

# HIGHER EDUCATION AND WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INDIA: FUTURE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES.

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**Abstract:** The present scenario of higher education in India shows that there is wide range of disparities in enrolment rates and availability of institutions of higher education in different states. Although India Government from time to time has made efforts to reduce this gap and to some extent, has made noticeable progress in this regard, particularly with reference to growth in the number of higher educational institutions i.e., universities and colleges over the years, the rural-urban and regional differentials in availability of institutions of higher education along with other infrastructure such as teaching faculty, hostels, housing for teachers, library, laboratories, and computer facilities etc. have widened over the years. We have studied the issue of participation of women in higher education on the basis of the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education. We use the National sample survey data and AIHES (2015 -2016) to find out the enrolment ratio in higher educational institutions. The main objective of this paper is to analyse the participation rate of women in higher education of India and future role of universities in enhancing their participation.

**Index Terms**-Higher education, Gross enrolment ratio (GER)

**I Background:** ‘No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens’.- Michelle Obama. Women’s constitute 48% of the Indian population. Human development undoubtedly covers all – men and women.. many realize the significance and importance of women’s varied role in the society. Women are the builders of a nation right from the early days in their homes and it is at their hands that children receive their first education. They are not only teachers of children, performing all the tasks but they also take part in various socio-economic activities. With regard to the importance of women’s education, Pratibha D. S. Patil, the honorable President of India said in her speech at the 58th Convocation of SNDT Women’s University, Mumbai, 2009, that “Educated women can be an effective voice for articulating women related causes. They can be the voices in the fight against social evils like female feticide, child marriage, dowry and addictions, as well as against the discrimination and biases that exists in the society against women. They can be the advocates for improved working conditions for women, gender equality and welfare of women. Highly educated women can help other women to become self-reliant and self-confident. They can counsel other women as well as share their experiences about carrier choices, employment opportunities, and business enterprises and also in matters like nutrition and childcare. Among various levels of education, higher education has pervasive and influential impact on development of nation. Higher education empowers the individual with necessary skills and competence for achieving personal and social goals, which in-turn contributes to the development of nation (Kale, 2006). Recent study of the world bank also supports this view. It imparts in-depth knowledge and understanding so, as to advance the students to new frontiers of knowledge in different walks of life. It is considered to be the major area in promoting and accelerating the process of national development. In this emerging scenario of knowledge based society of 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education becomes a crucial issues in creating skilled and knowledgeable human resources to meet the forthcoming challenges of the changing world. Higher Education plays an active role in improving women's position and promoting their rights in society. With the spread of higher education among women, exploitation and oppression of women will be considerably reduced it is therefore important to enhance the participation of all in higher education.

**Objective:** To study the participation rate of women in higher education of India.

**II Methodology:** We have studied the issue of participation of women in higher education on the basis of the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education. We used the National sample survey data and AISHE (2015-2016) to capture the enrolment ratio. To suggest the future role of higher educational institutions for higher participation of women, we have taken the help of secondary data like books, magazines, government reports etc.

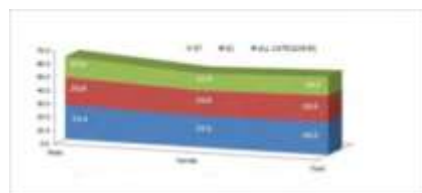
**Growth of higher education in India:** India occupies an important position in respect of Higher Education. With its own historical heritage, Indian higher education system is third after the United States and China. There are a number of revolutionary changes being introduced in Indian higher education system. Now India has a population of about 1.2 billion which is about 16 % of the world population. As per data available, the enrolment to higher education in India has increased from 0.7% in the year 1950 to 24.5% in the year 2016 but it is still extremely low as compared to 54.6% for the developed countries and 36.3% for the developing countries . So the number of higher educational institutions needs to be increased, different courses to be added to provide accesses to the knowledge to our youth of the world’s largest democracy. Expansion of higher education is therefore utterly important and becomes very necessary for the entire development of the country. Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 33,000 colleges and more than 17 million students in a decade from 2000–01 to 2010–11. After independence numbers of both the Higher Educational Institutions and number of students has increased tremendously. At the time of independence, in 1947, there were only 20 universities and 496 colleges in the country but now India has 799 universities, with a break up of 44 central universities, 540 state universities, 122 deemed universities, 90 private universities, 5 institutions established and functioning under the State Act, and 75 Institutes of National Importance which include AIIMS, IITs, IEST and NITs among others. Other institutions include 39,071 colleges as Government Degree Colleges and Private Degree Colleges, including 1800 exclusive women's colleges, functioning under these universities and institutions as reported by the UGC in 2016.. The following table(1) shows the picture

Year	Universities	Colleges	Enrolment(in millions)
1947-48	20	496	0.1
1950-51	28	578	0.2
1960-61	45	1864	0.6
1970-71	93	3370	2.0
1980-81	123	4861	2.8
1990-91	184	5932	4.4
2000-01	266	11412	8.8
2005-06	348	17625	10.5
2006-07	367	18064	11.2
2009-10	467	25951	14.6
2010-11	634	33023	17.0
2015-16	799	39071	34.6

Source: AIHES 2015-2016

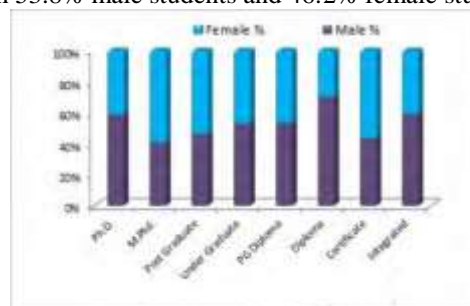
### III Place of women in Higher Education in India:

Since independence there had been a phenomenal growth in the number of women student's enrolment in higher education. On the eve of the independence, the women enrolment was less than 10 per cent of the total enrolment but in the academic year 2015-16 women enrolment increased up to 46.2 per cent. In the third world countries the need for higher education among women is more important as because colonialism has remained a great force here which hinders education for the general masses and for women in particular. Estimated Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 24.5%, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. For Scheduled Castes it is 19.9% and for Scheduled Tribes it is 14.2%. State-wise GER and GPI are shown in Table (2) and Table (3) respectively. GER for male population at all India level is 25.4% whereas for SC Males it is 20.8% and 15.6%, for ST males. Similarly GER for female population at all India level 23.5% whereas for SC females is 19.0% and for ST females, it is 12.9%. The GER for females in all categories is highest in Chandigarh with 70.4%. Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Sikkim, Telangana and Uttarakhand also have GER of more than 30% for their female population Fig 1.



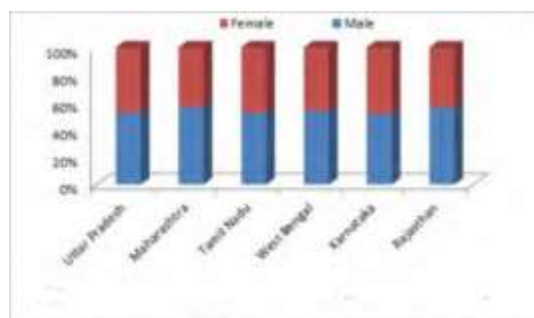
Source: AIHES (2015-2016)

If we analyse the present position of male and female enrollment in higher education then we find the trend is of higher males than females in almost every level, except M.Phil., Post Graduate and Certificate, where in, the female enrolment is slightly higher than male enrolment. Student enrolment at Under Graduate level has 53.3% male and 46.7% female. Diploma has a skewed distribution with 70.4% males and 29.6% females. Ph.D. level has 59% male and 41% female. Integrated levels has 59.6% male and 40.4% female. PG Diploma student enrolment also projects lopsided picture with 53.8% male students and 46.2% female students. Figure 2



This trend of relatively higher male enrolment than female enrolment of students is also seen across the levels in the state-wise distribution. The top 6 States are highlighted in table (4) in terms of highest total student enrolment are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka and Rajasthan. However in terms of total number of Institutions the ranking of these States is slightly different with Uttar Pradesh (7495) at the top followed by Maharashtra (7115), Karnataka (5284), Rajasthan (3705), Tamil Nadu (3439) and Andhra

Pradesh (3375). It is interesting to note that these 6 States with highest student enrolment constitute nearly 54% of the total student enrolment in India. Rest of the 30 States (including UTs) have only 46% of the total student enrolment. So inevitably, the female students in these 6 States is almost 54.4% of the total female students enrolled and male students enrolled in these 6 States contributes to 54.1% of the total male students across India. Uttar Pradesh, with its highest student enrolment in India, has 52.46% male and 47.54% female students. Maharashtra has the second highest student enrolment with approx. 56.37% male and approx. 43.63% females. Thereafter, Tamil Nadu has 52.25% male and 47.75% female West Bengal with 53.68% male and 46.32% female students. In Karnataka, percentage of females enrolled is 48.42% whereas the male enrolment is 51.58%. Rajasthan has more male Students as compared to female students Fig 3



The enrolment of women in higher education has been increasing rapidly since independence and has shown significant progress in the past decade. The enrolment of women students in universities and colleges was around 43000 in 1950- 51 constituting about 10% of the total enrolment . the Kothari Commission on Education (1966) recommended that the proportion of womens enrolment should be raised to 33%. It is significant to note that this proportion has more or less been reached as shown in Table(5)

Year of Enrolment	Total Enrolment	Number of Women	Percentage
1982-83	31,33,093	8,80,156	28.1
1983-84	33,07,649	9,40,253	28.4
1984-85	34,04,096	9,92,139	29.1
1985-86	36,05,029	10,67,484	29.6
1986-87	37,54,409	11,48,849	30.6
1987-88	39,10,828	12,24,089	31.3
1988-89	40,74,676	12,91,672	31.7
1989-90	42,46,878	13,67,495	32.2
1990-91	44,25,247	14,36,887	32.5
1991-92	46,11,107	15,12,270	32.8

Table(5 )Estimated of Women Students in Higher Education

Source: UGC Annual Report 1991-92

Table (6):Participation of women in different programmes.

Female per 100 Male Students in important programmes in Regular mode of education					
Programme	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
B.A.-Bachelor of Arts	103	108	115	118	118
B.B.A.-Bachelor of Business Administration	58	59	63	64	65
B.C.A.-Bachelor of Computer Applications	54	61	75	75	76
B.Com.-Bachelor of Commerce	78	79	83	86	90
B.Ed.-Bachelor of Education	165	169	180	188	197
B.Pharm.-Bachelor of Pharmacy	74	73	82	85	85
B.Sc.(Nursing)-Bachelor of Science in nursing	546	527	523	462	455
B.Sc.-Bachelor of Science	94	92	95	93	93
B.Tech.-Bachelor of Technology & B.E.- Bachelor of Engineering	40	38	39	39	38
L.L.B.-Bachelor of Law or Laws	44	43	46	44	44
M.B.B.S.-Bachelor of Medicine and	88	86	93	95	97
Bachelor of Surgery	88	86	93	95	97
M.Com.-Master of Commerce	109	122	136	145	148
M.A.-Master of Arts	117	124	147	154	165
M.B.A.- Master of Business Administration	50	52	56	58	61
M.Sc.-Master of Science	113	123	138	147	157
M.Tech. -Master of Technology	52	55	61	64	64

However from the data shown in table(7) it is seen that a large percentage of women are in arts courses and the percentage of women in professional courses like Engineering/technology, law, BBA/BCA is very low, being less than 10% except in medicine where the percentage of women is quite good. The preliminary analysis of data available from the ongoing study on women's colleges has shown that most of the women's colleges are offering conventional and feminine oriented courses. There are very few women's colleges which are offering courses in emerging areas like computer applications, electronics, bio-technology, microbiology etc.

Table(7)Women Enrolment: Faculty-wise : 2013-2014

S.No	Faculty	Women Enrolment	Percentage to total women enrolment
1	Arts	4738713	44.91
2	Science	1911122	18.11
3	Commerce/ Management	1733350	16.42
4	Education	438877	4.16
5	Engineering/ technology	992765	9.41
6	Medicine	464617	4.40
7	Agriculture	30416	0.29
8	Veterinary science	9373	0.09
9	Law	129089	1.22
10	Others	104127	0.99
	Total	1055249	100.0

Women's participation in higher education has been improved and considerable progress has been made. A lot needs to be done. We should adopt strategy for increasing the participation of women in all higher educational institutions based on the prescription of the national policy

#### ***IV Future Role of Universities in Greater Participation of Women in Higher Education:***

Higher education institutions should play a vital role in order to achieve the target of cent per cent literacy in women population. Even though legislation and policy changes were important to consider women as the equal partner for development of the nation. Certain steps are essential in universities/colleges for introducing the contents of women's studies for greater involvement of the women in related areas and subject disciplines. At university and college level, major roles may take place which are highlighted below:

##### ***Increase in the number of colleges for women;***

Although the Govt. has made efforts to increase the no. of women's colleges but still it is not satisfactory. In most of the areas in our country there is dearth of women's colleges. Therefore to increase the participation of women in higher education maximum number of women's colleges need to be established.

##### ***Scholarships for girls***

Higher educational institutions should start giving scholarships to the girls in different disciplines. It will also motivate girls from different communities to come ahead for education and compete their classmates. These scholarships should be given in these areas where there is a need of girls for the development of society e.g. nursing, teaching, pathology and pharmacy etc.

##### ***Start short term courses for women***

Higher education institutions should offer new short-term courses for women like computer Education, Nursing, Cutting and Stitching etc. These courses will help them to start work at their own for their economic independence. Along with it, university degrees will provide them better job opportunities in the market.

##### ***Interaction of universities with girls school***

Higher education institutions should arrange seminars and extension lectures of the experts in girl's school in different areas. These experts will share with girl students the possibilities of new areas where they can seek admission. Not only this, they will also make aware the girl students about the future need of the different subjects. They can conduct the interviews with the girl students and provide guidance for future studies on the basis of their abilities.

##### ***Introducing new professional courses for women***

Higher educational institutions should keep on introducing new professional courses for women which they can join after completing senior secondary education. These courses should be from those thrust areas which are job oriented. After doing these courses either they can go for jobs in offices/institutions or they can do work on their own. The courses like interior decoration, script writing for TV and radio, computer hardware, technical know-how of electronic gadgets etc.

##### ***Reservation of seats for girls in different disciplines***

Higher educational institutions should suggest amending of laws to provide the provision of reservation of seats for girls in different disciplines as there is reservation for SC and ST candidates. It will certainly motivate the parents to send their daughters for higher education which will prove a milestone in empowering women.

##### ***Relationship of higher educational institutions with industries***

Higher educational institutions should establish the relationship with different industries. By doing so, the authorities should understand the type of jobs in different areas. Along with it, they can also find out the jobs which are suitable for girls. They can start such courses with the help of different industries. Also these industries will provide placement to the girl students.

***Courses in agriculture***

Nearly 80% of our population is involved and dependent upon agriculture. Undoubtedly, women are also working in the fields. If they are provided training in different aspects of agriculture, they can certainly do wonders in this domain also. It will not only increase the productivity of land but it will also provide monetary gains to the individual/family.

***Income generating activities***

The women should be encouraged to develop and market their handicrafts using modern design. Self-financing, need based, continuing courses should be started at the university centre to strengthen the UGC financial continuing courses. It can be organized in micro credit, flower making, toy making and other income generation programme. University through distance education programmes for the women personnel of NGO in the area of entrepreneur health, nutrition and allied areas.

***Women's reproductive health and child care***

Health areas like vaccination, immunization, post and pre-natal care, awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infection need to improve a lot among them. Rural development can be achieved only if women become enlightened and empowered. This is an unchallenged global experience, and need to be given special attention by the universities

***Resource centre for women***

Higher education institutions can also serve as the resource centre for women at the state level with an aim to strengthen institutional capacity of the department of social welfare in the state and for the holistic development of women.

***V Conclusion:***

Although India is potentially rich in human resources but till now our country has failed to harvest this potential of human resources due to the present education system which is undemocratic in access, provides no equity and equality for all sections of society. It is never too late to start something beneficial and useful for growth and development. Therefore, the higher education has to be expanded to reach at least 50% enrolment through increasing three times the number of colleges, institutions and universities from the present level. The universities have a major responsibility in nation building through enriching skill based and technical courses. Higher education is the key which alone can prove a solution to multiple issues. It should be available in all corners of the country if we really want a self dependent society able to solve unforeseen troubles. Higher education opens the door of opportunity and prepares a solid background for ultimate growth in almost all areas. If our women fail to receive it the nation cannot find itself fit for facing the challenges of the future. So, it is a need of hour to expand higher educational institutions for the women of our country to turn their dreams into reality. They have all the capacities as that of men. So their power and capacities must be recognized, It is only then women participation in higher education will be enhanced.

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