3rd Survey of Devadasi System

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Why in News?

Recently, the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) directed the government to complete the Devadasi system survey and submit recommendations by October.

- **Devadasi system** - It involves a ritual in which young girls, usually before puberty, are married off or dedicated to deities.
- **Ban –** It has been ***banned*** in the State since 1982 under Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act.
- **Previous survey –** In 1993-1994 and 2007-2008, when 22,873 and 46,660 Devadasis, respectively, were identified.
- **Age limit -** In the previous two surveys the age limit has been observed as ***45 and above to*** qualify to register, so far circulars have been silent on the age.

Proposed Survey

- **Announced in -** 2024-2025 Budget.
- **Plan to be conducted by -** Offices of taluk-level child development officers.
- **Social Stigma -** It discouraged many individuals from publicly identifying as Devadasis, and authorities often intimidated them with the threat of legal consequences due to the practice being outlawed in 1982.
- Despite the ban, the tradition continued across many big temples during annual fairs in North Karnataka.
- **Need for comprehensive data -** Activists believe a house-to-house survey involving former Devadasis would help identify all Devadasis, including those initiated after the practice was banned.
- **Concerns -** There are allegations that individuals *who are not Devadasis* have been included in previous lists and are receiving rehabilitation benefits.
- **Lack of awareness -** Women in North Karnataka also migrate for livelihood. There was a lack of awareness about the survey.
- **Facilitating rehabilitation and support -** A thorough survey is considered crucial for effective and equitable implementation of rehabilitation programs, including pensions and other forms of support.

Devadasi rehabilitation program in Karnataka

• **Aim -** To provide ***financial and social support*** to women formerly dedicated to the Devadasi system.
• These measures are designed to *empower former Devadasis and their families* by offering financial assistance and promoting social integration.
• **Key Aspects**
• **Pension for Ex-Devadasis -**
• The scheme provides a monthly pension of Rs. 30,000 to ex-Devadasis, directly transferred to their bank accounts.
• **Incentives for Marriage -** The state government offers incentives to the children of Devadasis upon marriage, particularly if they belong to the *Scheduled Caste (SC) community* and apply within 18 months of marriage.
• **Income Generation Support -** The program also supports ex-Devadasis in establishing income-generating activities through various initiatives, including financial assistance and skill development training.
• **Eligibility -** The program is primarily for women who were dedicated to the Devadasi system and is managed by the Social Welfare Department of the Government of Karnataka.
• **Verification and Allotment -** The Social Welfare Department conducts spot verification of the submitted details, and upon successful verification.

Reference

The Hindu| Third Survey of Devadasi System

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