

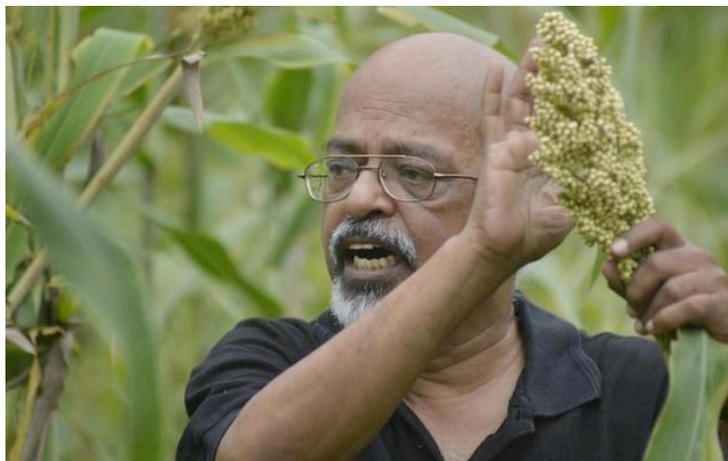
# THE HINDU

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## Banking on millet magic

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P.V. Satheesh, Director, Deccan Development Society Campaign for Conservation and Community, PHOTO: NAGARA GOPAL



### **Deccan Development Society empowers women farmers through seed banking and marketing**

The series on millets would be incomplete if it does not talk about the people who have been playing a pivotal role in not only protecting the grains but also projecting the importance of including them in our daily food.

One such people is P.V. Satheesh, the chief of the Deccan Development Society in Pastapur, a village in Medak District about 130 km from Hyderabad.

When Satheesh was working as a producer in Doordarshan, he got an opportunity to produce a programme on millets. This is where the idea of Deccan Development Society (DDS) was sown. It has been 25 years since then and DDS now works in more than 70 villages with about 5,000 women's self help groups. The women members of the groups, mostly dalits, represent the economically poor strata of the region.

Through DDS, the women not only brought out the importance of farming millets but also drew government's attention to their living condition. Satheesh is presently working to make these women farmers independent. They are now learning to take up seed banking, to use home made manure and other simple technologies to boost growth.

Seed banking for instance makes them self reliant.

Modern day agriculture is designed in this way to make a farmer depend on the market for everything.

DDS wanted to break this hurdle. The women members were taught to develop eco-friendly enterprises. Cows' dung and urine are used as manure. Hundreds of backyard biofertiliser units behind their homes are improving the productivity of soils and generating income.

Millet processing units have been set up to mill and clean the harvested grains. DDS helps marketing them. "Millets are change makers. The adoptability and drought-resistant properties of millets are big advantages. They can save the world from malnutrition and hunger," says Satheesh.

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