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DEVADASI SYSTEM AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

The Devadasi system has existed in India for centuries. It is the practice of ceremonially offering an unmarried girl as a wife to god. Over a period of time this has become nothing more than commercial sex work in the name of god. Children born to such mothers bear the stigma of being 'Devadasi's Children' and lack a father figure. These children are often looked after by their grandparents or care takers because most of them can't stay with their mother. These children miss out on parental care and guidance during crucial periods of their development. There is a need to understand these children's feelings, their opinions about this practice and its impact on them. A purposive sample of three boys and four girls was selected for the study. Unstructured interview was used for data collection. Most of them report that the children got to know that their mother was a Devadasi around the age of 10 years and they felt very sorry about it. They do not blame the mother as they perceive her to be a victim of the system. Themes that emerged in the discussion are these; the children do not want to be labeled as 'Devadasi's children, they want this system to be eradicated and they get perturbed if people ask them about their biological family. Neither the boys nor the girls want their family members to become Devadasi and they feel that it is an oppressive practice. It is certain that there is anger and disapproval towards the society that is responsible for their current down-trodden status.

KEYWORDS: Devadasi system, jagmetal mask, Rajadasi, Alankara Dasi, Rudra dasi