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Bridging Gaps: Ensuring Equity and Diversity in Indian Higher Educational Institutions

Alok Kumar Chakrawal*

Fostering equity and diversity in Indian higher education is essential for creating an inclusive and just academic environment. This article examines key challenges such as socio-economic disparities, gender imbalances, and infrastructural limitations while highlighting policies and institutional efforts aimed at ensuring inclusivity. Special focus is given to the initiatives of Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya, Bilaspur, including *Sudama Yojana* (financial assistance for underprivileged students), *Swabhimaan Thali* (affordable meals for all @10 rupees), *Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat* (cultural exchange and national integration), and the promotion of sports and yoga for holistic student development. By analyzing these initiatives, the article emphasizes the importance of strategic, collaborative approaches in bridging educational gaps and fostering equal opportunities for all students in Indian higher educational institutions.

Higher education in India is crucial in shaping the country's social, economic, and intellectual landscape. As one of the largest education systems in the world, with over a thousand universities and thousands of colleges catering to millions of students, Indian higher education is inherently diverse. However, despite this diversity, systemic inequalities hinder equitable access to education for all. Issues such as caste-based discrimination, gender disparity, linguistic barriers, socio-economic inequities, and lack of adequate representation of marginalised communities in faculty and administrative roles make it imperative for higher educational institutions to adopt comprehensive strategies that promote equity and diversity on campuses. The Indian higher education system has historically been influenced by socio-cultural hierarchies that create obstacles for students from marginalised backgrounds. Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), religious minorities, women, students from rural and remote areas, and persons with disabilities often face significant challenges in accessing quality education. The disparities manifest in various forms—whether it is financial constraints preventing students from enrolling in prestigious institutions, language barriers limiting comprehension in classrooms, gender biases restricting women's participation in certain disciplines, or infrastructural deficiencies making education inaccessible for students with disabilities.

At the policy level, India has implemented several affirmative action measures to bridge these gaps. The reservation system in higher education, which allocates seats for SC, ST, and OBC students, has been a crucial step toward ensuring representation and access

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