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## Against devadasis system for women

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### Abstract

According to the devadasi themselves there exists a devadasi 'way of life' or 'professional ethic' but not a devadasi jati (sub-caste). As per these rules, devadasi practice. Social welfare organizations are also working for the welfare of the devadasis. To know about the socio- economically background of the devadasis. To assess the occupation and economic status of the devadasis. To study the awareness of the devadasis on social welfare programmes and rehabilitation programmes formed for the welfare of the devadasis. A bout 200 women devadasis are interviewed to collect the information on the socio- economically changes and developments of devadasis and status of devadasi practice in the twenty first century. The devadasi women educational status indicates that 85.5 percent of devadasi's are literates and 14.5 percent of devadasi's are literates i.e., primary, secondary, high school level. Earlier, prostitution was the main occupation of the devadasi's, but due to government welfare programmes and schemes, the devadasi's are engaged in occupations like self-employment. The Self Help Groups and such other government welfare schemes should be effectively implemented for the welfare of devadasi's. It is suggested to the Voluntary Organizations Government to increase awareness of the devadasi's on the rehabilitations programmes and welfare schemes of the government for the welfare of the devadasi's. The study revealed that less number of devadasis Hence, it can be said that the devadasi practice is slowly disappearing and there are elder devadasi's, for whom there is need for rehabilitation.

**Keywords:** devadasi's and women

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### Introduction

The Indian institution of devadasi, a religious practice, which offers girls to the deities in Hindu temples, the dedication usually occurs before the girl reaches puberty and requires the girl to become sexually available for community members. Traditionally, it is believed that these girls are "serving" society as "ordained" by the goddess. Due to her sacred condition and her belonging to the divinity, a devadasi cannot be married to one particular man, as in the traditional idea of marriage women are transferable property gifted to husbands. This concept is will summarized by a saying "a devadasi is servant of God but wife of the whole town".

### Devadasis System

Devadasis are also known by various other local terms, such as jogini. Furthermore, the devadasi practice of religious prostitution is known as basive in Karnataka and matangi in Maharashtra. It is also known as venkatasani, nailis, muralis and the radiyan. Devadasi are sometimes referred to as a caste; however, some question the accuracy of this usage. "According to the devadasi themselves there exists a devadasi 'way of life' or 'professional ethic' but not a devadasi jati (sub-caste). Later, the office of devadasi became hereditary but it did not confer the right to work without adequate qualification".

Recently the devadasi system has started to disappear, having been outlawed in all of Indian in 1988. However, devadasis still exist in India today, as shown in a 2004 report by the National Human Rights Commission of the Government of India. According to this report, "...after initiation as devadasis, women migrate either to nearby towns or other far-off cities to practice prostitution".

The practice of dedicating devadasis was declared illegally by the government of the Indian state Karnataka in 1982 and by the government of Andhra Pradesh in 1988. However as of 2006 the practice was still prevalent in around 10 districts of northern Karnataka and 14 districts in Andhra Pradesh. In Karnataka, the devadasi system was followed for over 10 centuries. Chief among them was the Renuka Yallamma (of Saudatti and Kokatanur) cult.

Considering the social evils such as forced prostitution in the name of god, the Government of Karnataka passed the Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of dedication) Act in 1982 and also amended the same in 2010 to rehabilitate the existing devadasis. As per these rules, devadasi practice. The government formulated "devadasi Rehabilitation programme" by providing counseling and awareness and shall be economically empowered by involving the explain woman in income generating activities, if necessary by providing protection or shelter in remand home upto six months and see that the staid woman shall become self-sustained by availing subsidy and loans through banks.

Social welfare organizations are also working for the welfare of the devadasis. Due to the efforts of government there is considerable change in the socio-economically life of the devadasis in Karnataka. Hence, to study the socio-economically change of devadasis in Belgaum district, the present study was made.

### Objectives of the Study

The study is made to analyse the socio-economically change and development of devadasis in Belgaum district of Karnataka and the particular objectives are

1. To know about the socio- economically background of the devadasis.
2. To assess the occupation and economic status of the devadasis.
3. To study the awareness of the devadasis on social welfare programmes and rehabilitation programmes formed for the welfare of the devadasis.

### Area and Methodology

The present study was made in Saudatti and Kokatanur where there is temple of Shri Renuka devi and many of the devadasis visit the temple on full moon days. Saudatti is a taluka place in and Kokatanur is a taluka place in Belgaum District and Sri Renuka devi temple is popular for devotees, majority of them are from Maharastra state. About 200 women devadasis are interviewed to collect the information on the socio- economically changes and developments of devadasis and status of devadasi practice in the twenty first century. The respondents covered under the present study are from other places such as Belgaum district The collected primary data is analysed and discussed as under.

#### 1. Age

Information on the age of the respondents reveals the level of awareness on the god and devotion and also knowledge on the rituals related to the devadasi practice. The age of the respondents covered under the present study is shown in the following table.

**Table 1:** Age-wise of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
0-18 years	02	1.0
18-30	35	17.5
30 and above	163	81.5
Total	200	100.0

**Source:** Field study.

It is noted from the above table that majority, that is 163 (81.5%) of the respondents are of above 30 years above years followed by, 35 (17.5%) are between the age group of 18 to 30 years and 02 (1.0%) are age group of 0 to 18 years . It is summarized that there are more older devadasis than younger ones and it shows that slowly, the popularity of devadasi practice is disappearing among the young women.

#### 2. Education Status of Respondents

The devadasi women educational status indicates that 85.5 percent of devadasi's are literates and 14.5 percent of devadasi's are illiterates i.e., primary, secondary, high school level. The educated devadasi's also felt that, it is service of god.

**Table 2:** Education of the Respondents

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Illiterate	171	85.50
Primary	10	5.00
Middle school	14	7.00
High school	5	2.50
Graduation	-	-
Total	200	100.00

**Source:** Field study.

#### 3. Occupation of Respondents

Information on occupation of the respondents reveals their economic status and standard of living. Earlier, prostitution was the main occupation of the devadasis, but due to government welfare programmes and schemes, the devadasis are engaged in occupations like self-employment. The collected information on the occupation of the respondents is shown in the following table.

**Table 3:** Occupation of the Respondent

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Collie-Labourers	174	87.00
Agriculture	13	6.50
Small business	01	0.50
Others	12	6.00
Total	200	100.00

**Source:** Field study.

Information collected on the occupations of the respondents revealed then are an engaged labourers (cooli) 174 devadasi women (87 %) percentage another land working in devadasi women that 01(0.5%) are engaged in small business or trade, followed by 13 (6.5%) are engaged in Agriculture labour, 12(6.0%) are engaged in other types of occupations and surprisingly, It is noted that an overwhelming majority of the respondents are engaged in productive occupations for their livelihood, the devadasis are transformed economically.

#### 4. Awareness on the Rehabilitation programmes

It was asked to the respondents that whether they are aware on the rehabilitation programmes meant for the empowerment of devadasis. The collected information is tabulated as under.

**Table 4:** Age of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	160	80
No	40	20
Total	200	100.0

**Source:** Field study.

It is revealed from the above table that 160(80%) of the respondents are aware about the rehabilitation programmes for the empowerment of devadasis, whereas remaining an overwhelming that is 40(20%) of the respondent are not aware about the rehabilitation programmes and welfare schemes of the government. Hence, it is strongly suggested to the voluntary organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations to increase awareness of the Government among the devadasis.

#### Suggestion

The practice of devadasi should be curbed by increasing the awareness of the people. For this purpose, there is need to educate the devadasis against the ancient faiths and beliefs.

It is suggested to provide a source of income to devadasis. The Self Help Groups and such other government welfare schemes should be effectively implemented for the welfare of devadasis.

It is suggested to the Voluntary Organizations Government to increase awareness of the devadasis on the rehabilitations programmes and welfare schemes of the government for the welfare of the devadasis.

#### Conclusion

The study revealed that less number of devadasis Hence, it can be said that the devadasi practice is slowly disappearing and there are elder devadasis, for whom there is need for rehabilitation. Even though there are plenty rehabilitation programmes for the welfare of the devadasis, still only a few of the devadasis are aware on such schemes. Hence, there is need to increase awareness of devadasis on such welfare schemes. Concluded that majority of devadasis have changed their life socio-economically and developed and also living like other women in the society.

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