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## Women's education- society's pride: The context of Arunachal Pradesh

*Dr. Shiva Nand Jha*

*[snjbrj@yahoo.com](mailto:snjbrj@yahoo.com)*

*Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh*

### ABSTRACT

*The gender bias in educational attainment results from the discriminatory attitudes towards the girl child and their education. A number of studies have shown that societies and families are immensely benefitted when women are educated. In Arunachal Pradesh, educational infrastructures continue to be inadequate, however, its expansion particularly since 1980s has been remarkable. Though gender bias can't be denied in case of Arunachal's education but the recent trend and progress in women's education in the state show great promises in the days to come. The present paper is an attempt towards understanding the status, problems, opportunities, challenges and viable measures related to women's higher education in Arunachal Pradesh- a tribal dominated state of mountainous eco-system. The basic consideration of the paper stands at "women's education: society's pride".*

**Keywords**— *Gender Issues, Higher Education, HEIs, Status of women*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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, yet gender disparities remain a crude reality. Sarvapalli Dr. Radhakrishnan our former President and a philosopher of eminence 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 woman 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 ..."

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 encouraging and 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 male's 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 recent data suggests that in many HEIs girls have outnumbered the boys in terms numerical strengths as well as their academic performances.

### 2. 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 height 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.

### 3. 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 to look after the household work. However, in modern era there seems to be a lot 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. 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.
- Weaving or making handicrafts in which they are experts.
- Engaged in agricultural activities especially in shifting cultivation.
- Preparations of rice beer (locally made liquor).

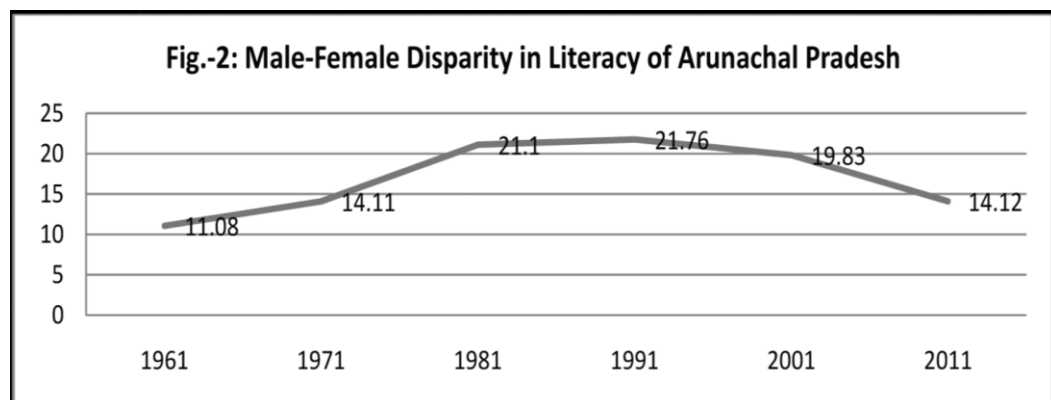
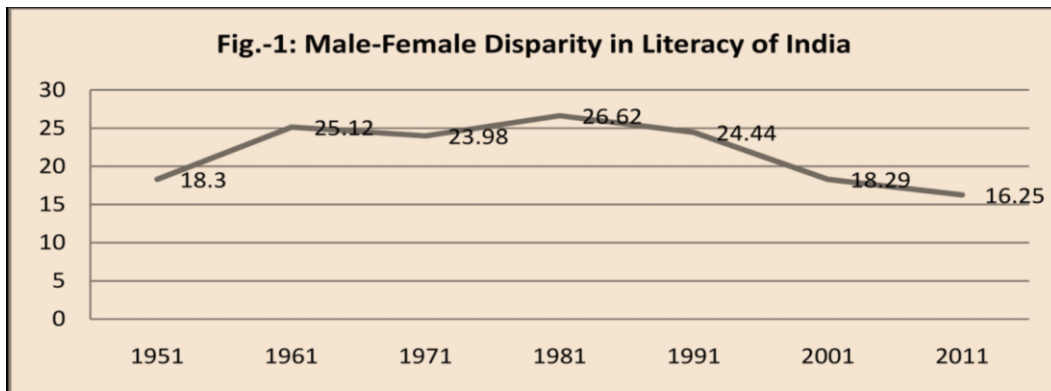
### 4. EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

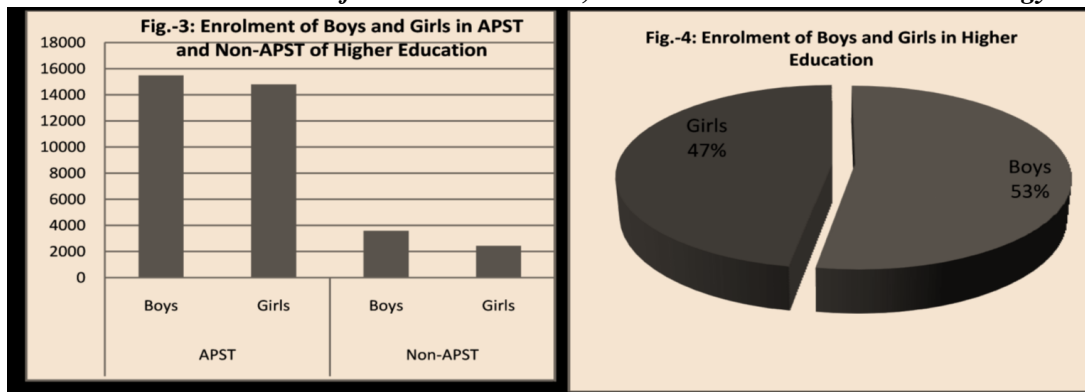
At the time of independence, there were only three primary schools with literacy rate almost zero. A meagre literacy rate of 7.23% against the national average of 28.30% was recorded in 1961 census. But, over a period of seventy years of independence, a remarkable literacy rate of 66.95% (Census-2011) has been achieved by this state. 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.

**Table 1: Literacy Rate of Arunachal Pradesh in 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





### 5. STATE GOVERNMENT’S INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE GIRLS’ 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:

- (a) National Programme for Education of Girl at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
- (b) 47 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya (KGBV) residential schools were established in the year 2004-05 to 2009-10 for girls’ education.
- (c) Pratibha Khoj scheme is carried out in the state on the basis of which 50 girls are selected from each district on merit basis and some financial assistances are given to them for their studies. The amount is given to the students in addition to the stipend already available to tribe girls.
- (d) SSA programme is running in the state since 2001-02 whose one of the main objectives 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. 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, 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 Uchchatra Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) to achieve the new vistas of development in higher education sector of the State.

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

S. 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. Category-wise break up is evident from table-2.

### 6. STATUS OF WOMEN’S EDUCATION

Table-1 and fig. 2 to 4 reflects the status of women literacy. It is very gratifying to observe that in most of the government colleges of general education in Arunachal Pradesh 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 graph of percentage share of girls and boys (fig.3 & 4) 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 financial issues. To address this problem, Government of Arunachal Pradesh is trying to mobilise resources from every possible source to construct more women hostels in the Government Colleges.

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% was increased to the tune of 17.06% in 2019-20.

## **7. WOMEN SPECIFIC PROBLEMS IN A.P.**

Arunachal Pradesh is required to address some basic problems associated girls education. Important among them are:

- Inadequate physical infrastructure especially girl's common room, adequate washrooms etc.
- Very limited number of women's colleges.
- Less focus on the establishment of excellent institutions like IITs and IIMs.
- Admission policy based on catchment area and very less number on merit basis.
- Aimlessness of students in general education.
- Commercialization of higher education by private institutions.

## **8. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF WOMEN'S HIGHER EDUCATION**

Some future prospects of higher education especially in favour of girls in Arunachal Pradesh may be noted as under:

- 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 are expected to 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.

## **9. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

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:

- Top priority should be given to quality enhancement in higher education with due consideration on women's' higher education by our policy makers.
- Specialization in education need to be supported.
- 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. Issues like women education and empowerment, disadvantaged section of society, our rich tradition and culture and human values must be protected in our policies.

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 Arunachal Pradesh in the days to come.

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