

## Colonial Resistance in *Do or Die*

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### Abstract

Basavaraj Kattimani (1919-1989) happens to be an important novelist, short story writer and autobiographer in addition to being a well-known journalist. He was born in Malamaradi village of Gokak taluka of Belagavi District in 1919. He belongs to the Progressive Writers' Movement (*Pragatisila*) in Karnataka and belongs to the galaxy of other progressive writers like Niranjana and Chaduranga and others. He was also an MLC of Karnataka for a term from 1968-1974. He has written several political, social and historical novels and short stories in Kannada. He was a prolific writer with more than thirty-five novels and more than ten collections of short stories, an autobiography and many prose pieces. He was known for novels of social realism, political novels, historical novels and religious cum satirical novels.

**Key Words:** Colonial rule, resistance, Do or Die

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dealing with the life of St. Akkamahadevi created quite a furor in Karnataka after their publications. *Swatantryadedege (Towards Freedom)* happens to be one of his famous political novels or Freedom Narratives. His *Jwalamukhiya Mele (Upon the Volcano)*, dealing with the life and dilemma of a journalist won him the Soviet Land Nehru Award. Although he was not formally educated in the University, he was educated in the University of Life itself and wrote about his authentic experience of life. In this respect he is easily comparable to Thomas Hardy, who was also not formally educated in any University. Almost all of his novels are written in a social-realistic style with a satirical tinge about them. As far as his social realism is concerned he is easily comparable to Galsworthy and Charles Dickens.

The present novel, *Do or Die* (Tr. of *Madi Madidavaru* in Kannada) delineates the colonial struggle between the Indian

youth and Congress members under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi against the British rule in India. It is about the Quit India Movement (or *Chale Jao Chaluvali*) of 1942. Broadly speaking there is a conflict between the young men and women like Hema, Vishwanath, Sekhar, and Sanganna on the one hand and the police department including its CID officers like Kirtinath on the other. The young men and women are inspired by the patriotic zeal, when they are invited by Mahatma Gandhi to start a non-violent non-cooperation, or *satyagraha* against the British Government.

The novel begins at a point when the young men and women of north Karnataka are exasperated by the news of the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and few other Congress leaders by the British Government. So Hema, a young girl of about eighteen and a college student at Mumbai and daughter of Shamrao, a Congress leader, has left her college and is going to Belagavi on a train to join the last struggle. Her decision to participate in the Quit India Movement is inspired by the call of Mahatma Gandhi to all the Indians, “The news...which whipped up the sentiments of the entire country. It alerted her also. The speech made by Gandhiji at the A.I.C.C, ‘Do or Die.’ Male, female, child, students, all must participate in this last struggle of ours. Defying the authority of the British Government we must declare our independence. ‘Do or Die,’ the heroic proclamation. The challenge had woken her up just as it did crores of Indians. So, she had decided to bid goodbye to college studies and plunge into the battlefield” (Pp.1-2). The character of Hema is admirable in that although she is the daughter of Shamrao, a Congress leader and

brought up in all the comforts of life, has defied the words of her father by rejecting his suggestion of getting married and settling down in life. She has decided to participate in the political struggle which is quite risky to her. She has boarded the Pune-Bengaluru train and is on the way to Belagavi. Although her father had participated in all the movements starting from the 1921 movement through all the years, like 1930, 1932, 1934, and 1941 etc, and gone to jail several times and never tried to be Minister. But he does not want his daughter to plunge into politics as she has already lost her mother and happens to be his only daughter, whom he has brought up like a parrot. It is due to his affection and deep concern for her that he has asked her not to plunge into politics but to lead a married and settled life. But Hema has an inner patriotic urge in her. That is why she does not listen to his advice and decides to plunge into political action without bothering about her personal safety or future. She wants to overcome the natural weaknesses of her gender by going out of the kitchen into the broad world to struggle with like-minded men who are patriotic.

When the train halts at some station, she happens to meet a sturdy young man called Sekhar, (a native of Kallapur village near Kittur), who is about twenty-five years and who is clad in a *khadi* Nehru shirt, *khadi* dhoti and a Gandhi-cap. He introduces himself to Hema and remembers to have seen her in Kolhapur and tells her how a CID has been chasing him as there has been a warrant on him. He tells her how they are all inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s call, “Bapuji has directed us ‘to do or die.’ That’s enough for us, isn’t it? As directed by him, we all must fight against the Government

and see that it doesn't function. The Congress Socialist Party also has said the same thing. At Pune four or five of them had met me. They gave us a whole agenda" (P.13). Hemavati wants to be of some use to them in their Movement but she does not know how to contribute her mite to it. Then Sekhar suggests to her that she, being educated can help them by typing and issuing pamphlets. She is inspired to accept that job. She knows that Sekhar is an enthusiastic youth, who has studied up to Mulki Examination (i.e. 7<sup>th</sup> Standard), and who lives as a farmer among the farmers in his village. Sekhar changes his normal civil dress and dons the uniform of a CID and wears a beard so perfectly that even Hema cannot identify him properly as Sekhar. He has to go on changing his dress in order to escape from the hands of the real CIDs who are after him and rebels like him. Then Sekhar alights from the train in the next station after promising to see her at her home at Belagavi.

Then Hemavati is accosted by Mr. Viswanath Desai when the train halts at the next station. He recognizes her as his college mate at Pune. He also tells her how he wants to plunge into the Quit India Movement as he is tired of the disturbed life at Pune, "In view of the *lathi* charge and firing at Pune, I'm disgusted with this government, Hemavati. Really speaking, I've thought of plunging into this Movement and do something. But I've no idea of what to do" (P.20). Hema learns that Mr. Desai wears the dress of a CID so that no real CID can identify him as fake.

Then at Miraj Railway Station Kirtinath, a real CID meets Hema sitting in the compartment and talks with her out of

courtesy. Hema sends away Sekhar from there lest he should be detected by the real CID, Kirtinath. She tells him how her father, when Congress was in office, had helped Kirtinath to get the job of a CID. We learn later that Shamrao wanted his daughter, Hemavati marry Kirtinath and settled down in life, but Hema is not eager to get married so soon, as she is deeply interested in the Quit India Movement. Thus she has defied her gender role of domesticity in being the kitchen queen.

When Viswanath Desai is writing the pamphlets in Hema's house at night up to 10 o'clock, a CID enters the house suddenly and threatens him with a pistol that writing the pamphlets is against the British Government and wants to know who the Goddess of Liberty (*Swatantryadevi*) is, who is getting these pamphlets written. Otherwise he threatens Desai that he would shoot him after three minutes if he did not answer his queries. Although Desai is initially surprised and shocked by the entry of a CID, who seems to know all the details about Hema and himself, slowly recovers his composure and refuses to answer the questions of the CID thereby displaying his courage to face death. On realizing the courage and firm determination of Desai, the CID reveals his identity as none other than Sekhar, who is in the guise of a CID, who appreciates him for his courage and deep patriotism. Hema also joins them by that time. So this test was conducted by Sekhar and Hema to confirm the real patriotism and loyalty of Desai to Gandhian ideology. Sekhar declares happily that Desai has passed in first class with a first rank in the test.

The three patriots discuss their problems of organizing themselves into a band. They do not want to be like the old *satyagrahis* who used to indulge in picketing, going to jail and coming back and repeat the same pattern of behavior. They have no strength to do something useful. Sekhar opines rightly, "They are caught in this dilemma. That's why under the pretext of living *incognito* in big cities like Pune – that too in the houses of big government officers, they want to spend time comfortably having food there" (P.35). He points out the backwardness of Karnataka in the fight and shows the divide between North and South, "That's why our Karnataka is backward. Has one of us been a Congress president? Has even been a Working Committee Member? The strings of the Congress are all in the hands of North Indians. They it is who are big leaders. This is the reason for it. Among us there are many talking leaders. Not many who can show by action," (P.36) says Hema.

They want to be men of action as they are young and enthusiastic. For their band of patriots, they require some money and also some weapons. They believe that "Those who die for a good cause turn into stars and shine in the sky" (P.42). Although this is a superstitious folk-myth it inspires them to go ahead with their struggle with the British Government.

They know that their enemy, i.e. the British Government in India is very strong because of their superior weapons and trained soldiers. They require a month's time to galvanize their activities by making preparations like collecting some money from the rich people like Duddannavar Sahukar and others and some guns and

pistols somehow or other. Sekhar goes to his native village of Kallapur. While he is travelling in a truck he learns with chagrin how seven villagers of Kallapur were fired and killed by the local police, when they took out a *prabhat pheri* (morning march) in Bailahongala. Thus the conflict between the colonial government and the colonized has already started and the native patriots have to get themselves ready to fight with the enemy on the lines suggested by Mahatma Gandhi. These patriots are naturally inspired by the earlier fighters like Rani Chennamma of Kittur and Rayanna of Sangavalli and Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Dhanasetti Mallappa and so on, who fought and fell for their Land. Sekhar has a brother called Linganna at the village, who looks after the land and his mother. They are seriously oriented towards the Quit India Movement, Congress, Satyagraha, and village upliftment. Desai reminds Sekhar that they are like soldiers who have to sacrifice their personal pleasures and "That they shouldn't think of home and property, filial considerations, attachments, none at all" (P.43).

Before reaching Kallapur, Sekhar goes via Kittur and feels inspired by the sight of the palace of Kittur and saddened by the sight of the ruined palace being converted into a graveyard wherein several martyrs had been buried long back. The once glorious palace of Raja Mallasarja and Rani Chennamma being converted into a graveyard is highly symbolic of the colonial destruction of the native kingdom and the utter helplessness of the native people. He had developed scorn for the native people's lack of pride and stupidity.

Anyway he is happy to learn from Sanganna that a meeting is going to take

place at the heroic town of Kittur to discuss their future plans of rebellion against the British Government. Some important leaders and even ministers are supposed to attend the meeting at Kittur. Desai displays his emotional attachment to the Heroic Land of Kittur by taking a fistful of soil in his fingers and pressing it to his eyes. Others follow suit. Then he swears, "Our battle has begun from today. None of us should turn back till we die. Only those with that determination should join our group. Take oath of 'do or die, remembering Chennamma's feet'" (P.46).

The next night they begin the meeting on the platform of Basavanna Temple at Kittur after 10 o'clock. All the patriots have gathered in the meeting. Some torches are lit around there. Sankaranna, the Master plays on his drum and inspires the audience by a heroic song invoking the names of Rani Chennamma, Rayanna of Sangavalli, Chennappa Wali and others, narrates how Nehru, Gandhi, Patel and other Congress leaders have been arrested at night and put into jail by the cruel British Government and how they should respond to Mahatma Gandhi's call to join the Quit India Movement and drive out the British colonizers from our country. Obviously his heroic song sung in the style of a *lavani* folk song inspires the hearts of the listeners and prepares them mentally to galvanize their rebellious action. All of them shout the patriotic slogans like *Gandhi Maharaj ki Jai*. They are very angry to learn that the British Government has not even revealed the fact about where exactly Gandhi has been put into jail.

Then an old man Balappa asks Sankaranna, the Master of the patriotic band,

but the Master pleads his ignorance about that. Balappa expresses his sympathy for Gandhi as he has always identified himself with the latter and cherished his ideals. He believes that Rani Chennamma herself was born in the form of Gandhi and that she had sent Gandhi with her blessings to drive her enemy, the English from the country. Ever since the 1921 Movement began Balappa had taken great interest in the Congress, Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru and so on and learnt all things about the Movement. During the Harijan Yatra when Gandhi had come to Belagavi, he had gone up to Belagavi from Kallapur and seen Gandhi to his eye's content. His respect for Gandhi had increased when he learnt that the latter had given up wearing clothes, except a short dhoti and a scarf on his shoulders. He had given up his food on learning that Gandhi had taken a vow of fasting. He would go the Basavanna Temple and pray to God to take care of 'Our father Gandhi.' He was very angry with the British Government for punishing an old man past seventy years like Gandhi with imprisonment. Such details show the extraordinary influence of Gandhi and his ideals even upon the illiterate people like farmers and labourers. Though not formally educated in the cities these villagers are fired by the patriotic zeal and are ready to lay down their lives for their country. When patriots are discussing their issues in the meeting the Village Accountant Rangappa Kulkarni comes there and alerts them not to involve him in trouble. He tells them how a policeman had come to his house and cautioned him not to involve himself in the public meetings against the British Government. He confesses further that he being a job holder in the British Government has to obey their orders,

although emotionally he belongs to the group of patriots. Thus Ranganna happens to be a party to the colonial British Government in India. Even in the small village of Kallapur the microscopic conflict between imperialism and native pride may be seen operating here. The people know that Ranganna had betrayed them in the past in 1932 rebellious movement also, although he talks with false sympathy. They therefore want to teach him a lesson of his life. After Ranganna goes to his house, they go to his house at night, threaten him and force him to write down his letter of resignation to the British Government and even forcibly take out all the Government records of revenue and registers and burn them to ashes. Their intention is solely to paralyze the British Government and not to recognize its authority. Kulkarni Ranganna obliges them helplessly. He thinks about the dilemma of his own life. He cannot join the freedom fighters or work on the field as a farmer as he is a Brahmin. But he has to marry off his three daughters and earn his livelihood mainly through his job as a Village Accountant. So his vindictiveness makes him report the same to the Government. He writes the report at night itself and sends it to the Government officers by pressing his *talavar* (courier) Lakya into service at that odd hour.

Babasaheb, the Desai of Hallur is a well-known landlord in Belagavi area, but nicknamed as 'Madcap Desai' because of his spending of all his ancestral property on trivial things. He is against the Congress Party and the Gandhian Movements and in favour of the British Government in India. He always treats the officers of the British Government with food, hospitality and expensive gifts in order to please them and

curry their favour. He has an eye on the title of Rao Bahadur to be bestowed upon him by the British Government. Having lost his wife, he lives alone in his mansion with a servant. He returns home past midnight after satisfying his crazes like cards, liquor and women.

He has an only son, Viswanath, who has been studying in a college at Pune. But when the college is closed down for three months due to the Quit India Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi, he expects his son to return home. But Viswanath does not return home at all nor does he reply to his father's letter. So Babasaheb Desai is worried about his son's safety during the days of *lathi* charges, arrests and violence in the cities. He has three guns in his house. Viswanath and his band of rebels hatch a plan of stealing the three guns belonging to his father. So one night Wrestler Sanganna leads them to Desai's house, knocks on the main door and silences the servant by gagging his mouth with a ball of cloth and binding him and waking up Desai himself. Sanganna tells Desai that his son Viswanath has come to the village and been waiting for him near the Hanuman Temple outside the village. Desai, taken in by this strange news and goaded by his affection for the son, goes out of his mansion along with Sanganna. Meanwhile Viswanath enters his house and steals the three guns and leaves a letter there saying that he has taken the guns, which are useful to him in his Quit India Movement and that he has been escaping from the police as there has been a warrant against him. When Desai returns home without meeting his son at the Hanuman temple, he is surprised to find the letter of his son and the guns which are missing. He is deeply worried about Viswanath's safety and wants

to get the police warrant against his son cancelled by the Collector by writing a letter to him. It is ironical that Desai is pro British Government and anti-Congress and anti-Gandhi, whereas his own son is an active participant in the Quit India Movement thereby displaying his loyalty to the Congress Party and to Gandhian ideals.

Meanwhile the band of rebels learns from Parvatevva, (Sekhar's mother), who has learnt from Godubai, wife of Ranganna Kulkarni that her husband has already written some letter to the higher authorities against the rebels. Therefore, Parvatevva requests her son Sekhar not to harm Ranganna Kulkarni on humanitarian grounds and in order to save the *mangalya* of his wife. The rebels promise Parvatevva that they would not harm the Kulkarni, but would only teach him a lesson at the proper time.

Then they think of starting their rebellious activities from a far off place instead of doing it in the village itself, so that their activities may not be spied and reported by anybody immediately to the British Government. They therefore decide to shift their place of activities to the Kiruba Valley, two miles away from Kallapur and where there is a temple and where some ascetics dwell for the practice of their penance. So they collect the necessary things like quilts, bed sheets and other things and shift themselves to the Kiruba Valley, where Parvatevva would supply them their food every day.

But early in the morning four policemen and a Fouzdar come and knock on the door of Linganna's house and ask him about the whereabouts of his younger brother, Sekhar. But Linganna pleads

ignorance about it and replies that his brother has not come home for the last two days. But the Fouzdar asks his police constables to take Linganna forcibly to the village office (*Chavadi*). But when they reach the *chavadi*, another policeman comes and tells the order of another Fouzdar to run towards the Belagavi - Bagewadi road where the telephone poles have been felled and the wire cut for many miles. So the first Fouzdar lets Linganna free and rushes to the Belagavi-Bagewadi road. They are sure that the rebels must have felled the telephone poles and cut the telephone wire for nearly eleven miles within a night. This is how they have shown their resistance and displayed their pro-Gandhian and anti-British Government sentiments. Linganna is secretly happy to learn what his younger brother Sekhar with his band has done within a single night. Ranganna Kulkarni is rebuked by the Fouzdar for not keeping an eye on the rebels of Kallapur. Hence Ranganna Kulkarni's dream of getting a gift of about four acres of land from the British Government for betraying the local rebels is shattered.

Though Hemavati waits for one and a half month, Viswanath does not visit her at all, but on 1<sup>st</sup> October he goes to her house at Belagavi and meets and tells her how some ten or twelve of them have been camping in a Kiruba Valley near Kallapur village and chalking out the plans of their rebellion. Hemavati wants to join them, but Viswanath tells her how it is difficult for a young girl to stay with them in a valley. But Hemavati does not mind staying with them as her mind is quite firm and morals quite strong. Viswanath promises to make some arrangement for her separate stay at some safe spot from where she can help them to

cyclostyle the copies of pamphlets to publicize their rebellious agenda. Meanwhile both of them discuss and analyze the behaviour of the urban and educated people living in Pune and Mumbai etc., who start the rebellion overenthusiastically, but begin to withdraw as the Police begin to arrest and imprison them. Hema tells how many students at Pune have stopped participating in the rebellion due to their fear of the police, selfishness and pleasure-seeking. She comments upon her father Shamrao also who spends his time comfortably at home without indulging in any political activity. But Viswanath praises the patriotic qualities of the rural and illiterate folk who are strong in their motivation and execute all the orders given to them by Gandhi and his men. In his opinion, it is the unlettered village people, who are men of action and not mere talkers and who can help drive out the British from India. He tells her further how about eighty rebels have succeeded in breaking the electric poles, cutting the telephone wires, burning the Government records and breaking the bridges across the rivers. He also tells her how they want to celebrate the Gandhi Jayanti in a meaningful manner.

Hemavati tells Viswanath how her father wants her to marry Kirtinath, whom he had helped to get a job of a CID, when Congress was in power. It is quite ironical that Kirtinath has become a representative of the British Government and has to marry the daughter of a Congress leader, who is opposed to the British Government. There is a blatant contradiction between Hemavati's loyalty to Gandhian ideals and Congress party and her would-be husband, Kirtinath belongs to the inimical British Government. After Viswanath takes leave of

Hema, Kirtinath visits her house and enquires if Viswanath had come to her house. But she pleads ignorance about it and lies that nobody had come there. But Kirtinath, the CID warns Hema and threatens to arrest her in spite their possible alliance as he is duty bound to do so; that there is a prize of Rs. 500 on the head of the rebels like Sekhar and Viswanath and that giving shelter to such rebels is also a crime.

Viswanath escapes from the hands of the police and returns to their camp at Kiruba Valley and tells his companions how he escaped from the hands of the police by sprinkling red-chilly powder into his eyes and returned there in a stray bullock cart found on the way. Then they plan their next scheme of action. They hide themselves behind the trees near a bend in the river where there is a narrow bridge and surround the Mail Bus coming there. They show their pistols and ask the driver to hand over the mail bag to them and promise the travelers never to fear for their life as they do not wish to harm them. They see Kirtinath, the CID, clad in a suit and hat, also sitting in the same bus, but he could not oppose them as it was most unexpected. The rebels burn the letters in the mail bag thereby showing their resistance to the British Government. Thus they celebrate the Gandhi Jayanti on 2<sup>nd</sup> October by looting and burning the *tapal* (mail) of the Government and paralyzing the government machinery in their own manner. On the same day they take a vow to do or die according to Mahatma Gandhi's call to the nation. They want to publicize the Gandhian agenda by writing out hundreds of pamphlets and distribute among the common people as there was no possibility of publicizing and advertisement of their plans during those days. Therefore, Sekhar



writes down hundreds of carbon copies strenuously. He thinks of inviting Hemavati to produce a big number of copies with the help of a cyclostyling machine to be installed in a secret place.

In the next phase of their rebellious action, Sekhar assumes the guise of a Police Officer goes near the Traveller's Bungalow at night in order to burn it and threatens the Fouzdar and two police constables by pretending to be another Fouzdar thereby misguiding them to rush into different directions by leaving the Traveller's Bungalow. But after a little while the real Fouzdar and police constables realize that it was a trick played upon them by a rebel like Sekhar himself.

One day Kirtinath, the CID goes to the house of Babasaheb Desai at Hallur and after having his food in his house, asks the latter about his son, Viswanath, but the Desai pleads ignorance about his whereabouts and replies further that he has not returned home even after the College at Pune has been closed down. But Kirtinath shocks him by telling him that his son has joined the group of rebels headed by a Congress man like Sekhar from Kallapur and that there has been a warrant against him as he along with other rebels has been indulging in destructive activities thereby paralyzing the British Government. The Desai is really puzzled by his son's activities and does not know what to do about him or how to control him. Finally, Kirtinath suggests to the Desai to threaten Linganna, (brother of Sekhar,) the farmer who tills the land of the Desai and indirectly render Sekhar helpless.

Meanwhile the rebels have succeeded in snatching away five rifles from

the policemen in the early hours of night by spraying chili powder in their eyes and plan to raid the nearest Taluk Office. They think that they require at least a hundred men and one full month for executing their plan.

Goaded by Kirtinath, Babasaheb Desai takes Ranganna Kulkarni to the house of Linganna and asks him to clear the rent on the land for the past five years and stop tilling his land. Naturally Linganna, and his mother, Parvatevva are worried about their livelihood. Parvatevva brings it to the notice of her son, Sekhar camping at the Kiruba Valley. Sekhar realizes that it must be the treacherous act of Ranganna to have goaded the Desai to harass Linganna and his family.

After threatening Linganna the Desai goes to the Kiruba Valley itself on horseback in search of his son Viswanath, but all of them escape from there as soon as they hear the clip-clop of the horse's hooves. The Desai meets the old Balappa and asks him the whereabouts of his son, Viswanath. But Balappa pleads total ignorance about him and his companions. Then the Desai threatens Balappa and finally has him beaten up by the police constables accompanying him. Even then Balappa does not divulge any information about the band of rebels as he is an embodiment of loyalty and patriotism.

Then the rebels go to a nearby monastery, meet the Swamiji and seek secret shelter there. The Swamiji, who is a sympathizer of the Congress Party and a patriot at heart, makes arrangements for their food and accommodation. He learns from the rebels how the job holders are loyal to the British Government and not patriotic enough. The Swamiji understands the dilemma of the job holders who have to

serve the British Government in spite of their patriotic zeal. He promises Sekhar that he would speak to Babasaheb Desai not to harass Linganna unnecessarily by forcing him to pay up the arrears of land rent for five years and not take back the right of cultivation from him.

But Linganna at home in Kallapur is almost heart-broken and bed ridden and cannot either eat his meal or sleep well because of the new insecurity brought upon him by his landlord Babasaheb Desai. His mother Parvatevva tries to enhearten him by advising him not to lose his heart but to be man enough to face the challenge of life even by becoming a labourer at a mill at Hubballi. When the whole family is worried about their livelihood like this, Wrestler Sanganna comes and knocks at their door and tells them not to worry about forfeiting their right to cultivate the land or paying up the arrears of the rent as the Swamiji of the Monastery has promised to speak to the landlord Desai and solve their problem. It is only then that Linganna recovers from his mental depression.

Then Sanganna goes back to his own house, finds his mother Satavva ailing, bed-ridden and being reduced to almost a skeleton. His wife Siddavva thinks that her husband stays at home at least for a night, but he gets ready to leave the house immediately as the police officers must be after him because of the treachery of the Village Accountant Ranganna Kulkarni. His wife hugs him and sobs and requests him not to leave the house so quickly. By that time the police officers and a Fouzdar knock at their door and barge into it and begin to search for Sanganna. Sanganna hides himself in a room and his wife and mother lie to the police officers that Sanganna is not

at home. But the Fouzdar refuses to believe them and rushes towards the door of the room where he suspects Sanganna must be hiding. Hearing the noise in the house Sanganna peeps out of his room and displays his pistol at the sight of which the Fouzdar also holds his pistol and threatens him to come out. In this tussle Sanganna's mother gets up from her bed and rushes in between the fighters. Then the Fouzdar shoots his pistol at Sanganna, but the bullet hits Sanganna's mother who comes in-between them. Naturally Sanganna is bereaved by the death of his mother, but yet he does not want to stay back at home but gets ready to go with the police officer, without bothering about conducting the last rites of his mother. Thus Satavva shows the height of her motherly affection for her son even at the risk of her own life and wishes that he should live. Likewise, Sanganna also shows his deep patriotism and loyalty to Gandhian ideals by ignoring his wife and family. Both these acts are admirable in the context of political turmoil in India around 1942.

Although old Balappa and Sanganna are arrested and imprisoned, the Quit India Movement continues with the new rebels joining the group. "In a month's time they had accomplished hundreds of tasks. Going round village after village, burning *chavadis*, the registers of *goudas* and *kulkarnis* were destroyed. At several places, weapons like swords etc, were grabbed. And post officers, set on fire. A bitter battle was fought from all sides to break the government machinery" (P.135).

Viswanath and Hemavati stay in a hut in a Lambani colony for about a month and print cyclostyled copies of pamphlets and distribute them among the people

secretly by sending them out with the Lambani women who carry them in the bundles of their faggots to sell. Although Hema has led the life of a princess in Pune at her father's house, she does not mind working as an ordinary clerk in the Lambani hut by wearing the Lambani skirt and bodice. She has overcome the limitations of her gender. She has transcended the confines of domesticity, refused to be a kitchen queen and a procreative machine and taken up the life of active political participation, which is admirable.

When they spend one month together like this, Viswanath seems to develop some sort of love for her. When he expresses it to her, she reminds him of their noble purpose of rebellion and snubs his amorous feelings. Viswanath does some self-analysis and wants to know if he joined the Quit India Movement genuinely or just to be in the company of this girl. Finally, he also overcomes his amorous desire for her as he is reminded about his higher goal of life. She tells him that their relationship is that of a brother and sister and puts a full stop to his wandering amorous thoughts.

Leader Shankarappa and Sekhar discuss the future plan of action. A new rebel called Basavanneppa has also joined them. They know that the Governor is coming to Belagavi where the British government has arranged a reception for him. They plan their biggest task of looting the revenue collected by the Gowdas and Kulkarnis at the *chavadi* of a nearby village and guarded by soldiers with rifles in their hands. As planned earlier, they assume the guise of ordinary farmers and enter the *chavadi* before the military van arrives there to collect the revenue money and throw a handmade bomb thereby threatening

everyone and loot the entire money in that hullabaloo: "As decided beforehand, except Sekhar and Basavanneppa, the rest of them entered the *chavadi* one by one. Standing afar till then Sekhar and Basavanneppa both got on to the platform at once. Sekhar at once dropped down the hand bomb he had hidden in his blanket. As the police guards stood dumbfounded, they were seized and their guns snatched away. Simultaneously, the members of the Band inside held pistols in their hands, silenced the policemen and took over their rifles. They also looted in a couple of minutes. Amidst the fracas, some *Gowdas* and *Kulkarnis* pocketed the revenue money and ran away. After finishing this task, the members of the Band also disappeared from there in a couple of minutes. The police, helpless stood wringing their hands" (P.150). The rebels thus succeed in looting the revenue thereby paralyzing the Government machinery and indirectly forcing them to leave the country. What is admirable about these native rebels is that although they hold weapons in their hands, they never want to harm anyone including the Government officers, but use them only to threaten them and scatter them away. They follow the Gandhian ideal of non-violence strictly.

In another trick, they offer sugarcane to soldiers and tempt them to eat. But when the soldiers are busy eating the sugarcanes, the rebels snatch away their rifles cleverly and run away from there.

In the meanwhile, they burn twenty-six Railway stations in the same day. So the news reaches the government at Belagavi. Hence the Government sends more police security and posts a CID, Kirtinath at the Belagavi area, especially around Kallapur, the hot bed of rebels. Hema and Viswanath

continue to publish pamphlets from the Lambani colony. Viswanath is tired of the sedentary job of preparing the pamphlets and wants to participate in open action along with other rebels. Hema comments that people living comfortably at Bengaluru and Mumbai can afford to write love stories, whereas the active rebels can write only war stories, if they mind. Viswanath believes that getting freedom for the country from the British is a great festival for all of them. These rural rebels do not long for any power or position after getting independence, but are loyal to the Mother Earth. They want to serve the Mother Earth and eke out their living by hard labour and do not long for comfortable government jobs. This ideal is simply admirable. They want to attend the Karnataka Congress meeting to be held at Kolhapur and see what emerges from it for their future action and what the old politicians like Shamrao eating curds and *avalakki* comfortably at their homes in Pune and Mumbai will be doing there. Even Hema does not like her father leading an inactive but comfortable life at home instead of participating actively in the rebellion.

Now that the CID officer, Kirtinath is posted near the Kittur area, he has been hectically searching for the rebels in order to arrest and punish them. He meets Babasaheb Desai and tells him how his son Viswanath and Hema have been living in a Lambani colony somewhere around the same area. Babasaheb Desai is really surprised and shocked by this information, but he is too helpless to do anything about his son. Kirtinath has thought of capturing the rebels through betrayal by the natives. Accordingly, Suranagowda of the village comes to the spot outside the village, where the rebels have been camping

overnight and offers some breakfast to them affectionately and then invites them pretentiously to his home to have delicious food consisting of *holige* and other sweet dishes. As Sekhar addresses him as ‘uncle,’ he cannot suspect him nor can he trust him completely. When the sun reaches the zenith in the sky, all of his companions go to Suranagowda’s house for their lunch, but Sekhar stays back as suspicion lurks in his soul. Before he makes a move, luckily Nila, the young daughter of Suranagowda rushes there and alerts Sekhar not to go to her house as her father has planned a treacherous sketch of getting them arrested by the police. She offers him a packet of *holiges* and asks him to run away from there at the earliest. Thus Sekhar’s doubt has been confirmed. He therefore goes away from there to escape the police who might be moving around in that area. Sekhar is not interested in marriage now, although his parents have been pressurizing him to get married, because he is inspired by the noble ideal of national freedom preached by Mahatma Gandhi.

Thinking that staying in the Lambani colony is not safe from the police, both Viswanath and Hema escape from there in the guise of ordinary farmers and go to a nearby Sogala Valley in the evening. They observe the extraordinary beauty of the waterfall and the scenery of Nature. They observe the beautiful moon and the twinkling stars also, but they have no time or patience to enjoy that sight. They eat the *rottis* brought from the Lambani colony and try to sleep in a ruined temple, on the stone slabs in the biting cold. Both of them share the same blanket and try to sleep, but they cannot because of the cold. What is admirable about them is that they don’t even

indulge in the preliminary sensations of kissing and hugging as they are quite strong in their control of emotions and senses. But Viswanath tries to express his hidden love for her, but she, being a girl of strong morals and determination, does not yield to his emotional appeal, but reminds him to sublimate his emotion from the amorous to high patriotism. She tells him that she is not as attractive as her classmate Vimala Pataskar, who was almost in love with him in her college at Pune where he was known as a famous cricketer. Both Hema and he try to analyze their behaviour. Viswanath tells her that perhaps he would not have joined the Quit India Movement if he had not met her on the train. She also reminds him that he should not join the political movement just in order to be in the company of a girl like her. She tells him clearly that their relationship should be that of a brother and a sister. Thus Hema emerges as a girl with strong morals and firm determination in spite of her bubbling youth. Then Viswanath is able to control himself. He asks her to sleep and have some rest as they have walked a long distance and feeling tired, whereas he wants to sit and guard her from the wild animals like jackals and hyenas, which are said to be wandering about at night. Hema tries in vain to sleep. Viswanath sits guard near her and observes Nature around the ruined temple in the moonlight. At that time, he sees a vague figure going to the waterfall, bending and drinking some water. He suspects that it must be a ghost or some policeman coming in search of him. He wants to ascertain the identity of the mysterious figure. He therefore shouts at the figure and asks him as to who he is and threatens to shoot him if he did not reveal his identity. Then the

figure turns out to be none other than Wrestler Sanganna, who recognizes Viswanath and tells him how he has escaped from the Yaravada Camp jail by jumping over the high wall and escaping from the hands of the police and how with the help of the money offered by some Congress men he travelled in the train up to Belagavi in the guise of an ordinary farmer and is going to Gokaki, which happens to be the parental town of his wife. He advises Viswanath to go the monastery at night itself along with Hema as moving about during the broad day time is not safe for them.

Babaseheb Desai and CID Kirtinath have already come to the monastery at night and ask the Swamiji to tell them the whereabouts of Viswanath and other rebels who had visited the monastery. The Swamiji tells them that he does not know anything, but when the CID threatens to arrest him, the Swamiji tells them that the monastery is always sympathetic towards the patriotic rebels and does not want to betray them on any count and tells them further that they can arrest him in the early morning until which time they can have their dinner and sleep in the monastery. The CID is really puzzled by the bold answer of the Swamiji. Throughout the night CID Kirtinath experiences a dilemma whether to arrest or not to arrest the Swamiji. Arresting the Swamiji is quite easy for him as he is a government servant, but the consequences of the arrest of the holy man will create great upheaval in the society, which will not be easy to control. He knows that Viswanath is a college student and an intelligent man who is behind all the rebels. He thinks that by capturing Viswanath he can control the rebels easily.

The next morning the policemen along with the Fouzdar come and hide behind the trees around the monastery. Simultaneously Sanganna, Viswanath and Hema come and stop at the entrance of the village in which the monastery is located. Viswanath prevents Sanganna from going round the monastery and volunteers to go there and check if any policemen are hiding there. When he crosses the Bhel Tree Grove (*Patrivana*) a policeman shouts at him. Then Viswanath grows alert and begins to run back the way he has come. But by that time the policeman shoots his gun. Although Viswanath escapes the first bullet, the second bullet shot by the policeman hits him in the back. Before Kirtinath, the CID comes out of the monastery and ascertains as to who fired the shot, Sekhar comes there unexpectedly and asks Sanganna and Hema to escape from there and be in the Kalamma Temple until he goes there.

Sekhar assumes the guise of a Fouzdar by getting into the khaki uniform and misleads the policemen, who speak only Hindi, towards the opposite road to Belagavi.

Meanwhile Viswanath, hit by the police bullet is lying down in the *patrivana* and breathing his last. By that time Babasaheb Desai comes and sees the condition of his son, his only hope in life and laments his death: "O, my Son Viswanath! Whata wretched thing I've done! I called the police in order to catch you. I wanted to have you caught and take you home. Who knew it would end up like this! O!" (P.192) It shows the irony of Babasaheb Desai's life. All through his life he was loyal to the British Government, against the patriotic rebels and hoping to be endowed with a title of Rao Bahadur by the

Government. He prays to the Swamiji to save the life of his son, but the Swamiji also cannot do anything about it. He sends for a doctor from Bailahongala. The Desai repents of his life-long loyalty to the British Government by disdaining the Congress Party and the patriotic rebels: "What I expected! I did all kinds of unwanted things. For forty years I brushed the shoes of the government. I gave a party to any and every red-faced sahib that came, spent money like water, opposed the Movement. I contributed to the War Fund. I got villagers recruited by force in the army. When my own son plunged into the Movement I tried to dissuade him from it. Listening to this CID and that Rangappa I said 'yes' to all that they suggested. I did all this in the hope of taking him home. If only I knew they would shoot him to death, I wouldn't have agreed to anything. They brought me here. Right under my nose, they shot my son dead" (P.193). But CID Kirtinath apologizes for the unexpected shooting that has taken place. He clarifies to Babasaheb Desai that his policeman shot at Viswanath whom he could not identify and who began to run away from him, that the policeman has done his duty when he himself (Kirtinath) was inside the monastery and that he would not have allowed the shooting. But the Desai is so deeply grieved that he shouts at Kirtinath to go away from there. So Kirtinath and the Fouzdar walk out of the monastery rather helplessly. Viswanath talks a little before he dies. He requests the Swamiji and his father in his weak voice to tell Sekhar to continue the fight and not to cry and lament his death. The scene is really touching and brings tears in the eyes of the readers also. Now there is a sudden transformation of in the heart of Babasaheb Desai, who promises his dying

son, “No, dear. I won’t lose heart. Now my eyes are opened. From now on, I will also plunge into your mission. I will fight till that government goes out of my country...” (P.194). Listening to the words of his dear father, whose attitude has undergone a sudden change, Viswanath talks to him even at the time of his death, which opens the eyes of his father: “*Appa*, you...you will join the Movement? Aha, ha, ha, ha! How nice it is, Swamiji, how nice! I knew beforehand my father would, one day or other join us. The blood of our family is like that, isn’t it? The government had, by offering all kinds of enticements, kept the lion of my father in a cage. But now the cage is broken down. *Appa* is free...free. Swamiji. There is a pistol in my pocket. Fully loaded. Give it to *Appa*. You order him, Swamiji. From today *appa* too is a freedom fighter *appa*...”(P.195). After speaking his last words of appreciation for his father, Viswanath dies with a sense of fulfillment. The Desai falls on the body of his son dumbfounded and promises, “As per your wish, I will work for freedom, Viswanath, till I die. I have vowed by touching Swamiji’s feet. Let your soul rest in peace” (P.196).

Then Sekhar goes to the Kalamma Temple, where he removes his Fouzdar’s uniform and tells Sanganna and Hema how Viswanath died at the hands of the policeman working under CID Kirtinath. Naturally Hema is deeply grieved by the death of her co-fighter. Sekhar tells them further how twenty of their rebels were arrested by the police due to the treachery hatched by Suranagowda. He appreciates Viswanath who fought and fell for his country and describes him as the ‘jewel’ of his rebellious band. Sekhar suggests to them

to go via Gokavi lest they should be arrested by the police if they go by a straight path. He wants to go to Kolhapur to attend the meeting of the Karnataka Congress.

As scheduled the meeting of the Congress workers begins in a monastery at Kolhapur. Leaders have come from big cities like Pune, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Madras. Shamrao is the president of the meeting. In the meeting the ex-Minister Kallappa asks Sekhar for a report of all that they have done by way of executing Mahatma Gandhi’s call for action. He asks him how many rifles they have, how they could collect them, why they did burn the railway stations, break the bridges, burn the records and loot the revenue from the treasuries and accuses him of violating the norms set by Mahatma Gandhi. But Sekhar gets exasperated at Minister Kallappa’s queries and counter accuses them that they have not done anything while Nehru and Gandhi were in the jail, whereas the villagers have plunged into rebellious action; that they have collected the rifles from the policemen and others and burnt the revenue records, cut the telephone wires and looted the money from the treasuries only to paralyze the Government machinery but never indulged in violence to any countrymen or the Government officers; and that they have used the weapons only to threaten the Government police and never to harm them and that otherwise they would have been killed by the Government police by now. The leaders like Shamrao understand the youthful zest and patriotism of Sekhar and the young rebels and request them not to continue such destructive action as it would not be approved by Mahatma Gandhi and that there is a difference between the Freedom Movement of Ireland,

Russia and America and that of India; and that the Quit India Movement of India should be completely non-violent and peaceful unlike the other ones elsewhere in the world. Sekhar is not deterred by Ex-Minister Kallappa's warning that the young patriots will have to face criminal cases against them. Then Sekhar reacts strongly that they are not afraid of the criminal cases when they are ready to lay down their lives for the freedom of the country and silences him. Thus the meeting concludes on a note of dissent. After the meeting is over they fix it again for the next day, but all the Karnataka Congress leaders including Shamrao are arrested before dawn by the police, who had detected it successfully. But Sekhar escapes from the hands of the police cleverly. The other Congress workers from Belagavi, Dharwad and Bijapur decide to continue their rebellious activities until Gandhi issues an official statement to stop it.

Now Sekhar's band is camping at a village four miles away from the *taluka* office. Basavanneppa and other new rebels have also joined the group. Even Babasaheb Desai, who was once pro-British Government, has been giving them moral support and financial help now. The zest of the young village rebels has been increasing whereas the Government police seem to be tired of continuous work of chasing them and feeling nostalgic about their homes and wives and children at far off places from where they have arrived. But the higher officers like CID Kirtinath and others have been hoping to get proper promotions for their effort to suppress and control the rebels. But the rebels have not stopped their activities. They have taught a good lesson Suranagowda by boycotting him and his entire family for his treacherous invitation of

twenty one rebels to his house and getting them arrested by the police cunningly. Consequently, he cannot show his face to anybody in his village and feels secluded from them. The rebels have planned to burn the *taluka* office near the village. When they are on their way in the early morning they see a lorry coming from the opposite direction. Suspecting that there must be police staff in the lorry Sanganna shoots at it blindly in order to avenge the murder of his mother by the policeman in the near past at his home. He learns that CID Kirtinath is hit by his bullet and is happy to know that he has taken a life for the life of his mother. But the policemen also shoot back and Sanganna is hit by their bullet and dies, with a sense of satisfaction. When the police chase the rebels Hema shoots at them and in turn is hit by them. She is hit in her left arm as a result of which she starts bleeding profusely. Then Basavanneppa tries to shoot at the policemen, but is shot dead by them in the skirmish. Sekhar is hit by a bullet on his forehead and he also starts bleeding profusely. Leaving Basavanneppa's dead-body there on the spot, Sekhar and Hema escape in a lorry that is parked there unexpectedly. Hasansab, the owner of the lorry is from Kallapur and knows Sekhar's family history. He wants to take them to Gokavi and get them treated by getting the bullets out of their limbs. But as the lorry runs ahead, Hasansab tells Sekhar how the police have confiscated his house at Kallapur, how his elder brother Linganna is arrested and how they have been suffering from lack of food grains, how the people of the village have helped them with foodgrains and how his old mother Parvatevva was heroic enough to face the dire situation by displaying her existential



courage so on. Sekhar feels sorry for his family and sad to know how the Government has harassed his family in order to prevent him from participating in the rebellion. By then Hema swoons and dies. Sekhar is deeply grieved by her death. As the lorry is about to reach Gokavi town, Hasansab is shocked and sad to know that Sekhar has also breathed his last. He helplessly prays to God, "Allah, my God! Save his life, my father! You may take my life, but save his! Father!" (P.220). Thus all the rebels like Viswanath, Sanganna, Sekhar, Basavanneppa and Hema have sacrificed their precious lives for the liberation of our country from the colonial rule of the British and become the martyrs for the noble cause. Hema, a young girl of just eighteen years and the daughter of a Congress Leader has sacrificed her life for her country. Her sacrifice is highly admirable. These rural rebels are not highly educated, except for a couple of them and they are not interested in attaining any power or position, but are inspired by the noble and high ideal of pure patriotism. They have fought and laid down their lives in response to Gandhi's clarion call of 'Do or Die,' thereby fulfilling their patriotism dream. The activities of these admirable rebels easily remind us of those of Sangolli Rayanna around 1826 and prove the universal truth that history repeats itself. These rebels remain the unheard and unsung heroes in Indian history, but Basavaraj Kattimani has to be congratulated for immortalizing these unheard and unsung heroes in his novel written in a realistic

#### Reference:

Basavaraj Kattimani, *Do or Die (Tr. of Madi Madidavaru)*. Basavaraj Kattimani Foundation, Belagavi, 2012. (All the page references are to this edition.)

style. The novel is conspicuous for its authenticity of depiction of political life because the novelist himself had participated in the Quit India Movement actively and gone to jail. The novel may be said to be a good and successful political novel. It may also be described as a Freedom Narrative or a Gandhian Novel. In so far as it deals with the colonial conflict between native Indians and the British Government it may be said to be a Commonwealth Novel written in regional language, comparable with other similar novels written in other regional languages of India. In certain aspects it may be compared and contrasted with the African novelist, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

Sadanand Kanavalli has done an academic service by releasing the Kannada novel from the limited linguistic circle to the global circle of English speaking readers thereby enriching the Indian Literature in English Translation. He has succeeded in communicating the novelist's political vision to the non-Kannada readers to a great extent. But unfortunately there have remained many typographical errors, Kannada-isms, un-English usage of words, inconsistent use of spellings for proper names and place-names and inconsistent use of diacritical marks and stylistic mistakes, which should be corrected in the future editions of the novel. The publication of the present translation testifies to the governmental and bureaucratic ignorance, negligence of and indifference to the excellence of quality of editing and production, as usual.