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A study on Kanyashree Prakalpa in relation to Women Empowerment in West Bengal.

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Abstract: Govt of West Bengal started a Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme under the name Kanyashree Prakalpa in 2013. This scheme was implemented with the objective to empowering adolescent girls specially those from socio-economically disadvantaged families by decreasing child marriage rate, incentivizing them to continue education and by increasing social power & self esteem. “Women empowerment” became a popular word for the Government of different countries and different national and international organisations for making policy for gender equity by uplifting the condition of the women. In this study we will observed the basic concept of women empowerment, the short description about Kanyashee scheme and how it help in women empowerment in West Bengal

Key words: Kanyashree Prakalpa, women empowerment Dropout Rate, Child Marriage Rate, Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme.

Introduction : Swami Vivekananda said that “ A bird cannot fly only on one wing”. Any society or nation can not develop without the development of the women. For the sustainable development of the society gender equity & women empowerment are very essential. Various international and national organisations take this as a serious matter. To meet the Sustainable Development Goals many nation committed to take steps for empowering women. Govt. of West Bengal took a step towards women empowerment by launching Kanyashree Scheme in 2013. It is a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme for socio economically backward adolescents girls between the ages of 13 and 18 who are facing high risk for dropping out of school and for child marriage. This scheme has many positive impact regarding women empowerment by preventing child marriage, by reducing the school drop out rate of girl students, enabling girl to continue school education, developing decision taking power among girls etc.

Methodology/Approach: The present study is purely based on the analysis of secondary data retrieved from the Govt. official website of India & west Bengal, other organizations, research papers etc.

Concept of Women empowerment:

Definition: Women empowerment is process of their personal & social change that occurred, through which they gain power of meaningful choices and control over their lives.

According to Wikipedia, the term EMPOWERMENT originated in community psychology; it refers to “measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities in order to enable them to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority”

According to Kabeer (2012) women empowerment is “the processes through which women gained the capacity for exercising strategic forms of agency in relation to their own lives as well as in relation to the larger structures of constraint that positioned them as subordinate to men”.

The UN defines women’s empowerment as “women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have and determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.”

Principles of women empowerment: The UN Women stated 7 principles of women empowerment. They are :

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.
2. Treat all women and men fairly at work –respect and support human rights and non discrimination.
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women.
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

Dimensions of women empowerment:

According to the NWECE 2010, International Forum for Women's Empowerment, there are several dimensions of Women's Empowerment:

1. Cognitive dimension, or women's awareness and understanding of their conditions;
2. Psychological dimension, or women's self-confidence and self-esteem;
3. Economic dimension, or women's ability to access resources, to engage in productive activities and to take autonomous decisions;
4. Political dimension or women's ability to set their own agenda, to negotiate, lead and organize for changing conditions.
5. Physical dimension, or control over one's own mobility and physical conditions including sexuality and reproductive health/fertility.

Women empowerment's dimension can be summarized as follows aslo:

1. Economic dimension , 2. Social dimension, 3. Political dimension and 4. Psychological dimension.

Rationale behind Kanyashree :

- **Child marriage :**

Like many other states of India, in West Bengal child marriage is major problem towards women empowerment.

Under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA), 18 is the legal age of marriage for girls, and 21 for boys in India. Despite several years of this Act being in existence, the early marriage of children continues to be practiced in West Bengal.

- According to DLHS -3, 2007-08, **West Bengal** ranked fifth highest in the country when it came to the prevalence of child marriage, with almost every second girl a child bride (54.7%). Although more pervasive in rural areas, statistics revealed that even in non-slum areas of Kolkata, more than a quarter of girls are married before they reach adulthood.
- According to DLHS 4; 2012-13, the percentage of girls aged 18 years currently getting married before 18 years was 32.1% (36.3% in rural areas, and 21.3% in urban areas). Bankura, Murshidabad, Purba Midnapore, Bardhaman, Birbhum, Dakshin Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, Nadia and Purulia were identified as the districts with the highest incidence of child marriage in the state.
- According to the Census 2011, 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%.
- Child marriage has many negative impacts upon girls. Most of girl child are reported to be a victim of sexual abuse, family violence. So, there is a negative impact on their health and the health of their children, leaves them financially and socially disempowered, and vulnerable to child labour, trafficking and other forms of exploitation.

- **School dropout:**

- In India girl education is challenge to the Government. Traditional Indian society did not support girls education. Society has changed now, but still in India & in West Bengal also many family do not girls education after secondary education. Besides that due to poverty many family engage girls in working at their early age stopping their school education as They think that girls education has no return for their family as after marriage girls will go others' house & most of them continue the tradition of child marriage. So, Child marriage leads to girls dropping out of school, which limit their scope of future development.
- In West Bengal, attendance of girls in school drops from 85% in the age-group 6-10 years to a mere 33% in the age group 15-17 years. (NFHS III, 2005-06).
- After the implementation Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan towards universalization of elementary education, significant progress has been noticed among girls, both in terms of enrolment and completion rate at the elementary level.
- However, the transition from elementary to secondary school levels remains a concern. The Selected Educational Statistics (2010-11) published by MoHRD, Government of India shows that for the state of West Bengal, the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) for girls gradually decrease from 88% at elementary level(VI-VIII) to 59% at high school (IX-X) and 33.3% at higher secondary (XI-XII) . It means that more girls are leaving schools in the adolescent age group. The drop-out rates between Class I-X was found to be as high as 47.9% by the same report.
- According to the DISE Flash Statistics 2013-14, the at the secondary, dropout rate(%), among adolescent boys (6.3%) at the upper primary level is more than that of the girls (4.2%) and higher secondary levels , dropout rate(%), among adolescent boys is 15% & among the girls 19%. So the dropout rate girls at the higher secondary level is higher than that of the boys.
- Secondary education is not free, and many economically weak parents forced girls student for marriage before the age of 18.

Child and maternal ill-health and mortality

The maternal and child health are of great concern towards the women empowerment. for the development of the maternal and child health, child marriage and poverty create constraints . Many children suffer malnutrition in West Bengal. Child marriages result in early pregnancies, which in turn lead to high maternal and infant deaths, and are also a leading cause for malnutrition among children.

Child marriage and trafficking:

Girl child trafficking from the poor and illiterate family occurred by human exploitation rackets. It is big problem in the path of women empowerment. From data on children it is clear that children who have gone missing because of child marriages arranged by fraudulent means, it is significant to note that the districts which rank the highest amongst all districts for child marriages, namely, Murshidabad and Malda, are also considered the most vulnerable to trafficking.

Objectives of Kanyashree Prakalpa:

The Kanyashree Prakalpa has the following objectives:

1. Discouraging child marriage of girls to continue school education at least attaining the age of 18 which enhance the social power and self-esteem of girls through a targeted behaviour change communication strategy to promote social and psychological empowerment of women.
2. Giving financial help to the poor girl child to continue education in Secondary and Higher Secondary classes and those undergoing vocational training or sports training. The amount of scholarships paid directly to bank accounts in the girls' names, so girls can take the decision of utilization of the money which should as a tool of empowerment for adolescent girls.
3. Improving IMR and MMR by delaying the age of marriage and consequently increasing the median age of first birth
4. To reduce the drop outs rate of girls students specially from poor families.
5. Improve the health condition of the girl child by eradicating under nutrition and mal-nutrition of girl child.
6. Prevent girl child trafficking .

The kanyashree Prakalpa, was implemented by the Govt. of West Bengal, improve the status and well being of girls reading in classes from VIII to XII, specifically those from socio-economically disadvantages families through Conditional Cash Transfers by: Incentivizing them to continue in education for a longer period .

Scheme Design of Kanyashree Prakalpa :

Kanyashree Prakalpa is a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme . The scheme has two cash transfer components:

- The first component is an Annual Scholarship of Rs. 750/- which is to be paid annually to the girls in the age group 13 to 18 years (from Class VIII to XII), provided they are unmarried at the time. This is K1. the amount increased to Rs. 1000.00 from the financial year 2018-19.
- The second is a One-Time Grant of Rs. 25,000/-, which will be paid to the girls when age of 18 , provided that she was engaged in an academic or occupational pursuit and was unmarried. This is K2. Initially the girls from those families whose annual income amounted to Rs.1,20,000/- or less were eligible for this benefit. Further, girls with special needs, girls having lost both parents and girls residing at Juvenile Justice homes were also eligible. But now there is no bar of family income & all girls students are eligible.

Impact of Kanyashree Prakalpa :

There are many positive impact for improving the socio- economic condition of the socio economically backward girl child. The main impact are the following :

1. Impact on child marriage :

According to DLHS -3, 2007-08, the state ranked fifth highest in the country and the percentage of child marriage is 54.7%. According to DLHS 4; 2012-13, the percentage of girls married before 18 years was 32.1% (36.3% in rural areas, and 21.3% in urban areas). According to NFHS-4(2015-2016) the percentage of women OF 20-24 years married before the age 18 years was 40.7%. so after implementation of Kanyashree the rate of child marriage had fallen significantly. This scheme minimizes the tendency of child marriage, as the main criteria for availing the benefit is to remain unmarried until the age of 18 years. The Rapid Assessment [Kanyashree (2015): "Rapid Assessment Kanyashree Prakalpa," made by the government in 9 schools of three districts – Purulia, Malda and North 24 Paraganas during April to June, 2015 reveals that the number girls married before the age of 18 had reduced from 132 to 89. In every Block of West Bengal, by the inspiration of our Chief Minister , Kanyashree Yoddha Team has formed from the local school girls which also help the local administration to prevent child marriage. So this schme has a positive effect in preventing child marriage.

2. Impact on School drop-out of girls :

In West Bengal, attendance of girls in school drops from 85% in the age-group 6-10 years to a mere 33% in the age group 15-17 years. (NFHS III, 2005-06). The Selected Educational Statistics (2010-11) published by MoHRD, Government of India shows that for the state of West Bengal, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls gradually decrease from 88% at elementary level(VI-VIII) to 59% at high school (IX-X) and 33.3% at higher secondary (XI-XII) . so the drop out rate increases in the adolescent age group.

According to the DISE Flash Statistics 2013-14, the dropout rate(%), among girls is 4.2% at at the secondary level, and at the higher secondary levels , dropout rate(%), among the girls is 19%.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class IX to X is :1270635 in 2012-13.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class XI to XII is : 698440 in 2012-13.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class IX to X is : 1346616 in 2013-14.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class is XI to XII: 736378 in 2013-14.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class IX to X is : 1412770 in 2014-15.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class is XI to XII: 785828 in 2014-15.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class IX to X is : 1491350 in 2015-16.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class is XI to XII : 820881 in 2015-16.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class IX to X is : 1420429 in 2016-17.

The total number of enrolment of girls in the class is XI to XII: 829181 in 2016-17.

The Rapid Assessment [Kanyashree (2015): “Rapid Assessment Kanyashree Prakalpa,” made by the government in 9 schools of three districts – Purulia, Malda and North 24 Paraganas during April to June, 2015 reveals that the enrolment of girl students between class-VIII to Class-XII has increased from 9,021 in 2013-14 to 9,329 in 2014-15.

According to the Annual State of Education Report (ASER) 2020, the school dropout rate in 2018-20 in West Bengal declined from 3.3 per cent to 1.5 per cent

So, it is clear from the above data that after implementation of kanyashree scheme the enrolment of girls in school education increases and drop out rate decreases.

3. Impact on Decision taking power of girls :

This scheme has the objective of raising decision taking power of girls. Sen and Dutta (2018) have also found in their survey that the proportion of girls who are not facing the pressure for marriage below 18 years of age has increased by 5.17, 4.04 and 2.67 percentage points in three districts----Howrah, Murshidabad and Koch Bihar respectively. Assurance of getting Rs. 25000/- directly to their own bank account after completion of 18 years to continue education develop decision taking power of girls for continuing education and say “no” to child marriage. Definitely this help in women empowering.

4. Impact on psychological empowerment of girls :

This is a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Scheme and the financial benefit directly enter to the bank account of the girl students from the class VII –XII. This help them to take decision for the utilization of the benefit. Besides this prevention of child marriage the continuation of education develop self esteem and create a place in society for them. These all act as tools for psychological empowerment of girls.

5. Creating a large number of beneficiaries :

This scheme create a large number of beneficiaries. For getting the benefit of the scheme family income should be within Rs. 120000.00 per annum and in west Bengal more than 90% families are belong to the lower income slab mention in the scheme for getting the benefit. Year Wise Statistics of application of Kanyashree prakalpa is cited below in two tables.

Scheme Type	2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17		2017-18	
	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned
Annual Scholarship(K1)	18,89,960	18,44,990	7,69,945	7,59,061	6,11,154	5,95,221	7,39,762	7,09,517	7,05,188	6,87,625
Renewal(K1)	0	0	12,22,942	12,04,921	15,83,074	15,76,218	16,05,615	15,79,703	17,48,332	17,36,146
One Time Grant(K2)	1,44,197	1,38,965	49,138	46,118	34,979	32,379	25,198	23,797	3,319	3,270
Upgradation(K2)	0	0	2,56,737	2,49,266	3,01,874	2,96,969	3,29,533	3,21,028	3,94,772	3,89,392
Total Application	20,34,157	19,83,955	22,98,762	22,59,366	25,31,081	25,00,787	27,00,108	26,34,045	28,51,611	28,16,433

Table 1: Year Wise Statistics of application of Kanyashree from the financial year 2013-14 to 2017-18.(source: https://www.wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_4.0/dashboard.php)

Scheme Type	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		Till Date	
	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned	Uploaded	Sanctioned
Annual Scholarship(K1)	8,08,797	8,05,701	6,82,984	6,48,096	4,60,222	4,47,349	66,68,012	64,97,560
Renewal(K1)	18,42,334	18,41,566	20,08,941	20,07,588	20,14,821	20,13,552	1,20,26,059	1,19,59,694
One Time Grant(K2)	16,740	16,625	9,155	5,544	9,135	575	2,91,861	2,67,273
Upgradation(K2)	4,29,577	4,26,289	4,85,097	4,78,584	4,87,051	4,73,418	26,84,641	26,34,946
Total Application	30,97,448	30,90,181	31,86,177	31,39,812	29,71,229	29,34,894	1,96,55,752	1,93,45,346

Table 2: Year Wise Statistics of application of Kanyashree from the financial year 2018-19 to 2020-21(till date).(source: https://www.wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_4.0/dashboard.php)

From the above tables it is clear to us that in every year number of applications and number of sanctioned applications increase, in fact number of beneficiaries increase this scheme creates a large number of beneficiaries. For the process of Women empowerment a large number beneficiary is a condition. So, we can say that this scheme off course is a tool for empowerment.

Conclusion:

I find through the above study that Kanyashree Prakalpa has a big role in empowering girls in West Bengal since 2013. This scheme covers various dimensions of empowerment. This scheme receive International Award from

Besides, the benefit there are some lacuna in the path of this scheme also:

1. Many families conceal the incident of child marriage, and for schools & local administration it is not always possible aware about it. So, the preventing the child marriage aim of the scheme affected.
2. Many families utilizes the amount of K1 for their other family purposes
3. Many families were not aware of the pre-condition that their daughters must have to remain unmarried
4. Many left education after getting one time grant.
5. Many girl student stay in schools for getting benefit only without attending schools regularly.
6. Many girl student uses the money for other purposes.

After seeing the lacuna of this scheme, I can suggest some for the successful implementation :

1. Arranging awareness camp, seminars, work shops in schools, block, district, and state level to aware the students, parents, teachers, administrators benefits of the scheme.
2. Projecting this scheme not only as the monetary support scheme but also as a step towards women empowerment.
3. Amount of K1 should be raised to meet the regular cost of education.
4. Govt. should take it as a long term project.
5. Govt. has to conduct and encourage more research work on this scheme for proper investigation of impact of this scheme.

Without empowering women a society, a nation can not progress. The Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee had started a step for empowering the girls from socio economically disadvantages group 2013 and it has many long path to walk. In June, 2017 Govt. of West Bengal received Award for Kanyashree from United Nations Organisation for the highest public service. When the girls of the world across the state, across the nation realize the true meaning of women empowerment, the main goal of Kanyashree Prakalpa will filled up and this scheme will be, in Mamata Banerjee's own word "Biswashree".

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