CHAPTER IV

PROSTITUTION AND DEVADASI CUSTOM

After knowing how the initiation of girls to Devadasihood takes place in the shrines and their types, now let us study how much the institution of Devadasi contributes to the commercial prostitution. For this, a study was conducted on one hundred commercial prostitutes of Peigaum city. The informants were selected at random from different localities of the city, giving appropriate representation to all age-groups and localities. For interrogation a detailed questionnaire was used. The main aim of this study was to assess the extent of contribution of Devadasi custom to this ancient profession in this city. So, this chapter, apart from revealing the relation between the Devadasi custom and the commercial prostitution, also throws some light on the background of the city and the prostitution as a profession. An attempt is also made to know the effects of the same on the individual, family and society.

There are a number of causes responsible for the existence of commercial prostitution in any society. These
causes can be grouped into three main heads (i) Economic, (ii) Social and (iii) Religious and moral. Poverty is the mother of all social evils in any society. It forces people to commit immoral, antisocial and evil acts such as stealing, burglary, robbery etc. Among these prostitution is one and is practiced by women of the poor families. Having no other means of support available and in order to eke out a living, they often resort to this profession.

Bongor in his book "Criminality and Economic Condition" (1916:321-56), discusses in detail the economic factors which are responsible for girls from under privileged background to enter into prostitution. He found immoral environment, early employment and poverty as the main causes. The parents of these prostitutes are unable to provide proper physical and moral protection to their adolescent daughters, and this again is due to their acute poverty. According to the report of the Enquiry Committee of League of Nations (1938), poverty, overcrowding and low wages are clearly found to be the contributing causes for prostitution. It is also observed that of all the causes for prostitution none is more important than unemployment and poverty, which are the inevitable consequences of low wages.
The social factors, which contribute the commercial prostitution in Indian society, are also many. Among them (a) dowry system, (b) caste system, (c) child marriage, (d) problem of widowhood, (e) decline of joint family and (f) plurality of wives are important. Let us discuss these causes in some detail to understand the problem.

Recently, owing to anti-dowry law and so on, though taking dowry is prohibited, in many cases it becomes obligatory on the part of the girl's parents to pay a large amount of dowry in the form of cash and goods to the family of the bridegroom. Marriage also means elaborate and costly rituals. Inviting of kith and kin is also obligatory on the part of the wedding family. Till the family makes arrangement for this exorbitant money, the girls have to go without marriage. The disappointed girls become easy victims of the profession of prostitution, which will be carried on secretly in the beginning and, later, openly. Like this dowry becomes an important factor for the continuation of the commercial prostitution.

Indian society is divided into a number of castes and sub-castes, which are arranged vertically into high and low
There is very little scope for mobility and communality among the different groups. Similarly, lack of communality and inter-marriage among different castes, narrow down the opportunities for girls to marry easily and soon in life. This causes artificial scarcity of suitable persons to marry. In the course of this, when they don’t get a suitable man to marry, the girls go astray and stoop to commercial prostitution. The low castes had no direct and intimate contact with the learned and richer upper castes and so they remained illiterate, ignorant and poor for centuries. The only avenue opened to them to go nearer to the upper castes was to work as domestic and farm hands. As labourers, their women were easily accessible for free sex relation to the men of upper castes, which indirectly led to the rise of commercial prostitution.

Child marriage is one of the social evils of the Indian society. Owing to a number of reasons the parents marry-off their children at a very young age—some times when they are even in utero or womb. Many such couples on coming of age cannot adjust among themselves, which results in desertion or divorce. Such women are forced to enter into the profession of
prostitution and gratify their sex urge. Child marriage also
brought about the problem of child widows. Since children and
adolescents die in large numbers owing to innocence, diseases
and accidents, this left their parents widowed, early in life.
On the contrary, widow marriages are not allowed in our society
and the young widows are forced to go without sex gratification
or satisfy it through immoral means. Those who resort to the
latter means gradually drift towards prostitution.

The disintegration and disappearance of joint family
system in India, also equally responsible for the rise of the
social evil of prostitution. Hindu joint family provided shel­
ter, food, moral support etc., to all those who identified
with it. As a result, different rites and rituals performed
from time to time for the individuals, were taken care of by
the joint family. Similarly the joint family had adequate pro­
property to provide food and shelter to all the members. Now, with
the decay of the joint family, the widowed and destitute women
have lost their security and a few are forced to resort to
prostitution to support themselves.

The system of polygamy among the Hindus and Muslims
often results in jealousy and marital unhappiness. The younger
or the older co-wife, who is dissatisfied sexually, may seek sex-gratification outside the wedlock.

Apart from the above said factors, other important ones which contribute to the commercial prostitution are rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization. Industries and urban centres attracted the rural masses in great number in search of employment. Since they were poor and non-influential, most of them failed to get good and permanent employment in the highly specialized fields of industry and commerce. When they failed to secure employment, they faced a lot of difficulty in maintaining their families. As a result, they resorted to many immoral or illegal activities and, among them, prostitution is one. At the same time, persons, who played the role of middlemen between the rural immigrants and the industrial management, also misguided and abused them for their personal gains. As a result, commercial prostitution increased very fast in urban communities. In this regard, Mukherji (1951:319) says - "In thousands of slums of Indian industrial centres, mothhood is brutalised. Womanhood is dishonoured and the childhood poisoned at its very source. Prostitution in such areas lead to an increase in spread of venereal diseases first in the city and later in the villages with the return of the migratory worker to his home".
Illtreatment shown to a daughter-in-law, sister-in-law or wife is also to a great extent responsible for driving the woman to such a state of exasperation in feeling that there is no other alternative for her than either to commit suicide or to run away from the house. When such inexperienced girls leave the premises of their families, they fall an easy prey to anti-social elements. Kidnapping or seduction of young girls is also equally responsible for the growth of prostitution in India. These women are either seduced with the promise of marriage or employment by lovers, procurers, employers or co-workers or even strangers, or assaulted and even dragged to the evil profession. Often girls change hands fast and also effectively. Once they are in the hands of the procurers, they are forever placed behind the black curtain of the commercialised vice.

Lack of work, either seasonal or dangerous and exposing girls to temptations also lead them to prostitution. There are many recreational factors which lead to the fall of women, and these dangerous forms of recreation are drinking, gambling, dance halls, cafes, dubious clubs, amusement parks or play grounds, and bad companies also attract these women to prostitution. Unsatisfactory family conditions, broken homes due to
divorce or desertion by the parents, immoral character of the either parents, lack of understanding, sympathy and affection of the parents during childhood and adolescence, and lack of discipline, marital conflicts and maladjustments, loose habits of the husband and so on, play no mean role in forcing helpless women to prostitution. Besides physiological and biological factors, personal factors also play an important role in causing sexual delinquency. Feeble minded or sub-normal women suffer from unhappiness and failure and develop excessive restlessness, lack of self-confidence, want of affection, defiance of authority and such other conditions normally lead a woman to this profession. Physical deformities, feeble mindedness, adolescent disturbances and unsolicited unsatisfied sexual urges, over sex or desire for enjoying sex varieties or one lacking the power to control sexual impulses, may produce a sort of rebellion against the social norms of the society and result in immoral traffic. Ordinarily, such persons cannot be married and therefore, the prostitution is the only resort for them for sex gratification.

Other causes which lead women to prostitution are desire for affluence; educated and outwardly respectable, these women
are tempted to take to prostitution because of the undue emphasis on the values of affluence. Educated middle class prostitutes can ultimately be traced to economic sector. Indeed it is the cult of consumption which encourages this pattern of prostitution. In order to fulfill the desire for romance, several national and international business concerns operate houses of ill-fame to entertain high officials of the state. Young girls are lured into the orgies by a few women employed by these tycoons. Many educated girls prefer these dens, because they are assured of their security. In most cases, the desire for romance and enjoyment of free sex life lead them to this profession.

RELIigious AND MORAL CAUSES FOR PROSTITUTION:

Religious causes of prostitution are as important as economic and social ones. India is a land of villages. More than 70 per cent of the population are illiterate, traditional-minded and superstitious. Because of ignorance, these people have blind faith in the supernatural beings, to get their desires fulfilled. At the same time, they also take vows in the name of the deity, so as to overcome their problems. Taking vows in the name of the deity again depends upon the religious
texts of the people. So the people, belonging to little traditions, take such vow as of dedicating girls to the deity as Devadasi. Today the Devadasi custom is contributing a lot to the growth of commercial prostitution. So, the orthodox, and illiterate low caste Hindu family dedicates at least a girl for religious purpose. But, in the long run, the very religious purpose vanishes and boils down to economic gains to her and her family.

As a Devadasi, a woman is not allowed by the society to get married, and also no temples in Karnataka give financial help to any of their devadasis. So, the only way left to them for maintenance is to practice commercial prostitution. Moreover, as a Devadasi, she is immune to law, even if she entertains men sexually. So, the earnings of these Devadasis tempted other poor and needy persons to induct their daughter/sister to take to this profession via temple. Though the intention is to practice prostitution, they do not directly join brothels. Even if they do so, they become the scapegoats of the society.

In order to avoid ill fame to the family, these women get religious sanction as Devadasis, before they actually jump into the field of prostitution. Moreover, our findings in the field work
reveals that the Devadasis practise commercial prostitution in their own villages. They go to far off places and towns, because they can earn more. Even when they are picked up by the police under S.I.T. Act., they do not hesitate to disclose their identity to evade the fine. So, it is understood here that religion has also joined its hands in the rapid growth of prostitution.

Our investigations reveal that the Devadasis, who fail to go as concubines, change their lovers often. Finally, when they fail to get one, they start going to brothels in nearby cities to earn a living. The brothel-keepers also have pimps stationed around penshops, cinemas and dance theatres and lodgings. Since both the parties are trained in the trade, they exchange very quickly and in code, the information such as age, price and protection against police raids, etc., in the locality.

Normally, the Devadasis who are commercial prostitutes, visit the towns and cities one day earlier to the weekly market day there. They stay at the brothels known to them. For the help given to them, the brothel keeper and the pimps get their share out of their earnings. After staying for some time or
earning the required amount of money, they either return to
the villages or go to other towns. Like this, they go from
town to town and from village to village.

When a Devadasi comes on such tours she usually comes
alone without any guard or helper, because the area of her
operation is a safe and familiar one. In other words, she
goes to a known brothel, and receives more or less the same
customers and through the same pimps. The Devadasi does not
accept the offer to go with strangers. This is because she
feels that they may cheat her. She also does not go to any
lodging for her trade since it is against the custom of Devas-
dasi to entertain men away from a domestic shrine. So, it is
only the non-devadasi type of prostitutes who operate at
lodgings. It is also understood that the police raid only the
lodgings to check trafficking in women and not the homes of
older Devadasis. It is because the older Devadasi-turned-
brothel-keepers, keep their family shrines open for visiting
Devadasis, and so there will be a floating population of men
and women. Anybody rounded up by the police from here, can
cosily escape the law, claiming themselves as religious
functionaries.
If this is the story of rural-based and town-visiting Bevedasis for prostitution, the plight of Bevedasis who go to brothels in big cities like Bombay, Pune etc., is different. There are two types of brothels in those places, viz., those run with the commercial prostitutes and other with the Bevedasis. The owners, organizational set up, relations between the owners, customers and the girls differ a lot in these two places. In the brothels run by senior Bevedasis the newly initiated Bevedasis are taken on contract basis for a period of 5 to 8 years and on a regular payment to the girls' families. The selection of girls, their initiation, trip to these far off places, their stay in brothels and return to their villages after retirement, is a long and well guarded secret. Our investigations in the villages around Belgaum city revealed that when the brothel keepers in Bombay and Pune need reinforcement as and when their girls become old or sick, they go out looking for them in villages known to them. Others ask their agents to procure girls for them.

For the brothels run by commercial agents, girls are procured through different and antisocial techniques. Mostly kidnapped, abducted and run away girls are brought to these
houses and sold. Once a girl, is sold to such a house, means she has no way to get out until she is dead or thrown out due to old age or disease. In many cases, the girls reaching such houses never try to get out of them, since they have no place or person to go. Without religious linkage, their stay here brings disgrace to them and to their families. So once a girl is lost here means she is lost for ever to the family.

In the case of brothels/houses run by senior Devadasis, when they need new girls, they visit villages known to them. Since they regularly visit these villages every year and also during a particular season (December/January), the news of their arrival will be known in the circle of families and castes which want to send their girls for prostitution. These procurers are usually elderly women, who themselves are retired prostituting Devadasis, and owners of brothels. They are well-fed, richly dressed and ornamented and pose prosperity in all their activities by spending lavishly on friends and relatives. They make it a point to take out currency notes of bigger denomination even to buy a small thing in a village shop. They will also visit or invite people of their acquaintance and spend lavishly on them to show that they have plenty of money.
They also do this to assess the possible opposition from individuals or institutions to their stay and create public support in their favour.

Initially, the buyers pretend innocence and say that they have come on a social visit and not to procure girls. After one or two days and establishing a base, they start their business. By then the poor families which want to send their girls to brothels to earn a living, start visiting them with a request to take their girls. On the other hand, the procurers insist that they want only one or two girls since the demand is less and money market is tight. By this time, the parents of the girls come down and practically beg that their girl be selected. To press their need they even glorify their poverty and problems. If the procurer is a caste or kin's woman, they even make use of this to press their point. Finally, knowing the extent of availability of girls, the procurers start accepting invitations to visit individual families to inspect the girls. On their visit, they are fed with lavish non-vegetarian preparations and drinks of alcoholic beverages. Then the girls are physically verified for their complexion, health age and
possible deformities. Our informant told us that the girls are even made nude to examine them closely.

After selecting the required number of girls, the procurers make advance payments to the family to initiate the girl for Devadasihood and at the immediately available opportunity. This advance amount paid will, however, be adjusted against the earnings of the girl later on. After this arrangement, the procurers visit the police and other agencies to make arrangements for their safe travel to their destination.

Like this owing to poverty and misconception the caste and families, on their own force the procurers to take their girls. In a few cases, to make the girl acceptable, she is fed well and also not exposed to sun, to bring in her a healthy look and fair complexion. When the procurers pretend their non-acceptance of the girls, they even lower their demands for money etc., like this, the families try to send off their girls to brothels to earn for the family. This is all due to poverty and lack of any other means to earn a living in the village.
It is not true that all girls willingly agree to
become Devadena and go to brothels. Like any other girls,
they too would like to marry, if possible, the man of their
liking, and have a family and children of their own. This
dream they get by seeing other well settled girls in their
caste and village. They also resist the offer, since they
have seen the fate of other Devadena in the village. Some
have learnt this from the experience of their own sisters or
cousins. But their parents pressurise them, tempt them and
plead with them to go and help the family monetarily. Some-
times, they are asked to sacrifice their comforts and dreams
for the good of their younger sisters, and brothers who are
to be married. They also plead their inability to protect
them against the dominant personalities in the community, who
will in any case get them by hook or crook. Ultimately the
girls have to yield to such threats and temptations.

When the girls agree, the procurers assure them and
their families that they will be safe with them in the brothel
and will also get their payments regularly. Of course, they do
this, if not for the good of the girls and their families, but
for the sake of their business, whatever little, they regularly send the money to the girls' families. Though the girls are brought back to the families only after the contract period is over, their return to their family is ensured. By doing this, their task of reinforcement to the prostituting force in the brothel, is assured. With this mutual trust and help the two groups work and this contributes to the continuation of the profession.

Do all these transactions take place secretly? No, is the answer. During our stay in a village for field work, one day we happened to see two well-fed, richly dressed strangers in the village post office. To satisfy our curiosity about them, we asked the postmaster in English, as to who the strangers were. To this question the latter answered in the local language viz., Kannada, and in a loud casual voice, that they were procurers of girls for brothels in Bombay. He also told us that they had been there since a week, to select girls by visiting families in this and neighbouring villages. Embarrassed for being caught for his curiosity, we left the place, assuring to meet the postmaster some time later in the day.
That evening, when we and the postmaster met, the latter told us that such trips by brothel-keepers to procure girls to brothels in Bombay and Pune were common in the area.

The whole village, including the village and caste elders, knew about it. That day, the women were there in the post office waiting for their telephone call to Bombay. Though they conveyed that they wanted to talk to the Bombay party in code, every one knew that the transaction was. To the question by us as to how they would take girls to Bombay, as the police might catch them, we were told that they would take them by train and that too by a reserved coach. The police, caste elders, and the village officials knew about it, but they also knew that hunger is harsher than insult. So all turn a deaf ear or blind eye to this. A few of them may object to this, but the procurers know that they do this only to have their share in the business.

All these will go to show that the so-called sounds of wheels of prostitution are heard everywhere. But the persons involved know how to oil and when to oil them to silence. Here is the case of a parent:

...
CASE No. 1

Yellappa belongs to a landless lover caste. He has two sons and three daughters. The first girl on coming of age, became a victim of sex loving landlords in the village. By her 29th year, she was a worn-out, sick person and returned home with venereal disease. With this untold income she brought to the family was gone and in turn her maintenance came on the family. By now the village youth started having their eye on the second daughter, who was hardly thirteen years old. Two of his sons were not married since there was no money to arrange. At this stage it occurred to him to send his second daughter to Bombay brothel. With great persuasion the procurers agreed to take her. With the advance of rupees one thousand (1,000/-) taken from them, the initiation rite to brothelhood was celebrated. For this, during 1962, they spent Rs. 400/-. When the village youth came to know of this they wanted to have the girl for themselves. A few offered money, gold, etc. But the business was already settled with the Bombay party. To press their demand the villagers instigated the caste youth to stop her from being sent to Bombay. Finally the latter agreed to keep quite if a sheep (worth Rs. 150/-) was donated to give a feast to the community. As a next step the youth brought it to the notice
of the local police. The constable who promptly appeared in the village, collected Rs. 100/- and left. Then the matter was brought to the notice of a social worker at Hubli to stop this. When this was going on, the procurers from Bombay felt that their money will go a waste and met a political leader at Hubli and with his help the social worker was silenced. But as his share, the political leader wanted to sleep with the girl on the first night. So the parents of the girl and the procurers arranged for the ceremony at Hubli itself and satisfied the man and brought their girl to Bombay.

The case shows that everyone in the community knew about the transaction and no one sincerely tried to prevent it. On the contrary each one wanted his share in the deal and none even succeeded in getting it. The sufferers were the girl and her parents. Out of the advance amount received, they had to spend a lot on buying the clearance and could save very little for the use of the family. The girl lost her gold or monetary benefit which she would have got from the person who had sexual relation with her for the first time; because the politician claimed the pleasure for himself in return for his help. The brothel keeper, too, lost her share in the payment for the first sexual-union of the girl. But that was compensated for by telling the parents that they would not get any
money for three months from them since they had to make good their loss.

As it has been already stated not all girls willingly accept prostitution. They refuse to go in for it for a number of reasons, such as their dream of a family life, self-respect, health and so on. They themselves have seen and heard of the plight of girls of their caste and village. When they return to the village like living corpses/carriers of diseases and horror stories at the brothels, but they are persuaded, pleaded and even threatened. The procurers also tell them of glorious stories of the girls who are married and happily steeled, owning houses, ornaments, bank balances and even brothels of their own. They quote their own examples. But they always warn that all these come only if they work hard, save and earn the goodwill of the customers and brothel-keepers.

So doubt a handful of girls who went as prostitutes to Bombay and other places made a lot of money, married or even became brothel owners. But most others returned empty-handed. The money they earned was spent on food and stay and for
slanding home. At home, the parents spent it on their day-to-day needs, when the girl returned from the brothel she was old, weak, and sick and came here to see the same poverty and hunger. She often returned discontented for not doing well in the profession. By this she too develops guilty feelings and loses hope in life. Now once again her religion and patron deity come to her help and she starts earning her living as a religious beggar. After a few days, she forgets her past suffering and starts working for the system, first as a play and later as an agent of procurers of girls to brothels.

Here is the case of a woman, which supports our above findings:

CASE No. 2.

Chunnerva, is a senior companion of a prostitute at Subli city. Though she says she is 45 years old, she looks like a 60 year old woman. She was forced by her family to go to Pune brothel when she was only 14 years old. According to her, it was her good looks that dragged her into this situation. Since the procurers had rejected her elder sister in favour of her and the cell came to her. The procurers who were so kind to her and her parents in their village and during journey became different persons after reaching the brothel. She along with ten to twelve other girls,
was made to work hard. In the beginning she suffered a lot both bodily and mentally, later she began to curse her parents, her keepers, men and finally herself. Afterwards she settled to a life philosophy of her own—work, eat and sleep. So doubt some men were kind but majority were cruel and came drunk. She was to undergo treatment several times for venereal diseases. As an early settler she became a guide and comforter to new comers. So new came from home. On asking she was only told that every one is fine and her money is promptly and regularly sent home. At 34 she almost became useless to the brothel keeper. So they sent her home with little money for expenses. On reaching home she learnt that her mother was dead and gone long back, her sister unhappily married and her old father ill and underfed. After seeing all this she felt that the life in the brothel was much better.

During the next 'Bunda Gunnaha' somehow she managed to get initiated to Jagtihood at the shrine and got the status to beg alms. With this status now she got adequate food and money, which was of much use to her family also. Now they started caring for her once again. This took almost 4-5 years. By the time she was 40 years old. She become a link between younger prostitutes and their clients. Gradually she learnt all the tricks needed for the trade, and started grooming young girls for initiation. To-date she has
arranged the initiation of 15 to 16 girls. This also brings her commission and new dress and food. Now and then the Bombay procurers contact her for reinforcement and she readily obliges them since it is paying. Moreover there is nothing else to do to earn a living and no employment opportunity and no children to fall back upon. Some times the memories of the past hurts her, especially when she grows a new candidate for the profession. But the hunger closes all her bad memories and compels her to work for the evil system.

There are also instances of Devadasis who went to brothels in Bombay and Pune and rose to the status of brothel keepers and at old age sold their establishments and returned to their kith and kin to spend their last days. The kin accepted them happily because of the big money they brought with them. The society also did not see anything wrong in accepting them back because they are Devadasis, who have the duty of spreading the glory of their favourite deity. Here is the case of a Devadasi who, after earning enough, returned to her village and happily settled with her nephew.
CASE No. 3

Basswe was one of the three daughters to her Bawadi mother. She had one brother also. Way back in 1940s she was taken to Kochey to do 'danda' by her distant relative, who was a brothel keeper. In youth, she worked hard and sent money home. Later then the brothel keeper became old, she asked Basswe to help her in running the brothel. When the old woman died she even became its owner. As the owner of the brothel she used to come home every year, to procure girls and mostly from her and neighboring villages in Rooksura taluk. Those days there were no legal restrictions and she freely did her business. A few other brothels also asked her to procure girls for their establishments. By doing all these businesses she earned lot of money and this she passed it on to her brother in the village. In turn he and his sons wisely invested it on landed property. When she became too old to manage the brothel, she sold it to another person for a higher price and retired from the business. Because of her help rendered to their family and also the cash and gold she brought with her, the family welcomed her amidst them. Now she is almost sixty three and lives with her brother’s sons and their children, like any other elderly woman in the village. She said without her help her brother’s family would have remained poor even to-day and not married off their children to good families.
The city of Belgaum is an old one and was ruled by many rulers. First the territory of Belgaum was ruled by Bhatta, and after their downfall it came under the rule of Jainas, but the Jaina kings were also not able to maintain their supremacy over this territory for a long period of time. Finally the territory came under the clutches of the Maratha Kings (c.f. Basavaraja 1954). With the fall of the Marathas the British took over, and owing to its strategic location they made it their military camp. In those days the city was located at the meeting place of four States such as Maharashtra, Bijapur, Portuguese Goa and Mysore. This made the British develop that city into a military base. The British established the Maratha regiment and stationed it here. Today the military personnel in all these establishments come to fifty thousand. The military also runs its own factories, dairy farms, and business establishments to meet the day-to-day requirements of the personnel. So, thousands of civilians also work here.

Now, Belgaum is one of the four Revenue Divisional head quarters of Karnataka State, with the districts of...
Belgaum, Marwad, Bijapur and Karwar comprised in it. It is also the zone head quarters of the Armed Reserve Police.

So, a number of district and divisional government offices are found here. They include the office of the Divisional Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, the Deputy Inspector General of Police, the Superintendent of Police, the Joint Director of Education, the Deputy Director of Education, the Superintendent of Excise, the Deputy Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, the Deputy Commissioner of Transport, the District Medical Officer, the District Family Welfare Officer, the Office of the Chief Engineer for Irrigation and so on.

With the founding of the Karnataka Liberal Education Society in the year 1916, Belgaum also has come to be known as the city of educational institutions. It is the home town of many schools and colleges, run by K.L.E. and other educational societies. Today there are eight degree, two engineering, one education, one medical, one Homoeopathic medical and one Ayurvedic Medical colleges found here. There are 46 higher secondary schools, 152 primary schools and 22 nursery schools (of which 17 are run by the Government and 5 by private agencies). Belgaum is also the Divisional Headquarters of the
Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation. The division has a fleet of buses operating between different towns and cities in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Goa. The corporation also maintains a divisional workshop for repairs to and body building to their vehicles. In addition, there is the city service transport facility with a fleet of buses.

There are also a large number of industries in and around Belgaum city. The important one among them is the aluminium factory established in October 1969. It employs over 1,467 labourers and officials. A few more persons are engaged in the activities connected with the factories as commission agents, dealers etc. There are other industries in and around the city of Belgaum. They too employ a large number of labourers.

Belgaum is also a commercial and business centre. Woven cloth, hotel, furniture, grocery and other business flourish. The A.P.J.C., has a big market yard, which serves the business purposes in wheat, potatoes, paddy, groundnuts, onions, tobacco and so on. The different localities of Belgaum have their own market days. However, Saturday is the weekly market day of Belgaum proper. It attracts thousands of people.
from nearby villages for buying and selling articles.
Belgaum has sixteen (16) cinema theatres and four drama theatres. Here Kannada, Hindi, Marathi and English films are screened three times a day. Belgaum is also known for good hotels and lodgings. There are more than 200 hotels and lodgings in Belgaum. Of them, four (4) are 'A' grade hotels and 15 are 'B' grade. These serve the needs of thousands of visitors who come to the city for business and official purposes.

Owing to its nearness to Khopar and Supa forest regions, Belgaum is also known for saw mills, timber and furniture business. There are more than 20 saw mills of different magnitude in Belgaum. They cut big logs for different uses such as building construction, automobile body building, furniture and art. Belgaum city is also known as the city of garages, since there are a number of automobile garages here. If the smaller ones undertake only the repairing of automobiles, the bigger ones build bodies of buses and trucks. Naturally, the automobile spare shops are also found in large numbers. Belgaum has as many as 75 branches of banks (54 are nationalised and 21 co-operative banks), 71 automobile and 17 petro-chemical dealers, 39 petrol banks, 80 liquor
shops and 46 arrack shops. Naturally, all these employ a large number of casual, permanent, skilled and unskilled labourers.

The population of Belgaum city is 3,02,090 (1981). It can be classified into three categories: Permanent residents, stationary population and floating population. Those, who come for trade and commerce, stay in hotels and lodgings. The Army and Air Force personnel and the students are stationed here for a certain period of time. Others are the permanent residents. They include the labourers, businessmen, landlords etc. Of the visiting and stationed category a large number of them are either without a family or do not bring it owing to scarcity of suitable houses or lodgings. Naturally they are away from their homes and there are possibilities of them visiting brothels in the city. Owing to the above mentioned factors, the institution of prostitution has been in existence in the city of Belgaum since a long time. As and when the city grows, the size of their population also increased.

The city of Belgaum is divided into cantonment and Civil areas. The Civil area is divided into Shegaon, Tilakwadi,
Kills, Vadagaon, Hindwadi, Mahantech Nagar, Jadhav Nagar, Godavivannagar, Visheshware Nagar, Indol, Fheebag, Chennanaagi Nagar, Shivaji Nagar, Shastri Nagar, Ameer Nagar, Banae Nagar, Chitodeher Nagar, Angol and Asoke Nagar. Camp and Jestre are the military areas. There are also a number of areas declared as slums. The red districts are found in Shapur, Tilakwadi, Vadagaon and Jakkappachal area of the city. Among these the Jakkappa chok and keruti gulli are well known for the profession of prostitution, with a large number of brothels and cheap class lodginggs.

Now let us study the operation of prostitution in Belgaum. As it is said earlier, the main aim of this study is to know the extent to which the Bovadasi custom contributes to commercial prostitution. Belgaum was selected owing to its location, size, commercial and industrial background and involvement in the profession of prostitution. One hundred commercial prostitutes were selected at random for our study. Earlier to that, police officials, social workers etc., were consulted and convinced about our purpose of study. They, in turn, through their personal in the locality, introduced us to the prostitutes, brothel keepers and their agents. During our first visit, a lady constable went with us. The strong men of the
business were warned not to harass us but to co-operate with us. After acquainting with the operators of the profession we started contesting the informants directly. Within a week's time, both parties could identify each other and could meet each other at the police stations, court halls, market, lodgings and, of course, at the brothels. Initially, no doubt, the whole group had their suspicion and in course of time it was removed. Of course, both the police and the operators of the business, exchanged information about us and our work.

After establishing sufficient contact with the confidence in the informants, we started interviewing them. A few in the beginning, refused because they were of the opinion that we were police officers. But later on when they were convinced, they readily agreed and gave interviews to us. Those who agreed, were interviewed as far as possible, in isolation.

Table No. 6 shows the caste and age-wise distribution of the informants. It is evident from the table that our informants came from almost all major castes in the district, including the upper castes. However, the low-caste informants were
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>BRAHMIN</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>LINGAYAT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>VAISHNE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>KURUMA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>UPPAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>MADIWALAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>KARATHA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>VODDAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>JADAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>BARKER</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>BARIJANS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**          |       | 10      | 26    | 38    | 14    | 2     | -     | -     | -     | -     |            | 100   |
in majority and the Herijans topped the list with 37 per cent of the total. The informants were in the age groups between 16 and 40. It was interesting to note that no girls below 16 and women above 40 years were in our sample. This shows that too young and too old are not available in the flesh market of Belgium.

Table No. 7 shows the occupational background of the informant’s family. It was found that labouring class contributed as many as 56 per cent and this was followed by 21 per cent from persons of farming background. The other occupational groups represented were: trade 5 per cent, craft caste 1 per cent, truck driving 10 per cent, village service 5 per cent and white collar jobs such as teaching 2 per cent. It is evident that labour class, which is also landless and poor, contributed more number of them. Among the farming class majority came from marginal and small farming background.

Table No. 8 shows the marital status of the 100 informants. It is significant to note that as many as 60 per cent of them were married persons, 39 per cent were bachelors, and only one was unmarried. Among the married, 7 claimed that they lived with their husbands, 21 were widowed, 31 were deserted.
## Table No. 7

Caste-wise Family Occupational Background of the Prostitutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Farming</th>
<th>Labouring</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Craft</th>
<th>Truck</th>
<th>Watchmen</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BRAHMIN</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LINSAYATS</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VELIKIT</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>KURUDA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>UPPAR</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>NADIBALAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MARATANA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VODDAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>JADAR</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>BURKAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>HARIJANS</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Castes</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Deserted</td>
<td>Devedasi</td>
<td>Unmarried</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>BRAHMIN</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>LINGAYAT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>VAVALI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>KIDDA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>SEPAT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>MADANALAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>MARATHA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>VODDA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>JADAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>BALKER</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>RANIJANG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TOTAL  | 7       | 21      | 1       | 31       | 39       | 1         | 100      |       |
and one was divorced. Among the informants with husbands it
was found that these men were either old or disabled and sick.
Majority of them had taken those women as second and even
third wives. The so called deserted or widowed were driven
to this profession because of their acute poverty and their
helplessness in maintaining themselves and their dependents.
Among the Devasasi as many as 29 came from Harijan caste,
followed by 66 from Vaishniki caste.

Among the widowed informants, it is found that the
majority were married young and into poor families. During
their youth they could not get moral and financial support,
and so reached this place. Without any means to fall back
upon, even as children they were forced to join this profe-
sion. Another reason is desertion. In Hindu society divorce
is not allowed, since marriage is considered a sacrament. So,
unevenly married couple part later in life by deserting each
other. When this happens, the woman become helpless without a
place to go to since doors are shut to her in both conjugal
and parental homes. The latter family does so mostly owing to
poverty and family honour. At the same time, if the desertion
is due to immoral acts of the woman, she will have to find her own way to lead an independent life, and in that case prostitution is the only way open to her.

Table No. 9 shows the educational background of the informants. Out of the total 93 per cent are illiterates and among them majority came from low castes. Among the literates one had studied upto the secondary level and another upto pre-university examination and both came from the upper castes. Even here, the distribution of the trait shows the real picture prevailing in the society regarding the rate of literacy. Such an illiterate majority was also ignorant of the fact, that the glamour the profession had was false and this they could not know even through the available literature.

Table No. 10 gives the information of the family background of the informants. Out of one hundred informants as many as 24 came from broken family background, 24 from widowed family background and 33 from single parent background. The figures show that the background of the family is also important in spreading the evil of prostitution. When parents break because of a quarrel or death, the children are left uncared for.
Table No. 9  

**Educational Background of the Prostitutes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>S.S. H.C.</th>
<th>P.U.G. and above</th>
<th>Illiterate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>BRAHMIN</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LINGAYAT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>VAJNIKI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>KURUMA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DEFAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>MADIYALAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>MARATHA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>VODAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>JACAN</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>BAKSHI</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>MUSSING</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>HARIJANS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 10

#### Family Background of the Prostitutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>CASTS</th>
<th>Broken</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
<th>S. Parent</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>ESIHAI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>LINGAYAT</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>VALMIKI</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>KURUMA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>UPPAR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>MADIWALAR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>MARATHA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>FODJAR</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>JADAR</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>BARRIER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>MUSLIMS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>HARIJANS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>39</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Added to this are the poverty, ignorance and the social surroundings in which they lived. All these factors made the children from these families the victims of the evil profession.

Table 5a, 6 shows that as many as 39 out of one hundred informants are Devadasis. For the dedicated women it is a deviation from the tradition, to become commercial prostitutes.

It was found that majority of the prostituting Devadasis had failed to get life partner to live with and so became commercial prostitutes. This happened again because most of them were disabled and suffered from some or other diseases. It is also found that the majority of these were sexually assaulted earlier to their initiation, and to save their as well as their family honour, they were dedicated to a deity. This means they became Devadasis not because of a vow taken because of the necessity but to save the dignity of the family since they were found with an illegitimate child when even before initiation. It is also a fact that a majority of them were dedicated to minor shrines and less known deities. Owing to this, they could not make a decent living like other Devadasis, with the support from the devotees, in the form of
drums, food and clothing. They were dedicated to these shrines, since it was found easy and less expensive. Finally, when they failed to support themselves with their ritual status and rules, they resorted to this immoral profession.