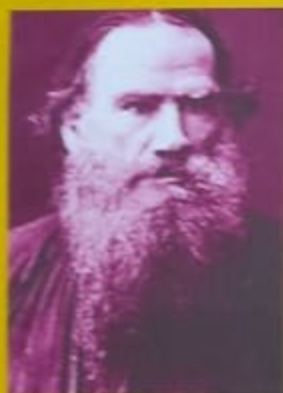


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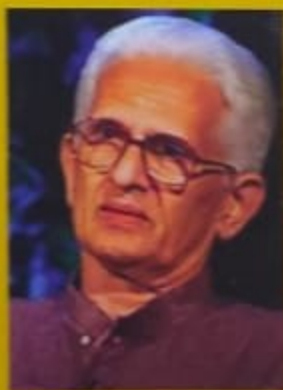
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Volume 18, Number 2

July-Dec. 2018

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JOURNAL OF LITERATURE & AESTHETICS

Kollam, Kerala - 691021

AN INTERNATIONAL PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

JLA is normally issued twice a year in May and October. It publishes research articles, poems, short stories, interviews and book reviews.

Contributions can be sent by email attachment at <jlaindia@gmail.com>. If sent by post, laser printout preferably accompanied by soft copy on CD should be addressed to the Editor. Articles should not exceed 5000 words. All correspondence including matters of subscription should be addressed to the Associate Editor Dr. Manoj S.

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Travel, History and Politics of Religion: De-scribing Lives of Devadasis

Reji A.L.



Abstract

Devadasi Theruvukalilude (Through the Streets of Devadasis) is a travelogue in Malayalam by P. Surendran which depicts the lives of Devadasis located in various parts of India. The present paper examines how the text as a travel narrative helps us to understand the different cultural, social, religious and gender-based boundaries that existed among Devadasi communities in India. We live in an era of increasing globalization, in which mobility, travel and cross-cultural contacts are the accepted facts of life. Here the travelling of narratives becomes unchallenging across media, from discipline to discipline, within disciplines, from concepts to professional practices, and from narrative to non-narrative. The social, political and philosophical forces frequently change the relationship between the selves and the worlds that the traveller inhabits and explores. This paper critically analyses how discourse delimits the experience of Devadasis and how their identities are constantly contested by the language and experience of others and the possibility of re-presenting them as individuals in P. Surendran's work, *Devadasi Theruvukalilude*. The book gives in the form of travel narratives some instances of Deccan Devadasis' present day life. Though the government has prohibited such practices through law, they are still going on in hundreds of villages in Andhra, Maharashtra and Karnataka. The paper also discusses critically who Devadasis are and how history problematizes the question through ages and their transforming lives at the sanctum sanctorum of sexuality. The text selected for study provides a unique, direct experience through numerous mini narratives of Devadasis. So the possibility to slip into some stereotypical depiction is limited.

Keywords: Devadasi, identity accicharitam, pottukkattu, jogva, bettale seve, garjamai