

## DEVADASI SYSTEM: FORCED PROSTITUTION BY DALIT

### WOMEN ON THE NAME OF RELIGION

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#### ABSTRACT

In India a system of ritualised prostitution, known as Devadasi System, exists. In this system a girl, usually before reaching the age of puberty, is dedicated or married to a temple, continues in several southern states including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Kerala and some parts of Maharashtra and Orissa. Literally meaning „female servant of god, “Devadasi” is usually belong to the Dalit community. The word “Devadasi” originates from two Sanskrit words Deva” which means God and “Dasi” which means female servant. In this system, pre- puberty young girls were married off to the God or local deities of any temple and the girls became the property of the priest, other inmates of the temple and also local land lords and zamindars. The saying in Marathi is ‘*Devdasi devachi, bayko saarya gavachi*’, means servant of God but the wife of whole town. Devadasi cult provides a license for prostitution with religious sanction. Thousands of Dalit women are forced to become maidens of God in many villages. In Devadasi system Dalit women are induced into prostitution in the name of religion. They are taken from their families, never to see them again they are later sexually exploited by the temple priest and local land lords or zamindars and finally auctioned secretly into prostitution and ultimately die from venereal diseases and HIV Aids. At the end she leads miserable life.

**KEYWORDS:** Dalit Women, Devadasi, Hinduism, Indian Social System, History