

**WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
AN OVER VIEW OF INDIAN SCENARIO SINCE
INDEPENDENCE**

Ms.Binodini Majhi*

ABSTRACT:

Empowerment of women strongly associated with level of education i.e. higher the level of education greater the empowerment of women. Women are a backbone of a family playing multiple roles. By educating women the process of development of the nation can be accelerated. Education is the key yardstick by which the growth and development of a country can be delineated and as such it has occupied an honoured place in the society. None can deny that in the life of an individual as well as society education has a vital role. There has been significant increase in enrollment of women in higher education since independence. The present paper attempts to address the growth of women enrollment in higher education, women's choice of discipline in higher education and also focused on regional disparities in enrollment of women for higher education in states and UTs of India. There was a gradual increase in women enrollment for higher education since independence. It was increased from 10% to 41.52% since 1950-51 to 2010-11. The regional variation in women enrollment in higher education shows that as per the statistics of 2011-12 Goa rank first (60.31%) followed by Kerala(58.62%) and in the bottom of the list is Arunachal Pradesh (36.69%) followed by Bihar (36.97%) except this states like Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh have also very less percentage of women enrolled in higher education.

Keywords: Education, higher education, women, women education, enrollment

* Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Geography, School of Regional Studies and Earth Sciences, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Odisha (India)

Introduction:

Education is a basic requirement and a fundamental right for the citizens of a free nation. It is also of increasing strategic importance in the new environment of knowledge and information technology based globalized economy. Education plays a catalytic role in a country's socio-economic development and is one of the principal means available for a deeper and harmonious form of human development reducing poverty, ignorance and exclusion. Higher Education, which is a training ground for a professional, research-based, career-oriented future, must be respected as a potential instrument for bringing about social transformation and ensuring the success of democracy. Education must be provided to all categories of citizens by breaking down constraints and barriers. Once students have completed primary and secondary education, attention must focus on increasing participation of men and women equally in the field of Higher Education. The Indian National Policy of Education recognizes this when it states 'Wider women's access to vocational, technical and professional education at all levels, breaking gender stereotypes, will ensure better financial stability for women and lead to national development'. In connection to above discussion the present paper is an attempt to understand women and their status in higher education on the basis of growth in women enrollment in higher education, level of higher education, subject wise enrollment of women in higher education and regional disparities across states and union territories in women enrollment for higher education. The study is primarily based on secondary data and related literature.

Background of Higher Education in India

In India Higher Education had its roots in early time as well. In the 5th century BC Taxila was the earliest recorded centre of higher education in India although there is a debate with its status – whether it was university or not. In the modern sense of the term „University“ the Nalanda University was the oldest University system of education in the World. With the establishment of the British Raj in India, the western education became in-grained into Indian society. But in the pre-independence era there was very limited access to Higher Education. From the year 1883 till, the independence both the number of colleges and the enrollment of students in India were found to be very low.

Necessity of Higher Education for Women

Almost half of the population in India is occupied by women. They are the half of the human resources. But it is very unfortunate to say that for long years there have been a strong bias against women and thereby there is a tendency to deny equal socio-economic opportunity for them. This neglecting attitude towards women is prominent in many respects particularly in the field of education. Theoretically the need of higher education for both males and females is the same. But practically it could be said that female education is more important than that of male. In this connection a statement of philosopher-president and noted educationist Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (1948) is referred- He says “there cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education has to be limited to men or women, the opportunity should be given to women. From them it would most surely be passed on to the next generation.”

Women education has two aspects- individual aspect and social aspect. It is education which increases women's abilities to deal with the problems of her life, her family, her society and nation. Education increases confidence in a woman. An educated woman can easily understand the demerits of early marriage and high birth rate. They have the attitude of gender parity among their children right from health care, nutrition, education and even career. The fruits of education are enjoyed not only by the woman concerned but it passes to her family in later life (Nath 2014).

Enrollment of Women in Higher Education:

The status of women in higher education was drastically changed over time. It shows a gradual increase over different period. It is clearly depicted from (Table-1 and Fig-1) that in 1950-51, the percentage of women to total enrollment was only 10 percent. The rate of increase was not very high or low but it remains between 2% - 4 % whereas during 1970-71 there was no increase rather in that year it was less than 0.04% from previous one (1965-66). When we give a look on absolute number of women enrolled in higher education, it shows that in 1950-51 it was only 17,000 and in 1980-81 it increased to 749000 in three decades time. And after that in next 30 years (2010-11) it reaches to 70, 49000 numbers of women enrolled in higher education. The University Grants Commission (UGC) report reveals that out of 169.75 lakhs students enrolled in higher

Table 1 : Girl Student Growth in Higher Education, 1950-51 to 2010-11

Year	Men(000s)	Women(000s)	Total enrolment(000s)	% of women to total students
1950-51	157	17	174	10
1955-56	252	43	295	14.6
1960-61	468	89	557	16
1965-66	849	218	1067	20.4
1970-71	1563	391	1954	20
1975-76	2131	595	2426	24.5
1980-81	2003	749	2752	27.2
1985-86	2512	1059	3571	29.6
1990-91	2986	1439	4425	32.5
1995-96	4235	2191	6426	34.1
2000-01	4988	3012	8001	37.6
2005-06	6562	4466	11028	40.5
2010-2011	9926	7049	16975	41.52

Source: MHRD for 1950-51 & 1960-61 & UGC for 1970-71 onwards

education in 2010-11, almost 70.49 lakhs were women as compared to just about 47.08 lakhs women enrolled in 2006-07. This is possible because of increasing awareness among people in the society. Government policies and opening of women's colleges and Women Universities. Finally it can be concluded that this is attributed to changing nature of society, process of urbanization and modernization.

Enrollment of Women in different level of higher education:

Enrollment of women in different level of higher education shows that out of total enrollment in an academic session highest percentage of women enrolled in graduation(85%), then next is post graduation, from(table-2) it reveal that only 12.51% women enrolled in post graduation. In diploma/certificate course around 1% women were enrolled where as in research it is less than 1 percent (0.79%).

Table 2: Women’s enrollment in different level of Higher Education, 2011-12

Education Level	Men	Women	Total student	% of student (men & women) level wise out of total enrollment (All levels)	% of women student in each level	level wise % of women out of total enrolled women
Graduate	8580000	6037000	14617000	86.11	41.30	85
Post Graduate	1167000	882000	2049000	12.07	43.04	12.51
Diploma /Certificate	98000	73000	171000	1.00	42.69	1.035
Research	81000	56000	137000	0.80	40.87	0.79
All Level	9926000	7048000	16974000	100		

Source: Higher education in India at a glance (2012), UGC New Delhi

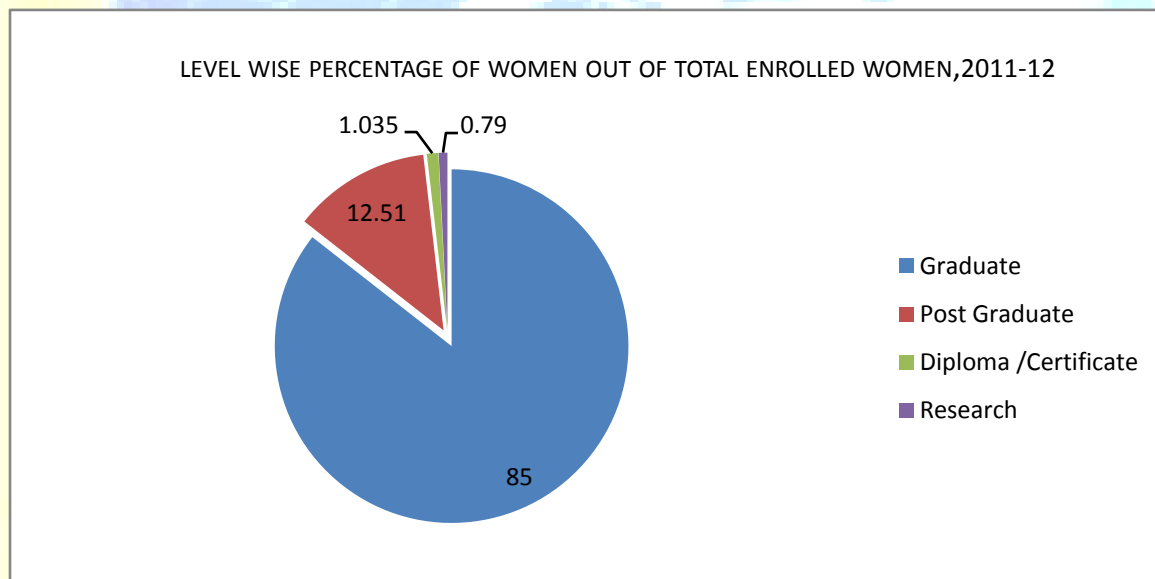


Fig.1: Educational level wise women enrollment, 2011-12

Enrollment of women in higher education in different level shows highest percentage of women enrollment in Graduation and lowest percentage in research (M.Phil& P.hd) which is clearly visible in Fig-1. There is also marked difference is enrollment of women students and men in different level of education as it is clearly reflected in Fig-2. It is found that in research study

where the number of female is very less, in that as per the data of 2011-12 fifty six thousand students were women and eighty one thousand students were male all over India.

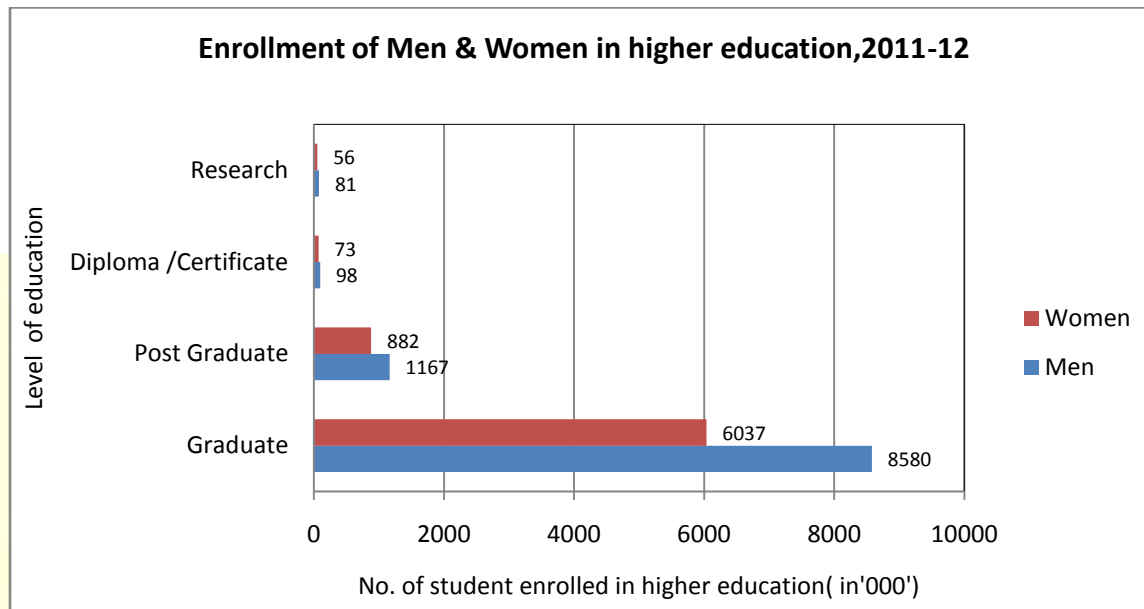


Fig.2: Enrollment of men and women students in higher education, 2011-12

Enrollment of Women in General and Professional Education

The programmes in higher education are divided into those of general subjects such as Arts which include Social Sciences and Humanities; Pure Sciences, Professional courses such as Engineering, Medical science, teacher education, agriculture, law etc. They are also divided into masculine and feminine disciplines. Arts, Social sciences, Humanities, Teacher Education have been viewed as feminine disciplines. On the other hand, Commerce, Law, Engineering are masculine subjects. Medical science has not been a masculine discipline in India unlike in the western countries. In India like in the rest of South Asia, the practice of female seclusion enjoined the treatment of women patients by women doctors. This required training women doctors, thereby enabling them to enter the medical profession (Chanana, 1988). The proportion of women in some of the masculine disciplines was very less soon after independence and remained so till the 1980's with the exception of Commerce. Science, a masculine discipline provides an interesting insight on disciplinary choices of young men and women. Table-3 present a brief picture of subject/faculty wise enrollment of men and women from 1950-51 to 1990-91.

It also reveals that the proportion of women in Science decreased from 33.3 percent in 1950-51 to 28.8 % in 1980-81. Science has never been the first preference for young women whose parents considered marriage much more important than higher education. A Science degree

required a longer investment of time and other resources and thus was not desirable. Prior to 1990's, education and its linkage to the job market early on in life was only for those men who needed jobs and was certainly not for women (Dewan,2012).

Table:3

Proportion of Men and Women Students to total enrolment:Facultywise,1950-51to1991-92

Faculty	1950-51		1960-61		1970-71		1980-81		1991-92	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Arts	16	84	24.6	75.4	54.24	35.63	31.7	68.3	37.7	62.3
Science	33.3	66.7	10.5	89.5	19.78	19	17.8	82.2	28.8	71.2
Commerce	0.5	99.5	0.9	99.1	14.64	24.26	3.7	96.3	15.9	84.1
Education	32.4	67.6	32.8	67.2	3.73	1.74	36.5	63.5	47.3	52.7
Engg/Tech	0.2	99.8	0.9	99.1	1.18	6.73	1	99	3.8	96.2
Medicine	16.3	83.7	21.9	78.1	3.49	3.31	22.8	77.2	24.4	75.6
Law	2.1	97.9	3	97	0.25	1.51	3.7	96.3	6.9	93.1
Agl./Vet. & others	5.8	94.2	7	93	0.06	0.33	9.5	90.5	13.6	86.4
All Faculties	10.9	89.1	16.2	83.8	1.79	6.84	21.9	78.1	27.2	72.8
					0.84	0.65				
					100	100				

Source: Adopted from Chanana, (2000), Desai and Thakkar, (2004)

Enrollment of women across faculties/disciplines or subjects and their presence across various levels varies and changes over time. There is difference in women enrollment in general and professional education. Starting from 1950-51 when the proportion of women was 10.9 percent to 40.04 percent in 2002-03, the increase has been significant. In other words, there were 14 women per 100 men in 1950-51 which increased to 67 in 2002-03. Thus the proportion of women entering higher education has increased rapidly from 32% in 1991-92 to 40 % of all students in 2002-03 and 41.5% as per 2010-11(Table-1).There have been also shifts in women's choice of disciplines in higher education.

Women Enrollment in Higher Education across States and UTs of India

The gendered impact of social, cultural and economic disparities across states has been referred to time and again by the official Committees and Commissions as well as by the social scientists. These trends are continuing while the enrollment of women varies from province to province.

Table-4 shows the enrollment of women in higher education in states and union territories of India during 2011-12. It reveals from the table that Goa has had the highest enrollment and even now it is 60 percent. Thus, there are more women than men in higher education. The other states where they are more than half the proportion are Kerala (58.6), Meghalaya (54.19), and Himachal Pradesh (51.16) among states Andaman and Nicobar Islands (58.37), Chandigarh (50.37) and Pondicherry (52.6). Those with lower proportion are also the most backward namely Bihar (36.97), Jharkhand (30.40), Chhattisgarh (36.70), Rajasthan (32.33), Uttar Pradesh (38.40) and Madhya Pradesh (37.20). In these provinces, the proportion is less than the all India average of 40.05 percent.

The link between the state and professional education is very close. The variations can be seen in the growth of engineering and technology courses in the four southern states. A majority of women students were from the southern and western regions. The number of women students is highest in the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The regional disparities are due to several reasons. One of them is the early starting of formal education in the southern as compared to the northern regions during the colonial period. Many private engineering colleges have been established there. The socio-cultural practices and positive attitudes of parents towards the higher education of their daughters also have an impact on the women's access to professional education. This difference is to a large extent due to the practice of female seclusion in the north and its absence in the south (Chanana, 1988).

Table-4 Women enrollment in higher education in States and Union territories of India,2011-12

State	% of Women enrollment to total enrollment	State	% of Women enrollment to total enrollment
Goa	60.31	Uttarakhand	40.97
Kerala	58.62	Odisha	40.93
Meghalaya	54.19	West Bengal	40.82
Himachal pradesh	51.16	Andhra Pradesh	39.93
Punjab	49.68	Jharkhand	38.61
Nagaland	49.08	Rajasthan	38.54
Sikkim	48.02	Madhya Pradesh	37.88
Mizoram	47.85	Chattisgarh	37.18
Assam	47.79	Bihar	36.97
Tamil Nadu	46.45	Arunachal Pradesh	36.69
Delhi	46.33	Union territories	
Jammu & Kashmir	46.01	Daman & Diu	59.11
Karnataka	45.81	A & N Island	58.37
Haryana	44.13	Puducherry	51.52
Maharashtra	43.9	Chandigarh	50.37
Manipur	43.68	D & N Haveli	46.98
Gujarat	43.52	Lakshdweep	40.79
Tripura	42.3	Grand Total (India)	42
Uttara Pradesh	41.26		

Source: UGC Annual Report, 2011 &2012

Findings and Conclusion:

There was a gradual increase in women enrollment for higher education since independence. It was increased from 10% to 41.52% since 1950-51 to 2010-11. Women enrollment in different level of higher education reflects that as per the data base of 2011-12 the percentage of women out of total student constitute more than 40% but less than 45% in different level such as graduation, P.G, Research & diploma and certificate courses. Out of total enrolled women in

2011-12 85% enrolled for graduation, 12.5% for P.G and percentage of women in diploma, certificate course and research is 1% and less than 1% respectively. Enrollment of women in general and professional courses shows that women percentage is very good in case of medical profession. In 1950-51 it was 16.3% and increased to 24.4% in 1991-92. The regional variation in women enrollment in higher education shows that as per the statistics of 2011-12 Goa rank first (60.31%) followed by Kerala(58.62%) and in the bottom of the list is Arunachal Pradesh (36.69%) followed by Bihar (36.97%) except this states like Chhattisgarh and Madhyapradesh have also very less percentage of women enrolled in higher education.

From analyzing different data base it is found that women enrollment in different level of higher education was increased steadily. Women's enrollment in higher education is varies in India from one region to another region that is lowest in Arunachal Pradesh and Bihar and highest in Goa and Kerala. Choice of faculty for higher study is also give a different scenario, maximum percentage of women select education and Arts where as very few women select Engg/tech and Law as their choice faculty for pursuing higher education. Higher education of women plays a crucial role in enabling them to meet the complex challenges of the present world. Higher education must train them to become self sufficient, empowered with decision making capacities to achieve the best for themselves and the country.

References:

- [1] Chanana, K (1988) "Social Change or Social reform: the education of women in Pre-independence India" in K. Chanana (ed), Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in gender identity.
- [2] Chanana, K. (2007, Feb.17). Globalisation, higher education and gender : Changing subject choice of Indian women students. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(7), 590-598.
- [3] Desai, N. & Thakkar, U. (2004) *Women in Indian Society*. India: National Book Trust.
- [4] Dewan, A. (2012) Globalization, Higher education and the Changing Status of Indian Women- An Appraisal of the Emerging Issues and Challenges *Scholarly Journal of Education* 1:1, 1-5.
- [5] Kadam, N.L (2014) Women in Higher Education: Position and Prospects *Wamayung Research Journal, Issue* (March), 1-9.

[6] MHRD Annual Report(2006)Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Government of India. New Delhi.

[7] National Knowledge Commission [NKC].(2009).Report to the Nation 2006-2009.New Delhi:Government of India

[8] Nath, S. (2014) Higher Education and Women Participation in India, *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research*, 3:2 ,43-47.

[9] Selected educational Statistics [SES](2005-06).New Delhi:Government of India.

[10] Raju,S.(2008).Gender differentials in access to higher education. Higher education in India:Issues relating to inclusion,quality and finance (pp-79-102).University Grant Commission Report.

[11] UGC Annual Report, University Grant Commission. New Delhi: Government of India

[12] Yashpal Committee Report [YCR] (2009).Report of 'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of higher education'. Ministry of Human Resource Development. New Delhi: Government of India.