



ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Ascendency Of Women In Higher  
Education In India-a Pathway To Empowerment

Sujatha Freeda Nesamani Bose<sup>1</sup> and L .Selvamuthu Kumarasami <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor in History , Institute of Advanced Study in Education, Saidapet  
Chennai-600 015

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor in History, Presidency College (Autonomous), Chennai- 600 005  
Tamil Nadu, South India

Abstract:

*India is emerging a Super Power over the coming decades even overtaking giants like the USA and China. 'Education for All simply implies 'Quality and Equal Education for All'. The Women Education is the need of the hour and concern of India. The empowerment of the Women in India is based on the qualitative and quantitative education. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the good governance in Independent India in the sector of higher education and the increasing number of women enrolment and entry into the field of various disciplines of Higher Education. Their percentage for five decades since 1950 in India is increasing but not in proportion to their population strength. The impact of higher education in leads the empowerment of women in various walks of Public Life. Their life style is changing in the era of modernization and globalization.*

Higher Education at Under – and Postgraduate Level and Professional Education

In a total population of about 270 million girls and women, the number of educated women one million today? We saw that at primary level in the age – group 6-11 years, only 59 girls in every 100 were in school, which means that 41 in every 100 are bracketed out. At middle level, age – group 11-14, only 19 girls in every 100 are in school, which means that 81 in every 100 are bracketed pour. At secondary level, age – group 14-17, only. 10 in every 100 are in school, which means that 90 in every 100 are bracketed out. At higher level, in age-group 18-23 years, only 8 percent of girls that is, not even one in 100 is in an institution for higher learning, 99.2 in every 100 are bracketed out. By 1966. it was estimated that 200,000 young women were in colleges/universities etc. 148,000 as undergraduates in arts, science and commerce courses, 17,000 in Master's courses in arts and science and in research, and 35,000 in professional under - and postgraduates and research courses.

Enrolments in Higher Education  
(1950-51 to 1965-66)  
(in 000's)

	1950-51			1955-56			1960-61			1965-66 (Estimates)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Arts Commerce And Science												
1. Undergraduate Course in Arts & Science	153	22	175	249	46	295	313	83	396	550	147	697

Please cite this Article as : Sujatha Freeda Nesamani Bose<sup>1</sup> and L .Selvamuthu Kumarasami <sup>2</sup> , Ascendency Of Women In Higher Education In India-a Pathway To Empowerment : Indian Streams Research Journal (Aug. ; 2012)



2. Undergraduate Course in Commerce	16	-	16	27	-	27	38	-	38	61	1	62
Total	169	22	191	276	46	322	351	83	434	611	148	759
Post graduates												
3. M.A & M.Sc.	14	2	17	21	4	25	38	9	17	62	16	78
4. Research	1	-	1	2	-	3	4	1	4	6	1	8
Total	15	2	18	23	4	28	42	10	51	68	17	86
Professional												
5. Undergraduate	46	4	50	74	7	82	131	15	147	195	33	227
6. Postgraduate & Research	4	-	4	6	1	7	12	1	13	20	2	22
Total	50	4	54	80	8	89	143	16	160	215	35	249
Grand Total	234	28	263	380	58	439	535	109	645	895	200	1094
Percentage of Total enrolment to Population in the Age – group (18-23)	12	0.1	0.7	1.7	0.3	1.0	2.2	0.5	1.4	3.3	0.82	2.1

This table summaries the actual and comparative position for women, and men interesting points emerge from this table are

- (1) Enrolments at the undergraduate stage in arts, commerce and science course have increased from 191,000 in 1950-51 to 759,000 in 1965-66 or at an average annual rate of 9.6 percent. The enrolment of girls at this stage shows considerable improvement the number of girls enrolled for every 100 boys increased from 13 to 24.
- (2) In postgraduate courses in arts and science and in research, the total enrolments have increased from 18,000 in 1950-51 to 86,000 in 1965-66 or at an average annual rate of 11 percent. The enrolment of girls shows a considerable improvement at this stage also – if rose from 13 for every 100 boys in 1950-51 to 1965-66.
- (3) In professional education, enrolments have risen from 54,000 in 1950-51 to 249,000 in 1965-66. the rate of growth is faster than that in arts and science at 10.7 per cent –m but a little less than that at the postgraduate stage.

Evidently there has been an improvement in the higher, including professional education of women between 1950 and 1966 but the percentage are still extremely low and numbers, relative to those in the age-group 18-23 years that have to be served, are still very small.

CORRECTING POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS

There is a prevailing view that it is no longer necessary to give special attention to women's education at the level of higher education since women are taking advantage of it in increasing number adequate to the needs of society. Shortages of in increasing adequate to the needs of society. Shortages of educated women available for taking up positions of directional and organizational responsibilities in various professions and occupations, however, points to the need for special efforts to expand women's education at the college and university stage. The figures of comparative enrolment of men and women students at the higher education stage reveal that the proportion of women students to the total enrolment in Indian universities was about 13 per cent in 1955-56. about 17 per cent in 1960-61 and about 21 per cent in 1965-66. Thus, in one decade the proportion has increased from 13 per cent to 21 per cent and at present the proportion of women students to men students is 1:4, This proportion is not in keeping with the changing needs of Indian society nor with the needs of economic and social development. In view of these needs the proportion of women students to the total enrolment at this stage should be increased to 33 per cent during the next ten years to meet the requirements for educated women in different fields. To achieve this target we have recommended two programmes elsewhere, viz.,

- (1) a programme of scholarship and financial assistance to women students in colleges and universities on a liberal scale, and
- (2) a programme of the provision of suitable but economical hostel accommodation for women students with all the necessary amenities on a large scale. Liberal grants should be provided by the Government of India for this purpose as also by the State Governments. Both these programmes are



particularly necessary to encourage girls from rural areas to take advantage of higher education. At present their numbers are very small in colleges and universities as compared to those of girls from urban areas.

#### **COURSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION SPECIALLY MEANT TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF WOMEN**

As at present, women students should have free access to courses in arts, humanities, sciences and technology..... The more academic type of girls with ambitions of pursuing careers of research or teaching at the college or university level, or in professions such as medicine or technology should have all the opportunities and incentives for doing so.

'For a large number of women students, there is need for taking up higher education with specific avenues of employment where the services of trained and educated women are urgently required. There needs to be an emphasis on technical and vocational elements in such courses. Some of the professional fields where women's services are required and where there are shortages at present are those of education (teaching), social work, nursing and a series of occupational fields such as nutrition, dietetics, institutional management, etc. All such courses have been stressed during the Second during the Second and Third Five Year Plans and facilities for them have been expanded. Hence, every effort should be taken to expand these courses according to developmental needs and to improve them in the light of their objectives.

#### **JOB ORIENTED COURSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Home Science has been introduced in 33 universities and is gradually receiving recognition as an academic discipline. Home science, in addition to giving good general education, should equip students on a scientific basis to work in the professional fields of dietetics, food technology, family welfare work, extension work in community development and welfare extension projects, research work in projects and schemes of ICMR, ICAR and Council of Child Welfare.

Nursing has been introduced as a course at the B.Sc. level in universities with the purpose of preparing nursing staff at higher levels. The expansion of this course should be according to the requirements of the profession.

Education as an elective at the B.A. or B.Sc. level has been introduced in 11 universities in each of these universities, there are more women than men who offer this course. The course has at present only a general educational value and does not serve the purpose of professional preparation even partially. The value of concurrent and integrated courses in general and professional teacher education should be included such courses will prove to be popular with women students. With the fewer employment avenues open to women, they make up their mind about joining the teaching profession at an early stage. They would welcome such concurrent courses if the first year of the three – year degree course offers a basic general course which would lead to pedagogy as well as to some other field.

Courses in Social Work are offered in several universities. this is a field where there appear to be a need for designing special courses to meet the requirements of those fields of social work where women's services are required. As other avenues open up to women, courses in these field will have to be designed.

#### **NEED OF HIGH – LEVEL TRAINING**

In the Third Five Year Plan, there was a scheme to set up a National Institute for women for giving high-level training to women candidates in organization administration and management to enable them to take up responsible positions. Women trained on these lines would be needed for implementing many national plants and projects particularly in social services to meet the requirements of voluntary organizations and to provides competent personnel to take up positions that are becoming increasingly available to them in the industrial sectors. For want of funds it has not yet been possible to set up such an institution at the national level (1966). Hence or four universities with good business administration and management departments should set up wings for giving such high – level training as is needed by women.

Further, one or two universities should set up research units to deal specially with women's education. These should take up follow-up studies of educated women, consider women's education from the point of view of employment opportunities available to women, and ensure proper planning of women's education particularly as the stage of higher education.

The role of women outside the home has become an important feature of the social and economic life of the country and, in the years to come, this will become still more significant. From this point of view, greater attention will have to be paid to the problems of training and employment of women. Opportunities for part – time employment which would enable women to look after their homes and to have a career outside will have to be largely expanded. As the age of marriage continues to rise, full – time employment will have to be provided for almost all young and married women. Teaching, nursing and social service are

well-recognized areas where women can have a useful role to play. In addition, several new avenues will have to be opened out to them'.

#### **MOBILIZATION OF PUBLIC OPINION**

The proposal already made by the Education Commission (1964-1966) for the most part await implementation even where they do not imply large expenditure. Public opinion has therefore to be mobilized to ensure that this minimum of action is implemented without further delay. Time is of the essence of the solution to the problem of womanpower. The responsibility rests with educated Indian women. Also with them rests the responsibility to ensure that resourcefulness and self-help

#### **HIGHER EDUCATION IN OPEN UNIVERSITY**

The world of education is witnessing a stirring educational ferment in British's educational system, exemplified by Open University. The Report of the Planning Committee, India, makes stimulating reading. 'The objects of the Open University', 'are to provide opportunities are at both under-graduate and post-graduate level of higher education to all those who, for any reason, have need, or are being precluded from achieving their aims through an existing institution of higher education.....' 'The result is an ingenious combination of educational broadcasting (university of the Air) and television, with correspondence courses and a minimal element of face-to-face instruction. The Open University provides particularly for the part-time earner-student who is nationally productive and desires to be more productive. The only pre-requisite for enrolment are a minimum age of 21 years and sufficient motivation to fill out an application form.

Open University education costs about one-third that of a brick –and-mortar university. The Open University provides higher to those who have not so far received it. It is an investment in productivity that India could well consider for the 99.2 per cent of women in the age-group 18-23 who are still without it, and for those millions above the age-group who could benefit from it in lifelong education. Unusual situations demand unorthodox approaches.

#### **STRATEGIES: PROMOTION OF WOMEN EDUCATION**

Several strategies were adopted to promote education of girls in independent India Theoretically all formal and non- formal education and training programmes are open to women. In addition provision exists for opening of separate institutional or separate wings for women and girls exclusively. Education is free for girls right up to the university level. In the first three Five year plan, girl's education was given special component with earmarked allocations. In the Eighth Five Year Plan. A Central Scheme provided funds to the States to hire a woman teacher for all single teacher primary schools and also funds and prizes for villages, blocks and districts doing well in female education and literacy. The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was launched as a societal and technology mission in 1988 for imparting functional literacy to 80 million illiterate adults in 15-35 age group by 1995, bulk of whom were women. NLM adopted the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) as a principal strategy for achieving universal literacy. Analysis of the TLC campaigns shows that women form the bulk of the beneficiaries.

#### **GROWTH OF FEMALE LITERACY**

India has the second largest higher educational system in the world after China with 7494 colleges of several education, 540 engineering colleges. 755 medical colleges, 818 colleges of teacher training. 1066 polytechnics. TTIS 4171 and 1319 teacher training schools and 308 universities, institutions of national importance and research institutions. Female literacy has growth from 8% in 1951 and 39% in 1991. Male, female gap has narrowed Female literacy has improved by 11 percentage points compared to 9 percentage points increase in the case of male during 1991-1997. Female literacy stands at 50%.

#### **ENROLMENT OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

The higher, professional, technical educational institutions in India serves more than six million students and scholars, out of whom 39 per cent are girls their number having gone up by more four since independence.

**GIRLS FORM:**

- 40% of the students enrolled in B.A./ B.Sc/ B.Com
- 38% of the M.B.B.S Students
- 40% of those studying in M.A./ M.Sc/ M.Com
- 43% of the B.Ed., trainees
- 47% of the student teacher enrolled in J.B.T. Courses.
- 30% of the students enrolled for the doctoral programmes.
- 19.5% of the students in Engineering and Technology Courses.
- 16.8% of the students in Polytechnics and
- 13% of the Students in ITI's.

The share of girls in various faculties has increased very substantially in arts, science, commerce, education and medicine in the last four decades. However, girls continue to be way behind in Engineering and Technology (19.5%), and in the second level technical education institutions except in teacher training schools. They form 16.8% of all students in polytechnics and a more 13% in the industrial Training Institutions.

**Environment of Girls as Percentage of total enrolment in  
Higher Education by faculty**

Year	Arts	Science	Commerce	Education	Engg. / Tech.	Medicine
1960 – 61	18.6	0.0	1.1	32.5	0.8	20.4
1970-71	33.5	18.8	2.8	37.3	1.0	21.3
1980-81	37.5	27.9	15.2	46.7	4.6	23.8
1990-91	39.8	36.8	24.0	44.4	10.9	34.3
1998-99	44.7	35.6	31.6	47.0	19.5	38.0

**EDUCATED WOMEN**

An' educated women', is a women with a first university degree that should equip her to choose her field of further study wisely, continue her study, with the necessary field training by herself, do her own reading, acquire her own expertise and organize her own way of learning and living. In this expect the concept of 'lifelong education' enunciated by UNESCO. That education covers 'the continuation of the educational process is not worthy. Without interruption to fulfil the aspirations and develop the potentialities of each individual human being and to meet the ever more pressing demands of world in transformation.

Without a framework of further education for educated women, a certain number of degree holder will not nurture their own creativity, will hesitate to enter employment and to hold nurture their own creativity, will hesitate to enter employment and to hold jobs in the new fields which are opening in the modern sector of the economy, and well perform only the minimum of civic responsibilities. The investment in their higher education will lead, to all outward appearances, to perusal, rather than social profits; and in the long range such a situation may be turned against the very principle of equal opportunities for women in higher education.

**REASONS FOR STRENGTHENING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF LIFE LONG EDUCATION**

Lifelong education should be available to all, but women have special needs since many marry young and are not in a position to enter or continue professional life. Therefore, structures for life long education should be designed to assist the young married women to find ways to maintain her intellectual competence during the years of her most concentrated family responsibilities. Suitable structures should make it possible for women of all ages to keep in touch with their professions and with life and learning outside the home. They should provide an atmosphere in which to challenge women to commitments and facilities their carrying out such commitments.

Further education is also needed for professional advance. Women who enter employment in the seventies will have to learn to apply in their day-to-day work many new techniques and skills which have not yet been conceived. The rapid advance of knowledge in all professional fields may sometimes be better absorbed in an institutional setting than through self-education. In some cases, refresher courses are needed, in others, learning additional skills such as administration and finance may help women to move up in the ranks of their profession.

In India, as in many developing and developed countries, a growing number of educated women find that they must earn their own living many others would like to emerge from their homes when their



family responsibilities lessen, but they find it difficult to explore the alternatives. Planning and Counseling centers for women can offer short non credit courses on 'Great Expectations for women' or Decision towards new directions ; they can give information about the new social roles open in employment, civic service and continuing education. They can offer the stimulus of sharing experiences and the knowledge of institutions which help the employed person. In addition to informing educated women about the realities of the labour market, the staff of such centers can work with various community agencies and group to change attitudes about women's work and to create new types of opportunities for work and service.

#### **ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The university and other institutions of higher learning have a major role to play in the continues education of the educated women yet. Studies in the USA have shown that of the 3.5 million student are studying in the university evening colleges. It is rate indeed to find an institution in which the enrolment of women runs as high as one-third. Therefore, as well as making provision for educated women enter regular undergraduate and postgraduate courses, some universities and women's colleges may well establish special women's education programmes within their regular extension service or centers for continuing education of 'discovery programmes for the modern women' may be set up. Whatever structures are chosen, they should reflect the strengths and capabilities of particular institutions and be integrated with the instructional department.

Through they need not be given priority, there should be some centers for the study of liberal arts for adults. Their activities may range from serious year-long liberal arts seminars fro women to short courses on the meaning of history, to short three day meetings as an antidote for apathy. Saturday classes for adult students, correspondence courses, and residential centers are all providing their value in the organization of continuous education by the university. Sometimes the short programmes are best organized in cooperation with a women's organization.

#### **HIGHER EDUCATED WOMEN IN VARIOUS FIELDS**

In the seventies the image of the modern educated Indian woman is more than interesting it is inspiring. She is ready to equip herself not merely with a degree, but with professional expertise. She wishes to participate in her business at home, and also in the civic life of the Indian community. The moon has been conquered by men, but even in this fascinating adventure, a women undertook the hazardous journey of traveling in a spaceship. The sky is no longer the limit.

Indian women of the seventies will go in for higher education in larger numbers and will continue to practice more intensively in the field of their specialization. The established professions such as teaching, social work, medicine and nursing will no doubt attract more women, but with the development of newer fields of knowledge, more women will try to establish themselves in new professions.

#### **THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

In teaching women have proved very successful and have played an important professional role. The reasons for an Indian women's indispensability at certain stages of education are that (i) she can teach children almost by instinct: (ii) she has a natural gift for educating the young and forming their character: and (iii) traditional acceptance in our society of the fact that the teaching profession is admirable suited to women.

In this traditional profession, there are the highest potential employment opportunities in India and the world. There has been a steady rise in enrolment of pupils to primary and secondary education in India and it will, therefore, be easy to get jobs in this profession. In teaching, there are a number of high-level posts for which women are eligible and have been selected principals of schools, supervisors, inspectors, Directors of Education, State Ministers of Education and so on.

#### **TEACHING OF HIGHER LEVELS**

Indian women entered this field many years ago and today, in almost all the universities women professors and lecturers are teaching in substantial number. There are many women's colleges and one women's University in India. Where teaching is done mostly by women. The profession offers vast opportunities as enrolment are increasing every year. Within a few years, the coveted University Chairs will be occupied by gifted women professors. There is still some resistance to giving these to women, but the barriers are about to fail.

The first degree in any branch of science qualifies a person to work as a laboratory assistant and/or junior technician. A few years ago, a degree in any branch of engineering was a guarantee of lucrative job, but times have changed and the profession has reached the point of saturation. Indian women have not patronized the profession of engineering in large number but those who have done so have been reasonably

successful. Highly qualified women scientists have many opportunities according to their specialization for a job in private and public sector industries. The national Laboratories and Atomic Energy Establishments offer jobs with high salaries to qualified women.

#### **Pharmacy Graduates**

This is a very new field, but already offer jobs at various levels. The careers offered are an dispensing pharmacists. Hospital pharmacists and in the pharmaceutical industry and its laboratories. A few universities in India offer pharmaceutical courses. The profession is well suited to women who tend, when trained, to be accurate, neat and methodical in their work the profession may be practiced may be practiced part-time and also independently.

#### **Commerce Graduates**

There has been an extraordinary rise of attendance of girls at commerce colleges. The banking industry and other industry and commercial establishments need commerce graduates. There are banks where separate section have been opened for women and whole establishment are now run by women. This I think is not usual even in advanced countries of the world.

#### **Mathematics Graduates**

Careers in insurance companies, banks, statistical departments are good openings for graduates with mathematics as a specialization. There is a shortage of statisticians, actuaries and accountants throughout the world. Women can quality in these fields just as well as men.

#### **Electronic and Computer Experts**

Women have worked in India as computer machine operator but they can also go in for service as computer programmes and act as research assistants for firms manufacturing electronic computer.

#### **Graduates in the Fine Arts**

Graduation in any field of the fine arts such as drawing, painting music theatre arts and such other allied subjects, offers numerous opening but there is some insecurity in many of these avenues that are still not generally professionally remunerative. Women tend to demand a strong element of security in the professional for those with aptitude and the stamina to complete the latter course.

#### **Journalism and Writing**

The special postgraduate diploma offered by universities in mass communication and journalism give training that can assist independent career in the field. India will need more newspaper and periodicals and women can go in for jobs as editors and sub editors in the publishing world. There has been a loud cry for textbook writers in Indian languages. Women can take up this work even as part time work or do it at home. The publishing industry offers a wide range of jobs, starting from script evaluation and correction, proof reading, designation jackets and other related jobs, essential for publishing good books. Here women have certain special advantages, particularly those of the upper middle class , with facility in the use of English and of other Indian languages and literatures and a sound general education.

#### **Graduates in Public Service**

The UN Declaration on the Political Rights of Women expressly states. 'Access to the Public Service is a Political Rights'. Women in India did not have to struggle hard to get this as Gandhiji made them equal partners with men during the Indian independence movement in which they occupied many positions of leadership. They were appointed ministers in the cabinets of central and state governments. They are being appointed heads of diplomatic and consular services. At the IAS and IFS examinations, many women have appeared and given a good account of themselves. The Central Government and State Government offices have forward to many high level posts in the seventies. With a women prime minister at the helm, it will be less and necessary to argue the case for the appointment of women to high levels of public service.

In a traditional society like ours, it will however take time to shape public opinion into giving as a matter of course as good an education to girls as to boys, and to allowing girls to choose their professions for the full exploitation of their skills. In the big cities and towns the process of accelerating the tempo of gainful employment for women is felt more and more women go in for higher education.

#### **Rise of Educated Women**

Due to the attainment of higher education a number of women elevated themselves to eminence in various fields of public life Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, Manju Bashini, Durgabai Deshmukh and Rukmani

Lakshmi Pathy took active participation in political and social welfare activities. Anjani Dayanand, Former Chief Secretary, Government of Pondichery, Lathika Patakar. I.A.S., Thilakavathi, I.P.S., G.K. Gariyali, I.A.S., Chandralekha., I.A.S., Malathi. I.A.S., Anuradha Rajivan , I.A.S all in Government of Tamil Nadu, Sarojini Varadappan, Social Worker. V.N Kothainayagi Ammal, Sivasankari, Maragatham Chandrasekar, Sathiyavani Muthu, Fathima Feevi and a few more women of India are the architects of the women's world in modern times.

### CONCLUSION

The higher education system has witnessed a 13-fold increase in the number of Universities, 25 – fold increase in the number of Colleges and 30 – fold increase in the enrolment of students since independence. Yet the access of women to higher education remains limited and restricted. It is not in proportion to the women population. Due to the family responsibilities, the women are not coming to under further education and life long education.

### REFERENCES

1. Bhupendra Yadav, 'Highert Education: New Dilemmas', Economic And Political Weekly, 28 Febraury 2004, Vol XXXIX, pp.880-882.
2. Amartya Sen 'Eduactionin Kerals's Developemnt: Towards New Agenda', Frontline, 19 January 2001, Chennai, pp. 113-166
3. Bakshi, S.R, Womens Rights and Modernization, Jaipur, 1998, pp.124 – 151.
4. Usha Nayar, Education of Girls in India: Progress and Prospectus, NCRET, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 57-60.
5. Qadri, A.W.B., Education and Muslims in India Since Independence, New Delhi, 1998, pp.64-66.
6. Ram Sharma, Women's Education in Ancient and Muslim World, New Delhi, 1996, pp.169-170.
7. Kiran Devendra, Changing Status of Women in India, New Delhi, 1994, pp.140-148.
8. Dew, Women in Tamilnadu –A Profile, Madras, 1986, pp.7-12 and 61-67.
9. Tara Ali Baig, (ed.), Women of India, New Delhi, 1957, pp.151-158 and 175-190.