

Evaluation of the Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme
Department of Karnataka State Women Development Corporation

Summary and recommendations

I Introduction

As a consequence of the Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982 and in order to root out the evil practice of dedication of girls as Devadasis, the Government of Karnataka had undertaken several welfare programmes for the ex Devadasis and also to create awareness among people in the State. The important among them were organizing camps, street plays, exhibitions, wall writings, signboards, pamphlets and handbills. In addition to Government departments, several NGO's were also working for eradication of the evil practice of Devadasi system. One such organization was MASS, which was promoted by the Ex-Devadasi women in Belgaum district facilitated by the Government of Karnataka and the MYRADA.

Awareness among the Ex-Devadasis regarding the welfare programmes is a pre-requisite for availing benefits from such schemes. The concerned information was made available to them through the project officers and the staff of the Devadasi Rehabilitation Project (DRP) at the District level and also through the officials of the KSWDC. Further, the information was also made available through volunteers trained among the Ex-Devadasis at the village or panchayat level. The village panchayat and the neighbours were also contributed to the information dissemination.

Irrespective of the District, the Ex-Devadasis were aware of not only the welfare schemes and programmes but also the Act related to the abolition of dedication of girls as Devadasis. Further, they were also aware of the consequences of the violation of such Act. If a person involve in dedicating the children or encouraging

others to dedicate the girls as Devadasis, he or she will have to undergo punishment as enlisted in the Act.

II Findings

Since the duration of the study was very short which limits the scope for revisits to the field for strengthening the contents and thereby the findings and recommendations. However, the above issue was successfully addressed through PRAs, discussions with officials and telephonic clarifications with the village level voluntaries and also with the respondents whenever it was required to fill the gaps and to strengthen the arguments.

1. The evaluation of rehabilitation programme was taken up in 10 districts where the Devadasi practice was in vogue in the past. The districts include Bagalkote, Bijapur, Belgaum, Gadag, Koppal, Haveri, Raichur, Bellary, Gulbarga and Dharwad. A total of 22873 of Devadasis were identified and each individual person was given an identification number. Taking cognizance of The Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982, these identified persons were deemed to have given up the Devadasi practice. Hence they were treated as Ex-Devadasis.
2. In order to root out the evil practice of Devadasi system and to improve the social and economic conditions of Ex-Devadasis, the Government of Karnataka had introduced several programmes through the Karnataka State Women Development Corporation. They include wide publicity against the practice of dedication, introduced several income generating activities, health camps, awareness camps, organising Self Help Groups, monthly pension, etc.

3. Now the Corporation/Government intends to know the impact of the above programmes to be evaluated by an independent organisation. The present exercise is a part of the above mandate. With the above background, the study has proposed the following objectives.
 - i. To assess the social, economic, educational and cultural practices of Ex-Devadasis in Karnataka State
 - ii. To assess the impact of rehabilitation provided by KSWDC for Ex-Devadasis in Karnataka State
 - iii. To make a few policy suggestions
4. The study has covered 119 villages and 500 respondents from the selected 10 districts. Of the total villages covered, 19 villages were from Raichur district, 15 villages were from Koppal district and 14 villages were from Belgaum district. Another 12 villages each were from Bagalkote, Gulbarga and Gadag districts. And the remaining 11 villages were from Haveri district

At the outset, the rehabilitation package has made inroads into the targeted group and brought considerable changes in the lives of Ex-Devadasis.

5. The age-wise classification of data has shown that 77.40 per cent of the respondents belonged to the age group of 45 to 60 years of age.
6. The socio-religious restrictions which put a ban on the Ex-Devadasis to go for marriage. In spite of such a ban or belief, in the sample, only one Ex-Devadasi had married and living happily with her husband and children.
7. 96 per cent of the Ex-Devadasis were illiterate
8. About 60 per cent of the Ex-Devadasis were pursuing labour as their occupation.

9. Nearly 92 per cent of Ex-Devadasis had children. The total child population constituted 1331 persons. Among them 55.45 per cent (738 persons) were male children and 44.55 per cent (593 persons) were female children.
10. Half of the child population (53.90 per cent) among the sample households was married.
11. 43.20 per cent of the total child population was illiterate. Among them, a large proportion was females (49.24 per cent) as against their male counterparts (38.35 per cent).
12. In terms of gender, access to education for the female children is evident though their percentage was less in all other course excepting primary schooling. 0.51 per cent of the female children had the benefit of studying post-graduation course.
13. Half of the children of Ex-Devadasi were pursuing labour as their occupation. The other important occupations though not numerically dominant but significant in terms of their livelihoods include private job (5.71 per cent), government job (2.78 per cent), animal husbandry (2.55 per cent), petty business and vegetable vending (2.33 per cent), and other allied activities.
14. Several programmes were undertaken by the Devadasi Rehabilitation Project in the notified Districts to create awareness among people. The important among them were organizing camps, street plays, exhibitions, wall writings, signboards, pamphlets and handbills.
15. Irrespective of the District, the Ex-Devadasis were aware of not only the welfare schemes and programmes but also the Act related to the abolition of

dedication of girls as Devadasis. Further, they were also aware of the consequences of the violation of such Act. If a person involve in dedicating or encouraging others to dedicate the girls as Devadasis, he or she will have to undergo punishment as enlisted in the Act.

16. Almost all respondents reported that the DRP staff has involved in organizing the awareness camps in each districts and they have participated in such camps actively. As a part of awareness creation and implementation of the welfare programmes, the Project Officers reported that they have involved in their respective jurisdictions in all district except Belgaum in organizing Gram Sabhas and other modes of creating awareness against the social evils of Devadasi system and for implementing the development schemes for the Ex-Devadasis under the Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme.
17. In Belgaum district the above responsibility of organizing awareness camps and publicizing the welfare programmes which were meant for Ex-Devadasis under their rehabilitation programme was taken up by MASS organisation
18. All the respondents were satisfied with the Rehabilitation Package and mentioned with gratitude that it was because of the DRP efforts all the Ex-Devadasis are leading a contented life if not a luxurious one.
19. First, it was the awareness programmes and training in different activities which empowered the Ex-Devadasis to lead a normal life.
20. The income generating activities are important intervention in the lives of Ex-Devadasis, which had changed their lifestyles.

21. The monthly pension has given the Ex-Devadasis a lift such that they need not depend on others for their day to day cash needs. It also enabled them to have definite source of food security.
22. The Housing Programme for Ex-Devadasis had made them to feel proud to have a safe and secured living.
23. With the economical development it was reported that the Ex-Devadasis could send their children to school and colleges.
24. A large majority of respondents have reported that both DRP and MASS enlightened the Ex-Devadasis about the social evils of Devadasis practices and the impact on their health and development
25. With the dedicated efforts of the DRP Staff, the volunteers, the NGO's and other sympathetic persons, today it was reported that irrespective of the district that the Ex-Devadasis were made sensitive to the problems and the sufferings one has to undergo from the day of dedication to the end of lives. In response to the efforts, the Ex-Devadasis have involved themselves to put an end to the age old social evil of Devadasi practice.
26. All respondents, irrespective of the district have reported that the dedication of girls as Devadasi in and around their villages has stopped and also the growing of matted hairs.
27. Those of the Ex-Devadasis who are continuing with the IG activity especially the animal husbandry and petty business were only the activities which provided regular income to the respondents. It was in the districts of Belgaum, Dharwad, Koppal followed by Bijapur and Bagalkote the IG activities were reported better than the rest of the districts.

28. All the respondents were satisfied with the Rehabilitation Package and mentioned with gratitude that it was because of the DRP efforts all the Ex-Devadasis are leading a contented life if not a luxurious one. In the same tone they gave the reasons for above statement. First, it was the awareness programmes and training in different activities which empowered the Ex-Devadasis to lead a normal life (18.06 per cent). Similarly they referred income generating activities as the most important intervention in their lives, which changed their lifestyles (32.20 per cent). Further, the monthly pension has given them a lift such that they need not depend on others for their day to day cash needs. It also enabled to have definite source of food security. The Housing Programme for Ex-Devadasis had made them to feel proud to have a safe and secured living (21.80 per cent).

29. Though everybody was happy with the Rehabilitation package, they still feel that the DRP could bring further changes in their life by providing additional facilities and benefits.

i. About 17 per cent requested for housing site.

ii. Another 26.20 per cent demanded for the enhancement of monthly pension to Rs.1000.

iii. Yet another 17 per cent need additional IG programmes,

iv. A few requested for allotment of agriculture land

v. And many demand reservation of jobs for their children in the government and other such benefits

30. The dedication of girls as Devadasis has given up due to the efforts of the DRP officials and other voluntaries but their faith and devotion in continuing the other rituals and practices seems to be in vogue among the EX-

Devadasis. With the present structure and strength of the DRP staff where one District Officer holding charge of two to three districts, one would find it difficult to mainstream the ex-Devadasis and to provide necessary inputs and proper surveillance to curb the factors favouring the reemergence of the system.

III Policy Recommendations:

1. Income generating activities need to be reintroduced.
2. Surveillance is essential in all districts
3. Introduction of welfare schemes for the children of Ex-Devadasis are essential
4. Health camps to be continued and Health insurance to the whole family be provided by including their families under Yashswini and Vajpayee Arogyashree programmes
5. SHG Benefit to be extended to all Ex-Devadasis
6. Pension Amount to be increased to Ex-Devadasis irrespective of age. However an additional amount equivalent to 25 per cent of the pension to be increased to those Devadasis who have attained 55 years of age and above
7. Resurvey of Devadasis\Ex-Devadasis wherever it was not covered earlier has to be taken up and the benefits also to be extended to all.
8. Provision for Anthyodaya ration cards to all Ex-Devadasis
9. Honorarium to Ex-Devadasi volunteers to be increased
10. Essential to address the issues related to the DRP Staff Welfare for better impact.