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Exploring the impacts of cultural superstitions on child welfare: From the lens of Iphigenia's Myth to the Sri Lankan context

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Background: Iphigenia can be regarded as one of the pivotal female figures during the fifth century BCE, who was the daughter of King Agamemnon and queen Clytemnestra of Mycenae, Greece. She was sacrificed by her father as a tribute for the goddess Artemis to ensure favorable winds for the Greek fleet. Thus, this paper examines how these negative superstitions emphasize the significance of protecting children from such beliefs in the modern context.

Method: This study is based on a qualitative approach by following mythological narratives from both Greece and Sri Lanka to reflect the negative impacts of superstitious beliefs.

Results: In the Sri Lankan context, superstitious beliefs have existed since the dawn of civilization. Sri Lankan tribes have their own superstitious beliefs according to their socio-cultural background. In parallel, the tale of Vihara Mahadevi can be taken as a prominent example for this scenario. Vihara Mahadevi was a Sri Lankan princess who was the daughter of King Kelanitissa. She was sacrificed to the sea to stop the raging waves of the ocean when it flooded the inland because of a curse due to a sin committed by her father, which was accidentally murdering a Buddhist monk. It unveils the recurring nature of these incidents even in the modern context. It emphasizes the need for broadening the educational system and public awareness programs while challenging detrimental cultural superstitious beliefs by stimulating rational thinking as well as rational decision making.

Conclusion: Hence, this study shows how superstitious beliefs endanger children while broadening the perspectives on child welfare and the necessity to empower child protection.

Keywords: Iphigenia, vihara mahadevi, superstitious beliefs, child vulnerability, child welfare.