

Knowledge level of devdasi farm women about Government welfare programme in Western Maharashtra, India

PALLAVI D. SURYAWANSHI, P.G. KHALACHE* AND MILIND C. AHIRE
Department Extension Education, Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, RAHURI (M.S.) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The custom of dedicating girls to the God and their lifelong attachment to the temples is neither a relatively recent practice, nor it is confined to India alone. There were Devdasis also in Venus temple in Rome and Amman temples in Egypt. It was very common in ancient times amongst Lybia, Syria, Armenia, Chaldea and Egypt. In an attempt to eradicate the custom of Devdasis, the Government of the erstwhile State of Bombay passed an act known as The Bombay Devdasi Protection Act 1934. This Act for the first time defined legally the term Devdasi. Accordingly, the Devdasi means any girl or woman who is dedicated to any Hindu deity, idol, and object of worship, temple or other religious institutions. It is observed from the study that a majority of the Devdasi farm women were from middle age group illiterate, remain unmarried but bear children (47.50 per cent) and had family size up to two members, medium farming experience, medium cosmopolitaness, low social participation, having low sources of information, medium value orientation, small land holding, having goat as livestock possession, agricultural labourer as major occupation in addition to their own farming and medium annual income. All the respondents had knowledge about Marriage Grant scheme to the Devdasi and their Daughters and Devdasi provident Grant programme. While they did not have knowledge about Marriage grant programme to the Daughters of Destitute Divorced widows, Nutritive Diet Scheme and Stipend to the Girls for Professional Training. It was further observed that except one scheme (Devdasi Provident Grants) no Devdasi farm women were found to be availing benefits of Devdasi welfare Programmes widely.

Key words : Devdasi, Women, Government and Welfare.

INTRODUCTION

The custom of dedicating girl to the God and their lifelong attachment to the temples is neither a relatively recent practice, nor it is confined to India and Maharashtra state alone. Many social workers and Non-Governmental Organizations have taken efforts to abolish the Devdasi system and to rehabilitate Devdasi before and after independence of our country. The Government of Maharashtra is making good efforts to bring Devdasi in the main stream. These efforts shows that many Devdasi, though belong to a Devdasi family are giving up devdasi life. But is it also an important factor that now what they are aspiring for. An investigation entitled "A study of Devdasi Farm Women in Western Maharashtra" was carried out during the year 2006 with following objectives:

I. To study the extent of knowledge and benefits accrued by the Devdasi farm women from the Government welfare programmes implemented in their locality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Kolhapur and Sangli districts of Western Maharashtra Gadhinglaj and Bhudargad talukas of Kolhapur district and Jat and

Kawthe Mahankal talukas of Sangli district being the predominant in Oevdasi farm women population were purposively selected from the selected talukas, 50 Devdasi farm women were selected to make the sample size of 200. The data were collected through structured personal interview schedule. The collected information was tabulated into primary and secondary tables. The findings are presented herewith as under the following heads.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge about welfare programmes :

Knowledge about welfare programme is the prerequisite to get the benefit of that programme. So knowledge about different welfare programmes was studied. Still our society is not ready to accept these Devdasis after reformation. They are still suffering from the social view of the society.

In view of the paramount importance of knowledge and attitude to be possessed by the Devdasi women in general and Devdasi farm women in particular their knowledge was ascertained and presented under the following sub-heads.

Knowledge about the Devdasi welfare and Rural

* Author for correspondence.

development programmes :

The knowledge about the Devdasi welfare programme was not enough but knowledge about various rural development programmes is also necessary. Therefore, to check whether Devdasi farm women are aware about the Devdasi welfare and Rural development programmes. For this purpose, in all ten programmes were selected for study purpose. The prerequisite information on these programmes was collected and analyzed. The results are presented in the Table - 1.

knowledge about Seed Money Scheme for the self-employment of Devdasis and Employment Guarantee Scheme respectively. None of the respondents (100.00 per cent) had knowledge about Marriage Grants to the Daughters of Destitute Divorced Widows,

Nutritive Diet Scheme and Stipend to the girls for professional training :

In case of benefits, it is observed that near about half (47.50 per cent) of the respondents received the

Table 1 : Distribution of the respondents by their knowledge about and benefits received from the Devdasi welfare and Rural development programmes.

N=200

S. No.	Rural development Programmes	Extent of knowledge		Beneficiary	
		No. of respondents	Percentage	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Marriage grants to the Devdasis and their daughters.	200	100.00	8	4.00
2.	Devdasi provident grants.	200	100.00	95	47.50
3.	Professional training for financial resettlement of Devdasis.	71	35.50	--	--
4.	Supply of school uniform (2 sets) and writing material for education of children of Devdasi.	110	55.00	16	8.00
5.	Seed money scheme for Devdasis.	49	24.50	--	--
6.	Marriage grants to the daughters of destitute divorced Widows.	--	--	--	--
7.	Nutritive diet scheme.	--	--	--	--
8.	Integrated Child welfare Scheme.	56	28.00	--	--
9.	Stipend to the girls for professional training.	--	--	--	--
10.	Employment Guarantee Scheme.	43	21.50	--	--

It is seen from the Table 1 that all the respondents (100.00 per cent) had knowledge about Marriage Grants to the Devdasis and their Daughters and Devdasi Provident Grants. More than half (55.00 per cent) of the respondents had knowledge about Supply of School Uniforms (2 sets) and Writing material for Education of Children of Devdasis. Further, it was observed that 35.50 per cent had knowledge about Professional Training for Financial Resettlement of Devdasi farm women followed by 28.00 per cent respondents who had knowledge about Integrated Child Development Scheme. Moreover, only 24.50 and 21.50 per cent of the respondents had

benefits of Devdasi Provident Grants. In addition to this, 8.00 per cent of the respondents received the benefits of the scheme, Supply of School Uniforms (2 sets) and Writing material for Education of Children of Devdasis. While only 4.00 per cent had the benefits of the programme Marriage Grants to the Devdasi and their Daughters. No one of the respondents received the benefits of the rest of the programmes

Knowledge level of Devdasi farm women about Devdasi welfare programmes :

It was expected that the Devdasi farm women

should at least know the programmes which were especially made for the benefits of Devdasis. So three welfare programmes were selected in detail for the study. The findings are given under the following heads.

Knowledge level of Devdasi farm women about terms and conditions to get benefits of Devdasi welfare programmes :

To receive benefits of any welfare programme, it is expected to have the knowledge about the terms and conditions of that programme. Keeping this in view, data were collected, analysed and findings are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2 : Distribution of the respondents by their knowledge about terms and conditions to get benefits of Devdasi welfare programmes. N=200

S. No.	Knowledge level	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	No Knowledge	43	21.50
2.	Partial Knowledge	66	33.00
3.	Full Knowledge	91	45.50
Total		200	100.00

A majority of the respondents (45.50 per cent) had full knowledge about the terms and conditions to get the benefits of Devdasi welfare programmes. While only 33.00 per cent had partial knowledge followed by 21.50 per cent respondents who had no knowledge about the Devdasi welfare programmes.

Knowledge of Devdasi farm women about the Marriage Grants schemes to the : Devdasis and their daughters :

This programme has been selected to check the knowledge in detail because this programme helps to impart social status and lead them to live a married life. So the data were collected, analyzed and results are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3 shows that all the respondents (100.00 per cent) had full knowledge about the maximum grants provided under this scheme. About the budgeted amount for marriage ceremony expenditure (out of the total grants), though 54.00 per cent of the respondents had full knowledge while 46.00 per cent had no knowledge. Regarding the item, amount that will be deposited in joint account of the couple after marriage in Nationalized Bank to start a family life, a majority (56.50 per cent) of the respondents had full knowledge, while 43.50 per cent respondents did not have knowledge about this. More than four-fifth (83.50 per cent) of the respondents had full knowledge about the minimum marriage age for bride

while only 16.50 per cent had no knowledge about the same. Near about same condition was observed in case of the minimum marriage age for bridegroom, 88.00 per cent respondents had full knowledge. A little more than two-third (66.50 per cent) of the respondents had full knowledge that it should be the first marriage of the bridegroom and the bride.

More than half (54.50 per cent) of the respondents had full knowledge that the marriage should be registered in the Marriage Registration Office but 45.50 per cent had no knowledge about the same. In case of the item that the beneficiary should not have any other source of economic help, only 42.00 per cent respondents had full

knowledge and a majority (58.00 per cent) of the respondents did not have any knowledge. Only 24.00 per cent of the respondents had full knowledge about the authority to be approached to get the grants while more than three-fourth (76.00 per cent) of the respondents had no knowledge. About the time limit for application to be made before marriage, near about equal percentage of the respondents had full (51.50 per cent) and no (48.50 per cent) knowledge. In case of the time limit for application to be made after marriage, 45.50 per cent of the respondents had full knowledge.

Only 33.50 per cent of the respondents had full knowledge that if the application made before marriage, the time to get marriage grants is at marriage ceremonies while a little near about more than two-third (66.50 per cent) of the respondents had no knowledge.

In case of certificates need to be attached with the application near about half (48.00 per cent) of the respondents had full knowledge followed by 34.00 per cent who had partial knowledge and only 18.00 per cent had no knowledge regarding the same.

In the pre-tested schedule it was observed that the Devdasi Provident Grant scheme was largely known and implemented. So this programme is checked to know whether all Devdasi farm women know about the details. So the data after collection were analyzed and results are presented in the Table 4.

It is seen from the Table 4 that all the respondents

Table 3 : Distribution of the respondents by their knowledge about the Marriage Grants scheme to the Devdasis and their Daughters.

N=200

S.No.	Particulars of the scheme	Knowledge level		
		Full	Partial	No
1.	Maximum grants provided under this scheme.	200 (100.00)	--	--
2.	Out of total grants, the budgeted amount for marriage ceremony expenditure.	108 (54.00)	--	92 (46.00)
3.	After marriage, amount that will be deposited in joint account of the couple in Nationalised Bank to start family life.	113 (56.50)	--	87 (43.50)
4.	The minimum marriage age for bride.	167 (83.50)	--	33 (16.50)
5.	The minimum marriage age for bridegroom.	176 (88.00)	--	24 (12.00)
6.	It should be the first marriage of the groom and bride.	133 (66.50)	--	67 (33.50)
7.	The marriage should be registered in the Marriage Registration Office.	109 (54.50)	--	91 (45.50)
8.	The beneficiary should not have any other source of economic help.	84 (42.00)	--	116 (58.00)
9.	Authority to be approached to get the grants.	48 (24.00)	--	152 (76.00)
10.	The time limit for application to be made before marriage.	103 (51.50)	--	97 (48.50)
11.	The time limit for application to be made after marriage.	91 (45.50)	--	109 (54.50)
12.	If applied before marriage, the time to get marriage grants.	67 (33.50)	--	133 (66.50)
13.	The certificates need to be attached with the application.	96 (48.00)	68 (34.00)	36 (18.00)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.)

(100.00 per cent) had full knowledge about Provision of amount under Devdasi Provident Grants and the minimum age limit for the beneficiaries. Near about two-third (63.50 per cent) of the respondents had full knowledge about the required certificates to get benefits while 16.50 per cent and 20.00 per cent respondents had partial and no knowledge respectively. In case of authority to be approached to get the benefits, 38.50 per cent respondents had full knowledge while near about two-third (61.50 per cent) of the respondents had no knowledge about the same.

Knowledge of Devdasi farm women about Seed Money Scheme :

This programme is most important because it gives the economic settlement or financial rehabilitation of Devdasi farm women. With this view, the information on this aspect was collected and analyzed. It was found that

though 24.50 per cent respondents knew about Seed Money Scheme, many of them did not know anything except name of the programme, the terms and conditions, the loan amount (Rs.35, 000) and for what business it is sanctioned.

Knowledge level of the Devdasi farm women about Devdasi welfare programmes :

The total score of the above three schemes obtained by each Devdasi farm women was collected and analysed to check an overall knowledge level. The data after the collection and analysis, presented in the Table 5.

It is observed from Table 5 that near about two-third (62.50 per cent) of the respondents had medium knowledge level followed by 24.00 per cent and 13.50 per cent respondents who had low and high knowledge level respectively. The mean knowledge score of the respondents was found to be 30.78 with SD 9.26.

Table 4 : Distribution of the respondents by their knowledge about the Devdasi Provident Grant scheme.

N=200

S. No.	Particulars of the scheme	Knowledge level			
		Full	Partial	Overall	No
1.	Provision under Provident Grants.	200 (100.00)	--	200 (100.00)	--
2.	The minimum age limit for the beneficiaries under this scheme.	200 (100.00)	--	200 (100.00)	--
3.	Required certificates to get the benefits.	127 (63.50)	33 (16.50)	160 (80.00)	40 (20.00)
4.	Authority to be approached to get the benefits.	77 (38.50)	--	77 (38.50)	123 (61.50)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.)

Table 5 : Distribution of the respondents by their knowledge level about Devdasi welfare programmes.

S. No.	Knowledge level	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Low (up to 21 scores)	58	24.00
2.	Medium (21 to 40 scores)	125	62.50
3.	High (41 and above scores)	27	13.50
Total:		200	100.00

Mean = 30.78 SD = 9.26

CONCLUSION

Further, it is evident from the findings of the study that very poor knowledge about Devdasi welfare schemes was possessed by the Devdasi farm women that of rural welfare schemes in general. However, the Devdasi Provident Grant Scheme was exception to it. In case of which it was observed that a majority of the farm women know about various components of the schemes. It is really matter of concern that the Devdasi farm women did not know even names of many schemes or beyond name of the scheme.

Implications :

To benefit the rural and Devdasi farm women under these programmes, the government, non-government and voluntary organizations and District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) in particular may play an important role to bring them in main stream. In the same way, knowledge of Devdasi farm women about Devdasi

women welfare programmes should be increased.

While introducing a new Devdasi welfare programmes to village initially, the Devdasi farm women with high social participation, high education, having high use of mass media may be selected as beneficiaries and as key leader for the other Devdasi farm women to motivate them to participate in rural and Devdasi welfare programmes.

REFERENCES

- Ghatage, B.S. (1986).** A study of welfare schemes applied to Devdasis in Kolhapur district, M. Phil. Dissertation (Unpub.) submitted to Shivaji University, Kolhapur.
- Kamble, N.D. (1998).** Devdasis in Belgaum District: A Sociological study. Ph.D. thesis (Unpublished) submitted to Shivaji University, Kolhapur.

Received : August, 2006; Accepted : March, 2007