



## **A Comparative study of Women's Participation in Higher Education**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In India, regional imbalances reflected in the economic disparity among states, education and healthcare access and infrastructural development. Women education and empowerment are the pillars of development. Women education ensures the holistic and long-term development. It incorporates equitable and increased access to technical and vocational education and training, higher education and research with due attention to quality education. This paper is a comparative study to find out women's participation levels in higher education in Northeast region in compare to other eight richest states of India and it will focus to explore the underlying factors in the disparity among eight states of Northeast region namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim with that of other eight richest states namely Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan. The entire region of Northeast India is basically disadvantaged, geographically situated in the most remote part of India, particularly in terms of socio-economic, educational, communication and infrastructure. This paper also examines nature of geographical barriers that hinder women's participation level in higher education in this region. For this study I employ two indicators, namely, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Females and Gender Parity Index (GPI) to measure the absolute and relative participation of women in the higher education from 2011 to 2017 in Northeast region and other eight richest states of India.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education plays a significant role to improve the quality of school education and increase access to higher

education. While the number of women participation in public life has increased, their participation is often relegated to the areas deemed suitable for women and at lower levels of the occupational ladder. Such type of gender inequalities arise from discriminatory socio-cultural values, norms, and attitudes and educational opportunities (Indiresan, 2002).

Importance of Higher education for everyone is an undeniable fact and it is so important particularly for women. Most of the educational programmes and international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) mainly focused on the importance of women's education to boost household nutrition, decline in fertility rate as well as infant mortality and for improving the health and education of children (Goonsekere & Silva-De-Alwis, 2005). But if we look at the internal distribution of students in the higher education system, there are still significant differences between men and women (Ghara, 2016). Women are very much concentrated in particular segments of the system (Stromquist, 2001). This seminar paper is a comparative study of the expansion of higher education among Indian women in the region of North East States in the light of All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data with that of the other eight richest states namely Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan. For this study, I consider Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of females in higher education and Gender Parity Index (GPI) in higher education as two indicators to measure the female students' enrolment in higher education in Northeast states and other eight richest states of India. Gender issues in Northeast India in the field of education or educational practices are particularly noticeable. The entire region of

Northeast India is basically disadvantaged, geographically situated in the most remote part of India, particularly in terms of socio-economic, educational, communication and infrastructure field. For this reason, the Indian government and state governments of Northeast India have established institutions for rapid improvements in educational arena leading to significant progression in higher education during recent times. Northeast India is a geographically disadvantaged region located at the extreme point of northern India. The region is popularly known for ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, with more than 160 Scheduled Tribes belonging to five different ethnic groups and over 400 distinct tribal and sub-tribal groupings speaking about 175 languages, added to which is a large and diverse non-tribal population concentrated mainly in Assam and Tripura (Bhaumik, 2009). The Northeastern States (NES) have some common characteristics, such as tribal concentrations, hilly areas, highly rural based, a predominance of agriculture, industrial backwardness, etc.

Women education and empowerment are the pillars of development. Women education ensures the holistic and long-term development. It incorporates equitable and increased access to technical and vocational education and training, higher education and research with due attention to quality education. The GER and GPI both are important as they influence transition rates over time (Tilak & Biswal, 2015; UNICEF, 2014). So, this comparative study wants to investigate the degree of proximity between geographical hindrances and economic backwardness of Northeast states with the expansion of women higher education scenario of this region under the purview of AISHE data for last 7 years, the study is based particularly on female GER and GPI of this region and other eight richest states of India.

### **Objective and Methodology:**

The objective of this seminar paper is to find out nature of women GER and GPI in Northeast states in compare to other eight richest states' statistics of women GER and GPI of India in higher education level. And also to identify the factors that determine the overall levels of women's participation in higher education in terms of female GER and GPI. This analysis is carried out for 8 Northeast states and other

eight richest states of India using AISHE data from 2011-12 to 2016-17.

The United Nations constructed this statistical measure of female GER in higher education. It is used to indicate the capacity of higher education system to enroll female students of a particular age group. Higher value of GER of females indicates a higher degree of participation whether the pupils belong to the official age group or not. On the other hand, GPI is a socio-economic index. It is used to measure the relative enrolment of females and males in a certain stage of education (primary, secondary, higher secondary, under-graduation, post-graduation, etc.). This index is released by UNESCO. GPI is significant indicator of women empowerment in the society. In the remaining article, I make a comparative analysis of female GER and GPI in higher education in 8 Northeast states and other eight richest states of India.

### **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in North East States and other eight states of India**

The Indian higher education has witnessed many fold increase in its institutional progress since independence. During 1950 and 2017, the number of universities has increased from 20 to about 913, colleges from 500 to 40,796 and the teachers from 15,000 to nearly 13.51 lakhs. As a result, the enrolment of students has increased from a mere 1.00 lakh in 1950 to over 310 lakhs in 2016-2017 (AISHE, 2016-2017). The institutional capacity expansion in terms of number of universities/colleges and teachers has provided better access to the students to post higher secondary education. The access to higher education is measured through gross enrolment ratio, (GER) this is a ratio of persons enrolled in higher educational institutions to total population of the persons from 18 to 23 years. At present, the estimate of GER is generally based on the data collected by Ministry of Education, Government of India from the educational institutions.

While the gross enrolment rate at aggregate level is about 24.5% in 2016-17 at overall level, it varies significantly across the states and districts. The present study brings out the regional disparities in the region of Northeast States and other eight richest states in Gross enrolment ratio.

**GER: Year- 2011-12**

Sl. No	State	Female	State	Female	National
1.	Assam	14.8	Maharashtra	24.3	17.9
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	20.2	Tamil Nadu	36.8	
3.	Manipur	29.9	Gujarat	14.7	
4.	Meghalaya	18.5	Karnataka	22.7	
5.	Mizoram	18.3	Uttar Pradesh	17.2	
6.	Nagaland	13.4	Andhra Pradesh	26.4	
7.	Sikkim	27.4	West Bengal	11.8	
8.	Tripura	10.2	Rajasthan	15.5	

Source: AISHE

**GER: Year- 2012-13**

Sl. No	State	Female	State	Female	National
1.	Assam	13.7	Maharashtra	20.6	20.1
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	19.8	Tamil Nadu	38.7	
3.	Manipur	29.0	Gujarat	16.2	
4.	Meghalaya	19.7	Karnataka	24.5	
5.	Mizoram	22.0	Uttar Pradesh	20.4	
6.	Nagaland	12.8	Andhra Pradesh	23.6	
7.	Sikkim	26.9	West Bengal	13.2	
8.	Tripura	11.7	Rajasthan	14.8	

Source: AISHE

**GER: Year- 2013-14**

Sl. No	State	Female	State	Female	National
1.	Assam	15.2	Maharashtra	23.9	22.0
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	26.6	Tamil Nadu	40.4	
3.	Manipur	37.6	Gujarat	17.2	
4.	Meghalaya	18.9	Karnataka	25.6	
5.	Mizoram	22.7	Uttar Pradesh	23.0	
6.	Nagaland	13.9	Andhra Pradesh	26.7	
7.	Sikkim	29.3	West Bengal	14.4	
8.	Tripura	14.4	Rajasthan	17.8	

Source: AISHE

**GER: Year- 2014-15**

Sl. No	State	Female	State	Female	National
1.	Assam	14.3	Maharashtra	25.6	23.2
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	27.9	Tamil Nadu	43.4	
3.	Manipur	34.8	Gujarat	17.5	
4.	Meghalaya	21.2	Karnataka	26.0	
5.	Mizoram	23.0	Uttar Pradesh	25.5	
6.	Nagaland	16.1	Andhra Pradesh	27.3	
7.	Sikkim	32.4	West Bengal	15.8	
8.	Tripura	13.5	Rajasthan	17.9	

Source: AISHE

**GER: Year- 2015-16**

Sl. No	State	Female	State	Female	National
1.	Assam	14.7	Maharashtra	27.6	23.5
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	28.5	Tamil Nadu	42.4	
3.	Manipur	33.1	Gujarat	18.3	
4.	Meghalaya	21.1	Karnataka	25.9	
5.	Mizoram	23.0	Uttar Pradesh	24.9	
6.	Nagaland	15.6	Andhra Pradesh	26.9	
7.	Sikkim	38.5	West Bengal	16.2	
8.	Tripura	14.0	Rajasthan	18.5	

Source: AISHE

**GER: Year- 2016-17**

Sl. No	State	Female	State	Female	National
1.	Assam	16.6	Maharashtra	28.2	24.5
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	28.5	Tamil Nadu	45.6	
3.	Manipur	34.7	Gujarat	17.3	
4.	Meghalaya	23.8	Karnataka	26.6	
5.	Mizoram	23.7	Uttar Pradesh	25.3	
6.	Nagaland	17.0	Andhra Pradesh	28.4	
7.	Sikkim	40.8	West Bengal	17.2	
8.	Tripura	16.8	Rajasthan	19.3	

Source: AISHE

**Gender Parity Index (GPI) in North East States and eight other States of India**

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a statistical tool used to measure gender equity and equal women participation in higher education. The formula for calculation of GPI is like, division of the total number of female students enrolled in a particular level of education by the number of male students enrolled in the same level of education. The GPI ranges from 0 to 1, where a GPI value is 1, it indicates complete parity between male and female students enrolment. The Gender Parity Index plays a vital role in higher education in India. In short, it can be said that Gender parity index is an essential tool for promoting and assuring women's participation through gender equity in Indian higher education system. It also helps to find out the barriers that prevent women from accessing higher education and encourages policymakers and educationists to develop targeted interventions to reduce these barriers of women's participation in higher education. By monitoring progress towards women's participation and gender equality and improving the quality of higher education, the GPI can contribute towards achieving gender parity in Indian higher education system. AISHE data shows the GPI for higher education in India is about 0.94 point in 2016-17 (AISHE, 2016-17) indicating a slight lower enrolment of females than males. It is also the fact that GPI in all Indian states and union territories have a wide range of variations, with some states showing higher gender parity than others states and union territories. Variations of GPI are also applicable for SC and ST students across different states and union territories, with some states showing higher gender parity for these groups than others states and UTs. According to AISHE data 2016-17, GPI of Lakshadweep is 2.60 in 2016-17 and GPI of Kerala is 1.40 show a significantly higher enrolment of female students compared to male students, while in others states, such as GPI of Gujarat is 0.75 and GPI of Andhra Pradesh is 0.78 have lower enrolment of female students compared to male students in these states. The state of Kerala has the highest GPI of 1.40 for all categories that indicates there are 40 percent more female students than male students in higher education in Kerala. Likewise, Lakshadweep has the highest GPI of 2.60 for all categories, indicating a significant gender gap and better women's participation in higher education in this union territory.

**GPI: Year- 2011-12**

Sl. No	State	All Categories	State	All Categories	India
1.	Assam	1.01	Maharashtra	0.86	0.88
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.89	Tamil Nadu	0.85	
3.	Manipur	0.98	Gujarat	0.81	
4.	Meghalaya	1.13	Karnataka	0.91	
5.	Mizoram	0.93	Uttar Pradesh	0.98	
6.	Nagaland	0.74	Andhra Pradesh	0.79	
7.	Sikkim	0.95	West Bengal	0.76	
8.	Tripura	0.70	Rajasthan	0.75	

Source: AISHE

**GPI: Year- 2012-13**

Sl. No	State	All Categories	State	All Categories	India
1.	Assam	0.97	Maharashtra	0.83	0.89
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	1.08	Tamil Nadu	0.85	
3.	Manipur	0.94	Gujarat	0.80	
4.	Meghalaya	1.06	Karnataka	0.94	
5.	Mizoram	0.98	Uttar Pradesh	1.09	
6.	Nagaland	0.77	Andhra Pradesh	0.76	
7.	Sikkim	1.23	West Bengal	0.77	
8.	Tripura	0.71	Rajasthan	0.69	

Source: AISHE

**GPI: Year- 2013-14**

Sl. No	State	All Categories	State	All Categories	India
1.	Assam	0.92	Maharashtra	0.85	0.92
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	1.04	Tamil Nadu	0.89	
3.	Manipur	0.99	Gujarat	0.80	
4.	Meghalaya	0.96	Karnataka	0.96	
5.	Mizoram	0.99	Uttar Pradesh	1.13	
6.	Nagaland	0.82	Andhra Pradesh	0.76	
7.	Sikkim	1.11	West Bengal	0.79	
8.	Tripura	0.72	Rajasthan	0.83	

Source: AISHE

**GPI: Year- 2014-15**

Sl. No	State	All Categories	State	All Categories	India
1.	Assam	0.93	Maharashtra	0.86	0.92
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.97	Tamil Nadu	0.92	
3.	Manipur	0.94	Gujarat	0.79	
4.	Meghalaya	1.07	Karnataka	0.97	
5.	Mizoram	0.98	Uttar Pradesh	1.04	
6.	Nagaland	1.06	Andhra Pradesh	0.78	
7.	Sikkim	1.14	West Bengal	0.83	
8.	Tripura	0.67	Rajasthan	0.82	

Source: AISHE

**GPI: Year- 2015-16**

Sl. No	State	All Categories	State	All Categories	India
1.	Assam	0.90	Maharashtra	0.86	0.92
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.99	Tamil Nadu	0.92	
3.	Manipur	0.94	Gujarat	1.02	
4.	Meghalaya	1.04	Karnataka	0.99	
5.	Mizoram	0.91	Uttar Pradesh	1.03	
6.	Nagaland	1.10	Andhra Pradesh	0.77	
7.	Sikkim	1.05	West Bengal	0.85	
8.	Tripura	0.70	Rajasthan	0.85	

Source: AISHE

**GPI: Year- 2016-17**

Sl. No	State	All Categories	State	All Categories	India
1.	Assam	0.93	Maharashtra	0.88	0.94
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.97	Tamil Nadu	0.95	
3.	Manipur	0.98	Gujarat	0.75	
4.	Meghalaya	1.03	Karnataka	1.01	
5.	Mizoram	0.94	Uttar Pradesh	1.03	
6.	Nagaland	1.06	Andhra Pradesh	0.78	
7.	Sikkim	1.20	West Bengal	0.87	
8.	Tripura	0.78	Rajasthan	0.89	

Source: AISHE

**Concluding remarks:**

The concept of Quality life is very much connected with the concept of Higher education. Consequently, all the countries in the world are promoting higher education and are also trying to achieve gender parity parallelly. Government of India has recently taken several initiatives to achieve gender parity in higher education. Such as, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has started 'UDAAN' project under the guidance of MHRD to address the issue of low female enrolment in prestigious engineering institutions and to find out the reasons of the teaching gap between school education and engineering entrance examination. This article analyzed data on higher education for 8 North East states and other eight richest states under AISHE data from 2011-12 to 2016-17. Regional variations are there among eight states of North east region in GER. Women's participation in higher education in the form of GER is satisfactory in some North East states. Students' enrolment in Higher education concentrated towards under-graduate level mainly in arts stream in compare to postgraduate, technical education and professional courses. North East States are in better position in

terms of GPI at undergraduate level. This study also shows that economic burden, household workload, problems of employability, distance of colleges in North East region have played a negative role in improving GER of female students.

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