

Laxmiai – A Mothergoddess of the Deccan*

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According to the *Census of India* of 1961, Shevgaon Taluka in Ahmednagar District, in the Indian State of Maharashtra, has a population of 104 207. Of these 12,58% belong to the Scheduled Castes. Among them the Mahars and the Mangs are the most numerous. Both Mangs and Mahars belong to the so-called former "Untouchables" of India. Untouchability has been legally abolished by a provision passed by the Constituent Assembly of independent India on Nov. 29, 1948 (ZELLIOT 1972: 69).

Certainly, changes have taken place since then in the attitude of the caste-Hindus towards the former Untouchables during the last few decades, but still the gap between the different communities is wide. Thus in Shevgaon and its surroundings the living quarters of the Ex-Untouchables are still set well apart from the village proper; usually they have separate wells to fetch their drinking water, and separate temples to worship their gods.

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