

JOGINI TRADITION:

Jogini tradition is an inherited social evil and a precipitated socio-religious malady that at once subordinated body and soul of low-caste women to an inhuman practice. Under the system jogins are wedded to local deities and then declared "wives of all". They have no control over their sexuality, womanhood and motherhood. They are at the mercy of influential male members within their community/village and are subservient to patriarchy.

With in a decade after the entry of Samaskar ,the inhuman tradition was comfortably attacked with the help of government, village communities and the victims. Samsakar believes working in a frictionless social atmosphere and as a prelude to its reform activities, it often tries to create a friendly atmosphere and grounds its reform activities. It is this social approach that brought laurels to the organization over a period of time. Today, the organization feels satisfied that its reform and rehabilitation activities bore fruit within a span of one decade and a half Samskar heralded an era of change and to ground the same on a firm basis takes some more time.

In the process, the organization realized that some of the internal components of the Jogini tradition were unconsciously ignored. These ignored elements have an enduring influence on the jogini tradition. The most important among these is the role of caste priests who sanctify the marriages of Jogini women. These caste priests (enjoying the position of Brahmin priests of Hindu religious tradition) are called 'Potharajus'.

ABOUT POTHARAJU'S

There are 500 families of potharajus in Nizamabad District alone. Each family has more than one Potharaju (the sons of Potharajus also become potharajus and follow the ancestral customs) Since potharajus enjoy the position of 'Brahmins' in the system, they are no invited by the landlords for manual labour. On the other, their wives have to work and look after the family. The situation created an atmosphere where they have been forced to be allergic to work. Instead, they live on alms and participate in "death dances" (dancing before dead bodies) along with Jogini sisters. Their main responsibilities are to perform and sanctify marriages of jogini sisters. Sometimes they serve as village quacks and advise people on health issues since the latter believe that potharajus have divine powers.

RITUALS OF POTHARAJUS

Potharajus never cut their hair. Nor do they head items like cowdung as they are treated as purified souls. It is potharaju who have a religious sanction to participate in functions connected with Jogini tradition like VOORA PANDAGA (Village festival) and GAAVU PATTADAM (This is a cruel act where potharajus kill the goat with teeth and during the process the mouth of the unfortunate beast is tied. The potharajus are not supposed to lose time in doing so the failure of which is treated as a bad omen by the villagers)

The jogini reformation activities of the organization sent position signals to the Potharaju community too. For various reasons many of them are prepared to shun the practice and promised to do so with the help of Samaskar. Many of Potharajus died of infection over a period of time as their teeth and mouth have been affected by the 'act of killing' of goats. It is Potharajus who often conduct animal sacrifice under jogini tradition. If they are persuaded to get rid of their present avocation, the animal sacrifice too ceases. Otherwise, the prohibition on animal sacrifice (vide Act XXXII of 1950 as amended in Act No. 15 of 1990 of Govt. Of A.P.) falls into insignificance in the light of a religious practice.

POTHARAJUS PLACE IN JOGINI SYSTEM

Since the potharajus occupy a place of pivotal importance in the jogini system, it becomes equally important to reform potharajus. In its absence, the jogini tradition often remains seemingly halted, yet potentially active. This realization makes us more careful in dealing with the problem. As Potharajus themselves expressed a willingness to leave the practice. Samaskar treats this the most opportune time to attack the few remnants of an inhuman historical tradition.

POTHU RAJU

The initiation is pathetically dramatic. After having been selected for the "honour" of becoming a Jogin, the young girl usually between the ages of five and nine, is married in an elaborate ceremony to Potharaju, the god.

She is painted with turmeric powder from head to foot, dressed in yellow, an auspicious color, decked with flowers and treated every bit like a bride. The priest, from the same caste, dressed in red, performs the marriage with Potharaju, usually enacted by one of those men who get possessed on country liquor. A 'Mangalasutra' is also tied on behalf of the god, and there is eating and drinking for all the guests. The ceremony is attended by the elders of the village, higher castes and other dignitaries whose presence strangely lends the marriage some sort of semi-official sanction.

POTHARAJU

He is the priest of the goddess officiating on her behalf at every function. He has a tuft of hair, dons a lash in his hand, wears a kada around one wrist and gungru around one of his legs.

JOGINI - JOGIN TRADITION

Never in the history of the world has any name been more sullied any idol more tarnished any term more misinterpreted and any religious more desecrated than in the system and the custom of Jogin. The word "Jogin" is derived from the word "Yogin" meaning a "girl saint". Behind this sacred and honorable word stands... and brutality of consigning the height of innocence

To the doors of the Devil and the flower of childhood to the flames of the lust.

"Jogin" are defined as " a larger number of small girls traditionally at superstitiously dedicated to the village gods eventually abandoned to the woods to the caprice and avarice were mortals. They system of this custom is totally different of prostitution. Immoral traffic all over the world, from time immorial, is commercial. Prostitution is by option, not by imposition. No part of the world claims such a traditional in blindly accepted by our society in general and the village community in particular, under which children are consigned to so-called Gods but misused by me. This is nothing but a widespread paranoid Fuedophilia

Very often people mistake the Jogins as a form of the .. system. It is no so. There is no untouchables against the Devadasis there ,and the doors of every sacred temple are open to them. "Jogins system no prevalent in Nizamabad and the adjacent which is district of Andhra Pradesh. It is strange how the system has survived over the centuries and is practiced under the patronage of the few rich. This is the pathetic plight of very young girls, belonging to the Scheduled Castes, who are brutally exploited even to this day, euphemistically labeled as "Jogins". The victims are inducted into "Prostitution" with social sanction under the cover of tradition. The whole system is basically wrapped up in superstition. Like the Karnataka Devadasi System, which is known to the Indian social ethos, the Jogin system is an equally serious, social evil where young girls belonging to the oppressed and weaker sections of society are condemned in their infancy to lead a life of shame and insecurity in the name of religion.