

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION:

The present Chapter, being the concluding Chapter, brings together the conceptual and analytical strands of the preceding Chapters and presents the conclusions arrived at on the completion of the investigation.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS:

The following broad conclusions have emerged from this investigation:

1. Devdasi tradition is a part of India's socio-religious culture since ancient times. The original religious nobleness of the tradition, however, has given way to sexual exploitation of young females and the tradition has degenerated into a malevolent social practice. The tradition also acts as a conduit for the supply of young girls to illicit sex trade.
2. It was found that mostly the young men and women from backward castes, who also are illiterate, poor or physically handicapped, fall victim to the Devdasi tradition.
3. Illiteracy, poverty, superstition are the major causes for the continuation of the tradition.
4. 'Devdasi/Jogata life' is very miserable because of its uphill struggle for the individual. By tradition, he/she has to maintain himself/herself by begging only. Many,

- therefore, are driven into commercial sex trade, in addition to allowing themselves to be sexually exploited.
5. Since Devdasis/Jogatas are married to the Goddess Yallamma, they are traditionally not allowed to take a legal spouse. Still, they beget children, who are socially recognized. The entire institution, however, causes a grave moral strife in the society. Male Jogatas and adolescent Devdasi children are also more susceptible to addiction and morally/socially corrupt behaviour. This in itself causes another set of social problems.
 6. Sustained efforts of several dedicated individuals and organizations in Kolhapur District, has led to some concrete work towards the eradication of the Devdasi tradition from the society. These organizations have done a commendable work towards prevention and eradication of the Devdasi tradition and rehabilitation of the Devdasis.
 7. During last decade or so, under pressure from these organizations, the State Government has enacted certain legal measures for the prevention of the Devdasi tradition as well as has implemented several schemes for Devdasi rehabilitation. Unfortunately, however, the legal measures are ineffective because of the superstition, generally prevalent in the society; while the benefits of the rehabilitation effort have not reached all the Devdasis.

5.3 SUGGESTIONS:

Based on the conclusions presented hereabove, the following suggestions are being offered:

(A) Prevention and Eradication:

1. Since illiteracy, superstition and poverty among the backward caste communities are the root causes behind the continuation of the Devdasi tradition, it would be appropriate to attack these through organized effort; particularly, the Government should spearhead this effort by allocating trained personnel and resources for eradicating Devdasi- and such other evil traditions.
2. Mass media - newspapers, radio and television -, with their outreach in the rural areas can contribute substantially to remove the illiteracy and superstition. It is heartening to note that many a voluntary organization is doing satisfactory work through their anti-superstition drives. This work should get adequate publicity in the mass media, so that it becomes the whole society's mission.
3. Government's poverty removal programmes for rural areas should become more people-oriented and the personnel implementing these should ensure that the benefits do reach the needy and poor. This would go a long way in preventing the further spread of a socially evil traditions like Devdasis.

4. The visible manifestations of the Devdasi tradition - e.g. 'Jag', 'Paradi', etc., be prohibited by law and the person/s exhibiting these in public be prosecuted. Also, the begging of 'Jogawa' be banned.
5. Appearance of a 'Jat' in hair is the prime cause for converting an individual into a Devdasi/Jogata, quite often, against his/her will. Hence, the Government's public health system at grassroot level should conduct regular 'Jat' removal campaigns and also educate the people in personal hygiene and clean living habits. The organizations already engaged in 'Jat' removal work be encouraged in their endeavour.
6. The Devdasi System Abolition and Rehabilitation Act, 1990, of the Government of Maharashtra be strictly enforced; the ritualistic Devdasi marriages be prevented, if necessary with the force of law; village-level fairs of the Goddess Yallamma be discouraged by persuading people not to attend as well as boycott these fairs. Particularly, the ugly side of the Devdasi tradition be brought out forcefully to the attention to the society, so that a social rethinking may occur. Mass media and the Government's publicity machinery can undertake this responsibility effectively.

(B) Rehabilitation:

5. The under-age Devdasis/Jogatas be taken under care for their formal education atleast upto matriculation level and imparted aptitude-oriented skills so that they may eventually stand on their on.
6. Female Devdasis in marriageable age-group may be appropriately helped to marry and settle down. For this, the the implementation of the Devdasi Marriage Scheme and Devdasi Training and Rehabilitation Scheme be strengthened, so that these women become economically independent.
7. The amount of Rs.300/- per month under Devdasi Pension Scheme for older Devdasis and Jogatas be enhanced to Rs.500/- per month and the dispensing machinery should ensure that the benefits of the Scheme reach all the eligible Devdasis/Jogatas.
8. Atleast for few years to come, Devdasi children should get preferential treatment in educational opportunities like admissions to schools and colleges, to student-hostels. Also, these children should receive subsidized/free supplies of educational material.
9. Particularly in the areas where Devdasi problem is severe, the Devdasi children should get special attention under the prevailing poverty eradication programmes, so that these children may start their own small businesses and industries.

Overall, the reach of the Devdasi prevention/eradication and rehabilitation work being conducted both under Governmental and voluntary auspices has to increase many-fold to make an effective impression on the age-old evil tradition. This work will, however, be effective only if the whole society wakes up to the problem and augments the on-going effort.

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