CHAPTER V

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We are in the twenty first century Kudmul Ranga Rao who was lived for sixty-nine years belongs to the 19th and the 20th century. Today when we look at and analyze the situation of depressed classes people in our undivided Dakshina Kannada district, we witness many changes, growth and developments in all the fields. Whether the developments are towards the positive or negative side is a debatable issue. Today, as study about Ranga Rao, who brought about a historic change in the outlook and behaviour of the depressed people of former South Kanara district through his dedicated services and his daring, energetic but peaceful methods of struggle against stifling socio-religious and cultural practices that degraded the original people of this land, it is good to analyze whether Ranga Rao is relevant today.

Ranga Rao was the foremost and fearless worker of his time for the eradication of caste and other social prejudices and disabilities of the depressed classes people. To ameliorate the economic conditions of the poor, Ranga Rao spent all his own earnings as a lawyer which was considerable, on the establishment of the organization called Depressed Classes Mission, the organ for social service to depressed classes. This was the beginning of an organized socio-religious movement to in the district, which helps the downtrodden masses through schools, hostels, orphanages and constructive work. By distribution of lands, emphasis on technical trainings, cottage industries, such as spinning and weaving and other handicrafts he tried to welfare the depressed classes and achieves their economic status. For achieving these he lost absolutely all his assets, but never his courage and his devotion to the cause.
Ideas of Enlightenment and Liberalism

Rao’s ideology considered the individual as the center of all human endeavours. Society moves round the axis of its individuals. The welfare and comfort of the individual in this world was the main source of inspiration for all the social reforms. His aim was to rediscover the individuals, to liberate his intellect and to make him or her once again free, creative and happy. The sense of human dignity must reassert itself.

Ranga Rao is revered to his universal knowledge, openness to the views of others, non-violent philosophy and his unrelenting resolve to set aright social wrongs. He was instrumental in setting the spiritual foundation for social reform in today’s Dakshina Kannada and was one of social reformers who tackled caste discrimination and deprivation. He demonstrated a path to social emancipation with spiritual universal values and notion of equality. His initial beliefs shaped by Brahmo concepts, which include belief in a formless God and deprecation of the worship of idols.

Humanitarian and Philanthropic Outlook

Ranga Rao, one who started a debate on society and religion at first in the district. He manifested a spirit of emancipation from the social and religious bondages and also infused a sense of creativity in to the deprived communities. He incorporated reason, logic and openness into his discussions on religion, society and tried to demolish the dogmatic approach of religion and existing untouchability.

Ranga Rao mainly influenced by the teachings of Brahmo Samaj and other liberal sects. He instinctively felt that love of God and love of one’s fellow men are the two pillars for a noble life. He was a social
reformer and social worker at heart, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual emancipation of down trodden people.\footnote{Source Interviewed with Mr Ram Kumar, Taluk Extension Officer of Backward Classes and Minorities, on 4/2/2010 at the office of Taluk Panchayat, Mangalore – 1}

The burning problem of existing inequality particularly the inhuman caste structure and the stigma of untouchability, he hardly comes forward to eliminate the caste inequality by launching a crusade against it. But his zeal and concern for the society not later maintained. Ranga Rao’s approach was completely based on humanitarian and philanthropic outlook. His attempt was made to mould the society on the line by preaching equality and the like. Starting up of schools, distributing properties, organizing community feasts were his main methods to mobilize downtrodden people.\footnote{Source Interviewed with Mrs Nalini Dutta, Grand Daughter of Late Mr Ullala Raghunathiah, who was Ranga Rao’s brother-in-law, started Brahmo Samaj Branch first in Mangalore in1870, on 17/3/2010 at her home near Bijuji Housing Colony, Mangalore – 4}

**His Leadership and Constructive Strategies**

Ranga Rao was considered as a ‘transformational leader’. He motivates and inspires people by helping group member see the importance and higher good of the task. He was highly focused on the performance of group members. To achieve this he had highly ethical and moral standards.\footnote{Source Interviewed with Dr Dayananda Naik, Lecturer in Political Science, University College, Hampanakatta, Mangalore on 20/3/2010}

Transformational leadership is a type of leadership style that leads to positive changes in those who follow. This leadership is generally energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process; they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well.\footnote{Burns, J M. *Leadership* N Y, Harper and Raw} The components of
transformational leadership were four they are intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, idealized influence

Born as an upper caste man, Ranga Rao educated himself and inspired untouchable castes to reject Brahmanical social order that kept them socially degraded, economically poor, culturally despised, politically powerless, and denied them the basic human rights. He tried to abolish all forms of discriminations and inequalities based on caste, gender, or status following his own leadership and vision to uplift the Dalits.

Leadership has always been associated with many attributes. These attributes range from individual persona of the leader to a number of skills such as self-confidence, strong convictions, poise, ability to speak and present his concerns, and influence others thought and actions. But it is the articulation of vision in the leadership that taps the conscious or unconscious needs, values, aspirations and feelings of followers such that the leadership enthuse them with shared ideological goal.

Leadership is accepting responsibility to create conditions that enable others to achieve shared purpose in the face of uncertainty. Leaders accept responsibility not only for their individual ‘part’ of the work, but also for the collective ‘whole’. Taking responsibility as a leader, the problem of untouchability challenged Ranga Rao most and he fought it with vigour. He advocated certain definitive measures. 1. Untouchable colonies should not be separate from the main village. 2. Untouchables should be accepted as normal member of the society in


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public places like temples, wells and in public functions. 3 They should avail themselves of government assistance only for education, and education is only one factor which helps them to achieve their selfhood. 4. They should not eat carcass meat and should give up drinking liquor 5 They should achieve their goal towards education, cleanliness, devotion of God, organization, handicrafts, technical training, trade, and agriculture

**His Philosophy**

He advised them to organize and dedicate to ‘Upasanas’ and ‘Bhajans’ that can be help untouchables to create their self consciousness and self reliance. His philosophy strongly denounced discrimination in the name of caste or religion, and private enterprise for the ongoing upliftment of the quality of life. His philosophy emphasized the consistence between true existences of the human creation on earth, divine behind the creation and sustenance of the equality, justice and universe. He was firmly believed the principles of Brahmo Samaj ‘Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Humanity’. 298

Ranga Rao’s creative activities reflect the thoughts of great people’s like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswathi, Swami Vivekananda, Jesus Christ etc. Slogans of Ranga Rao was ‘Deenoddharanam Deshoddharanam’, (upliftment of the depressed classes people is welfare of the state) and ‘service to man was the effective worship of God’. His ideas were admired by several scholars and famous thinkers like world Noble poet Rabindranath Tagore, Dr Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi, and Servants of India Society members.

298 By Raghuram, The Hindu, Online edition of India’s National Newspaper, Saturday, April 14
His reformative measure completely reflects the way of Shri Narayana Guru who was transforming the Kerala society from the caste prejudices and established a new social identity for the Izhavas, a former untouchable caste of Kerala. The Ranga Rao stressed the need for the spiritual and social upliftment to the downtrodden by their effort through the establishment of educational institutions, hostels, vocational schools, Ashrama schools, and by following Sanskritized life to establish new social identity to the untouchables.

Today, hundreds of families belonging to the oppressed classes in Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts consider Ranga Rao as their ‘saviour’ and ‘God’. Sociologists in Mangalore University attribute the wide social acceptance of the oppressed classes in undivided Dakshina Kannada today to his brave efforts. Photography of Ranga Rao was kept in almost all Dalit’s houses and their Bhajan Mandirams Dalit households in the undivided Dakshina Kannada district considered him as a ‘Guru’ (teacher) for their souls. His legacy continues to be revered at esteemed levels within social, intellectual and organized untouchable communities in the district.

To us, the word ‘Guru’ (teacher) is a very sacred one. It has many meanings. It may mean that which is weighty and valuable; it may mean that which is worthy of honour, it may also mean that which dispels ignorance. Both in education and religion ‘Guru’ and ‘Guruhood’ are revered.

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299 Source Message from Mr Manohar Nivas, Former Secretary of Mangalore Brahmo Samaj, now settled in Australia
300 Source Interviewed with Mr Devappa Kudroli, a noted ‘Handasa’ and one of the strong believer in the thoughts of Ranga Rao, at Kodialbail, Mangalore-3
Idea of Free Education and Distribution of Land for Uplift

Ranga Rao advised that education is a means for anyone who desires progress in this world. Therefore it has to be given to all without any gender and caste discrimination. He encouraged and inspired many young persons who belonged to untouchable castes to become teachers. He has developed a number of educational institutions which enables depressed classes children to enter schools to acquire necessary capabilities to seize opportunities to lead the lives they want. To encourage education among Dalits he practiced to give free mid-day-meal and incentives for motivating them to learn well. He believed education is one of the most intriguing and complex casualties in terms of its role in bringing change. Education is basically a means to an end. To make individual eligible to occupy certain role-positions, it is expected that they should possess specialize knowledge. This knowledge is acquired by individuals in institutional context. Education leads to an abstract phenomenon known as consciousness which plays an important role in social change.

According to Ranga Rao, education is also linked with occupational mobility. In India the caste system also involved hereditary occupations. The hierarchical and hereditary character of occupations provided rigidity to the caste system. The universalization of education may contribute to disappearance of occupational rigidity for the member of the caste. Thus, education may contribute to the social mobility.

Enlightenment reformers pinned particularly strong hopes on education. The growth of education, according to thinkers such as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, would not only eradicate illiteracy but would also help to create a critical and engaged public.\(^{301}\)

Ranga Rao always believed the famous quotation from Kathopanishad that ‘Subtler than the Subtler, Greater than the great, in the heart of each creature is the atman seated’. For hundred of generations, depressed groups, untouchables, were landless and totally dependent on upper castes. Their children worked as child labourers. Land is vital for depressed people towards independence and social equality. Therefore Ranga Rao himself tried to ask land from government officials, donation from upper caste and elite people. He was succeeded to get few acres of land from upper castes and government to distribute it to the Dalit families to construct their houses.\[302\]

As a constructive programme of Ranga Rao distributed land for depressed classes can provides opportunity to eradicate the poverty and class distinctions of have and have-nots. It creates a sense of service and sacrifices among the land owners. The concept of land distribution is a comprehensive one as it envisages solve so many problems at one and at the same time.

Reports of Social Welfare Department of the Dakshina Kannada district shows that many of the dalit communities were suffered from various issues like, unemployment, homelessness, less resources from the state, low standard of living, discrimination, sub-caste question, political fragmentation, untouchability in their day to day life. Even today, the Dalit issues like selfhood and culture are closely bound up with land and livelihood, which have been effectively employed over time to reinforce the degradation of Dalits.

Ranga Rao had an intense concern for the deprived masses. Decades come and go but what remain are the impression and acts of social reformers. Ranga Rao managed to bring mobility by making

302 Source Interview with Mr Balachandra Kavoor, Rtd Police Constable, who was the strong believer of the ideology of Kudmul Ranga Rao Kavoor, Mangalore
reformative changes in the society. As one man army he took up the challenges of breaking the curse of prevailing caste-system and untouchability. The contributions, made by him, simple yet eminent soul towards humanity are really remarkable. His social activities and thoughts guided the district to a new beginning.\(^{303}\)

Through his Depressed Classes Movement, he aimed at creating a society free from ignorance, superstition and empty customs. The passion with which he has dedicated his whole life for the enlightenment of his fellow human beings is a relentless exposure of the obscurantist superstitions in Indian society, and the tremendous awakening he has engendered in thousand of hearts, despite the overt and covert opposition of the traditionally exploited groups. All this has earned Ranga Rao an important place in the history of undivided Dakshina Kannada district. These new movement merged with the humane concerns of moderate philosophy to produce a new humanitarianism, which accented both reason and sentimentality but also continued the nineteenth-century concern for human freedom.

Today leadership in India, as also in the rest of the world is more political than moral and the leadership quality is unfortunately based on one’s capacity to be all-powerful. But political leadership does not endure for all time as does the leadership in the moral and spiritual fields. Great leaders captured the hearts of all by their love for humanity, and their influence is enduring. Other leaders may either be remembered for some time for their moral qualities or are easily forgotten, unless they leave their imprints on the social side and render service to humanity by typing to bring them together. Besides national leaders, there is today also a need for international leaders, whose aim should be to establish permanent

\(^{303}\) Ibid
peace in the world. Unless their desire is to serve humanity they cannot become leaders who will be cherished by men for all time.

Reckoning the millennia of Indian history, one can hardly think of a greater contrast than the one that existed between eighteenth century and twentieth century India. On the one hand India had a stagnating traditional culture and society at very low ebb, while on the other hand India possessed a still traditional society in the throes and the creative excitement of modernizing itself, of emerging as a new nation, remaining thoroughly its own and rooted in its culture, yet taking its place in the contemporary world. The nineteenth century was the pivotal century that saw the initiation of this process that brought about an enormous transformation in the religious, social, economic, political, and cultural spheres.

The transformation came for the involvement of some interrelated factors among which the first is the total impact of the British Raj. It influenced Indian life through many channels: education, administration, legislation, trade, the creation of a network of communications, inchoative industrialization and urbanization, all had great influence not only on the many Indians who became directly involved in them, but also on society as a whole, because every measure in some way interfered with some traditional patterns of life. In the cultural field to the British exerted pressure through the work of scholars, educators, and missionaries, orientalists, utilitarian, or evangelical. The entire effect of this influence acted on the life and ideas of the people in multiple ways, forcing them to adjust their patterns of life to the new circumstances and thus affecting a continuum of social change.

Under these circumstances, the reformers excelled as landmarks in this gradual adaptation to new conditions. These are the Indians who
consciously reacted to the new situation and advocated deliberate changes in social and religious attitudes and customs, involving a break with tradition itself. They saw change not as a slow adaptive process, but as a positive value in itself, and contrasted it with the negativity of existing patterns. As a group they had a great impact on nineteenth century, though they were not by far the only factor in effecting change.

Movement for empowerment started way back during second half of the nineteenth century with reformatory efforts to uplift the backward groups of Indian society, especially ‘Dalits’ Later on, it turned into seeking state intervention and generating the idea of paying special attention to untouchables Untouchables have been described as ‘the oppressed of the oppressed and lowest of the low’, who have not been benefited from the opening up of modern economic, social, political and cultural opportunities

In the process of development and spread of the new awakening in India, the Dalit consciousness also started gaining momentum. With growth of democratic institutions the Dalits began to assume some importance in the national politics They started organizing and struggle to eliminate untouchability and caste system. The internal contradictions of the notion of ‘emancipation’ as it emerged from the mainstream of modernity, as well as the relation between universalism and particularism which inherent in it. 304

Dalit liberation movement is, of course an inseparable part of the politico-cultural history of India. It is true that the Indian National Movement was determined to liberate the country form the yoke of foreign imperialism, but this process was not going to be complete and final unless all the sections of the society including the so called

untouchables were to be free from the stigma of untouchability. This uphill task of liberation of the Dalits was fulfilled by the Dalit leaders. They were the real predecessors of liberty, equality and social justice in India; they commanded attention of the national politicians by their vociferousness influenced and shaped the national politics in a befitting manner.\(^{305}\)

Dalit liberation movement was against the whole oppressive Hindu system and values and it was active, more or less throughout India. The role of Dalit and non-Dalit leaders in the Dalit liberation movement was of great value. The contribution of impersonal factors like the new education, industrialization, land system, democratic process, and means of communication, etc., to the Dalit movement cannot be ignored. Thus, the personal and impersonal factors were responsible for the rise and growth of the ‘new Dalit consciousness’ which brought a new vigour to the untouchables.

The pioneers, who worked for the liberation of Dalits and other backward castes, propagated the idea of the need for a cultural revolution or a total transformation of Indian society. They propagated the secular and democratic principle. This broad-based standpoint is widely accepted among the Dalits.

The concept of the leader and follower is abhorrent to the democratic way of thinking. No one would like to accept inferiority as ‘all man are created equal’, however, we do follow when we don't know the way, and there is someone who we believe knows. The leader is, therefore, someone we trust - we trust his knowledge, his intentions and his vision. A ‘vision’ as the term is used here is not a dream, a hope or a prophecy. It is a sense of causation, i.e., if action proceeds as the vision.

\(^{305}\) Ramachandra Kashirasagara, *Dalit Movement in India and its leadership, 1857-1856*, M.D Publications 1994
conceives, then certain consequences follow. It is a map, a route, a guide to action. Like a map, it has to leave out many concrete features in order to focus on the few key paths to the goal. The leader is able to visualize the end results, the actions required to achieve those results, and the motivations that will make the people concerned take the desired action.

A few decades ago, South Kanara district was an extreme example of social and economic inequalities of the depressed classes. Untouchables were treated as slaves and educational institutions were not open to them. They were denied of all government jobs. They were completely forbidden from entering temples, and even worshipping any of the Gods and Goddesses. They lived in abject poverty. Often they thought, rather they were tutored by the social customs to believe, that it is their fate to be born an out caste and it is their dharma or social duty to serve others and live in servility.

Today it is an entirely different picture. Things have completely changed now. Many of those untouchables now wield intellectual power and professional skills; among them there are now judges, doctors, engineers, professors and teachers, government secretaries, and so on in all walks of life from all echelons of society. They wield economic and political power. A great social and economic transformation has taken place within a span of few decades.

For many observers, it is difficult to understand the reason for these tremendous social and economic transformations involving the lowest strata of society in undivided Dakshina Kannada, all in a democratic set up. For many it is still a miracle eluding all answers. But to anyone who is aware of the inspiring personae of the transformation, it is clear that this has been brought about by the reformations initiated by one of the reformers of the region was Ranga Rao. His reforms were
directed towards the emancipation of the entirety of downtrodden human life, the soul, mind and body. It was his integrated approach for social development. Perhaps nearest to Karnataka in this respect is Bengal, where one can easily place that it is again the result of similar spiritual by Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekananda and Tagore. Ranga Rao was cast in an earthly mould of the downtrodden and hence had a solid base at grass root level. He lived and worked with them to bring about practical social uplift through ‘education, organization, and occupation’, while the same philosophy of the Bengali reformers took time to percolate from the elite to the masses.

Today, Dalits of undivided Dakshina Kannada district believe that the contributions he had made to social reformations, impressive and timely as they were, are just the byproducts of his perfectly practical philosophy. He remained fully active and yet filled with practical wisdom and compassionate concern for the downtrodden people. For nearly forty one year (1887-1928), the Ranga Rao worked incessantly as a teacher, organizer, preacher, and reformer in the district, with the strong opposition from high caste Hindus and unfavourable socio-economic conditions. His chief concern was to educate the downtrodden communities. He was no spectacular preacher or propagandist, nor he did he indulge any lengthy metaphysical dissertations. But the very acts he performed remain as the embodiment of his social and religious reforms. His life was in essence his message.

Ranga Rao believed that the people at the lower social strata were craving to raise themselves up socially through providing better education and occupational opportunities. He showed for them the social and economic channels in the first place and the distribution of land in the second instance for upliftment. In fact Ranga Rao’s life coincided with the renaissance period in India, a confluence of religious, literary and
national movements and South Kanara district was fortunate enough to have the Ranga Rao as a moving and living spirit of the dynamic movements for the emancipation of the oppressed and depressed classes.

Today Ranga Rao is being remembered by most of the Dalits from undivided Dakshina Kannada district. They have been celebrating his teachings with singing ‘Bhajans’ every day or weekly one day in every Dalit’s household. They were considered Ranga Rao as their ‘role model’. Educated Dalit members were constructed ‘Sabha Bhavans’ and ‘Bhajan Mandirs’ in the name of Ranga Rao to celebrate the teachings and propagate the ideology of Ranga Rao. Their activities mainly centered on fulfilling the objectives like 1 Promotion and safeguarding the education, social, economic, culture, moral, interest of the members 2 To arrange occasional social gatherings, group prayers, sports, arts, cultural and literary entertainments 3 To arrange and enriched philosophical thoughts of the Ranga Rao. 4. To establish welfare forums for ladies and destitute children, start libraries, educational institutions, common prayer halls and organize classes to educate Dalit members. Most of them belonged to the Scheduled Castes are followed the teachings of Ranga Rao and themselves indulged in the activities of donating land, construction of houses and helping depressed classes people in the district.\(^{306}\)

Today’s Dalit are stronger than they have even been. The progress they have made over the last century is quite remarkable. Many of the discriminations that once affected them have been seriously attenuated. Yet, and perhaps paradoxically the great majority remain poor, powerless and indeed without a voice.\(^{307}\) The dalit are still subjected to invidious

\(^{306}\) Source: Field work

discriminations based on the ground of untouchability. They are the worst sufferers of poverty, acute illiteracy, intolerable humiliations and other vices that are incidental to connected with untouchability. This indicates that there is a need to generate still more awareness among them of their socio-economic, political, legal and constitutional rights so that they can protect themselves under the law.

The future of twenty-first century upon which we are pondering over is quite uncertain to many, the threat quite real and potential. The crisis is such that can change the course of human history and that of mother earth. These are so because man is living with a self-destructive mentality. Already the notions of caste, race, ethnicity which is rooted in culture and religion prevail in the mental structures - the irrational and imaginative realm. The conflict of class, rooted in the 'desire' of a selected few to 'enjoy' the benefits of material-science and 'degrade' fellow human beings is still a blatant reality. There is, however, much discussions and dispute on the means of attaining the ideals of social justice. Today this problem is worsened by the multiple divisions existing in the Dalit ranks. For example, the Dalits are divided among themselves along sub-caste lines, keep clawing at each other, pulling down those who move up, so that remain in their lowly position. They are also hindered by the present political climate in which the upper castes are trying to establish a unified Hindu cultural nationalism.\textsuperscript{308}

A 'new human order' is to be established. An order which is wise, thinking, just, reasoned, rational, truthful, scientific, sustainable, egalitarian, compassionate, moral, ethical a welfaristic - that is, Humane and Enlightened. This can be achieved only through the thoughts which have given by great persons of human centered. There is no way out but

\textsuperscript{308} Michael, S M, \textit{Untouchable, Dalits in Modern India}, 1999, p. 39
to adopt the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, and justice as way of life. The principles of Humanism and Human Rights must be ensured by following the path of great people can help and strengthen the future better.

Though decades have passed since Ranga Rao expounded the philosophy of a casteless society, where everyone live in full harmony benefiting each other, without the fear and distinction of caste or prejudice of creed, the conditions prevailing in many parts of our country are far from what we expect and strive for. Under the juncture of challenging situation, we believe that the ideology and strategy of Ranga Rao have a key role to play in uplift and empower the downtrodden socially, economically, and spiritually, shows the way and courage to Dalits to achieve more justice, respect and progress in the present scenario. Therefore, we need more Kudmul Ranga Rao who will fight for justice wholeheartedly, selflessly and lead Indian society into a brighter tomorrow