



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**Botany**

**ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

**KEY WORDS:** Issues, Challenges, Higher Education (Tertiary education)

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**ABSTRACT**

As the pinnacle of a country's educational pyramid, higher education has a unique influence on subsequent generations of students. Humanism, tolerance, intellectual exploration, and the search for truth are all symbols of a university. Colleges and universities are examples of post-secondary educational institutions. The country faces a new task at the dawn of the twenty-first century, becoming a developed society, which necessitates both the rapid establishment of a knowledge-based economy and the establishment of a society based on fairness and human values. In the past few decades, the explosion of knowledge and the creation of convenient tools of information and communication technology, as well as other technological advancements, have made competency a hallmark of growth around the world. It has a positive impact on the quality of life and living conditions in Indian society. Indian higher education needs a major overhaul if it is to become more relevant, competitive, and purposeful in the near future. The current state of higher education is largely influenced by a number of new difficulties and challenges. The issues and challenges are the key responsibilities for the current situation of higher education in India. As a result of this, the present initiative is designed to address developing concerns and issues of higher education.

**INTRODUCTION**

Education is an important tool for socio-economic transformation. Quality higher education leads to sustainable growth and wholesome empowerment of people and adds resilience to the country's overall economic system. It bridges societal enrolment ratio gaps fast and ends disparities quicker. A higher inclusive gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education also goes a long way in fostering societal progress and individual elevation. Indian higher education system is the world's third largest in terms of total student enrollment. As per ASHE-2021 enrolment in higher education increased to 4.14 crore. GER in higher education in 2014-15 was 24.3 percent which rose to 24.5 percent in 2015-16 and 25.2 percent in 2016-17. It is pertinent to note that the population in 18-23 year age group is considered as eligible for the purpose of enrolment in higher education. NEP 2020 aims for universalization of education. GER in higher education is to be raised 50 percent by 2035, which means that not less than seven crore youth aged between 18 to 23 years still won't be able to reach colleges and universities. The University Grants Commission is the primary governing organization at the tertiary level, and it is responsible for implementing standards, advising the government, and assisting in coordination between the center and the states. Universities and the component colleges that make up universities are the primary institutions of higher learning in India. In India, there are currently 1074 government-recognized universities and colleges, with more expected in 2023. Out of 1074 universities, 460 are state universities, 56 are central universities, 430 are private universities and 128 are deemed to be universities. Along with these national institutes of higher learning, there are 23 IITs, 31 NITs, 20 IIMs, 28 IIITs and 7 IISERs offering courses in engineering, technology, management and basic sciences. The majority of these institutions in India are linked with colleges where undergraduate courses are provided in English, Hind and other regional languages. There are 16,885 colleges, including 1800 women's colleges that are part of these universities and institutions. According to the Department of Higher Education, there are 4.57 lakh instructors and 99.54 lakh students enrolled in various higher education institutions throughout India. Aside from these higher education institutions, there are a number of private institutes in India that provide a variety of professional courses in various fields.

Indian higher education does not meet international quality standards in general. As a result, the quality of the country's educational institutions warrants a rise in the evaluation of

their performance. The traditional view was that the quality of these institutions could be measured by their own resources, such as the impressive list of degrees and experience listed at the end of the admission brochure, the library's volume and scope, the campus's opulence, and the endowment, or by their measurable and quantifiable outputs, such as the number of graduates who are well-rounded, happy, and productive.

Keeping this in mind the government has formed a Knowledge Commission to provide solutions to the difficulties plaguing the higher education system and to help India become a knowledge powerhouse in the global economy. While there is a need to grow the higher education sector, resource limits for both the centre and the states make it difficult to provide excellent education even in current institutions. After following neoliberal policies for the last 17 years, the government is eager to open up the higher education system to commercial providers, either via public-private partnerships or through foreign direct investment in higher education. While one side opposes the commercialization of education, the other believes that incorporating the private sector is the only way out. It is critical that we understand and predict how the higher education industry will respond to these problems. How is the industry considering reforms to better interact with the rest of the world? If India wants to become a worldwide economic powerhouse, it must invest in higher education.

Any nation's strength is determined by its educational system, particularly its academic institutions and research activities. Higher education institutions are valued because they promote long-term human growth via the production and diffusion of information, resulting in a catalytic shift in society. The National Knowledge Commission advises 2,500 institutions to improve student possibilities in higher education. Indian universities could not occupy good place in world rankings, these conditions need the growth of quality assurance to higher standards. The demand for quality growth, as well as the effects of globalization, has generated obstacles in the sector of higher education in India. Furthermore, the country's new task at the beginning of the twenty-first century is to become a developed society, which necessitates the creation of a robust economy powered by knowledge as well as a new society based on fairness and human values. Competence has become a characteristic of progress all over the globe. It has an impact on Indian society in terms of improving the quality of life and living circumstances. As a result, India must act quickly to realign its higher education system in order to be influential,

competitive, relevant, and purposeful.

Functional system of higher education is considered to have existed in India as early as 1000 B.C. Vedic education was the primary focus of these ancient learning centers, unlike today's colleges and universities. The colonial heritage is evident in the present Indian educational system. The university system was employed by the British government for the purpose of cultural hegemony. The East India Company, the British Parliament, and eventually British authority were all involved in colonial endeavours in higher education. The Senate of Serampore University is oldest university in India established in 1818 in West Bengal.

### Issues of Higher Education In India

The current higher education system does not fulfil the purpose for which it was established, and it is facing several issues to its existence. In general, education has become such a profitable business that quality has suffered as the number of professional institutions has grown, with quota systems and politicisation adding fuel to the fire of the spoil system, resulting in increased unemployment of graduates with no immediate relief from their travails in the country's job market. Only 25% of engineering graduates are immediately employable, the majority of educational institutions provide low quality education. There is an obvious shortage of qualified instructors, yet teaching is not a popular vocation.

Indian institutions fall short when it comes to producing high-quality research and innovation outputs. India will become the world's third biggest economy, with a concomitant fast expansion of its middle classes. India will have overtaken China as the nation with the biggest tertiary-age population. The university's role in influencing students' futures is dependent on a transparent, progressive, and socially responsible educational (SRE) system. To do this, we need effective governance in the higher education system, which would drive resource and infrastructure optimization. Initiatives must also be done to care for the human aspects of business, such as decent compensation, parity, and other world-class perks. The following are the few issues of higher education in India.

#### 1. Teaching Quality

The quality of teaching is deteriorating, which is the primary challenge confronting India's higher education system. The majority of teachers have inadequate education and experience to perform the duties of their current positions. In spite of this, the teaching of languages in general and the teaching of languages of instruction in particular is taken for granted, which in the multilingual environment of a globalised society is unacceptable.

#### 2. No Value Education

The fundamental concern facing India's higher education system is poor teaching quality. The majority of teachers lack the necessary qualifications and experience to carry out the responsibilities of their respective professions. The teachers who are working in HEIs are with lack of values which bring down the quality of education.

#### 3. Poor Women's Education

Women have a much lower literacy rate than men. Conservative cultural attitudes prevent girls from attending colleges. If women educated all the family members would be educated. Recently women enrolment gradually increasing in HEIs.

#### 4. Political Factor

Political influence is also a bad thing and an issue with higher education. Governing bodies do not want any political influence or interference in their affairs. The dominant political leaders, now playing key role in governing bodies of the Universities, as they own most of the Institutions, imparting education (Aided-non-aided).

#### 5. Moral Issues

Younger generation is not interested in serving their country

and they are more interested in just taking up a job and a hefty pay package. Rapid growth of science and technology and subsequent industrialization has caused a great and danger to our old moral and values.

#### 6. Corruption In Education

Corruption in Indian education system has been eroding the quality of education. It is one of the major contributors to domestic black money. Payment to Management at dark rooms and seeking admissions is increasing.

#### 7. Economic Difficulties

Many of the Indian students are from poor families, they are unable to pay college and hostel fee and it leads to decreasing of enrollment. Near about seventy- five percent of the total students community today, have been facing the financial problems. Earn while learn scheme cannot adequately support student to face economic challenges.

#### 8. Curriculum Issues

There are many different curriculum systems that confuse the students who wish to achieve the same objective such as Engineering, Medical, Science and Management. At the higher education level, there is no uniformity in the syllabuses taught for the same programme.

#### 9. Wrong Societal Outlook

For Governments, more scoring is success. English is becoming the measure of intelligence. Hence, parents of today take least interest in vernacular medium of education. Due to the perceived notion of inferior quality, Govt. institutes are becoming the last choice.

#### 10. Financing

Financing is also an issue with higher education in India. Yes, India is already spending very much on higher education and it can't spend more. However, if the quality of higher education has to be improved then more financing is needed.

#### 11. Privatization

Privatization is also a big problem that higher education faces. Privatization of higher education is the way to go.

#### 12. Quota System

Debating quota system is very controversial. But if you are being honest then I must tell you quota is not good for the quality of higher education. Talent and merit is more important than your identity.

#### 13. No Project Based Learning

Project-based learning is lacking in higher education. Young graduates must gain new skills, particularly vocational ones that will help them find work. As a result, we are not focused on project-based learning in any way.

#### 14. Lack Of Commitment And Passion among Teachers

University and college teachers have not commitment and passion towards their profession, they are spending more time in unrelated works and are unable to mold the future generation.

### Challenges of Higher Education In India

Since independence, we are facing difficulties in building a world-class educational system. It is unfortunate to say that our country's education system couldn't handle the new rules that were put in place. Still, our education system is riddled with difficulties and obstacles. India recognises that the higher education sector faces tremendous difficulties in the face of a rapidly changing global context. Students who major in fields like humanities, social sciences, mathematics, and natural sciences, as well as those who pursue careers in fields like as law or medicine would need a wide variety of abilities, according to the University Grants Commission.

The general education approach that has served the vast majority of students in India must be changed. Instead, a significant investment is needed to make human resources productive by linking the older general disciplines of humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and commerce to their applications in the new economy and by having adequate field-based experience to enhance knowledge with skills and develop appropriate attitudes.

"The university has a fundamental role to play in fostering

social change," the UGC remarked in response to these increasing requirements. "It must have an influence on the society if it is to preserve its legitimacy and attract public support." It intends to do this via a renewed focus on community-based programmes and social concerns. Only if the system is both effective and efficient can concepts like access, equality, relevance, and quality be operationalized. As a result, efficient administration of higher education and the system's overall networking has become a major concern. Only a systemic approach to change, as well as the growth of human resources and the system's networking via information and communication technology can bring about the transformation.

Higher education in India is now beset by several fundamental issues. Low student enrolment rate, outmoded teaching techniques, deteriorating research standards, uninspired students, overcrowded classrooms, and broad regional, economic, gender, and ethnic disparities. Apart from worries about decreasing quality, numerous private providers have been accused of exploiting students. Providing students from low-income households with fair access to high-quality higher education is a huge problem. Low-income students are further disadvantaged since they are not intellectually equipped to participate in extremely competitive admission tests that favour the urban elite and rich students who can afford private tuition and coaching. Basic scientific education has deteriorated, as has education in non-marketable fields.

The state of research at higher education institutions is at an all-time low. The government and society provide insufficient and dwindling financial support for higher education. Many rural colleges are non-viable, under-enrolled, and have inadequate infrastructure and resources, as well as a small number of lecturers. A series of judicial interventions over the last two decades, as well as the government's knee-jerk reactions both at the national and state levels and regulatory bodies' lack of understanding of the emerging market structure of higher education in India have added to the country's higher education landscape. In the nation, there is a lack of a well-informed higher education reform plan. A few attempts here and there are not grounded in the new global realities of competitiveness and growing student and job mobility.

There are still a lot of individuals in different sections of the nation that are out of reach. This was the time when we put a greater emphasis on our educational programmes and made our system more accessible to individuals from all walks of life. In order to adopt additional policies, it is necessary to reconsider these sectors. The federal government develops policies and programmes, while state governments are responsible for implementing such policies. The quality of education facilities is better in the wealthier states. Such flaws in the country's education system must be addressed, which can only be done by raising funds and giving better facilities to pupils. However, we are aware that the budget for the school system is continually increased, but it is never applied. The government strives to adopt many policies, but the quality is never verified. The bulk of the money goes to the authorities who work on this.

Higher education is tremendously varied, as are the difficulties and concerns that higher education institutions encounter. Education entails more than just reading books. It also entails participating in a variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that enrich life in general and education in particular. I feel that prospects for such comprehensive growth are not adequate in India. In India, such facilities are either inadequate or difficult to get by. Even if facilities are available, there is a scarcity of information about them.

There are not enough universities and educational

institutions, but one of the most essential truths is that higher education lacks quality. There are few instructors, and their expertise is woefully inadequate. The professors do not have a thorough understanding of the courses, and the student community has limited resources. Students have no study habit, all they care about is getting good grades in class and getting a job. Our best kids are diligent workers, but they are not creative. They are incapable of developing new technologies. A transformation in higher education is desperately needed. These are only a few of the difficulties that must be addressed in order to address all facets of the current educational situation, and we must work diligently to address them.

"We have major challenges and we do have skill shortages," says Sam Pitroda (head of the Knowledge Commission, 2009), "serious problems that have arisen from the reality that we do not actually have the capacity in our higher education to satisfy the requirements of today as well as future." Establishing an overarching authority for higher education and research, putting in place a system to prevent and punish educational malpractices, creating mandatory assessment and accreditation practices, and establishing educational tribunals for fast-track adjudication of disputes are among the regulatory and governance reforms that the new higher education minister has begun. Each of these improvements requires the passage of separate legislation, contradicting the government's stated goal for a united strategy. Other academic improvements suggested include implementing a "choice-based" credit system and changing syllabi on a regular basis. Students in India now have limited choice, they must follow a set standard curriculum that has not been updated in decades. A new credit system would break down the curriculum into discrete units, allowing students to choose from a variety of courses that would be updated on a regular basis. However, although these are critical improvements, they have been discussed for more than two decades and, as in the past, would be met with fierce resistance by the heavily unionized faculty. According to certain investigations, the five-year plan and proposed legislation by the new administration do not offer a strong foundation for critical structural changes. Inadequate financial resources and low fee structures have slowed the establishment of government institutions, resulting in a massive demand-supply mismatch in India's higher education sector.

### Enrolment

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of India in higher education is only 27.3% which is quite low as compared to the developed as well as, other developing countries. With the increase of enrolments at school level, the supply of higher education institutes is insufficient to meet the growing demand in the country.

### Equity

There is no equity in GER among different sectors of the society. According to previous studies the GER in higher education in India among male and female varies to a greater extent. There are regional variations too some states have high GER while as some is quite behind the national GER which reflect a significant imbalance within the higher education system.

### Quality

Higher education quality is a multifaceted, multi-levelled, and dynamic notion. One of the most pressing issues in India at the moment is ensuring high-quality higher education. The government, on the other hand, is relentless in its pursuit of high-quality education. Despite this, a huge number of Indian colleges and universities are unable to achieve the UGC's basic criteria, and these institutions are unable to compete with the world's best universities.

### Infrastructure

Poor infrastructure is another challenge to the higher education system of India particularly the institutes run by the public sector suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. There are large numbers of colleges which are functioning on second or third floor of the building on ground or first floor there exists readymade hosiery or photocopy shops.

### Political Interference

The vast majority of educational establishments are controlled by political figures, many of whom also hold important roles in the governing boards of universities. They are using the naive kids in order to forward their own corrupt agenda. Students begin to establish their careers in politics while organizing political campaigns, forgetting their personal goals in the process. The quality of higher education is a contentious topic in India. There is a significant amount of government participation in it. In spite of the fact that the system receives no support from the states. Additionally, a significant number of notable political leaders are either owners of universities or are on the boards of management of colleges. This results in the management of these organizations being subjected to a significant amount of severe political pressure.

### Faculty

Faculty shortages and the inability of the state educational system to attract and retain well qualified teachers have been posing challenges to quality education for many years. Large numbers of NET / Ph. D candidates are unemployed even there are lot of vacancies in higher education, these deserving candidates are then applying in other departments which is a biggest blow to the higher education system.

### Accreditation

As per the data provided by the NAAC, only few higher learning institutions are accredited. And among those accredited, only 30% of the universities and 45% of the colleges were found to be of quality to be ranked at 'A' level".

### Research and Innovation

There are very nominal scholars in our country whose writing is cited by famous western authors. There is inadequate focus on research in higher education institutes. There are insufficient resources and facilities, as well as, limited numbers of quality faculty to advice students. Most of the research scholars are without fellowships or not getting their fellowships on time which directly or indirectly affects their research. Moreover, Indian Higher education institutions are poorly connected to research centres. So, this is another area of challenge to the higher education in India.

### Structure of Higher Education

Management of the Indian education faces challenges of over centralization, bureaucratic structures and lack of accountability, transparency, and professionalism. As a result of increase in number of affiliated colleges and students, the burden of administrative functions of universities has significantly increased and the core focus on academics and research is diluted. Higher education is passing through a phase of internationalization. Almost all countries are experiencing fund shortage and public system of higher education is facing difficulty in financing higher education. As noted earlier, development is guided by the neo-liberal economic policies almost all over the world and, therefore, higher education is increasingly viewed as a private good. It is important to understand how different countries are responding to the neo liberal challenges in financing higher education.

### Remedies for Improving Quality of Higher Education

There are some suggestions and expectations from Government, Industry, Educational Institutions, Parents and Students for improving quality of higher education.

### 1. Towards a Learning Society

As we move towards a learning society, every human activity will require contributions from experts, and this will place the entire sector of higher education in sharp focus. Although the priorities, which are being assigned today to the task of Education for All, will continue to be preponderant, the country will have to prepare itself to invest more and more on higher education and, simultaneously, measures will have to be taken to refine, diversify and upgrade higher education and research programmes.

### 2. Industry and Academia Connection

Industry and Academia connect necessary to ensure curriculum and skills in line with requirements. Skill building is really very crucial to ensure employability of academia to understand and make sure good jobs.

### 3. Incentives to Teachers And Researchers

Industry and students are expecting specialized courses to be offered so that they get the latest and best in education and they are also industry ready and employable. Vocational and Diploma courses need to be made more attractive to facilitate specialized programs being offered to students. Incentives should be provided to teachers and researchers to make these professions more attractive for the younger generation.

### 4. Innovative Practices

The new technologies offer vast opportunities for progress in all walks of life. It offers opportunities for economic growth, improved health, better service delivery, improved learning and socio-cultural advances. Though efforts are required to improve the country's innovative capacity, yet the efforts should be to build on the existing strengths in light of new understanding of the research-innovation-growth linkage.

### 5. To Mobilize Resources

The decline in public funding in the last two plan periods has resulted in serious effects on standards due to increasing costs on non-salary items and emoluments of staff, on the one hand, and declining resources, on the other. Effective measures will have to be adopted to mobilize resources for higher education. There is also a need to relate the fee structure to the student's capacity to pay for the cost. So that, students at lower economic levels can be given highly subsidized and fully subsidized education.

### 6. Coming of Information Age

The world is entering into an Information age and developments in communication, information and technology will open up new and cost-effective approaches for providing the reach of higher education to the youth as well as to those who need continuing education for meeting the demands of explosion of information, fast-changing nature of occupations, and lifelong education. Knowledge, which is at the heart of higher education, is a crucial resource in the development of political democracy, the struggle for social justice and progress towards individual enlightenment.

### 7. Public Private Partnership (PPP)

PPP is critical to improving the quality of higher education. Governments may guarantee PPP by enacting relevant policies. As a first step toward PPP, the University Grants Commission and the Ministry of Human Resource Development should play a significant role in building a meaningful interaction between universities, industry, and national research labs (NRLs). Government funding for NRLs should guarantee the engagement of higher education institutions involved in research activities to allow the availability of the most modern equipment. Both the government and private educational institutions have made efforts to train teaching personnel at different levels. However, in order to produce a quality and adequate quantity of educational professionals, this must be strengthened with proper attention to all factors. Such endeavours need a strong framework for research base institutions. We must be confident that private-public partnerships and industrial interaction will occur in the sphere of education at all levels, especially in backward regions, as is urgently required. To attain greatness, we must establish a genuine partnership between government, educators, and business partnerships

that can provide our high-tech sectors with competent individuals who satisfy industry standards.

### 8. Job Oriented Courses

The goal of education is to help students develop their personalities holistically. However, modern education does not convey actual knowledge of life or improve a student's potential in order to win accolades in the sector in which one is engaged. As a result, a mix of arts topics with computer technology, science, and humanities or literature should be implemented, so that such courses may be beneficial for students to perform positions after recruiting in certain firms, reducing the unneeded rush to higher education.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

India, which has the world's second biggest population, needs to exercise extreme caution with regard to the administration of its higher education system. It's possible that formulating a plan for a logical organization should be step one in the process of reforming higher education. It is necessary to have an open and well-informed dialogue in order to accomplish this transformation. There will be some studies carried out, with participation from educational institutions, businesses, the government, prospective students, and other interested parties. It is necessary for the system to be adapted so that it is compatible with India's current level of development, political system, social structure, economic capacity, historical context, and cultural norms.

A perspective that is shared ought to lead to the production of a framework that not only guides the development and reform of higher education but also organizes and manages the system in a manner that is congruent with the goals of society. This framework should result from the production of a shared perspective. In order to be successful in convincing the general people of the wider value of acquiring a higher education, a long-term political and financial commitment, in addition to support at a high level, will be required. New academic programmes, in addition to brand-new academic programmes, should be developed, and new academic programmes should be created, all of which may be accomplished by putting in place new academic programmes. The primary goals of these programmes should be to provide children from underprivileged backgrounds with a general education and to assist brilliant and motivated pupils in making up for academic deficiencies. They should also concentrate on strengthening their abilities and finding ways to motivate them.

There has been a phenomenal rise in institutions of higher learning in all areas since independence. But, with such rapid expansion, has it been able to address the fundamental problem of quality? India is becoming one of the world's fastest growing nations, with yearly growth rates exceeding 9%. To maintain that pace of development, the number of colleges as well as the quality of higher education in India must be increased. To meet and surpass future expectations, financial resources, access and equality, quality standards, relevance, and, lastly, responsiveness must all be reconsidered. Certain components, most notably careful staff selection and continuous staff development, are especially important in achieving and maintaining national, regional, or international quality, particularly through the promotion of appropriate academic development programmes, such as teaching, learning methodology, and student mobility within and between countries. Internal and external self-evaluation must be undertaken freely by independent professionals, preferably with worldwide experts. The National Knowledge Commission's Report, if followed, has the potential to improve India's education system. We are approaching an age characterised by the boundaries of knowledge and wisdom. Decisions on these issues are anticipated to be critical to India's future as a centre of knowledge creation. We need more highly educated, competent individuals who can propel our economy ahead. When India can offer competent

individuals to the outside world, we will be able to simply and swiftly transition our country from a developing to a developed one.

"The moment has come to establish a second wave of institution building and of excellence in the domains of education, research, and capacity development," said Dr. Manmohan Singh, the former Prime Minister of India. We need an educational system that is forward-thinking, liberal, and flexible enough to accommodate the shifting requirements of a society, economy, and planet that are all in a state of flux. It is imperative that the focus of India's public policy for higher education be on finding solutions to these problems. However, a single institution cannot significantly alter the situation. If the government is willing to support such projects along these lines, the future will belong to us. We will be able to match and compete with the economies of other nations, and realizing our goal of being the most economically powerful nation on the planet won't be difficult at all.

A person's physical being, mental makeup, and moral fibre may all be developed and honed via the process of education. It is the coming together of a person's head, heart, and intellect, and as a result, it helps a person to build a well-rounded personality and brings out the best in that person. Higher education in India has grown at a remarkable pace in the 75 years since the country gained its freedom, nevertheless, not all citizens have the same opportunity to participate. With an annual growth rate that is consistently more than 9 percent, India is now one of the nations in the world that is growing at one of the quickest rates. Even now, a significant proportion of the population is illiterate, and a disproportionately high percentage of youngsters do not get instruction beyond the elementary level. This has not only prevented a large portion of the population from contributing fully to the development of the country, but it has also prevented them from utilizing the benefits of whatever development has taken place for the benefit of the people. There is no denying that India's higher education system is hampered by a number of obstacles, but it is of the highest significance that these obstacles be overcome and the system be strengthened. The question that has to be answered is how to make effective use of this potential in the future. There are possibilities available, however, figuring out how to profit from these chances and how to make them available to other people is a challenge that has to be addressed. In order to maintain this pace of development, there is a pressing need in India to both expand the number of institutions offering higher education and improve the quality of such institutions and India will become super power in the world.

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