ANTHROPOS

114.2019: 531–545

Colonial Material Collections and Representations of Devadasi Bodies in the Public Sphere in the Early 20th-Century South India

Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan

ANTHROPOS

114.2019: 531–545

Colonial Material Collections and Representations of Devadasi Bodies in the Public Sphere in the Early 20th-Century South India

Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan

Abstract. – This article discusses how the politics of morality in the early 20th-century South India, in its gendered nation-building exercise, reified a distinction between sacred/profane by using *devadasis'* bodies as material objects in the public sphere. Traditional performers of dance and music, *devadasis* were chosen to represent the profane in a series of historical developments in which both Europeans and Indian colonial elites participated in constructing and using the categories of the sacred and profane to classify sex and body as material, profane, and obscene. Specifically targeting *devadasis*, these developments resulted in ostracization and criminalization of *devadasis* and their communities. Using statues, poems, and literature as examples, this article shows how *devadasis* were collected as material objects and used to represent the notion that some bodies and sex were fundamentally materialistic whilst others were not, such as that of the "new woman" who was imagined to be an ideal woman, and the guardian of the sacred space in the colonial and postcolonial India. *[South India, devadasis, performance arts, temples, material objects, sex, body]*

Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan, PhD in Religious Studies from Stirling University, Scotland (2014). – Her dissertation focused on early 20th century South India where performance arts served a religious, gendered nationalistic tool and its historical implications on contemporary laws on intellectual property rights. – Her current research project looks at nationalism and creation of myths and gendered identities through storytelling. – She currently is a Project Assistant Professor teaching academic research writing and conversation at the Center for Global Communication Strategies at University of Tokyo and is an affiliated researcher at the Centre for the Study of Religion and Culture in Asia at University of Groningen.
Email: rnadadurkannan@gmail.com

1 Introduction

The nation-building exercise of the late 19th- and the early 20th-century South India was seeped in the politics of gender identities. This, in and of itself, was not new; and this pattern has been observed in other anticolonial movements.[1] The construction of a unifying identity called "Hinduism" that encompassed transforming understandings of morality and obscenity resulted in an emphasis on monogamous conjugality. This notion enabled the redefinition of masculinity and femininity in particular to represent an "authentic Indian culture," an ideal "Hindu citizen," in both public and private spheres.[2] These constructs, which were an appropriation of colonial and Orientalist discourses, impacted women in particular who were re-imagined as the guardians of the inner/private spheres,

---

1 Davydova (2010); Bhabha (2003); Yuval-Davis (1997); Ramaswamy (1997, 1993); Parker (1992).
2 From the beginning, this article establishes that the terms/categories profane, sacred, obscene, religion, secular, immoral, etc. are contentious and ought to be deconstructed. This holds true for the term "prostitutes" – within the colonial contexts discussed in the article, the term prostitutes was used pejoratively, which the usage of this term in this article indicates. Wherever possible, albeit being a modern term, this article uses the term "sex workers" to refer to those being part of the sex industry in general. However, in order not to inhibit the flow of the article for the readers, these terms are *not* enclosed within quotation marks. Also, all non-English words, terms and phrases that need emphasis have been italicized.

Anthropos 114.2019

which were considered sacred/spiritual spheres by the newly emerging nationalist patriarchy (Hyam 1992: 64; Chatterjee 1993: 73). The underlying politics of this process of "Classicisation" (Chatterjee 1993) was the constructed definition and differentiation of the religion/secular sphere ergo sacred/profane spheres. This process took many forms. This essay focuses on one such form in the historical developments of the early 20th-century South India, which transformed the presentations of sex as material and of body as a representation of such materiality in the public sphere. However, not all bodies were deemed sexual, material, or profane. Some, specifically women from the traditionally performing communities of dance and music called *devadasis*, were "collected" and represented as such in order to define, and distinguish between obscenity and morality, "coarse women" and "new women." In many ways, and this essay will show how, the Indian colonial elites followed colonial material practices in marginalizing *devadasis*.

In what Mohanty calls the "bureaucratisation of gender and race" (1991: 17), colonial narratives, and indigenous appropriation of these narratives coupled with Anglo-Indian laws ensured that sex, body, and certain expressions of sexuality came to represent profanity and obscenity in the public sphere; this affected *devadasis* disproportionately. K. M. Parker's essay (1998) gives an excellent account on the vilification of *devadasis* by the colonial government from a legal perspective whose communities were criminalized in 1947 by the newly formed Indian government (Soneji 2012: 31). Their performances were banned and music and dance, now redefined as classical/religious Karnatic Music and *Bharatnatyam* (lit. dance of India), were placed under the custodianship of middle-class Indian colonial elites. Meanwhile, a reform movement attempted to reintegrate *devadasis* into "respectable Hindu" (read: bourgeoisie) society. This essay looks at some of the popular media such as images, poetry, and literature to show how *devadasis* were collected and represented as material objects in these media to shape the notion that their bodies were sexual, material, and, therefore, profane, whilst others were not. For example, whilst the nationalists were critical of *devadasis* for performing sexually-charged music and dance, they accepted sculptures such as the one below[3] that is a sexualized portrayal of a female dancer, inside a temple, a space seen as sacred and nonsexual:

Fig. : A sculpture of a female dancer, Sri Perumbudur Temple, South India.

Using examples such as these in addition to poetry, images, and literary works this essay shows how *devadasis* were represented as the immoral Other whose bodies were then used as objects in the politics of morality to shape a gendered national identity. In doing so, the essay will show how colonial narratives on the categories sacred/profane and indigenous appropriation of these narratives, in and outwith these media, enabled the redefinition of these problematic categories, which marginalized *devadasis* raising questions on representation and agency of the subaltern in colonial contexts. The essay will also present the competing narratives that both silenced *devadasi* voices and enabled the colonial material practices.

This narrative is important and relevant for questions of material connection for several reasons: firstly, the construction and understanding of materiality transformed during these developments. That is, *devadasis'* bodies were objectified in order to be represented as material objects that were inherently sexual in nature. Also, by showing that their bodies could be represented as material, body and sex came to be represented as pertaining to materiality. Thus, in this context, sex was re-

---

3 Photographs were taken by the author in 2015.

constructed as being *of material*. Secondly, religion/secular, sacred/profane distinctions were indigenous appropriation of colonial narratives that served as an ideological foundation for such colonial material practices. Thirdly, Othering of the *devadasis* enabled such a construction of these distinctions, which was in turn used to ostracize *devadasis* who were then represented as not conforming to the dominant gendered narratives of the European and Indian colonial elites. Thus, not all forms of sex and bodies were classified as material and hence, profane, instead, *devadasis'* bodies were presented and re-presented in popular media as being obscene and profane. *Devadasis* were "collected" and represented in the public sphere to articulate the dominant discourses of the colonial/national elites. That they were chosen and juxtaposed with the "new woman" is in and of itself a practice of collection of material objects. As one of the central themes of this journal issue, the question is then of representation and agency: who represented whom in what way for what purpose? The ambiguity in defining the problematic categories of sacred/profane somehow did not impede the Indian nationalists from determining certain expressions of body and sexuality as acceptable whilst others as not.

Finally, the larger anthropological implication of these developments, in addition to marginalizing *devadasi* communities, is the reconstructed understandings of gender identities and roles, and sexuality in the public sphere. The regulation of representations of gender and sexuality in the public sphere that has serious implications even today – media, especially films and performance arts, are gendered. It is helpful to get a brief overview of the history of *devadasi* communities and the transforming practices of their communities at the turn of the century, leading up to the gendered politics of the early 20th century.

2 A Brief History of Devadasi Communities in South India

Devadasis, female performers of music and dance, were an integral part of traditional communities who were patronized by courts, temples, and private patrons. Although there were musicians attached to the royal courts, *devadasis* constituted a main group of performers in various settings within the Indian medieval kingdoms between 14th and 16th centuries. This group consisted of *nattuvars* – male performers – who conducted and composed dance performances, which were then

performed by *devadasis*. The common perception of *devadasis* derives from an etymological understanding of the terms as *deva*, "god" and *dasi*, "servant" (therefore, "servants of gods"), perpetuating the idea that *devadasis* were associated only with temples and hence, their communities were religious. However, historically, *devadasis* performed in three different settings: as courtesans at the royal courts they also performed at festivals; as courtesans who were temple performers; and, as dancing girls in colonial Madras where they performed in salons (*nautch* or *sadir*) for colonial elites (both Indian and British) who were also their patrons (Soneji 2012: 7–9). Courtesans attached to the royal courts were "dedicated" to the king through a ritual called *katthikalyanam* (lit.: dagger wedding) by which they were inducted into their roles as concubines (Soneji 2012: 36). The ritual signified that the women were the king's concubines who were guaranteed the status of the wives but not the title "Queen" (34). Similar to this ritual was the one involving *devadasis* attached to the temples in which girls traditionally born into the *devadasis* communities were "given" to the temples; that is, courtesans underwent a ritual called *pottukattudhal* (lit.: tying the pendant) (34) after which they were attached to the temples, performing during everyday rituals and festivals. Because of such a ritual, they have been referred to as *nityasumangali* (lit.: forever auspicious), meaning that they can never be widowed because they are "married" to the deity (7). The ritual *pottukattudhal* gave *devadasis* a social status as being the deity's wife or the king's concubine; but the ritual was not a prerequisite for performing music and dance as a *devadasi*.

Devadasi communities lived within a matrilineal context (within the patriarchal society) that ensured certain rights that were otherwise unavailable to women under the prevailing indigenous laws. For instance, *devadasis* had the right to education, while the already existing laws in India (although referred to as "Hindu Law") prohibited women's education. *Devadasis* had the right to full inheritance and the right to perform funeral rights; closely tied to the right to inheritance was their right to adopt girls (Srinivasan 1988: 188), while according to the then laws, men could adopt only boys and women could adopt only boys and only on behalf of their husbands. *Devadasis* also had the tradition of having multiple sexual partners who often were their patrons.

From the 16th century, diverse *devadasi* presence and patronage in the settings mentioned above came to be institutionalized. Tanjavur King-

dom in South India, ruled by Nayakas during that period, encouraged a focus on *bhoga* (lit.: erotic) performances, thereby blurring the distinction between *devadasis* at the temples and at the royal courts forging them into unified identities of concubines and mistresses (Soneji 2012: 31). Compositions from these times, some of which were by *devadasis* (see below), "express[ed] female [sexual] desire and are completely unabashed in their representations of the corporeality of sexual experience" (31) and the performances involved "gestural interpretation and nonrepresentational dance," that involved the literal enactment of eroticism through gestures (64). We shall soon see that these aspects of their performances, coupled with the matrilineal context, became the focal points for the reform movement in developing a narrative against *devadasis* and their bodies as profane. Although salon performances existed in the urban centers in the mid-19th century, the dwindling royal and temple patronage for *devadasi* communities due to restrictions laid by the colonial British government on indigenous kinds and chieftains resulted in mass migration of *devadasis* to the colonial Madras (Krishnan 2008: 71) making salon performances become more popular.

The collection and representation of *devadasis'* bodies as obscene was a political and legal process. It began with pushing *devadasis* to gendered liminal spaces first by ostracizing and then by criminalizing the spaces they occupied, silencing their various forms of expressions and, thus, making them material objects for collection by using various media to reiterate these ideas. It began with transforming perceptions of *devadasis* in the late 19th and early 20th century.

2.1 Creation of Gendered Liminal Spaces in Colonial Madras

By the 19th century, *devadasi* repertoire transformed to accommodate the aesthetic preferences of the emerging urban audience consisting of Indian and European elites. Salon performances (an anglicized usage of the term *nautch*, which literally means dance), became the key to this transformation in which *devadasis* came to be perceived and represented not as traditional temple dancers but as professional dancers and entertainers. Salon performances came to represent aesthetic innovations patronized and supported by Indian elites as "displays [of] prestige" (Soneji 2012: 76). Certain

performances, such as *javalis*[4], specifically became popular because they were "[u]nabashedly erotic, sometimes sarcastic, and always upbeat … [were] also songs of the volatile, sexually charged space of the salon, one that was diametrically opposed to the contained, private sexuality of the conjugal home" (95). Yet, their historical connection to the temples was not completely forgotten and often invoked as and when it was necessary. For example, if *devadasis* were seen only as performers in the contexts of salons, their connections to the temples were often brought up by both European and Indian elites who critiqued them in their nationalistic discourses. There was a need for nuance in understanding *devadasis* performing in various settings (as discussed above) which was ignored by both the European and Indian elites, thus creating a liminal space where *devadasis* were both accepted and ridiculed at the same time. Moreover, the European colonial elites were confounded by the complex matrilineal context (noted above) of *devadasi* communities who were beginning to perceive *devadasis* as living outside the "norms" of the "Hindu" society that was fundamentally patriarchal. Thus, *devadasis'* right to education, property, adoption, and non-conjugality was seen as being diametrically opposite to how the rest of the society functioned and the role of women in such a society. As Parker (1998) has shown, these aspects enabled the European elites and the colonial government to place *devadasi* communities as being outside the normal society.

Cutting across these developments, in the mid- to late 19th century, was the increased presence of British military personnel in India, especially after the 1857 rebellion. By now, salon performances were a popular form of entertainment among urban audiences. With *devadasis* receiving more patrons, they were being increasingly represented as prostitutes. Indeed, as Hyam (1992: 88f.) notes, British military personnel in their writings often portrayed *devadasis* as prostitutes who had the skills to entertain with music and dance. Such essentialization of *devadasis'* sexual practices to portray them began to take a rather serious shape in the form of a series of legislations, the most obvious testimony perhaps being Anglo-Indian laws that were passed defining them as sex workers. With the increase in the British military presence, and a rise in prostitution with new brothels open-

---

4 *Javalis* are a kind of love songs in South India using the poetic imagery characteristic of the romantic-devotional movement; their origin goes back to the 18th century (cf. <https://www.britannica.com/art/javali>).

ing up across India (Hyam 1992: 122f.), the colonial government legislated brothels and prostitutes by passing the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864 and 1868. The newly legislated Anglo-Indian laws forged a change in the perceptions of *devadasis*, from prostitutes whose tradition (of multiple sexual partners) was acceptable to prostitutes who were a moral drain on the society (Parker 1998: 566). This notion was in particular in reference to their tradition of having multiple sexual partners that was seen as not conforming to the monogamous conjugality of the rest of the society. In this new administrative and legal position, *devadasis* were seen as moral deviants and a threat to Indian culture (Soneji 2012: 120). Elsewhere I have written about how the same politics of morality removed music and dance from *devadasis* placing them in the hands of the newly emerging patriarchy by distinguishing between sacred art and profane art (Nadadur Kannan 2014). Whilst those aspects led to a gendered classification of performance arts (specifically, music and dance) as religious arts, here I want to focus on the question of *devadasis* themselves and the representation of their bodies in the public sphere.

By the end of the 19th century, gendered liminal spaces had already been created for *devadasis* – they were administratively and legally reified as prostitutes; yet, their presence and performances were necessary for the urban audiences consisting of Indian and European elites.[5] Also, as mentioned above, their historical connections to the temples were either ignored or invoked depending on the needs of the narratives thereby forcing them to occupy these liminal spaces. In her essay on the portrayal of Radha, the lover of deity Krishna, in miniature paintings, Cattoni (2015: 58) has argued that the ambiguity of the status of Radha, either as a divine lover or an earthly maiden, allowed for the artists' interpretation of her. A similar argument can be made for *devadasis*. Having been forced to occupy gendered liminal spaces where they were silenced, *devadasis* were then open to interpretation and representations of the colonial elites and the Indian nationalists socially, and legally.

---

5 One aspect of the Contagious Diseases Acts was to have a register for all sex workers; this mandatory registration then required sex workers to subject to a medical examination. This invasive legal requirement was protested by many including Josephine Butler in Britain. In India, some *devadasis* protested against being considered and registered as prostitutes. For more, see Soneji (2012).

2.2 Body(ies) and Material Objects: Devadasis and the "New Woman" in the Public Sphere

Chatterjee (1993: 73) described the Indian nationalists' nation-building exercise as "classicisation," meaning that the inner domain of spirituality had to be strengthened to subvert the outer domain of politics that was taken over by the colonizers. Separating social roles, the outer/material world then belonged to men while the inner/spiritual world was assigned to women, which had to be protected and nurtured. This new patriarchy defined the "new woman" as being different from the "common woman" who was seen as being "coarse, vulgar … sexually promiscuous … maidservants, washer women, barbers, peddlers … prostitutes" (127). The specific allusion to a particular class (and caste) of women indicates that the "new woman" belonged to the upper-class (and caste) communities. This "new woman" of the emerging middle class was seen as being modest and spiritual with "godlike virtues" (125). These sets of attributes were advocated as a new social responsibility for women during increasing nationalist activities (125). The attributes entailed rejecting materialism by transcending one's body, for the body was impure and subject to "this worldly" aspects whilst one's soul, the inner sphere, was spiritual. As Chatterjee (1993: 130) notes, the new femininity was laid out with specific rules such as

… The spirituality of her [the new woman] character had also to be stressed in contrast with the innumerable ways men had to surrender to the pressures of the material world … they must maintain the cohesiveness of the family life … [there must be an] assertion of spiritual purity on the part of women.

Within these narratives, distinctions were drawn between the spiritual and the material. "The material domain, argue[d] nationalist writers, lies outside us – a mere external that influences us, conditions us, and forces us to adjust to it. Ultimately, it is unimportant. The spiritual, which lies within, is our true self; it is that which is genuinely essential" (Chatterjee 1993: 120). This domain had to be protected from the Western influence of materialism, and strengthened. Appropriating colonial discourse on these categories was justified as a way to "match their [colonizers'] strengths" in order to "ultimately overthrow" them (121). Colonial and Orientalists' discourses on these categories were complex. Whilst some Orientalists considered indigenous literary works as "distasteful" and "not conforming to Western propriety" (Gupta 2001: 34f.), others such as Max Mueller

held the view that historical literary works were always religious and sacred. Kabbani (1994) has written on the Orientalist perceptions of indigenous sexuality as "unbridled sexual ardour" (8) and the Orient as "peopled by nations who were content to achieve in the erotic domain alone" (54). Thus, whilst Orientalist writers such as Horace Wilson and Sir Edwin Arnold translated early literary works such as the *puranas* or the *Vedas*, they deliberately omitted explicit expressions of sexuality in these texts. These Orientalists generally purported the notion that "Vedic Hinduism" was sacred and that Islamic colonization of many parts of India had led to the erosion of the "glorious past." This approach to indigenous work, disembedding the sexual/erotic 54321aspects to glorify and mystify the sacred aspects of these works, was a precursor to what the Indian elites did in the early 20th century by constructing a puritanical Hindu identity and representing sexuality as obscenity.

The ideas of the Enlightenment certainly played a role in the colonial government's understandings of indigenous traditions and practices evidenced by deliberate distinctions drawn between religion/ secular, and sacred/profane spheres in various contexts.[6] Pertaining to *devadasis*, the Anglo-Indian laws, establishing their identities as prostitutes without considering *devadasis'* connections to the temples are good examples. The Indian nationalists appropriated these distinctions, religion/secular and sacred/profane, to posit that religion was the inner domain and represented the superiority of the Indian mind to be able to be closer to the divine. Hence, it needed to be strengthened and projected onto the outer domain to force the dominating secularity of the colonizers out. A specific understanding of materialism/material emerged here: materialism in this context indicated a desire for ownership and consumption of material possessions and wealth. This particular understanding of materialism was used to portray *devadasis* as the moral deviants in the popular media.

It was in this milieu that the native appropriation of colonial narratives resulted in criticisms of obscenity and pornography in the public sphere. Expressions of sexuality in various media including literature, poetry, and images were criticized

for being pornographic. Specifically, works on and by *devadasis* were classified as profane and as voices of moral deviants. That *devadasis* were specifically collected for this is evident from the arbitrariness with which works by *devadasis* were criticized whilst others were not. To Indian nationalists, *devadasis* represented the profane because they embodied the profane; but those works that could be appropriated into mainstream society to represent the hegemonic discourses of the politics of morality were deemed acceptable. Such arbitrariness was made possible by a series of Anglo-Indian laws specifically aimed at censorship in the public sphere.

3 Censorship in the Public Sphere

As Gupta (2001) argues, the emergence of censorship in the early 20th century was dictated by the emerging politics of morality. Albeit it began as censorship of print medium, it soon spread to other media such as literature, poetry, and images.

The first obscenity laws in India coincided with the transforming perceptions of *devadasis* in the late nineteenth century Gupta (2001: 30). A negotiation was held in Paris in 1910 and the outcome of it was the "Agreement for the Suppression of the Circulation of Obscene Publications," a multilateral treaty of which the British Empire was a signatory on behalf of its colonies (LNTS 1924). In 1923, during a convention in Geneva as a part of the League of Nations, an international treaty was designed as a supplement to the original Paris treaty. According to this agreement, it was a punishable offence to use "obscene writings, drawings, prints, paintings, printed matter, pictures, posters, emblems, photographs, cinematograph films or any other obscene objects" for distribution or public exhibition (LNTS 1924). However, as Gupta points out, none of these laws was any clearer about what obscenity was defined as (2001: 31). For instance, the Indian laws, based on English laws, defined obscenity as "whether the tendency of the matter is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" (LNTS 1924). This definition becomes particularly noteworthy because these laws were put in place during a period of increased and intense nationalist sentiments articulated through various media. The colonial government was in the process of cracking down on nationalistic publications. Interestingly, in 1925 the colonial government in India chose to adopt only

---

6 The colonial government used these distinctions for administrative purposes. For instance, the dwindling patronage to *devadasis* was because the colonial government abolished such a patronage system because they saw temples as religious spaces that should not be mingled with governing of states by the kings. For more, see Dirks (2008).

parts of the treaty. An exception to the treaty was introduced that said "this section does not extend to any book, pamphlet, writing, drawing or painting … for religious purposes or any representation sculptured, engraved, painted or otherwise represented on or in any temple, or on any car used for the conveyance of idols, or kept or used for any religious purpose" (Collection of the Acts 1926: 57). There were several ways in which these laws enabled the collection and representation of *devadasis* as material objects in this context. For the Indian nationalists, this exception enabled them to arbitrarily censor works on and by *devadasis* whilst allowing those that conformed to the hegemonic discourses of morality and obscenity.

3.1 Icons and Images in Sacred and Secular Spaces

In writing about colonial photography of *devadasis*, Soneji (2012) argues that the images were "sexually charged" much like the salon performance spaces. The image that Soneji (2012: 77) refers to shows four *devadasis* standing and performing a particular gesture whilst two *devadasis* are performing acrobatics. This image can also be found on the cover of his book. Most images of *devadasis*, some of which can be found online, portray them as similar to that of Soneji's example with *devadasis* in gestural poses (Indian Council for Cultural Relations 2011: 4). One image from 1870 by a British lieutenant stationed in colonial Madras shows two *devadasis* on a bed, with one woman lying on the bed and the second woman sitting next to her. Both women are looking away from the camera and at each other; but there is a sensual nature in which the woman is lying on the bed (Talwar 2013). It is reasonable to assume that this image is not the only sensual portrayal of *devadasis*. However, what is significant in all these images is how they were "crafted subtly" to appear "dignified and respectable enough" (Soneji 2012: 76f.) for the audience back home in Britain. It is noteworthy that none of these images were made within temple premises, but almost always in salon or *nautch* spaces (ibid.). This points to the attempts at placing *devadasis'* bodies outside sacred spaces, thus deliberately dichotomizing sacred/profane. This is also a deliberate attempt at the disembedding of *devadasis* from their many contexts to occupy a specific space, a liminal space within which they were being increasingly ostracized.

Another aspect of *devadasis* that came under intense scrutiny was their performances. As Soneji notes (2012: 104–106) *devadasis* had developed several complex gestural modes to portray sexually charged compositions, which were part of their repertoire. Such performances, in addition to *javalis*, came under intense criticism as examples of degradation of the status of the art (Meduri 1996: 137). Indeed, the Indian nationalists explicitly encouraged the "new women" to take up dance in order to, as they claimed, give the art its dignity back (Meduri 1996: 137; Nadadur Kannan 2014). Theosophist Rukmini Devi Arundale can be credited for transforming *devadasi* repertoire into what is now known as *Bharatnatyam* (lit.: the dance of India) by a) learning the dance from *devadasi* communities and training the next generation of masters in her own community (thereby removing the art altogether from *devadasis*); b) reinterpreting gestures to portray *javalis* and other similar compositions as platonic love (called "divine love"); c) placing the art within sacred spaces and invoking the divine to reify its sacrality (Nadadur Kannan 2014; Allen 1997). *Devadasis* embodied their performances, and to the Indian nationalists *devadasis'* bodies had defiled the art because they represented the profane. Thus, not only were *devadasis* collected and objectified in the images, they were also placed in settings that would best portray them as not sacred, in this context meaning the profane.

In relation to the representations of *devadasis* and the criticism towards their performances, I want to return to the sculpture presented in the introduction and discuss further sculptures.

Image 2 is similar to the one in the introduction section. It is a sculpture with a sexualized portrayal of a female dancer with very large breasts, and who is also partially clothed.

Perhaps the most popular erotic sculptures are at the Khajuraho temples located in the state of Madhya Pradesh in central India, often referred to as "sex temples" in contemporary popular media owing to the sexually explicit nature of the sculptures (Ramadurai 2015), though similar sculptures can also be found in other temples. The specific ones this article refers to are from the Sun Temple in Konark in the state of Odisha, whose 32 images have been published on the Archeological Survey of India website (2016). In the first image (no. 32), a couple are embracing whilst engaging in intercourse (<http://asi.nic.in/konarak-sun-temple-photo-gallery/>), and in the second image (no. 34 and 35), the man's hand is on the woman's breasts whilst a third subject is performing fellatio. Modestly, the Archeological Survey of India have entitled these images as "amorous couples."

Fig. 2: A sculpture of a female dancer, Sri Perumbudur Temple, South India.

Sculptures such as these, sexualized portrayals of women and portrayals of explicit sexual acts, are commonly found in temples throughout India, including South India as discussed in this article. These temples were those sacred spaces that were core to the nationalists' construction of morality. Yet, the nationalists did not object to the presence of this imagery within the temple premises, evident from the ubiquity of these sculptures in historical temples.

These images raise questions about embodiment: Did the nationalists, subscribing to the religion/secular dichotomy, understand embodiment as transformative of the context or space within which it is performed? In other words, to the nationalists, did these images transform into "divine love" devoid of their sexuality once they occupied or become associated with a sacred space? Furthermore, did *devadasis'* embodiment become obscene because they were moved to secular and profane spaces? It certainly seems to have been the case with the transformation of performance spaces for dance that was redefined as *Bharatnatyam*. Once dance was removed from *devadasis*, Arundale enabled its re-definition as religious dance by incorporating images and idols of deities and temples in performance spaces thereby purifying these spaces (Allen 1997; Nadadur Kannan 2014). Within these spaces, when the same dance (then performed by *devadasis*) was now performed by the "new women," the dancers embodied the sacrality of the space rendering both the dance and the dancer religious.

The legal exception (mentioned above) enabled these sculptures to escape the scrutiny and censure of the colonial government. This exception then was a representation of the broader developments of that time wherein ambiguous categories were constructed, and identities were essentialized and categorized to put forward an ideological transformation of a nation. This exception was then an explicit and deliberate legal and social distinction between religious/obscene and sacred/profane. It must be noted that the colonial government did not define what was constituted as a religious purpose in this context, for surely with their history as temple performers *devadasis* could have been included in this exception. The attributes that were used to distinguish between the sculptures in the temple and the images of *devadasis* were not clearly defined. However, the nationalists were clear about whose sexuality was acceptable and whose was not. In the forthcoming sections, this ambiguity in representation will be clearer in the case of poems. Whilst the colonial government did not define what "religious purposes" meant, for the elite Indian nationalists that which pertains to the divine constituted as "religious." Yet, this definition was equally ambiguous because if it referred to the divine, then *devadasis* as temple dancers should not have been victimized. Thus, whilst *devadasis* also performed in temples, the nationalists denied any religious connections they may have had, categorically classifying them as profane and prostitutes.

3.2 Profanity in Poetry and Literature

Traditional art forms came under severe scrutiny and with certain arbitrariness, exemplified by the legal exemption discussed above, they were deemed to be either acceptable or unacceptable along the lines of the constructed category of the sacred or the profane. As discussed above, compositions such as *javalis* that involved gestural interpretation of eroticism were classified as immoral. Poetry and works that expressed eroticism were severely criticized for being published; this meant that there was also considerable criticism towards works such as *javalis* that were performed by *devadasis*. More specifically, *javalis* were re-defined from erotic to mean obscene and immoral. For instance, here is a typical composition by Kshetreyya, the 17th-century composer (Ramanujan, Rao, and Shulman 1994: 120f.):

A Woman to Her Lover:
How soon it's morning already! There's something new in my heart,
Muvva Gopala.
Have we talked even a little while
to undo the pain of our separation till now?
You call me in your passion, "Woman, come to me," and while your mouth is still on mine,
it's morning already!
Caught in the grip of the Love God,
angry with him, we find release drinking
at each other's lips.
You say, "My girl, your body is tender as a leaf," and before you can loosen your tight embrace,
it's morning already!
Listening to my moans as you touch certain spots,
the pet parrot mimics me, and O how we laugh in bed!
You say, "Come close, my girl,"
and make love to me like a wild man, Muvva Gopala,
and as I get ready to move on top,
it's morning already (Padam 175; Title: "Cellabo Yentavegame")!

Poems like these were considered to be sexually explicit because of the sexual acts described in the composition in addition to the gestural interpretations of *devadasis*. To the Indian nationalists, these expressions of sexuality were to remain in the private sphere; that they were being performed in the public sphere by *devadasis* was seen as immoral. This, in addition to the already reified notion of *devadasis* as prostitutes enabled the nationalists to represent *devadasis* as the embodiment of sexual impropriety. It must be noted that this particular composition, much like many from that period, were composed by *nattuvars*, the male composers of the *devadasi* communities. However,

works by *devadasis* were also criticized and condemned.

It is common to find works of a *devadasi* named Muddhupalani whilst looking into these historical developments. Muddhupalani (1730–1790) was a *devadasi* in the court of the Nayaka King Pratapasimha (1739–1763). Not much biographical information is available about her. However, some of her works from the 18th century are still found: whether because of their popularity or their availability in the public sphere two centuries after it was originally written is not clear. It could well be both reasons because whilst there are records indicating that the kingdoms in South India till the 20th century encouraged their courtesans to compose poems (Soneji 2012: 31; Rao and Shulman 2002: 293), many of these texts are not currently available (Tharu and Lalita 1991).

Muddhupalani is best known for her collection of five hundred and eighty four erotic poems *Radhika Satwanam* (Appeasing Radhika). The poems portray the relationship between Krishna (a deity), Radha (Krishna's aunt), and Krishna's new wife Ila Devi (Tharu and Lalita 1991: 117). *Radhika Satwanam* is a story about the relationship between the three characters in which Radha raises Ila Devi and gives her to Krishna in marriage. Whilst Tharu and Lalita (1991) refer to Radha as Krishna's aunt in their commentary of Radhika Satwanam, Rao and Shulman (2002) refer to her as Krishna's first wife (293) in theirs. Poems describe Radha advising Krishna and Ila Devi (albeit, separately) on lovemaking.

A poem on Radha advising Ila:
… If he kisses your cheek,
touch his lips with yours.
When he gets on top of you
move against him from below.
If he gets tired while making love,
quickly take over and get on top.
He's the best lover, a real connoisseur,
extremely delicate.
Love him skillfully,
and make him love you.
That's my advice.
But you know best.
Loving has its own laws … (Rao and Shulman 2002: 295).

Radha, who desires Krishna herself, struggles with the grief of separation from Krishna, who when confronted, appeases Radha with an embrace (Rao and Shulman 2002: 295). Muddhupalani's work, in many ways, is typical of her time – explicitly sexual in nature, deities as the main protagonists

(which in some contexts alluded to their patrons), and presented in the form of poetry. In fact, Tharu and Lalita (1991: 118) argue that some of the poems in this collection point to the possibility that Muddhupalani might have drawn from her personal life. As the same authors put it, "what makes the work so radical … is the easy confidence with which it contests the asymmetries of sexual satisfaction … and asserts women's claim to pleasure." First published in 1887 (with a second edition in 1907), *Radhika Satwanam* was republished in 1911 by Bangalore Nagaratnamma, herself a *devadasi*. Unlike the previous editions, the final edition came under severe criticism. Specifically, a reformer, Kandukuri Veershalingam criticized this work as a "crude depiction of sex" (cited in Gupta 2001: 31f.). Eventually, the colonial government banned her work from the public sphere as a part of their censorship measures (Gupta 2001: 31f.).

In disembedding *devadasis* from their contexts and performances, the Indian nationalists removed music and dance from these traditional performers and placed them in the custodianship of the bourgeoisie class consisting of Brahmins and upper-class non-Brahmins (Nadadur Kannan 2014: 255). Whilst this meant transforming the nature and forms of performing these arts, as Arundale managed to achieve with *Bharatnatyam*, it also meant appropriation of certain aspects of *devadasi* performances. Thus, whilst *javalis* when performed by *devadasis* were criticized severely, these compositions were later appropriated by middle-class performers who portrayed the sexual relationship between the protagonists as "divine love." Within these newer understandings, not only were *javalis* acceptable, but also compositions such as the following by the 18th-century composer Utthukkadu Venkatasubbaiyar (2007: 50):

I hugged him because he was a boy.
But, he kissed on my lips like my husband …
… did he stop there? He asked the route to the river-bank.
Then, he asked something that is embarrassing.
He asked for a kiss … .

This is not as sexually explicit as some of the *javalis* or indeed the statues discussed above. In this composition, a married *gopika*[7] (Krishna's admirer) complains to Yashoda, Krishna's mother, about her son's flirtations. Contextually, the story

of Krishna is filled with such stories wherein the *gopikas*, married or unmarried, despite such complaints are beguiled by the deity. In the milieu of politics of gender where monogamy was hailed as the Hindu way of life, this composition portrays the illicit nature of sexual relationship between Krishna and the *gopika*; or at least, Krishna's advances towards a married woman. In addition, compositions of the Vaishnavite saints *alvars* in which the saints took the role of Vishnu's wife/lover (*nayaka-nayaki bhava* – lit.: hero/heroine emotion), not very different to that of Krishna and the *gopikas*, were treated as divine love. Yet, *javalis* on any extra-marital sexual relationship a woman initiates with a man, usually performed by *devadasis*, were deemed to be obscene. It is important to note that most *javalis* that have been incorporated into mainstream music and dance performances were composed by *nattuvars*, in other words, these compositions were of men expressing female sexuality. However, works by *devadasis* expressing their sexuality have been pushed into oblivion.

By the early 20th century, with the intervening discourses on health, hygiene, and the Contagious Diseases Acts that established the notion that sex workers were the primary carriers of venereal diseases, texts vilifying *devadasis* began to appear in the public sphere. These texts published in the form of novels, short stories, etc., contained a similar plot: *devadasis* deceiving young patrons of their wealth, and patrons contracting venereal diseases. *Dasigal Mosavalai* was one such text that was influential in transforming the narratives on *devadasis* and giving momentum to the anti-*devadasi* rhetoric. Written by Moovalur Ramamirthammal in 1936, *Dasigal Mosavalai Alladhu Madhi Petra Minor* (lit.: web of deceit of *devadasis* or a minor who became wise) was a novel with a complex story encompassing several characters, nationalistic politics, and "reform" politics. "Minor" in colloquial Tamil refers to young men from wealthy influential families, often such as village headmen. They are usually cast in popular culture as promiscuous young men who get away with their promiscuity owing to their wealth and status in the village. A short summary of the novel will enable the readers to understand the discussion that follows:

A minor besotted by two *devadasis* (sisters) he meets on a train, gifts his watch, and follows them to their house. As a way of deception by *devadasis*, having been given a different address, he meets a "reformed" one who reveals to him the truths about the system. Now wise, he

---

7 *Gopikas* refer to the female devotees of Krishna who are traditionally believed to have lived in his village. The story of Krishna's childhood revolves around his charisma and the flirtatious relationship he shared with these women.

returns to his wife. Another minor meets the *devadasi* sisters in colonial Madras, is besotted by them. When they perform at his wedding, he abandons his wife and moves in with the *devadasi* sisters along with the first minor who wants to avenge the sisters for deceiving him. He then fetches the second minor's wife (a "reformer") who wants to win back her husband and is disguised as a wealthy patron. The *devadasi* sisters besotted with the new patron, ignore the second minor who realizes his mistake. The wife then sports as a second disguise as a *devadasi* and convinces her husband that she is one of the sisters. Meanwhile the *devadasi* sisters have lost all forms of livelihood; in abject poverty, they reluctantly become reformed. The first minor who finally avenges takes the wealth of the sisters and donates it to an association working for the abolition of *devadasi* system (Ramamirthammal 1936; Ramamirthammal et al. 2003: 1f.).

By establishing the notion that *devadasis* were materialistic and immoral, the nationalists were able to "collect" and "represent" *devadasis* in a particular way in the public sphere. *Dasigal Mosavalai* was one of many such texts that continued to appear in the popular media such as newspapers. Letters and articles were published in the newspapers and magazines vilifying *devadasis*. Their bodies were immoral, and needed to be removed from the public sphere – whether it was a performance space or not. They were singled out as the moral deviants so that the hegemonic discourses could argue how a "true Hindu society" should be, and not be. They were also chosen to show the role of the "new woman" in this colonial sexual politics. These developments raise the question of agency of *devadasis*.

4 Politics of Representation and the Questions of Agency

The process of classicization and of prescribing a role for women within nationalist politics by making them guardians of the inner/spiritual domain, at the outset seemed to empower women – making them responsible for strengthening and nurturing India at a crucial juncture of nationalist politics. But it repressed women by binding them to a sphere out of which they could emerge only within certain contexts. Any expression of female sexuality in the public sphere was severely criticized. Expressions of sexuality were allowed only for procreation and only within monogamous conjugal relationships. For *devadasi* women, on the other hand, any expression of sexuality was not allowed. This brings in the question of representation of body and sex in general and that of *devadasis* in particular. In all the examples used above, *devadasis* were in many ways collected as examples of deviants and displayed by making them occupy liminal spaces. Within these spaces, they were to be looked at and criticized but not to be included in mainstream society.

A recurring, albeit contradictory narrative on *devadasis* during these historical developments was that *devadasi* as a category was ineradicable, and *devadasis* chose to belong to this category. According to Indian nationalists, young girls who were "dedicated" to the tradition by their matrons, and girls adopted by matrons, were the victims of a social evil. However, adult *devadasis* were seen as having chosen the tradition, that within the tradition they had free will to choose their performances, lives, and more importantly, sexual partners. Therefore, they chose to become prostitutes and chose wealthy patrons as sexual partners because of their greed for material wealth. Within this context, materialism specifically meant material possessions that resulted in the indulgence of the senses. The term *aimpulan* (lit.: *aim* – five, *pulan* – sensory organs) in Tamil was often used to refer to this understanding of materialism: the five senses being understood to be touch, feel, smell, vision, and hearing. To indulge in them (*unarvu* – lit.: feel or in this context, indulge) was seen as materialism as these create desire for wealth, sex, material possessions, etc. A desire-free life was seen as a prerequisite for achieving spiritual bliss, i. e., *moksha*. *Sanyasis* (lit.: ascetics) are described in Tamil as *thuravi*, which comes from the root word *thuravu* that literally means "to open" or "give up." Therefore, *thuravi* means one who has given up; it is closely related to the term *nirvanam* in Tamil (*nirvana* in Sanskrit), which means "naked"; giving up ones desires and material possessions is to be naked of these emotions. According to this narrative, *devadasis* were thus a moral corruption in the society owing to their materialistic lives, in contrast to the "new woman," the guardian of the inner sphere, who through renunciation works towards *moksha*.

Devadasis, embodying their tradition, practices, and performances, were thus used to demonstrate what impropriety and deviance looked like, in order to define hegemonic discourses: By drawing specific distinctions between *devadasis* and the "new women," *devadasis* were forced to occupy liminal spaces where their presence was necessary in order to define the "new woman." It is important to focus on certain aspects of the discourse here. The new nationalist middle class marked a

distinction between promiscuous and modest women, the former being common women and the latter, "new women." Striking is the similarity between this dichotomy and the colonial narratives on the colonized, as Kabbani has argued (1994). Colonized peoples, especially in the East, were seen as uncouth and coarse with voracious sexual appetites coupled with a fondness for violence, whilst the colonizer was portrayed as moral and honorable (Kabbani 1994: 67f.). This positioning aided the colonial definition of *devadasis* as prostitutes, which was eventually adopted by the Indians. Hence, whilst historically *devadasis* embodied the divine and the erotic through their performances (such as *javalis*), now a *devadasi* was removed from her performance arts; now, her body represented only the sexual impropriety. By contrast, the new middle-class woman was removed from her sexuality for she now embodied the spiritual. This type of embodiment was used to define the subject and the personhood of women in relation to the state (Abu-Lughod 1998: 8). These "Gandhian women" were then accountable for both inner and outer spheres (8f.), as guardians of spirituality whilst being responsible for domesticity of the household that now was conscious of permeating into the outer sphere.

Having juxtaposed *devadasis* and the new middle-class women as polar opposites, the anti-*devadasi* movement aimed at purging *devadasi* of her impropriety and body to belong to the respectable middle class. At the same time, her presence was important in the society to make a clear case and definition for the "new woman" in her redefined female sexuality. Moreover, there is a problematic and contradictory understanding of embodiment. For the nationalists, sculptures within religious spaces (i. e., temples) were embodied and in this contextualization, erotic imagery (of sexual acts or sculptures of women with large breasts) became acceptable. To them, the space guaranteed a form of embodiment devoid of sexuality, which was replaced with "divine love." For a *devadasi*, however, outwith the religious space (i. e., in salons of colonial Madras), her embodiment and eroticism remained intact and problematic and, therefore, fell under the scrutiny of politics of morality. Classicization clearly dichotomized two classes of women: the "new women" and *devadasis*. As discussed so far, this class-based distinction was constructed based on sacred/profane categories. Furthermore, the choice of the media (whether visual or textual) and the censorship of those media also depended on the class of the audiences for those media. Thus, for instance, textu-

al media such as poetry and literature were censored based on a Bourdieuian distinction between high and low culture, but the target audience were primarily bourgeoisie Indians (Gupta 2001: 85); the same can be said of performance arts wherein the nationalists attempted to transform listeners to connoisseurs (Nadadur Kannan 2014: 47). However, the contexts within which visual media were available, be it photographs or sculptures, were public; the temples were public spaces accessible to every strata of society. Censorship in these contexts, in addition to the legal exception, was limited. Moreover, the classicization process had, albeit ambiguously, marked the public sphere as secular and, therefore, prone to profanity, whilst the inner sphere was where the sacred was guarded. This adds further understanding as to why temple imagery escaped the severe scrutiny that the literary sources faced.

Gupta (2001: 32) erroneously concludes that the charges of obscenity did not pertain to only female sexuality by saying "charges of obscenity cut across gender lines; many works which were to become equally controversial were written by men, signifying that it was perhaps the issue of obscenity that was central." However, primarily the definition of obscenity pertained to expressions of female sexuality in the public sphere, which was seen as immoral, originating mainly with *devadasis*. The banned works may have been by both male and female authors. However, these works were expressions of female sexuality, a case in point being Muddhupalani's work, in which she explicitly described her sexual desires and fantasies. This seems to be the issue: obscenity was seen as any explicit expression of female sexuality. Also, in the examples of sexually explicit compositions given above, *javalis* expressed female sexuality (albeit by male composers and poets), which was severely criticized, whilst the idea of "divine love" posits the sexual focus on the male subject, especially when deified, which then became more acceptable in the public sphere. These notions were particularly reified within the context of the nationalist movements and the newly emerging patriarchy, which, as Chatterjee describes (1993), were a part of the project of classicization.

Ramamirthammal's work has been credited by scholars "as a testimony to the travails of a community trapped in the transition from 'tradition' to 'modernity'" (Anandhi 1991: 743) and for bringing to the fore the multilayered complex developments surrounding the "reform" movement. Ramamirthammal (1883–1962), albeit born in a non-

devadasi family, was forced into the *devadasi* system as a child by her parents with persuasion from her uncle. Subverting the system, in addition to not being allowed by her parents to marry, she married her music teacher. She then joined the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu and became a passionate supporter of the "reform" movement and abolition of the *devadasi* system that she detested and saw as degrading (Anandhi 1991: 742). Founded by Periyar, a Tamil nationalist, the Self-Respect Movement began in Tamil Nadu as a counter-movement to the prevailing caste-system. Members of this movement saw the *devadasi* system negatively and as an outcome of the caste system, specifically, through the patronage of Brahmins. The movement transformed into a political party called the Justice Party, which then splintered into major political parties who are players in contemporary politics in Tamil Nadu (Anandhi 1991: 742). Ramamirthammal remained active in Tamil Nadu politics until her death. The novel *Dasigal Mosavalai Alladhu Madhi Petra Minor* reveals the complexity within which she negotiated the *devadasi* system and "reform" politics. There is a clear distinction between a *devadasi* who saw the error of her ways and reformed, and those who were forced to reform because they had lost the wealth earned through a "degrading profession." It is stated clearly, however, that *devadasis* do not know the evils of the systems they are a part of and that they require saviors from outside the system. An important aspect of victimization in the novel was that of the *zamindars*[8] and minors. To be waylaid by *devadasis* resulting in dereliction of their duties as a son, husband, and father is a clear stigmatization of *devadasis*. More importantly, it points back to the classicization discourse wherein men were seen as the guardians of the outer/political spheres whilst women were the guardians of the inner/spiritual spheres. Thus, the *zamindar*'s dereliction of duties also extends to his Indian subjecthood and citizenship. In this context, women, like that of *zamindar*'s wife, were responsible for safeguarding the inner sphere of family, including the husband. Along these lines, *devadasis* are blamed for the discretions of the *zamindars* whilst the responsibility falls upon the *zamindar*'s wife to win him back. The novel has been read as a feminist text

(Ramamirthammal et al. 2003: 4) but it must be noted that the *zamindar*'s failure to perform his duties in the public sphere, which is to protect the political sphere from the colonizers, is then blamed on both *devadasis* and his middle-class reformer wife.

In this context, it is important to look at the self-representations of *devadasis*. Perhaps a unique aspect of Muddhupalani's work is the self-representation in the preface of the book. Muddhupalani writes about herself as:

Which other woman of my kind has felicitated scholars with gifts and money?
To which other woman of my kind have epics been dedicated?
Which other woman of my kind has won such acclaim in each of the arts?
You are incomparable, Muddhupalani, among your kind (Ramamirthammal et al. 2003:116)

Elsewhere, she writes:

A face that glows like the full moon,
skills of conversations, matching the countenance.
Eyes filled with compassion,
matching the speech.
A great spirit of generosity,
matching the glance.
These are the ornaments
that adorn Palani,
when she is praised by kings (ibid. 117).

The second poem, especially, is rare to be found in a *devadasi*'s work because poems of this kind were written primarily on the patrons of *devadasis* and not about *devadasis* themselves.[9] Such self-representations were silenced as evidenced from the banning of Muddhupalani's work, but also the passing of the legislation criminalizing *devadasi* communities in 1947 by passing the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act.

5 Conclusion

It is important to note that whilst sex and the body of women in general were repressed in the public sphere as a form of materialism, it was *devadasis'* bodies that served as material objects during the classicization project. There were several aspects to the nationalists and the colonial government's perception of *devadasis*: they were seen either as

---

8 During the Mughal Empire, *zamindars* belonged to the nobility and formed the ruling class. Under British colonial rule in India, the permanent settlement consolidated what became known as the zamindari system. The British rewarded supportive *zamindars* by recognizing them as princes.

9 Peterson (2011: 304); Tharu and Lalita (1991: 117); Rao and Shulman (2002: 294).

having complete agency over their lives, or as victims of an immoral system. That the contexts were much more nuanced and complex was completely overlooked. For the Indian nationalists, it was unimaginable that the matrilineal system would award agency to the matrons. Rather, the newly constructed morality operative in the public sphere and its colonial definition of *devadasis* as prostitutes placed the sexual lives of *devadasis* at the forefront of the issue. The newly constructed middle-class women within the restrictions of conjugality seemed to them more proper than a system whereby unmarried women were ensured the right to inheritance, education (amongst other rights), and limited sexual agency. Ultimately, through *devadasi* bodies, the expression of female sexuality in the public sphere was suppressed. Although the nationalists emphasized monogamy and conjugal sexual relationships, with the suppression of female sexuality patriarchy gave way to the only form of sexuality deemed to be acceptable, which was the expression of deified male and female sexuality. In this contradictory and complicated understanding of sex and embodiment, *devadasi* bodies were pushed to the peripheries and female sexuality to the inner sphere. It is clear, however, that the nationalists, by appropriating the colonial narratives that Kabbani discusses, followed material practices that were similar to those of the colonizers and Orientalists. They used the same methodology, narratives, and categories to marginalize *devadasis*. Thus, the indigenous material practices of the Indian nationalists seeking liberation from colonial control were actually the same as colonial material practices, and, as a consequence, their objectives and the results were also consonant with colonial objectives and results.

References Cited

Abu-Lughod, Lila
1998   Introduction. Feminist Longings and Postcolonial Conditions. In: L. Abu-Lughod (ed.), Remaking Women. Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East; pp. 3–30. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Anandhi, S.
1991   Representing Devadasi: "Dasigal Mosavalai" as a Radical Text. *Economic and Political Weekly* 26/11–12: 739–746.

Allen, Matthew Harp
1997   Rewriting the Script for South Indian Dance. *The Drama Review* 41/3: 63–100.

Archeological Survey of India
2016   World Heritage Sites – Konark – Sun Temple – Photo Gallery. <http://asi.nic.in/asi_monu_whs_konark_images.asp> [31.07.2016]

Bhabha, Homi (ed.)
2003   Nation and Narration. London: Routledge. [Reprint]

Cattoni, Nadia
2015   The Figure of Radha in Miniature Paintings. From the Pastoral to the Courtly, from Text to Visuality, from Polyphony to Normativity. *Religion & Gender* 5/1: 52–70.

Chatterjee, Partha
1993   The Nation and Its Fragments. Colonial and Postcolonial Histories. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Davydova, Darja
2010   Feminisation of the Nation. Images of Woman, Family, and Nation in the Lithuanian Public Discourse. *Amsterdam Social Science* 2/1: 65–78.

Dirks, Nicholas B.
2008   The Hollow Crown. Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Cambridge South Asian Studies, 39)

Government of India
1926   Collection of the Acts of the Indian Legislature and of the Governor General. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch.

Gupta, Charu
2001   Sexuality, Obscenity, Community. Women, Muslims, and the Hindu Public in Colonial India. New York: Palgrave.

Hyam, Ronald
1992   Empire and Sexuality. The British Experience. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations
2011   A Century of India Dance: 1901–2000. The Mohan Khokar Dance Collection. <http://www.narthaki.com/info/tdhc/images/tdhc27.pdf> [04.04.2019]

Kabbani, Rana
1994   Imperial Fictions. Europe's Myths of Orient. London: Pandora. [Rev. and Expanded Ed.]

Krishnan, Hari
2008   Inscribing Practice. Reconfigurations and Textualizations of Devadasi Repertoire in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century South India. In: I. V. Peterson and D. Soneji (eds.), Performing Pasts. Reinventing the Arts in Modern South India; pp. 71–89. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LNTS – League of Nations Treaty Series
1924   International Convention for the Suppression of the Circulation of and Traffic in Obscene Publications. <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/treaties/LNTSer/1924/143.html> [04.04.2019]

Meduri, Avanthi
1996   Nation, Woman, Representation. The Sutured History of the Devadasi and Her Dance. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms. (University Microfilms International, 7) [PhD Thesis, New York University]

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade
1991   Introduction. Cartographies of Struggle. Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. In: C. T. Mohanty, A. Russo, and L. Torres (eds.), Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism; pp. 1–50. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Nadadur Kannan, Rajalakshmi
2014   Performing "Religious" Music. Interrogating Karnatic Music within a Postcolonial Setting. Stirling. [PhD Thesis, University of Stirling]

Parker, Andrew
1992   Nationalisms and Sexualities. New York: Routledge.

Parker, Kunal M.
1998   "A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes." Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800–1914. *Modern Asian Studies* 32/3: 559–633.

Peterson, Indira Viswanathan
2011   Multilingual Dramas at the Tanjavur Maratha Court and Literary Cultures in Early Modern South India. *The Medieval History Journal* 14/2: 285–321.

Ramadurai, Charukesi
2015   India's Temples of Sex. *BBC Travel* (October 07, 2015). <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20150921-indias-temples-of-sex> [04.04.2019]

Ramamirthammal, Moovalur
1936   Web of Deceit Alladhu Madhi Petra Minor. Madras: Pearl Press.

Ramamirthammal, Moovalur, et al.
2003   Web of Deceit Alladhu Madhi Petra Minor. New Delhi: Kali for Women.

Ramanujan, A. K., Velcheru Narayana Rao, and **David Shulman** (eds.)
1994   When God Is a Customer. Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ramaswamy, Sumathi
1993   En/Gendering Language. The Poetics of Tamil Identity. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35/4: 683–725.
1997   Passions of the Tongue. Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891–1970. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Studies on the History of Society and Culture, 29)

Rao, Velcheru Narayana, and **David Shulman** (ed.)
2002   Classical Telugu Poetry. An Anthology. Berkeley: University of California. (Voices from Asia, 13)

Soneji, Devesh
2012   Unfinished Gestures. Devadāsīs, Memory, and Modernity in South India. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Srinivasan, Amrit
1988   Reform or Conformity? Temple "Prostitution" and the Community in the Madras Presidency. In: B. Agarwal (ed.), Structures of Patriarchy. State, Community, and Household in Modernising Asia; pp. 175–198. Delhi: Kali for Women. (Women and the Household in Asia, 2)

Talwar, Kay
2013   Devadasi. The Eternal Dancer. *Unframed* (May 15, 2013 – Los Angeles County Museum of Art / LACMA). <https://unframed.lacma.org/2013/05/15/devadasi-the-eternal-dancer> [04.04.2019]

Tharu, Susie, and **Ke Lalita**
1991   Women Writing in India. 600 B. C. to the Present. Vol. 1: 600 B. C. to the Early 20th Century. New York: Feminist Press at CUNY.

Venkatasubbaiyar, Utthukkadu
2007   Sri Krishnaganam — Online. <https://www.projectmadurai.org/pm_etexts/pdf/pm0312.pdf> [18.09.2019]

Yuval-Davis, Nira
1997   Gender and Nation. London: Sage Publications.

moussons

Social Science Research on Southeast Asia
Recherche en sciences humaines sur l'Asie du Sud-Est

NUMBER 33 NOW AVAILABLE

1-2019 33

moussons généraliste

Recherche
en sciences humaines
sur l'Asie du Sud-Est
Social Science Research on Southeast Asia

PUP

A set of 7 ARTICLES by

Maaike Matelski
Marion Sabrié
Helene Maria Kyed
Eben Forbes
Julien Debonneville
Olivia Killias
Laurent Gédéon
Louise Pichard-Bertaux
Bernard Sellato

BOOK REVIEWS