Status of Women’s in Higher Education

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Introduction

In India about 60 percent of the population lives in about six lakh villages and half of them live below the poverty line. Villagers living within on and the outskirts of the forests depend upon forest for their livelihood. Among the villagers who are mostly dependent on the forest are the tribal people. There are about six crores tribals in India out of whom most of them are either marginal farmer of landless people. In the rural areas, women mostly act as helpers to men in agricultural activities. They do such works as harvesting, weeding, planting, threshing, manuring, etc. these are classified are agricultural laborers. Sherwan (1984) stated that agriculture and allied activities provide employment to the largest no. of women workers. In 1971 the no. of women employed was 405,000. This increased to 581,600 in 1979. However, in terms of the proportions of women to total person employed there was a decline from 37.6 to 35.9 percent. This is a significant indicator of the shift of female workers from agriculture to non-agricultural work. Among the tribal population, the works of the household collection of fuel wood, cultivation, etc have been equally divided between male and females (Jha and Sen, 1991). The entry of women into formal education system began in 19th century. Although the government was making efforts for girls education. Social reform movements of the 19th and 20th century played a vital role in the upliftment of women.

At the international level, prohibition against sex discrimination was first articulated in the United Nations Charter of 1945 and later reiterated in the universal declaration of human rights of 1948. Since then, virtually all human rights instruments have reinforced and extended protections against discrimination. The international covenant on civil and political rights adopted in 1966 guarantees equal protection of the law to both sexes. The international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights also adopted in 1966 promises women equality of status. The fourth world conference on women, held at Beijing brought us further forward by reaffirming gender equality as a fundamental pre-requisite for social justice (Kidwai, 2011).

Perhaps the most important conceptual advance in the international law of women’s rights is the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW), effective 1981, which provides that women be given rights equal to those of men on equal terms. The preamble of (CEDAW) maintains that ‘the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.'
Higher Education and Women

Education in India especially higher education in India is indeed one amongst other elements which has captured the world's attention. The Vedas, Puranas, Ayurveda, Yoga, Kautilya's and Arthasastra are some of the significant traditional Indian knowledge system which even today, India can boast of. It is certainly not an overstatement to say that the history of higher education in India is long, pregnant with its copious past.

Higher education in India is defined as the education attained after the completion of 12 years of schooling. Higher education for women has gained a wider role and responsibility all over the world. Today, in the 21st century, one cannot afford to ignore the importance of higher education for women any longer. The reason for its need and urgency is that there is no biological difference in the systems of males and females. Need for higher education among women assumes all the more importance in countries like India where colonialism has remained a great force hindering education for the general masses and for the women in particular. Higher education of women in India is indeed necessary. Whether to provide society with competent men and women trained in agriculture, arts, medicine, science and technology and various other professions, or to strive to promote equality and social justice or whether to reduce social and cultural differences through diffusion of education, diffusing higher education of women in India is certainly that hidden key (Bharathi 2009).

Strategies to Enhance Women's Status

The country like India has a rich and glorious tradition of higher education since ancient times. Independence brought with it a huge rise in the social demand for higher education. The early 1990s brought about radical changes in attitudes and approaches towards higher education. The economic reform policies of the 1990s created an environment conducive to the rapid growth of private universities in the country and the number increased to 90 by 2011. A range of approaches exists for promoting gender equity in higher education. The review of change strategies, however, suggests a continued strong reliance on liberal feminist perspectives. Enhanced recruitment, increasing availability of team sports, implementation and enforcement of antidiscrimination policies, "grooming mentoring" and professional development to widen the pool of qualified applicants all reflect liberal feminist conceptualizations of power as a resource to be more evenly distributed between men and women in higher education (Allan. 2011). Other types of feminist influences are evident in common strategies that include the establishment and support of women's student centers, women's colleges, feminist research and writing groups, advocacy of collective decision making and generative approaches to leadership, networks of women, a focus on community, and empowerment of women Research has unveiled the fact that there are few influencing factors which supports in the success and failure in completing higher education in women (Bharathi, 2009).

Success

- Women are strongly motivated to succeed in the education stream.
The merit basis of the education system permits females to excel. Prejudice against women's education has been reduced. Higher Education has come to be considered equivalent to a bride's "dowry". Women’s universities promote women's Higher Education. Women’s expectations for education based employment are high. Some Higher Education courses provide scholarship facilities for women. Female students have been provided with residential facilities in some areas.

Failure

Female students have difficulties in access to transport facilities in general. Sexual harassment as well as occasional student violence hinders female student’s completion of higher education. Marriage in many cases leads to early withdraw. Gender stereotyping inhibits completion of studies. Financial constraints can cause withdrawal from the education stream. Part-time work to earn living interferes with studies.

Current Status in Higher Education

The greatest movement toward numerical parity is among students, where women currently account for 57 percent of undergraduates and are pursuing degrees in a range of disciplines across virtually every type of postsecondary institution. In fact, women have become the majority of degree earners in nearly every level of postsecondary education, except Ph.D. and M.D. programs. Representation of faculty, staff, and administrators reflects persistent gaps in equity for women in higher-ranking positions such as full professorships or provost and in doctoral-granting research universities. The same trends apply to the representation of women senior administrators, presidents, and members of governing boards (Cook and Cordova, 2007). In 2013, about 12 million women are enrolled in undergraduate courses, but few continue to professional courses, 6,00,000 women were enrolled for diploma courses, the latest year for which data is available. Even fewer women sign on for PhDs; only 40% of PhD candidates are female. It remains the case, however, that women are heavily concentrated in particular fields, earning a majority of their degrees in health professions, psychology, education, other social sciences, and the humanities. Patterns of inequity are typically amplified for women of color. Lack of parity also is noted in research related to student engagement and co-curricular activities, including athletics.

According to MHRD report (2016-17) total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 34.6 million with 18.6 million boys and 16 million girls. Girls constitute 46.2% of the total enrolment. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 24.5%, which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 25.4% and for females, it is 23.5%. For Scheduled Castes, it is 19.9% and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 14.2% as compared to the national GER of 24.5%. Uttar Pradesh comes at number one with the highest student enrolment followed by Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. Scheduled Casts students constitute 13.9% and Scheduled Tribes students 4.9% of the total enrolment. 33.75% students belong to
Other Backward Classes. 4.7% students belong to Muslim Minority and 1.97% from other Minority Community. The estimated total number of teachers is 15,8,813. Out of which more than half about 61% are male teachers and 39% are female teachers.

Conclusion

The world is moving towards greater democracy and market-oriented policies in an effort to improve human development. In this climate, more opportunities should be provided for women to obtain executive appointments. The efforts of specialized agencies, of women's groups and the resolutions of international conferences all contribute towards the recruitment of women for such positions. Clear trends to strengthen the empowerment of highly qualified women are visible in the fields of research, training, advocacy and networking and must be further strengthened. These operate both in the higher education domain itself and also in professional activities. The spin-off effects resulting from increased access and participation are life-long and have flow-on benefits for women in all social groups.

A major civilization transformation has taken place throughout the 20th century, the evolving empowerment of women together with the recognition of women’s rights as human rights. 8th march is universally acknowledged as international women’s Day which means that the women of today has come of age and wants to lead a dignified life of equality with man. The slogan raised today by the women of the world is equality. Dignity and self respect is what we want. This slogan is indicatives of the new awareness among women the world over.

REFERENCES