

TWO-DAY DELIBERATIONS ON
**Gender and Higher
Education in India**

JANUARY 30-31, 2023



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION POLICY
राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक योजना एवं प्रशासन संस्थान
**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION**
(Deemed to be University)
17-B, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi – 110016, INDIA



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CONCEPT NOTE

Gender and Higher Education in India

Professor Manisha Priyam
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Introduction

The issue of gender in higher education is an important theme of inquiry and policy engagement in India. It helps reinforce aspects of equity and social inclusion in the current debates on reforming higher education. The current policy focus on reforms in the sector are on the one hand devoted to increasing access—transforming higher education from an arena of ‘elite participation’ to one of ‘mass- access’. As per the All- India Survey of Higher Education, Gross Enrolment Ratios in Higher Education have witnessed an overall rise, with a near gender- parity in enrolments. Yet, it is only a quarter of the eligible youth population of ages 18-23 years who are enrolled in higher education in India (with a GER of nearly 27 percent, nearly 72 percent are outside the net of higher education). Thus, it is the latter aspect of mass access has a special appeal to countries such as India, and in the Global South—these are countries that have experienced direct colonial domination, and its power play. Modern public universities are an outcome of the contested colonial power politics. Democratic transformations and the process of nation state building have had an emphasis on building institutions of higher education following formal independence from colonial rule. However, most data indicators and sociological studies point to the relatively small base of participation, and the persistence of higher education as an ‘elite sphere’. Gender is an important determinant of social exclusion, in India and in the Global South, although there are notable variations in the region on how this plays out. Further, there is an overlay of social and cultural identities, and of economic categories, increasing gendered vulnerabilities in meaningful participation in higher education in the sub-continent.

Understanding Variation and Segregation

This theme of variation has special significance to understanding the specific nature of persisting inequalities in higher education, especially as it relates to gender. Table 1 shows some of this variation across countries in the South Asia Region—Sri Lanka and India show higher participation for females. More than half the females enrolled in state universities in Sri Lanka are female. In Bangladesh, while the achievements on the MDGs have been great, that on tertiary education is not that robust. Within

India, girls belonging to marginalised social castes and tribes (referred to as the scheduled castes and tribes) have significantly lower GERs—SC female at 23.3%; and ST females are the worst off at 17.5%. Seen in context, rural scheduled caste girls, especially in the fifth scheduled areas of mainland India have the lowest opportunities for higher education. So, the gender-parity ‘catch-up’ is by and large an elite phenomenon of urban, upper caste and other backward caste category girls. There are regional variations as well—the Southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and the West Indian state of Maharashtra do significantly better than populous North Indian states such as Bihar. In urban areas, where there has been an enhanced supply of government (public funded) and low-cost private schools, school completion rates are high, and there is high aspiration amongst girls for going to college and to institutions of higher education. Notwithstanding the provision of ‘free’ public higher education, it is seldom the case that girls from segregated zones of urban marginalization make it to elite urban colleges. Informal social and cultural pressures keep girls from such zones of urban stigma away from participation in an ostensibly free and fair public system.

Further, North-Eastern states in India speak of processes of gender exclusion that are at variance from mainstream Indian states, especially in their cultural and linguistic differences, differing experiences of peace and conflict, and within the North Eastern states, there are reported differences between the hill regions and others.

Table 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Tertiary Education, South Asia, 2018/19

Country	Total	Female
Afghanistan	9.7	4.9
Bangladesh	24	17
India	26.3	26.4
Nepal	13.3	13.7
Pakistan	9	8.7
Srilanka	21.1	26

Source: UNESCO UIS; All India Survey of Higher Education

The enabling conditions that have made for higher female participation rates in neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka, and in India’s Southern states, demand special attention within the region—specially as similarities of social structure and culture can facilitate cross-learnings within the region. So is the issue of success with the MDGs in Bangladesh—in a similar fashion, Indian states such as Bihar have shown a ‘catch up’ in basic education, and incentivised school participation for the girl child. But Bangladesh as also many Indian states find it a challenge to emulate and/or scale up their recent gains in school education to that at the tertiary level. What are the specific reasons for lack of policy-transfer within subsectors of education? Further, the acute deprivation

faced by the rural Scheduled Tribe girl child is another aspect for special focus and analysis. This indigenous population is that of forest dwellers, living in relative isolation from the mainstream processes of development, and has some amount of cultural and linguistic autonomy protected by statutory mandates.

Urban segregation and gendered exclusion pose a further conundrum—unlike the largely rural, forest-dweller scheduled tribe girl child, the urban population (and the girl child within urban marginalised zones) is not ‘remote’ to the mainstream and to processes of development. There is also an abundant ‘supply’ as the best and oldest public higher education facilities are concentrated in urban areas. Yet, enclaves within the urban create imaginary boundaries of stigma, and public facilities for higher education lie outside of it. Anirudh Krishna (*Broken Ladder: The Paradox and Potential of India’s One Billion*, 2017) speaks about ‘broken ladders’—the missed opportunities among slum communities in a system that does not allow pathways for further participation. Gender inequalities are a critical barrier in reaching education—basic and higher. The barriers persist even in their (the girl child’s) constrained access to work opportunities. Krishna (2017) calls for an understanding of both—the complexity of the everyday and the heterogeneity across states. One possible way of doing so is developing a “worms’ eye view” from the bottom up, based on lived experiences of the poor. But the silence on account of exercise of gendered power in communities makes the exercise of understanding barriers to access a challenging one.

From Access to Participation: Public Higher Education as a Site for Interrogating Gendered Inequality

Craig Jeffrey et.al. note the masculine nature of ‘hanging around’ near public institutions of higher education in North India—a freedom that women cannot be seen to participate in. Also, the hanging around is an aspect of waiting—biding time—due to the prospects of unemployment (*Degrees Without Freedom: Education, Masculinities, and Unemployment in North India*, Stanford University Press, 2007). Sneha Krishnan discusses the restrictions on young girls as they participate in higher education in an elite College in Chennai and reside in its hostels. Women can hardly participate as equals if spaces of higher education (even public funded ones, overtly wedded to principles of egalitarianism) become overt assertion and display of masculine power. Alternatively, restrictions imposed on young girls, on account of their gender, internalise in them instincts of accepting subordination, and stopping short of questioning male power.

A perceptible and unfortunate outcome is to be seen in the academic hierarchies in SAR public universities. Female workers constitute the bottom—temporary or entry grade lecturers, and few rise up to the level of Professors, and even fewer lead the universities as Deans or Vice Chancellors. The All- India Survey of Higher Education gives detailed data accounts in this regard. I argue that the assumption of the pipeline—the theory of natural ascension to the top once they have entered the academic workforce—does not hold in the Indian university system. There are few women in leadership positions in Indian universities. Women from *Dalit* social caste backgrounds find it that much more difficult to rise to the top. Further, women constitute a disproportionately high share of the casual workforce at the bottom—of temporary teachers on contract. The hierarchy of the academia

thus constructs and consolidates gendered power, and the general discourse on inefficient academic bureaucracy fails to highlight this in significant ways. (See Manisha Priyam *Broken Pipelines or Fields of Power: Missing Women Leadership in Indian Higher Education*, 2019). The much talked about meritorious IIT system in India has hardly had women leaders rise to the top. Thus, the principles of merit and much valued science and technical education exclude women in invisible ways. Academic hierarchies exclude female leadership in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as well.

These two-day deliberations will focus on an in-depth exploration of the nature of demographic transitions, constitute gender in its inter-sectionality with caste, class, and spatial marginalization, and the experience of gender on spatial sites of higher education, including of academic hierarchies. It is our belief:

- That massification in and of itself does not lead to gendered equalities
- That improved access to schools and better possibility of school completion following the policy emphasis on MDGs (in Bangladesh, and in many laggard Indian states) may have led to greater social demand for higher education, but not necessarily enhanced opportunities for higher education
- That rapid expansion, especially in state level universities and affiliated institutions have increased public bureaucracies in universities, and are not up to the mark on a gender gaze.
- Reform efforts have a focus on creating more efficient and accountable public systems and improving quality, with no overt focus on equality, or interrogating the social nature of these public organizations.

Thus, we ask the following questions:

- How is that girls fare once they enter higher education?
- Is there a construction of gender in peer groups? Are there barriers to learning opportunities that girls face?
- What is variation in experience in terms of caste, tribe, class and regional experiences of gender in higher education.
- Studies in organizational sociology note that hierarchical organizations (of which universities are an example) locate male dominance (Joan Acker, 1990). Gender is constructed in peer groups, in leisure spaces of universities and colleges, and in academic hierarchies.
- How is that women experience the university/higher education as a workspace? Do they reflect on the temporal aspects of the construction of the academic hierarchy within spatial domains of higher education?

The focus of the two-day deliberations will be on the experiences of gender in differing institutional and spatial contexts.

No Neat and Tidy Transition to the Labour Market

Besides, we are also aware that there are no neat and tidy pathway of transition from higher education to the labour market. A lot of the degree earning is for ‘credentials’ alone, and workforce participation exhibits strong gender-based segregation. In India, workforce participation rates by levels of educational attainment in the Periodic Labour Force Surveys, show that 64.5 percent women with post graduate and above degrees do not find any employment, while men fare better in the labour market. It is indicative therefore that even from the narrow base of the female population that goes through high levels of education, structural constraints inhibit meaningful and productive employment. The invisible gendered barriers between university/higher education for women and world of works leads one to ask the question—enhancing capabilities for what? Does knowledge as human development include ‘women’? Persistent gendered segregation marks the world of higher education, notwithstanding claims of massification.

Further, the predominance of informal work opportunities, make for precarious work opportunities specially for girls from poor and rural backgrounds. Studies on social mobility ironically confirm the lack of it in rural areas and in urban slums. Anirudh Krishna’s large -scale survey in rural areas and in urban slums conform this. The majority of the work opportunities being generated for the urban underclass is not in the ‘call-centers’, but in construction sites, that require circular mobility and put women at a disadvantage from free and fair participation norms.

While improving quality and enhancing the efficiency of universities as organisations has been a priority in recent policy landscapes for reforms, the focus of these efforts is largely institutional. There is an urgent need to shift the focus of the debate from access to widening participation and strengthening inclusiveness in higher education. Also, important is the need to have a clear view of what is being done to achieve diversity in student population, and equalize life-chances by providing fair opportunities that cut across inequalities—this is not clearly evident in what is being done in South Asia in this regard.

Organisation of the Deliberations

Deliberations will be held in the following thematic sessions:

- the experience of gender in higher education institutions in India
- the intersectionality of caste, class, tribe, and gender
- gender, labour, and education
- history of Women’s Studies and higher education in India
- Gender in the IITs
- North- Eastern Feminisms
- Gender and Higher Education in the Kashmir Valley: Experiences and Practices

Professor Sonajharia Minz, VC, Sido Kanhu Murmu University, Jharkhand, will deliver the keynote address. She is an eminent scientist, and India's first woman Vice Chancellor serving in a disadvantaged tribal region in Jharkhand.

Further, the discussions will be framed within the thinking about "Southern Feminisms" such that we can reimagine a public university within the global South with overt lenses of Gender. Following the two-day deliberations, suggestions for policy interventions will be thought about, and publications of international standards will be considered.

RESOURCE PERSONS

The issues of Gender in Higher Education January 30-31, 2023

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1.	N. Neetha	Professor and Acting Director	Centre for Women's Development Studies	9953643378 neetha@cwds.ac.in neethapillai@gmail.com
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32.	Yodida Bhutia	Professor	Sikkim University	yodidabhutia@gmail.com

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Gender and Higher Education in India

January 30-31, 2023

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

January 30, 2023	
Registration and Tea/Coffee	9:00 am – 9:25 am
Lighting of lamp, Ground floor, NIEPA	9:25 am - 9:30 am
Lighting of Lamp by VC, NIEPA, Representatives of UNESCO and UN Women, Professor Sonajharia Minz, and Professor Amrit Srinivasan	
Conference Inauguration	9:30 am - 10:15 am Professor Sudhanshu Bhushan, VC (IC) Professor A K Singh (Head, Department of Education Policy) Ms. Eunsong Kim, Chief Human and Social Sciences, UNESCO (TBC) UN Women Representative (TBC) Professor Manisha Priyam (Professor, Department of Education Policy)
Inaugural Keynote	10:20 am – 11:00 am Keynote Speaker: Professor Sonajharia Minz, Vice-Chancellor Sido Kanhu Murmu University, Jharkhand. Chairperson: Professor Kumar Suresh, NIEPA
Tea/Coffee	11:00 am-11:15 am
Session 1 Women's Education in Modern India: Histories, Ideas and Biographies	11:15 am – 1:00 pm Panel Speakers: Professor Vibhuti Patel, Vice President, Indian Association for Women's Studies Professor Krishna Menon, Ambedkar University Dr. Priyanka Jha, Banaras Hindu University Professor Manisha Priyam, NIEPA Chairperson: Professor Rakhee Kalita Moral, Cotton University, Guwahati

Lunch	1:00 pm- 2:00 pm
Session 2 Gender & Research in Science and Technology	2: 00 pm – 2:30 pm Panel Speakers: Dr Nisha Mendiratta, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India Dr Sajitha Bashir, Former Adviser, World Bank, Vice President, Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust Chairperson: Professor Mona Khare, NIEPA
Special Keynote (Online)	2:30 pm - 3.00-pm Speaker: Professor Ruksana Osman, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, UNESCO Chair in Teacher Education for Diversity and Development Chairperson: Dr. Sajitha Bashir, Former Adviser, World Bank; Vice President, Vakkom Moulavi Foundation Trust
Tea	3:00 pm – 3:15 pm
Session 3 Gender, Education, and Labor	3:15 pm – 4:45 pm Panel Speakers: Professor N. Neetha, Centre for Women’s Development Studies Dr. Dipa Sinha, Ambedkar University Ms Mridusmita Bordoloi, Centre for Policy Research Dr. Anamika Priyadarshini, Centre for Catalyzing Change Chairperson: Dr. Divya Vaid, Center for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University
Vocal Recital and tribute to Mahatma Gandhi in NIEPA foyer	5.30 pm - 6.30 pm Artist: Smt. Vidya Shah, Eminent Vocalist
Conference Dinner	7:00 pm – 8:15 pm

Special Conference Keynote	8:30 pm Dr. Ritty Lukose (online) Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University
January 31, 2023	
Session 4 Gender and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs)	9:30 am – 10:30 am Panel Speakers: Dr. Priyanka Tripathi, IIT Patna Professor Nirmala Menon, IIT Indore Professor Angelie Multani, IIT Delhi Chairperson: Professor Amrit Srinivasan, IIIT Delhi
Session 5 Feminist Practices and Pedagogies in North East India	10:45 am – 12:00 pm Panel Speakers: Professor Rakhee Kalita Moral, Cotton University, Gauhati Professor Poonam Borah, Gauhati University Dr. Nzanmongi Jasmine Patton, Gargi College, University of Delhi. Dr Yodida Bhutia (Online), Sikkim University Chairperson: Dr. Sangeeta Angom, NIEPA
Session 6 Gender and Higher Education in the Kashmir valley: Institutions and Experiences	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm Panel Speakers: Professor Deeba Sarmad, Dean, Cluster University of Srinagar Professor Ruhi Kanth, Principal, Women's College, Srinagar Chairperson: Ms. Sagarika Ghose, Eminent Journalist
Lunch	1:30 pm – 2:30 pm
Session 7 Gender and Higher Education: Intersectional Identities	2:30 pm – 3:10 pm Panel Speakers: Dr Ghazala Jamil, Jawaharlal Nehru University Ms Sunaina Arya, Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University Chairperson: Professor Shruti Tambe, SPPU

<p>Session 8 Gender and Governance in Higher Education: The Micro-View</p>	<p>3:10 pm – 4:00pm</p> <p>Panel Speakers: Professor Sheela Reddy, Principal, Sri Venkateshwara College, Delhi University Professor Latha Nair, Amrit Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kochi Campus Dr Anshu Srivastava, NIEPA</p> <p>Chairperson: Professor Vibha Chauhan, Principal, Kirorimal College(Retired)</p>
<p>Special Conference Keynote</p>	<p>4:00 pm - 4.30 pm (IST) Dr. Rashmi Varma, University of Warwick. UK</p> <p>Chairperson: Professor Manisha Priyam, NIEPA</p>
<p>Valedictory Keynote:</p>	<p>4.30 pm - 4.50 pm Ms. Kanta Singh, UN Women (TBC)</p> <p>Chairperson: Professor Deeba Sarmad</p>
<p>Vote of Thanks</p>	<p>4:50 pm - 5.00 pm Ms. Meenakshi Ravivanshi, Doctoral Research Candidate, NIEPA</p>

BIONOTES



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Neetha N. is Professor at the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi. She was Associate Fellow & Coordinator, Centre for Gender and Labour at the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, NOIDA during 1998-2006. Her work focuses on the analysis of women's employment, issues of women workers in the informal sector, domestic workers, unpaid care work and labour migration. She has published extensively in national and international books and journals. She has recently edited two books 'Working at Others Homes: The Specifics and Challenges of Paid Domestic Work' (ed), Tulika Books (2018) and Migration, Gender and Care Economy, (2019, co-edited with Irudaya Rajan), Routledge. She is one of the Lead Authors of the chapter on Pluralising Family of the International Panel on Social Progress Report, 2018.



Ms Mridusmita Bordoloi, *Associate Fellow*
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Mridusmita Bordoloi is an Associate Fellow with the Accountability Initiative team at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Delhi. She has 19 years of research experience in the areas of education, labour market, and child protection in India. Her recent work involves tracking public finances, government processes, regulations and outcomes in 'school education' and 'child protection' sectors, including analysis of multiple centrally-sponsored schemes implemented by the Union Government of India. Her research also includes issues related to social protection for unorganised sector workers, gender-gap in India's labour market outcomes and overall labour market challenges. Her work in the past involved understanding household sector income and consumption patterns in India, by exploring both macro-economic trends as well as evidence from primary surveys.



Dr Dipa Sinha, *Assistant Professor*

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Dipa Sinha is Assistant Professor, Economics at School of Liberal Studies, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar University Delhi. She holds MA and PhD in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi and MSc Development Studies from SOAS, University of London. Her research interests include food security and nutrition, public health, gender and development. She is associated with the Right to Food campaign India.



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Prof. C. Sheela Reddy worked as an Assistant Professor in Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, during 2006 – 2011. At the University, she taught Public Administration, Research Methodology and International Relations. She joined Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) as Associate Professor of Socio-Political Development (Applied Social Science) in 2011. Her broad areas of interest include: Governance, Public Policy Issues, Ambedkar's Thought and Philosophy and International Relations. At IIPA, she was involved in the design and conduct of many national and international training programmes. She coordinated three times Advanced Professional Programme in Public Administration (APPPA), a 10 months flagship programme of IIPA for Senior Officers of Government of India including All India Services, Central Services and Defence Services. She became Chair Professor, Dr. Ambedkar Chair in Social Justice, IIPA in 2016 and continued till January 2021.

Prof. Reddy has been actively engaged in Evaluation and Impact Research Studies in respect of Government Schemes and Projects which provide feedback and policy advocacy to the Departments. She served as the Co-Editor of the prestigious Journal of IIPA, Indian Journal of Public Administration (IJPA). She is widely travelled and visited Sri Lanka, France, U. K., Singapore, China, Australia, South Africa, Italy, Hungary, and USA on academic assignments. She is a member of many professional bodies, participated and presented papers in several national/ international seminars and conferences. Currently, she is the Principal, Sri Venkateswara College, University of Delhi.



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Prof. Srinivasan is a visiting faculty in sociology/social anthropology at the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology Delhi. She has been the recipient of several prestigious awards including the Tagore National Fellowship for Cultural Research Award in recognition of her work on Feminine Professionalism in the Classical Indian Performing Arts (2015-17), Commonwealth Scholarship Award, the Shastri Indo- Canadian Fellowship and the Charles Wallace Fellowship Awards. Prof. Srinivasan's long association with the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi as a Professor and Head of the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences led to an innovative teaching and research career which questioned mainstream social science with ideas drawn from art, technology and design. Prof Srinivasan promotes ethnography in the search for real life, policy solutions to the problem of unsustainable consumption in India. Most recently, she has contributed to the formulation of Computer Science and Social Science (CSSS) - an innovative new undergraduate degree programme at IIIT-D.



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Dr. Bashir holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the London School of Economics and is a former advisor, Office of the Global Director of the Education Practice, World Bank. During her time at the World Bank she led the work on digital skills as part of the Digital Economy initiatives of the World Bank. She also led the research team working on using technology for accelerating human capital outcomes in South Asia, which led to the World Bank's regional publication, *The Converging Technology Revolution and Human Capital – Potential and Implications for South Asia*. She pioneered the World Bank's support for science and technology in Africa. Her initiatives include financing the Africa Centres of Excellence regional project and establishing the first pan-African science fund, with contributions from African governments, the World Bank, donors and private sector (the PASET Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund). She is the co-author of *Facing Forward: Schooling for Learning in Africa*, a flagship study of the World Bank on the quality of basic education in Africa.



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Dr. Krishna Menon is Professor, Gender Studies, and former Dean, School of Human Studies, Ambedkar University Delhi. She taught Political Science at Lady Shri Ram College for over two decades and was the Director of the Centre for Peace at Lady Shri Ram College. She received her B A (Honours) in Political Science from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi, MA and MPhil degrees in Political Science from the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University and PhD from the University of Delhi. She has published books, papers and articles on debates within political theory, issues in Indian politics, and feminist theory and politics. Her recent co-edited book titled 'Doing Feminisms In The Academy: Identity, Institutional Pedagogy And Critical Classrooms In India And The UK' (Zubaan, 2021) is based on a joint research project funded by the UGC UKIERI with the University of Edinburgh. She was the co-editor-in-chief of the International Feminist Journal of Politics and has been a prolific writer, having published many papers, articles, books and book chapters, in addition to monographs and reports and blogs. Her co-authored paper 'Social Sciences Teaching and Research: Its Resilience and Relevance in Times of the NEP and Pandemic' was recently published in the Journal of Educational Planning and Administration. Her latest co-authored paper Unbearable Weight: Women and the Shaping of Political Subjects through the Politics of Corporeality (2022) was published in the Journal of International Women's Studies. She is the recipient of the Teacher of Distinction award from the University of Delhi in 2009 and the Saahas Pragya Award for her contribution to higher education and gender knowledge from WISCOMP in 2021. In November 2022, she was awarded the AURPIS award for 'Good Researcher' by Ambedkar University Delhi.



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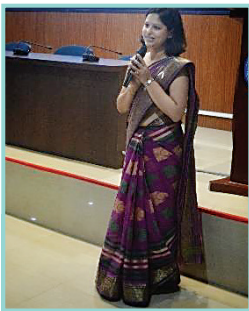
A consummate educator and academic researcher, Dr. Nair has been a stalwart of the Department of English and Centre for Research at St Teresa's College (Autonomous), which is one of the premiere institutions in India, accredited in the Fourth Cycle of Accreditation with 5.57 C.G.P.A and ranked 47th in the NIRF at All India Level. Since she began her tenure in 1990, her vivacity, love for learning, and absolute dedication to the vocation of higher education have made her a beloved mentor to the generations of students who have graduated from the English programmes at the Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and Doctoral levels. She is currently the Head of Department, Associate Professor and Dean of Research at St. Teresa's College, Kochi.

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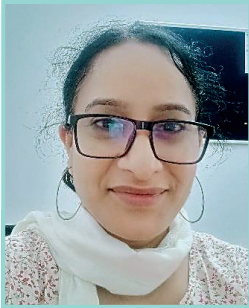
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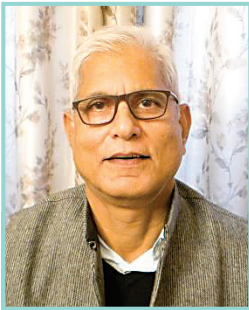
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