

# WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the differences between male and female participation and achievements in academic and non academic activities in the University of Peradeniya. The paper will focus on six areas a) the changing pattern of female student enrolment in subjects and fields of study, b) gender-wise academic achievements, c) participation of female students in extra curricular activities, d) the various aspects to the residential life of female students, e) female representation in different levels of academic staff, their promotional prospects and the contribution made by them to academic activities, f) the problems faced by female students as well as female teachers.

## Introduction

"Education is widely accepted to be the key to human progress. It is the 'first window of change', especially for women. It enables them to take on more independent and varied roles. Education encounters less resistance from the traditional minded than do most other catalysts. Unlike employment outside the home, or political participation, education for women is almost universally valued - perhaps because education is seen both as a productive investment and as a consumer good" (Newland 1979).

Especially after independence, Sri Lanka placed great emphasis on education and expected that the expansion of education would bring about greater equality in society. In recent decades, women's education has been applauded as the most significant factor in achieving the socio-economic capability of women in the country. It is in this regard that the participation of women in higher education has become important and access to a University is considered to be an important means both of vocational and social mobility.

The University of Peradeniya, the oldest residential University in the country has seven Faculties and extensive facilities compared with the other universities in the island. (Gunawardane 1992, Golden Jubilee Souvenir 1992, Silva 1995). Although women enjoy equality in the education there is a difference between male and female participation and achievements in academic as well as non academic activities at the University of Peradeniya.

The study will investigate a) the changing pattern of female student enrolment according to their major fields, b) gender-wise academic achievements, c) participation of female students in extra-curricular activities, d) various facets of residential life of female students, e) female representation at all levels of the academic staff, their promotional prospects, and the contributions made by them to academic activities, f) the problems faced by female students as well as female staff members, and suggestion to improve the present system.

### Changing Pattern of Female Student Enrolment

The University of Ceylon created in 1942 provided equal access to both sexes. At the outset it had four Faculties, with 904 students, including 91 female students, reading for the B.A., B.Sc. and M.B.B.S. degrees. These female students constituted 10.1% of the total enrolment. Of them 19 were in the Faculty of Medicine. Free education introduced in 1945 opened the doors of the University to more women as well as men. Women's numbers increased to 480 or 21.8% of the total enrolment in 1952, when the separate Campus at Peradeniya was established. In the early sixties, the percentage of women increased to 44.5% as a result of the adoption of the two national languages (Sinhala and Tamil) as the media of instruction at the secondary school level in 1958. After the mid 1960's, the percentage of women's enrolment began to decrease. This fluctuation was a result of two factors, viz. the policy of equal access to University education, accepted since the inception of University education, was ignored during the years 1959 to 1965 and that policy was restored from 1966 by the National Council of Higher Education (Jayaweera 1979). However, it did not go below 33%. It was 33.5% in 1985. After that it has fluctuated between 33-42% (Table I).

The increased participation of women in Peradeniya has not been restricted to women of one ethnic group. While the percentage of Sinhalese women in the University increased from 23.9% in 1952 to 35.6% in 1986, the increase of Tamil women was equally spectacular from 17.8% in 1952 to 25.1% in 1986. In 1962 the percentage of Tamil women was 43.1% and in 1978 it was 34.4%. In 1962 and in 1978 it jumped over the percentage of Sinhalese women (Table II). After the 1980's a decrease of the percentage of Sinhalese as well as Tamil women can be seen. The decrease of percentage of Tamil women may be due to the introduction of new university enrolment policies, such as standardisation and district basis system and the establishment of the Jaffna University. However the reasons for the decline in of the percentage of Sinhalese women are not very clear. The incorporation of the Institute of Technology, Colombo with its male dominant student population into the University system, the introduction of management studies and "job oriented courses" with their gender role connotations (United Nations 1979) may have reduced the number of Sinhalese and Tamil women admitted to Peradeniya University during this period.

After the 1970's the representation of Burghers, men as well as women has become invisible. This was the result of the decrease of their numbers in the total population in the country, due to their migration to foreign countries. Most noteworthy, however, was the increase of Muslim women, from 7.6% in 1952 to 44.93% in 1990. This must be a result of the fact that business rather than professional studies tended to attract Muslims in general and secondly, that the practice of the *pardah* reduced the number of women students entering universities until early 1980's. However, it can be seen that recently such attitudes are being replaced by more positive attitudes towards the education of Muslim women. (Gunawardana 1989). Similarly, the entering of Muslim students from Eastern (Batticaloa) University to Peradeniya also had effects on this increase. Thus the proportion of female enrolment in the total student population increased consistently and at a rapid rate till the mid 1970's. Since then the increase has been so gradual that it has become almost stagnant. However, the pattern of increase in women's enrolment in Peradeniya is similar to the world pattern, as noted by a report of United Nations.

"Increasingly, women are enrolling in universities. In developed regions, as well as in some countries of Southern Africa and Western Asia, the numbers of women and men in higher education have become nearly equal" (United Nations 1991).

**Table I. Students percentage distribution of the University of Ceylon/Peradeniya by sex  
1942 - 90**

University of Ceylon (Total number)				
Year	Male	Female	Total	Female
1942	813	91	904	10.1
1943	800	104	904	11.5
1944	874	122	996	12.2
1945	932	133	1065	12.5
1946	1124	178	1302	13.7
1947	1312	242	1554	15.6
1948	1335	277	1612	17.2
1949	1519	325	1844	17.6
1950	1655	381	2036	18.7
1951	1761	449	2210	20.3
1952	1752	480	2232	21.5
University of Ceylon - Peradeniya				
1953	571	360	931	39.5
1954	600	368	968	38.0
1955	623	374	997	37.6
1956	658	379	1037	36.5
1957	713	442	1155	38.3
1958	778	544	1322	41.1
1959	821	643	1464	43.9
1961	1462	1174	2636	44.5
1962	1831	1135	3184	42.6
1963	1847	1307	3154	41.4
1964	2615	1677	4292	39.1
University of Ceylon (Total number)				
1965	3124	1944	5068	38.4
1966	3376	1910	5286	36.1
1967	3360	2008	5368	37.2
New admissions only - University of Peradeniya				
1974	664	422	1086	38.8
1975	749	496	1246	39.8
1976	727	526	1253	41.9
1977	860	566	1426	39.7
1978	850	554	1404	39.5
1979	857	511	1368	37.4
1980	823	578	1401	41.3
1981	902	552	1454	37.8
1983	805	435	1240	35.1
1984	785	394	1179	33.4
1985	787	435	1222	35.6
1986	844	430	1274	33.6
1987	782	480	1262	38.0
1988	788	472	1260	37.5
1989	908	503	1411	35.5
1990	1014	648	1662	39.0

Source - Annual report of the council, University of Ceylon/ Peradeniya, respective years.

**Table II. Student enrolment by ethnic group in the University of Peradeniya 1952-86**

ETHNIC GROUP	M	F	T	F %		M	F	T	F %
SINHALA	1017	321	1338	23.9		1133	498	1631	30.5
TAMIL	595	129	724	17.8		751	193	954	20.2
BURGHHER	50	17	67	25.3		40	15	55	27.2
MOOR & MALAY	36		39	7.6		44	10	54	18.5
OTHERS	24	10	4	29.4		22	12	4	35.3
TOTAL	1722	480	2202	21.8		1990	728	2718	26.8
	<b>1962</b>					<b>1967</b>			
SINHALA	1497	1128	2625	42.9		2132	1417	3549	39.9
TAMIL	276	209	485	43.1		1015	519	1534	33.8
BURGHHER	15	5	20	25.0		75	20	95	21.1
MOOR & MALAY	35	5	40	12.5		133	50	183	27.3
OTHERS	8	6	14	42.8		5	2	7	28.5
TOTAL	1831	1353	3184	42.5		3360	2008	5368	37.4
	<b>1978</b>					<b>1982</b>			
SINHALA	2034	1029	3063	33.6		2159	1461	3620	40.4
TAMIL	577	301	878	34.3		845	398	1243	32.0
BURGHHER	4	2	6	33.3		5	8	13	61.5
MOOR & MALAY	77	22	99	22.2		245	132	377	35.0
OTHERS	12	10	22	45.5		5	4	9	44.4
TOTAL	2704	1364	4068	33.5		3259	2003	5262	38.1
	<b>1986</b>					<b>1990</b>			
SINHALA	2026	1122	3148	35.6		2682	1455	4137	35.17
TAMIL	570	191	761	25.1		636	258	894	28.85
BURGHHER		2	2	100		1	5	6	83.35
MOOR & MALAY	299	157	456	34.4		593	484	1077	44.93
OTHERS	33	3	36	8.3		40	6	46	13.04
TOTAL	2928	1475	4433	33.5		3952	2208	6160	35.84

Source - Annual reports of the University of Peradeniya-respective years.

The pattern of distribution of female students by Faculties appeared to have changed very little until the early sixties. Table III shows that the increase of women in total enrolment was largely due to their increased participation in the Arts, Medicine and Dental science. These courses, prepare women for entry into fields traditionally considered "suitable for women", that is teaching, medicine and allied occupations. Gender imbalances were seen in admissions in science courses even in the early 1970's. Women were especially under-represented in Engineering, Agriculture and Veterinary Science. In the late 1960's the admissions of women to the science faculty started increasing from 15.9% in 1963 to 33.2% in 1967. In the early 1980's the percentage of women in Agriculture and Veterinary Science too began to increase and in 1987 percentages reached 41.4% and 48.8% respectively. In 1990 the percentage of women in the Faculty of Veterinary Science had gone above the 50% mark.

**Table III . New admissions to University of Ceylon (later University of Peradeniya) by Faculties & sex 1952 - 1990**

1951-1952 FACULTY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %
ARTS	150	99	249	39.7
LAW	10	0	10	0
SCIENCE	78	16	94	17.4
AGRICULTURE	9	0	09	0
ENGINEERING	22	0	22	0
MEDICINE	95	24	119	20.2
VET. SCIENCE	5	0	05	0
TOTAL	369	139	508	27.4
1952-1953				
ARTS	152	104	256	40.6
LAW	08	0	08	0
SCIENCE	82	20	102	19.6
AGRICULTURE	03	0	03	0
ENGINEERING	22	0	22	0
MEDICINE	98	25	123	20.3
VET SCIENCE	06	0	06	0
TOTAL	371	149	520	28.6
1955-1956				
ARTS	170	114	284	40.1
LAW	19	0	09	0
SCIENCE	141	30	171	17.5
AGRICULTURE	14	01	05	20
ENGINEERING	60	0	60	0
MEDICINE	100	21	121	17.4
VET SCIENCE	08	0	08	0
TOTAL	492	166	658	25.2
1959-1960				
ARTS	349	298	647	46.1
LAW	1	0	1	0
SCIENCE	165	37	202	18.3
AGRICULTURE	09	0	9	01
ENGINEERING	67	01	68	1.5
MEDICINE	96	33	129	25.6
VET SCIENCE	08	0	08	0
TOTAL	695	369	1064	34.7
1963-1964				
ARTS	317	369	686	53.8
LAW	13	2	15	13.3
SCIENCE	184	35	219	15.9
AGRICULTURE	16	1	17	5.8
ENGINEERING	135	1	136	0.01
MEDICINE	126	34	160	21.2
DENTAL SCIENCE	16	7	23	30.4
VET SCIENCE	11	2	13	15.4
TOTAL	818	550	1368	40.2
1967				
ARTS	333	334	667	50.1
SCIENCE	138	39	117	33.3
AGRICULTURE	27	02	29	6.8

ENGINEERING	145	05	150	3.3
MEDICINE	45	31	76	40.8
DENTAL SCIENCE	12	14	26	53.8
VET SCIENCE	17	4	21	19.0
TOTAL	717	429	1146	37.4
1977-78				
ARTS	327	384	711	54.0
SCIENCE	128	68	196	34.7
AGRICULTURE	80	25	105	23.
ENGINEERING	232	18	250	7.2
MEDICINE	93	71	164	43.3
DENTAL SCIENCE				
VET SCIENCE				
TOTAL	860	566	1426	39.7
1981-82				
FACULTY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %
ARTS	338	253	591	42.8
SCIENCE	133	47	180	26.1
AGRICULTURE	85	33	118	27.9
ENGINEERING	222	29	251	11.5
MEDICINE	1	78	18.9	41.2
DENTAL SCIENCE				
VET SCIENCE	13	2	25	48
TOTAL	902	452	1354	33.3
1984-85				
ARTS	230	190	420	45.2
SCIENCE	113	62	175	35.4
AGRICULTURE	95	33	128	25.7
ENGINEERING	230	22	252	8.7
MEDICINE & DENTAL	99	73	172	42.4
VET SCIENCE	18	14	32	43.7
TOTAL	785	394	1179	33.4
1987-88				
ARTS	192	195	387	50.4
SCIENCE	123	59	182	32.4
AGRICULTURE	102	72	174	41.4
ENGINEERING	247	36	283	12.7
MEDICINE & DENTAL	96	97	193	50.1
VET SCIENCE	22	21	43	48.8
TOTAL	782	480	1262	38.0
1990-91				
ARTS	345	302	647	46.6
SCIENCE	117	95	212	44.8
AGRICULTURE	106	85	191	44.5
ENGINEERING	270	19	289	6.5
MEDICINE & DENTAL	156	118	274	43.0
VET SCIENCE	20	29	49	59.2
TOTAL	1014	648	1662	38.9

Source - Data collected from annual reports of University of (Ceylon) Peradeniya of respective years

The Engineering Faculty was completely male dominated until 1964, and in that year one female student was admitted to the faculty. The percentage of women in Engineering has been increasing very slowly and it came up to 12.7% in 1987. But it decreased to 6.5% in 1990. Thus, the proportion of women in each Faculty has increased, though there is a variation in enrolment by Faculty. However, what is significant is that the proportion of women continues to be lower in all Faculties, except on rare occasions, in the Faculty of Arts, Dental Science and Veterinary Science. In 1990, the enrolment rates of women in both Arts and Medical faculties have gone down alike and in all other Faculties, except Engineering, the percentages have increased to over 40%.

The changing patterns of female enrolment across Faculties such as higher enrolment in Science, Veterinary Science and Agriculture and the decline in Arts and Medicine, may be treated as indicators of the direction towards moving away from stereotypes. Although this enrolment pattern shows a narrowing of gender differences in the Faculties of Science, Medicine, Dental Science, Veterinary Science and Agriculture Faculties, there is still a wide gap between enrolment of men and women in the Engineering Faculty. This pattern of study choice among men and women is common world-wide (Sivard 1985).

According to a recent survey (see appendix 1) 98 (51.8%) female undergraduates out of 189 respondents prefer teaching as their future career. Moreover, it was interesting to note that 4 Engineering, 16 Agriculture and 20 Science undergraduates selected teaching as their first career preference. While 157 (83.1%) of them selected people-oriented professions such as teaching, clerical, banking, medicine and related jobs, only 32 (16.9%) undergraduates selected professions related to Engineering, Agriculture and business. The survey reports that 91 (48.1%) female students out of 120 respondents who are studying science subjects selected those subjects since they like it. But only 20 (10.6%) students said that they like Maths. 18 (9.5%) students said that they are good in Science disciplines.

This survey shows the gender disparity in science oriented courses, especially in Engineering is mainly based on lack of interest in Maths and Physical Sciences and the career aspirations of female undergraduates. The demand for science education in the University as an avenue to economically rewarding occupations has also operated within this normative framework, since women admitted to science courses are enrolled mainly in Biological Sciences, Medicine and related courses. The pattern of enrolment, therefore, reflects cultural attitudes which favour the "feminine jobs" and reject technology as a male subject. On the other hand, it is also apparent that the Peradeniya University women are taking to hitherto "masculine" professional areas with considerable success.

### **Gender-Wise Academic Achievements**

There was a vast gap between the educational achievements of male and female students in Peradeniya a gap which has been narrowing slowly in recent years. Table IV shows that First Classes were obtained mainly by the male students in all the faculties, and most of the Second Classes were obtained by the female students. It is clear even in the Faculty of Arts, where female students are almost half of the population, that there is a disparity between male and female students in respect of those who have been awarded First or Second Class Honours. This set of data shows that many female Arts students have obtained Second Classes, especially Second Class (Lower Division) lowers.

In the Faculty of Engineering, where very few female students have enrolled, only 11 women have obtained First Classes as against 166 male students during the period 1964-1991. While 214 men obtained Second (Upper Division) Classes, only 13 women were able to gain the same results. This may be due to the small numbers of women undergraduates in the Faculty of

engineering. Out of the 11 women who gained First Class Honours 10 students studied Civil Engineering and only 1 studied Mechanical Engineering. During the years mentioned in Table IV no female student has obtained a First or Second Class (Upper Division Pass) in Electrical or Production Engineering, the courses being considered to be "masculine" fields.

Although the rate of women's new admissions has increased to over 40% in the Faculties of Medicine and Dental Science since the late 1970's, no female student has obtained First Classes in the above mentioned years. Only 7 women of the Science Faculty have been able to obtain First Classes throughout this period. Although there was a sudden increase of women's admissions in the faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Science in the late 1980's, women's achievements in these Faculties have not shown much progress.

When one compares academic achievements such as scholarships, prizes and medals gained by female students with those gained by male students, again it can be seen that there is an imbalance between the two groups. Although we are unable to compare these achievements with the total student numbers of every faculty, it is clear that few women have received scholarships, prizes and medals in the years 1952 - 1990 (Table V). However, this table shows a slight increase of the number of such successful women since the early 1980's.

**Table IV . Passes with class of all Faculties by sex 1954-1990**

YEAR	ARTS				LAW				SCIENCE				MED & DENT			
	1ST CLA		2ND CLA		1ST CLA		2ND CLA		1ST CLA		2ND CLA		1ST CLA		2ND CLA	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1954	4		23	14	0	0	3	0	5	0	21	1			22	5
1955	3	2	16	11			1		6	0	14		1		34	11
1958	7	1	5	3			3		14	2	6	2	3		36	11
			18	4			3				10	3				
1959	1	1	7	5			3		9	0	5	7			33	4
			13	5			1				8	3				
1960	3	0	10	3	1				8	0	8	5	2		32	9
			16	10							10	2				
1961	5	0	8	3	2		1		4	0	6	2			24	6
			19	10			1				17	3				
1962			15	7	2		1		8	0	9	3			23	3
			29	18			1				17	2				
1963	8	0	13	7			2		14	0	14	0			27	7
			34	12							14	3				
1964	1	2	24	8	1		1		6	0	9	2	1		29	1
			32	18			1				16	2			14	
1965							1		7	0	7	3			25	3
											8	2				
1966	3	2	10	9									1		7	2
			33	30												
1967	3	3	12	7					10	0	14	2			24	16
			23	16							21	4				
1968	1		17	17					5	4	3				11	5
			32	25												
1985	4	2	21	17					2		10	8			5	8
			54	15							11	9				
1986	2		25	21					4	1	12	5			9	9
			66	58							15	8				
1990	4	2	28	7					1		5	3			8	2
			58	43							19	12				



Table IV. Contd....

YEAR	ENGINEER				VET SC				AGRI			
	1ST CLA		2ND CLA		1ST CLA		2ND CLA		1ST CLA		2ND CLA	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1954	6	0	5	0			4	0	1	0	4	0
1955	2		8				3				4	0
1958	4		6		1		2	0			2	0
1959	4		14				4				1	0
1960	6		9				1				3	0
1961	7	1	10				1				3	0
1962	6		4				1				2	0
			11									
1963	9		2				2				1	0
			17									
1964	7		6				2					0
			14									
1965							3				2	0
1966	11		15	21			4				1	1
											4	
1967	7		1	0			3					
			10									
1968	5		6				3				2	3
			11									
1985	23		21	2			3				2	28
			63	8							19	
1986	18	4	12	0			3	4			4	26
			25	2							15	
1990	10		10	2			2					
			38	11								

Source - Data collected from convocation list (Examination Branch) of respective years, University of Peradeniya

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**Table V. Scholarships, prizes & medals obtained by students by sex & Faculties 1952-85**

YEAR	FACULTIES	SCHOLARSHIPS		PRIZES		MEDALS	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
1952	ARTS	7	2	4	3		
	LAW	1	0				
	SCIENCE & AGRI:	12	2				
	ENGINEERING	3	0				
	MEDI: & VET SCI:	4	0	5	3		
	TOTAL	27	4	9	6		
1955	ARTS	3	2	3	2		
	SCIENCE	2	0	2	0		
	MEDI: & VET SCI:	0	0	0	0	2	0
	TOTAL	5	2	5	2	2	0
1959	ARTS	6	4	3	1		
	LAW	1	0	1	0		
	SCIENCE	7	0	1	0		
	ENGINEERING	4	0				
	MEDI: & VET SCI:	6	3	4	3		
	TOTAL	34	7	9	4		
1962	ARTS	13	5	6	1		
	SCIENCE	7	1				
	ENGINEERING	1	0				
	MEDI: & VET SCI:	4	1	3	1		
	TOTAL	25	7	9	2		
1966	ARTS	14	2	6	3		
	MEDI: & VET SCI:	4	0	3	1		
	TOTAL	18	2	9	4		
1968	ARTS	8	2	7	2		
	AGRICULTURE	1	0				
	TOTAL	9	2	7	2		
1982	ARTS	11	9	6	3	4	2
	SCIENCE	8	5	2	1	1	0
	AGRICULTURE	16	3	3	2		
	ENGINEERING	15	0	5	0	1	0
	MEDI: & DEN: SCI:	8	7	2	2	3	0
	VET SCIENCE	3	2	1	0	1	0
	TOTAL	61	26	19	8	10	2
1985	ARTS	5	4	20	10	5	2
	SCIENCE	4	1				
	AGRICULTURE	18	7	3	2		
	ENGINEERING	22	2	9	0		
	MEDI: & DEN: SCI:	17	14	4	2		
	VET SCIENCE	1	0	1	0		
	TOTAL	67	28	37	14	5	2

Source: Data collected from annual reports of University of Peradeniya & convocation list of respective years.

### Participation of Female Students in Extra-Curricular Activities

When we look at the early years of the University one can see that male as well as female students participated in extra curricular activities in a satisfactory manner. In the 1940's the membership of most of the Faculty societies related to major fields were made compulsory. The Second Annual Report of the Council of the University says:

"most of the societies have continued with full vigour and King George's Hall has been in considerable demand for student activities. These social functions are an essential part of University life and the Board of Residence and Discipline is glad to encourage them." (Annual Report 1943).

The Annual Reports of the 1950's and 1960's also give us similar information about students' extra curricular activities. Until the late 1960's female students had participated in elected student bodies. A few had worked as Vice-Chairperson, Junior Treasurer and Magazine Editor and Assistant Secretary of the Peradeniya Student Union (PSU). Some had become committee members and some were quite active in the PSU elections. After the early 1970's, the female students have not been visible in the student union which has been dominated by male students. Although one notes a few female committee members, no woman held any important positions in the Student Union (see Table VI). For example between 1982 and 1990 among members elected to the Student Assembly from 6 faculties there were two women who were committee members and no women held office as PSU office bearers (Annual Report 1982). This has become the usual pattern of women's participation in student bodies. Our survey shows that at present, 120 (63.5%) female students do not participate in any kind of extra curricular activities and only 50 (30.7%) of them participate in some form of extra activities. From among them only 5 (2.6%) have said that they participate in student union activities and in student politics without facing any difficulties.

**Table VI. Representation in student assembly 1979-1992**

POSITION	1979		1980		1981		1983		1992	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
CHAIRMAN	1		1		1		1		1	
V. CHAIRMAN	1		1		1		1		1	
SECRETARY	1		1		1		1		1	
J. TREASURER	1		1		1		2		1	

Source: Data collected from the student welfare branch, University of Peradeniya.

According to the Annual Reports the early years of the University, there were 82 registered student's unions (Annual Report 1992) in various fields and in the 1960's the number of unions increased to over 100. Of these unions, the Union Society, the Dramatic Society, the Travel Society, the Rover Crew, the Buddhist Brotherhood, the Hindu Students Movement, the Catholic Students Society, the Students Christian Movement, the Music Society and the Arts Council were well-organised and women had participated in various activities. Many of these unions published magazines, discussed matters with the Vice-Chancellor and the Deans, made suggestions to improve the Faculties and conditions in the University. Some organised inter-hall matches, debates, competitions, day and vacation tours, received students from foreign universities, produced dramas, organised cultural events such as Melas, Buddhist devotional singing and Christmas Carols. According to the annual reports of the University, women participated in all these activities, they

arranged parties, made decorations, helped the staff with certain student activities and edited magazines.

However, most of these societies and their activities disappeared mainly after the 1970's. The Annual Report of 1992 shows that at present, the Peradeniya University has only 45 registered unions. Today except for a few religious societies most of the other societies are dysfunctional and women are mostly inactive. Currently student societies organise only get-togethers and farewell parties, an annual trip and Buddhist devotional singing and female students too participate in these activities. Recently when the Buddhist Brotherhood Society started collecting money and other necessities for the refugees in the North-Eastern Provinces, the female students especially at Ramanathan and Sangamitta Halls played an important role. It shows, that female students are quite keen on religious and welfare activities, but they are not willing to take leadership roles.

The Annual Reports of the University show that until the late 1960's the Music Society, Art Council, the Ghandarva Sabha, and the Sangeetha Natya Sangam were very active and they organised various concerts and festivals. In those days large numbers of female students were members of these societies and especially women's residential halls played a bigger role than the men's hall in the sphere of music. The Fourteenth Annual Report of the University (1955) which refers to the report of the Warden of Hilda Obeysekara Hall Miss. K. Mathiaparanam states:

" the students of Hilda Obeysekara Hall find music and dancing a delightful form of relaxation and seem to derive much pleasure from this form of entertainment. Miss Kitty Hay has contributed much in this connection, for she generously consented to teach "square dancing", in the Hall. Her classes progressively increased in frequency and numbers and square dancing has certainly attracted a large number of students" (Annual Report 1955).

Similarly, in several Annual Reports, Dr (Mrs.) Ram Florence Aluvihare, then Warden of Sangamitta Hall, and Mrs. Vajira Cook, then Warden of James Peris and later of Ramanathan Hall have also mentioned activities such as fresher's concerts, drama competitions, sing songs, dancing and music classes and entertaining musicians (Annual Reports 1956, 1957).

According to Prof. E.R. Sarachchandra:

"in those days women students were devoted to the arts, were more sensitive to beauty and to the finer points in a work of art".

He says:

"Women were, in general, more appreciative of music than the men students".

He also mentions the fact that the female Wardens encouraged extra-mural activities of the residential halls and did nothing to obstruct them except when the students went against the rules of the Halls. He has appreciated the co-operation given by Miss Mathiaparanam and Dr (Mrs) Aluvihare.

Some of the women students who took part in the cultural activities initiated by Prof. Sarachchandra are continuing their activities even now. They have made a contribution to the culture of our country from the inspiration and the enthusiasm they derived when they were at the Peradeniya University. Prof. Sarathchandra has mentioned the names of Trilicia Gunawardana, Malmie Ranasinghe, Anula Abeysinghe, Eva Ranasinghe, Lanka Bandara, Nandita Sarathchandra Jayanthi de Silva and Hemamali Gunasingha as outstanding women in the field of drama during this time at Peradeniya.

In a recent study done by Dr D.P.M. Weerakkody (Weerakkody 1992) on "Music at Peradeniya" reference has been made to the cultural activities organised by the Hindu Student Society, the Sangeetha Natya Sangam, the Students Christian Movement and the Newman Society.

Prof. K.N.O. Dharmadasa in a study of "The Peradeniya Contribution to Literature Theatre and the Arts" expresses the following views on university cultural activities:

"The fifties and sixties were thus the peak period of the university's contribution to the island's culture. Thereafter was a period of steady decline, and artistic activity in the universities at Peradeniya as well as the others that came into existence from 1958 - 59 never reached the same levels" (Dharmadasa 1995).

After the 1970's one can see only very few cultural activities in Peradeniya and women's participation also decreased along with this deterioration due to the lack of opportunities. Still the interest of women in drama and music is visible in the University of Peradeniya. Some female students participated in "street theatre" (veedi natya) performances produced by Gamini Haththotuwegama or in stage plays produced by him and Prof. Ashley Halpe. However, in these activities also the Arts Council faces many difficulties such as funding and training. The Buddhist Brotherhood the Art Council and the Gandarava Sabha organise the annual Buddhist devotional singing, even with some difficulties and some female students participate in them. The annual Christmas Carol service has been discontinued. The Arts Council has been unable to organise the annual drama festival in 1995. The Arts Council nowadays shows less interest in cultural activities, being only concerned with profit and loss (Weerakkody 1992).

This decline of the cultural activities in the University of Peradeniya is confirmed by our survey results. It shows that only 9 (4.8%) female students participated in music and related activities, 5 (2.6%) in drama, and 16 (8.5%) in the activities of religious societies. This evidence shows the dearth of active female participants in cultural activities in recent years. Today cultural activities at Peradeniya depend on the sacrifices made by a few teachers such as Prof. Ashley Halpe, Prof. K N O Dharmadasa, Dr D P M Weerakkody, Dr W M Gunatilake, Mr Gaminie Haththotuwegama, Mrs Sumangala Dharmadasa and Mrs Lalitha Gunawardane. Although they spend time to train and motivate students, some experience shows the different attitudes of the students. Recent social, political, cultural and economic changes of the country and the administrative changes of the University have prevented women students from participating in drama and music related activities.

The University of Peradeniya is provided with a gymnasium and play grounds with all facilities. According to the information given by the Director of Physical Education <sup>3</sup> male as well as female students are willing to participate in games, and inter-university matches. Both men and women practice together and they are quite co-operative. The instructor of Physical Education says that there was/is no dearth of women's participation in sports

However, when we looked at the contribution of the office bearers of the Sports Council of the University, it is clear that there has been male domination throughout this period (Table VII). No female student has become the President or the Vice-President of the Sports Council, and on rare occasions they have come up to the position of the Editor of the Sports Magazine. A few women have become Secretaries and most women have served rarely as committee members. Even the active sportswomen's duties were limited to organising parties, decorating, serving and preparing food, which are considered to be feminine jobs. The data pertaining to the years 1970, 1980, and 1990's show that most of the time women were given the leadership positions in the food committee, the editorial board, the social committee and the decoration committee, in organising the annual colours night.

**Table VII . Women in Sports Council. 1978-1991**

POSITION	1978		1979		1980		1981		1984		1985		1986		1988		1990		1991	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
PRESIDENT	1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1	
V.PRESIDENT	1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1	
SECRETARY	1		1		1	1			1		1		1				1			1
J:SECRETARY	1		1		1			1	1		1				1					1
EDITOR	1			1	1			1		1		1		1			1			1
COM:MEMBERS	1	1	1	2	2	2			1	1	2		2		1		1		1	1

Source: Data collected from the sports council magazines of respective years, University of Peradeniya

When one examines the number of students who received colours in recent years one can see a disparity between men's and women's achievements. Although it is difficult to compare these with total numbers of sportswomen due to the lack of data, this disparity is clearly visible in mixed sports. Table VIII shows that fewer women have obtained colours compared to men. The remarkable feature in this field is that there were only two Muslim women in this field throughout this period.

**Table VIII . Students, who received colours by sports and sex. 1977-91**

NAME OF SPORTS	1977/78		1978/79		1984/85		1990/91	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
ATHLETICS	FULL 7 HALF 2	3 3	5 6	2 4	4 7	3 2	2 14	3 4
BADMINTON(MEN & WOMEN)	FULL 3 HALF 2	2	5	4	4 3	4 3	8 1	6 1
BASKET BALL (MEN & WOMEN)	FULL 5 HALF 2	8 1	8 4	7	11 3	8 3	9 1	8 2
CRICKET	FULL 12 HALF 5		10 2		12 5		10 8	
FOOT BALL	FULL 9 HALF 4		9 4		14 6		13 8	
HOCKEY (MEN & WOMEN)	FULL 12 HALF 2	12 0	12 2	9 1	11 5	10 4	11 8	8 4
NET BALL	FULL HALF	9		7 2		10 1		9 2
RUGGER	FULL 19 HALF				16 4		16 6	
RUGBY	FULL 7 HALF 5							
TABLE TENNIS (MEN & WOMEN)	FULL 5 HALF 4	4 1	7 2	5 2	7 2	5 2	8 3	3 2
VOLLEY BALL (MEN & WOMEN)	FULL 9 HALF 4	6 1	6 4	4	6 4	4	13	6 4
WEIGHT TRAINING	FULL 5 HALF 4		3 5		3 5		10 2	
WRESTLING	FULL 6 HALF 5		12 6		12 6		9 2	

Source: Data collected from records of the Gymnasium, University of Peradeniya.

The information gathered from Peradeniya graduates through interviews and questionnaires gives the impression that in the field of sports women had a successful period before the early 1970's. After that the situation has changed due to various reasons. In the fifties and sixties women participating in sports were given a lot of encouragement, recognition and support by the University authorities and the staff. The Annual Reports of the Wardens of the women's halls of the University demonstrate their interest in women's sports in their halls and in the needs of women who represented the University and obtained University Colours. They seem to have organised inter-hall matches, as well as matches between seniors and freshers within the halls of residence. Perhaps there is no reason to believe that the present day female undergraduates are less talented and less enthusiastic in sports. Their interest has been depressed by numerous extraneous factors. According to previous Peradeniya students, who graduated in the 1960's, the standard of sports was very much higher in those days than at present and it may be due to the admission criteria which prevailed, where at the viva voce due weightage was given to those who showed talent in sports and other extra-curricular activities. However this criteria prevails even now and the change must be due to the changes of the life styles of the women undergraduates.

The University sports teams in the 1950's and the early 1960's included in their ranks all Ceylon athletes and even national record holders. Due place was given to women athletes. Sportswomen such as Nirmala Dissnayake, Nilmini Alwis and Shanthi de Abrew had won national titles while at the University and thereby brought fame to the University. Lalitha Nagasinghe and Hilary Perera too had won national and open titles in badminton, and the de Saram sisters, Sheila and Dorothy were national tennis players. Dorothy De Saram had the distinction of becoming the first Instructress in Physical Education at the Peradeniya University and she was succeeded a couple of years later by Shanthi de Abrew. Their contribution towards the development of the sports programmes of the University was noteworthy. Shanthi De Abrew later rejoined the University as the Director of Physical Education.

Except very few women athletes such as Damayanthi Wicremasinghe in 1975, nobody came up to the national level in the late 1970's and 1980's. Today it is seldom that one can find a University sportswoman coming up to national standards. Our survey results show that 75 (39.7%) women participate in sports at the level of residential halls but only 5 of them (2.6%) participate in university teams.

At present women are treated on par with men as far as cultural activities and sports are concerned but there are certain social factors which prevent the present set of students from spectacular performances in the field of sports. A large number of female students, after they finish lectures for the day, rush off to the markets or to the halls of residence to cook meals, sometimes not only for themselves, but also for their boy friends. Of course this change is not only due to social factors among the university students such as family and high school backgrounds of the present day undergraduates, and the system of competitive examinations, but also due to political and economic reasons.

### **The Residential Life of Female Students**

The University of Peradeniya has seven Halls of Residence for men, three women's Halls and two houses for Buddhist monks. Until the 1960's, in the Halls of Residence, there were only one or two students in a room. Until 1979 three meals with evening tea were provided for a subsidised fee. Facilities such as laundering clothes, supply of hot water, and special meals for the sick were provided to students. Most of the women's Halls had a music room, piano, sports goods and other recreational facilities. Until the 1960's women and men students led relatively comfortable lives in the university. They enjoyed university life very much, especially the residential life provided for the students with opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities.

University annual reports of the 1950's and 1960's show that the female students were interested in Hall activities, and most of the time they had elections to select members of hall committees. This is an indication of women's interest and willingness in participating in hall administration. In those days the hall committee and the student sub-wardens helped the hall administration. They organised orientation programmes, inter-hall matches, matches between freshmen and seniors, musical evenings, drama festivals and competitions, sing songs, melas, baila competitions, debates, camp fires, get-togethers, religious activities, and many other activities. Similarly women in the residential halls paid attention to academic activities such as inviting scholars, political leaders and local as well as foreign public figures organising academic discussions, high table dinners to distinguished visitors, and also publishing magazines, e.g. *Thunapaha* of Sangamatha hall.

A report written by Miss Mathiyaparanan, on Hilda Obeysekara Hall gives us an insight to the situation that prevailed in the female halls at that time

"The informal musical evenings, concerts and sports helped to establish a homely and happy atmosphere right from the beginning in life at the hall..." (Annual Report 1956).

However after the 1970's the standards of the halls deteriorated rapidly. After the late 1960's, the university no longer provided accommodation to all the students. As a result students were compelled to reside unofficially in the halls and it created various problems relating to food, hygiene, facilities and discipline too. Since there was no plan to increase the halls of residence in the mid 1970's the university decided to accommodate three students in one room; (four or five in "box rooms") Facilities like toilets, water and electricity were not sufficient for the crowded halls. In the late 80's and 90's the university began to buy or lease out large houses and converted them into female hostels, (for example A 45 and A 7 and Tiverton Hostels). Some of them do not have adequate facilities for women and some are quite far from the university. Because of this over crowding of halls, there has been a serious decline in standards of cleanliness and a deterioration of physical amenities.

The cafeteria system introduced in the Halls of Residence in 1979 has created more problems especially for women undergraduates. It caused a sudden change in the lives of the students resident in the Halls. After the abolition of the system of providing meals, most of the women undergraduates began to prepare all three meals for themselves. This cuts into their time and the women especially do not have enough time for their academic activities as the women before the 1970's.

Also, since there are no facilities in their rooms or in any other place in the halls, cooking creates many problems relating to water and electricity. Cleanliness of rooms, toilets and wash rooms are a perennial problem. Stray cats and dogs and monkeys are an added nuisance. Another consequence is that women students cannot find time to participate in extra-curricular activities.

After the 1970's the hall administration too was changed in the face of new challenges. The university started recruiting part-time Academic Wardens to look after the hall management. They were drawn from the senior female faculty members and the selection was mainly done on the basis of seniority and not on the basis of their administrative abilities or the time they can sacrifice for the hall management. The Academic Wardens are quite busy with full-time work viz lecturing, attending workshops and seminars, researching and sometimes doing their post-graduate studies. Therefore they do not have sufficient time to attend to the day to day hall administration and to organise various extra-curricular activities as the full time Wardens did in the 1970's. Unlike in those days, the Wardens and the Sub-wardens today face new challenges regarding hall administration. The number of students has increased rapidly, e.g. in the early 1970's there were about 295 students resident in Sangamitta hall and in 1995 the number rose to 660, with the

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building of four cluster houses behind the main hall. But still facilities for the students of the hall are inadequate and no new facilities have been given to the Wardens officially. The hall office is sometimes unable to attend to the students' requirements.

Especially after the 1980's, due to over crowding, financial constraints, the lack of skilled workmen - carpenters masons and plumbers - lack of supervision, wastage, the indifference of some administrative officers, especially in the divisions of maintenance, electricity and gardening, and the carelessness and the selfishness of some students, the upkeep of the Halls of Residence has become a very difficult task. Although one cannot expect the standards of the 1950's and 1960's, some Wardens have been trying to make the environment more attractive and pleasant, especially in respect of the student extra-curricular activities, discipline, cleanliness and the garden. Although this does not need much in terms of funds, many difficulties have been experienced in respect of support from officials in related fields and motivation of the students as well as the minor employees of the Halls. Moreover though we organise an annual orientation programme - freshers welcome, freshers variety shows, a "banna", drawing a raffle, farewell party and year-end pirith ceremony - many constraints such as lack of funds, lack of willingness of the women students and lack of other resources have been faced.

While there are serious constraints regarding the organisation of certain hall activities, it is also disappointing to note that most of the female undergraduates of the halls do not seem to show much interest in extra-curricular activities. Unlike in the past, many female students are unwilling even to be members of the hall committee. Therefore, the Wardens have to keep persuading them to join such activities. Although very few female students sacrifice their time, money and energy on hall activities, many do not even like to spend a few minutes to participate in them. Moreover, politics creeping into female halls has created problems, especially factionalism based on political ideologies with negative effects on the harmony and the integration of the hall community. As a result, interest of female students in extra activities has been decreasing. Our survey shows that only 42 (22.2%) female students out of 189 respondents participate in hall activities. The female students have given various reasons for their lack of participation and the following reasons have been mentioned by about 147 (78%) of the respondents viz.: not sufficient time; competitiveness in examinations, heavy content of syllabuses and recent political problems, reluctance to be active in non-academic activities due to opposition from parents; economic reasons and attitudes arising from problems regarding an uncertain future.

While 104 (55.1%) female students have mentioned that they were not satisfied with the hall facilities, 77 (40%) have said that they were satisfied with the present situation. The main reasons for dissatisfaction are uncleanliness, frequent shortage of water and power the fact that wardens or sub-wardens do not have a close relationship with the students, (almost all the respondents residing in a certain hall have mentioned that they have never seen the Warden, and know her only by name). There also appears to be a generation gap between certain Wardens and full time Sub-wardens.

The differences in the attitude to work among the minor employees of the Halls has become a major reason for the deterioration of the hall administration. They are not willing to work as they did in the 1950's and 60's and most of them are interested in getting more over-time payments. Even in the early 1970's they were quite active and they took pride in their work. They have become lethargic after the abolition of the system of providing meals, and their attitudes and interest in work have changed due to the changing politics especially in the trade union politics in the university.

Thus, mainly due to social, political and economic changes of the country in the 1970's, the lives of the female as well as male students of the halls have changed rapidly. The university authorities have been unable to find solutions for this deterioration and this has become more and more complicated since they are busy with the day to day administration.

### Female Academics in the University of Peradeniya

Occupational segregation and "soft" subject choices affect Peradeniya women not only as learners but also as teachers. Table IX shows that from the 1950's to 1980's, a few women were given Faculty positions especially in the "masculine" fields such as Engineering. In the Arts and the Medical and Dental Faculties more women were given new appointments, but even in those Faculties women were not proportionately represented in terms of the female population. There was a remarkable disparity in the numbers of new appointments between male and female faculty members in the Science, Agriculture, Veterinary Science and Engineering Faculties until the late 1970's.

**Table IX . New appointments to the Academic Staff by Faculties & sex. 1948-82**

YEAR	ARTS		SCIEN.		AGRIC.		ENGIN.		MEDI. & DEN.		VET. SCI.		LAW	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1948	7	1	9	0	4	0			10	1	1	0		
1952	14	3	2	0	1	0	3	0-	6	0	2	0	2	0
1955	2	1	1	0			1	0	4	0	3	0		
1959	14	3	10	0					5	0	1	0	1	0
1962	1	0	3	0			1	0	4	2			1	0
1%3	8	2	5	2	1	0	3	0	0	1			1	1
1%7	13	4	5	0	1	0	1	0						
1972	2	3	8	1	1	0	6	0	2	0				
1979	3	0	1	2	20	4	14	1	5	9	1	0		
1982	5	3	2	0	3	2	9	1	4	3	0	1		

**Source:** Annual reports of University of Peradeniya from respective years data collected from the Academic Establishment Branch of the Senate House, University of Peradeniya.

However, Table X shows that the overall share of women in Faculty employment has been increasing very slowly after the late 1960's. In 1955 only 8.3% of women were given new appointments from all the Faculty positions and in 1983 it has come up to 34.2%. However, Table XI shows that (according to the statistics of 1991) still women of all the Faculties of Peradeniya amount to only 25.5% of the total. Except for the Engineering Faculty, the women in other faculties hold 25% to 35% of teaching positions. The lowest percentage can be found in the faculty of Engineering - 14.4% in 1991.

When we consider the ranks of faculty members the same Table shows us that the Peradeniya women have lost some ground with respect to rank and they are clustered at the lower end of the academic ladder. The 1991 data shows that there is not a single woman grade I professor in any Faculty and there are only 6 women grade II professors to 37 male professors. These 6 women are attached to the Faculties of Arts (3), Medicine (2) and Veterinary Science (1). According to this Table a large number of women hold lower academic ranks. Except on rare occasions, the percentage of women who obtained promotions to higher grades of the academic staff has been quite minimal. But in 1982 there was a sudden increase (Table XII).

**Table X. Long-term new appointments (Academic Staff) of all Faculties by sex & percentage of women 1948-84**

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	FEMALE %
1948	31	2	33	6.1
1952	30	3	33	9.1
1954	14	3	17	17.6
1955	11	1	1	8.3
1956	12	1	13	7.7
1957	23	3	26	11.5
1958	16	1	17	5.9
1959	31	3	34	8.8
1961	30	1	31	3.2
1962	10	2	12	16.7
1963	19	5	24	20.8
1964	35	5	40	12.5
1966	15	1	16	6.2
1968	63	20	83	24.1
1972	18	4	22	18.2
1979	52	16	68	23.5
1980	27	11	38	28.9
1982	24	10	34	29.4
1983	25	13	38	34.2
1984	57	26	83	31.3

Source: Annual reports of respective years, University of Peradeniya. Data collected from the Academic Establishments Branch, Senate House, University of Peradeniya.

Usually the type of job and field has a relationship to the proportion of registered women undergraduates in the faculty. Of course it makes sense that in those fields in which women are most heavily represented, they should be more heavily represented in Faculty positions. But in Faculties like Arts and Medicine too, female share of faculty positions is not proportionate. When one discusses the reasons for the vast gender disparity in other Faculties, it can be seen that women have not entered various fields in great numbers, whether by choice or due to lack of opportunity, until recently, and that it will take more time for them to progress through the system.

There are some who feel that the difference is not caused by discrimination, but rather by the market's reaction to choices made by women about their careers. Using a human capital accumulation model Johnson and Stafford (Johnson 1974) attribute the gap to women's tendency to devote fewer hours to work, to spend less time in academic activities, and to interrupt their careers to look after their children. According to this theory, over the course of their careers, women continue to be less involved. Thus economists in the human capital tradition argue that it is largely a matter of choice, whereas sociologists attribute it to sex role socialisation and institutional barriers. Both explanations have merit and there is much support to prove these theories from the university of Peradeniya.

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**Table XI. Updated positions of permanent staff (Academic) as at 21st May 1991, by Faculties and sex**

	Prof.Gr.1		Prof. Gr 2		Assoc.Prof.		Sen. Lec.Gr I		Sen.Lec Gr II	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Arts	63		8	3	16		32	4	23	9
Science	2		12		3	2	11	5	10	3
Agriculture	3		3		4		4	1	25	8
Engineering	5		4				6		16	2
Medicine	3		4	2	3		11	5	13	8
Dental Science	1		5						6	4
Veterinary Medicine	2		1	1			1	2	4	3

**Table XI. Contd.**

	Lecturer		Asst.Lect.		Teach. Asst		Total		Female %	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Arts	23	9	9	5			122	46		37.7
Science	10	7	1	1			49	18		26.9
Agriculture	25	12			6		10	21		23.0
Engineering	25	2	11		16	10	83	14		14.4
Medicine	8	6		1			42	22		34.4
Dental Science	6	3	1				19	7		26.9
Veterinary Medicine	6	5					16	9		36.0

Source: Data collected from the Academic Establishments Branch,  
University of Peradeniya

The contribution made by the women academics at Peradeniya, to academic as well as non-academic activities are also low. Table XIII shows that very few women have contributed to academic activities and the women's percentage of this contribution has been increasing slowly after the 1980's. This disparity is again mainly due to the small numbers of women academics in the higher ranks. Even some women academics who are in the higher ranks have not contributed in the same way as the men in the same rank. This is mainly due to the social and cultural constraints that women face in Sri Lanka

**Table XII. Promotions to higher grades of Academic Staff by Faculties & sex 1952-82**

YEAR	ARTS		SCIE.		AGRI.		ENGL		MEDL		DEN.		VET.SCI		TOT.		F %
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1952	3	0	1	0					2	0	1	0			7	0	0
1955	4	0	7	0			2	0	5	1	1	0			19	1	5.3
1959	4	1	5	0					3	0	1	0			13	1	7.7
1962	9	1	1	0					2	0	2	0			14	1	7.1
1963	14	0	5	1	1	0	3	0	3	0					26	1	3.8
1967	13	2	5	0	1	0	6	0	12	0	1	0	1	0	39	3	7.7
1972	11	3	1	0	1	0	3	0					1	0	7	3	42.8
1979	4	0	3	0	4	0	1	0	8	1	1	0			21	1	4.7
1982	7	6	9	3	2	0	1	0	1	2	5	2			25	13	52

Source: Annual reports of respective years, University of Peradeniya.

**Table XIII. Contributions made by the Faculty Members to the research activities(recognised publications only) by Faculty & sex. 1943-85**

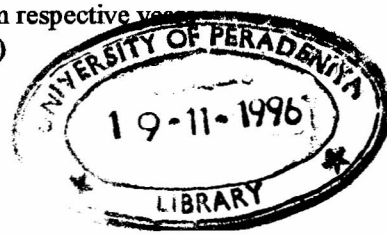
YEAR	ARTS		SCIE.		AGRI.		ENGL.		MEDI.		DEN.		VET.SCI		TOT.		F %
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1943	15	0	2	0					7	0					24		0
1948	22	0	7	0					10	0					39		0
1952	80	2	32	0			6	0	51	0	2	0	5	0	176	2	1.1
1955	72	0	18	0			7	0	50	2	2			18	0	165	
1959	107	5	32	0	11	0	3	0	47	1			17	0	217	6	2.8
1962	102	3	20	0	14	0	2	0	72	0			21	0	231	3	3.1
1963	97	4	19	0	8	0	2	0	51	0	0	0	14	0	191	4	2.1
1967	25	0	33	0	33	0	8	0	32	2	9	0			140	2	1.4
1972	71	1	41	2	17	0	17	0	22	0					168	3	1.8
1979	no																
1982	99	7			45	1	18	1	55	5							
1985	97	11	85	3	93	5	20	5	60	14	2	1	28	3	411	37	9

So far no woman has become a Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor or a Dean of a Faculty of the University of Peradeniya. The Tables XIV and XV illustrate the Women's percentage of the University Council and the Senate, the highest decision making bodies of the University, is also minimal. Similarly, the percentage of women in important committees such as the Finance Committee, Lands and Buildings Committee, and the Board of Welfare is also very small (Table. XVI). But the data of the last decade show (Table XVII) that although the percentage is small a few women have become Heads of Departments. The Faculty of Engineering which is a male dominated faculty has a woman heading the department of Chemical Engineering.

**Table XIV . Women in the Senate of University of Peradeniya (1954 - 1995)**

YEAR	M	F	F%
1954	13	1	7.7
1955	13	1	7.7
1960	13	1	7.7
1961	13	1	7.7
1965	13	1	7.7
1968	50	2	4.0
1984	53	1	1.9
1990	86	5	5.8
1991	86	9	10.5
1995	104	18	17.3

Source: Annual Reports of the University of Peradeniya from respective years  
(The changes of the members were only mentioned)



**Table XV. Women in the Council of University of Peradeniya ( 1952 - 1995 )**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F%</b>
1952	7	0	0.0
1955	9	0	0.0
1960	9	1	11.1
1964	10	0	0.0
1979	20	1	5.0
1980	19	2	10.5
1983	19	2	10.5
1985	19	2	10.5
1990	19	2	10.5
1991	19	2	10.5
1994	21	0	0.0
1995	21	0	0.0

Source: Annual Reports of the University of Peradeniya, from respective years  
(The changes of the Council members were only mentioned)

**Table XVI. Women in important committees of University of Peradeniya  
( 1979 - 1984 )\***

**THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

<b>Year</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F %</b>
1979	11	0	0
1980	14	0	0
1982	15	0	0
1983	15	0	0
1984	14	1	7.1

**THE LANDS, BUILDINGS & MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE**

Year	M	F %
1979	7	0
1980	13	0
1982	14	0
1983	14	0
1984	14	0

**BOARDS OF WELFARE**

Year	M	F	F%
1979	11	1	9.1
1980	13	1	7.7
1982	18	2	11.1
1983	18	2	11.1

Source: Annual Reports of University of Peradeniya - from respective years.

\* Only the Annual reports where data is available.

**Table XVII. The distribution of male female Heads of the Departments by Faculties - 1982-92**

YEAR	ARTS		SCIE.		AGRI.		ENGL.		MEDI.		DEN.		VET.SCI		TOT.		F %
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1982	12	1	5	0	5	0	6	0	12	2			3	1	43	4	8.5
1985	12	1	6	0	5	0	7	0					3	1	33	2	5.7
1987	13	1	6	0			7	0	10	4	4	1	3	1	43	7	14
1988	12	1	6	0	7	0	7	0	12	3	4	0	3	1	51	5	8.9
1989	11	2	6	0	7	0	7	0	11	4	4	0	3	1	49	7	12.5
1992	13	1	6	0	7	0	6	1	11	4	5	1	3	1	51	8	15.7

Source: Annual reports of the University Of Peradeniya from respective years.

**Conclusion**

This brief study shows that the female students enrolment and attainment rates in the University of Peradeniya have been increasing and that the new fields or "masculine" fields of study have become more open to women. Despite the gains in enrolment and number of degrees



awarded, there is still a significant difference between men and women in the major fields of study. There is a large gap between men and women, especially in the Faculty of Engineering. However, there has been a substantial narrowing of the gap between men and women even in this Faculty in recent years.

After the 1970's, there was a sudden decrease in student participation in extra-curricular activities. Simultaneously, the deterioration of the standards of the Halls of residence, and a decrease in hall activities too began in the 1970's and has declined in a rapid manner. Consequently, the lives of the female students of the halls of Residence, too, have changed in various ways.

The percentage of women holding faculty positions was very low at the beginning of the University but after the 1960's, it has been increasing. Still a large disparity is visible between the male and female ranks. The data on the contributions made by female and male academics to academic as well as non-academic activities also show a big difference.

The causes contributing to the disparity between male and female students as well as between male and female teachers need investigation. 167 (88.41%) female students out of 189 respondents mentioned at least 3 of these constraints, and believed that they are in a disadvantaged position merely because they are women. The following constraints are the most noteworthy among them:-

#### 1 Gender specific constraints

- 1.1 The freedom of female students of the university is limited due to the restrictions imposed by not only parents, brothers and boy friends but also by the "educated" community in the university.
- 1.2 Especially in Engineering and Agriculture, female undergraduates find practical work in industry and in the field to be very rigorous and physically demanding.
- 1.3 Reluctance to meet male teachers for further discussions on difficult subjects due to negative attitudes and various rumours prevailing in the university.
- 1.4 Due to cultural barriers, and gender role assumptions, there is a lack of opportunity to have more open and flexible relationships with the society, especially with the male colleagues. Therefore 29% of the respondents believe that their general knowledge is quite limited and this impacts negatively on their academic activities and on their leadership potential.
- 1.5 Male domination - 59% of respondents believe that they are discriminated and they are treated differently mostly by male colleagues. For example female students are not given sufficient opportunities to express their own ideas at the students meetings; even if they do express their ideas, boys consider these as unimportant and condemned them. Unnecessary influence (relating to love affairs, personal jealousies, beauty and modern dress) on female students, and physical and verbal (baduwa, yaka) sexual harassment.
- 1.6 Insufficient time - 41% respondents said that they do not have enough time to do reference work in order to write tutorials and also to do any extra activities. They believe that for a woman it takes more time to take care of her hair, face and clothes, and even more time is taken for cooking, cleaning the room and clothes.

- 2 Constraints relating to rules and regulations of the University
  - 2.1 Some rules and regulations of the Halls of Residence - for example female students should obtain permission (late passes) from the Warden or the Sub-wardens if they go out after 7 p.m. are thought to irksome, although they can get permission to stay out until 9.30 p.m. Many female respondents (52%) said that this regulation hinders their participation in academic as well as non-academic activities. Especially Medical students said that the late pass system has become an unnecessary burden on them when they go to hospital for clinical studies at night. Similarly, 48% of respondents said that they are unable to attend discussions (kuppi) related to various difficulties in their subjects usually held at male residences until late at night, prior to examinations.
  
- 3 Constraints relating to Political factors.
  - 3.1 49% of respondents mentioned that they are afraid to take any leadership role in the university activities. 21% of women said they do not want to attend any "political" meetings, strikes or marches in the university as they know how university students were killed, beaten and treated in a very bad manner by the government forces during the recent political unrest (1987-89) in the island.
  
- 4 Constraints relating to economic factors.
  - 4.1 23% of respondents said that poverty affects them to a great degree - Although some obtain "Mahapola" scholarships they send Rs. 200/= to Rs. 300/= monthly to their homes and are unable to buy necessary text-books or photo-copies. Sometimes the library has one or two copies of the recommended text books or sometimes it doesn't have up to date books b) Most of the Arts Faculty respondents - (39%) mentioned that they are much older than the usual university students and at this age they should be independent and have their own earnings. According to most respondents, due to their fear of entering an "uncertain future" they were unable to concentrate on their studies.
  
- 5 Constraints relating to psychological factors.
  - 5.1 Most of the women consider themselves weak, sensitive, flexible, not good at mathematics and technology. They also feel that they do not have practical knowledge of machinery. Lack of leadership and courage to face and solve problems were other issues that they were concerned with.
  
- 6 Other constraints
  - 6.1 Lack of proficiency in English language and lack of self confidence to raise questions on academic matters during the lecture, tutorial and practical classes. Since there is a belief among male and female students that women should not try to be a "Pora" (leader) in the class.
  - 6.2 Lack of opportunity to have close relationships with teachers - 37% of respondents expressed that neither the university authorities nor the student leadership take any interest in having healthy relationships with teachers. They believe healthy student-teacher relationships promote each other's understanding and it enhances their knowledge. They are quite hesitant to have relationships with teachers due to the "fixed notions" among the student community. According to some respondents, during their "rag" season, they were threatened by their seniors not to respect teachers.

One needs to note that only 22% of respondents believe that they are not disadvantaged because of their feminine status. At interviews carried out by the author with 19 female faculty members, similar constraints were mentioned by them. They particularly noted following extra reasons:

1) Multiple role - All women believe that especially after marriage they should spend at least 8 to 10 years for child bearing and rearing. Multiple roles hinder them in their post graduate studies, research and extra activities.

2) Attitudes of male colleagues - Many male colleagues look upon women not as academic colleagues but as "female colleagues". Therefore, even with all the qualifications most of the men do not consider women as members of the "boys club". Therefore, female academics do not always get information about seminars, work-shops, scholarships and other extra activities. This makes women under-represented in these activities.

### **Suggestions To Improve The Situation**

1) The University should organise compulsory gender sensitisation programmes.

2) To organise seminars, workshops and vacation programmes with female students of high schools and the university to make them aware of the experiences and achievements of successful women-role models, and to give them information about selecting subjects and career prospect opportunities.

3) To establish a separate women's unit in the University to help female students to solve their problems, to motivate female students to be more courageous, to promote the relationships between teachers and students, to organise welfare programmes for female students and to provide more opportunities in research activities, mainly relating to women's issues.

4) To introduce "co-operative learning" systems to promote student's relationships and to improve their knowledge on subject matter etc.

5) a) The university authorities should pay more attention to extra-curricular activities  
b) especially more teachers should be involved in those activities of the students  
c) to give more recognition to students and teachers who participate or play leadership roles in extra curricular activities.

6) a) To introduce a subsidised co-operative system to provide meals in Halls of Residence  
b) to have open discussions and opinion polls to find out female students' attitudes regarding rules and regulations of the halls and to change them according to the changing social moves of society  
c) to have long term permanent solutions for the accommodation problem.

7) To create a more democratic political environment in the University.

8) To create long-term plans to absorb university graduates into the development programs of the country.

- 9) To establish day care centres, Montessori school and a shopping centre in the University premises.

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## Appendix

A questionnaire was distributed among 200 female students in all seven faculties and 189 students responded. Thirteen questions were included and they were mainly on the reasons for selecting their majors, attitude to their subjects, the problems faced by female students - gender specific constraints -, their lives in the halls of residence, problems they see at the halls, their suggestions to improve the present situations in the halls of residence, about their extra-curricular activities and the female student counselling service.

The distribution of respondents by Faculties and academic year

Year/Faculty	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Total
Arts	15	16	16	22		69
Science	6	5	8	8		27
Agriculture	5	4	8	7		24
Engineering	7	4	1	7		19
Medicine	8	6	3	4	2	23
Dental Science	3	4	2	1		17
Veterinary Science	4	3	5	5		17
Total						189

The students were selected randomly. Of these except for four students the rest were residing in the three main female hostels, Wijewardena, Ramanathan and Sangamitta. The students were selected from all academic years and Faculties in proportion to the percentage of female students in the respective Faculties.