CHAPTER- 1

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The later half of the nineteenth century was unique not only for the intensity with which Indians in different parts of India struggled for political reforms but also for the passion with which some of them sought to reform the society. Quite a few of them worked towards this end and succeeded in creating an intellectual climate, which would favour social changes. The spirit of social reform grew slowly but steadily and the evils of child marriage, caste rigours and untouchability, all had their determined opponents. But the part played by the reformers in a region like Karnataka, which was comparatively conservative in character, had a special significance. Social reform movement obviously contemplates change in the social structure and change in social values of the Indian society. It aims to reform the society on the sublime principles of liberty, equality, justice and brotherhood.

What factors are responsible for bringing about social change? Does social change occur independent of leadership? Or is it an outcome of leadership? There is a controversy among the social scientist regarding the causation of social change. There are five major schools of thinkers who had interpreted the causes of social change. According to St Augustine (345-430AD), history is only 'an unfolding of a divine plan'. According to August Comte (1798-1857), L T Hobhouse (1864-1927), Max Weber (1864-1920)\(^1\) and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), the region or culture is important in shaping social structure. Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), believed that an evolution in the society is bound to take place in the course of time.

\(^1\) Dronberger, The Political Thought of Max Weber, 1971, pp 278-283
According to H T. Buckle (1821-1862), a change may take place in the society because of geographical factors including climate, food, soil and other aspects. According to Karl Marx (1818-1888), the mode of production determines the social structure. He thought that the social structure is but the byproduct of the economic structure. It is not the 'intellect' or 'idea', but the pattern of economic production and distribution which shape the structure of given society. Thus it seems that there are two extreme views in the respect, one giving importance to personal factors like reason, morality, ability, and one's notion of right or wrong and other giving importance to impersonal factors like divinity, environment and economic condition. In the view of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, both the personal as well as impersonal factors are important in bringing about social change.

The Indian social reform movement began with establishment of new sects like Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Prarthana Samaj etc. The leaders of these new sects were influenced by ideas of liberty, a belief in the parliamentary system and the conviction that all men had equal rights before God and the law.

Reformers had a vision of the new social structure based on social equality. Social reformers pointed out that the undemocratic institution of caste was not compatible with political democracy. According to Tagore, so long as the society remained unjust there could be no justice in politics. Social reformers wanted the higher and lower castes to have equal rights in law, education, politics and in every other matter.

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2 E S Bogardus, *The development of Social Thought*, 1964, pp 278-280
5 B R Ambedkar, *Ranade, Gandhi, and Jinnah*, p 14
It is a fact that the evil practice of the untouchability has sufficiently proved to be the most injurious to the so-called untouchables in particular and Hindus in general. Therefore, the struggle for the emancipation of the depressed classes from the thralldom of untouchability and casteism has been in contribution for a pretty long time. It is but natural that no community would be willing to remain under cruel subjugation forever, and no society would sustain the shock of inequality and disunity. Several saints, social reformers, and political leaders from both the Dalits and non-Dalits had tried their best for the eradication of untouchability from the social fabric.

The Dalit liberation movement got an impetus during the British period with the dawn of democratic institutions in India; the Dalit liberation movement steadily became more vocal, assertive, and effective. After independence, untouchability had been legally abolished under the Constitution of India, which states ‘untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law’. In consonance with this provision, the parliament, empowered under Articles 35 of the Constitution passed the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 and it has been in implementation since then. Besides, the Constitution has provided certain educational facilities under Articles 15 (4) and 46, reservation in the employment under Articles 16 (4) and 335, and reservation in the Central and State Legislatures under Articles 330 (1) and 332 (1) for the amelioration of the socio-economic condition of the Dalits.7

The objective of the Dalit movement was obviously to liberate the historically known untouchable classes from the most oppressive practice.

7 V D Divekar (ed.), op cit, pp viii–ix
of untouchability observed unscrupulously by the caste Hindus, and to bring the former on par with socio-cultural level of the privileged classes, so that they could be brought to the national mainstream. Thus, the basic idea involved in this process was of reconstruction of the society on the basis of new values. It is therefore, necessary to inquire who were those leaders, what were their ideologies and approaches to social reconstruction, what was their mode of operation, how could they mobilize the ignorant masses along with them, how they could politicize them, what strategy or tactics they had adopted to raise the involvement of the Dalits in their liberation and in getting the things done at government level. Which path or process of social change they had adopted either Sanskritization or de-Sanskritization, westernization or modernization, dialective or the cognitive historical process and lastly how far they became successful in their mission? For this purpose it is necessary to identify the leaders to take into account their cognitive background, their individual and collective contribution to the movement and their achievements.

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 from 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 precursors 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. Their role in setting up the universal human values, narrowing the social distance between the touchables and untouchables and in
setting up a democratic polity cannot be easily ignored and underestimated. However the pity is that the history of Dalit liberation movement has not been properly interpreted and duly recorded in a consolidated and comprehensive manner as such.8

The present work is but a humble attempt to give a brief account of the Dalit emancipation in former South Kanara (presently divided into Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, is a region situated in Coastal Karnataka) and reveal with due respect the social reform profiles of the leader called Kudmul Ranga Rao, who had worked for the emancipation of depressed classes from the bondage of untouchability and caste system. A person, who has devoted his whole life to a particular cause, should have three special qualities in order to be successful in his work. Those qualities are self-confident, self-sacrifice and a clear strategy of action. To a large extend Kudmul Ranga Rao posses all these three qualities.

Oppression is a known phenomenon. It existed, is existing and will continue to exist. In any society, we find that some are occupying the first steps of the ladder and some are pushed to the last and the least. This is an existential situation of our country.

In such a situation, there are two groups which are always prominent in the society, the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressed react to the oppression or the oppressors in different ways. Some silently accept it as their destiny. They believe that such a situation has befallen them because of their past life. Others join forces with the oppressors and co-operate with them with a hidden motive of safeguarding their lives and interests. There are others who question the situation. They think in terms of challenging the oppressors. Kudmul Ranga Rao, no doubt belonged to this category of people. He looked at... 

8 V D Divekar (ed), op cit, pp ix-xvi
the situation, analyzed it and questioned it. He did not stop with questioning but had a vision for a new future of depressed classes people of South Kanara district.

The history of any society needs to be reviewed and reassessed in the history would serve as an inspiration to their fellow members. If the role played by such actors is ignored, then dedication to the cause would go into unconsciousness and the society would lose its guiding spirits in finding the future path. Hence, this study is proposed to know the history of Dalit liberation particularly in former South Kanara with special emphasis on the role played by the Kudmul Ranga Rao individually for the liberation of depressed classes and the achievements he had made in his mission.

Coastal Karnataka for a number of reasons came under the sway of the reformist movement from early onwards. The spread of education in this region and the growing sensitivity to concerns of religion, caste their spell on this region more than anywhere else. The South Kanara became the great cradle of the socio-economic interventions not merely of the Christian Missionaries but also Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Theosophical Society and Prathana Samaj. There were experiments in proposing socio-economic reform from the impulses of the local situation.

1. Review of Literature

Various academicians and practitioners have undertaken studies on role of reformer and their contributions for the empowerment of downtrodden people, but very few studies are available on reformatory work formed by the regional personalities like Kudmul Ranga Rao who was considered a pioneer social reformer of former South Kanara district. Based on different reviews here is an attempt made to describe the,
concept of social movements, concept of emancipation and empowerment, Dalit discrimination and efforts to change, Kudmul Ranga Rao and his emancipation projects for the empowerment of depressed classes people in the said district

**Conceptual Framework of Social Movements**

A social movement essentially involves a sustained collective mobilization through their formal or informal organization. A social movement which rejects the existing institutions will in turn attempt to codify the belief system and provide institutionalized arrangement to enforce its code of conduct. Social movement may also be seen as symptomatic of some malfunctioning of society like deprivation, inequalities, social imbalance, but not sufficient to spurn a social movement. An awareness of the discrimination or deprived condition is necessary. This awakening created in a sufficiently large number of people leads to a widespread collective mobilization. Often this consciousness exists in the middle class and the intelligentsia, who tend to be the leaders of the movement. Movements begin in the minds of men with ideas. Hungry men do not revolt as such, as they are deeply involved in the primary struggle for survival. The genesis of different kinds of social and cultural movements has been analyzed with reference to the concepts of strain, revitalization and relative deprivation.

**Strain**

Smelser\(^9\) (1962), treats structural strain as the underlying factor leading to collective action or movement. According to him, there can be no social movement without a previous sub-system strain. This theory fits

in the structural functional explanation. The structure of society affects the origin and form of movements in a variety of ways. This phenomenon has been referred to by Smelser as 'structural conducivenesses'. Subsystems of a society are all related and independent of each other. So strain even in our sub system affects the functioning of society as a whole.

**Revitalization**

Anthony Wallace\(^{10}\) (1956), has defined revitalization as a conscious organized on the part of some members of a society to create more satisfying culture. Nativism is an attitude of rejection of alien person or culture or rejection of everything from a dominant society. In revivalism, the aim of the movement is to return to a former era of happiness, to go back to golden age, to revive a previous condition of social virtue. This theory indicates adaptive process like an imitative or evaluative process of social change centered on acquiescence. Revitalization is considered to be an adoptive process in establishing equilibrium, which is a postulate of the structural functional approach. Hence, the significance of conflict in bringing about change is underplayed.

**Relative Deprivation**

Relative deprivation means a widespread feeling that people are deprived of some desired state or thing in comparison with some standard or with real or imagined conditions of other people. The notion of relative deprivation is to be found in the thoughts of Marx and Engels.

\(^{10}\) Wallace Anthony F C. *Revitalization Movements Some Theoretical Considerations for their comparative Study*, American Anthropologist, 58:264-281
Marx, Engels (1973)\textsuperscript{11} and Aberle (1966)\textsuperscript{12} used the term relative deprivation as the basis of conflict to explain the genesis of social movements and social change. Merton (1950)\textsuperscript{13} and Runciman (1966)\textsuperscript{14} used it as the basis of social mobility in relation to the life styles of positive reference groups. The credit of developing this concept goes to Aberle. He defined relative deprivation as a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectation and poverty or prosperity, but what people have come to feel as their just due as compared with their present or threatened future existence. A position of relative deprivation alone will not generate a movement. But it is perception of a situation and the estimation of capabilities by activity.

MSA Rao\textsuperscript{15} stresses that relative deprivation refers not only to material condition but also to the other spheres of life such as religion, education, politics, and civic life. It is found that the notion of relative deprivation is adequate in analyzing the structural conditions, which provide the necessary conditions in explaining the genesis of depressed classes movement. The concept of relative deprivation incorporates the virtue of Marxian analysis with accepting the caste struggle as the only ideology. It is important to realize that caste ethnicity and class are not mutually exclusive categories. They interact and intersect and articulate either in caste, ethnic, or class idioms.

A social movement has to justify the need for social change. It therefore, must develop sooner or later a comprehensive ideology or a theory, which should be convincing to the participants in the movement.

\textsuperscript{12} David F. Aberle, \textit{The Peyote religion among the Navaho}, Chicago Aldine, 1966
\textsuperscript{14} Runciman, \textit{Relative deprivation and social Justice}, University of California Press, 1966
It would therefore, have to project a cause to struggle for and present a version of a more valued alternative system. Ideology helps the concerned sections gain self-respect, honour, and worth. The shared ideology forms the basis for the identity of the group in a movement while an ideology directs the cause of events; the results of the events themselves have a crucial influence on the character of the ideology, changing the pattern of communication with different symbols and codes. Thus, it is a dynamic system. It helps in the codification of belief and myths in order to define a group’s aspiration and responses to the reality. Ideology then is closely related to the problems of identity, i.e., the way in which a group perceives itself in relation to other relevant groups and vice-versa. It provides the yardstick for accessing the nature and degree of commitment of both leaders and followers and for evaluating the results of events.

Besides, it provides the logic of the communication system in a social movement encoding and decoding messages as it presents the participant view, which enable us to understand the meanings of the symbolic actions of the participants. In the absence of a charismatic leadership, social movement remains an elaborate belief system or a definite action programme. Ideology is based on the structural conditions of existence of the concerned group on the one hand, and the level of consciousness and resources on the other.

A movement may start with an ideology or it may acquire one in the course of its development. In either case, it is continually revised in the light of subsequent events and the reaction of opposition reference group. United by ideology, the leaders of the movement create organizational devices to fight the evils and reduce grievances. A social movement must have a minimum degree or organization, yet it is not organized like clubs and other associations. Some kind of organization
enables certain persons to act as authorized spokesmen and representatives. Ideology is an important component of all social movements.

A social movement is a deliberate collective endeavour to promote a change in any direction and by any means not excluding violence, illegal means, revolution or withdrawal into 'utopian' community. The social movement and changes that are brought about by protest movement are based on challenges, protest dissent, confrontation, aggression and revolt as opposed to acquiescence. All movements have political implications even if their members do not strive for political power. Aberle holds that all social movements fulfill two key functions in society—They help both in the process of socialization, and train the elite. Movements that are directed only at change in ideology or culture movements that are primarily non-political can have a fairly widespread impact but this impact tends to be diffused and impermanent.

The study of social movements logically belongs to the realm of social process; it is related to both social structure and the consequence of change. Although there are variations in how social scientists define social movements (see Gusfield 1968, Wilson 1973). There are collective mobilization, the presence of an ideology and an orientation towards change.

Social movements may be classified on the basis of one or the other criterion (see Aberle 1966, Smelser 1962, Wallace 1956) on the basis of locus, social movements may be classified into linguistic, religious, sectarian, caste, peasant, worker, tribal, racial, ethnic, women, and students. Taking the nature of social change as the criterion movements may be classified into reformative, transformative, and

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revolutionary. Similarly the nature of their ideology provides another criterion by which social movements may be classified into either protest millenarian or revitalizing.

Concept of 'Emancipation' and 'Empowerment'

If there is one term that has become a kind of all-encompassing lingua franca for social, political, cultural discourse it is 'empowerment'. Whether it is used to discuss the structural makeover of multi-nationals, or the civil rights of disenfranchised groups, 'empowerment' acts as a powerful signifier for theories of access and enablement. Emancipation is an act of setting free from the power of another, from slavery, subjection, dependence, or controlling influence; also, the state of being thus set free, liberation, as, the emancipation of slaves; the emancipation of minors, the emancipation of a person from prejudices, the emancipation of the mind from superstition; the emancipation of a nation from tyranny or subjection. The concepts of empowerment and emancipation have gained common currency in recent years. The notion of enabling people to take control of their own lives and to free themselves from the structures which dominate and constrain them.

Singh and Titi (1995), in development discourse, empowerment is believed to be the mechanism through which poverty can be combated. Hopa (1999), the concept has been central to development strategies aimed at alleviating poverty and social exclusion. In which individuals take responsibility for their own needs and development. (Craig and

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17 Singh, N & V Titi, Empowerment for Sustainable Development An Overview In N Singh & V Titi, Empowerment Towards Sustainable Development, London Zed Books, 1995, p 6
19 Craig, G and M. Mayo, Community Participation and Empowerment The Human Face of Structural Adjustment or Tools for Democratic Transformation In G Craig & M Mayo (eds), 1995, p 1
Mayo, 1995)

W. F. Wertheim (1974), ‘emancipation’ is a term used to describe various efforts to obtain social and political rights or equality, often for a specifically disenfranchised group, or more generally in discussion of such matters. Prof W F Wertheim whose writings on Indonesia and other countries have attracted attention since long Wertheim calls his concept ‘emancipation’. The term ‘emancipation’ is used in the Netherlands, to which Prof Wertheim belongs, to connote movements of social groups to liberate themselves from yokes of all kinds, manmade and otherwise.

According to Wertheim, the first and most important emancipation movement in Western Europe was of the rising bourgeoisie, which wrested knowledge and education from the powerful clergy. This movement began in the Middle Ages and lasted till about the end of the 18th century. However, there is another view. Towards the end of the 18th century a pietistic section of the ruling Protestants in Holland began to polarize itself due to growing differences with the ‘liberal’ section. This section finally seceded from the ruling church and formed its own religious organization. Some people consider this as the first emancipation movement but the most significant one is considered to be the polarization of the Dutch Catholics in mid-19th century to protect their interest from ruling Protestants. All the three groups—Catholics, pietistic Protestants and ruling Protestants—now polarized, grew as “pillars” with their own educational institutions, political parties and religious organization. In the running of the nation each pillar got its own share by a policy of “accommodation”. Dutch social growth today is known as verzuiling or ‘pillarization’ or ‘vertical pluralism’ as some may prefer to call it. The essence of the pillar model is ‘participation by polarization’. Polarization led to emancipation. Polarization of course needs “mass upsurge from below”. In the Dutch society it happened on religious
denominational lines. Elsewhere it can happen on some other lines, maybe racial, ethnic, or some other factor.

One has however to work out the limitations of this possibility in a caste society which has traditionally functioned on the basis of complementarity, mutual dependence, a sense of hierarchy and toleration. With new modes of living, following industrial-urban growth, all this will be toned down very much but whether such ideas will totally disappear remains to be seen. In such a situation, mass upsurge from below may not take place effectively. Wherever it has taken place, as in Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, there have been counter-balancing forces and therefore cleavages have kept on cropping up in polarized groups. The Dutch polarized neatly into closed pillars and at the centre of each there was an ecclesiastical ideology. Even politics was shaped in this ideology.

The Indian experience has somewhat been different. In Kerala, the Ezhavas as a caste group polarized, and even the Nayars tried it, but many external forces including secular political ideologies have checked the growth of complete polarization from time to time. It is true at the same time that secular political parties themselves have tried to adapt to the polarized caste groups so that much water has had to be poured into secular political ideologies as well. In Tamil Nadu, the Dravidian Movement, which has the semblance of an emancipation movement, has a core ideology focused on the pristine glory of Dravidian and the need to revive it through a frontal attack on Brahman-Aryan domination. At the practical level a strong anti-Brahman sentiment was the driving force of the movement. However movement has split thrice on several reasons, one of which can finally be traced back to the impact of secular political ideologies. Thus, on a close study, one can see several instances where effective polarization and mass upsurge have been held under check by many forces from the large environment.
Wertheim says that pillarization and religious polarization are not very relevant to his concept of emancipation as applied to the developing world. Having spent his childhood in Russia during the revolution of 1945, Wertheim is convinced of the ‘supreme importance’ of revolutions a human phenomenon. In his latest book, Evolution and Revolution, he tells social scientists committed to stability-harmony concepts, that evolutionary change from the normal social process and logically culminate in revolutions. Impressed by the Chinese and Cuban revolutions in recent times, he expects major revolutionary struggles in Viet Nam, India and other poor countries. 20

R.C Trucker (ed.) (1978), as Karl Marx observed, “Every emancipation is a restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself. Human emancipation will only be complete when the real individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a species being; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers as social powers so that he no longer separated his social power from himself as political power.” 21

From the beginning of the Marx critical analysis of Hegel to the uncompleted late work ‘A critique of Political Economy’, Marx’s philosophy is committed to the goal of human emancipation. Marx carries on the struggle for emancipation as it was led by step by step into a philosophy of human freedom and historical responsibility. It did so by beginning to lead the discussion of emancipation back to “the world of human beings, to the condition of people themselves” in order to

make individuals aware of their social practice and thus to make it available to them.

In order to grasp analytically the inherent condition of capitalistic society Marx has to probe, deeper than bourgeois, social philosophy of history, which, since it only reflects on constitutional freedoms, cannot see the connection of these with the economic basis. The main starting point of Marx theory after 1844 is social production, work and practice. From the very beginning the unity of these three basic determinates of human survival and action must be underlined. For where these are pulled apart so that, for example, the working struggle with nature and the communicative practice of human relations are understood to mean anthropologically determined, separate lines of development.

Social practice of individuals is substantially the basis of all history, but as long as this practice runs in a spontaneous natural fashion, i.e. the social individuals are not conscious of themselves as social beings or the social responsibility of their actions, what they created and create will be experienced as if it were the consequence of natural law, having become so by necessity, and so as something which determines them and rules over them. Only when such individual becomes conscious of their alienation can they revolutionize the conditions alienating them and begin to take shaping of such a process of becoming conscious, to lead the process as a bearer of social practice. The stringency of this dialectic of history lies in the fact that Marx sees that social production i.e. via the individual now conscious and acting together, to overcome the alienation caused by us ourselves. Only in this Marxist conception does the dialectic become a historical one and become what Hegel had only assured; substance, which is the base of all history, in which becoming a subject does not mean only theoretic understanding but consciously planned social production, work and practice of consciously unified
Ernest Laclau (1996), in *Emancipation(s)*, examines 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. According to him, ‘emancipation’-a notion which has been part of our political imaginary for centuries and whose disintegration today as being organized around six distinctive dimensions. The first is dichotomic dimension between the emancipatory movement and the social order which has preceded it there is an absolute gap, a radical discontinuity. The second can be considered a holistic dimension emancipation affects all areas of social life and there is a relation of essential imbrications between its various contents in these different areas.

The third dimension can be referred to as the transparency dimension if alienation its various aspects-religious, political, economic etcetera has been radically eradicated, there is only the absolute coincidence of human essence with itself and there is no room for any relation of either power or representation Emancipation presupposes the elimination of power, the abolition of the subject and object distinction, and the management without any opaqueness or mediation of communitarian affairs by social agents identified with the viewpoint of social totality.

A fourth dimension is the pre-existence of what has to be emancipated vis-a-vis the act of emancipation. There is no emancipation without oppression, and there is no oppression without the presence of something, which is impeded, in its free development by oppressive.

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22 Marx, K Engles, F Werke in 39 Bdn U 1 Erg bd in 2 Teilen (MEW), Berlin Dietz, 1956
forces. Emancipation is not, in this sense, an act of creation but instead of liberation of something, which precedes the liberating act.

In the fifth place, dimension of ground, this is inherent in the project of any radical emancipation. If the act of emancipation is truly radical, if it is really going to leave behind everything preceding it, it has to take place at the level of the 'ground' of the social. If there were no ground, if the revolutionary act leaves a residue, which is beyond the transforming abilities of the emancipatory praxis, the very idea of a radical emancipation would become contradictory. Finally, rationalistic dimension, as the idea of an absolute representability of the real cannot appeal to anything external to the real itself, it can only coincide with the principle of an absolute rationality. Thus, full emancipation is simply the moment in which the real ceases to be an opaque positivity confronting, and in which the latter's distance from the rational is finally cancelled.

Emancipation means at one and the same time radical foundation, radical exclusion, that is, it postulates, at the same time both a ground of the social and its impossibility. Discourse of radical emancipation emerged for the first time with Christianity and its specific form was salvation. Christianity was going to present the image of a future humanity or post humanity from which all evil would have been eradicated. World history is a permanent struggle between the saints and the forces of evil and there is no common ground between them, the future society will be a perfect one without any internal splits, opaqueness or alienation.

Contemporary social struggles are bringing to the fore this contradictory movement that the emancipatory discourse of both religious and modern secularized eschatologies had concealed and repressed. We are today coming to terms with our own finitude and with the political possibilities that it opens. This is the point from which the potentially
liberatory discourses of our postmodern age have to start. We can perhaps say that today we are at the end of emancipation beginning of freedom.23

Manoranjan Mohanty (1995), the concept of ‘empowerment’ implies formal rather than substantive power and it involves an external upper level agency to grant power rather than people below seizing it in the course of struggle. Above all this concept is part of the political philosophy of the new economic globalization of western capitalism.

For about two decades since the mid 1960s there was a plea to put ‘politics in command’ and accordingly growth models and development strategies were assessed. Even though there was no consensus as to the political criteria for evaluating development policies, still certain values such as freedom and equality were put at the core of this exercise. While the preoccupation with growth was questioned ‘political essence of progress was emphasized.’24

With the upsurge of the women’s movement and other social movements the pursuit of freedom and justice was put in more concrete terms and development process was scrutinized on the basis of such political parameters.25 It is in this process that the term ‘empowerment,’ i.e., giving power to a certain unprivileged section of society came to be used.

In the 1990s however, the milieu is one of ‘economics in command’. Growth of production, modernization of technology and management are supposed to be the central goals of development in the contemporary wage of ‘Structural Adjustment Programme’. Liberalization and privatization of the economy and its integration with the global economy are advocated essentially on the ground of

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25 Ibid , p. 1434
developing production. Ostensibly, 'empowerment' as an objective of the economic development should be a welcome addition in the democratic discourse. After all, oppressed groups ranging from unorganized workers and poor peasants to tribal people, Dalits and women have been engaged in a struggle for power and should normally judge the development process in those terms. Whether development projects had led to their pauperization and subjugation was the issue raised by the various movements of displaced people and ecological movements among others. So when documents of the United Nations Summit as also the declarations of the national governments powerfully stress their commitment to empower people, the normal reaction is one of the positive glees among the democratic forces. However, the context of the popularization of this term, 'empowerment' the framework globalization which underlies it makes it a questionable concept.

**Discourse of World Summits**

The document related to the world Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen on March 6-12, 1995 where 'empowerment' figures prominently as an objective. The Declaration signed by the heads of states and governments says the following:

We affirm that in the both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments are those which empower people to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities. The Declaration and the Programme of Action have many such statements which clearly link empowerment with economic globalization.

This statement also implies that empowerment as such – even in the sense it is used here – is not the goal, but something to be understood.

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26 Ibid, p 1434
in the context of production and investment. Empowerment requires the full participation of people in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of decisions determining the functioning and the well-being of our societies.27 There is a certain definition of 'empowerment' suggested in this statement as strengthening their capacities' which can be achieved through 'full participation of people in.' Strengthening of capacities is of course, crucial to the liberation of the oppressed. Such a definition does not imply liberation from the bondages which have historically constrained fuller realization of human potential in the case of the deprived sections. Such constraints operated at various levels including socio-economic structure, ideology, and political process which the omnibus concept of 'empowerment' does not capture. Then there are processes of exploitation which encompass the entire society, some which afflict several sector or groups, yet others which target specific classes, castes, ethnic groups, and others.28 Without a relevant disaggregation, the autonomous significance of specific struggles is not acknowledged nor is an appropriate interconnection established. Hence, 'strengthening their capacities' boils down to an overgeneralized, albeit noble, statement of intent with little political value to the oppressed.

As for meaning of 'full participation of people' it has to be read together with the first commitment of the Declaration which talks about creating an enabling environment economic, political, social, cultural, and legal environment. The heads of states and government announced their first commitment thus: 'provide a stable legal framework, in accordance with our Constitutions, laws and procedures, and consistent with international law and obligations which includes and promotes equality and equity between women and men, full respects for all human rights.

27 Ibid, p 1435.
28 Ibid, p 1435
and fundamental freedom and the rule of law, access to justice, elimination of all forms of discrimination, transparent and accountable governance and administration and the encouragement of partnership with free and representative organizations of civil society'.

There is further commitment to people's participation through 'decentralization, open management of public institutions, and strengthening of the abilities and opportunities of civil society and local communities to develop their own organizations, resources and activities'. The emphasis is on participation through the existing institutions or by building 'representative organizations of civil society'. In other words, those who advocate replacement of the prevailing institutions are either outside the civil society or are denied the right to participate since that might upset the 'stable legal framework'.

Empowerment, however, is not simply a mechanical process of sharing, distribution or redistribution of power. Rather, it involves far wider changes in social and economic institutional arrangements, political ideologies, traditional practices and even in the mindset of the marginalized people through conscientization.

Robbins, Chatterjee, and Canda, (1998), defines, 'Empowerment is a process by which individuals and groups gain power, access to resources and control over their own lives. In doing so, they gain the ability to achieve their highest personal and collective aspirations and goals.' Rappaport, (1981), examines, 'Empowerment is a construct that

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29 Ibid., p 1436
30 Ibid., 1436
links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping system and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change.\(^{32}\)

Empowerment research and intervention link individual well being with the larger social and political environment. Theoretically, the construct connects mental health to mutual help and the struggle to create a responsive community. Empowerment oriented interventions enhance wellness while they also aim to ameliorate problems, provide opportunities for participants to develop knowledge and skills, and engage professional as collaborators instead of authoritative experts.\(^{33}\)

Swift and Levin, (1987), observed, theories of empowerment include both processes and outcomes suggesting that actions, activities, or structures may be empowering and that the outcome of such processes result in a level of being empowered.\(^{34}\)

Both empowerment processes and outcomes vary in their outward form because no single standard can fully capture its meaning in all contexts or populations (Rappaport, 1984).\(^{35}\)

Zimmerman (1993), says, empowering process for individuals might include participation in community organizations At the organizational level, empowering process might include collective decision making and shared leadership Empowered outcomes refer to operationalizations of empowerment that study the consequences of empowering processes Empowered outcomes for individuals might


\(^{33}\) Ibid


\(^{35}\) Rappaport, J “Studies in Empowerment Introduction to the Issues,” Prevention in Human Services, 1984, p 4
include situation, specific perceived control and resource mobilization skills.\(^{36}\)

Thus, empowerment suggests that the participation with others to achieve goals, efforts to gain access to resources and some critical understanding of the socio-political environment are basic components of the construct. Therefore empowerment includes organizational processes and structures that enhances member participation and improve goal achievement for the organization. At the community level, empowerment refers to collective action to improve the quality of life in a community and to the connections among community organizations.\(^{37}\)

Emancipators identify a central moral purpose in the production of knowledge. The elimination of oppression and the creation of the conditions for human flourishing. Social implies that human emancipation depends upon the transformation of the social world, not just the inner self. Social justice is all people would have broadly equal access to the necessary material and social means to live flourishing lives.\(^{38}\)

Jaffrelot ((2005), explores, Ambedkar in his quest for the liberation of untouchables had evolved different strategies in response to the political atmosphere of the country. They were political representation, party politics and the politics of collaboration. As Jaffrelot says, "Ambedkar had considered political action as one of the untouchable’s instrument of emancipation." He had devoted most of his time and energy in organizing untouchables into a political entity. He had ensured for his community the access to education and representation in legislative

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\(^{37}\) Ibid

\(^{38}\) Erik Oluf Wright, A Frame work for Emancipatory Social Science, University of Wisconsin Madison, 2007
bodies and continuously urged the British to protect the untouchables from social oppression and inequality. He saw the Constitution as the framework for social transformation, an embodiment of the right of equality. The last and final strategy he adopted for the emancipation of untouchables was conversion as a means of liberation.39

Gopal Guru (2001), his Dalits in Pursuit of Modernity, he explains in what way this modernity will shape the emancipatory agenda of Dalits in the twenty-first century. For the Dalits, modernity is seen in the context of their being provided the language of rights to equality, freedom and dignity, self-respect and recognition. This new language grew out of the Dalits' rejection of the language of obligation that entail negative rights like the right over raw hide and flesh of dead cattle, leftover food and caste-off clothes. All these sought to humiliate the Dalits under the Hindu feudal order.

The language of equality that they learnt from both the Indian and Western emancipatory traditions led the Dalits not only to question the exclusionary Hindutva paradigm but also inspired them to seek inclusion into the opportunity structure on the basis of modernist credentials like skills, abilities and excellence. Thus, a sense of equality and self-respect provide normative grounds for the Dalit pursuit of modernity. Modernity provided the values of freedom and autonomy that be realized through the fixed and regulated notion of time as against that of vetbiyari system used to exploit Dalits both in terms of physical and mental labour. For Dalits modernity also promised to reconstruct the mobile territorial space that would place them in a more socially interactive relationship with Hindus. This was in contrast to 'Hindu internment', which confined the Dalits.

within fixed boundaries that were guarded by the upper castes with the help of the purity-pollution ideology.

The Dalits were segregated into distinct camps like Halgeri in Karnataka, Maharwada in Maharashtra and Pariah Chari in Tamil Nadu. Thus the progress of modernity in India promised to civilize the savage society with the logic of liberation for the Dalits both during the colonial and in post-independence India. It is true that as compared to the complete denial of positive rights to the Dalits, colonial modernity and later the constitutional provisions and various state welfare policies did occupy spaces in politics, culture, education and occupation. However, the “opportunity” side of colonial modernity had serious limitations. The imperialists and the native capitalists used the purity-pollution ideology to ghettoize the Dalit workers in Dalit chawls, and to restrict them to manual jobs in industry, or those connected to sanitation. Colonial modernity was a mixed blessing for the Dalits as it was enabling them in the context of feudal slavery and at the same time constraining given its inability to expand the realm of emancipation.

In the post-Independence period, various constitutional provisions and the welfare policies of the state were aimed at overcoming the exclusion of the Dalits from many kinds of opportunities at various levels. However, the Dalit claims to modernity suffered from the lack of recognition either by the state or by the Hindu civil society. The Dalit only the elite among them claims to modernity turn out to be a tragedy in another sense, as socially hierarchized civil society refuses to recognize such modernist claims. Civil society refuses to recognize these claims by deploying the humiliating of scandal, gossip, malicious caste propaganda and by adopting condescending attitudes towards the Dalit modernists.
Dalit’s disenchantment with the phenomenon of modernity will draw on the following reasons. First, education and employment opportunities that are vitally important resources for Dalit modernity are going to be either depleted or will become totally meaningless for them and the poorer ‘sections of society’. Secondly, the Dalits are likely to be further excluded from this ‘meaningful’ education, as it will not be supported by the state, which, due to the growing compulsion of globalization, has already started withdrawing from the social sphere. This will mean that the Dalit will continue to have only a marginal access to education, and particularly primary education will continue to serve as the creche for the Dalit children till they are ready for employment. For most of the Dalits from the Northern states where the educational level is so low and poverty so appalling, even this system may not be needed.

The alternative notion of modernity in the twenty-first century would be based on the realization of the limitation of such alternatives and also the limits of state action like reservation, which gave only a fractured and stigmatized sense of modernity to Dalits. This realization has already led to them to pursue the question of intra-group equality outside the limiting framework of reservation, which as mentioned earlier, provided only a negative reference point. The question of equality is likely to be pursued primarily in terms of an access to and equal distribution of resources. This demand for equal access to resources, in ideological terms, will render the individuated category of mobility meaningless for the majority of the Dalits who continue 15 per cent of the countries total population. However, this would depend on the degree of the spread entrenchment of liberalism in various parts of the country. For example, the Dalit protest would be directed between the owners of property, assets and the Dalits. And Dalits perhaps would fight these local battles all alone in where the structure are still hostile and poorer.
Backward Castes are indifferent and even hostile to Dalits. But in other places where liberalism has had a civilizing impact on Bahujan consciousness, the Dalit is likely to win friends from Bahujan castes.\(^4^0\)

The concept 'Emancipation' is thus firstly an internal process. It involves a process of liberation of the self from the old internalized prejudices. For many Dalits, emancipation is tantamount to an adoption of mainstream behaviour. To free oneself from the traditional bonds and enter a free labour market is just a first step. To speak and wear cloths as others do, to have access to what they enjoy, whether in village space, in the sphere of power, in the professions, or in the religious world these are the many tests of the real possibilities of not just improving one's material life but more generally, and as importantly, breaking the old discrimination barriers enclosing Dalits in their multi-faceted submissive status. Confirmation of emancipation through assimilation comes when honors are bestowed upon a Dalit by members of upper castes themselves. Emancipation, then, is not only liberation from social bondage but also a construction of cultural tools required for alternative modes of thinking.\(^4^1\)

**Dalit Discrimination**

Indian society is the product of a long and complex historical process and marked by considerable cultural heterogeneity. As one observes the complex structure of Indian Society at the turn of the century, four major trends\(^4^2\) of social transformation are in evidence, they

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\(^4^0\) See Gopal Guru, *Dalit in Pursuit of Modernity in India Another Millennium*\(^2\) of Romila Thaper (ed), 2001

\(^4^1\) Jean-Luc Racine, Josiane Racine, (1998), “Dalit Identities and The Dialectics of Oppression and Emancipation in a Changing India The Tamil Case and Beyond,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and The Middle East* (Formerly South Asia Bulletin), Vol XVIII No 1, pp 10-17

are, transition from cumulative to dispersed dominance, a gradual movement from hierarchy to equality, resulting in the decline of traditional collectivism and the emergence of individualism, third is the simultaneous demands for equality and the assertion of collective identity, and the fourth is the movement from plural society to pluralism. The remarkable development in the spheres of technology, communication, education and other possibilities of getting aware of what is happening around, had fostered a growing sense of the identity consciousness among these indigenous people called ‘Dalits’. On the other hand, the country has embarked on a journey to build the nation on secular ideal with an endeavour to provide a just and equitable society for all its citizens, with its constitutional provisions and other benefits to uplift the oppressed communities. In spite of all these signal changes in various sectors, poverty, discrimination, denial, injustice and misery is the lot of a large number of people.

The Dalits have historically been poor, deprived of basic human rights, and treated as social inferiors in India. They still face economic, social, cultural, and political discrimination in the name of caste. Centuries of this ‘hidden apartheid’ that has perpetuated discrimination and denial of their human rights, has resulted not only in Dalits representing a disproportionate amount of the poor in India, but also in the creation of numerous other obstacles that hinder Dalit’s ability to change their situation.

**An Oppressed People**

Dalits in India are ancient ethnic-social groups, whose lot has been oppression and ignominy for centuries. The etymology of the term can be traced to the Sanskrit root ‘dal’, meaning ‘ground down’, ‘downtrodden’,
"crushed", and "destroyed" It refers to physical weakness and to a lowly insignificant position of these particular groups in the society. The Dalits are described as poor, socially placed outside the fourfold caste-system of Hinduism. They are at times referred to as the "fifth caste" panchamas, but usually treated as "outcastes". These, outcastes suffer the stigma of untouchability, even though it has been legally abolished by Indian Constitution and its practice has been declared as an offence. Historically Dalits were called by various names, such as "untouchables", "Harjans", "Exterior Castes", "Depressed Classes", "Out Castes", "Mlecha", "Chandala", "Panchama", "Avarna", "Nishada", "Paulkasa", "Antyaja", and "Atishudra".

Dalits account for 15.5% of the total population of India. It is a fact that 75% of SCs communities live below poverty line, many continue to be illiterate, and about half are landless agricultural laborers. Only 7% have access to safe drinking water, electricity and toilet facilities. Thus, it is evident that, most of the terms used to denote Dalits are found with implications of marginalization and oppression. They are clearly demarcated from the caste-groups. Dalits are those communities which have for many centuries occupied a deeply ambiguous place within Indian society.

Out-Castes and Untouchables

It is important to direct our attention briefly to the inhumanity to which the Dalits have been subjected. The worst of all is the ascription of untouchability, on the basis of the principle of purity and pollution. This

44 M C Raj, Dalitology The Book of the Dalit People, Ambedkar Resource Center, Tumkur, 2001, p 95
social marginalization is the root of all kinds of discriminations they suffer in everyday life. They are the ones who are outside the pale of the Hindu caste hierarchy. For they that fall beyond the four-fold Varna system their position is much inferior to the Shudras, who are the lowest caste in the four-fold Varna system. It is to be kept in mind that though the Dalits are accommodated in the local *jati* system in the villages, they are discriminated against both in the Varna and *jati* systems. The Dalits are thus truly out-castes. This social marginalization is glaringly visible in the very physical set-up of their hamlets at the periphery of the village. They were forbidden to draw water from the village well, enter temple, wear sandals, use public roads, own land and their presence itself was considered as polluting. Further they were denied of knowledge, and learning, they are deprived of privilege of reading, learning or even listening to the Sastra the sacred scriptures of Hinduism.

Today by rejecting these terms the out-caste Indians have appropriated the terms ‘Dalit’ as an expression of self-identity. Here the author argues and identifies that this term as another ‘imposed identity’ from elite intellectuals, and thus rejected by the poor and oppressed in many parts of the country. They use it in a spirit of pride and militancy, an indication of revolutionary progression made within the Dalit community. The fact is that the name Dalit is not merely a rejection of the very idea of pollution or impurity or untouchability; it reveals a sense of a unified class or a movement toward equality and societal justice. It connotes the consciousness of their existence without freedom and outcaste experience, and stands for an affirmation and assertion of

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the fact that ‘we are broken people’ and ‘we are people crushed by oppression and exploitation’.

The term ‘Dalit’ also implies an inherent denial of ideology of purity and pollution, caste hierarchy justified and legitimized by Karma theory. It was initially coined in the nineteenth century by Marathi social reformer, Mahatma Jotirao Phule, was adopted in the 1970’s by the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra, and is today widely accepted by Dalit Theologians. The Dalit Freedom Network estimates that there are 250 million Dalits in India today. Although there is no clear cut consensus among the Dalit theologians as to who constitutes ‘Dalit’, invariably the term is used in reference to the Scheduled Castes. It is in this connection though most Dalit liberation theologians restrict their use of the term to Scheduled Castes, a few leaders of the Dalit movement say that the term Dalit is comprehensive and includes all oppressed peoples except the upper-caste Hindus. But the word is not widely used to refer to all the poor and the oppressed. It usually refers to one particular group of castes, the SCs that are those castes admitted to the special schedule by the Government of India. Understanding Dalits inevitably entails understanding the Indian caste system. In the Indian context, the word ‘caste’ denotes not only Varna but also another concept called jati. The European term ‘caste’ conflates the indigenous concepts of Varna and jatt. The significant feature of the Indian social structure is a deep-rooted caste system based on the Varna ideology mediated through its purity and pollution norms.

49 James Massey, ed, Indigenous People Dalit Issues in Today’s Theological Debate, p 6
50 See http://www.dalitnetwork.org/
51 Samuel Jayakumar, Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion Historical Resources for a Contemporary Debate, pp 12-13
52 Ursula M Sharma, Caste, Buckingham/Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999, pp 5-6
Reasons for Discrimination

Several theories have been propounded to describe the origins and practice of discrimination against the Dalits. However, the two prominent theories are: the Aryan theory of caste system and purity and pollution theory.

Aryan Theory for the Origins of the Caste

This theory is popularly known as the Aryan invasion theory, it is a racial theory. According to this theory, the present day Dalits were the 'black race natives' similar to Dasyus who were conquered and enslaved by the white Sanskrit speaking Aryan invaders around BC 1,500.

According to this theory, it was the Varna or 'colour' as an important dividing category, it is supported by the ancient texts like Rg Veda. According to this theory, the dissenter indigenous people the dasa, dasyus, rakshasa, asuras who did not submit themselves to the hegemonic Aryan invaders and they were considered as a threat to the Aryan way of life. Consequently, they were hated and constantly attacked by the invaders. Their eventual subjugation resulted in the exclusion of the dasa from their economic activity of the time and assigned 'unskillful, unproductive, lowly and menial jobs and treated with utmost contempt, segregated as a residual category of people to employed as and when necessary.'

There is an alternative view, which argues in favour of indigenous Aryan position, claiming that the Aryans were indistinguishable with the people of Indus civilization. In spite of the ambivalence surrounding the debate of Aryan origin, these two theories are used by people according...
to their interests in developing an argument. The appropriation of these theories by fundamentalist groups implies a careful structuring of the knowledge of the past, and legitimization of the present day conflicts. However, the anti-caste movements such as Adi-dravida, Adi-dharam movements were a check to the Hindu claims. These were the movements through which indigenous people attempted to formulate an autonomous identity as the original inhabitants, sons of the soil. Thus J. H. Hutton, the eminent anthropologist locates the origin of the caste system in the taboos and divisions of labour found among the pre-Aryan tribes of India, and in their efforts for self-preservation at the face of invasion. He asserts that untouchability is the result of ritual impurity To him, “the origin of the position of the exterior castes is partly racial, partly religious, and partly a matter of social custom.”

Von Fuerer Haimendorf, believed that untouchability is an urban development and a resultant of an unclean and ritually impure occupation. In most cases, caste is exhibited only in terms of certain practices like untouchability, although untouchability is not a typical attribute of the Dalits alone. However, the practice of untouchability is an essential condition for the existence of the caste system, without which it is deemed to be difficult to maintain the social order in Hindu society.

Purity and Pollution Theory

It was generally believed that it was the notions of purity and pollution are the foundations for caste system in India. It was Louis Dumont who developed the purity and pollution ideology into a

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57 Eva-Maria Hardtmann, The Dalit Movement in India Local Practices, Global Connections, New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2009, p 58
58 J H Hutton, Caste in India, Oxford Oxford University Press, 1963, p 207
systematic theory. According to him, caste is little more than the working out of the complementary opposition between the pure and the impure on a substantial level. Superiority and superior purity are identical; it is in this sense that the ideologically distinction of purity is the foundation of status. Though Dumont speaks of purity and pollution in intellectual terms, as does not imply to means these as the foundations for purity and pollution in the society, his argument seems to be pointing suggestively to the fact that notions of purity and pollution became referential for the behavior and interaction of the caste groups.

According to M. N. Srinivas, the ideas of purity and pollution cover a large sector of life. Inter-caste relations are governed at many points by the idea of pollution. G. S. Ghurye attributes the idea of ceremonial purity to an exclusive social stratification. He says, “Caste in India is a Brahminic child of the Indo-Aryan culture, cradled in the land of the Ganges and the Jamna and from there transferred to other parts of the country.” These rules of purity and impurity were not only applied to treat the different social groups hierarchically, but also to put restrictions on marital, social and occupational relations of all castes. On the basis of notions of purity and pollution the origins of Dalits are identified being ‘debased’ and ‘disruptive’ thus justifying their exclusion from the contours of society. Therefore, ‘Dalits’ in our country are those who have been marginalized and treated as objects of rather than subjects of the history. Dalits were often underprivileged and deprived of basic human rights, suppressed on the account of their status at birth. They have become the objects of philanthropic and social work. As objects

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60 Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus *The Caste System and Its Implications*, London Paladdin, 1972, p. 56
61 M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Bombay Asia publishing House, 1962, p. 151

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they were pushed around, subjugated and exploited at every point in their life. Thus, the term ‘Dalits’ refers to caste groups who are constitutionally considered as ex-untouchables and unnaturally exterior or prohibited social communities, the out castes.63

The name ‘Dalit’ does not merely gave them another name or identity, it has also turn out to be an expression of hope in recovering their past and re-claiming their self-dignity as full human beings. The ‘self assertion’ of Dalits not only established their common identity, but also implies their state of being conscious of their imposed identity. The term ‘Dalit,’ which signifies, ground down, downtrodden, or oppressed, is now being used by the low castes in a spirit of pride and militancy to reveal a sense of unified class or a movement towards equality and liberation for a new society based on egalitarian values, social justice and human dignity.64

Class – Caste Nexus

In India, caste and class are inseparably linked together to form the ‘caste-class and power nexus’ which under guards and permeates all socio-cultural and politico- economical relationships of social institutions and communities. Historically, Dalits were a people without a history of their own.65 The educational institutions also have peculiar methods of perpetuating casteism and caste discrimination which often gets demonstrated in their continued thinking along caste lines. The upper caste children are advised by their parents to boycott the classes of SC/ST

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teachers. Children are asked not to eat food served at schools as midday meal program implemented by the Government. As a result the Casteist culture got institutionalized at every sphere of life in the society and led to total destruction of the social fabric.\(^{66}\)

Caste-based discrimination is also evident even in the labour market where globalization and liberalization of the market economy are at the forefront. The recent book entitled, *Blocked by Castes: Economic Discrimination in Modern India* by Sukhadeo Thorat and Katherine Newmann, describes clearly this nature of caste based discrimination in India. This recent study of the job market clearly indicates the binary comparisons of outcomes for low and high caste candidates and scientifically proved that Dalit and Muslim applicants do face a significant discrimination in the white-collar job market on the basis of their caste identity.\(^{67}\) Further, it is obvious in every area of human life such as housing, health, school, business and public services. Once they were free natives but were subjected to a process of being de-historized, de-culturised, de-economized, and above all de-humanized. Hence, the lot of the Dalits is deprivation and disfiguration.\(^{68}\)

The reports of the Commission of SCs and STs also indicate that while in the cities, the practice of untouchability has become less prevalent, it continues unabated in rural areas in India due to the traditional economic dependence of the untouchables on the clean castes. In most of the villages the scheduled caste people are not allowed to share the common water sources and have to use separate wells or other water

\(^{66}\) *Social Action*, no 1, 2004, p 53

\(^{67}\) Sukhadeo Thorat and Katherine Newmann, (eds), *Blocked by Caste: Economic Discrimination in Modern India*, New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2009, p 45

\(^{68}\) M N Srinivas, *Caste Its Twentieth Century Avatar*, Delhi Viking, 1996, p 56
sources. The entry of untouchables in the temples of upper caste Hindus is also found informally restricted in the rural areas.⁶⁹

Efforts to Change

There has not been a single, unified Dalit movement in the country now or in the past. Different movements have highlighted different issues related to Dalits, around different ideologies. However, all of them assert a Dalit identity though the meaning may not be identical or precise for everyone. Notwithstanding differences in the nature of Dalit movements and the meaning of identity, there has been a common quest for equality, self-dignity and eradication of untouchability. The continuous struggle of Dalits forced others to provide solutions to their question. These solutions can be divided into two segments: one is the non-Dalits and the other is the Dalits themselves.

i. Non-Dalit Response: Integration in the Fold of a Reformed Hinduism

The traditional Hindu social order relegated the Dalits to ignominious existence, where as the reformist efforts tried to integrate them within the Hindu fold by re-interpreting its tenets. Efforts were made especially by Arya Samaj in the 19th century to fight against caste inequality. There came into existence many associations and societies with the idea of promoting welfare of the Dalits.⁷⁰ Most of these efforts sought to accord the untouchables a place within the Hinduism, which was a pragmatic strategy to arrest the conversion of the Dalits from Hinduism. One such effort which stood of symbolic event was, Gandhi’s integrative approach, he gave a new name Harijan to Dalits, which means

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⁷⁰ Felix Wilfred, “From the Dusty Soil Contextual Reinterpretation of Christianity,” *Madras Department of Christian Studies*, University of Madras, 1995, p 109
the ‘children of God’. It was intended to elevate their social position and give them a sense of identity. However, this could not challenge the deep-rooted caste-structure, which was accepted as the foundational social-order. This clearly indicates that the social situation of Dalits is not just confined to the strong social stratification, but their position in the society is inextricably connected with the religious legitimization of social order given by the upper castes and governed by the laws of Manu Gandhi called them *Harijans* meaning children of God – tried his best for temple entry. The term is now disliked.

### ii. Sanskritization

Sanskritization is another avenue open for the social change. According to M N. Srinivas, Sanskritization is the process by which a ‘low’ Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently ‘twice-born’ caste. Generally such changes are followed by claim to a higher position in the caste hierarchy than the traditionally caste by the local community.\(^{71}\) Sanskritization is not a free and spontaneous step on the part of the untouchables or other backward castes, but an induced process. Here the Hindu way of life is believed to be as ideal to be followed and internalized by the lower castes. As a social process Sanskritization may account for change for some extent, but it is another variation within the walls of caste-prison. It alienates the Dalits from their authentic self and leads them to assume a false identity.

The political priorities of Ambedkar and the interventions he made were, however, the response to the problems he faced and the opportunities available to him in the specific historical conditions of his

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\(^{71}\) M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, New Delhi Orient Longman, 1972, p 6
times. He launched a number of different kinds of struggles and established a variety of organizations. His prolific writings covered a wide range. But his primary concerns during the last years of his life were two. One was the project of establishing such institutions, rules and norms as would end untouchability and exploitation of his people enable them to claim their rights to liberty, equality and human dignity. The second was the creation of a sensitive and civilized society in which there is a climate of fraternity. One of the most significant of his contributions for that purpose was the framing of the Constitutional Law of India.

**Constitutional and Legal Support**

The modern Constitutional and legal provisions are another way or the means opened to remove the stigma of untouchability and eradicate the situation of discrimination and inequality connected with it. There were subsequent legal acts in 1955 and amendment in 1976, which made offences relation to untouchability punishable crime. In the year 1977 the Protection of Civil Rights rules such as Human Rights, Dalit Human Rights, and Minority Rights were passed both by Central and the State governments. The laws of abolishing untouchability remained by and large a revolution on paper. The Government sanctioned several other Constitutional Rights.

As K.L Sharma (1974) observes “there are two patterns of social mobility among the Scheduled Castes, one is the welfare measures have brought about mobility among some selected sections of the Scheduled Castes adversely affecting the hegemony of the dominant castes in the field of education and employment and second is social mobility among

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72 Jimmy Dabhi, "Dalit Human Rights Issues and Perspectives," p 35
the Scheduled Castes is also directly a result of certain socio-cultural movements which in turn has created anti-upper caste attitude and awareness about their own low positions" 75

He also opines that since the Scheduled Castes are highly differentiated in terms of their socio-economic status within themselves, certain sections of them have taken more advantages whereas others have lagged behind. The fact of the emergence of new inequalities with the sub-castes of Scheduled Castes has also been well recognized by almost all the social scientists and this has created a complexity of the social situation to understand the nature and directions of social mobility and change among the weaker sections of the Indian society 76

The empirical studies conducted by S. Patwardhan (1973), Oommen (1968), Chauhan (1967) and Parvathamma (1973) are providing ample evidence that the Scheduled Castes in India are changing with differential social and economic conditions. One of the significant insights which are revealed by the Patwardhan’s study is differential rate of change and degree of mobility broadly speaking the reasons for this differential change in the direction and rate of mobility are historical and psychological. There are both social and non-social factors which explain this uneven development and progress. Mahars have shown the maximum degree of mobility due to the factors like Ambedkar’s leadership, group solidarity, identity and articulation education and so on.77

Apart from these ideological and religious constructions in the initial phase, Dalit struggles in later years came to be centered more on achieving social, economic and political rights as a source of

75 C. L. Sharma, Social Mobility among Scheduled Castes, M D Publications, Pvt, Ltd, New Delhi, 1996, p 6
76 Ibid
77 C. L. Sharma, op cit, p 193
emancipation. Further, in this pursuit Dalits have also attempted to forge a larger unity of the marginalized sections in India.

Though the processes of socio-economic change in Independent India have not altered the Dalits' experiences of exploitation and oppression, it has nevertheless effectuated changes in some of their lives. Apart from creating the context for a sense of awakening, in questioning the caste system and even rejecting Hinduism among Dalits, these changes have also created conditions for their co-option. Though the spread of the education and government employment has made Dalits more aware of their plight, it is through these processes of social mobility that some Dalit communities have begun to visualize themselves, not as separate from the Hindu community, but as a part of it.78

Bernard Cohn's study of Chamars in Sawai Madhopur is a case in point. Cohn pointed out that with education came a change in family structure, domestic ceremonies and religious life of Chamars in Madhopur which showed greater affinity to orthodox Hinduism. With the aim of raising their caste social status this community made a common effort to suppress their distinctive traditional religion.79

Lynch's study of the Jatavs of Agra shows that the urban experience and consequent social mobility created the context for this group’s rejection of not only the caste system but even Hinduism.80 Indeed, in recent times there have been attempts to radicalize the content of the category ‘Dalit’ It envisages a broader unity of all the oppressed Dalits, tribals, Other Backward Castes (OBCs), the working class, peasantry and women in ending subjugation, oppression and exploitation

78 Ibid, p 194
79 Bernard Cohn, An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays, New Delhi Oxford University Press, 1987, p 279
in Indian society. Of course, it is to be seen how far this radical ideological content is translated into common concrete action.

**Kudmul Ranga Rao**

Kudmul Ranga Rao, who devoted his life, and gave up his career and property for the upliftment of the oppressed classes in the pre-Independence era of South Kanara district. Ranga Rao studied the teachings of the Buddha, Basaveshwara, Vivekananda, Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswathi to enable him to convince the upper caste Hindus about universal brotherhood. The message of Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj ‘Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of humanity’ attracted Kudmul Ranga Rao to the Samaj and he treated all human beings as equal irrespective of caste and religion. He believed in the theory that no person is untouchable and he was started to devote his life for the development of the downtrodden people. He was a champion of the oppressed and was one with them till the end of his life.  

K.K. Poojan (1971) explores, “Sri Kudmul Ranga Rao worked incessantly for the uplift of Harijans. He founded Harijan colonies in various parts of the district, fought for their social recognition and status. At a time when society was their oppressor, he consoled them, inviting the Harijans to his house to enjoy his hospitality. He was instrumental in bringing Raja Ram Mohan Roy’s Brahmo Samaj into shap”.  

R.S Padbidri (1971) observes, “his contribution to the Harijan cause was notable in the uplift of the depressed classes and was

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81 Informations from Manohar Nivas, Former Secretary of the Mangalore Brahmo Samaj, and now he was settled in 2 Florey Cres, Mulgrave, Victoria 3170, Australia
contemplating to give himself up exclusively to Hanjan work, staying in the Sadhak Ashram, which he had built at Kadri near Mangalore. B.S Nirody (1971) speaks, “Shri Kudmul Ranga Rao was the foremost and fearless worker of his time for the eradication of caste and other social prejudices and disabilities”. Pandit Ramanath Rao (1928) states, “in recognition of his social and philanthropic work, government conferred on him the title of Rao Saheb”. A B. Shetty (1971) opines, “Shri Kudmul Ranga Rao, who was one of the pioneers of the depressed class movement in Southern India”.

P. Kamalaksha (1986) defines, “Shri Kudmul Ranga Rao had done a considerable amount of pioneering work among the untouchables, drawing upon himself and the members of his family irritated from the orthodox section of Hindu Society”.

Karnataka State Gazetteer (1973) depicts, “the people of the Coastal district of South Kanara have been in touch with foreign countries since a long time. They had the advantage of an earlier introduction of modern education. There is a high percentage of literacy among them and in recent years, a remarkable progress has been achieved in the field of education. There is a tradition of enterprising spirit and active public life. Social workers and nationalist leaders like Kudmul

83 Sadhak Ashram is a spiritual organization dedicated to the help people achieve the righteous knowledge, virtues, righteous action etc
84 Padhuri, R S “Foremost leader of Karnataka,” in Radha Karnad, Saguna Karnad Desai (eds), Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p 66
85 Nirody, B S “Foremost Servant of the Nation,” in Radha Karnad, Saguna Karnad Desai (eds), Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p 65
87 Shetty, A B “A Resplendent example to Emulate,” in Radha Karnad, Saguna Karnad Desai (eds), Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p 71
88 Kamalaksha, P Poojya Kudmul Ranga Rao, (in Kannada), Comprint, Beebi Alabi Road, Mangalore, 1986, p 12
Ranga Rao (1859-1928), Kamad Sadashiva Rao (1881-1937) and others inspired the people and kindled nationalistic ideas in them.  

The above literary survey covers a few shades or projects of Kudmul Ranga Rao for the socio-economic empowerment of the depressed classes people.

2. Statement and Objectives of the Problem

Selection of the Topic

The study aims at analyze and discover the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao towards depressed classes people in undivided Dakshina Kannada. It is felt that the topic in order to discover past trend regarding for a complex whole. The topic has utility and repeats the value of role of Kudmul Ranga Rao and his contribution to the past society, which have shaped the present

Kudmul Ranga Rao was no longer with us today and unfortunately some of the traditions left behind by him are also fast vanishing from our social scene. Therefore there is a necessary need to recollecting the sacred memory of this person and many educational and social institutions are being established for the sake of depressed classes people in the district of his birth. His memory is evergreen and inspires and refreshes

The study was did justice to the many-sided personality of this born leader of men. His work for suppressed and depressed sections of our society will always be remembered by a grateful people. His dedicated life will ever remain an inspiration for generation to come.

Statement of the Problem

The study aims at finding out the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao in the empowerment of depressed classes in Coastal Karnataka.

89 South Kanara District Gazetteer, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore, 1973, p. 674
The earlier South Kanara district was one of the worst strongholds of untouchability in the country. During the closing decades of the last century, a few individuals and institutions did pioneering work in the upliftment of depressed classes in the district. Kudmul Ranga Rao, a devoted worker sacrificed much for promoting the welfare of the depressed sections of the society. Ranga Rao had done a considerable amount of pioneering work among the untouchables in the district.

Objectives

It is in this context that the present study is tried to recollect and document all the efforts and role played by Kudmul Ranga Rao for the empowerment of the Dalits. With this background, the present study is undertaken having the following objectives.

❖ To evaluate the various emancipation and reform projects of India
❖ To study the life and work of Kudmul Ranga Rao
❖ To analyze the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao and his emancipation projects for the eradication of untouchability in earlier South Kanara district
❖ To study the availability of support from others for the empowerment of depressed classes in the post Kudmul Ranga Rao phase of undivided Dakshina Kannada district
❖ To examine the relevance of social thoughts, programmes of Kudmul Ranga Rao to the present situation.

3. Methodology and Profile of the Study Area

The study was carried out at Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts are formerly known as South Kanara district is a region situated in Coastal Karnataka. Historically, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi have been the constituent parts of the larger Kanara region. The Kanara region comprises three Coastal districts of Karnataka, namely Dakshina,
Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada and Kasargod district of Kerala in South Western India.

In present study, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts considered as a study area. It is also called as undivided Dakshina Kannada district. The study covers all the efforts and establishments which adopted by the Ranga Rao, through which he performed activities in the selected area. Opinions collected from the identified people who belong to the study area. Study also takes into considered all the events which undertaken by Ranga Rao in the said area with particular period.

**Research Design**

In the present study, the ‘historical method’ was adopted to collect the information. In a social science, historical method found its expression and application as early as in the middle of the 19th century through the writings of the German Historical School. Past knowledge is considered to be pre-requisite for present knowledge. This is the main argument for the adoption of historical method in present-day social research. Nothing happens in a social vacuum. In so far as anything has an anticipated history and natural development, past is causally related to the present. Although there is inter-temporal change of situations, there are still certain orders and regularities are regarded as process-series sequence-pattern periodicities and cycles.

It is said that history repeats itself. This, though not wholly true, is broadly valid for social phenomena. In order to appreciate these regularities and social influences, one has to resort to the historical method. Historical method is “the induction of principles through research into the past and social forces which have shaped the present”. In order to discover some basis for social activity, the method becomes genetic in character. The main objective of this method is to apply mind
in the matter of various social problems by discovering the past trend regarding facts, events and attitudes, by demarcating the lines of development of thought and action.

Relevant information has been found out by looking into the sources both published and unpublished and to study all the available materials on the subject. Incorporating the various objectives of the research area the interview was conducted and administered to selected people and organizations personally

Information was also collected from published secondary literature like personal accounts and official documents, various records, gazetteers, contemporary documents, photography, related history of great person belonging, to the field investigation They may useful as corroborating evidence

The collected data was judiciously chosen, critically examined and verify, discriminatively used and analyzed

**Tool**

A descriptive, analytical research tool was adopted for the study. To gather the primary information, present study have been consisted various tools like interview, focused group discussion, observation and historical methods, related documents and photography These designs intended to find the social-economic participation of Kudmul Ranga Rao and to analyze the level of empowerment of the depressed classes people. Relevant information collected through personally interviewing the identified respondents like opinion from leaders, public undertaking trusts, specified governmental departments, emancipatory writers, Dalit organizations etc.
Data Collection

Primary data have been collected through the individual interview form the various categories of respondents. Secondary data have been collected from the literature, articles, previous researches, biographies etc.

Data Analysis

The collected data/information was suitably analyzed and documented. Based on the information and the theoretical framework, the final thesis was prepared.

4. Scope and Limitations

The present study is, however, limited to undivided Dakshina Kannada district of Coastal Karnataka, which spread roughly from the period of later half of the 19th century to the 20th century. While taking into account the contribution of the leaders to the cause of liberation of the Dalits in South Kanara, one cannot ignore the contribution of the person named Kudmul Ranga Rao. However, present study is obviously confined to the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao who contributed to the social reform movement and struggled lot for the upliftment of the downtrodden communities. It is however, just restricted to particular person and region. It is a descriptive study of the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao in the empowerment of the depressed classes people in the said area.

The study covers all the shades or aspects of the general liberal projects of emancipation, reform movements and emancipation discourses of different leaders in India, projects, strategies, ideologies and organizations of Kudmul Ranga Rao and how it could empower the lives of depressed classes.

The collection of related data for the study is not made on the basis of sample or census, but on the basis of available information of such
those who could fulfill certain criteria of information. Thus, the study covers all the available and documented informations and their established organizations aimed at Dalit uplift. In order to make it more representative, care has been taken to interview the people who have opinion and influence from the ideology of the Kudmul Ranga Rao were also considered.

The present study as concentrating itself emancipatory measures for depressed classes people from pre-independence to post independence reforms period of the region.

The present study is general to specific rather than specific to general which means that; first, it is studied the emancipation and reform projects by various social reformers in various parts at the national level and come to the specific study of the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao in the emancipation of depressed classes

The present study as confined to micro rather than macro Micro level filed based studies are used as source of information to supplement the secondary data which is relevant, is used for the analysis.

Key Terms

Dalits

For the purpose of the present study Dalit or ex-untouchables means all those people of depressed classes who were traditionally subjected to the invidious discriminations on grounds of untouchability and categorized as the untouchables, downtrodden, exterior classes, depressed classes or the scheduled castes

Dalit Movement

The organizational or institutional efforts made by Dalit and non-Dalit leaders for the liberation of the downtrodden masses could be
termed as Dalit movement. It is a movement of protest against untouchability, casteism, and superstitions. It aims at the uplift of the Dalits to the level of non-Dalits.

Negatively speaking, it stands for the rejection of the old traditional Hindu social order based on untouchability, socio-economic inequality, casteism, unscientific and irrational religious beliefs and customary servitude.

Positively speaking, it stands for the acceptance of a new social order based on equality, liberty, social justice, scientific and rational religious or moral principles and social, economic, cultural and political development of the Dalits.

It is, obviously, the movement to regain self respect and equal human status in the society. The means by which it could operate were bringing awareness among the Dalit masses about their own ‘identity’ as human beings equal to other human beings, inculcating in them the attitude of protest against all sort of injustice, oppressions, and raising organizational strength and pressure against all the forces of inequality in a peaceful manner. Social reform organizations aimed at improving their miserable conditions and to spread education among them. They worked to secure rights of admission to school, drawing water from the public wells, entering the temples and to use the roads.

**Leaders**

Unless the context otherwise requires, leaders are those persons, belonging to the Dalit and non-Dalit communities, endeavoured to liberate the Dalits from untouchability customary servitude, superstitious and tried to uplift them in social, economic, educational and political spheres to the level of caste Hindus. The term includes those persons who
by their exceptional abilities, position and efforts had raised the pride and status of the community and boosted up the morale of their brethren.

**Research Aid**

The present study is however, based on the available literature on the socio-religious reforms movements in general and the role of Kudmul Ranga Rao in the empowerment of the depressed classes people in particular. Especially the biographical literature on the selected person though scanty and described in regional languages proved to be great benefit. The study is obviously based on documents because the person who was selected for the study is no more today.

It was, however, not an easy task. After consulting relevant literature and prominent persons in this field, efforts were made to contact those who know the Kudmul Ranga Rao. The paper notification also were made and requested all the concerned persons that, if they have any information regarding Kudmul Ranga Rao that they would approached in due course of time and give their opinion in this respect. The addresses were collected and establishing rapport with them. This process however, continued intermittently throughout the study period. All most all the respondents were pleased to reveal the required information in this respect. A very few of them appreciated the efforts.

It is, however, true that most of the respondents who were belonged to Dalit community and benefitted from Rao’s ideology being old and infirm, could not recollect almost all the facts. Many of them had no systematic record or written documents with them.

The next of kin and family members of such reformer were not fully able to reveal the facts regarding the life and mission of Kudmul Ranga Rao.
However, certain facts collected during the interviews were duly confirmed by consulting other relevant sources. Apart from that, interviews or discussions with the eminent academicians, Dalit leaders, activists, also proved to be useful in collecting relevant information.

5. Significance of the Study

The Dalit are still subjected to invidious discriminations based on the ground of untouchability. They are the worst sufferers of abject poverty, acute illiteracy, customary servitude, heinous superstitions and intolerable humiliations and other vices that are incidental to connect with untouchability.

This study would enable Dalits to analyze, interpret and appreciated the true leadership. It would be useful for them to developing a sense of brotherhood amongst them. They may be able to struggle for their rightful place in history. Therefore, the history of struggle for the emancipation of Dalits, a sizeable minority from the age-old ugly and oppressive custom of untouchability cannot be ignored, nor could it be underestimated. Even, the struggle for the liberation of Dalits ought to be treated as equal to the struggle for Independence. Therefore, it is necessary to record it with due respect and with the same sense of gratitude to those leaders and their struggle for the liberation of Dalits, as that of the struggle of National independence.

There are, no doubt certain books on Dalit movement and its leaders, but they are scanty and scattered. As most of them are written in the regional languages, they are not easily accessible to others. Hence, such leaders and their mission remained unknown to other regions.

The history of the most leaders who fought for the cause of social reform is not found in consolidated form. The present study however,
gives stress upon the role of the Kudmul Ranga Rao, and his organizations as well as the circumstances in setting the historical events.

It would, of course, be useful as a ready reference to the scholars interested in undertaking intensive research on individual leader, their thoughts and movements, regional movements, and the specific movements. It would be beneficial to those leaders who prefer to take lessons from their past. It would effective to the framers of the policy as they would come to know the current and cross-current of various thoughts and their linkages in the present. Therefore it is of immense value.