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## GENDER ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

*Dr. Shiva Nand Jha*

Associate Professor. & Head

Department of Geography

Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat

Arunachal Pradesh-791103, INDIA.

### Abstract:

Gender inequality in India refers to health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women in India. When India's population is examined as a whole, women are at a disadvantage in several important ways including literacy and education and especially higher education. Although the constitution of India grants men and women equal rights, gender disparities remain. Arunachal Pradesh is a very late starter in the field of higher education. The first degree college was established here in 1964. The literacy rate of Arunachal Pradesh was almost zero at the time of independence. It is indeed very gratifying to observe that the state has made significant progress in the field of higher education. Literacy for females stands at about 60%, compared to 73.6% for males in Arunachal Pradesh as against the national average of 65.5% and 82.1% for females and males literacy rates respectively according to 2011 census. It is very significant to note that the female literacy rate of Arunachal Pradesh is now ahead of many states of India, e.g. Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar and Jharkhand.

The present paper examines various parameters related to the problems, prospects, opportunities, challenges and the way forward for the emerging status and development of higher education in Arunachal Pradesh with special reference to women's education. The basic consideration of the paper stands at "women's education: society's pride".

**Key Words:** Gender Issues, Higher Education, HEIs, Status of women

### Introduction

Status of women particularly in terms education is perhaps the most significant indicator of the level of cultural development of any society or nation. Sarvapalli Dr. Radhakrishnan, our former President has very emphatically stated, "Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level." Mahatma Gandhi, our father of Nation was very clear about the significance of women's education. He was of the view that educating a man is educating an individual and educating a women is educating a family.

The resolution on the National Policy on Education (1968) stressed the importance of women education in these words, "The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation".

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967) took note of the great contribution made by women to social, political, economic and cultural life and recommended that all appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels ..."

### Methodology

**Research design:** Descriptive research design has been used for conducting this study.

**Objective:** This study aims to elaborate the status, problems, prospects, opportunities, challenges and the way forward for the development of higher education in Arunachal Pradesh with special reference to women's education.

**Hypothesis:** Is the Status and trend of women in context of higher education in Arunachal Pradesh is expected to achieve a new heights of achievement in the days to come?

**Data collection and analysis:** Both primary and secondary sources of data have been collected. Primary data has been collected in the form of general observation as well as interview conducted with female students studying in the colleges and university of Arunachal Pradesh randomly to know their perception on the subject. Secondary sources of data collected from books, journals in the field, and abstracts published by the Department of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Arunachal Pradesh. The collected data mainly from secondary sources have been tabulated and analysed with the help of simple statistical techniques.

## IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

### Arunachal's Locational Profile

Arunachal Pradesh, the erstwhile NEFA, is located in the extreme North-Eastern tip of India between latitudes 26°30' N & 29°30'N and longitude 91°30'E & 97°30'E. spreading over an area of 83,743 Km<sup>2</sup> It is the largest state of N.E. India but with just 13, 83, 727 population it's population density is lowest in the country- 17 persons per Km<sup>2</sup>. The State is strategically very important as it shares International border with Bhutan in the west, Tibet (China) in the north and north-East (1080 Km.) and Myanmar in the East.

The territory that is known as Arunachal Pradesh was often called as hidden land during the British Raj. The process of development in terms of road and communication, education, community development accelerated only after the Chinese aggression in 1962 and developmental activities became visible at massive scale after 1972 when the region was granted a separate administrative status of UT and subsequently Statehood in 1987.

### Role Played by Women in Tribal Societies of A.P.

Arunachal Pradesh is territory of more than twenty five tribal societies. Historically, tribal society was defended by the men and the women were mostly engaged in household works. This distinguished role based on gender was the demand of the situation during ancient time in which the position of male was higher in tribal societies in particular and in most of the societies in general. However, in modern era there seems to be a lots of changes in the role played by female of Arunachal Pradesh. Many female members of almost every society in the state are now educated and engaged in government jobs and serving many departments of the state.

Unlike the general women of other parts of the country the tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh have to take extra burden of earning to run families along with many other responsibilities. The tribal women are playing a varied role in different societies of Arunachal Pradesh. Although there are some changes being observed in their role with the striking of modern era but they are still engaged in:

- Collecting firewood from the community forests for domestic use.
- Look after children at home, cooking food for family and also to wash utensils and cloths.
- Collecting wild edible leaves and forest products for vegetable purpose.
- Selling vegetables and fruits in the market to run families.
- Weaving or making handicrafts in which they are experts.
- Engaged in agricultural activities including shifting cultivation in which many crops are grown for own consumption and for commercial purposes.
- Preparations of rice beer (locally made liquor) generally drink on certain occasion by male members of society.

### Arunachal's Educational Profile (School and Higher Education)

At the time of independence, there were only three primary schools with literacy rate was almost zero of this region. It is interesting to note the first census was conducted in the State in the year 1961 on sample basis (not on a full scale census) due to lack of infrastructure and logistic support; a meagre literacy rate of 7.23% against the national average of 28.30% was recorded. But, over a period of seventy years of independence, a remarkable literacy rate of 66.95% (Census-2011) has been achieved as against the national average of 74.04%. It is more important to note that the state has made remarkably well in terms of female literacy. According to 2011 census many states of India having long tradition of female literacy are now below the female literacy rate of Arunachal Pradesh. In many government degree colleges, the girls have outnumbered the boys.

**Table 1: Literacy Rate of Arunachal Pradesh vis-a-vis all India Since 1951**

Census Yr.	Literacy in A. P. (%)	Literacy India (%)	Literacy Gap (%)	Female Literacy Gap (%)		
				India	A.P.	Gap
1951	(N.A.) below 1%	18.33	-	8.86	-	-
1961	7.23	28.30	<b>21.07</b>	15.35	-	-
1971	11.29	34.45	<b>23.16</b>	21.97	4.43	<b>17.54</b>
1981	25.54	43.53	<b>21.99</b>	29.76	13.39	<b>16.37</b>
1991	41.59	52.23	<b>10.64</b>	39.29	29.69	<b>9.60</b>
2001	54.74	65.38	<b>10.64</b>	54.16	43.53	<b>10.63</b>
2011	66.95	74.04	<b>7.29</b>	65.46	59.57	<b>5.89</b>

Source: Compiled from Census of India, 2011.

### State Government's Initiatives to Promote Girls Education

Enhancement in school education acts as base for the upward entry to higher education. To enhance the female education in the state especially at school stage Central and State Government have implemented various policies and programmes in Arunachal Pradesh. Some of the initiatives may be noted as under:

- National Programme for Education of Girl at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV): In the state there were 47 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) residential schools were established in the year 2004-05 to 2009-10 for girls' education.
- To increase the competition among Tribal girls education in the state, a Pratibha Khoj scheme is carried out in the state on the basis of which a 50 girls are selected from each districts on the merit basis and some financial assistance are given to them for their studies with some conditions. The amount is given to the students in addition to the stipend already available to Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe girls.
- SSA programme is running in the state since 2001-02 whose one of the main objective is to bridge gender gap and bring equality of male and female enrolment, literacy rate etc.

Due to above efforts the gender parity index of Arunachal Pradesh was recorded 0.97 in 2014-15 which was less than 0.50 at the beginning of this millennium.

Education is the empowering tool for all round development of an area and its society. Hence, high priority was given to the education sector of the State. The State government has been showing utmost commitment towards the successful implementation of various flagship programmes initiated by Government of India for the improvement of education in general, and higher education in particular, e.g. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), Right to Education (RTE), Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMs), Universalization of Elementary and Secondary Education and Rastriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) to achieve the new vistas of development in higher education sector of the State.

**Table 2: Higher & Technical Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh during 2017-18**

Sl.No.	Type of Institution	No. of NAAC Accreditation	No. of UGC/AICTE Recognized	Total
1	Central University/Institution	1	4	4
2	Private University	-	NA	9
3	Other Central Institution	-	-	3
4	Govt. Degree College	6	6	17
5	Private Degree College	1	-	7
6	Private Professional College	-	-	3
7	Private B.ED. College	-	-	9
8	Govt. Polytechnic College	-	1	6
9	Private Polytechnic College	-	1	18
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>59</b>

Source: Compiled from Basic Information on Higher & Technical Education Arunachal Pradesh-2017-18

The state had seen the growth of 59 higher education institutions till 2018, under which 17 govt. colleges, 7 private degree colleges, 3 private professional institutions like Homoeopathic medical college and Law College and Fine Arts College, 9 private universities, 9 private B.Ed. colleges, 6 government and one private polytechnic college. The state has 3 other central government institutions, namely, College of Horticulture and Forestry, Pasighat; Central Institute of Himalayan Culture Studies, Dahung-Mon-Bomdila; and National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology, Naharlagun. The total enrolment in the institutes of higher education is now well above 35 thousand.

## Status of Women's Education

Table 1 reflects the status of women literacy. It is indeed encouraging to observe that in most of the government colleges of general education in Arunachal Pradesh, especially in big colleges like J N College, Pasighat and D N Govt. College Itanagar, girls have outnumbered the boys. The dominance of girls in terms of numerical strength as well as university results are far ahead than the boys. The overall percentage share of girls and boys indicates that still the percentage of girls enrolment is slightly less than the boys (47%) but it is due to the inclusion of private institutions and universities. In government run institutions the situation speaks in favour of girls.

Goals under RUSA includes **Excellence, Equity, Access** and some other aspect for the holistic development of higher education. Government of Arunachal Pradesh has given due impetus to the second important goals of RUSA, i.e. 'Equity'. Poor facility for female students in terms of Hostel facility in the existing & established Government Colleges of the state is a big problem. Lack of hostel facility turns a major hurdle in girls' safety and cost issues. To address this problem, Government of Arunachal Pradesh is trying to mobilising resources from every possible source to construct more women hostels in the government colleges to accommodate more numbers of girls. The government has decided to have basic minimum facilities in each government college of the State as its top priority.

The expenditure on Higher education as percentage of total GSDP was 0.48% in 2015-16 which has been on constantly increasing every year. It increased to 0.66%, 0.80% and 1.05% in 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 respectively. Likewise the expenditure on higher education as % of total education was only 7.47% which increased to the tune of 17.06% in 2019-20. In many colleges girls have outnumbered the boys. So, more women colleges are expected in the days to come in view of the ever-increasing budget allocation on higher education and a very positive attitude of the government towards women's higher education.

## Identifying the Women's Problems of Higher Education in A.P.

It is evident from the above discussion that the higher education in Arunachal Pradesh is moving in the right direction especially in terms of women's education. However, being a very late starter in the field of higher education, the state is required to address some basic problems associated with it. Important among them are:

- Inadequate physical infrastructure especially girl's common room, number of washrooms etc.
- Very limited number of Women's colleges.
- Less focus on the establishment of excellent institutions like IITs and IIMs to enable our girls' students to have their quality technical education in the state itself.
- Admission policy based on catchment area and not on merit restricted our girl students in selecting their choice of institution. Special provision for reservation of meritorious girls students need to be introduced.
- Theoretical Based Syllabus and no scope for creative courses restrict the flourishing of girls' talent.
- Aimlessness of students in general education
- Commercialization of higher education in private institution

## Future Prospects of women's Higher Education

In Arunachal Pradesh social, economic, political and technological conditions are changing with an accelerated pace, which will have far reaching impact on future. Some future prospects of higher education especially in favour of girls in the state may be noted as under:

- Diversification is taking place to meet the new needs. Specialised institutions have started coming up to meet the specialised needs of women population.
- Issues of access, communication, and technology are intertwined which would gain lot of importance in the years to come.
- Higher educational institutions will sign MOU with industries and with different foreign universities. As a result, the higher education institutes of the state may have campus and study centres of foreign institutions. Students, especially girls, will also benefit from these by getting scholarship and opportunities to learn in foreign universities in a safe and cost effective manner.

## The Way Forward

Before coming to the conclusive part of this paper, it seems appropriate to outline few points relevant for the betterment of higher education in our country in general which is equally meaningful for North-east India including Arunachal Pradesh:

- Our policy makers must give top priority to quality enhancement in higher education with due consideration on women's higher education.
- Specialization in education need to be supported. Considering the complex and pluralistic higher education scenario in our State, we need to have a multi-layered system of academic management in which women's equal participation must be ensured.
- Relevance to employability is the need of the hour. The courses of higher education must be linked with work and employment.
- Higher education institutes especially the universities should design course programmes relevant to lifelong learning and multiple career goals. Learning process must move towards off campus, i.e., to the home, the workplace, and in the remote places. It would help a lot in the career advancement of our women learners.
- Equity, access and excellence- the ultimate goals of higher education must not be compromised. However, greater emphasis must be given to the 'Equity' aspect.
- Issues like women education and empowerment, disadvantaged section of society, our rich tradition and culture and human values must be protected in our policies.

## Some Other Aspects of Women's Empowerment in A.P.

**Property Rights:** It is very discouraging to note that traditionally women has no direct share in the parents 'property in most of the tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh. However, the category of property has significantly changed in modern context but in terms of immovable property the right of women is still restricted. This situation demands change.

**Decision Making:** The 73rd constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, which provides Panchayati Raj a constitutional status, paved the way for the active participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institution by reserving one-third seats for them. It has been a belief that ensuring partnerships of woman with the Panchayati Raj Institutions would enable them to participate effectively and independently. The overall situation of women against their constitutional share of one-third is quite impressive. As per 2008 data the strength of women representative is evident from following table-3.

**Table 3: PRI's Elected members strength in Arunachal Pradesh, 2008**

Sl. No.	Level of PRIs	Male	Female	Total
1.	Gram Panchayats	4167	3181(43.3%)	7348
2.	Anchal Samitis	1130	649 (36.5%)	1779
3.	Zila Parishad	101	60(37.3)	161
<b>Total</b>		<b>5358</b>	<b>3890 (41.9%)</b>	<b>9288</b>

**APST women: Identity and Gender Inequality-** an article by **Nellie N Manpoong** published in a newspaper on 22 OCT 2018 truly reflect the gloomy picture of women's status in Arunachal Pradesh. Let me quote the text- "The status of a child born to an Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribe (APST) woman and a non-APST man has been challenged time and again by anybody who is of 'pure' APST blood. A lady who works for the welfare of women and children was of the opinion that if a child born to an APST woman and non-APST man was not entitled to anything then the same laws should apply to APST men who marry non-APST women as well. How does the society then decide whose name the child carries? The law provided the option of adoption. During such circumstances, the child's maternal uncle or the next husband of the child's mother steps up to the plate and gives their name to the child through relative adoption or state adoption".

## Conclusion:

Without going in much details let me conclude by saying that "Women's Education is Society's Pride". Arunachal Pradesh has made tremendous progress in the field of Higher Education in particular and in the field of literacy and education in general. Due consideration for overall development of women's status and education shows great promises for the days to come.

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