

# Kanyashree Prakalpa –Prosperity Towards Right to Education for Women

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## **Abstract**

The Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP), a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) scheme is an innovative project to ensure the education for girl-students so that dropout rates are reduced, also works as prosperity towards right to education for women. It was introduced on 8th March, 2013 by the Department of Women Development and Social Welfare of West Bengal for incentivizing adolescent girls to complete secondary, higher secondary and higher education, or equivalent in technical or vocational streams and also to prevent child marriage till at least the age of 18. The effectiveness of this Prakalpa immediately appears just after the implementation of it across the state. This paper evaluates the impact of this Prakalpa on female enrollment in the college. It is found that KP not only minimizes the tendency of girl students to drop out from schools at early age, at the same time it increases female admission in the college. In this study, a comparative analysis has been drawn between prior 2013 and after 2013 to show the actual increasing enrollment of female students in Ramnagar college in Purba Medinipore district, West Bengal, India. This study is based on secondary data. The findings of this study suggest that this scheme protects & empowers the girls especially from socio-economically disadvantaged families, by giving incentives to them to continue education for a longer period of time, footing their participation and meaningful contribution to the society.

**Key words :** Women, Right to Education, Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP)

## **Introduction**

Quality education for all is a basic right. Women's education not only empowers families, also communities and economies. The education of women helps to remove the social stigma that surrounds it. It is the key to eliminate various social evils such as female infanticide, dowry, child marriage, harassment etc. This is not just to help the women of today but of the future generations as well who can live in a world where gender equality exists. Half of the world's population is of women and educating them helps to attain overall socio-economic development. No nation can flourish if the half of population remains illiterate. A woman is a future mother and if she becomes educated, her children will also be educated. A better educated mother makes the better future mother. Educating woman is the way of educating nation, because women form the foundation of society. But patriarchal socio-political and socio-economic practice has prevented the girl children from enjoying equitable right in education. Every day, girl child face barriers to education caused by poverty, cultural norms and practices, ignorance of parents, tradition, violence, lack of qualified women teachers, lack of educational facilities in rural areas, lack of supporting social attitudes, lack of proper supervision and guidance etc. The

society will not be able to achieve the maximum extent of growth if this continues to persist. These barriers need to be eradicated from society. In such situation, Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) that is Kanyashree Prakalpa (KP) have found widespread use in incentivizing households to compensate for the opportunity cost of enrolling girl child and continuing their education who would otherwise be married at an early age.

### **Kanyashree Prakalapa (KP)**

KP has been introduced on 8th March 2013 by the Government of West Bengal though targets at reducing both the dropout rate and child marriage rate of girl students. It is an intervention scheme of the Govt. of West Bengal in the present socio-economic condition to ensure the education for girl-students, so that enrollment rates in education are increased and their overall uplift is possible.

On 14th August of every year is being observed as Kanyashree day as stated by West Bengal honourable chief minister Mamta Banerjee, and distribution of Kanyashree Bala is also part of this scheme. This scheme has received widespread recognition at both national and international levels, the latest being awarded the first in the Asia-Pacific group for the category “reaching the poorest and most vulnerable through inclusive services and participation” by the United Nations in the Netherlands in July 2017. In June, 2017 Govt. of West Bengal received Award for Kanyashree from United Nations Organisation for the highest public service.

### **The scheme of Kanyashree Project has three components, these are:**

**Kanyashree 1 (K-1):** Annual scholarship of INR 500 to unmarried girls aged 13-18 years enrolled in Grades VIII-XII or equivalent.

**Kanyashree 2 (K-2):** One-time grant of INR 25,000 to unmarried girls aged 18 years pursuing education, vocational / technical training / sports. The present study is related with this district.

**Kanyashree 3 (K-3) :** ‘Kanyashree girls’, whether single or married, for financial assistance for pursuing Post Graduate studies under the Swami Vivekananda Merit cum Means Scholarship Scheme, with a nominal condition of at least 45% marks in Graduation and pursuing Post Graduate courses in the State of West Bengal. For pursuing Arts and Commerce, each K-3 beneficiary will receive Rs.2000 /- p.m. and for pursuing Post Graduate studies in Science, each K-3 beneficiary will get Rs.2500 /- p.m.

**For banking help:** Zero-balance bank accounts should be open in girl’s name, with simplified opening procedures, related to direct transfer of funds.

### **Journey of Women’s Right to Education in India**

In the time of ancient India, Indian women were in most estimable position. They in ancient India were entitled to the very important rite of Upanayana, which had given them the right to study the Vedas just like men. During the Vedic period female education was very much appreciated. The initiation was indispensable for girls to secure a suitable life partner. The Atharvaveda says that a woman can become successful in her own married life when she is properly trained during learning period. They studied the sacred texts, had the full right of entry to different branches of knowledge. Like men, women used to observe Brahmacharya and used to study Vedas, Upanishad. Basically, then they did not have to right to marriage before the end of their education. Specifically, in the era of the Sindhu Civilization women education was called ‘Golden Time’.

But, there was a slight difference between the Vedic and the earlier Vedic period. Since the Yajurveda, the attitude towards women has changed in society and women's right to education had been reduced. Yet at the time, the women took part in religious ceremonies with their partners. Even they were proficient in singing, dancing, fine-arts etc.

In later ages, women were unfortunately barred from Vedic education. During post Vedic times, right to education for women declined. Women were merely treated as the property of men. The social situation for women became more restricted as religion became increasingly institutionalised. The women were treated as dependent status to men and denied freedom and knowledge of the Vedic texts.

After the Vedic age, as religious traditions, Brahamanya education was the most important for education. As a result, liberalization in education was mostly curtailed and girls were pushed into the four walls of home. Women education was partly collapsed by the oppression of religion. Even Manusanghita treats women to be a curse of society. In Manusanghita, the social status of women was manifested as "In the childhood, there will be women under the father, in adolescence under the husband, and in the absence of their husbands, they will be under the sons". Women will never be free.

Later, Buddhist and Jain orders gave an impetus to women education. The era of Buddhism was a rising against the rigid orthodox Hindu culture. During this period, the women were able to attain remarkable success and achieved glory in the sphere of education, culture and spiritual potentialities.

Times of Jainism was also immense inspiration for women, heralding the advent of another golden age and showing magnificently what heights women could reach. Women were given full rights and facilities for the highest quality of education which was spiritually oriented.

During the puranic period, inequality of getting opportunities in religious rites and in education prevailed. During post-puranic period, the educational status of women deteriorated much more. The 8th and 9th centuries were a low period for female education. Hence both girls and their parents concentrated much more on the marriage than education. The practice of sati also affected women education. In the 9th century, education of women was restricted only to royal families. Thus education had become exceptional among women in general in the 8th century.

During the Muslim rule, the percentage of female literacy went down further due to the predominance of the pardah system. Due to the strict observance of the purdah system, women rarely enjoyed opportunity to acquire higher education by attending educational institutions.

Education in British period opens a new chapter in Indian women's educational history. Britishers made a serious attempt on women's right to education during their tenure. The missionaries and the private voluntary bodies, both Christian and Indian became votaries of education. They took increasing attention in the promotion of women's education in the country. They made great efforts to set up new schools and colleges in various parts of the country and bore the financial burden of women's education.

The attainment of Independence marked a watershed in the right to women's education in India. Article 45 of the Constitution made a provision to provide free and compulsory education for all children until the age of fourteen within a period of ten years from the passing of the Constitution. However, the period was extended. As a result of this, India has been experiencing a phenomenal progress of women's education since Independence. For the first time in India in 1991, literacy rates have been measured for the population aged seven and above. Female literacy went up from about 8 per cent in 1951 to 39 per cent in 1991 and subsequently to 65 percent in 2011 (Gupta, 2000).

### Women's Educational Status in West Bengal

Women Literacy rate for West Bengal in 2001 was 59.61% and in 2011 it rose to 71.16% with a positive change in percentage of 11.55% (Niyogi, 2011). In the year of 2001, West Bengal ranked 21 out of all states in terms of literacy rate of women and its position change by an increase of 2 ranks, reflecting a position of 19 out of all states in terms of women literacy rate (Census Report of India, 2001). As per Census data of 2011, the Literacy Ratio of Rural Male and Female populations are 78.44% and 65.51% respectively and for urban male and female populations, it is 88.37% and 80.98% respectively. It is observed that the female literacy rate is quite less than that of male literacy ratio and rural women reflect the lowest literacy rates out of all. Even though the situation has changed in the recent years, but it still not has been validated with any current Census data that the situation has improved.

According to NFHS-3 (2005-06), 53.3% of women of the age group 20-24 had been married before they completed 18 years of age in West Bengal. On the other hand, NFHS-4 (2015-16) shows that this rate has fallen from 53.3% to 40.7% (PIB, 2017).

According to West Bengal government data, in the secondary level, dropout rate among girls fell from 23.06 per cent in 2012-13 to 19.79 per cent in 2015-16. Further, according to Kanyashree baseline survey of June 2015, conducted with a sample size of nine schools across three districts, the enrollment of girls increased from 9,021 in 2013-14 to 9,329 in 2014-15. The increase in enrollment significantly improved in the secondary and higher secondary levels. The number of girls dropping out of school reduced from 161 in 2013-14 to 71 in 2014-15, a reduction of 56 per cent, the survey said. Further, there was a 33 per cent drop in cases of child marriage (Acharya, 2016).

DLHS-4, 2012-13 show cases that 32.1% of girls below 18 years get married in West Bengal (36.3% in rural areas, and 21.3% in urban areas). The states of Purba Medinipur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Nadia, Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Bardhaman and Murshidabad are the districts that reflect highest child marriage incidence. To mention the fact that Purba Medinipur boasts as the district having the highest literacy rate, followed by Kolkata, is even more disheartening, as it reflects that being literate does not stop the incidence of child marriage. Census 2011 show cases the percentage of women married below the age of 18 is almost 40.24% of its 27.45 million ever-married women, as compared to the national average of 30.21% (Biswas and Deb, 2019).

### Objectives of the study

The present study was undertaken to achieve the following objectives-

- To find out the awareness of KP among girls student in relation to rural locality.
- To assess the extent to which this 'Prakalpa' has already been reached.
- To find out the impact of KP on female enrollment in the college.

### Research Methodology

The study is based on purely secondary data collected from Ramnagar College situated at Ramnagar Block – I, Purba Medinipore district, West Bengal, India, during the period 2012 to 2019. The data have been collected from college register on actual enrollment of girl students during the years. Here the impact assessment of KP on rural women educational scenario has been seen. Therefore, the study is both evaluative and comparative.

### The Findings

In support of the idea of gaining information about the female enrollment in Ramnagar college, the direct impact of KP on rural education has been studied. It is also observed that even after passing out from school, the guardians are ready to send their daughters in the college for higher studies through the availing of KP. Here also it appears that the schools and school authorities motivate the higher secondary passed out girls students in enrolling the college for building up of foundation and remain beside their passed out students, even when they continue to flourish in their lives.

### Impact Assessment on Girls' Education

In this article, Ramnagar college at Ramnagar Block – I, Purba Medinipore is the study area. Female enrolment at the first year in the college, just completing Higher Secondary education, in respective years has been studied. A comparative analysis has been drawn between prior 2013 and after 2013 (pre and post KP period) to show the actual increasing admission of female students in Ramnagar college.

**Table – Number of students admitted in the college from 2013 to 2019**

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. Of Male Students</b>	<b>No. Of Female Students</b>
<b>2012</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>535</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>780</b>	<b>591</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>665</b>
<b>2015</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>866</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>908</b>
<b>2017</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>926</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>776</b>	<b>1030</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>638</b>	<b>1035</b>

**Source – College Register**

It has been shown in the above table the increasing enrolment of female students at Ramnagar college just after implementing the KP. The year, 2012 was the previous year of launching the KP. The year, 2013 of launching of the KP, and after onwards, i.e., up to 2019 the data has been given, the admission of female students has been increasing in this college. The admission rate among girls in the college shows a sudden increase after the year of 2013. In the year, 2012 the girls enrolment was 535 and in the year, 2013, it has been increased to 591. Gradually, the rate has been increased, seen in the table, and in the year 2019, the admission rate of female has been increased into 1035. In the present scenario, the girls are achieving a better quantity than the boys for higher studies. It is observed that to obtain the benefit of the grant money, the admission rate shows inclination toward the thought of sending their girl child to college and letting them to continue their higher studies.

Thus, the data shows that the KP has ensured college enrollment and retention of girl child in the education system which are essential for increasing the higher level of academic performance of girl students particularly belongs to BPL level girl students residing in the rural area. The monetary benefit

from the KP made the guardian of students to send their girl child to school, as most of the parents either belong from the farming occupation or labour, or from household occupation. So the KP is not only a huge boost in regards of motivating the students to pursue higher education, but also made their parents to support their idea to receive the benefit of this Prakalpa.

### **Conclusion**

Without educating women a society, a nation cannot progress. KP must be regarded as a necessary help for girl students' education which can act as a catalyst to manifest their potential power within in the form of a very small seed of a banyan tree. In course of time, the manifestation of their potential power will not only empower the women but the nation too. This scheme enhances the attitude towards education and self power, self esteem of women which have a positive influence for the development of society. KP can act as protective apparatus for the girls in making them self assured, creative and building of significant place in society. It provides a safety net for those vulnerable families who are forced, by tradition, social compulsion and poverty, their daughters into illegal and dangerous marriages. It can make a promise to every woman in achieving her goal of completing the education, for it shields her from being early married off as a girl child. So KP is not only a social welfare scheme, it is future for women.

Besides, the benefits there are some lacuna in the trail of this scheme:

1. Many families conceal the incident of child marriage, and college & local administration cannot always reach to them through awareness about it. So, the proper implementation of the right to education for girls through the scheme is affected.
2. Many families utilize the amount of KP for their other family expenses.
3. Many left education after getting one time grant.
4. Many girl student stay in college only for getting benefit without attending schools regularly.
5. Many girl students use the money for other purposes.

### **Recommendations**

To increase the effectiveness of the KP the following steps may be suggested:

- ✓ Many girl students are married without marriage registration and leave the college as soon as they receive K2. To avoid this problem, the one-time grant may be segregated into at least three equal yearly instalments so that girl students can be retained in higher education for a longer time.
- ✓ Well planned campaign is the need for the right to education for girl child through implementation of the KP.
- ✓ Local administration, college administration and parents must be cautious to prevent the misuse of the KP.

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