THE
CHIRALA-PERALA TRAGEDY
AN EPISODE OF VOLUNTARY EXILE

CHAPTER I
UNDER THE UNION

Of all the errors committed by the Indian Government none is more gravely serious than their destruction of village organism throughout India. From times of yore village has been the unit of all free life and civilization. It has absorbed within itself diverse trades and occupations and religions and castes in one community. It has absorbed newcomers, acquired new blood, assimilated new ideas to add to the old and "leaven" them. The village is the basis of all civilization and "the one germ of corporate life that could be
encouraged into a larger growth.” But it is an irony of fate to note that it has been killed by the British administrators in India.

The English official comes to India “new-fledged and eager for his work.” Knowing nothing of India, he proceeds to overrule “the well-informed Indian opinion and seeks to impose English methods on an ancient land which has its own traditions.” They then complain that Indians are ignorant, they are not fit for self-government and they should be ruled with an iron hand. “It is the way with the hybrids.”

After the advent of the British rule in India, various enactments were framed to destroy the independent initiative power of villages and crush out the life and spirit of the people, “and to reduce them to the status of humble, tractable servants of the official hierarchy.” Instead of becoming a school for local self-government, village administration seems “in danger of conversion into a branch of the bureaucracy.” It is also a pity to note that a section of our countrymen become tools in the hands of an Alien Bureaucracy which transforms them by its jugglery into “statesmen.” It is these “statesmen” who help the foreigner
to enslave people and advise the government to resort to severe repression if the nation asserts its self-consciousness. This is the ineffaceable impression one gets when he reviews the history of local self-government in India. To those who doubt the above truth, I cite the tragic episode of Chirala-Perala in the Andhradesh as an instance on the point, and let them mark, learn, and inwardly digest the bitter truth that the so-called reforms doled out now and then to a seemingly impotent nation by a benevolent Ma Bap Government, sap the little bit of initiative and independence a nation possesses and condemn it to the hell of slavery for ever.

A cluster of trees consisting of mango and cocoanut and other useful Indian trees, a group of dwellings some tiled and some thatched, a temple in the centre, a church and a rice mill,—signs of the invasion of modern Western Civilization—these surrounded on all sides by large barren fields—this is the village of Chirala (in the Guntur District, the Madras Presidency): and near and around it are four villages, Viraraghavapet, Jandrapet, Perala, and Old Chirala. With its surrounding four villages Chirala has formed as the basis of a Union
during the last forty years silently doing its God-appointed task. In fact the Chirala Union formed a little state in itself and though years have rolled away and changes have been vast and varied, still it maintained its unity and perfection and "resembled exactly his prototype of at least one thousand years ago."

Chirala possesses a Board Elementary School and an hospital both maintained by the Taluk Board of Bapatla. Educational facilities are also afforded in the form of twelve Results' Schools getting government grants. Not only these but a secondary school maintained by the village committee, a Government's girls' school, and Mission's boys' and girls' schools form the chief centres of education in these five villages.

The collections of the Union amount roughly to Rs. 5,000 a year, which money used to be spent on establishment, scavenging, and street-lighting.

These villages possess excellent and happy climate. Chirala is a summer resort to those who cannot afford to ascend to the Olympian heights of Ooty or the Elysian heights of Simla. As the soil of the villages is sandy and porous (the sea is three miles distant from the villages) there is no need on the part of a British official
to think of a permanent drainage scheme. The villages have gardens on their outskirts and Nature has provided them with scavengers (pigs) in large numbers; hence a British officer need not trouble himself of plans to maintain a grand scavenging department. Plenty of sweet water can be had in the villages and hence they do not require a water scheme from expert engineers of the modern day civilization.

The villagers are simple, happy, and work hard. In food and in dress as well as in many other things they are simple. They are contented and have no high ambitions. They work when there is work, and play when they have no work and enjoy life's pleasures most keenly. Dyeing and weaving form their chief occupations and they are able to raise sufficient food to sustain them for a year. Under the Union their life, in general, flowed on happily and smoothly on un-ruffled by anything uncommon, and "undisturbed by the many conflicting interests that are at work in the outside world." Truly one remembers the following words of the poet when he thinks of the simple and happy life of the villagers under the Union:

"It was a land of plenty and of wealth;
There God's indulgent hand made for a race
Supremely blest a paradise on earth,
A land of virtue, truth, and charity,
Where nature's choicest treasures man enjoyed
With little toil, where youth respected age,
Where each his neighbour's wife his sister deemed.

A land where each man deemed him highly blest
When he relieved the mis'ries of the poor;
When to his roof the wearied traveller came
To share his proffered bounty with good cheer."
CHAPTER II

ENFORCEMENT OF MUNICIPALITY

Carlyle says: "The ways of the world are more anarchical than ever........we have got into the age of revolutions. All kinds of things are coming to be subjected to fire as it were; hotter and hotter the wind rises around everything." The above remark applies with equal force to the village constitutions in India. Introduction of the Ryotwari system (in the Madras Presidency), and the extreme centralization of judicial and executive powers in the hands of its (British Bureaucracy) own officials have completed the task of destroying, root and branch, the old village constitutions: and as a result we find now hybrid councils and unions in their places. In spite of the cataclysmic changes, the villagers of the Chirala union were self-sufficient and happily living, when, the Government of Madras threw a bomb shell—
God knows the reason why—on the union and disturbed the placid contentment of the villagers.

In November, 1919, the Government of Madras issued a notification to the effect that Chirala and Perala should henceforth be formed as a municipality; and Jandrapet and Old Chirala should be separated from Chirala and Perala and constitute themselves as a union; and if there were any complaints to the contrary they might be notified to the Government by a certain date. This strange pronouncement astounded the villagers; and they, not only sent reasoned petitions, but also deputed some of their men to go to Madras and discuss the question with the Government. But all their attempts became futile. The Government, at last, declared the constitution of the municipality of Chirala-Perala in January, 1920.

Eleven councillors with a Revenue Divisional Officer as Chairman were nominated and they formed as a Municipal Council to carry on the administration of Chirala-Perala. Taxes were increased from Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 33,000. Many revision petitions were sent up to the Chairman complaining about the nature of the exorbitant taxation. But the Chairman advised the people
to pay taxes and then appeal against high and unjust taxation. The advice was accepted and for the first half-year taxes were paid and then the villagers appealed to the higher authorities of their grievances. But wastage of money on courts and posts was the result of their legitimate agitation.

At last goaded to despair the villagers resolved to boycott the municipality. The municipal councillors, feeling the righteous and just indignation of their countrymen against the municipality, resigned in a body. The District Collector having learnt of the serious step taken by the councillors visited the place, when, the villagers urged him to recommend the abolition of the municipality. Afterwards, when, Hon’ble Mr. Ramarayananagar, Minister of Local Self-Government, visited Chirala in February, 1921, the villagers sent a deputation to him praying to dissolve the municipality. The councillors unanimously demanded the Minister to yield to the wishes of the people and reinstate the old union again. The Minister never cared for the strong public opinion but threatened to appoint a paid chairman, to establish punitive police, to remove the Railway Station, Post Office, and hospital, and to station
the military if they do not agree to have a municipality. His threats having no effect on the villagers, the Minister, through the help of the village munsiff of Nidubrolé, invited some non-Brahmins and tickling their caste prejudices and giving them hopes of nomination on the council tried his best to seduce them to his side; but glad to note he failed and failed miserably. After returning to Madras the Minister officially asked the newly-instituted Chirala Municipal Council why it should not be superseded and a paid chairman appointed in its place, to carry on its duties. The Municipal Council met (the American Missionary Mr. Thomas too attended) and in a well-reasoned statement resolved that the villagers could not bear heavy taxation, the villagers did not require a municipality, therefore the Minister should abide by the wishes of the people and instead of superseding it should reinstate the old union dissolving the Municipal Council. But as the master so the servant, the Minister being a Brown Bureaucrat, turned a deaf ear to the resolution of the municipality and, on 1st April, 1921, superseding it appointed a paid chairman on a fat salary of Rs. 390 a month.
CHAPTER III

EVACUATION OF VILLAGES

The first act of the tragedy is over and you will enter upon the second act where you will witness the subtle workings of a Bureaucracy driving out the villagers across the plains "with their hymns of lofty cheer."

Alleging that the people became riotous, burnt toll-gate and placed toll-bar across the rail-road stopping the Calcutta mail for some time, the Government stationed a batch of reserve police (100 or so in number) at Chirala and thus began their operations in the field, viz., threatening the villagers to submit to the municipality. The paid chairman, with the help of the reserve police, went to the defaulters' houses and in many cases attached their properties, which, though auctioned at different places many a time, nobody bought them. In consequence of these repressive acts the villagers apprehended danger to their person and property and con-
sulted their leaders what to do in those circumstances. At that time Mahatma Gandhi, on his way to Madras, visited Chirala and inquiring into the grievances of the villagers advised them either to adopt civil disobedience or desatyay, i.e., to evacuate the villages. To adopt civil disobedience means to refuse payment of taxes, to submit to the attachment of property, and if necessary to go to jails in large numbers. The leaders of the villagers apprehended that, if they adopt civil disobedience, they might at any moment lose their patience and come into conflict with the Bureaucracy which awaits with glee for an opportunity "to make them learn a lesson which they might not forget for another fifty years." Thereupon Ramdas Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, the leader of Chirala-Peralala advised the villagers to leave the municipal limits, to construct huts on the outskirts, and live in them till the fulfilment of their wishes. Accordingly, the villagers, 15,000 in all, gathering their properties, began to evacuate the villages. During those midsummer days, the people were prepared even to give up their young children to death on their way or in the huts, and the old men, taking their bell on their heads, were prepared even to die or
swoon on their way rather than meekly submit to a wanton disregard of their popular rights and liberties by the Bureaucracy.

Afterwards the cases, regarding toll-shed-burning, toll-bar placed across railway lines, were duly heard before a tribunal. The evidence extracted before the tribunal clearly proved that the villagers were innocent and had nothing to do with those mischievous acts engineered by their enemies behind the scenes.

After the villagers left their native soil to live in huts constructed by themselves on the outskirts of the municipality, some engineered attempts were made to burn vacated houses and as a result we witness ten houses were burnt to ashes. Had there been a sudden blast of wind when the fire occurred, both the villages should have been burnt to ashes! But God frowned and non-co-operated with the malefactors.

Before the evacuation of the villages—

"As I past with careless steps and slow,
The mingling notes came softened from below;
The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
The playful children just let loose from school,
The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind;
These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
And filled each pause the nightingale had made."

But now—
"the sounds of population fail,
No cheerful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
For all the bloomy flush of life is fled."

Both the villages are in a dilapidated condition for the last six months. We find jackals taking their abode in the deserted houses. One feels terrified at the spectacle of seeing the snakes crawling here and there in the deserted villages. Green pasture has grown by the side-ways in the villages and Nature "red in tooth and claw" reigns supreme. When I visited the villages after evacuation, I felt pained at the desolation of the two beautiful spots of God's creation and involuntarily remembering recited the words of the poet (with slight change)—

"Sweet Chiral! parent of the blissful hour,
Thy glades forlorn confess the tyrant's power,
Here, as I take my solitary rounds
Amidst thy tangling walks and ruined grounds,
And, many a year elapsed, return to view
Where once the cottage stood, the hawthorn grew,
Remembrance wakes with all her busy train,
Swell at my breast, and turns the past to pain."

The villagers are determined not to re-enter the villages till the dissolution of the municipality. At first some people desired to return to the deserted villages but happily the incarceration of their beloved chief intervened and they too emphatically declared to me their intention of staying in the huts in the new colony till the municipality is abolished. As long as there is the municipality in existence—

"Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer’s news, the barber’s tale,
No more the woodman’s ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;
The host himself no longer shall be found
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid."
CHAPTER IV

PUBLICITY BUREAU ANSWERED.

When the villagers were struggling in the white heat of a mid-summer season in the huts to maintain their ordinary human rights, the Government of Madras, enjoying on the Olympion heights of Ooty, coolly kept quiet without once reviewing its act of misbehaviour towards a vast population of 15,000 human souls, in the light of the altered circumstances of the case. On the other hand, a statement was issued by the Publicity Bureau, Madras,* defending the Government's action and attributing the whole trouble to the non-co-operators. The reasons—if reasons they are—forwarded on behalf of the Government by the Publicity Bureau are, to put it mildly, mischievous, if not meaningless.

The Publicity Bureau says because the Sanitary Commissioner recommended the constitution of the municipality on grounds of public health, therefore the Government acted on his

*Vide Appendix I.
suggestion. This contention betrays woeful ignorance of the conditions of the villages on the part of a Sanitary Commissioner. Did he mean to say that the union was not taking an active interest in the work of sanitation? Did he compare the statistics of births, deaths and infectious diseases spread in the villages with those of other municipal towns and villages? Indeed, it is true that plague infected these villages in 1918. But this is directly attributable to the importation of it from big cities and towns, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Bezwada, and Guntur. Only 25 deaths occurred from plague in Chirala and its surrounding villages. Why not the Government convert the municipalities of Guntur and Bezwada into corporations for they have betrayed their inability of administering their areas when plague infected? For the matter of that Bapatla, Vepalalem unions, and the areas of some other non-unions too were infected with plague. Then why does not the Government turn them into municipalities so that money might be found "for the improvement of sanitation" of those infected areas? Why did the Government separate Jandrapet, a place infected with plague from Chirala municipality and awarded it a union? When every
body knows that to evacuate a place infected with plague is the best and wise thing for one to do, it is strange to hear the absurd statement that the plague-infected area should be converted into a municipality. Let the reader judge for himself the soundness of this argument forwarded by an apologetic Publicity Bureau on behalf of the Government of Madras!

I invite the reader's attention to read Appendix II, a statement made in reply to the Publicity Bureau by the Secretary, the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, in which the Secretary, in a well-reasoned and logical manner, refutes the contentions of the Bureau, argument by argument, and clearly proves the gross neglect paid by the Government in this matter, and how a "prestige-ridden" bureaucracy tries to override "the wishes of the people expressed emphatically and un-ambiguously."

Suppose (a moment please!) the arguments of the Bureau are right and a municipality should be established at Chirala. What are the benefits that the Chirala people accrue from a municipality? The benefits are—

(1) to bear the expenses of a school and hospital maintained by the Taluk Board in the past days, (2) to have a permanent vaccinator,
(3) to have a registrar of births and deaths (this work used to be done by the village munsiff under the union), (4) to have a sanitary inspector and building experts, (5) to have an Overseer with his establishment, (6) to have a manager, an accountant, a tax-clerk, a warrant officer, a typist, a shroff, etc. (The work of all these used to be done effectively by a clerk on a salary of Rs. 18 a month under the union). In short the expenses on all these items (excluding hospitals and school) approximately comes up to Rs. 14,500 a year. On the other hand the whole work was done by the union with Rs. 4,000 a year. Is it not a reckless wastage of money of the poor villagers under the municipality? This is the blessing the Government bestows on the villagers and for which they are maltreated without pity!

The Bureau contends why the Taluk Board should pay for the expenses of the hospital and other conveniences in Chirala. It should be stated that the hospital at Chirala is intended for the use of the whole district. The villages possess 30 or 35 good Ayurvedic physicians who treat the villagers of their petty diseases. Except in serious and complicated cases, none of the villagers had any necessity to go to the
Board's Hospital. An examination of the attendance register at the hospital reveals that people from outside the villages form a large majority of the cases attending the hospital.

When hospitals at various places in other unions are being maintained by Taluk Boards, is it a special rule laid down by the Government of Madras that Chirala should maintain its own hospital? Are not schools, as a rule, maintained by Taluk Boards in union and non-union areas? Thus we see this argument of the Bureau also is devoid of meaning.

The Bureau says also, as, in 1918, the Union Chairman advised constitution of a municipality and as the District Board supported the chairman's finding, hence the Government established a municipality. India is a land of mysteries. Local self-government is an anamoly in India. The people have no right in choosing their own officials in local administration but nomination is the order of the day. A nominated member on the Union, Council, or Assembly is a Johukum wallah, begs the Bureaucracy for favours, acts according to the wishes of the Bureaucracy and meekly submits to everything the Bureaucracy says or does. There may be exceptions to the rule here and there but on the whole, it is the
general rule which could not be contradicted by any one, nay, not even by the Bureau.

Probably the Bureau does not know that the people protested against the nomination of the said person as the Union Chairman when he was appointed to the post. The members of the union too were nominated by the Government. It is this union with its chairman, a man hated by the people, at its head recommended the constitution of a municipality! This is the form of Local self-government we are enjoying under the British Rule during the last half-century and more!

What wonder is there if the District Board accepts the proposal of the Union Chairman, who is after all a member of the same District Board! In 1915 the same District Board resolved that Chirala should not have a municipality. Then what unearthly things have occurred in the meanwhile for the District Board to change its opinion? Is it on account of plague infection? We have discussed about it before and shown the futility of that contention. Is it to please the Higher Authorities? Let the District Board answer! Jandrapet, one of the plague infected areas in 1918 was in the old union. Why should it be separated and made
a union? Did the District Board recommend to do like that? Or is it an inexplicable whim of the Presiding Deity of the "prestige-ridden" Bureaucracy of Madras?

Even taking into consideration the number of houses in the Chirala Union, we do not find it reasonable to convert it into a municipality. The Old Chirala Union consists of 4,529 houses of all classes: Bapatla Union possesses 2,245 houses and Ponur Union 2,180 houses. The total number of houses in the Chirala Union may seem to be great in number but if we go into details we find the reverse of it. The number of first five classes of houses in Chirala-Peralula excluding those of Jandrapet is 400, while Bapatla has 434, and Ponur 546. We see that the number of valuable houses in Chirala-Peralula is meagre compared with the other two unions. When, on an examination, we find that 400 houses (of the five classes) constitute Chirala-Peralula is it justifiable to force a municipality upon them? Taking on an average 4 people to live in each house, and deducting 1,600 rich men from a total population of 18,000, we see that 16,400 poor souls live in Chirala-Peralula. Did the Government think of this aspect of the question at all before establishing the municipality? Did the Sanitary
Commissioner recommend to constitute a municipality taking into consideration the above incontestable statistical figures? Or did the Government get, as a matter of course, the usual assent of the District Board and the Union Chairman to convert the Union into a Municipality? Let us admit that the Government pays scrupulous and respectful regard to the recommendations of the District Board and Union Chairman and Sanitary Commissioner. On the express recommendation of the Sanitary Commissioner and District Board, the Repalli Union has been converted into a municipality. The Repalli people protested. The Government prohibited meetings under Section 144, Criminal Procedure Code. But the agitation continued and at last the Minister issued a notification that the Repalli Municipality would be abolished very soon! The Minister naively speaks out that Repalli has no urban interests and it is a rural area. And yet the Government seems to think of establishing a Munsiff's Court there! If the minister acted to the contrary in the question of Repalli Municipality, the constitution of which was recommended by the District Board and the Sanitary Commissioner, then what obstacles are in his way to
rescind the orders in the case of Chirala-Perala? Oh! I forget. It is a matter of prestige? No sound reason can be given for enforcement of a municipality on Chirala-Perala but that the minister is not willing to yield to the just agitation of the people.

In this righteous struggle up till now eleven men and an old woman who refused to pay taxes went into jail for 20 days. The village karnam, Mr. Chirala Rangayya resigned his post and suffered a rigorous imprisonment of 3 months. Two more are at present in jail. We do not find a greater mockery of justice as we witness in some of the cases of Chirala people. Some of the people have been sentenced to imprisonment ranging from days to months, and they are told by the presiding officer to go home, stay there, and await their arrests. One of those men who received a sentence of imprisonment wrote to the presiding officer that he wanted to go to Benares on a visit and asked him when he would get the warrant of arrest so that after he served the term of imprisonment he might purge the, sins of his stay in a British prison with a bath in the Ganges at Benares.

In August last the Minister proposed that the
villagers of Chirala-Peralal, retaining the name of municipality may tax themselves, Rs. 4,000 only and do the work of the union as before. This "condescension" must be characterised as hypocrisy, pure and simple. How could the work of a municipality be carried on with the collections of a union? This kind of tactics is certainly unworthy on the part of a minister and it speaks of the mentality of those who, enjoying pelf and authority, worshipping the Deity of Prestige, override mercilessly the legitimate rights and wishes of their own countrymen.

The Bureau alleges that "after a careful examination of the situation he (the minister) came to the conclusion that the agitation for the abolition of the municipality was fictitious" and that "apparently under the influence of the non-co-operators and some of the rich merchants" the people agitated for the dissolution of the municipality. Whenever and whatever opposition comes to Government from any quarter, there the influence of some non-co-operator is attributed as a reason for it. This has become a matter of daily occurrence in India. You find the same thing at Malabar, at Contai and other places. We have grown sick
with this ever-repeated-but-contradicted charge against non-co-operators. We have repudiated it many a time and yet the Government blindly asserts the repudiated myth. Suppose the non-co-operator is at the bottom of it at Chirala-Peralal. Why is not the Government sensible enough to win over the villagers to its side by the abolition of the municipality? Why did the Government repress the villagers and has driven them into the fold of the non-co-operator? The non-co-operator never said that he would boycott the municipality. It is expressly laid down that a non-co-operator should contest the seats of election on the municipalities and convert them into powerful organisations of non-co-operation. How could we believe that the non-co-operator is the mischief-maker in Chirala-Peralal affair, when we witness the villagers waiting in a deputation on a minister? For a non-co-operator should not seek help from the blood-stained hands of an alien bureaucracy. To say that non-co-operation is responsible for the Chirala-Peralal tragedy is blasphemous.
CHAPTER V.

THE HERO OF CHIRALA–PERALA

The noble hero of Chirala–Peralal, Ramdas Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, was born at Paruganchiprole (Nandigama Taluk, Kistna District). His father was a teacher and poor young Gopalakrishna lost his mother on the third day of his birth. Then his father re-married but he too expired one-and-half years after the re-marriage. Young Gopalakrishna has been brought up from his childhood by his grand-mother who tenderly loves the boy very much. She became father and mother to him and Gopalakrishna in return for her deep affection tries his best to make her happy in her last days.

Educated by his uncle he studied till Matriculation Class in Town High School, Guntur. He failed in the Matriculation examination thrice owing to his waywardness and sportive company. Seeing this his uncle removed him to
Bapatla where, after a diligent study, he passed the Matriculation of the Madras University. Then he served as a clerk in the Taluk Office at Bapatla for a year, in which task he proved his incapacity to do the drudgery. He wrote a letter to his guardian in strong language that it would be wise to beg in streets than be a clerk in a Government Office where independence and the power of initiative would be destroyed by the spiritless and lifeless routine of the day. He requested his guardian to give him permission to resign and allow him to take up higher studies. Being a shrewd man, his guardian did not force him to be a clerk and assented to his proposal. Gopalakrishna resigned, joined in Intermediate Class in the College at Guntur but did not prosecute his studies till he completed his course. Giving up his studies he became a teacher in a mission’s school and afterwards went to Scotland to study at the Edinburgh University. He received the M.A. diploma in History and Economics and tasting the pleasures and pains of Western life he returned to India after a stay of five years. On his arrival he was appointed as a Professor at the Training College, Rajahmundry, which he gave up owing to a hitch
with the principal. Then he joined the Andhra Jateeya Kalasala as a teacher and left it too after some time.

He had an idea of starting a paper "Sadhana" and for this purpose he bought a press and obtained a security-less declaration both for the paper and the press. As his wife was a sickly girl, he wanted to take her to a healthy resort where she could recoup her health and staying there permanently he might start the paper. He chose Chirala as the best place for him with healthy climatic conditions. On his arrival at Chirala with his family, everybody, except the doctor, was new to him. Slowly he acquainted himself with his neighbours and became

"to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change, his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise;
His house was known to all the vagrant train;
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
The long-remember'd beggar was his guest,"
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;

Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried enchantment, reproved each dull delay,

Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.”

Everything went on quite happily when, the Madras Government suddenly declared to convert the Chirala Union into a Municipality. The villagers looked up to Gopalakrishna who became their friend, guide, and philosopher in their distress. He advised the people to petition to the Government, spoke personally with the Government officials, in fact, he did his best to do everything in his power both to help the people and the Government to be on good
terms. But the Government persisted and the municipality was established. He advised the people to boycott the municipality and be non-violent in their struggle. He impressed on their minds on all occasions the necessity of non-violence; and knowing pretty well the human nature he organised Ramdandu ("A Peaceful Army") whose duty is to do social service to their brethren and to maintain peace in the villages. Through this organisation he prevented the people losing their patience from the provoking pin-pricks of the Bureaucracy.

At meetings

"With meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorned the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway
And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray.
The service past, around the pious man,
With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran;
E'en children followed with endearing wile,
And plucked his gown, to share the good mans' smile.

His ready smile permits warmth expressed;
Their welfare pleased him, and their cares

distressed:
To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,

But all his serious thoughts had rest in heaven."
When the fight with the Government took a serious turn and when it came to a question of application of civil disobedience or Desatyag he thought over the matter for a fortnight or more revolving in his mind the serious nature of the step he would have to take in the matter. He felt diffident about the patience of the people if their properties would be attached before their very eyes, and resolved to carry out Desatyag. He consulted the elders of the town and at last definitely declared for Desatyag. At his call, men, women, and children gathering their properties, some carrying on their heads, some on carriages, quitted the villages, as though plague infected the villages, to live in huts outside the outskirts of the municipality. It is a sight for Gods to see those unhappy people leaving their sweet homes to worship freely at the pure shrine of self-determination.

"Good Heaven! What sorrows gloomed that parting day,
That called them from their native walks away:
When the poor exiles; every pleasure past,
Hung round the bowers, and fondly looked their last,
And took a long farewell."

Amidst that noble band, there were men ‘with hoary hair,’ and
"There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth."

Gopalakrishna appealed to the rich men of Andhradesh to help the Chirala-Peralal souls with money so that they might spend it in constructing huts and live an unhampered, free life. The Andhras responded to the appeal generously and the Andhra, Provincial Congress Committee voted Rs. 3,000. A Committee was formed to maintain order and peace in the colony and everyone obeyed the injunctions of the Committee.

On 24th September last the Andhra Conferences were held at Berhampore. Gopalakrishna went there to bring "Sanjivi" (money) to his Chirala-Peralal brethren. Alleging that he made violent speeches, the District Collector of Ganjam ordered him under Section 144, Criminal Procedure Code not to deliver speeches till one month in his jurisdiction. But Gopalakrishna fearlessly disobeyed the said order on 29th September giving intimation of it to the Collector a day before. At last on 1st October he was arrested at the Berhampore Railway

*Vide Appendix III.
Station and his trial was held at Chicacole Road. The Collector asked Gopalakrishna to give security and he, having refused, was sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment.

The news of his arrest flashed across the country with lightning rapidity and the whole country congratulated him from many platforms. He sent messages to his brethren at Chirala-Peralal to continue the struggle peacefully to the end and he would be praying for their success during his stay in the gaol. He sent another message to his countrymen that they should be prepared even to die and establish Swaraj before the end of this year. The Chirala-Peralal people congratulated him and resolved to maintain his family till he would return back free.

Gopalakrishna is thirty summers old. A stalwart man as he is, he wears pure Khadder dhoty, a Khadder turban, and beads of rudraksha around his neck. He looks like Ramdas (the servant of Rama.). He sings poems and slokams in praise of Shri Ramachandra and at all meetings he attends he induces the people to give up the western method of shouting, and cry "Shrimad Rama Ramana Govindo Hari." (Let Creation, Protection and
Destruction go on,) He teaches Bhakti cult to the young men and women in the Andhradadesh and picturing to them the noble personality of Hanuman he appeals to the people to be true servants of the country. He is humour incarnate and everybody, who has heard him, must confess he has been a great source of pleasure to the people. He used to keep them laughing so that they might not become morbid and desperate when they think of their slavish condition of life. He believes that the duty of a leader is to go forward, risking all hazards even to his life: and this is the reason why when some of his friends have expressed their doubts about non-violent aspect of the struggle in Palnad forest-affairs, he reprimanded thus:

"Your duty is to see that no violence is done. You must risk even your life to maintain non-violence. If the people assure you that they be non-violent then you think of going to Palnad and taking up the leadership!! That is the way with the cowards. When you doubt there occurs violence go and try your level best that no violence is done. Then only you are fit to be a leader of the people."

He was awarded the title of Andhra Ratna at the Guntur District Conference. He wrote
a book jointly with Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy on Dancing.

When I was travelling with Gopalakrishna to Berhampore during the month of September last to visit the Andhra Conferences he divulged to me some of his secret thoughts and opinions on men and matters in a frank, sincere and appealing manner. He confessed, with tears in his eyes, he had done many sins in his life but now he felt happy having "purged away the foreign matter." He has done his duty to his country and has become its servant. He expressed to me that property is murder and to down-trod the poor is a crime against humanity.

When he was going to Trichinopoly to be located in the gaol there, I met him at Bezwada Station, and he, taking his photo from me signed his autograph with a smile. He appealed to his friends to take care of his Chirala-Perala brethren, to be brave, and face even death for the sake of establishing Swaraj before the month of December ends. He humourously asked his friends to get jail certificates at an early date. As the train steamed out of the station, I saw him standing like the obedient Hanuman, hands-folded, smiling bidding good
bye to us all. As one of his lovely opponents remarked to me, "A great and important figure quits the stage of Andhra life and we feel his absence for sometime to come." Even his worst enemies had nothing to say against him but pour their torrents of mild praise on him out of their jealous hearts.

Ere long, I hope, he will come out with a philosophy of his own to teach his countrymen and may God bless him with long and healthy life so that he might successfully complete the work allotted unto him by his Creator.
EPILOGUE

In these pages I have traced the course of the noble struggle till Gopalakrishna's arrest and imprisonment. I will deal in the second part of the book with the new prosecutions that are going on and in what manner the fight ends.

Having been masters at applying the insidious policy of Divide at impera, the Government at the present moment are trying their best to prevail upon a portion of the population to return to the deserted villages, now giving hopes of appointments, then by gentle persuasion, and finally by threats. The accused in the new prosecutions are determined to enter the gaols rather than give taxes to a municipality enforced on them at the point of a bayonet. The Government, as is evident, believe in repression as their sole remedy and think that if they punish the influential people in Chirala-Perala (new colony), the remaining population could be prevailed upon to come back to the deserted villages. We cannot help feeling pity
EPILOGUE

at the perverted mentality of the Bureaucracy for probably they do not know that repression is a strong dose to make the people determined to fight to the end. The Government stand condemned before the bar of public opinion for the atrocious manner in which they are treating 18,000 poor, wretched souls without a dram of pity on them. We have heard the talk-talk of justice and equity for a long time and are disgusted to see it tomtommed by the Viceroy, the Ex-chief Justice of England, without witnessing it in the practical field. What will he say if he sees five thousand men, homeless and wretched, willing to die to maintain their birth-right of self-determination, yet starving and preparing themselves to front with joy the coming awful winter cold? What will he say if he sees five thousand mothers living in misery and squalor, struggling to earn enough to feed their little children? What will he say if he sees five thousand children giving up their sportly lives, wearing out their strength, and nursing hatred towards those who blasted their lives? What will he say if he sees a thousand of old people, cast off and helpless, waiting for death to take them from their earthly troubles? What will he say if he sees fifteen thousand men
women, and children, who desiring not to submit to an unjust and enforced measure, toil every hour they can stand and see for just enough to keep them alive, who are condemned to monotony and weariness, to hunger and misery, and to heat and cold? Has Justice run amok in the case of these helpless people? Have those in power no hearts to sympathise with and allieviate the sufferings of these miserable people? Do they not feel for these unhappy villagers while living in their palaces, rioting in luxury and extravagance—"such as no words can describe, as makes the imagination reel and stagger, makes the soul grow sick and faint? Cannot the authorities abolish the munici-

"Blood on his heavenly altar flows,
Hell's burning incense fills the air,
And Death attests in street and lane,
The hideous glory of his reign."

We believe the Local Government will not retrace its steps in this affair for we do not see
any signs till the present moment. The whole matter rests on a “Justice-loving” Viceroy. If he really believes in truth and justice, let him get down from the Elysian heights of Simla and personally undertake investigation into this tragedy. Let him judge for himself the righteousness or otherwise of his lieutenants’ work and let him undo the mischief that is done. If even he remains mute and dumb, then we, mortals, must bid adieu to the higher authorities and be prepared to die in maintenance of our legitimate rights and liberties. We must leave ourselves into the hands of the Almighty and grope on in the darkness of misery and poverty exclaiming, O! Autocracy!

"Thou curst by Heaven's decree,
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!
How do thy potions, with insidious joy,
Diffuse their pleasures only to destroy!
Kingdoms by thee, to sickly greatness grown,
Boast of a florid vigour not their own,
At every draught more large and large they grow;
A bloated mass of rank, unwieldy woe;
Till sapped their strength, and every part un-
sound,
Down, down they sink, and spread a ruin round."

Yes! Autocracy will never listen to the counsels of History, ranges itself against the people, digs its own grave, and buries itself "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."