

A Challenging Scene indeed!

"When life puts you in tough situations, don't say why me, just say try me."

- Anonymous

Hi, Everyone! Throughout my novel, *Burning for Freedom*, there are several scenes that I would—in my personal capacity—much, much rather not have written.

But what kind of novel would it have been, if I deleted essential scenes just because I was too chicken-hearted to write them? Just because I didn't want to put myself through the horrifying ordeal, the emotional agony, or reveal my heart and soul?

No, not writing them was not an option I ever gave myself. I still wonder to myself with great incredulity, did I really write a gay molestation scene? *Me . . . ?!!* I remember praying fervently that I wrote realistically and effectively, and that the readers would not laugh themselves silly upon reading it.

1913 was the year when Savarkar saved the first young boy from molestation. This single line from his *My Transportation for Life* had clung to my brain. The day after I decided to write the novel I woke up with the plot line in my head. This scene was going to be the scene that brought Savarkar and my fictional hero together.

A contrived situation created by an author is anathema to me. I most certainly didn't want to write any "contrived" scenes. So this Savarkar-Keshu meeting was crucial. There were critical challenges to overcome.

- making a meeting possible in the vast Cellular Jail where inmates are kept in solitary isolation.
- bonding Keshu with Savarkar. But that was not enough; Savarkar had to bond with Keshu too. And *that* was a tricky business indeed!!
- Absorbing Keshu quickly into the doings of the political prisoners, so I could merge the fictional element with the actual happenings.

The gay molestation scene was an effective answer to all these challenges and had the great plus point of being based on a real incident. This was *extremely* important to me.

I decided that I would not research this topic. My imagination would have to suffice. And that was *terrible* for me. The scene started popping in my mind move by move, over and over. I used to have nightmares and woke up sweating and with goose flesh.

Unfortunately, I had not even started writing the Andaman part of the book yet. I was particular about writing the novel sequentially. It was not to be borne! I stocked my home with groceries and just got down to it. I wrote fast and furiously. It still took me exactly sixteen days to nail down the novel, first draft of course, till the end of the scene.

By that time, my fridge was no better than Mother Hubbard's cupboard, but the nightmares stopped. And that was a great relief to me.

Anurupa