

## A study of theoretical review of socio economic status and mental health of devadasis and their children

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### ABSTRACT

The theoretical paper was aimed at assessing the level of mental health of Devadasis and socioeconomic status of Devadasis and their children because in some environment Devadasis and their children might face psychological issues such as anxiety, PTSD, depression, and mental health problems. Method: This paper is Qualitative in nature and adopts document method for data collection. The existing literature, NGO reports and governmental annual report on Devadasis have used as sources for present research.

**Keywords:** *Devadasis, Socioeconomic Status, Mental Health*

The term devadasi derives from the Sanskrit language, 'deva' means God, 'dasi' means servant (Goswami 2000). It has been understood by many studies findings that the Devadasis are in low socio economic status and it might impact on their mental health as well. According to Orchard (2007) stated that the majority of the devadasis in Karnataka state (India) live in their native town places or villages, where they are degraded by low socio-economic, untouchables framework coupled with the profession they are in and typically the devadasis usually live separately within larger village communities. (O'Neil, 2004) found that many Devadasis are not allowed to involve in their ritual ceremonies. Attitude of the people and the community have forced them to not to engage in alternate profession.

### *Historical background of Devadasis*

The Devdasis system is an old one, and apparently pre-Aryan. There is no mention of it in Vedic Sanskrit literature, but Tamil Sangam literature, which dates back to 200-300 BC, describes a class of dancing women called parattaiyar. They were courtesans who performed some ritual function, lived in a separate part of the city, and eventually came to be associated with temples. Later, in the post Vedic and post Buddhist age, the system seems to have spread through India, though it remained strongest in the south. Young girls were usually dedicated to the goddess, or occasionally to gods, very often after the appearance of matted hair called jath which is taken to be a sign of the call of the goddess. The dedicated girl was forbidden to marry (Omvedt, 1983).

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### ***Relevance of the study***

The present study was aimed at assessing the level of mental health status and socio-economic status of the Devadasis and their children. Children of Devadasis may not get facilities as compared to upper-class children and also these children might have been discriminated from basic facilities like getting proper education, right place to live (Shelter) and so on, it may impact on their mental health and being Devadasis children they might lose their respect in society and the value as well. Therefore, their present research has chosen the Devadasis and their children socio economic status and mental health status.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Sharma's (2007) have found that social world of Prostitutes and Devadasis discusses the Social structure and its politics in early modern India. The research discusses two groups of professional women who had a distinct place in the sexual economy of the period. However, on the contrary contemporary status of women being dedicated to god is enjoying meager status in the society Torri's (2009).

**SES:** Who are facing marginalization is likely to have tenuous involvement in the economy. Poverty, dependency, and feelings of shame are everyday aspects of economic dislocation and social isolation (Burton & Kagan, 2003). Mowli (1992) studied on Jogin Girl Child Labour and found that the majority of Devadasis come from poor landless families. Many Dalit (SC) women are dedicated to the Goddess at a very young age by poverty-stricken parents unable to pay their future dowries and hopeful that a pleased Goddess will make the next pregnancy a boy.

### ***Welfare of Devadasis***

The Devadasi welfare could be visualized as acting on three means, such as:

1. Devadasi Rehabilitation: Making present Devadasi leave the tradition and facilitate their resettlement or rehabilitate in social mainstream through economically gainful activities.
2. Devadasi Prevention: Preventing new boys and girls from entering the tradition; and
3. Devadasi Traditions: Totally eliminating the Devadasi tradition from the socio-religious culture.

### ***Devadasi Practice***

Most of the Devadasis belong to the Mahar and Matang castes who give no importance to education. People belonging to these communities are so very poor that the immediate families of the girl such as parents or husband do not balk at dedicating the girl to the system so that she can become a regular source of income for them as long as she is young and useful. When she becomes old and useless, she is discarded by these very people and left with the choice of begging for a living. If she is diseased by then – which she very often is – she dies alone and in penury. In Karnataka, Devadasis are found in couple of districts per say Raichur, Bijapur, Belgam, Dharwad, Bellary and Gulbarga and some of the Andhra Pradesh districts as well.

### ***Rehabilitation***

The Devadasi system violates several clauses of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including Clause-4 which states that 'no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.' The United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave trade, and Institutions and

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Practices Similar to Slavery, 1956, which India is a signatory to prohibit any practice where a child is handed over for exploitative purposes.

### ***Social status of Devadasis***

Devadasis life was not much easy. For becoming a devadasis a girl has to undergo some certain rituals samskaras (rites of passage). These are the ritual marriage, branding ceremony, initiation into the performing arts, debut (arangerru), duties, and funeral honors. These rituals transform an „ordinary“ girl into an „ever-auspicious female. Further, few more traditional rituals are ritual marriage, Branding ceremony, Dwelling place, Hairdressing, and ornaments. According to Nikolova (2009). Found that young girls and women forced into traditional ritual prostitution, recognizes that blind belief in the tradition increases ritual prostitution and majority of girls and women desire to leave prostitution, these children by forcibly putting them into Devadasis system and it negatively impact on their personality

### ***Mental health status of Devadasis***

Devadasis experience a higher level of depression, mental health issues and anxiety in overall general population (2005). Few researchers have found that increased of anxiety and mental health issues might lead to an effect on their physical health and social aspects as well like high job demands and low decision making in their life (1995). Generally, Devadasis's experiences poorer mental health status in comparison to general population women's (). Studies dealing with the mental health of Devadasis are rare (2001). The few studies either concentrate on certain disorders like post-traumatic stress disorders (1998), or drug use (2003), do not use diagnostic criteria (17, 18), deal exclusively with selected work settings like outdoors sex work (2006) , or are predominantly concerned with violence by customers towards female sex workers (2001).

## **CONCLUSION**

It has been observed that Devadasis and their children experiencing serious mental health issues and also environmental barriers. Children of Devadasis might face adjustment problems with their peers in the school setting and at society as well. Devadasis are not proved a proper education for their children, in fact, Devadasis indirectly pushing them into same work region where they are actively working as Devadasis.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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