CHAPTER III

LIFE AND WORK OF
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Profile of the District

South Kanara district, presently divided into Dakshina Kannada and Udupi district, is situated on the Western Coast of India as one of the districts of Coastal Karnataka. It is placed between Ghats on the one side and the Arabian Sea on the other. The region is distinguishable from other parts of Karnataka in terms of its high trajectory of Industrialization and commercial advancement. In fact, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi have, in the past several decades, witnessed a spectacular growth of industrial and commercial capitalism. The Harbour and the Airport at Mangalore, the Konkan Railway and the National Highways have connected this place with others parts of the country and the world in a major way. In the field of education this region has probably achieved a landmark as other educational institutions. Banking and the hotel industries are the two most important enterprises in which this region has achieved considerable success. Over a period of time, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi have evolved a very well developed system of transport and communication. Consumer consciousness in this region is pretty high as there is a fairly powerful consumer forum operating in the region for the last several decades.171

Historically, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi were under Portuguese occupation for some time. While there were a number of native rulers who showed some initial resistance to the advent of foreigners. Eventually Kanara came under the British rule and became part of the Madras Presidency in 1799. In the year 1822 Kanara came to be divided into North and South and the Northern part went to Bombay Presidency,

while the Southern part remained with the Madras Presidency. After independence, with the reorganization of the states in 1956, South Kanara also was reorganized to include Kundapur from North Kanara and exclude Kasaragod to Kerala. In the course time, South Kanara was renamed officially as Dakshina Kannada. As mentioned already, today, Dakshina Kannada is divided into two districts, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. As a region Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts appear truly multicultural as it is constituted by divergent social, cultural and linguistic identities and interests.  

The area of the district stretches to about 4,843 sq. kms. Its border starts from Shambavi River near Mulki and spreads beyond Payashwini River up to Sampaje village of Sullia Taluk. The district border touches the Arabian Sea and the Kerala state in the West, Kodagu district in the South, Hasan and Chikmagalur districts in the East and Udupi district in the north. The district has 5 taluks, 173 17 Hoblies, 206 Grama Panchayats, 371 inhabited villages, 15 towns/cities, 4 Corporation/Municipalities/Town Panchayats and 114 hamlets.

The land-holding pattern in undivided Dakshina Kannada is something similar to the pattern existing elsewhere where the upper castes hold the land and the lower castes remain land-labourers as well as landless peasants. 174 Feudal relationships sustain the socio-economic pattern of life in Dakshina Kannada where the land-holders socially and economically control the landless and elicit their obedience.

In Dakshina Kannada the landless lived under the control of the landholders who not only maintained their dominance over the landless.
but also their caste superiority. There are many instances of physical
torture being meted out to them.\textsuperscript{175} Along with economic and caste
disadvantage, the fear factor had also made the landless to be obedient to
their counterparts. It was the Land Reforms Act of 1974 that
significantly altered their condition. It helped the landless indeed the
lower castes to at least hold on to their patches of land-holdings, if not in
the form of cultivable land at least a house to live in. Along with the
Boosa Episode\textsuperscript{176} the changes in land-holding completely changed the
attitude of the lower castes in general and SCs/STs in particular. They
had already experienced a social reformation introduced by Kudmul
Ranga Rao.\textsuperscript{177} Land reforms as well as the Boosa episode helped in a big
way to bring the exploited together.

Religious composition of the district included Hindu, Islam,
Christianity and Jainsm as major religion. Major castes of the region is,
Brahmins, Gowda Saraswats, Bunts, Billavas, Mogaveeras, SCs and STs
Major language used Tulu, Kannada, Konkani and Malayalam.\textsuperscript{178}

The main occupations of the people in the district are agriculture,
horticulture, beedi-rolling and fishing. Hotels and the banking sector are
also in the mainstream of the socio-economic development of the
district.\textsuperscript{179}

The social reality of Dalits in Dakshina Kannada has a different
story to tell in comparison with the trends in the rest of Karnataka. Caste
and sub-caste consciousness is deeply rooted in the cultural life of Dalits

\textsuperscript{175} Naik, Dayanand \textit{The Dalit Movement in Dakshina Kannada and Mysore Districts: A Comparative
Analysis} (Unpublished Thesis), submitted to Department of Studies in Political Science Mangalore
University, Konaje 2003, pp 192-193

\textsuperscript{176} A Dalit political leader Basavalingappa called all the literary works as Boosa - means cattle field
That became a controversial issue on the upper castes raised voice against the statement

\textsuperscript{177} Kudmul Ranga Rao was the local hero who worked for the social reform especially for the cause of
the untouchables

\textsuperscript{178} Government of Karnataka, South Kanara District Gazetteer, Bangalore, 1973, pp 105-106

\textsuperscript{179} Annexure-III
who assert their caste identity and have apprehensions about using the term Dalit which transcends sub-caste identity. The South Kanara district Gazetteer provides a list of 56 castes which were identified as the Scheduled Castes. The following are the significant sub-castes existing in Dakshina Kannada as of now. All of them wish to be identified by their caste appellations rather than by the broader ideological enumeration called Dalits: 1 Mundala, 2 Mogera, 3 Nalkeyaya or Nalkedaya or Nalkes, 4 Parava, 5 Pambada, 6 Samagara, 7 Raneyar, 8 Holeya, 9 Ajila, 10 Adi dravida, 11 Baira, 12 Bakuda, 13 Godda, 14 Madiga, 15 Chamar, Muchi or Mochi.

Dakshina Kannada District, with its multifaceted facilities, to professionals, students as well as businessmen, entertains a big floating population, if not in all the taluks of Dakshina Kannada district, at least in Mangalore. Such a phenomenon leaves out of account a good number of house-holds in official documentation. Similarly from the district a significant proportion of the population has emigrated elsewhere but continues to cherish strong ethnic bonds with the place. Such households constitute a big chunk and their socio-economic background has gone unnoticed. Undoubtedly, the five taluks of the divided district and the eight taluks of the undivided district have been affected significantly by the demographic shifts.

Land has been an important issue in Dakshina Kannada, as elsewhere, and the agenda of the Dalit Movement reflected the same now and then. Heavy pressure on the district administration by the Dalit Sangharsa Samiti resulted in the distribution of land wherever it was.

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180 Talukwise distribution of Population of Dakshina Kannada District in 1991
181 Till 1998 Dakshina Kannada included both the present districts, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi
available. In 1989, 1225.33 acres of land was declared surplus under the Karnataka Land Reforms Act of 1961. Out of it, the district administration declared an extent of 1004.14 acres of land as under litigation and re-enquiry at the level of the land tribunal. An extent of 221.19 acres was available and was distributed to the beneficiaries.\textsuperscript{182} Landholdings pattern of the Scheduled Castes are relatively smaller as compared to those of the others\textsuperscript{183}. The relationship between land and Dalits suggest that in spite of certain initiatives taken by the government, a large number of Dalits in Dakshina Kannada have remained landless and their condition has not gone through any appreciable change. Many of them live in the house constructed by the government and earn their livelihood by working for others. Most of the landless Dalits are wage labourers, they are locally called ‘coolies’\textsuperscript{184}. Some of the menial jobs they have undertaken only show their condition of being poor. The economic condition of Dalits makes them respond to the authorities very positively\textsuperscript{185} not only to attract their attention but also to persuade them to take up programmes according to the constitutional provisions.

**Ideological Influence of Pre-Kudmul Ranga Rao Phase**

During the later part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century and early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Dakshina Kannada witnessed a vast variety of developments of immense social, cultural and political significance. The most important among them, being the activities of the Christian Missionaries,

\textsuperscript{182} Annexure-V

\textsuperscript{183} Annexure -VI

\textsuperscript{184} Informations collected from the officials of Social Welfare Department, Mangalore, Dakshina Kannada

\textsuperscript{185} In demanding land for cultivation and demanding jobs/work Dalits have marched towards District Commissioner’s office several times. The DSS report 2002-2003 says that there have been four instances of marching towards the District Commissioner’s office demanding jobs/work or land.

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particularly the Basel Mission and the advent of the social reform movements like Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalana Samiti. The achievements of Basel Mission are exceptional as it played a pioneering role in the fields of education, health and employment. Kudmul Ranga Rao, a prominent social reformer of the region, in association with the other backward caste leaders.186

Kudmul Ranga Rao is a popular name among the social reformers of Coastal Karnataka who engaged himself in the movement for social justice. There is a belief among Dalits in this region that it was he who provided a social base and meaning to Dalit emancipation through social reform. Many Dalit leaders while drawing inspiration from him recall his name with respect and recognize his effort in opening up the Hindu society for their inclusion. It might be useful to highlight the conditions existing in Dakshina Kannada prior to his intervention in order to grasp his contribution in proper perspective. During the pre-Kudmul Ranga Rao phase the notable intervention was the work of Basel Mission, a Christian Missionary Organization, for the uplift of the depressed classes or the downtrodden in the district.187

The South Kanara region became a favourable base where the Basel Mission implemented its activities like Education and social and economic assistance to those who were in need of such assistance. The lower castes, especially the untouchables, greatly benefited out of such schemes of assistance.188 The social mosaic of South Kanara was informed by diverse ethnic currents along with religion, language and

customs largely shaped by Dravidian influences. The whole of the population, with the exception of Muslims, Christians and Jains, today call themselves Hindus though they are divided into more than 600 separate castes. The region was largely inhabited by non-Brahmins, the depressed classes and Adivasis for long. Caste hierarchy along with the practice of untouchability, as it prevailed elsewhere, was prevalent in South Kanara. The Bunts were not only the landed gentry, but also were ranked high among the non-Brahmins. The Billavas, Mogaveeras (Fishermen) and other castes were very backward and worked as landless labourers in the area. The members of Dalit castes like Holeyas and Mundalas who constituted field labourers and former agriculture serfs of South Kanara lived tied to their landlords as under feudalism. Adivasis like Malekudiyas and Koragas, the sons of the soil, were truly marginalized apart from being deeply poverty ridden.

Till the 18th and early part of the 19th century, caste system was alive and kicking in the district and it paved the way for the sustenance of the Brahmnic hierarchical system and feudalism in the social life of Dakshina Kannada. This system made a large section of the people in the region live in hunger, illiteracy and poverty. The only socio-economic link between the landed gentry and semi bonded or landless labourers was that the former controlled the bootha or village deities, and the latter too were beholden to these deities. This worship ensured that the traditional way of living of the depressed classes with the practice of casteism and untouchability bound up with it was not challenged by any caste or community until the arrival of the Basel Mission in Dakshina Kannada.

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189 J Sturrock, Madras District Manuals South Kanara, Vol 1, Madras, Government of Madras, 1894, p 134
191 Ibid, p 51
192 Ibid
Indeed, the pre-Kudmul Ranga Rao phase of reform was mainly dominated by Missionary activity. The former students of the Basel College, who had come to this country in the service of English societies, had been sending reports calculated to rouse interest in India and to persuade the community of the great need for missionary work in this country.\(^{193}\)

A commission discussed the matter of opening Mission fields in India and the finance needed for such work. Eventually the commission took the decision to open a Mission field in India. When the English Parliament declared India open for non-English Missionaries, the Basel Mission sent out its first three Missionaries to the West-Coast of India—Lehner, Gleimer and Samuel Hebich. They arrived in Mangalore in 1834. They were warmly received by the sub-collector of the place who helped them greatly in their work. These Missionaries began to study the language of the people—Kanarese, Tulu and Malayalam. Samuel Hebich traveled a great deal around and met the Missionaries of other Missions, specially the Missionaries working in Kanarese and Malayalam speaking areas, sharing their experiences.\(^{194}\) As more Missionaries came in, the work was extended to different areas—South Kanara 1834, South Marata (Bombay Karnataka) in 1837, Dharwad and Hubli 1839, Honnavara 1845 and Coorg in 1853.\(^{195}\) Later, Coorg became a part of the South Kanara district council.

The Basel Missionaries, as mentioned earlier, after arriving at Bokkapatna in Mangalore on 30th October, 1834, purchased a house from

\(^{194}\) Ibid
\(^{195}\) Jayanth M Jogula, A study of the attitude of the Basel Mission churches in India and South India, Bangalore United Theological College, 1964, p 64
a Parsee in the present Mission Street area in Mangalore, and started to study the social situation of Dakshina Kannada. Initially when the Missionaries converted some natives to Christianity, they gathered on every Sunday for prayer in a hall at Nireshwalya near old Bunder in Mangalore. But after 1840, Balmatta, situated in the southern part of the city developed as the centre of the Mission, which in fact was the first base of the Basel Mission Society in India.196 Most of the Basel Mission Christians in South Kanara were the Billavas who were also then semi-untouchables. They occupied a low position in caste hierarchy. As observed earlier, they were mostly tenants and landless labourers working for the Bunts and other caste-Hindus.197 In spite of all the criticisms against conversion, the Basel Mission engaged itself in social transformation, especially in taking care of the poor and the disabled.

**The Role of Brahmo Samaj**

In 1850, 60s there are no temple for all the people. Brahmins were considered upper caste and rest of the caste considered as lower. People belonging to Saraswat, Gowda Saraswat and Billava communities need to search for the alternative worshiping pattern. At the same time in Kolkata Rajaram Mohan Roy was established a Brahmo faith which thoughts about monotheism i.e. believing only one god and it strongly rejects the idol worshiping, Smruthis, Vedas, Puranas. It based the principle called ‘Satyam, Jnanam, Anantham’ which means ‘truth, knowledge, and infinitive’.

In 1868 the Saraswat and Gowda Saraswat Brahmins led by Ullala Raghunatharaha and Billava community led by Nireshvalya Arasappa they come together and wanted to start Brahmo Samaj in Mangalore. In 1870

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196 Peter Wilson Prabhakar, *op. cit.*, p. 22
they founded Brahmo Samaj branch in Kodialbail. Every Sunday 8 to 9 a.m. they used to gather together and started to practice Brahmo philosophy. Even today this practice is continued in Mangalore. Later the close relationship between Ullala Raghunathaiah and Kudmul Ranga Rao makes the Ranga Rao to indulge with Brahmo philosophy. At the same time the period which not favour to the depressed classes people, their condition is very pathetic and very poor. Kudmul Ranga Rao tried to bring the depressed class people into Brahmo Samaj.

Prior to Rao’s full time social work, a branch of the Brahmo Samaj was founded at Mangalore in May 1870. The priority issue for its early leaders was not merely one of establishing a branch of Brahmo Samaj but also of opposing the gross activities of the Missionaries in converting the Billavas into Christianity. The Brahmo Samaj strove to reduce the exploitation caused in the name of caste and class equations. It began to take interest in the most backward in the society and attempted to uplift them by providing certain facilities, especially by according them recognition as human beings which was indeed missing till that date. When it began to address questions of caste exploitation Brahmo Samaj appears to have come under severe criticism.198 Besides, providing humanitarian assistance, it extended basic resources to the people who were in need of them.

In the urban areas people were in close touch with the day to day developments, and a feeling of political and spiritual nationalism spread among them. When hundreds of Billavas in the rural areas were converted to Christianity during the ‘Tulu movement’, Billavas in the urban areas came to resist the Missionary work by organizing the Brahmo

198 United Theological College, Indian Church History, Review, Vol XVII, No 2, Bangalore, 1984, pp 41- 148
Samaj However, under the leadership of Ullala Raghunathaiah and Baradwaj Shiva Rao, another socio-religious reformatory society called ‘Upasana Sabha’ (worship society) was started on June 11th, 1870 by the Saraswat Brahmin community in Mangalore. Though Raghunathaiah was the leader of both the Saraswat Brahmin community and Upasana Sabha, he maintained close contact with Nireshvalya Arasappa, the president of Mangalore Brahmo Samaj and actively participated in its various reforming activities.

The establishment of the Brahmo Samaj in Mangalore affected Missionary activities. In 1903, a Brahmo Samaj missionary namely Bhai Baladeva Narayana from Bombay came to Mangalore and a Theosophical preacher came to Kundapur. They started propagating the doctrines of the Samaj and Society respectively against the preachings of the Missionaries. In 1903, Brahmo Samaj took steps to warn people through a paper called ‘West Coast Spectator’ not to send their children to Mission schools, as they tend to vitiate the minds of India’s young generation. In 1903, in Mangalore the emissary of the Samaj started a school at Nireshvalya, (near old Harbour in Mangalore) near one of the Mission schools and warned his followers not to send the children to the latter.

Apart from it, Annie Besant called upon Hindus to establish their own schools as Mission schools their children’s religion was blasphemed and their moral principles undermined. Her Theosophical

199 Ibid
203 Ibid, p 62
204 Ibid, pp 73–74
Society also joined hands with Brahmo Samaj and started to educate the depressed class people and resorted to other socio-religious activities.

Thus, the Brahmo Samaj during the pre-Kudmul Ranga Rao phase got into a kind of politics of opposition to the Basel Mission with a single point agenda of fighting the conversion process. On the other hand, Basel Mission could not continue its full fledged conversion movement because of the attitude of the British Government after World War I on the one hand and the influence of Brahmo Samaj, Theosophical Society and the Aryasamaj on the other, even though, Basel Mission paved the way for the downtrodden of the region to think about and act upon the caste system and pursue their social, religious and economic freedom.

The Role of Arya Samaj

Unlike the Brahmo Samaj the branch of Arya Samaj in Mangalore was established relatively late. Arya Samaj was started by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875. In 1918, Prof Khanch and Verma, Principal, Dayanand Anglo Vedic College, Lahore, visited Mangalore and delivered a talk on the principles of Arya Samaj. He was able to influence some of the prominent citizens of Mangalore like K R Karanth, Dr. K. Shyama Rao, K Rama Rao and M. Anantha Krishna Rao who together worked hard to establish a branch of the Samaj in the city in 1918 under the leadership of K R Karanth.205

As Arya Samaj started its work in Mangalore very late, it did not affect the early evangelistic work of the Basel Mission. By then the Mission had been banned by the British Government.206 This ensured that

205 See P K Narayana, op cit, pp 36-37 And Peter Wilson Prabhakar, op cit, p 91
206 Ibid
the Basel Mission and Arya Samaj never had to cross swords with each other on evangelical issues.207

Arya Samaj conducted the Shuddhi of the converts and Dalits by making them wear the sacred thread and recite Gayatri Mantra. It established a general school in the 1920s called Vidhyadaini Higher primary school and orphanage institutions for boys and girls at Kadrigudda and Aryasamaj Road, Balmatta in Mangalore respectively. The Panchamas were allowed into the school at Kadrigudda in the 1920s in spite of the objections of the higher castes. Panchama teachers were made 'Shuddha' through the Shuddhi process and appointed to the school209 to impart education.210 Inter-caste marriages and the Shuddhi process are being carried out even today in the Arya Samaj institution at Balmatta, Mangalore.211 Arya Samaj got into almost a different set of activities as compared to the Brahmo Samaj and brought altogether new social changes.

The Kudmul Ranga Rao Phase
(Born: 29.06.1859, Died: 30.01.1928)

His Early Life

Kudmul Ranga Rao was born on 29 June, 1859 at a small village 'Kudmul' in Kasaragod district, earlier is a part of former South Kanara district and 40 Kilo Meter far from Mangalore of new Dakshina Kannada District, in a well known and honourable Gowda Saraswat Brahmin family. The Brahmins in general have been divided into two broad groups. According to Skandapurana, the Brahmins that lived in the North

207 Naik Dayananda, op cit, pp 207-209
208 Ibid
209 Ibid
210 Ibid
211 Ibid
of the Vindhyas were called Gowda Brahmins and those from the South the Dravidas. Each group was divided into five sections according to the regions of their settlement. The five Gowda Brahmin groups were: the Saraswats from the banks of the Saraswati River, Kaanyakubjas, from Kanauj, Gowda, from the banks of the South Ganga or Bengal, Utkals, from Orissa and the Maithilas, from Mithila in Bihar. The five Dravida groups were: the Maharashtras, Andhrs, Dravidas, from Tamilnadu, Karnata, from Karnataka and the Gurjaras, from Gujarat. As the southern Brahmins had domiciled in the South for long the Saraswats, who came to the South newly were described by the local Brahmins as Gowda Brahmins and thus the prefix Gowda was added to the Saraswats. These Brahmins are a professional group, expected to engage themselves in six karmas or six-fold duties. The six Karmas enjoined on them are 1) Yajnya or performing sacrifices by officiating as priests 2) Yaajana or causing the performance of the sacrifice by being the financier or the Yajaman. These sacrifices were performed for the spiritual benefit of the whole human society 3) Adhyayana or engaging oneself in academic pursuits 4) Adhyapana or teaching. 5) Daana or giving gifts 6) Prateegraha or accepting gifts.

During British rule in South Kanara district the people of this Chitrapur community came to be appointed as Shanbhags in most of the villages in South and North Kanara, and thus, the Chitrapur Saraswats have almost as many surnames as the villages in these two districts, and the surnames like Ullal, Udyavar, Beltangady, Honnavara, Chandavar, Kodkani etc represent the place where the ancestors of the holders of these surnames had been Shanbhags or village accountants. Due to certain peculiar historical and social reasons, this group of people took to English education earlier than all other communities in Kanara and came...
to dominate in the civil service under the British in these two Kanara districts.

The Gowda Saraswats being close to the corridors of power in Kanara took to English education earlier than others. They were hospitable to new thoughts and some of them were very much moved by the propaganda of the Basel Mission who was the first to bring English education to South Kanara. Many were upset by the criticism of the Hindu religion by the Christian Missionaries. Some of the points raised by the Missionaries in their criticism were right, some others wrong, but on the whole directed towards maligning Hinduism. Some newly educated Chitrapur Saraswat young men at the Mangalore Mission High School even thought of embracing Christianity. But a book by Raja Ram Mohan Roy made them think in new directions and they accepted the tenets of Brahmo Samaj and started its branch at Mangalore. It was one such noble spirit Kudmul Ranga Rao who took up the cause of the depressed classes and started the Depressed Classes Mission at Mangalore in 1897. Some of the Chitrapur Saraswats were also influenced by the Theosophical Society and rendered yeoman service to the cause of female education in Mangalore.


Ranga Rao’s father Sri Devappayya was working as clerk under a Muslim landlord. Devappayya was a simple and religious man. He was heading a middle class poor life. Ranga Rao’s mother Smt. Gowry was
deeply pious, truthful, gentle and polite. Ranga Rao was the first son among the seven children of Devappayya. At the age of sixteen, Ranga Rao lost his father. His life was not a bed of roses. He had to suffer a number of difficulties. In the middle of all the hardships, he completed his primary education at Kasargod and moved towards Mangalore in search of his fortune. At Mangalore, he was able to get a teaching job for eight Rupees as monthly salary. But he became a cult phenomenon among his pupils as well as the surrounding people. As teacher, he was very humble and affectionate. He was a down-to-earth person. In his youth, he had the revolutionary ideas on the difficulties of the suppressed. He used to mingle with the poor and depressed caste section of the society. He is a man of heart in sleeves. His wife Rukmini Amma, even though less educated, was a gentle and innocent lady, who co-operated in all sphere of Ranga Rao’s life. Her role in her husband’s life is notable. She never word against her husband, never interfere her husband’s social, religious as well as humanitarian purpose. She always encourages and supports her husband.

Later Ranga Rao completed matriculation examination through correspondence course, which was followed by pleadership examination. He worked very hard to achieve his goal. Later he started his career as a lawyer at Mangalore district. He had to maintain a large family. He had three sons, Deva Rao, Amritha Rao, and Sanjeefa Rao, and three daughters Smt. Lalitha Bai, Smt Radha Bai, and K. Shantha Rao. But Ranga Rao lost his two sons in their very young age. Devaraya, his elder son worked as a clerk at District Board office. Devaraya’s son Sadashiva Rao Kudmul secured graduation on 1933 at Mangalore, and worked for

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Japanese Company at Karachi. Later he came back to Mumbai and worked as an Assistant Accountant in TATA Company’s airlines Department. In 1970 he retired from the post of accountant officer at Indian Airlines. Now he resides at Santakruz in Mumbai.

Ranga Rao’s elder daughter Smt Lalithabhai married Diwan Bahadur Nayampalli Subba Rao His second daughter Smt. Radhabai married Dr. Subrayan, past president of Madras Presidency, who became Cabinet Minister in the Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi Cabinet Rajagopalcharya had taken the initial of this inter-caste marriage. Radhabai’s son General Kumara Mangalam became the general of Indian army. He was our first chief of the army staff. Ranga Rao’s youngest daughter Shanta Rao, working as a lecturer in a college at Libia.

Ranga Rao’s Contact with Brahmo Samaj Institution

While working as a teacher at Mangalore, Ranga Rao had a close intimacy with Raghunathaiyah, the founder of Brahmo Samaj at Ullala Raghunathaiyah was Ranga Rao’s brother-in-law. He was a gentle as well as a pious man He was against some of the existing practices of Hindu religion like superstitious beliefs, blind-fold practices. During this peak time, Mangalore witnessed the spread of the German Missionary activities It had a great effect of Raghunathaiyah. Later he converted to Christianity But soon he realized that the mental stress, suffering of his family members and converted into Brahmo Samaj. He was the first person to introduce, and establish the branch of Brahmo Samaj Mangalore The intimacy between Ranga Rao with Raghunathaiyah is praiseworthy

213 P Kamalaksha, op cit., 1986, pp 15-17
Ranga Rao was not happy with some of the false and superstitious beliefs of Hindu religion, especially child marriage, the harassment of women and widows, treatment of women by the society and the Devadasi system prevailed in Hindu society. Ranga Rao was touched by women’s hardships. If one wants to change the society it is true that one has to change himself first. So, Ranga Rao decided to join the Brahmo Samaj.

**Ranga Rao as a Lawyer**

As a lawyer he dedicated himself for truth and righteousness and the upliftment of the poor and suppressed. Due to his noble work he received the name, ‘lawyer of poor’ and ‘friend of poor’. Once an upper caste man raped a lower caste woman and becomes the reason for her pregnancy. Ranga Rao fought in favour of that lady against the caste Hindu and able to provide justice to her. Even though he became the victim of outraged Hindus, lower caste people worshiped him. His character attracted even the British Juries, who respected him the most.

In 19th century while British were governing our country South Kanara was under Madras Presidency. British gave more prominence for the development and the upliftment of the lower caste people. Even they opened schools, public wells, and separate colonies for their benefit. One such school was at Valencia in Mangalore. That school provided free mid-day meal for the students in those days. Mr. Rebello was appointed as the teacher. Bendur Babu, who belongs to depressed caste society, studied up to 4th standard in this school, and he became the role model for Ranga Rao in later fortune.

There is an incident to support the same. Once, when Ranga Rao was working as a lawyer at Mangalore district Court, the British judge appointed Bendur Babu as a clerk in the district court. But the upper caste people were against this appointment and protested. But unfortunately, the
British judge got transferred and he wants to clear the upper castes anxiety, so he called Babu as well as Ranga Rao, and said he want to cancel Babu’s appointment order, to avoid the Bendur Babu from the upper caste harassment. Further he requested Ranga Rao to make arrangement of good education for lower caste people and bring them as self developed and self respected. This incident had a great impact on Ranga Rao. Even though it is a milestone for his overall responsibility, it became a turning point in his concern for lower caste people. That incident take place around 1887-88.214

This incident made him to isolate himself from his work as lawyer; he spent much of his time for the upliftment of depressed caste people. He was much worried about the problems faced by lower caste people, and exploitation made by the upper castes. He desires to change the social system, where one human being treated another as an animal. His mind was always wandering on how to change the existing social set up of the society, how to eradicate the caste system, social inequality and untouchability, how to purify our sole, as human beings are the supreme creature of God’s creation. He decided that it was his duty and responsibility to work for the suppressed in order to bring them up in the society. He tried his best to fulfill that goal even he left his practice for this purpose. At that time he was just thirty years old. His main motto to bring reformatory changes in the belief system, ritual and life styles of the downtrodden people. He with the help of Ulla Raghunathaiah started an office called ‘Depressed Classes Mission’ (DCM), Kodialbail, Mangalore in 1897, and elected Raghunathaiah, as the secretary of that office. After, he start all creative and reformatory activities towards downtrodden under the Mission. The objects of the Mission were: spread of educating among.

214 Source Interviewed with Sita Bai, Former Warden, on 4/2/2009 at the office of Ranga Rao Girl’s Hostel, Kudmul Ranga Rao Road, Kodialbail, Mangalore – 1
the untouchables, to seek to provide employment for them, to try to remove social restrictions imposed on them and to impart religious teaching to them to make them better citizens.\textsuperscript{215}

**His Humbleness and Simplicity**

Ranga Rao was a religious person. He had full belief on God. Every day, without praying God he never had anything. He was a great thinker as well as very generous. He treated his enemies as friends. He was a rationalist. Even though he was threatened to death, and he was insulted many times, he never gave up his determination and moral values.

Daddalkad Anand, who lived at Daddalkad colony in Mangalore, was working as a lower level clerk in Depressed Classes Mission institution. The main branch of the institution was at Shedigudde. Anand’s routine work was to take letters from the main branch and from the school at Court Hill and to deliver it to Ranga Rao’s house. Once Ranga Rao had to go out for some urgent work. So he requested Anand to deliver the letters before 10 a.m. next morning. But that particular day the Headmaster of Shedigudde School was late. Due to this Anand could not deliver letters on time. Ranga Rao was very furious, and took Anand to task. He was not ready to listen to Anand’s explanations, though Anand very politely started to mumble the actual situation. Ranga Rao went away. Later Anand narrated the incident to the Headmaster. Headmaster was felt guilty as he was responsible for the whole incidents. The Headmaster wrote a letter to Ranga Rao and clarified the matter. When Ranga Rao came to know the truth, he regretted that the poor clerk had to

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid, and interview conducted with the Devadasa Kudroli, a noted religious singer of Kudroli, who received ‘Kanakadasa’ award recently. He is the man who strongly believed the ideas of Kudmul Ranga Rao for the benefit of the Scheduled castes communities.
undergo misery. He called the clerk and told him that by mistake he had punished him. So as compensation, he would offer him an Idli and a cup of Coffee from his breakfast every morning. The above incidents show how humble and pure in heart and nature Ranga Rao was.\textsuperscript{216}

Ranga Rao was a man of curiosity. He participated many debates and involved himself in it. Later he used to write articles and published them in newspapers. He was fluent in many languages like Kannada, English, Konkani, and Tulu. He was a great speaker, writer and also loved reading different kinds of books. He had his own library at Depressed Classes Mission office. Once, Depressed Classes Mission office faced a great financial crisis. It was difficult for Ranga Rao even to fulfill the basic necessities like food. In this critical situation Ranga Rao suddenly remembered famous British industrialist Sirman Morgan Dore. Immediately Ranga Rao ordered his secretary Ekambaraya to write a letter to him, mentioning the hard time of Depressed Classes Mission office as Sirman Morgan Dore used to give enough donations and present for the office. Ekambaraya writes a letter to Mr. Dore and sends the letter with Gopalkrishna Master, who belongs to depressed caste and resided at Kunjibettu near Udupi. But Mr. Dore got angry after reading the letter and aggressively he tells Gopalkrishna Master to leave the place. Gopalkrishna Master directly goes to Ranga Rao and describes each and everything to him. Ranga Rao reads the letter and feels very sorry because the letter was in the form of an order instead of a request or submission to send money. On the back side of the letter, Ranga Rao once again writes requesting for money and asks Gopalkrishna Master to give the letter to Mr. Dore. Soon after reading the letter Mr. Dore ties a number of silver coins in a towel and gives to Gopalkrishna Master and

\textsuperscript{216} Source Interviewed with Ram Kumar, Taluk Extension Officer of Backward Classes and Minorities, on 7/4/2010 at the office of Taluk Panchayat, Mangalore – 1
said to give those coins to Ranga Rao. This shows Ranga Rao’s effective, heart touching writing style. Those letters had a great impact on the readers.\(^{217}\)

**Ranga Rao’s Creative Works**

At the end of 19th century Ranga Rao started his social reformation. During that time the untouchables were not allowed to enter any schools or colleges. They were not allowed to use public wells, hotels and rivers. So the upper class people never liked the people who worked for these downtrodden. Even they opposed such works. But Ranga Rao never cared for society, even his family members. Again the untouchables were not willing for any change as they faced many threats from upper caste people. Upper caste people thought that if they supported the betterment of untouchables, then there would not be any serf or slave to work for them, as feudalism was prevailed during that day. Meanwhile, the untouchables had different sections among themselves. These uneducated people were very superstitiously and thought that if they revolt against the existing social system God might punish them. So, even these untouchables were against Ranga Rao’s wish. But Ranga Rao with all patience, intelligence and with a broad smile he faced all the opposition. His only dream was to educate untouchables. He wanted to bring social awareness, intellectual consciousness, and belief among each other, self-respect, good righteousness, nobility and intellectual refinement among untouchables. In order, to fulfill his dreams Ranga Rao planned for certain schemes. With the help of the friends, he worked to bring them...

\(^{217}\) Ibid
into practice. As a first step he planned to open residential schools for untouchables in all over the district.\textsuperscript{218}

**Establishment of First School for Untouchables**

In 1892, for the first time he opened a school for untouchables at Urva Chilimbi, in Mangalore. He purchased a small house for rent. But very soon the school was closed by the upper caste people. They started disturbance to the children though they were very few in number, but Ranga Rao’s determination was not shaken. Later he started primary schools for the first time at Kankanadi and Boluru in Mangalore. However, when Hindu teachers refused to teach for the lower caste children, Ranga Rao appointed Christian teachers.\textsuperscript{219} Later at Shedigudde in Mangalore he opened a school as well as a diploma school for untouchables. He also built residences for Koraga sect of people at Shedigudde, and financially helped them to develop their handicraft works and cottage industries. He also helped to acquire land for Koraga people at Udupi and Puttur. He constructed a residential school for girls. Those children who learnt up to 4\textsuperscript{th} standard, Ranga Rao sent them to study teachers training course. Ranga Rao had constructed many schools at Attavarara Babugudde School, Daddal Kadu, Ullala, Mulki and Udupi. He appointed those students who were trained in teachers training course as the teachers for these schools. During that time, the school opened by Ranga Rao was known as ‘Panchama Schools’. Here Ranga Rao provides mid-day meals for the students. In order to encourage these students to attend the school regularly, he used to give two paisa to six paisa for students. Mundappa Master, Benduru Babu Master, Byaripalla Angara

\textsuperscript{218} Ibid

\textsuperscript{219} Radha Karnad, Saguna Karnad Desai (eds.), *Apostle of Sacrifice*, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971 p 30
Mastar, Putta Master, Basava Mastar, Kapikadu Paddu Mastar, Guruva Mastar, J Babu Mastar, Koraga Mastar, and U. Koti Mastar, Udupi Govinda Mastar, were some of the famous teachers who studied in these schools (Master referred to a Male school teacher). Ranga Rao for a long time tried his best to run these schools with the help of some of his close friends and well wishers. But very soon he realized that it is difficult to run the schools in a proper way. He brings all the educational institutions and its activities under Depressed Classes Mission.\textsuperscript{220}

**Ranga Rao’s Efforts to Eradicate Slavery**

In around thousand years ago the untouchables or lower caste people, tribal people, in order to fulfill or earn their basic necessities like food and cloth, worked like animals in others estates and lands. There was no individuality or the awareness of human rights. During that time the tribal people were lived in a dense forest constructing small huts known as ‘Koppa’ using bamboo sticks. Their living condition was terribly poor. They didn’t have proper cloths to wear. The birds, animals, edible roots, fruits, vegetables, were their main food. They were very hard workers. But at the same time they were superstitious, uncultured and they were away from all the norms of the society. Ranga Rao wanted to change the living condition of these tribal peoples. He was worried to see them in that condition. He spent much of his time thinking how to change these people. He wanted to educate them. He was eagerly waiting to see them living like cultured human beings. Ranga Rao’s only dream was to see untouchables and tribal people enjoying all the social privileges.

He wanted to develop small-scale industries to help these people.

\textsuperscript{220} Ibid, pp 31-32
But Ranga Rao’s intension was not so easy to fulfill. He had to face many opposition and fortunes from traditional and upper caste people as well as his own family members. But Ranga Rao knew his goal very well. His determination, his will power was stronger and this helped him to overcome all the difficulties.  

Distribution of Lands for Agriculture and Houses for the Untouchables

Ranga Rao was able to secure lands from rich land owners, some for money and some for Moolageni land holdings. He distributed these lands for downtrodden people to construct houses and for irrigation purpose. At Kapikadu colony in Mangalore he constructed a ‘Sabha Bhavan’ known as ‘Star Hole’ for lower caste peoples. So that, they can use it for prayer, for ‘Bhajans’ (singing devotional songs), and for daily worship. According to Ranga Rao’s instruction each Saturday people gathered there for ‘Bhajans’ and prayers. This was like a social gathering; here he also encouraged cultural activities. Before going for prayer at ‘Star Hole’ Ranga Rao took all the untouchables to ‘Mundan’, to take bath, where the place the natural waterfall situated. Due to this system the untouchables started to take bath before they visit temples. Ranga Rao also imposed certain restrictions for the lands, which he had given for these people. Firstly these lands should not be sold for others at any cost. Secondly, with in the untouchables if they want to sell the land, they must get the permission from Depressed Classes Mission office. He constructed doors at entrance for Bijjai Kapikadu colony and Daddalakadu Colony and he used to lock these doors during the night.

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221 See Padbidri, R S “Foremost leader of Karnataka,” in Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p 66 and Interviewed with Balachandra Kavur, Rt Police Constable, on 10/5/2010 at the Bijjai, Mangalore – 1
time  Even if the police, government employees or any others wanted to enter the colony they were requested to get Ranga Rao’s permission first. This system was only to bring discipline among untouchables.

However, Ranga Rao expanded his working premises and at Bannanje, Udyavara of Udupi district, Pannamburu, Tannirubavi, Bykampadi of Dakshina Kannada, he allotted lands for untouchables. Again at Babugudde in Mangalore, he with the help of government, allotted lands for untouchables and also opened a primary school for them. Benegal Raghavendra Rao, who was one of the relatives of Ranga Rao, donated around seven acre of land at Udupi for downtrodden people and Ranga Rao distributed those lands for untouchables, who didn’t had any settlements. He also dug two wells for down trodden at Kunjibettu. He also struggled a lot to acquire jobs for these people at village panchayat and urban municipality  These constructive works helped and also brought a new spirit and social awareness among untouchables.

Spreading of Vocational and Job Oriented Education by Depressed Classes Mission Institution

Ranga Rao was aware of the importance of basic education Hence, Depressed Classes Mission Schools and Ashrama Schools gave equal importance for job-oriented courses along with reading and learning There were students developed the skills like, carpentry, weaving, horticulture, Seri culture, painting, embroidering etc. Sri Paddu Master, who studied at Depressed Class Mission School, later worked as a teacher at Panchama School at Bannanje. This school was the Board School for

222 Interviewed with P Kamalaksha, Sooterpete, on 9/10/2008

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Udupi district Later the students who studied in these Panchama Schools opened many Panchama Schools at Kundapura, Hangarakatte, Brahmavar, Malpe, Chitpady, Thonse, and Udyavara.\textsuperscript{223}

India is an agricultural country. People here depend on the cottage industries. So, Ranga Rao gave primary importance for vocational courses. Ranga Rao has foresightedness, integrity and his intelligence and intellectual power was incomparable. He thought twice before taking any decision, but never changed his mind once he decides. He worked hard to bring them into mainstream. The schools started by Ranga Rao were turned into aided schools and some into government schools later. Due to the pressure and proficiency of Ranga Rao, the downtrodden people, for the first time got the facilities in District Board and Municipal Council. 

Sriman Angara Master was elected a member of district board. Similarly they appointed Sri Govinda Mastar, a teacher from Udupi, as representative of untouchables in Mangalore Municipal Council. Ranga Rao was running a high school at Court Hill in Mangalore. Student had the facility to study till 8\textsuperscript{th} standard in this school. Along with untouchables, upper caste children were also studying here. Govinda Rao from Udupi, worked around 18 years as a teacher in this institution, so he brought honour from the Depressed Classes Mission institution.

In order to improve Koraga communities' financial status and to develop cooperation among them, Ranga Rao planned to set up a Cooperative Society. Likewise for the first time for untouchable, he established ‘Court Hill Adi Dravida Sahakara Sangha’ at Shedigudde in 1923, Mangalore. One of the main activities of the Cooperative Society to provides financial assistance for the depressed and backward classes. At the end of 927 the supervision of the Society was transferred into Cooperative Department of the South Kanara district. Ranga Rao.

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid
constructed new houses at ‘Koddelu’ for Koraga tribes, who were surrounded near the school. Ranga Rao made an arrangement to admit their children who completed their 8th standard to the Government College at Mangalore in 1922. 224

The Enormous Wish of Ranga Rao

Before his death the Ranga Rao wanted to see at least one depressed caste student should complete Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) exam. But his wish was not fulfilled. Another wish was to see at least one student from lower caste or class should complete his degree, secure a good job and become the owner of his own vehicle. Ranga Rao wanted to see him traveling in his vehicle and dust raised that travel would place as cloud and cover his head, can only prove that the all dreams he dreamt for the welfare of untouchables can come true. Only then his life and his work become meaningful. But even this, his wish was not fulfilled. Along with the upliftment of untouchables he also dedicated his life for the betterment of widow women. He tried to educate them and he tried to marry off ‘Devadasi’ girls. He opened an ‘Ashrama’ for widows. 225

Refugee Home for Women

After First World War the world experienced famine. At the crucial situation Ranga Rao distributed rice and kerosene to depressed communities. Ranga Rao dreamt of building a separate school for women and child widows. But he could not do it.

After his death Dr Benegal Raghavendra Rao, a famous doctor’s hard work and due to his donation Ranga Rao’s dreams came true. In

224 Source Interviewed with M M Prabhu, a noted Freedom fighter from Bajur, Daksha Kannada District, on 10/10/2009
225 Ibid
commemoration of Ranga Rao ‘Swami Ishwarananda Mahila Sevashrama’ was opened in front of Bunt’s hostel at Mangalore by Dr. Benagal Raghavendra Rao in 1928 with the objective of helping the destitute and the needy. The society is running a Balikashrama for providing shelter and protection to orphan and destitute children. The Home is open to all castes and creed Later Ranga Rao’s intimate relative late Nayampalli Ramaraya shifted this ‘Ashrama’ to Kudkorgudde in Kankanadi 226

Ranga Rao’s Prayer to Overcome the Financial Crisis

Ranga Rao faced severe critical financial crises to run his institutions. He requested many honourable people for donation and their help. He was a staunch believer in God, and always prayed him for help. He uses to write letters to donors from different places for donation. Before posting those letters he used to pray. Many times he himself, with the help of his friends walked along the street asking for rice, coconuts and other things for the survival of depressed children. Later Mundappa Bangera and Late Narasappayya like a shadow supported Ranga Rao in this campaign 227

The Problems Faced by Ranga Rao’s Children from Upper Caste People

Due to his reformation work he was to face a lot of problems and insults from the society. Even his own Saraswat community people excommunicated him from their community. Against this, Ranga Rao filled litigation in the court and won the cause. Even though this became a personal matter, at that time this issue was very famous. His daughters

226 Source Interviewed with Devdas Kudroli, one of the strong believer of Ranga Rao’s ideology, on 15/12/2009
227 Ibid
faced a lot of problems and insults from the upper caste people. Finally Ranga Rao sent his daughters by carriage to school. Even there the others students from upper caste background tortured them. Barbers were not ready to shave Ranga Rao. The washer man were not accepted his cloths to wash. Even some mischief boys threw stones at him while he was walking on the road. But Ranga Rao was not taken aback by all these things. He never lost his patience, instead, he bear all these insults. His wife Rukmini Devi was the backbone for all his works. Her soothing words always gave strengthen to Ranga Rao. Her helping nature, sacrifices, her advice, counsel, her cooperation and her worship toward Ranga Rao, and always helped him to overcome all the difficulties and insults.228

**Influence of His Works in Foreign Countries**

The name and fame of Ranga Rao, his social work, his concern for backward caste society spread even in foreign countries. Many foreigners used to write letters by praising his works. They were very proud of him. Some well known personalities used to send money for Depressed Classes Mission office library. This brought name and fame to Ranga Rao as the library started by him was full of good and valuable books. Even Henry Ford, a famous American Industrialist sent money for Depressed Classes Mission office. Ten years after Ranga Rao's death, a foreign Industrialist, Justice Wilbert, in his will, donated thousand dollars to Depressed Classes Mission office. The great governors, famous personalities who came to visit Mangalore always visited Depressed Classes Mission office at Shedigudde.

World famous personalities and great poet like Rabindranatha Tagore, Deenabandhu C.F Andrews, Dr. Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi, praised Ranga Rao’s work and his concern for untouchables. The founder of Servants of Indian Society, Sri Gopalkrishna Gokhale from Mumbai, great social reformers like Sriman Thakkar Bapa, Sri G.K Devadhar, Right honourable Sri Srinivasa Sastri, were Ranga Rao’s friends as well as the patron of his Depressed Classes Mission institution. Dr. Karnad, a member of Brahmo Samaj donated Rupees ten thousand for Depressed Classes Mission institution With this amount Ranga Rao constructed Dr. Karnad orphanage and boarding house in memory of Dr. Karnad at Shedigudde

The Teacher of Mahatma

February 24th 1934, evening 5 O’clock, Gandhiji along with his followers reached Mangalore from Madikeri In between at the places like Sampaje, Sullia, Puttur, and Raagi Kumeru, an untouchable colony, Gandhiji delivered his speeches and requests the people to donate some amount for the eradication of untouchability People open heartedly gave donations to Gandhiji Even at Mangalore, people especially untouchables were eager to receive Gandhiji

They decorated their houses and the street to welcome Gandhiji, from for away village people come to Mangalore to see Gandhiji.229 Gandhiji along with freedom movement spent his life for the upliftment of untouchables While delivering public speech he declared that ‘India’s independence is just a futile unless the progress and welfare of

229 Source Interviewed with Babu Amin and Sunder, Members of DSS, Indrali, Udupi, on 12/11/2009
untouchables’ Gandhiji was very sad to see the critical condition of untouchables. His main aim was to bring a drastic change in society. That means, firstly the upper class people should change their attitude towards untouchables, the discrimination between rich and poor should abolish, and untouchables should develop self-respect. In order to fulfill this, Gandhiji started peaceful movements. He visited Mangalore for three times for this purpose. For people he is a saint who wants to remove the difficulties, problems of people. Untouchables were delighted to see him.

On 1934, February 24th evening around 7 O’clock Gandhiji visited Depressed Classes Mission office at Shedigudde. He was arranging for his interview at ‘Prayer Home’ of Depressed Classes Mission Vidya Nilaya. People gathered there eagerly. It was difficult to control the mob as they were pushing each other. Due to this, a part of the front portion of the hall fully collapsed. Gandhiji soon after coming to the ‘Vidya Nilaya’ watched the children’s art works, handy crafts and appreciated it. The untouchable students with the help of their teacher sung a welcoming song for Gandhiji. He was very happy to hear and see it. Later he addresses the gathering. Firstly he appreciated Kudmul Ranga Rao’s work and his concern for untouchables. He considered Ranga Rao as ‘his teacher’ and openly declared it.

Later he spoke few words for students. Firstly he greeted them for the facilities they acquired. He remained them their duties and also spoke few good words towards Ranga Rao, even though they were celebrating sixth death anniversary of Ranga Rao, at that moment. Gandhiji distributed sweets, dresses to the students and blessed them.²³⁰

²³⁰ Rao, Shiva B. “Emblem of Sacrifice,” in Radha Karnad, Saguna Karnad Desai (eds), Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p 72
Depressed Classes Mission – An Ideal School

After getting inspiration from the works of Brahmo Samaj started in 1828 at Kolkata by Rajaram Mohan Roy. Some people wanted to open its branch of even in Mangalore. Among them Ullala Raghunathaiah was very important one. He was supported by Bharadwaja Shrivram, Sri Arasappa, Karnad Sadashiva Rao and some other people. As a result of their efforts in 1870 in the month of May, they opened a branch of Brahmo Samaj at Mangalore.

The member of Brahmo Samaj, Theosophical Society and people of great positions used to give donations for Ranga Rao’s Depressed Classes Mission office. Karnad Sadashiva Rao is also one among the people who helped to run Panchama Primary Schools. Karnad Sadashiva Rao was a great fan of Ranga Rao. He was full of praise for Ranga Rao’s work. He wanted to dedicate himself for Depressed Classes Mission office but unfortunately he joined congress party. But still he worked for untouchables. He used to participate in the rallies to abolish untouchability at Mysore and Bangalore. He and Gopal Swami, a famous personality of the region, who tried to remove untouchability, wandered around two months in Mangalore and tried to change people’s mind towards untouchability. Sadashiva Rao helped for Depressed Classes Mission institution beyond his limits. He rendered all his help to Ranga Rao while constructing schools, Ashramas and hostels for untouchables. The schools, Ashramas, hostels run by Depressed Classes Mission office was considered as ideal institution. It taught discipline, value education and also tried to import moral values for students. Students were also aware of cleanliness. Ranga Rao never allowed a student to wear dirty, untidy cloths to the students. Every day twice student should pray. Ranga Rao gave importance for prayer. Students used to get up at five O’clock in the morning. After bath they must assemble in prayer hall. After prayer
students had to read around 8.30 A.M. Students were provided with breakfast. Later they should go to the school. In the evening they have to do some work, later play. Ranga Rao also took care of the health of these students. Totally Ranga Rao gave importance to not only education but also co-curricular activities in his ‘Ashrama’. This helped the physical and mental development of the children. In recognition of his social and philanthropic work, Government conferred on him the title of ‘Rao Sahib’.

Ranga Rao was a simple man. He never allowed his students to wear foreign made cloths. He gave importance to ‘Swadeshi dress’ he never wanted any publicity for the social services he had done. Once a student called Ramachandra who was basically from Udupi, was studying in the primary school at Shedgudde, wrote a poem in favour of Ranga Rao. This boy respected Ranga Rao a lot. In order to express his love and respect he wrote a poem where he praised Ranga Rao a lot. Later he showed that poem to him. After reading that poem Ranga Rao started to cry, with full of tears he said to the boy that he was not worth for such a praise and tribute. He also took the promise from the boy that they never sing that song till he alive. This incident is a good example for his opposition of self praise and also his simplicity.

Ranga Rao’s Opposition for Old Orthodox Belief

Ranga Rao was against the old, orthodox, supernatural beliefs like enchantment, killing of animals for Gods and Goddess and other such practices. He used to give public speeches in the colonies to teach the untouchables to discard such practices. Instead he encouraged the group prayers. He preached them unity, brotherhood these evening gatherings.

231 P. Kamalaksha, op cit, 1986, pp 55-60
He felt very bad and was sad to see the ineffectiveness of these gatherings. Because even though people come to attend these speeches they were not eager to follow or change themselves. Once, Ranga Rao saw Koraga cult people with their flute, drums and even with women’s dress. They were dancing in front of a shop. This is also a source of begging. Ranga Rao felt very bad. He approached them, talked very gentle and took them to the school. There he tried to change their mind. He requested them to leave their laziness and work hard to earn their livelihood. He also advised them to stop their hobby of begging. His words were very effective and heart touching. He cried silently to see the wretched condition of Koraga people. He understood that to improve the lifestyle of Koraga people, the construction of houses is very necessary. Meanwhile he gave importance to the education and job-oriented courses, which will help them to live independently. In order to achieve this he dedicated himself. The whole life of Kudmul Ranga Rao was one of voluntary poverty, strenuous service and fullness of love. He has left a precious heritage.

The Flag Established by Ranga Rao and its Intension

The people of different caste, creeds were the members of Depressed Classes Mission office, established by Ranga Rao. There were students’ processions during some important moments. In these rallies students carried flag up to Depressed Classes Mission office. The flag had its own specialty. It was shining with different colours. A meanwhile it is also used to spread the words of Depressed Classes Mission office to the people. The flag which depicts, “a thatched first floor house with a well-off Hindu, a Muslim and a Christian, sitting at the veranda of the House.

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232 See Rao, Pandit Ramanath, op cit., p 132
They appeared to be looking at a muddied lake nearby in which a pig and a Dalit are trying to come up with the help of Mother India. She blesses him by holding his hand” The slogan of the Depressed Class Mission was “Deēnōdhāranam Dēshōdhāranam”, i.e. “raising the Dalits is raising the nation” It seems as if Kudmul Ranga Rao is requesting these representatives of Hindus, Muslims and Christians to extend their helping hand to the Depressed Class Mission in the great cause of the uplift of the Dalits who were living like pigs in the dirty mud. For him the uplift of the Dalits meant the uplift of the country Raghunathaiah was the first president and Rao was the founder secretary of the Mission.

Even though he gave the power of Depressed Classes Mission office to the control of The Servants of Indian Society, he maintains the practice of visiting the institution often While prayer was going on he used to give the lecture on discipline, good manners, respecting to the others to the students. He wanted the students should recite the following ‘Shloka’ every day.

‘Om| twameva maatachapitaa twameva|  
twameva bandhushcha sakhaa twameva||  
twameva vidya dravinam twameva|  
twameva sarva mama deva devaha ||  

It means.

You are my Mother; you are my Father;  
You are my Relative; you are my Friend,  
You are my Education; you are my Affluence;  
You are Everything, O’ my Lord
Depressed Classes Mission office under the Subordination of the Government

In India, The Servants of India Society is one of the first and foremost institutions worked for the development, progress and upliftment of the untouchables in the entire sphere of life. Many graduates surrendered themselves to work in this office. So Ranga Rao transferred the Depressed Classes Mission institution to The Servants of India Society. So, the education for untouchable should continue even after him. The Servants of Indian Society appointed Srman R. Sooryanarayana Rao, as a secretary for the Depressed Classes Mission office. Later, after few years, in 1953, Depressed Classes Mission office surrendered all its properties and the educational institutions to Madras Government.233

Life as Sage

The last span of his life Ranga Rao spent most of his time in prayers and religious activities of Brahmo Samaj. He used Kannada language to give sermons in the assemblies at Brahmo Samaj. In those speeches he used to praise the foreigners who came to our country, learnt our language and used it to preach their religion, why should we embrace foreign language? He used to give importance to mother tongue.

After giving up his all institutions under the control of Servants of Indian Society, he lost interest in his life. Finally Ranga Rao decided to take ‘Sanyasa’. In 1924, it was arranged that Maharshi, the disciple of Dayananda Saraswati, Shruddananda Swamiji came to Mangalore second time, to the inauguration function of Arya Samaj. Ranga Rao decided to take Sanyasa from him. But his desire was not fulfilled due to someone murdered Shruddananda Swamiji at Delhi. But Ranga Rao’s decision was

233 See Nrody, B S. “Foremost Servant of the Nation,” in Radha Kamad, Saguna Kamad Desai (eds), Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p 65
Finally, in 1927 he took 'Sanyasa' from Suvarchananda Swamy, the disciple of Shrividyananda Swami. He received the name called 'Ishwarananda Swami' from Vidya Vaachaspathi. He fired the title "Rao Saheb" given by the Government and also the records of his work in that particular day and got relief material attachments and desires.

Ranga Rao never loved or wanted any position. He never thought about himself or his family. He never wanted any publicity. His only ideal was the upliftment of untouchables. He wanted they should get respect in the society. He wanted them to educate and they should live independently, and to be good human beings with self respect. In order to achieve this goal he dedicated his life and experienced a number of hardships. His own people boycotted him. All days and nights he spent thinking about the untouchables. He prayed God for the same. Finally he received 'Sanyasa'. Ranga Rao did not do anything for his children except the education he had given to them. He left a small house at Kadri and some of the important books for his children. But both were lost. We never tried to retain them.

The Last Stage of Ranga Rao

During last days of his life Ranga Rao had only one desire in his life that is after his death, the 'Thoti' people, one of the most backward people among the untouchables, today known as Adi-Dravida, should take his dead body towards the graveyard. He had mentioned it in his will, and also requested his family members to read that will only after his death. He blamed himself for not doing much good things; bring change in their life style. He was very sad to see the poor living conditions of these people, so he requested the 'Thoti' people to arrange

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234 Source: Interviewed with Balachandra Kavur, Mangalore, one of the strong believer of Ranga Rao’s ideology, on 30/12/2009
his funeral pyre, which may bring peace to his departing soul. This was his last desire and prayer. The last day of Ranga Rao was not a bed of roses. His health condition was also not good. He was suffering from a heart disease called Coronary Thrombosis. He did not want to live for long. He used to pray get to take his life as soon as possible. He spent his last span of life at his elder daughter Mrs Lalitha Bai.

Finally, he was breathed his last calling God Narayana. He hopes of the untouchables and widows of the first were shattered alone with his death. Like the ‘sun’ who gives lights to all of us during day time and sinks as soon as it became dark, Ranga Rao’s life’s span came to an end.

He became the light for untouchables, humbled people and widows and finally the divine light reached its end. Ranga Rao, who brought a drastic change in the life of untouchables, finally left this world leaving behind all his people and his works.

He was sixty nine years old when he lost his life. 30 January 1928 he started his journey towards heavenly abode. This particular day was became a black day for the untouchables. The news was spread like wild fire all over the district. People from different parts of the district came to see his dead body to his eldest daughter Mrs Lalitha Bai’s house which was situated at Shivabagh at Kadri, Mangalore. His last wish was disclose before all the people. People rushed to take his body towards cemetery. Here too, trouble form fundamental minds did not end. The upper class people oppose the untouchables touching of Ranga Rao’s body. But Subbanna Rao, his son-in-law, intervened and pacified the crowd. He also rides out the will. Finally, as per Ranga Rao’s wish ‘Thoti’ people carried his body. Afternoon at around 3 O’clock the body was taken out of Subbanna Rao’s house. With a huge procession accompanied by silent prayer, it passed through Nandigudde’s Brahma Samaj Mandir towards the Cemetery.
Ranga Rao’s noble sacrifices, achievements, message and his holy creative works and his honest thinking have its value today. Ranga Rao’s life was varied and wide in its sympathies. Whoever knocked at the door of his heart for moral or monetary support found an easy entrance there. Kindness and courtesy were almost a religion with him. He was extremely simple and thrifty. Ranga Rao’s friendship was always devoted, most affectionate and loyal. His faith in prayer and God was unbounded. Whether in happiness or in grief his first thought was of God. There is no other person like the holy man, simple, sacrificial, creative, constructive man was Ranga Rao, in and around the whole South Kanara. Ranga Rao dedicated himself for society, and built a new history. It is very difficult to find the man like Ranga Rao in future.

P. Kamalaksha, a Dalit writer of the district, has observed that Ranga Rao’s words, objectives, his experiences; his constructive humanistic works become the light for today’s youth. By following his path, his word and by bringing his creative works in practice by the untouchable youths are the great tributes to Ranga Rao. It will surely gives peace to his eternal soul.  

Ranga Rao who was one of the pioneers of Depressed Classes Movements in Southern India. The whole life of Ranga Rao was one of voluntary poverty, strenuous service and fullness of love. He has left a precious heritage. May we be worthy of that heritage and may we cherish those noble ideals that were so dear to his heart.

Kudmul Ranga Rao, as a social reformer, strove to uplift the untouchables focusing on issues like land, employment, housing and education on the one hand and intellectual and spiritual enrichment on the

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235 P. Kamalaksha, op. cit., 1986, pp 67-73
236 Shetty, A B “A Resplendent example to Emulate,” in Radha Karnad, Saguna Karnad Desai (eds ), Apostle of Sacrifice, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p. 71
other. Rao wanted to lead Dalits on socio-religious lines that were being fashioned at that time. However, as a social reformer, he did everything for the well-being of the untouchables at the cost of his family. His intervention in the life of the untouchables in Dakshina Kannada was a major event. There was a remarkable unity between his precepts and practice. He practiced at the level of the locality a set of inclusionary practices, unique in their own way, which was one of the main tendencies at the national level too at that time.

In Kudmul Ranga Rao the ideas of enlightenment and liberalism were joined with deep sensibility about injustice, an urge for social service, and a practical active attitude of mind. He was inspired by a universal humanism, seeing the downtrodden and outcastes as members of one human family, endowed with equal rights by the one creator of all, and destined to live as brothers with egalitarian happiness.

Limitations

Despite these positive features, it is believed that a number of challenges are restricts the future scope of Depressed Classes Movement which was started by Kudmul Ranga Rao in the later nineteenth century. The following are the few limitations, which were found during the study undertaken.

❖ Social reform activities initiated by Kudmul Ranga Rao were more or less restricted to the limited geographical area of earlier South Kanara district of the Coastal Karnataka rather than other parts of the state. It has also seems to bring about partial changes in value system of particular region but not affect structural changes nor do they bring radical changes in the totality of social and cultural systems. Further, Kudmul Ranga Rao was considered as a sole upholder and first man who was fought for the exclusive
emancipation of depressed classes people of the district in later part of the nineteenth century

❖ Kudmul Ranga Rao could contemplate a reform in the social, economic and religious sphere, but not in the political sphere. He was first carried out his plan for social emancipation of depressed classes through reforming rather than of revolting or discarding. Perhaps, such sentiments were not likely to find favour in the rising tide of nationalistic consciousness of the particular period.

❖ The complicated nature of the social forces, the historiography of the early period of this region is often wont to take simplistic view of the rigid chasm that divided the progressives from the conservatives

❖ The last span of his life Ranga Rao spent most of his time in prayers and religious activities of Brahmo Samaj, and finally Ranga Rao took 'Sanyasa'. It may create the gap between worldliness and other worldliness

❖ Success of the any movement depends on nature and degree of involvement of the participants, location, size of population, exposure to outside communities, level of economic and historical experience. In this regard intensity towards mobility of the depressed classes of the region will not be strong. Various attempts were initiated by the Kudmul Ranga Rao through his unorthodox and radical ideas, set in motion a movement for social reform at different levels These attempts, although, did not break the citadel of orthodoxy completely, did make dents which could be turned into big openings by later day achievements.

During the later part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century Dakshina Kannada witnessed a vast variety of development of immense social, cultural and political significance. During the 20th
century Dakshina Kannada felt the impact of the Nationalist Movement alongside social reform. The social dynamics in the region saw the coming into existence of a good number of caste and community organizations reconstituting and redefining social identities. Some of them part of the ongoing nationalist agenda, while others were not. It’s also important to state that in this context that either social reform movements or the nationalist struggle present in the region were comprehensive developments encompassing the entire social constituency of the people. Their impact has been partial, fragmented and uneven.

Further, the impact of these ideological developments was also determined, to a great extent, by the specific nature and trajectory of the modernization process that the region was experiencing.

Thus, Dakshina Kannada offers a complex picture of the interplay of ideologies causing divergent and contradictory results. This suggests that if there were significant normatively charged ideological developments that brought people together to engage with inclusive social and reconstruction, there were also equally powerful ideological developments that tried to infuse ideas of division and exclusion. In fact, the 19th and the 20th century Dakshina Kannada was not entirely free from caste and community rivalries. There were quite a few instances of communal tension and caste conflict in the region throughout the periods in which activities of social reform and nationalist struggle were launched.237

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237 Tolpady, Rajaram op. cit., p 12
Kudmul Ranga Rao and Conceptual Framework of Social Movements

After understanding and analyzing the life and work of Kudmul Ranga Rao the present study, intend to relate the conceptual frame work of social reform movement and the movement initiated by Ranga Rao, with special reference to socio-economic achievement of Dalits in the undivided Dakshina Kannada district

One of the most influential social reform movements of South Kanara in later half of nineteenth century is the Depressed Classes Movement led by Kudmul Ranga Rao, which is not only for the reforms or Sanskritization but also for the structural change in the values of caste system, modernization, rejection of the traditional occupation, accessibility to the education, employment, industry, commerce, spiritual life and enlightenment He wanted to emphasize the creation of a just social order without any caste hierarchy and building of a social system free from social inequalities

Movement initiated by Kudmul Ranga Rao has got clear ideology, leadership, aims and objectives The spirit of this social movement brought about a lot of changes in the future As T K Oommen (1972), suggests that, a situation of strain in a society may be met the response pattern through crystallization of a new ideology, which champions the cause of the deprived, and establishment of a new organization to deal with the problem at hand.

It is argued that each of these developments may give rise to the emergence of three distinct types of movements- charismatic, ideological and organizational. The same tendency is found in the case of the movement of Kudmul Ranga Rao It was started against the situation of strain in the society in the form of social discrimination, dissatisfaction, disharmony, upper castes oppression, exploitation and all other kinds of
injustice towards depressed classes over a period of time. All these factors contributed to the Ranga Rao to focus on the crystallization of new ideology and organize the movement based on change oriented

The civil rights ideology based on democracy, motivated the depressed classes to evolve campaigns to fight for equality in educational, social and economic opportunities The movement also incorporated the religious-cultural ideology in this approach in seeking to gain identity, self-respect and honour. Both the ideology, simultaneously, in their efforts to attain equality of status with the dominant groups on the ritual and the secular planes. Ranga Rao’s Movement had developed as a ‘reformative movement’ within the Hindu religion. As explained by Ghanshyam Shah (1980), a reformative movement tries to reform the caste system to solve the problem of untouchability

Movement led by Ranga Rao emerged based on the principle of revitalization as a theme of protest ideology Anthony Wallace (1956), has defined revitalization as a conscious organized on the part of some members of a society to create more satisfying culture. It is also considered to be an adoptive process in establishing equilibrium, which is a postulate of the structural functional approach Ranga Rao was responsible for a thorough transformation on the life style of depressed classes involving education, new religious beliefs, ritual, practice and outlook to create egalitarian society. Attracted from Brahmo faith and other liberal thoughts Ranga Rao believed in one God, spiritual equality and high moral and cultural life. He was more aspiring for educational system, equality, justice, law and liberty. This awakening found articulation in South Kanara towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Ranga Rao’s movement played an important instrumental role in changing the socio-economic status of depressed classes in the district.
We may call this a transition from the era of reform 'from above' initiated by leaders of Western educated, professional, urban groups organized in religious bodies or elite voluntary associations, backed by the state to reform 'from below' sponsored by caste associations and the like which have primarily the attributes of 'ascriptive' groups, but also some times display characteristics of a voluntary group, and are under a leadership which fragmented the nation-wide reform objectives of the earlier period into caste upliftment and reform programmes.

Reform 'from above' was a situation of sponsored mobility where the leaders from upper caste background granted access to modern education and employment opportunities out of generosity to the lower castes. Sponsored mobility merely strengthens the super-ordinate, subordinate relationship (Rao, 1984) Here the untouchables who did not challenge the superiority and hegemony of the caste – Hindus They accepting their status as it existed The patronage given to them by the upper caste leaders enabled them to get modern education and employment opportunities and help them to achieve social mobility which might lead to the formation of a new social identity. The same tendency is found in the case of reformative movement of Kudmul Ranga Rao in South Kanara district.

Among the depressed classes the untouchables adopted the ideology of imitation of the high caste manners and also attracted towards the liberal approaches of the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj and activities of the Basel Mission. All these sects believed in education, secular and egalitarian ideology Imitation of upper caste including vegetarianism, adopting upper caste dress, manners, ceremonies rituals and following clean professions and skills, they would be able to elevate themselves to higher position in the caste hierarchy. However, most of the untouchables
followed the process of Sanskritization that Hinduised the Dalits to a
great extent. As stated by Ranga Rao, the factor likes education stand out
above all others. Educated people tend to be different It engenders a kind
of self-confidence. The spread of education to large numbers among the
subordinated untouchables has intended to infuse them with a new and
more ambitious culture Above all, education tends to invest a person
with sense of entitlement to equal treatment in matters of common human
concern.

Ranga Rao assessed the nature of social change among the
untouchables of South Kanara due to social mobilization. He built
alternative value system and new social identity for deprived people.
Lower caste people entered into the education and government jobs,
industry, commerce and business and politics. Education played a
significant role in the realization of the oppression and suppression of the
depressed. This community is highly successful in terms of education,
employment, economy, politics and culture during independence. The
caste system of today in undivided Dakshina Kannada is not the same as
it was a hundred years ago. However, social life of Dalits, for wherever
and whenever they assert their legitimate rights. The social consciousness
generated by the Dalit communities has played a very effective and
important role in making them confident enough to gear up their struggle
against age-old discrimination. This consciousness may be termed as
Dalit consciousness.

Ranga Rao tried to emancipate and liberate depressed classes from
the yokes of all kinds, manmade and otherwise. His emancipation
approaches seemed to have the same tendency found in the holistic
dimension and transparency dimension as explained by Ernest Laclau
(1996), in his book called Emancipation(s). As explained by Laclau, in
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. In transparency dimension, the emancipation presupposes the elimination of power, the abolition of the subject and object distinction. Available evidences indicates that Ranga Rao’s emancipation approaches intend to deal with the notion of enabling people to take control of their own lives and to free themselves from the structures which dominate and constrain them.

Depressed Classes Movement of Ranga Rao in later part of the nineteenth century has its limited spatial spread, confined societal scope, declared intentions, actual achievements and social consequences. Any social movement is an organized effort by an individual, group, or community to achieve particular goal. With regard to this, the available evidence indicates that this social movement was methodologically sound and significant in various respects. It was reflects the enough indicators of social movements as defined by social scientists (Gusfield 1968, Wilson 1973) the social movement logically belongs to the realm of social process, mobilization, the presence of an ideology and an orientation towards change.