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## The Discourse of Devadasi<sup>1</sup> Subject in Literary Vernacular: Contextualizing Resistance in Uttam Bandu Tupe's *Zulwa*<sup>2</sup>

**Umesh Kumar**

Research Scholar

&

**Nilekha Salunke**

Research Scholar

The English and Foreign Languages University

Hyderabad, India.

Being in serious academics for a while now, both as researchers and participants, one realizes that academic discourse, like any other- works on the concept and principles of binary opposition. However as a disclaimer, we are not the first ones to realize this and hopefully not the last. The binary hierarchy, by its very nature, makes one category as the 'dominant' and the other as 'dominated'. It brands one category as 'superior' which by default makes the remaining one as 'inferior'. This binary of superior versus inferior is also visible in the sphere of literary production. Literary production comes to us basically through two vehicles. Firstly, in 'mainstream' languages which in Indian context could be English or to some extent Hindi. Secondly, and more importantly at least in terms of quantity (since quality is a highly subjective terrain, so we have kept it out of our analytical preview) the bulk of literary production is accumulated in so called 'vernacular' languages.

The former, in spite of being a minority is quite dominant over the vernacular majority. If we look for the reasons, some of them are quite obvious. In literary production, both the mainstream and vernacular exists- not in isolation but in conflict. The seed of this conflict is sown when one language, which is always the language of ruling class, supersedes the language(s) of masses and in result puts them on the periphery. This was perhaps one of the reasons for the miraculous rise of English and Hindi respectively in Indian context. In the colonial times, English being the language of ruling British was given the nod. On the other hand, Hindi was patronized primarily by the cow belt nationalists who were engaged in anti-colonial struggle and declared it the language of the entire nation. Further, this so-called inferior status of the vernacular is also disseminated by a distinct ideology of the mainstream percolated by the governing class for its own benefits. Such an ideology creates uniformity in the ruling class but divides those who are being ruled. Such a division, in turn, creates a fallacy in the minds of the majority where they themselves, in hegemonic terms, start underestimating their own languages and accept the mainstream (elite backed) language as standard. In this entire round of power play, the languages of the majority are given the status of the underdog.

No one knows what 'was' and 'is' the view of the vernaculars clearly on issues of national importance, debates in literary production, and the questions of marginalized and subaltern subjects and so on, largely due to the non-availability of vernacular debates in the mainstream power languages. Neither the translators nor the researchers are bothered much about the status of this binary. Nevertheless, the binary between vernacular and superior mainstream non-vernacular is a relationship of violence. This deliberately constructed relationship of violence makes the mainstream 'immortal' by killing the vernacular. Barring a few acclaimed writers of vernacular whose writings are now available in multiple languages, the academic discourse at the national level, is by and large, remains pessimistic towards the

cause of vernacular Indian literatures. The larger debate, in the end, is about our acquaintance with the ongoing debates and discourses in the vernacular.

*Zulwa* (1986) by Uttam Bandu Tupe is one such literary expression which familiarizes us with the issue of Devadasi debate, her subjectivity, power relations in and around the Devadasi subject and her resultant resistance to change equations of power- as imagined in the Marathi vernacular. Before we dwell on these issues with some detail, let us have a brief synopsis regarding the plot of the novel.

*Zulwa* is not so well known but one of the powerful novels of Uttam Bandu Tupe belonging to a series of Devadasi Theme based novels appeared on Marathi literary scene especially in the Eighties.<sup>3</sup> This novel vividly describes the life and hardships of a Devadasi who has been dedicated to the goddess *Yellamma*<sup>4</sup> and her subsequent resistance to the imposed status. Yelu, who is a Devadasi, wishes that her daughter Jagan should also carry forward the ritual of Devadasi practice. Jagan is her beautiful, honest, clever and artistic daughter. Jagan is fond of education and it is her strong desire to get educated. The little education that she receives empowers her to reject her mother Yelu's advice of following her footsteps. She discards to become a Devadasi which was her impending fate by default.

Such a reversal of occupation, however, is not easy in an orthodox society where the profession of an individual is decided by birth and not by her/his deeds. Jagan being born to a Devadasi is an easy prey for lusty male characters in the novel. Initially, under different circumstances it is shown that Jagan falls in love with the son of a landlord named Jayant. In a typical upper caste attitude Jayant treats her only as a sex object and refuses to marry her in spite of using her sexually for a period of time. Jagan gets a bad name and branded as a prostitute. She is thrown out of the school for her relationship with Jayant. The school headmaster too wishes to take advantage of her sexuality but she protests and escapes. Then forcefully, as we observe in the due course of the narrative, Jagan had to accept her mother's business of performing as a Devadasi. She starts hating god and questions godly attributes. Jagan thinks that Devadasi practice should be eradicated. She considers this practice as a mere superstition. The way society makes use of Devadasi under the pretext of god, makes her feel uneasy. Even though she desperately wishes to change her path of life, society continues to stand in front of her and thwarts her liberation.

Jagan forms a *Zulwa* relationship with Kishna whom she starts loving after some days of her confrontation and refusal of marriage by Jayant. She dreams of living a normal family life like any other woman and get some stability in the life. But all her dreams remain unfulfilled as Kishna starts neglecting her. She gives birth to Krishna's child who is a girl. After few days of her birth, the baby falls ill and Yelu (Jagan's mother) rather than taking the baby to the doctor advises Jagan to put some *bhandara*<sup>5</sup> on the baby and recite the name of *Yellamma*. This is the last thing which makes Jagan lose her temper as she does not want her daughter to follow the life of a Devadasi like her. She argues with her mother on the same issue and throws the idol of goddess *Yellamma* into the river, thereby putting a full stop to her sufferings as a Devadasi.

The above discussion of the plot gives us the platform through which we can embark on some of the important themes and debates highlighted in the novel. Through his depiction of Jagan, the novelist attempts to create the subject of a Devadasi figure who is both a continuation and at the same time different from the earlier creation of Devadasi subjects by other novelists in Marathi vernacular. Further, our aim is to challenge the hegemony of master narratives of 'power languages' who do not allow the vernacular debate to come out.

Quite ironically, we use the medium of this powerful language (in this case English) to bring out the themes and debates from the vernacular. Yet, this could be a beginning in the right direction where our intention is constructive. Coming back to our discussion on *Zulwa*, the argument in following pages is divided into three distinct themes followed by a brief conclusion. Even in discussing these themes, relatively detailed attention is given to the section on 'Resistance' because this theme probably constitutes the poetic justice and nucleus of the novel. Further, this theme of resistance and Jagan's revolt makes the novel divergent from other novels written on the same subject. Furthermore, although distinct on surface, each section shows uniformity in its quest to theorize different concerns of Devadasi debate, her subjectivity, power relations around her and her counter resistance to diffuse these power relations.

## I

### The Custom of Sacred Prostitution: Birth as Destiny

There is no denying the fact that sexual exploitation is integral to all forms of women oppression. Time and again, the male dominated patriarchal society devised alternative mechanisms, which included both ideological and social, to subjugate women for his sexual needs outside the normative norms of marriage. The custom of Devadasi practice is one such system where the social and ideological is conspired for patriarchal needs. The Hindu temple becomes the physical location of this conspiracy where the Devadasi succumbs to her 'sacred duty' in service to those who have the authority over the temple.

The cultural nomenclature of sacred prostitution is itself problematic and against women. As researchers we distance ourselves from this gendered bias term and use it only as a popular word for analysis. By attaching the word 'sacred' this practice is provided a kind of religious legitimacy which the Brahmanical Hindu religion strives for. However, this is not the only nomenclature of its kind. For instance, the word 'Honour Killing' is another such term which is absolutely gender biased and talks only about the honour of men. In fact, Devadasi as a synonym of 'sacred prostitute' was invented during the colonial era by intelligentsia and conscious reformists to recast the temple prostitute in a critical historical context. Right from the ancient and medieval periods till the colonial period, these women were referred as *Sule*, *Sani*, *Bhogam* and *Patra* which either directly or implicitly meant prostitute.<sup>6</sup> A reference and naturalization which starts from the birth. The daughter of a Devadasi is by default a candidate to carry forward her legacy of religiously sanctioned prostitution. Further, it is the mother who takes the initiative to push her own daughter in the realms of such a wretched life, largely under pressure from the customary society.

The same reflection gets underway in the narrative of *Zulwa*. Here, Jagan's mother barring her initial resistance is convinced to see her daughter to perform as a Devadasi. Jagan's non-endorsement towards the profession is downplayed by her mother as well as Parasu (who works as a pimp in the novel). For instance in the following conversation between Jagan and Parasu, Parasu hints towards the ultimate destiny of a Devadasi girl. A destiny of oppression and humiliation decided on the basis of her birth:

Now it is enough. Your schooling is over. Be ready to serve god.

... Even if a Lamb shouts aloud, its voice can't be equal to the roaring of a Tiger. Even if a Lamb is fed to the belly; can it be used for tilling the land? Dear, it can only be used to make curry and fill others bellies. Jagan we are like that lamb. We are people of god, given by god, dedicated to god!

(Translated by Umesh Kumar: p.10)

This birth as destiny, we have noticed, is a linear theme in almost all the novels dealing with the issues of Devadasi subject. For the sake of illustration, we can take a similar example from another novel titled *Mahananda* (1970) written by Jayant Dalvi<sup>7</sup>. The novel narrates the story of two lovers who could not unite due to the orthodox attitude of heroine's mother (a Devadasi). Quite paradoxically though, the mother has no problem if the lover of her daughter takes her to bed- for she considers it as the sacred duty of her daughter:

This is our religion. We will carry forward it as long as we are alive. Modern girls are not following it. They want to marry. That is bad. If a Devadasi's daughter marries someone, leaving away duties of god, the whole family has to suffer the consequences of it.

... You don't become angry! Ours is the birth of Devadasi! Whoever gives us food, takes us to bed. What is the use of keeping choices for us?

(Translated by Nilekha Salunke: pp. 70-72)

Apart from a destiny by birth, the above utterances also posit the practice of Devadasi as an unavoidable cultural practice. Further, cultural practices are the medium through which reality is represented. The above examples testify to the fact that for a Devadasi- to live, behave and correspond like a Devadasi is ultimate reality. On theoretical domains, Marxist cultural and literary theory helps us to comprehend these cultural practices and their predisposition to represent *ultimate reality* (deliberate emphasis is ours).

According to Marxist criticism, all cultural practices seek to ensure that the dominant classes (in Indian context, we should combine the caste along with class) remain predominant. In order to do so it must convince the working class and the oppressed (in our case Devadasi subject) not to revolt or rebel. The dominant classes and castes usually achieve this by suggesting to the oppressed that the present social condition is *natural* and *beneficial* to them.

Further, what Marx and Engels argued for the capitalist mode of production can also be applied to the practice of Devadasi system. Here capitalist is the upper caste/class which gives sanction and advertises such evil practices. They justify and naturalize these practices through certain pattern of thoughts, ideas or myths. A variety of social, cultural, ritual and religious structures make the Devadasis believe that the order of inequality in society is 'natural' or 'preordained'. The recognition of being oppressed subjects is absent in them. This system of thought which helps the oppressors to subjugate Devadasis may be termed as Hegemonic Ideological Apparatus (HIA). This HIA asserts the naturalness and necessity of Devadasi practice. It prevents the recognition of the oppression by the oppressed. Thus, it is a blind, a veil that prevents the Devadasi from understanding her own oppression- a process which was called *false consciousness* by Marx. This nexus of HIA and cultural social practice makes Devadasi as a mere tool of sexual gratification. So much so that at times, humanity is devoid to her.

## II

### The Sexual Labour of Devadasi: Equations of Power

According to Michel Foucault, power is central to the human existence. All human relations and the institutions associated with it are engaged in this interplay of power. Now the next question arises-what is the site on which this power play is played out? According to Foucault, discourse is the territory on which the struggle for power is continuously played out. Speaking precisely, discourse is the construction of knowledge, its organization and sharing through specific forms of speech, writing and language. It is the situation in which understanding and representation of a specific subject is manufactured. It goes without saying that the authority that controls the discourses automatically controls the subjects. Let us try to understand the subjectivity of Devadasi with the help of Foucault's above given framework.

The narrative of the novel, from very beginning depicts Jagan's non-cooperation towards the acceptance of Devadasi profession. However, the discourse of patriarchy (with the representation of pure domesticated woman, the seductive Devadasi woman, the vulnerable woman) coupled with a sexist language try to *institutionalize* the practice and legitimacy of Devadasi practice. As an impending *Jogtin*, Jagan is always reminded by the society that she has to become sexually available to the villagers when she comes of age. Further, she is constantly warned not to establish any sexual relationship without the monetary rewards. Here she becomes the victim of a specific language of villagers which is hell-bent to control and subjugate her sexuality. For instance:

Even if a cheap woman behaves and decorates herself as a dignified married woman, she can't become one. She always has a God on her head. She changes her husband like clothes. But she behaves as if she is chaste than a married woman. It seems, today she is going to attract a boy from a high caste family.

(Translated by Umesh Kumar: p. 77)

On other occasion, when Jagan struggles to pay her school fee, she is advised that she can do so simply just by sleeping with any of her school teachers. In fact, the headmaster of the school approaches her for sexual favours under the pretext of providing her free school books. True to her rebellious and resistive nature, Jagan shows disapproval to those advances and consequently thrown out of the school. Officially though, the school management cites her licentious behaviour for her expulsion. She could not prove her innocence. She is frequently reminded that as a whore dedicated to deity she has no choices and should not dream of marriage and family since she has the *tendency* to change her sexual partners as she changes her sari. On a separate occasion, the brutality of this power ruled hegemonic system comes before us quite vividly when Jagan is approached by Pabya, her biological father for sexual favours:

It was a dark night. Jagan was seated on the quilt. Suddenly, a knock was heard. She opened the door. It was Pabya standing in front of her. He came inside the house with a clue of certain familiarity. He caught Jagan's hand in darkness.

Sit. Sit down dear Jagane...

Mother is there...that side, said Jagan.

I don't need her

Then whom do you need?

Now you should satisfy me...

Shut up.

Why? Dhurpi is better, isn't it? She is also of my age.

Shut up.

Why? You became angry because she is born to you. I am also born to you.

How would I know who made your mother pregnant? I have become her *zulwa*. I haven't kept

the watch on her.

Is it so? Now as you have come here, don't you think that your wife would have gone to

someone else? She is pure because she wears a *kunku* (vermilion) of your name!

(Translated by Nilekha Salunke: p.128)

The above discourse of language and sexist patriarchy constructs, legitimizes and institutionalizes the practice of Devadasi practice. However, the far-reaching goal here is to create the hegemony of unequal power relations. According to Foucault's analysis, no discourse can function without an object, a language and a power figure who deposes this specific language to illustrate and catalogue this object for the advantage of power figure. According to this analysis:

The Devadasi subject is the *object* constructed in the *discourse of Devadasi practice* (with its element of sacred prostitution, unquestioned devotion to deity such as goddess *Yellamma*) by the *power figure of Priest/Upper Caste male*. The discourse of Devadasi practice therefore is a signpost of multiple power equations where the established power structures maintain their power over the marginal and the subordinated with the help of production and circulation of particular discourses. Most of the literary narratives on Devadasi themes have another striking similarity. Even when a Devadasi enters into a sexual relationship with her upper caste lover with the hope of getting married to him or at least to have a *zulwa* relationship with him, she is still assumed to be sexually available to everyone. We know such is not the case with a non-Devadasi girl. Perhaps it happens because a non-Devadasi girl belongs to a normative sphere of domesticity. Furthermore, all romantic relationships of a Devadasi end in disaster. She merely becomes an object of sexual gratification for different men.

As a wife of God, she cannot become the monogamous wife of any man. On the contrary she is referred as *gavachi bayko/ gavacha dhan*.<sup>8</sup> Such a branding of hers gives others an unrestricted sexual access. Further by defining her as *undagi*<sup>9</sup> and not allowing her any respectable livelihood she is forced to be on the periphery by accepting non-domestic sexual relations for survival. As is noted by Anagha Tambe:

Thus, it is the hegemonic ideological discourse articulated often through teasing and humiliation of a Jogtin by the village, especially by the "respectable" "upper caste" men and women that mark her sexual identity as a disreputable and promiscuous non- wife, as against an "upper caste" "chaste" wife. Consequently, she is made vulnerable for sexual abuse in her everyday social encounters to any man in the village, including her biological father. (Tambe 87)

Nevertheless, the contestations against these dominant discourses are inevitable. Jagan and her mother are poles apart in their approaches regarding their identity of being Devadasis. Jagan's mother accepts her fate and tries to show the same path of Devadasi to Jagan. On the contrary, Jagan is too critical to accept such superstitious notions. She is combative, resistive and above all extremely critical of the system of which she is a part. This resistance of Jagan makes the next part of our discussion.

### III

#### Embodying Resistance: Jagan and her Quest for Liberation

As noted in the beginning of the essay, the concept of Resistance erupts as the main passage of our argument in this section. As a result, it becomes obligatory for us to describe - What do we mean by the term resistance? Like so many other words, this word is also not value free. We should understand that resistance is now a trendy topic. In sociology, as in many other disciplines, attention has recently diverted from issues of social control and social structure to issues of agency. As a result, we are now experiencing an overflow of research and theory which purports to speak about the issue of resistance.

The same is true about other disciplines as well. Resistance has managed to receive more impetus in disciplines such as anthropology, cultural studies, geography, political science, women's studies and even in literary studies. However, this period of productivity on resistance scholarship is both exciting and interesting but the problem is that different authors have used the concept and language of resistance in altered ways.

Scholars have used the term resistance to describe a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life (individual, collective, and institutional) and in a number of different settings, including political systems, entertainment and literature, and the workplace. Because of such disparity, it is not surprising that there is little consensus on the definition of resistance. The term is defined variously<sup>10</sup> as:

1. acting autonomously, in [one's] own interests
2. active efforts to oppose, fight, and refuse to cooperate with or submit to... abusive behaviour and...control
3. engaging in behaviors despite opposition or simply
4. questioning and objecting

It needs to be mentioned here that for our analysis we use resistance as 'acting autonomously' and 'questioning and objecting'. This quest for autonomy and liberation can be tapped in Jagan's character throughout the narrative. She questions the established norms prescribed for the Devadasis:

God himself will not know when my mother got married to him. Now, mother and Parasu will marry me with the same God. I will also have to become a Jogtin like my mother, roam around carrying goddess on my head and beg door to door saying *Yallammacha Jogva*. Mother and father- for me, both is my mother. I do not have father's name. I am born without it. Someone will be born out of me. Who will be her father? Or she will also be like me – fatherless? Her father and mother both will be me. I can't become a teacher or nurse. If I become nurse, I will take care of patients and god who resides in them.

(Translated by Nilekha Salunke: pp. 3-5)

And again,

Mother! Should I tell you the truth? Had your goddess been really powerful, why would she force us to beg? Yesterday my teacher was telling that god resides in every one of us. What all we have been doing, is mere a drama!  
Mother, with whom you got married and was dedicated, will I be married to the same god?  
Yes, that has to be done.  
Mother, your husband will become my husband. How come it is possible that mother and daughter having the same husband?

(Translated by Umesh Kumar: pp. 3-5)



This utterance, in which Jagan is the prominent speaker, constitutes the initial part of the novel. Jagan is educated as compared to other Devadasis (she wishes to become a nurse one day) and as a result quite audacious in her approach. We can say that she uses and wishes to use education as a crucial weapon of her emancipation. As we can see from her dialogues she is against the practice of Devadasi system and is a vocal critic of this evil practice. She sees no future for herself after being entrapped in such a custom. She is not a blind devotee of god and goddess and challenges their supreme powers. Her question regarding herself and her mother having same husband bamboozles not only her mother but also readers. Further, it provides her a stance, like that of a good advocate, who can defend herself and defend with valid arguments.

Jagan throughout the novel struggles and raises her voice against the atrocities of Devadasi practice. At times it becomes impossible for her to make her own mother understand. In a very powerful culmination to the novel, Jagan not only questions the authority of god and man on a Devadasi but symbolically liberates her from the shackles of Devadasi practice. She throws the idol of the goddess in the river and refuses to put *Bhandara* on her daughter's forehead. She unchains her daughter from the impending clutches of Devadasi practice. This is not only symbolic but a powerful scene of resistance in its own sense:

Mother, why do we do all these things? I have done according to your wish. I have become Jogtin. You forced me in a *zulwa* relation that also I did. Still I don't have my own space. All the time I am hanging in the air. What is there in this life of a Jogtin? Does anybody look at us even as a human being?

Jagan, there is no solution. We have to bear whatever is written in our destiny.

Mother, you had a *zulwa* relation with Pabya. What happiness did he give you? He kept you away from him so that his family name does not get spoiled. Same way Kishna became my *zulwa*. What did he do for me? This girl is born to him. He doesn't bother whether she is alive or dead. Whenever they need us, they use us and then throw us like a betel leaf. That's why I am telling you, let me give some medicines to the child, I don't want to rely on *Yellamma* anymore and spoil the life of my child. Our sufferings should not trouble this baby. In this case, don't even take the name of that *Yellamma* in front me. Burn that goddess and its masque.

Don't say like this. Put some turmeric powder on baby by the name of goddess. See, she will stop crying. When you were born, you also troubled me like this.

At that time you spoiled my life by putting turmeric powder on me.

How did your life get spoiled?

What is there in this life, it is worse than the life of a dog. Anyone can come and use us. What we get in result? These illegitimate children!

Jagane, don't behave like a mad. Put some turmeric on her.

No, mother. Let her die crying. At least she will be saved from the sufferings of future.

Jagane, she is your tomorrow's support.

For my tomorrow's happiness, I can't afford to spoil her whole life. Why don't we kill her now itself?

Being human if we can't live like human beings, then what is the use of this living? Jogtin's life is not even equivalent to that of a bitch!

What is wrong with you now? You have got a nice patron. Goddess herself has given you.

Is he a patron? Would any husband of a married woman sit quietly at this moment? Or wouldn't have he done every possible thing for his child and wife? Ten times I called him but he didn't come. At least he should have sent some things to eat.

Jagan, we don't have power on them.

Why? Because, we are Jogtins.

Say, whatever you feel. Baby is crying, put turmeric on her Jagane.

What will she do apart from crying? She doesn't have milk to drink. Seven days are gone, she is not well.

We should pray to *Yellamma*. You put turmeric. Promise mother *Yellamma*. See, you will get milk.

Mother, I have become weak due to the delivery. If I eat properly then only I will get milk. Or will I get it by praying? If god gives birth to the child then why does a woman need husband? I will go to him, put the baby in front of him and ask him; had this child born to his wife, what he may have done?

It's not like that, Jagane.

Yelu rose from her place. She went near the place of goddess. Jagan became red. She picked up the goddess and ran out of the open door. It was a Man river. River was flooded and that sight of river was dangerous. Muddy water of flood was flowing with speed.

Jagan reached on the bank of river. Yelu was following her. While she was shouting Jagane, stop, stop; Jagan went little inside the river and threw the goddess in the water.

Yelu went ahead shouting mother *Yellamma*. She got drowned in the flood of the river. She became invisible in the river.

Jagan felt bad for a moment, and then her heart turned hard like a stone. Only once she looked at the water. Jagan became fresh. She looked around everywhere after entering into the house. She felt as if her house has become free and smiling now. She hugged the child. Child also responded as if she has understood everything. No...nobody will put turmeric on you. She started feeding the child and suddenly a speedy flow of milk started from her breasts.

(Translated by Umesh Kumar: pp. 147-149)

The above narration starts with a heated exchange of words between Jagan and her mother. Jagan is at pains to realize that history is repeating itself. Whatever has happened to her is going to be repeated with her daughter. It is symbolically represented when Jagan's mother repeatedly urged her to put turmeric powder on Jagan's daughter. Jagan's continuous refusal to put turmeric powder on her daughter not only frees the little girl from choosing the same profession of Devadasi like her mother but also heralds the birth of a new Jagan who no longer believes in the orthodox rituals of obeying the superstitious gods like *Yellamma*. The emotional brawl between the mother and the daughter also indicates towards the impending conflict between the orthodox and the new. The orthodox resists the new and the new pushes the orthodox behind.

Further, Jagan is very critical of male behaviour. She blasts Pabya and Kishna who use Devadasis for satisfying their sexual urge. It is a fitting ending to the novel. Drowning of Jagan's mother in the river along with the idol of Yellamma is symbolically the death of Devadasi system. Further, this death unchains Jagan and her little daughter from the clutches of Devadasi system.

#### IV

#### Conclusion: Towards an Aesthetics of Vernacular Literature of Resistance

Towards the conclusion of this essay, we are reminded of Gayatri Spivak's much quoted essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' (1985). Building on Antonio Gramsci's notion of subaltern, Spivak theorizes the silence of native woman through the structures of colonialism and patriarchy. According to Spivak's formulation the structural violence of colonialism and patriarchy prohibits any speaking by woman. Taking an example of *Sati* during the early twentieth century, Spivak further argues that woman writes her body since there was no other way of speaking.

An attempt is made to impose same kind of silence on Jagan in the above discussed novel. Here, colonialism is replaced by neo/post colonialism and patriarchy stands on the same old pedestal. But, how do we read Jagan's character? Her act in the culminating part of the novel where she unchains herself from the slavery of sacred prostitution should be read as a 'speech of resistance'. Unfortunately, this speech of resistance is delivered in the vernacular and as a result is not considered as a speech at all. This again pushes us from where we started –the context and the meaning in the vernacular. Are we heading towards the new reading(s) which contextualizes the aesthetics of vernacular literature of resistance? This could perhaps be a small step in that direction.

#### Notes

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1. A Devadasi is a familiar dancing girl of India across all geographical locations. If we dissect her name, literally it suggests two worlds that she inhabits- one of god meaning *deva* and of slaves meaning *dasi*. She was discovered to serve god but slowly and gradually, through hegemonic process, transformed to serve men who assumed godly status (which mainly included priest and high caste men). This transformation forced her into the wretched life of 'sacred prostitution.' There is a variety of synonyms used for the word Devadasi across different cultures. For instance, the Marathi novel discussed above uses the word *Jogtin* in place of Devadasi. For a detailed analysis of this transformations and nomenclature, see Salunke 22-45.
  2. A Marathi word which according to Anagha Tambe refers to a relatively stable, ritually sanctioned patron of a Devadasi who is expected to provide her subsistence and give his name to the children born out of this union. As a material for this essay we have selected the novel which uses this same word as its title. Uttam Bandu Tupe's *Zulwa*, 1986 (2005), Mumbai, Majestic Prakashan. The subsequent references to this edition are translated by the authors from Marathi into English.

3. For an elaborate discussion of Devadasi characters in different literary genres, see Salunke 17-20 and Tambe 86.
4. A local name of the deity whom the Devadasis adore.
5. Literal for Turmeric, believed to have spiritual and godly powers. Usually applied on forehead by the devotees.
6. For a sampling and citation of this discussion, see Salunke 29-34.
7. Jayant Dalvi, *Mahananda*, 1970 (2011), Thane, Majestic Publishing House. Any reference to this edition is translated from Marathi into English by Nilekha Salunke. For a critical analysis of this novel, see Salunke 48-60.
8. Sexually connotative, wife of the entire village or property of the village.
9. Derogatory and abusive, literally meaning promiscuous.
10. For a detailed discussion on these definitions, see Hollander and Einwohmer 533-554.

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