

## 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.