Higher education of women gains significance in the light of the growing emphasis on their participation in the developmental process on the basis of gender parity and social equality. Women's education in general has been considered as a vital area of investment for the overall development of the society. As a follow up to this awakening, greater emphasis is laid on women education particularly higher education by providing them reservation of seats in educational institutions. It is due to this fact that there has been growing enrolment of women into institutions of Higher Education. Besides the regular stream, which has limited opportunities new streams were launched to create greater access to the seekers of higher education.

The enrolment of women into Higher Education has been undergoing changes, in the light of varied streams emerging in the higher education scenario. Apart from the regular stream, streams such as private study, correspondence education, open university have emerged to accord greater access to students to higher education. It is a fact that women find these nonconventional streams as more suitable, affordable compared to the regular stream. They also find it easier to enroll in non-conventional stream considering the socio-cultural
gender bias which places them in a disadvantageous position compared to the male members of the families.

Inspite of the large network of institutions of higher education, it is been found that only 6% of the youth are receiving higher education. The private study stream was earliest of the non-conventional stream to offer access to those who do not find entry into the regular stream. It has been found that the private study has been cost effective compared to other streams. Women's enrolment into higher education has not been examined particularly in the context of the non-conventional streams. Therefore an attempt is made in this study, to examine the women enrolled in private study stream so as to see the utility of this stream to women in attaining higher education.

The study undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To understand the pattern of enrolments of women candidates into the private study stream of Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur;

2. To examine the educational, social, economic profile of women candidates enrolled in private study stream; and
3. To analyse their attitudes and perception towards post-graduate education and employment.

These objectives were formulated to examine women candidates enrolled in the private study stream of Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur during the year 1992-93. The data was collected both from secondary and primary sources. The respondents were drawn by stratified random method considering their disciplines. The data is presented in the form of tables and simple statistical tools like averages and mean were calculated.

The following are the major findings of this present study:

Our study reveals that "Higher Education through Private Study" is gaining increasing popularity and greater acceptance. From the analysis of enrolment trends of private study, it is found that the overall enrolment in all the disciplines has been consistently on the rise during the decade. The women's enrolment trend revealed that it had a humble beginning with an overall enrolment percentage of 19.67 in the year 1984-85, and has made a steady progress. It rose upto 31.19 per cent by the year 1988-89 and it has reached to 45.21 per cent
by the year 1993-94. This indicates the growing enthusiasm for enrolment among women in Private Study stream.

It is found that majority of respondents 79.05 per cent come from B.A background. 85.71 per cent of them with Telugu as the medium of learning.

Our study reveals that more popular courses for the pursuance of post-graduation under Private Study stream are social sciences and languages followed by Commerce and Mathematics. In other words the subjects that are amenable for self-study are preferred more. The popular courses of study by Private Study among women are languages followed by subjects of Social Sciences like Sociology.

It is found that subjects like Commerce and Mathematics registered lower enrolment, as these courses need tuition and are difficult for self-study.

The data revealed that most of the respondents 66.12 per cent enrolled for M.A by Private Study have preferred Telugu medium for Post-Graduate studies since it happens to be their mother tongue and also due to the fact that they had studied their graduation in Telugu medium.
Age-wise analysis of respondents highlights the fact that 74.38 per cent are below 30 years of age which means that these are women who have not had the opportunity of entering to the regular stream and who are the treats of entering the job market with this post-graduate degrees.

Of the total 82 respondents, 43.90 per cent are married and the larger chunk of 56.10 per cent are unmarried, which means that most of the unmarried women are showing much interest to acquire higher education through private study than married women which indicates continuing constraints, discrimination in the pursuance of higher education by women.

The majority of the respondents 54.88 per cent come from forward castes, women from other backward sections are lesser in number which commensurate with that of their backwardness in literacy over generation.

The religious classification of respondents reveals that apart from women from Hindu community, Muslim community and Christians form 15.85 and Muslims 13.42 per cent of the respondents.

The data reveals that 60.97 per cent of respondents come from joint families and 39.03 per cent come from
nuclear families, which points out that the joint family in its structure or in its functional form is still more conducive to women to pursue higher education than nuclear families.

Our study reveals that urbanites avail the facility of private study more than the ruralites. It is found that among the respondents 75.61 per cent come from urban background and whereas 24.3 per cent come from rural areas.

Women are desire independent entity and aim to achieve it through higher education.

The family income of respondents show that 48.78 per cent have the family income ranging from ₹4001 to 6000 per month which means they come from middle class families to qualify themselves for a job thereby to augment the income levels of their families.

The responses indicated that 43.90 per cent gave self effort as the key factor while 31.71 per cent attributed the success to the encouragement given by family members.

As for the utility of Post-Graduate Degree, the responses indicated that 42.70 per cent desired
post-graduation only as a means to have better social status and 30.48 per cent desired post-graduation either for qualifying for a job or to attain promotion, which indicates the changing perception of women who view higher education as a means of attaining social parity with their male counterparts.

The reasons for enrolment in Higher Education is mainly due to its economic, social and psychological utilities viewed exclusively from the personal view point of women. Among the respondents 41.47 per cent feel that they need higher education for better social status; and 17.07 per cent of respondents feel that they are enrolled to qualify for a job.

Majority of the respondents' 41.42 per cent have opted for obtaining higher educational qualifications through private study is to better social status. The reason is that although the education of the females is lagging substantially behind that of males the rate of the employment seekers among educated women is on the increase.

Women's enrolment is still dependent on the economic condition of the family. But for the lower level of expenditure of the Private study stream, not many would take to other streams of education.
Questioned about their alternative in the absence of Private Study, the respondents said they would have idled at home (40.24%), entered some technical course (29.27%) and joined workforce (25.61%).

It is a fact that the students in Private Study stream to a larger extent buy guides only because of the lack of proper guidance and the non-availability of standard reading material.

Among the respondents majority of them (64.63%) feel job would give them a better social status in the family and in the society through their economic independence. The decades that followed after independence and International Women's Year, have given birth to the growing consciousness among educated women for parity of status which were denied earlier.

It was found that 68.04 per cent of respondents are feel confident of getting into some job or the other. This confidence has ushered in the mind of women due to new policies of government to encourage female employment in various sectors through reservation.

The women respondents enrolled for Private Study stream strongly feel that this stream has been of great help to them in the absence of their enrolment
into regular stream. Correspondence education comes next to Private Study in terms of preference (75.61%) followed by open university system (8.54%).

The analysis of responses given by the women students clearly shows that the main difference between the regular and private study stream is perceived to be the type of coaching by teachers and the possibility of better percentage of marks vis-a-vis the Private Study students.

The attitude scores of the respondents suggest that the majority of the respondents (97.56 per cent) have positive attitude towards education, employment and empowerment. By analysing the responses it can be clearly stated that the higher the level of education, the more positive would be women's attitude towards education and employment.

It is evident that the average attitude scores show a slightly growing trend up to the age of 40 years and drops from 41 year onwards. The highest point is said to be between 36 to 40 years of age groups who are found to be having positive attitudes towards the parameters underlined viz., education, employment and empowerment.
The average attitude scores do not vary considerably in view of their castes. The backward caste show a slight variation over the average of the forward caste. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women show the highest average score of 65.33 which is graded as fair attitude in view of the potential job opportunities, that are in store for them.

Irrespective of their marital status the attitude of respondents manifest a positive stand towards education, employment and empowerment. The present generation of educated women have a positive and fair attitude towards higher education and employment.

The average attitudes course of women faculty-wise indicates that the respondents enrolled for Commerce have the highest average of 60.15 points while the arts faculty manifest slightly lower average of 59.70 points. This is so because of the job potential and the marketability of the candidates.

**CONCLUSIONS :**

On the strength of the above findings as way of conclusion of discussion, an attempt is made to respond to the issues raised in the statement of the problem.
The first issue raised was to understand the pattern of enrolments of women into the Private Study stream of Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur. The findings suggest that Private Study is becoming popular method of acquiring higher education in general and in particular among women, urbanites, and members of middle class. The enrolment in general has been consistently on the rise during the decade 1984-94. The women's enrolment in particular reveals the trend that it had an humble beginning with 19.67 per cent and rose upto 45.21 per cent by the end of 1993-1994, thereby indicating a decade of steady progress. Thus the Private Study stream in a great way has paved way for their educational advancement and is making mark as an alternative mode for acquiring/bettering educational qualifications.

The second issue raised was to examine their educational, social, economic profile so as to know as to who are making use of this stream and to know any constraints therein in their attainment of post-graduation. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents come from Arts background with a Telugu as a medium of learning. The more popular courses for enrolment are languages followed by History, Economics and Sociology.
The socio-economic background suggests that majority of them come from forward castes from middle and upper middle class background and are urbanites; and the majority of women candidates are unmarried, and drawn from joint families, Which point out the limitations and constraints for the pursuance of higher education by women ruralites and members of lower classes.

The third issue relates to women's attitudes and perceptions towards higher education and employment. The findings of the study indicates that the respondents have a very positive attitude towards higher education, employment and empowerment. The higher the level of education, the more positive is the attitude towards education and employment.

To conclude it is emphasized that Private Study stream has been a great boon to women to attain post-graduation for the furtherance of their social, economic betterments. In view of its perceived utility over coming the constraints in the enrolment into regular stream.

Inspite of its utility, the reach and coverage through private study is limited on account of lack of quality self study material in regional vernacular,
lack of proper communication and information network and encouragement to the disadvantaged sections in terms of gender, caste and class and area of residence. In view of the utility of higher education and keeping the constraints of cost effectiveness to popularise private study the above limitations need to be tackled.

In this regard the author makes few suggestions:

1. Arrangements must be made for the self-study material in regional vernacular.

2. Encouragement to disadvantaged sections (gender, caste, class, rural areas), through the provision of fee concessions, scholarships as provided in the case of regular students; provision of more examination and information centres and well planned standardized schedule of admissions, examinations and results are necessary.