

NAYANTARA MEMORIAL CHARITABLE TRUST

RAKHI HANSDA

Rakhi discontinued her studies after studying till class VIII when she was married off while still in her mid teens. She lost her husband and came back to her parent's house along with her daughter. Her elder sister too had come back with her two daughters after becoming a widow. These two widowed sisters along with their daughters had been living at Jambuni village of CHaupahari jungle in Illamabzar block with their parents. Their father was a primary school teacher in the nearby Khayerdnaga village. Both these villages fell in the project area under NMCT's command.



Their daughters were students in the Supportive Education Centre being run by the Trust and both the widowed sisters would come to "Nayantara" once in while. Seeing the tribal children from their and the neighboring villages study at this centre, generated an interest in Rakhi. Some days back the Head Master of the Daronda High School had visited the centre and offered to admit all the school drop outs identified by the Trust and studying at the centre run by Nayantara.

Seeing Rakhi's interest an initiative was taken and this tribal widowed mother of a 4 year old girl got herself admitted in class IX as a regular student. She did not feel ashamed to sit with children almost 10 years her junior, nor did she care for the taunts levied by the over enthusiast villagers, as she wanted to study.

In due course of time, she passed class IX and soon it was time for the test exams at the school to determine who all would be allowed to appear for the "Madhyamik" (Class X Board Exam) exams. Rakhi passed that too and was declared eligible to take the West Bengal Class X Board exam. Having to do all domestic work, as well as work in the fields as a daily manual labor - as without that there was no other means of income for her - and at the same time take care of her 4 year old daughter, she was left with hardly any time and energy to sit down with her books. Anyway she took the board exams and soon it was time for the results to be declared.

Rakhi along with 4 other students of Nayantara had appeared for the Madhyamik exams. Like the remaining 4, she too was anxiously waiting for the results. Out came the list, Suman, Tapas, Shibnath and Sefali's names were there in the list of passed candidates. But, what about Rakhi? She was crestfallen, her name did not figure in the list. The Board had declared her FAIL.

But did she really fail? How can one who had dared her fate, who after becoming a widow with a daughter; years after leaving studies, joined school as a regular student, sitting with children many many years younger to her, who has thereafter passed the class IX and the test exam to be allowed to appear for the board exams, be declared

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Fail just for not clearing one exam. What about her passing so many tough and critical exams in her life before that?

We at Nayantara do not think she has failed. As far as we are concerned, she is a **winner** irrespective of what the Board says. Rakhi is an inspiration to many school drop outs and unfortunate girls like her in her community and beyond. **We salute her.**