

Parvati Sadashiv Kamle

45 year-old Parvati has spent the last 24 years of her life in the slum of Uttam Nagar, notorious for consisting almost entirely of sex-workers. After not being able to find any other work, Parvati's mother and aunt had decided to settle here and work as prostitutes. She is a Devdasi, which is a designation given to young girls who are believed to have been married to God. This custom is prevalent in some rural parts of southwestern India. As a result, Parvati never married (in the traditional sense of the term) and she also does not have any children. She herself never worked as a prostitute, subsisting instead on the money made from leasing out different rooms in her house to prostitutes, at Rs.20 per day. In front of the main structure, there is a long mud hut that is leaning dangerously on its side. This has been divided into several 'rooms.' As the picture shows, the stability of the toilet block is in sharp contrast to the hut.

During her late teens, Parvati worked in the police force for a few years. Now, she spends her time volunteering for Vaishya Anyay Mukti Parishad (VAMP- Federation for Freedom from Injustice for Prostitutes), distributing condoms and providing information on how to prevent STDs. VAMP is a Community Based Organization (CBO) that fights for prostitute's rights and provides a range of support services such as healthcare and education for the children. Parvati also does advocacy work for the prostitutes, working on conflict management, particularly with violent customers.

Parvati explains that she had been intending to get a toilet for years, but was unable to put together enough money. She used to defecate in a field ½ a kilometer away, and she explains that during monsoons the ground gets extremely muddy and there are a lot of bugs in the area. The new toilet block is a welcome change and Parvati asserts that she will not charge more rent because of the availability of this amenity for her tenants. As far as maintenance is concerned, she has decided that each of the 14 women will be responsible for cleaning the toilet each day, on a rotating basis.



Parvati Sadashiv Kamle



Parvati's Toilet (next to the hut where she leases out rooms)