CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS REFORMATION AND REHABILITATION OF DEVADASIS

A striking contrast may be noted in modern Indian history concerning the one between the position of upper caste Indian women in the mid-nineteenth century—subservient, uneducated, secluded—and their position in the mid-twentieth century—articulate, educated and active in professions and in public life. In fact the picture during the 1960s reveals that Indian Women have participated actively in elite politics at higher levels than their western counterparts "... in the 1960s the rate of female representation in the respective national legislatures was higher in India than in the United States and Great Britain. India, Lok Sabha, 7 per cent (1962); the United States, Congress, 2.2 per cent women (1965); Great Britain, Parliament, 5 per cent women (1966)". (Everett: 1981:1). These upper caste, educated women have been instrumental in the passage of social legislation with a bearing on women.

The constitution of India guarantees equality of the sexes. There are innumerable legislations concerning female employment such as equal pay provisions, maternity benefits, etc. There is also a legislation incorporating reforms in Hindu Law so that women have equal inheritance rights. Some scholars affirm that India has more laws designed to improve the status of women than the United States or Great Britain. But, however, existing laws are not enforced, and the women masses of India live in such acute poverty that property rights become irrelevant.

The improvement in the status of upper-caste Indian women and the passage of equal rights legislations were due to the efforts of the Indian Women's movement. The movement was linked with nationalist movement.
The Indian women's movement has been labelled as a bourgeois feminist movement. Bourgeois feminist movements are composed of middle class women who campaign for special provisions like extension of educational and occupational opportunities, voting rights, property rights to women. These movements however, failed to represent the interests of the other group of women. For example, the rural women belonging to low class and low castes were unable to participate in bourgeois women movements. Moreover, such movements hardly represent interests of peasants, working low caste women. Their interests are concerned more with food, wages and security rather than with voting and property rights. There are also incredible obstacles to the participation of lower class women in any social movements. It is true that there were campaigns against dowry and child marriages. But the middle class background of early feminist leaders could not allow them to take-up the causes of low caste and class women in India. Hence there were some problems in launching any social movement against the customs which were instrumental in exploiting lower caste women in the beginning. Before passing some remarks on social movements aimed to reform or revive the devadasi system, it is necessary to understand the meaning of social movement.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:

Some social scientists have defined social movement as a 'crusade'. The word crusade inspires in the people a new conception of themselves, since it creates an awareness of their rights and privileges. It also brings in new rays of hopes pertaining to the world they live in and of a world they want to achieve.

Dressler and Willis define social movements as 'deliberate attempt made by a large number of people to bring about a change, through group efforts' (1973:415). However, Dressler and Willis do not emphasize the role
Bertram states "When inequalities, insecurities or frustrations increase beyond the withstanding capacity of a people they make a collective attempt to change the unsatisfactory conditions. Then the Social Movement is in the making" (Bertram: 1958:349). He opines that the social movement emerges only after reaching the climax of withstanding capacity of frustrated, exploited group and it is a collective attempt.

Baldridge defines social movement as a "form of collective behaviours in which a dedicated group of people organise to promote or resist change". He further says, "A movement will have definite goals, organisational structure and a clear change oriented ideology. A movement consciously and purposefully promotes the policies it desires, usually through political or educational activities" (1975:298). Baldridge presents a more comprehensive definition as he emphasizes on 'who organise a social movement and how they do it'.

Social movements are by-products of complex factors. Hence their characteristics are also complex. Kilian (1964:42) opines that social movements range from religious to secular, from revolutionary to reactionary and form co-operative to the schismatic. Some social scientists have tried to classify social movements. Blumer (1951:168) classifies social movements in two categories. They are 'revolutionary' and 'reformistic' social movements. The revolutionary social movements attack existing norms and values and try to replace them with new ones. Contrary to this the reformistic social movements try to bring favourable change in the existing institutions.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS ASSOCIATED WITH DEVADASI SYSTEM IN INDIA

The social movements related with devadasi system may be classified into two categories - reformative and revivalist movements. The former was
comparatively more progressive and in reaction to it the revivalist movement emerged which was resistive in nature.

ANTI-NAUTCH AND ANTI-DEDICATION MOVEMENTS:

Reformationists who conceived Devadasi cult as social evil and devadasi as 'prostitute' launched antinautch and anti-dedication movement during 1890s. Their main aim was to do away with this system. Reform lobbyists were drawn mainly from missionaries, doctors, journalists and social workers. They urged the abolition of all ceremonies and procedures by which young girls dedicated themselves as devadasis to Hindu Shrines, was articulated in the first instance as an 'anti-nautch movement' (Here the word nautch, the corrupt form of Hindi term Nach-connotes dance, which was performed by a more common class of northern dancing girls like 'Tawaifs' etc.) These anti-nautch campaigners began their attack on the devadasi system in 1882. They fully made use of their declamatory and populist skills. They organised seminars and conferences to create a public opinion against the devadasi system. In the later part of 1882 an appeal was made to the Viceroy and Governor General of India and to the Governor of Madras. The appeal bore a large number of signatures of the educated class with the hope of gaining their practical help and influence in 'So great a moral question'. This appeal also defines the position of the anti-nautch movement. The following is the full text of the memorandum:

The humble memorial of the undersigned members of the "Hindu Social Reform Associations" of Madras and others,

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH:

1. That there exists in the Indian community a class of women commonly known as nautch-girls.

2. That these women are invariably prostitutes.
3. That countenance and encouragement are given to them, and even a recognised status in society secured to them, by the practice which prevails among Hindus, to a very undesirable extent, of inviting them to take part in marriage and other festivities, and even to entertainments given in honour of guests who are not Hindus.

4. That this practice not only necessarily lowers the moral tone of society, but also tends to destroy that family life on which national soundness depends, and to bring upon individuals ruin in property and character alike.

5. That this practice rests only upon fashion, and receives no authority from antiquity or religion, and accordingly has no claim to be considered a National Institution, and is entitled to no respect as such.

6. That a strong feeling is springing up among the educated classes of this country against the prevalence of this practice, as evinced, among other things, by the proceedings at a public meeting in Madras, on the 5th May 1893.

7. That so keenly do your Memorialists realize the harmful and degrading character of this practice, that they have resolved neither to invite nautch-girls to any entertainments given by themselves, nor to accept any invitation to an entertainment at which it is known that nautch-girls are to be present.

8. That your Memorialists feel assured that your Excellency desires to aid, by every proper means, those who labour to remove any form of social evil.
9. That your Memorialists accordingly appeal to your Excellency, as the official and recognized head of society in the Presidency of Madras, and as the representatives of Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Queen-Empress, in whose influence and example the cause of purity has ever found support, to discourage this pernicious practice by declining to attend any entertainment at which nautch-girls are invited to perform, and thus to strengthen the hands of those who are trying to purify the social life of their community."

The above given memorandum received the following reply from Viceroy.

VICEROYAL LODGE
Simla, Sept. 23rd 1893.

Sir,

I am desired by His Excellency, the Viceroy, to acknowledge the receipt of a memorial signed by yourself and numerous other persons, in which you appeal to His Excellency to decline, for the future, to attend any entertainment at which nautch-girls are invited to perform. You base your request upon the statement that those women are invariably prostitutes, and that it is, therefore, undesirable to countenance, or encourage them, in any way.

The Viceroy desires me to say in reply that, although he recognize the excellence of the objects upon which you have addressed him, he does not think that he could usefully make any such announcement as that which you have suggested. He has, on one or two occasions, when travelling in different parts of India, been present at entertainments of which a nautch formed a part, but the proceedings were as far as His Excellency observed them, not characterised by any impropriety, and the performers were present in the exercise of their profession as dancers, in accordance with the customs of the country.
Under the circumstances, His Excellency does not, on the eve of his departure from India, feel called upon to take any action such as that which you have recommended.

Very interestingly even the Governor of Madras also replied the memorialists in the same line. The text of the reply from Governor of Madras is as follows:

"GOVERNMENT HOUSE"

MADRAS, 4th October.

Sir,

In reply to the Memorial recently received from "Hindu Social Reform Association", I am desired to inform you that although His Excellency fully appreciates the good intentions which have actuated those who have joined with you in issuing the memorial, yet, he doubts if any advantages would be gained by his accepting the obligation which the memorial wishes to impose upon him. His Excellency has been present on several occasions on which nautches have been performed at none of which has he ever seen anything, in the remotest degree, be considered improper; and it has never occurred to him to take into consideration the moral character of the performers at these entertainments, any more than when he has been present at performances which have been carried out by professional dancers or athletes either in Europe or India. H.E., the Governor, therefore, regrets his inability to conform to the wishes expressed in the memorial". (Marcus Fuller‘1900 135)

On such replies the 'Indian Social Reformer' on October 14th 1883 commented as follows: "Both (Viceroy and Governor of Madras) state that at the entertainments given to them they have witnessed nautches, but so far as their Excellencies could observe there was nothing improper in the performance. Both lay stress on the nautch girls being professional dancers, and it has never occurred to them to look into closely into the moral character
of these women. Now it was never suggested by the memorialists that in the performance of the nautch there is any open impropriety visible to the casual eye. Even if it was there, it is hardly to be expected that it should be displayed before their Excellencies. They should not forget that they represent in this country a sovereign whose respect for purity and piety is as great as she is great. The people of India cannot but look with wonder on the representatives of her majesty being present at the performance of women, who, as everybody knows, are prostitutes; and their excellencies, hereafter, at least, must know to be such. "Do they get prostitute dancers to perform at entertainments given specially in honour of the royalty in Europe? The nautch women is invited to perform, it must be remembered, which is a very different thing from people going to theatre or other places where people of bad character may be engaged to entertain the public. The nautch-woman, thus, gets a status in the company."

This even further created a conducive environment among some elite members of Hindu Society to fight more systematically through organised associations. 'The Indian Social Reformer' supported the movement by criticizing British Government's stand on this issue. The 'Lahore Purity Servant' a news paper also sympathesized with Reformist anti-nautch compaigners by publishing occasional articles in its column. Primarily this movement contributed a lot in educating public opinion, in enlisting members to refuse to attend nautch parties or to refuse devadasis to invite at the festivities in their homes. The anti-nautch and other associations like purity association jointly organized Annual Social Conferences and passed resolutions. Among such resolutions the one passed in 1899 is noteworthy. It was as follows:

"In the opinion of the conference, the Reports of all the Associations show that a healthy change is taking place, in all parts of the country, in
favour of the Anti-Nautch and purity movements, including in the last, the condemnation of the practice of devoting girls, nominally to temple service but practically to a life of prostitution; and it entertains no doubt that public sentiment favours both these movements, as tending to purify our personal, family and public life; and the Conference trusts that these efforts will be continued, and that a vigilant watch will be kept by the organs of public opinion upon all attempts to violate this healthy sentiment” (Marcus B. Fuller: 1900:137).

In this resolution for the first time the additional clause of disapproval of the dedication of girls to temple services was included. Thus anti-nautch movement paved the way for anti-dedication movement. The anti-nautch and anti-dedication movements, started campaigning devadasis to adopt the moral supremacy of graham values. It requested them to voluntarily relinquish all rights to temple service and its privileges. Whereas men belonging to devadasi community continued to perform both in the temples and in people’s homes. Formally these people accompanied devadasis while performing her dance the Sadir which is popularly known in local context. They were instrument players and dance teachers. They received patronage from Dravid Munnetra Kazagum and other regional political parties.

In 1920’s the non-Brahmin Justice party (the more elitist precursor of DMK) had taken great care to protect service benefits, in terms of land and buildings attached to the devadasis office before finally pushing through the legislature bill in 1930. The Madras Act of 1929 enfranchising inams and maniams as the tax-free land privileges were called, was justified on the ground of social justice. The devadasi ‘bondslave’ to the temple authorities could now own the house and land without the extortion of service (Amrit Srinivasan 1985: 1876). By this time in Madras region anti-Brahminism was developing. The anti-Brahminism and anti-ritualism of the Backward classes movement
of the South equipped the devadasi community men with a powerful ideology with which to overcome the humiliation of the anti-nautch campaign and fight for dominance both within the household and wider society. During the close of the 20th century, science, religion and the politics of reform intertwined in the members of missionaries and some female social workers. They started to publish medical reports about immature sex and sought to discredit upper-caste customs and habits on humanitarian grounds. They declared that the patronage of temple dancers and the practice of pre-pubertal marriage were equally odious. Dr. S. Muthulaswami Reddy actually headed the legislative battle for the abolition of temple dedication. The reform movement leaders carefully used the British machinery of regional party politics and their journalistic skills to achieve its goal. However, in 1905 the Executive Committee of the Prince and Princess of Wales' Reception Fund unanimously decided that there should be no performance by nautch-girls at the entertainment to be given to 'Their Royal Highness' at Madras. In 1947 Madras State forbade the "dedication" and temple dancing. This bill was originally framed by Reddy as far back as 1930 asking for the abolition of temple dedication. With a lot of reluctance and emotionally loaded debate it was passed qualifying "... This legislation should not cut at the root of art and culture has come to us from generations past .... These things should not be killed in our jealousy for social reform"

At last reformists succeeded in achieving their goal of legally forbidding devadasis dance (Sadir) and dedication to temples after a long battle of 50 Years.

THE REVIVAL MOVEMENT:

The aggressive anti-nautch movement's campaign was followed with complete suppression of the dance of devadasi and its secular performances.
much earlier than formal legislation. Paradoxically during the same period there emerged a movement urging the 'revival' of Sadir or traditional dance of devadasis. These revivalists feared that the emergence of anti-nautch movement would lead to a ban on classical dance which was performed only by devadasis. They argued that the devadasi dance was a sacred tradition, worth preserving and if the legislation (justified though it was on the ground of anti-prostitution) came down with punitive hand not on prostitutes in general but on the devadasi alone - why did the devadasi need to go? (Amrit Srinivas 1985:1673).

The revivalists tried to present a utopian view of the institution of devadasis. According to their view it was the model of the ancient temple dancer as a pure and sacred, chaste woman. They stressed that in absence of immorality the dance of devadasi was a form of 'yoga' to enhance an individual's spiritual plane. The revivalists wanted to preserve the traditional form of Sadir dance by purifying it. The new name was given as 'Bharatanatyam'. As a consequence of purification some modifications were introduced into the content of dance style. The revivalists were basically belonging to Brahmin dominated Theosophical Circles. Many Brahmin girls started to learn the dance from devadasis. Hence the dance technique remained unchanged. The only change was in the class of clientele. The new features that emerged reflected to the altered social context both of the dancer and her dance. They were as follows:

1) An increased 'textualization' of the dance. The classical Sanskrit literature was invoked as a means to purifying the classical tradition as also reviving lost forms.

2) The 'Sanskritization' of the organisation of dance training. Elite schools such as Kalakshetra run by the Theosophical Society of Madras, supported
upper caste social practices at the institutional level—vegetarian diet, early rising and prayer, puja on the stage. The superior, more 'Pure' dance was thereby brought into relation with social mores of an appropriately superior class of dancer.

iii) The puritanical reform of the context and presentation of the dance concert. The more erotic and bawdy songs of the devadasi's repertoire were excluded and the image of the melam or dance band was done away with by giving the dancer prime focus on the stage. They were set out of the lime-light in the corner of the stage. Earlier the dance-conductor and his assistant also used to stand behind the dancer as she danced. The visible predominance of men in the devadasis band was done away with and more women were employed to provide accompaniment for the dance. The low key approach to Sringara or the artistic convention of love between man and woman in the dance mimetic sequence was justified as a means of reducing its overt eroticism and replacing it with an 'inward essence'.

iv) The teaching and performing functions were combined for the first time in the woman dancer who now saw herself not merely as a practitioner of the art but its interpreter as well. The changed orientation of the dance from an inferior 'Community' to a superior 'individual' practice helped these changes to acquire legitimacy. (Amrit Srinivas:1986).

Now the Bharatanatyam is monopolised by Brahmins in Tamil Nadu. The best artists in this field acknowledge their training under devadasis. These artists claiming that they have preserved the art from the fallen prostitutes the devadasis. But in reality they are perpetuating the 'Sadir' dance of devadasis only.
It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the reformists presented devadasi as a 'Prostitute' in order to abolish dedication of girls to temples and revivalists sketched her as a 'nun' in order to re-establish the institution of devadasi and her art afresh.

THE ROLE OF THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY:

The organisers of the Theosophical Society of India tried their best to revive devadasi dance. Pioneers like Madam H.P. Blavatsky, and Colonel H.S. Oclott undertook an exclusive tour of southern India and propagated the importance of the revival of devadasi institution and the associated art of Sadir. After establishing the Theosophical Society's headquarters at Adyar, Madras, they declared as the aim of restoration of India's ancient glory. Later Rukmini Arundale took up the cause of revival of Sadir to Bharatnatyam. She was very well groomed and encouraged by Anni-Besant. The Theosophical Society provided funds and organising skill to Rukmini Arundale in performance of Bharatanatyam and imparting training to willing disciples. Theosophists organised an International Convention at Adyar, Madras, in 1935-36. Rukmini Arundale presented Bharatanatyam on the occasion and was also elected as President of International Academy of Arts which was later renamed as Kalakshetra. Through Kalakshetra number of dance schools were established. These dance schools have encouraged teaching and learning of Bharatanatyam throughout the country.

ROLE OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION

In the area under study, in spite of high prevalence rate of devadasi cult, no mass movement has as yet emerged against it. People still strongly believe that it is a mode of worship, because basically the status of women in this area is at a deploring condition and they are relegated to a subordinate
Vimochana's Activities.

Marriage of a Devadasi.

Marriage of a Devadasi in an Anti-Dedication Campaign.
position to men like in other parts of rural India. Scheduled caste women are further subjugated to manifold exploitations. We come across with some stray cases of educated scheduled caste youths protesting against the heinous devadasi practice. But such protests were (and still are) suppressed by their own caste people and caste Hindus because of their vested interests. Hence in the past social workers and political leaders used to carefully avoid any reference to this cult as, this might adversely affect their popularity. They believed that reference to such practice would hurt the religious sentiments of Scheduled Caste people. Scheduled Caste educated members believed that upper caste people with their vested interests of gaining accessibility of desirable Scheduled Caste women, forced them to practice the cult. But innocent, ignorant members were in majority in this group. They were reluctant to yield to elite members' advice, to get rid of, their age old religious customs and beliefs. Moreover, they never wanted to face the curse of Yellamma deity by terminating their agelong religious services. In spite of this, awareness about this exploitative religious practice has started emerging in all sections of the Society. Very recently some new thinking has started taking place in this region.

EMERGENCE OF VIMOCHANA:

The incorporation of the Association Vimochana: Devadasi Punarvasati Sangha owes its origin to an young enthusiast lecturer of Sri S.M.S. College, Athani. He intended to organise a seminar at Kokatnur village of Athani Taluka on the evils of Devadasi system during April, 1984. He had in his mind to prepare and submit an action oriented research paper. He had somehow completed a preliminary survey work on his own covering 48 villages of Athani Taluka. Kokatnur village is situated very close to Yellammanwadi, one of the strongholds of devadasi system, in Belgaum district, with vested interests as supporters of devadasi cult, and as such the young lecturer was facing an up-hill task
in organising the proposed seminar, at such a place. At a casual talk with Shri V.S. Manavade, now Secretary of the Sangha, opened the topic of the seminar and sought his assistance. As a result of this a meeting was called on 28-3-1985 under the leadership of a young advocate Shri B.L. Patil at his Office-Cum-residence inviting the enthusiastic and dedicated social workers of the town. Shri M.V. Patil, a Senior Advocate, spoke with grace on the occasion and said that "the proposed seminar would have been conducted much earlier and it was indeed the need of the hour especially when some organisations are functioning to eradicate the evils of this system in places where this problem is not prevailing and the idea therefore, is more important. However the place chosen for the purpose is a stronghold of the very problem. Therefore, the combined effort of a big band of youths, elders, and social workers is required to make it a success." All the persons assembled for the purpose consented to the voice of M.V. Patil and decided to form themselves into an Association, at the first place, under the presidentship of Shri B.L. Patil. Then the President designate Shri B.L. Patil, declared open the 'Vimochana: Devadasi Punarvasati Sangh, Athani'. The members assembled also passed unanimously the following resolution:

"This Athani Taluka is one of the very few places in Karnataka having rampant Devadasi system being practised collously for centuries. It may not be out of place to mention here but with great sadness and a feeling of shame, that this is one of the very few places feeding enormously the brothels in big cities like Bombay, Poona etc..... Though long overdue this Association 'Vimochana: Devadasi Punarvasati Sangh, Athani' has been established and incorporated to counter act the evils of Devadasi system and other Socio-economic conditions of its victims."
SEMINAR AT KOKATNUR:

To give wide publicity to the Devadasi problem a short bulletin "Vimochaneya Vicechano" was released to carry the message of the Sangh at all the corners of the Athani Taluka and Belgaum district as well. This has sparked off the activities of the Department of Social Welfare and the officers of district level have started contacting the Sangha with a helping hand. 25th April, 1985 was a redlettered day which created abundant enthusiasm and confidence among the members of the Sangha and the general public in the Athani area. On that day, a State level seminar on "Evils of Devadasi System" was arranged at Kokatnur village, just 30 Kms. away from Athani and 12 Kms. away from Telsang village. Though Shri. V.L. Patil, then Hon'ble Minister for Social Welfare, Government of Karnataka, was not able to attend, Smt. Leeladevi R. Prasad, M.L.A., of Athani constituency inaugurated the seminar. In her address she appealed to the people to get rid of the devadasi cult which forces innocent girls to lead a life of shame. Dr. A. Pushapavati the then Hon'ble Minister of State for Social Welfare, Govt. of Karnataka who also belonged to Scheduled Caste community wondered why this cult was forced to be practised by only low caste women. Her speech was extremely emotional and she requested devadasis to stop this heinous practice. Shri. K.M. Katti from Social Welfare Department, Shri. M.S. Patil, Field publicity Officer, Government of India and Smt. Drakshayani Kattimani, a Social Worker from Hubli, also spoke on the occasion. The Seminar was a great success. At the same time the marriage of devadasi Nimbevva Tukaram Kamble with Shri. Shrimant Bhimappa Ghatakamble was also solemnised. The Seminar was entirely a novel experience to the affected class and naturally created a stir amongst them, forcing them to look back at the age-old practice in a new perspective. The Seminar was attended by a large gathering of public of not only Kokatnur Village but also of surrounding villages.
Within a week after the establishment of the Sangha one youth by name Ramesh Kamble came forward to marry a devadasi by name Sunanda, coming out of the clutches of the devadasi cult. The members of the Sangha welcomed the enthusiasm of the young person and happily performed their marriage in front of the Office of the Sangha on 6-4-1985 and got registered the same. This event gave them an enormous strength and zeal, to start their activities. In the meantime the Karnataka State Social Welfare Advisory Board Chairperson Smt. Savitri Gundu, wrote a letter informing the Sangha that she would be deputing the officers of the Board to discuss the voluntary organisations to carry on with its various schemes. Accordingly on 8th August, 1985, Shri. M.S. Subramanya, Secretary and Shri. P. Prakash, Social Welfare Officer of the Board, visited the Sangha along with Shri. B.C. Thigagaran, Programme Co-ordinator of Christian Children Fund, Bangalore. After thorough discussion with these officials the Sangha finally agreed to take up the various schemes of Karnataka State Social Welfare Advisory Board, the Central Social Welfare Advisory Board, Christian Children Fund, the State Government and the Central Government. For the purpose of taking up all these schemes it was utmost necessary to register the Sangha immediately. On the lines advised by Shri. P. Prakash, Social Welfare Officer of the Board, bye-laws of the Sangha were drawn. The Sangha was registered under the Karnataka State Societies Registration Act, 1960, on 4-9-1985.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE SANGHA

A) The upliftment of the Women in their Social, economical and cultural status.

B) 1) To set up training programmes, educational institutions, Socio-economic activities for the amelioration of the women;
n) To arrange for 'Holiday Home Camps', Seminars, condensed course of education, vocational guidance and adult education centres etc., for the benefit of women;

iii) To set up residential or non-residential nurseries, primary, middle and high schools etc., for the benefit of children;

C) To work for the benefit of Devadasis and their children in particular in the area, and so also for the widows, destitutes and other deserted and physically handicapped women and their children in general.

D) To propagate, publish literature, books and papers and canvass against the system of devadasi in its manifold forms and to take all reasonable measures to prevent and eradicate the system;

E) To help for implementation of all Government (State and Central both) policies and programme framed from time to time for the upliftment and amelioration of socio-economic conditions of the women and either children at large;

F) To work with only service motto and not for any personal gains or profits.

G) To fight against the evils of untouchability.

FINANCE:

No Sangha or Association run without funds. It is an important factor to carry on the Association's activities. The Sangha mainly generates funds from:

1. Membership Subscriptions,
2. Donations,
Soon after the inception of the Sangha, members after many deliberations prepared a proposal which served as guideline for their future activities. They proposed to spend upon the schemes to be taken up during the 3 years as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>RUPEES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>2,28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3,30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PHASEWISE ACTIVITIES AND SCHEMES**

**PHASE I (1985):**
1. To arrange 20 marriages of eligible devadasis,
2. One unit of child sponsorship project of Christian Children Fund.

A survey of 22 villages in the Athani Taluka was conducted during this period to trace the children of devadasis for the said project. The following table shows the number of children under different age groups and eligible for the sponsorship:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Villages</th>
<th>AGE GROUPS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>Eligible for Sponsorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-6 Years</td>
<td>6-12 Years</td>
<td>12-18 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 145 eligible children one unit containing 100 children were selected for the sponsorship plan by the Christian Children Fund. Approval for the Scheme was granted during the same year.

**PHASE II (1986):**

1. 25 marriages of Devadasis.
2. Follow-up programme of child sponsorship plan of Christian Children Fund.
4. Introduction of Vocational Training Courses for adult women including devadasis. The proposed courses are as follows:
   a) Tailoring,
   b) Nursery School Teachers' Training,
   c) Secretarial Courses.

**PHASE III (1987):**

1. 25 marriages of Devadasis,
2. Follow-up programme of child sponsorship plan of Christian Children Fund;
Savali's Activities

"Jatha Nirmoolana" Campaign.

A Seminar on Devadasi Problem.
At the end of the third year as many as 50 children would be available for schooling in I standard. For such students a residential school is proposed. All the necessary preparations are completed to start the same at the outskirt of the Athani town.

Second unit of dairy project alongwith the follow-up work of first unit started in the year 1986. The follow-up work of vocational training courses for adult women was also undertaken during the same year. Various schemes and projects to rehabilitate devadasis were taken up by the Sangha with the assistance and guidance from the State and Central Governments and State and Central Social Welfare Advisory Boards. In addition they are receiving funds through membership contribution and foreign aid.

At present the office of the Sangha is situated in the premises of Shri B.L. Patil Office-cum residence at Athani. The Sangha is planning to acquire 5 acres of land within the vicinity of Athani town so as to enable it to start all its projects and programmes at one place.

'Savali' a devadasi Punarvasati Sangha at Nipani is also active in eradicating the devadasi system. Under the guidance of local social workers, Sushila Naik a devadasi herself, has started anti dedication and rehabilitation campaign in Nipani area. 'Jatha Nirmoolana Andolana' started in this area, symbolically expressed resentment of social workers towards inducting innocent girls in this system. Savali is running creches for the benefit of children of devadasis. It is receiving assistance from Karnataka State Social Welfare Advisory Board.
Mysore rulers banned the temporary employment of devadasi dancers on the occasion of the car festival of Shri Bhoga Nandiswaranay at Nandi during 1892. The Maharaja of Mysore issued an order in 1899, stating that temple dancing girls of Srikantswarswamy temple at Nanjangud be stopped. However, devadasis who were in such service prior to this order, were allowed to draw their salaries till death. But new appointments were not made thereafter.

The Government of Mysore in April 1909 ordered that whatever be the original object of the institution of Devadasis, the state of immorality in which the temple services were found, fully justified the action taken in excluding the devadasis from every kind of service in the temples. This order also prohibited initiation ceremony in temples. Further, the practice of dedicating girls to temples, was made punishable under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act, 1927 of Mysore.

The Bombay Government also took steps for eradication of devadasi system and passed some legislations. The Bombay Devadasi Act, 1934 states that "the performance of any ceremony intended to dedicate or having the effect of dedicating of women as a devadasi where such women has or has not consented to the performance of such ceremony, is hereby declared unlawful and to be an effect to any custom or rule to the contrary not withstanding". This law also declared the marriage of devadasi valid and the children born of such marriage legitimate.

A bill was passed by the Andhra Pradesh Assembly on 1st April, 1987 providing deterrent punishment to those who perform, promote, take part in or abet the performance of any ceremony for dedicating a women as devadasi.
The bill seeks to eradicate the devadasi system which still prevails in certain parts of Andhra Pradesh. Under the devadasi system poor girls are married to deities and they later on turn into prostitutes living at the mercy of the villagers. There are over 16,000 devadasis in the state. The State Government also proposes to implement different programmes in order to secure the socio-economic rehabilitation of the devadasis. This would include allotment of house sites and construction of houses for them and extension of education facilities to their children. A housing colony has already come up in Adoni and Kurnool district (Social Welfare Vol. XXXIV No. 5 August 1987 p:21)

Another bill in Karnataka State was introduced during 1982, entitled "The Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Bill 1982" and was enacted into a statute. As per this Act dedication of women or girls to any deity/temple or object of worship is prohibited and any person who directly or indirectly supports dedication of women as devadasis is punished with a penalty of Rs. 2000 to 5000 and/or imprisonment. Under this Act Special provisions are made to rehabilitate devadasis. The Social Welfare Department in Karnataka State undertook various programmes such as:


2. Establishment of special Residential School for children of devadasis as they are more prone to be the victims of this cult.

3. Moral education, vocational training like tailoring, embroidery, and knitting are taught by trained teachers to devadasis in State-Homes.

4. Devadasis of marriageable age are encouraged to get married and settle in life. For this, an incentive of Rs. 3,000/- is sanctioned by Karnataka State Government.
5. They are also provided subsidised loans through nationalised banks to start self-employment or business under the assistance of Social Welfare Department.

6. Top priority is given to devadasis in case of various benefits provided through developmental programmes for weaker sections of the society such as Janata Housing Scheme, Bhagya Jyoti, Grahakalyan, Old-age pensions and TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment).

7. A special cell is created, with an officer whose duty is the rehabilitation of devadasis. He is also entrusted with publicity of various rehabilitative programmes for devadasis and curbing the spread of this evil practice.

8. Voluntary organisations which are interested in rehabilitation of devadasis and their children are liberally supported with Government funds.

Besides the State Home for women in Athani to rehabilitate devadasis, a certified school for children of devadasis is also established in Soundatti which has one of the largest concentration of devadasis. The Social Welfare Department has also chalked-out programme for rehabilitation of devadasis under the Graha Kalyan Scheme. For income generating schemes a subsidised loan is also sanctioned.

Since 1983 the Social Welfare department conducted about 206 marriages of devadasis; 129 of them during 1986-87 alone.

Vocational training is being imparted to identified and willing devadasis to enable them to earn a respectable livelihood. A workshop has been established in Munoli village nearby Soundatti for conducting tailoring classes for devadasis. This course is of six month's duration. A stipend of Rs. 210/- per month and travelling allowances to reach the workshop are provided to each devadasi.
as incentive. At present the admission is limited to 40 only. This being an experiment, after assessment of its success, it is proposed to open a few more such workshops. In fact the District Rural Development Society, Belgaum, has prepared a project profile on economic and social rehabilitation of the devadasis in Belgaum district covering the period 1987-90. This project profile is based on a computer based statistical data survey. It contains various proposals of rehabilitation of devadasis in Belgaum district.