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## **Present Status of Women in Higher Education in West Bengal: An Appraisal**

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### **Abstract**

*Education plays a crucial role in social- economic development of a country. It can also help in the development of human civilization through reducing poverty, ignorance, exclusion, etc. So education must be provided in every section in our society especially marginalized sections who are the deprived classes in our society. After completion of elementary and secondary education, attention must be paid on higher education. Today India's higher education system is the World's third largest education system after U.S and China. But the enrolment ratio in higher education is not as per expectation. According to ASHE (Annual Status of Higher Education of States & UTs in India) 2013 total enrolment of students in regular mode in higher education in India is around 241.8 lacs, with 55.7% male & 44.2% female enrolment. In India women consist half of the total population, but their enrolment in higher education is lower than men's enrolment. So on the basis of the above discussion, it can be said that that gender gap exist here in higher education system which is not a good indication for us. Present paper attempts to analyze participation and problems of women in higher education in India as well as in West Bengal. This paper also shows some suggestions on the basis of findings to reduce the gender gap in higher education.*

***Key Word: Marginalized section, Higher Education, Gender Gap.***

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**Introduction:** The development of a country depends on its growth of education in society because education is one & only tool which helps to create skilled, responsible, resourceful citizen. Who actively participates in economical, political, social field in achieving economic and technological development of a country. In the development of any country elementary education helps to create the foundation while higher education helps to make human intelligence, decision making efficiency, planning, management skills and power of imagination, etc. Now in 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education is recognized as a powerful instrument of social and economic development of society, it plays a vital role through up gradation of depriving marginalized sections, especially women in society. Because women are the backbone of society, they are the mother of the race, and guardian of future generation, so their education is very much necessary. In word of Swami Vivekananda "women must be educated, for it is the women who mould the next generation and hence the destiny of the country". But present picture is different, according to 2001 census report women are consist 48.2% of the total population, but they have had limited access to higher education.

The present paper attempts to address the participation and problems of women in the field of higher education and on the basis of findings to recommend some suitable suggestions to reduce the gender gap of higher education in West Bengal as well as India.

### **Objectives:**

- i. To identify year wise establishment of girls' colleges in India and West Bengal.
- ii. To highlight year wise women enrolment in respect of total enrolment in higher education in India.

- iii. To review year wise, gender comparison of various faculties in higher education in West Bengal.
- iv. To identify the status of women enrolment in higher education in West Bengal in respect of other states and UTs.
- v. To highlight the government plans and policies for women in higher education.
- vi. To provide some suitable suggestions on the basis of the findings to reduce the gender gap in higher education in India.

**Methodology:** Here, in this study descriptive methods are followed and secondary data has been collected. For this study data and information has been collected from various books, Research Article, Magazines, Research Journal, E-journal, Report of UGC, and Report of the higher Education Department of West Bengal and also from the higher education department of India.

Importance of Higher education for womenThe Indian higher education system has expanded at a fast pace by adding nearly 378 universities, 20 000 colleges, 405338 teachers with 9875000 students, which is more than 8 million, from 2000-01 to 2010-11, while women's colleges are grown up with 2404 and women enrollment was increased within the decade 37.60% to 42.66% in respect of total enrolment. But women consist the half of the human resources. It is very unfortunate to say that women are neglected more or less in our society. These neglecting attitudes towards women in the education sector are also pursued in our society. In the 21st century, nobody can ignore the necessity and urgency of higher education of women. Women's education is needed for both the aspects, individual and social. Higher education helps individual to enhance their confidence, self efficiency, to solve any kind of problems successfully for the benefit of their family, society or for the country as a whole. It can also help to contribute very directly to economic growth and productivity in a country.

Historical context

In the Vedic period of ancient India, education was open equally to men and women, many females distinguished themselves not only as Vedic scholar but also as great philosopher and teacher. Vedic literature praises the birth of a scholarly daughter in these words: "A girl also should be brought up and educated with great effort and care" (Mahanirvana Tantra). There are several references in the epics, smritis and puranas, where women enjoyed an elevated status in society. It is also interesting that girls like boys underwent the upanayana ceremony before entire in the Gurukul education system in ancient India. As per record in Sarvamukramika there were 20 women authors of Rigveda. The mention of female scholars and sages of the vedic age like Gargi, Sulabha, Lopamudra, Maitrai, Apala, Vishivavare, Sikata, Ghosha etc.

Women's education during the medieval period suffered a lot. Historically, the medieval period is an attributed as the 'dark age' for women in India. Even in the Islam religion books had nothing to say about women's education and in that time marketable and madrasas had no women scholars. Women's education in mediaeval India was restricted among the Muslim women due to religion.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century was highly sympathetic towards the exploited position of Indian women's because during the time the condition of women in British ruled India was deplorable. Women's education was also neglected in British India and very few women did acquire education specially who belong to the upper caste. In the last of 18<sup>th</sup> century British Government took the responsibility of educating women. The most significant achievement of the period was a girl's school started for the first time in Bombay in 1824. The Calcutta, Bombay and Madras Universities did not permit admission of girls up to 1875. After 1882 girls were allowed to go for higher education. During British Period there were two major movements which affected the position of women. There were the Social Reform Movement of the nineteenth century and the National Movement of the twentieth century. In short, during the phase prior to independence, an awareness of the need to remove social disabilities of women was created, the doors of education were opened for them.

Analysis:

**Table no: 1 Year wise distribution of colleges in India and West Bengal.**

Year	Total Colleges in India	Total Women Colleges in India	% of Women Colleges in Respect of Total College in India	Women Colleges in West Bengal
1970-71	3604	412	11.43	2
1980-81	4722	609	12.90	8
1990-91	7346	874	11.90	1
2000-01	12806	1578	12.32	4
2010-11	33023	3982	12.06	6
2011-12	35539	4266	12.00	0

Source: UGC Annual Report, Annual Report of Department Of Higher Education in West Bengal.

Table no 1 shows that, maximum number of women's colleges were established in the period of 2011-12 it was 4266. Highest women colleges (12.90%) were established in respect of total college establishment in the period of 1980-81. A large number of women's colleges were established in West Bengal in the period of 1980-81 it was 8. Through my study it was identified that, in West Bengal 22 colleges were established before 1970. Out of 11,721 women's colleges of India, which were established within the year of 1970-71 to 2011-12 Just 21 colleges were established in West Bengal.

**Table no: 2 year wise student enrolment in Higher education in India.**

Year	Male students Enrolment (000)	Female students Enrolment (000)	Total enrolment	% of female students in respect of all Student
1950-51	157	17	174	10
1955-56	252	43	295	14.60
1960-61	468	89	557	16.00
1965-66	849	218	1067	20.40
1970-71	1563	391	1954	20.00
1975-76	2131	595	2426	24.50
1980-81	2003	749	2752	27.20
1985-86	2512	1059	3571	29.60
1990-91	2986	1439	4425	32.50
1995-96	4235	2191	6426	34.10
2000-01	4988	3012	8001	37.60
2005-06	6562	4466	11028	40.50
2011-12	11655	8672	20327	42.66

Source: Dr. Shanjendu Nath, Journal: JBM&SSR, UGC Annual Report various year.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) report 2011-12 reveals that out of 203.27 lakhs (provisional) students enrolled in various courses at all levels in university/colleges & other institutions of higher education. Out of 203.27 lakhs, 86.72 lakhs has been women students, constituting 42.66percent in respect of total enrollment.

**Table no: 3 shows that Teaching staff in Higher Education in India and West Bengal**

Year	States	Male (%)	Female (%)
2010-11	India(7,65,349)	62.8	37.85
	Bihar	84.4	15.6
	Arunachal Pradesh	82.9	17.1
	West Bengal, Odisha & Jharkhand	60	30
2011-12	India(12,47,453)	61	39
	Bihar	80.45	19.55
	Arunachal Pradesh	75.5	24.5
	West Bengal, Odisha & Jharkhand	60	30

2012-13	India	62.7	37.3
	Bihar	84.4	15.6
	Arunachal Pradesh	82.9	17.1
	West Bengal, Odisha & Jharkhand	70.4	29.6

Source: India Human Development report 2011; calculation of teaching staff using data from All India Survey of Higher Education, MHRD 2011.

Above table no 3 shows that in India in the year of 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 the total number of teachers in responding institutions, more than 60% are male teachers and 37% are female teacher. Above table also shows that the lowest gender proportion of the teaching faculty of higher education is recorded in Bihar and second lowest is Arunachal Pradesh. West Bengal, Odisha, Jharjhand has only 30%, approximately female staff of the total teachers available in the states.

**Table no: 4 shows that faculty wise male & female student enrolment in Higher Education in West Bengal.**

Faculty	2009-2010				2010-2011			
	UG		PG		UG		PG	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Arts	53.92	46.07	49.44	50.56	49.2	50.70	49.44	50.56
Science	65.33	34.67	62.57	37.43	87.85	12.15	62.57	37.43
Commerce	76.71	23.28	65.93	34.07	94.79	5.21	65.93	34.07
Education	56.74	43.25	52.19	47.81	80.21	19.79	52.19	47.80
Law	60.69	39.31	49.05	50.95	88.02	11.98	49.04	50.95
Engineering	79.77	20.23	70.10	29.89	95.28	4.71	70.10	29.89
Management	55.95	44.05	67.82	32.17	90.48	9.51	66.19	33.81
Others	60.00	39.99	46.20	53.79	86.76	13.24	46.20	53.79

Source: UGC Annual Report, Annual Report Higher Education Department of West Bengal 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Table no 4 shows that, in both the session 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 female student enrolment is higher than male student enrolment. In the same session male student enrolment in PG level only in the faculty of arts and law is higher than female student enrolment. In case of UG level women enrolment has been increasing in the session 2010-11 in comprise to the session 2009-10 only in the faculty of arts, but in all other cases it is in decreasing trend than the previous session. And it is very surprising that in case of PG level in both the session of women enrolment is more or less in equal position.

**Table No: 5 show that state/UT wise analysis of women enrolment in Higher Education in India.**

	State	Total Enrolment	Female students Enrolment	% of Female students enrolment in respect of total enrolment
1	Goa (UT)	27792	16760	60.31
2	Daman Diu (UT)	949	561	59.11
3	Kerala	508931	298324	58.62
4	A & N Island (UT)	3637	2123	58.37
5	Meghalaya	44006	23849	54.19
6	Pondicherry (UT)	48027	24744	51.52
7	Himachal Pradesh	144023	73676	51.16
8	Chandigarh	67235	33867	50.38
9	Punjab	511678	254194	49.68
10	Nagaland	24207	11882	49.08
11	Sikkim	12757	6126	48.02
12	Mizoram	15848	7583	47.85
13	Assam	279243	133461	47.79
14	D & N Haveli (UT)	2120	996	46.98

15	Tamil Nadu	1854740	861494	46.45
16	Delhi	296837	137524	46.33
17	Jammu & Kashmir	205039	94339	46.01
18	Karnataka	1009972	462707	45.81
19	Haryana	486569	214727	44.13
20	Maharashtra	2413713	1059590	43.90
21	Manipur	36958	16144	43.68
22	Gujarat	1093124	475714	43.52
23	Tripura	47440	20068	42.30
24	Uttar Pradesh	2911104	1201146	41.26
25	Uttarakhand	302326	302326	40.97
26	Odessa	563102	230460	40.93
<b>27</b>	<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>1238799</b>	<b>505674</b>	<b>40.82</b>
28	Lakshadweep (UT)	429	175	40.79
29	Andhra Pradesh	1998541	797992	39.93
30	Jharkhand	431829	166708	38.61
31	Rajasthan	1244018	479421	38.54
32	Madhya Pradesh	1165173	441405	37.88
33	Chhattisgarh	386514	143690	37.18
34	Arunachal Pradesh	20254	7431	36.69
35	Bihar	930544	344026	36.69

Source: UGC Annual Report 2013

India occupied 3<sup>rd</sup> largest education system in the world, but only four states (Goa, Kerala, Meghalaya, Himachal Pradesh) and 4 UTs (Daman, Diu, A&N Island, Pondicherry, & Chandigarh) have been crossed the 50% women enrolment in respect of total enrolment. West Bengal with the population of 91 million is the fourth largest state in India and seventh largest sub-national entity in the world, but it has occupied 27<sup>th</sup> ranks among the states / UTs ranking.

#### Various Plans & policies have been formulated by our Government for women in Higher Education.

- **Coaching Facility:** To provide equal opportunity for all students UGC have been taken the policy of Establishment of residential coaching Academy for SC/ST/Minority and Women in universities and colleges.

i) To run coaching schemes for students at UG/PG level.

ii) Coaching schemes make available for students to prepare for NET and SET.

iii) To give career related coaching for students for entry into services conducted by central and state government.

iv) To provide Coaching for all India and state civil service examinations and UG/PG level examinations.

- **Scholarship Schemes:** Indira Gandhi National scholarship scheme is provided for single girl child for pursue both higher and technical education.

Post Doctoral fellowship is offered for SC/ST/ Minority and Women students.

- **Hostels Facility:** In the XI the five year plan, UGC has been allotted funds to Construction of women's hostels for colleges.

- **Capacity building for Women Managers in Higher Education:** The goal of the policy is to increase the participation of women in higher education management, including faculty, administration and staff for better gender balance and to sensitize the higher education system with quality development.

- **During XI plan, some approaches are being taken**

i) To offer training programs to focus on increasing gender sensitivity issues in respect of women managers.

ii) To provide some facility for women's movement

**Findings:**

1. Out of 11,721 women's colleges only 21 colleges were established in West Bengal.
2. According to report of higher education department of West Bengal Total women's colleges in West Bengal were 55. Out of 55 colleges 34 women's colleges are established before 1971.
3. The lowest gender proportion of the teaching faculty of higher education in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal are followed.
4. In India few women opt for science & commerce streams.
5. In most of the cases it is shown that in both undergraduate & post graduate level women enrolment is lower than boys.
6. In India out of 29 states & 6 union territories only 8 states & UT's cross 50% women enrolment in respect of total enrolment in higher education.
7. According to UGC Annual Report, it shows that West Bengal gets 27<sup>th</sup> position in the ranking of state and UT wise women enrolment.

**Some suggestions for reducing the gender gap in higher education**

1. In school, teachers should create interest in science subject in the school level.
2. Appointment of female teachers in higher education.
3. Requirement of women hostel not only for backward classes, but also for BPL holder general class women.
4. Arrangement of Scholarships for rank hold girls in various disciplines should provide which helps them as well as to motivate society.
5. In colleges & Universities, teaching method should be implemented by grouping together students of the same standard or maturity levels & encouraging group discussion under supervision of an experienced person.
6. Inclusion of various courses, both regular and distance mode like fine arts, fashion designing, costume designing, text tile designing, relating to women, which can help to reduce gender disparity in higher education in India.
7. To provide need based job oriented courses for women.
8. Women higher education policies need to take by our government.
9. The university should encourage students to do research work regarding women's issues.
10. UGC should provide research associate ship in every year for women.

**Conclusion:** Today gender issues are getting more attention. After above discussion, it can be concluded that there is a gender gap in the enrolment of men students as compared to women student in our country as well as in West Bengal. If this gap is not being reduced not only India but also the globe will be facing a big problem because higher education of women plays a crucial role to manifest their inner and outer potentiality, which can make them more efficient to chess challenges of ever changing society.

In India, our government takes various plans and policies to reduce the gender gap at the level of higher education, but those are not sufficient to cope up with the problems of gender inequality. Plans and policy formulation is not a last thing its implementation is very much necessary.

As a result of rapid growth of population, growth of students has been founded on the education system of our country, It is increased from 9.4 million students of the year 1990 to 15 million students of the year 2007 but ratio of student and institution have been decreased. A clean link should be established by the central government with state government to achieve the gender equity through established more institutions and also execute plans and policies related to higher education. Now in respect of this situation women should get some opportunities from enrolment to completion of their courses in higher education because it not only plays a significant role to empower women, but also in engaging self esteem, confidence and equal participation in all work of life.

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