APPENDIX - II

BALLAD OF THE BRAVE HUNTERS OF HALAGALI


A sad time came, a great sad time, to the brave men of the sword:
They grieved mightily, the hunters of Halagaly, when reached them the cruel word.

Orders came from across the Sea, sent by the East India Company,
That the great clans of the land from the possession of arms are banned:
Sword and dagger and knife, banet and shield of strife,
Hatchet and arrow and bow, the musket, axe, whate’er kills the foe.
Three years of hard prison to them, whoever dares conceal them;
And those shall not be saved, who have this order braved.
Tempt them well and hard with the promise of much reward;
There will not be one at all, who does not for reward fall.
Thus came the white man’s word, loud was the tom-tom heard.
And the bold swordsmen of Halagaly, their hearts did grieve mightily.

Some there with a mighty groan threw a few small arms down,
But great grief filled their heart, with the costlier weapons to part.
They were to them their breath, to part with them was like death.
So hastily, in the earth they hid, not a word of them was said.
Then came the party of Joid, which wandered well far and wide,
Home and barn and roof, keen combed the searching troop,
Till every weapon they did find, not a sickle was left behind;
The sword with the jewelled hilt, the grandfather had worn in the belt,
The musket of family fame, that had seen many a battle of name.
All were taken from them; their hearts were torn from them;
The bold clan stood weeping sadly, and beating their bosom madly.
For the proud hunters of Halagal, their hearts did grieve mighty.

III
Like the awesome mighty serpent, from which its tooth is shent,
Or like the widowed weak thing, from the public eye shrinking.
To dust has fallen our name, to hang our heads in shame!
For a soldier to weapons is wed, more than the wife beloved.
Without the sword and bow, we're like the shamefaced widow,
Or like the rotting corpse, decorated on the funeral hearse.
Could there be worse disgrace, to blacken our fair proud face?
This freedom to arms is our life, now all glory is gone from life.
What shame, Oh what black shame, to our fair country's name!
Where was the Pallagar, where our lord, where was the great just God?
What is now left to our life, save the silly bustlings of housewife?
Thus the brave bold hunters of Halagal, their hearts did grieve mightily.

IV
Halagal was a little town, in the Mudhol State of renown.
Four young bold men were there, whose hearts they knew no fear.
One was Poojari Hanama, the others Bala, Jadaga, Rama.
"We shall rather be killed and dead, than lay down our arms," they said.
"Fight we will unto the last, to keep our bright honour fast."
So all the brave men of the clan, swore to this secret plan.
And when the soldier did come there, they boxed him upon the ear.
When of this was word him brought, the white Sahib grew distraught.
Then Krishnagowda of Kaladagi, for persuasion was fetched to Kundaragi.
But the brave swordsmen of Halagal were not for yielding tamely.

V
"Our hands are of fighting men, not of the bangle-wristed women.
Our arms are our very god, the thought of yielding them is mad."
So when the white Sahib did find the men were of resolute mind,
He ordered his troops quickly to march on the village, Halagal.
The horsemen came riding apace, with cruel and vengeful face.
Night had fallen on earth's face, when the troops reached the place.
They rushed into the resting village, bent on plunder, kill and pillage.
Their muskets did roar amain, like the cruel monsoon rain. 
They caught, slaughtered and felled, the earth with corpses was filled. 
Yet the bold hunters of Halagaly kept on fighting heroically.

VI

What followed is a horror of grief, so I'll make my story brief. 
The troops all pursued the men, and spared not even women; 
They circled them from all around, as the deer is caught by the hound, 
And right into the midst of the crowd, banged and roared the guns aloud. 
With long sharp swords they did smite, with all their furious might, 
Till flowed the red, red blood, and made on the earth a flood. 
Like lightning went on the fight, the gun sounds tearing the night. 
And the brave hunters of Halagaly went on fighting undauntedly. 
Then Havelock himself there came, he watched this fighting game; 
And he used his sweetest words to make them lay down their swords. 
"Stop this and end the fight; we'll forgive each of you all right."
But the brave hunters of Halagaly were not to be tempted easily.

VII

"Trust him not, he has no faith," Jadaga comes up and saith. 
"These are sweet words, fellows, but they'll lead us to the gallows; 
These white men easily break word, the whole world has it heard; 
This to his falseness is answer." So saying, he pulled the trigger. 
Down dropped that Havelock Sahib. Then came running Kerr Sahib, 
Who fumed high in mighty rage, and ordered the village to rare. 
But our heroes engaged them there, with hearts that knew no fear. 
Each one had the strength of ten, and the spirit of a hundred men. 
They moved about like the wind, and struck before and behind, 
Until each one had killed a score, so resistless were these four. 
But the enemy number was great, and ill our gallants' fate. 
So the four brave hunters of Halagaly fell down fighting undauntedly.

VIII

Our hero, Hanama fought well, till with six bullets in him he fell. 
Heart-broken were the rest of them, yet fought with a desperate calm. 
Someone the horses' knee cut, with a well-wielded sword-thrust. 
Ramee, a brave young lass, killed three men of the horse. 
But doomed was their fate, as it grieves my heart to state. 
One by one the fighters all there fighting down did fall. 
What was a proud little village fell victim to plunderers' rage. 
Not a house was left on the ground, among all the hundreds around. 
Burning and looting and firing, went on the troops unceasing. 
So fell the noble village of Halagaly, of lofty men that lived honourably. 
A sad time it was, a sad time, alas, that came to the hunters of Halagaly; 
Men of a fighting race, death with a smile do face, rather than live ignobly.