

Dropout Percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Children in India

A Decadal Analysis up to Secondary Level

RAMESH PANDITA*

Abstract

The present study seeks to examine the enrolment and the dropout percentage of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) children in India. The study is supported by empirical findings based on the analysis of secondary data retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, for the period 2001-02 to 2010-11. The enrolment and dropout percentage of SC/ST children have been studied separately for the boys and the girl at three stages viz., primary, upper primary and secondary level. SC and ST are the two largest socially disadvantaged sections of Indian society. During the period of study, the overall enrolment percentage of SC and ST children have increased by 37.49 per cent and 37.92 per cent and their average annual dropout percentage has declined by 3.27 per cent and 2.23 per cent respectively. Among SC children, compared to 51.41 per cent boys, 52.16 per cent girls dropped out annually, while as among ST children, compared to 59.87 per cent boys, 61.32 per cent girls dropped out annually. Nearly 68.21 per cent ST and 62.57 per cent SC children drop out by the time they reach upper primary level and 88.17 per cent ST children and 83.62 per cent SC children dropped out by the time they reach secondary level. There is a need to observe caution while generalising the findings, especially while co-relating them to other sections of the Indian society.

* Assistant Librarian, BGSB University, Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir, India, R/o 274-C, Durga Nagar Sect. No I, P/o Roop Nagar, Jammu 180013.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of child dropout at school level is a global problem and so holds true about India, but when it comes to the Indian context, without doubt, one can say the problem is somewhat deep rooted in the Indian school education system. No country or nation can prosper or progress, if it has a weak educational sector and if there is any leveller in the world, what makes individuals, groups, communities, societies or, for that matter, nations to stand shoulder to shoulder with their developed contemporaries is the education and so holds true of the socially disadvantaged and they are no exception to it. Education is one such tool in the hands of common masses, which can turn any curse into a blessing and so holds true of turning a socially disadvantaged section of a society into a socially advantaged one.

As per 2011 population Census of India, India is a home of more than 1.2 billion¹ people in the world, the second largest populous country in the world after China. Given the economy, growth, development, resources and other services available in the country, one has got every reason to justify the higher dropout percentage of children from Indian schools for many reasons and the problem is still more serious when taken the case of socially disadvantaged sections of Indian social setup. What is more worrying is that despite so many measures

taken by both central and state governments, the dropout percentage hasn't declined to a considerable level as yet. Government of India is committed to provide free and compulsory elementary education to children between the age-group of 6 to 14 years which stands duly envisaged under article 21 (A), Right to Education Act of 2009².

"....educational disparities, which contribute a great deal to the persistence of massive inequalities in Indian society, also largely derive from more fundamental inequalities such as those of class, caste and gender..... p. 982" Dreze (2003)³. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are the two largest socially disadvantaged sections of the Indian society and together they constitute more than 25 per cent of India's population^[1]. There are also children who are deprived of the right to education for belonging to other weaker sections of society, including minorities and various others. Since the present study is confined to the enrolment and the dropout scenario of SC and ST children, as such emphasis has been laid only on these two particular sections.

Under Article 366 (24 and 25) of the Indian Constitution, the definitions of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes stand summarised as, "Scheduled Castes" and "Scheduled Tribes" means such castes/tribes, races/tribal communities or parts of or groups within such castes/tribes, races/tribal communities as

are deemed under articles 341 and 342 to be Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe for the purposes of this Constitution⁴.

BRIEF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT SCs AND STs IN INDIA

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been identified as the two most disadvantaged sections of Indian society. The people belonging to these two sections have been identified as economically weak, educationally backward, having no major share in government jobs.

Scheduled Castes are the ones who have been generally found as doing all types of odd jobs, which range from scavenging to other cleanliness jobs, but could never find a dignified place for themselves in society and in the larger part of modern Indian history; these people were known and rated as untouchables. To be more precise, every 6th person in India belongs to a Scheduled Cast community and as per 2011 population Census of Government of India, 16.6 per cent

belongs to Scheduled Castes and this percentage has increased by 0.4 per cent from 16.2 per cent¹. Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are the leading SC populous states in India.

Scheduled Tribes, on the other hand, are mostly concentrated in Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. Although economic activity of ST population varies considerably from place to place, but still agricultural activity is their mainstay. ST population is also addressed as *Adivasis* (Original Inhabitants), although known for living a nomadic life, but, of late, they too have started living a settled life. Domesticating animals, poultry, etc are their other economic activities. As per the 2011 census of government of India, 8.6 per cent¹ of the total population of the country consists of Scheduled Tribe people, which also means every 12th citizen in India belongs to the Scheduled Tribe community. ST population since 2001 has grown by 0.4 per cent, which then was 8.2 per cent.

Table 1

Literacy rate of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) – 1961-2011

Sl.No	Year	SC			ST			Total (All Castes)		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	1961	16.96	3.29	10.27	13.83	3.16	8.53	40.40	15.34	28.31
2	1971	22.36	6.44	14.67	17.63	4.85	11.30	45.95	21.97	34.45
3	1981	31.12	10.93	21.38	24.52	8.04	16.35	56.37	29.75	43.56
4	1991	49.91	23.76	37.41	40.65	18.19	29.60	64.13	39.29	52.21
5	2001	66.60	41.90	54.70	59.20	34.80	47.10	75.30	53.70	64.80
6	2011	75.20	56.50	66.10	68.50	49.40	59.00	80.90	64.60	73.00

Source: National Commission for SCs and STs, Fifth Report and Census of India, 2011

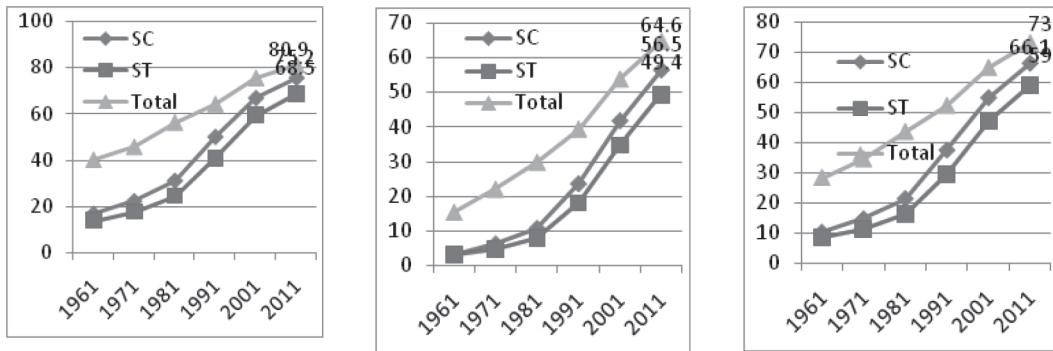


Fig. 1: Literacy levels of SC and STs in India

Provisions have been made under the Constitution of India towards the upliftment, welfare and betterment of the SC, ST and OBC people under article 15, which ensures prohibition of discrimination on the basis of cast, race, gender, religion, etc. Under article 16, equality of opportunity; under article 17, abolition of untouchability; under article 46, promotion of education and economic interests; under articles 330 and 332, reservation of seats for Scheduled Casts in the house of representatives and legislative assemblies respectively; under article 335^[5] reservation for services and posts; and many more provisions have been created to safeguard and protect the interests of these socially disadvantaged sections.

As per the past six population censuses carried out by the Government of India, the literacy rate of both SC and ST community has remained below the national literacy rate to a considerable level. Although the literacy rate of these two

disadvantaged groups has improved tremendously in past two decades, but still have to go a long way to make it at par with the national literacy rate. The scenario of SC and ST female literacy among both the groups has been very abysmal from the very beginning. The female literacy rate of SC population is better than the ST population, but both are far less than the national female literacy rate.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Educationists, social scientists and other governmental agencies have already undertaken a good number of studies concerning the enrolment and the dropout problem of socially disadvantaged sections of Indian society. Some of the related works which form the basis of the present study have been reproduced hereunder for better understanding of the concept of the dropout problem among the disadvantaged groups.

McNeal, 1999; Rumberger and Larson, 1998; Pong and Ju, 2000^{6,7,8} in their respective studies have

detailed a range of factors, which they found to influencing the dropout of a child. The authors are of the view that, the family background of the child, children's own behaviour, educational background of the parents, especially in the matters to educate a girl child, communities, peers, poor infrastructure, improper seating arrangement, socio-economic status of a family, their income level, etc. immensely contribute towards the dropout of a child. Birdsall *et al*, 2005; Bruneforth, 2007; Cardoso and Verner, 2007^{9,10,11} are of the view that poverty is one of the significant reasons, which leads to child dropout. Children who are able to seek more support from their parents, be it for access to quality schools, private tuitions, or the teaching at home are less prone to dropout. Parents who keep constant watch over their wards, regulate their behaviour in the desired direction, provide emotional support or constant encouragement excel in their studies and their dropout chances becoming diminish drastically Rumberger 1995; Ainsworth *et al*, 2005)^{12,13}.

Chug (2011)¹⁴ in her study, undertaken on the dropout of children dwelling in slums in Delhi, which mostly consists of Scheduled Caste population, termed the problem of dropout as intricate with multiple factions, which together contribute to the dropout of children from schools. The author is of the view that the dropout rate of slum children is higher at lower levels of their classes

and lowers down towards the higher classes. The author, while analysing the enrolment figures of MHRD for the period 2004-05 to 2007-08, found that, compared to the general population, the enrolment ratio of SC children has either gone stagnant or is increasing at a very slow pace. The author believes that school infrastructure, environment and teacher attitude have a profound impact on creating interest or disinterest among students.

Mitra and Singh (2008)¹⁵ in their study conducted during 2002-03, concerning literacy among tribal population in India found that, there is a sharp increase in the dropout rate among both tribal boys and girls, as their educational levels increase. The authors found the dropout rate among tribal children up to primary level was 41.13 per cent for boys and 41.91 per cent, for the upper primary level, it was 66.86 per cent for boys and 71.17 per cent for girls, which was far higher than the general dropout percentage among both boys and girls. Pandita (2015)¹⁶ has undertaken study over the enrolment and dropout percentage among boys and girls in India. The author in his study has observed 40.52 per cent enrolment growth among girls and 18.17 per cent among boys during the decade, which corroborates the fact that there is a substantial change in the outlook of Indian society towards the girl child.

Balgopalan (2003)¹⁷ and Public Report on Basic Education in Indian

(PROBE, 1999)¹⁸ are of the view that socially disadvantaged children face discrimination in government schools, as the government school teachers mostly belong to the upper castes and the children of upper caste mostly join private schools, as a result, teachers are least serious about the education of these children. The author terms this discrimination as terrible and exclusionary, which influences such kind of environment, that encourages the dropout of children from schools.

Dreze and Kingdon (2001)¹⁹ in their study concerning schooling in rural India, found that the education of boys is more responsive to their father's education, but the case is *vice-versa* for girls, however the maternal education has a positive effect on the girl's education. As per the National Council of Applied Economic Research (1996)²⁰, children from SC/ST or OBC communities are less likely to go to school than general category children, despite controlling the other household variables, which otherwise hitherto was treated as the factors influencing their enrolment and dropout. The study further observes that, being a SC/ST girl child, her chances of enrolling are reduced by 8 per cent and being an OBC girl child, the chances of her enrolment are reduced by 6 per cent.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper intends to achieve the following objectives.

- i. To examine the enrolment and

dropout percentage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children in India up to secondary level during the period 2001-02 to 2010-11, and.

- ii. To analyse and compare the enrolment and dropout percentage among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe children in India, for both boys and girls separately, to that of overall dropout percentage in country.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The scope of the present study is confined to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population of India, which are the two largest socially disadvantaged sections of Indian society, having together 25.2 per cent population share in the country. The study encompasses the period 2001-02 to 2010-11. The study is based on secondary data, retrieved from the official website of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India on October 02, 2014 accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33.

DISCUSSION AND DATA ANALYSIS

Data have been tabulated separately for both SC and ST children and to reflect the dropout trend separately for boys and girls, the data have been put under separate tables. Percentage at most of the places has been drawn up to two decimal places and has not been rounded off to 100 per cent figure, as such while computing data

for 100 per cent figure may reflect slight variations.

Annual Corresponding Growth and Annual Corresponding Decline percentage has been computed by using the following formula.

ACG- Annual Corresponding Growth,
ACD-Annual Corresponding Decline

$$\text{ACG} = \frac{\text{End Value} - \text{First Value}}{\text{First Value}} \times 100$$

$$\text{ACD} = \frac{\text{First Value} - \text{First Value}}{\text{First Value}} \times 100$$

The overall enrolment of SC children has increased from 31.95 million in 2001-02 to 43.93 million in 2010-11, which constitutes an enrolment

growth of 37.49 per cent during the decade. Accordingly, the enrolment percentage up to primary level has increased by 25.25 per cent, for upper primary level 50.66 per cent and for secondary level 93.22 per cent, which is quite encouraging given the 0.4 per cent SC population growth during the same period. The overall annual corresponding growth in enrolment remained positive, except for the year 2002-03, when it dropped by -0.18 per cent. However, the encouraging part is that the overall enrolment percentage of all SC children during the period of study grew on average by 3.27 per cent annually.

In terms of dropout, on average, 24.85 million students each year are

Table 2
Overall enrolment and dropout of Scheduled Caste children

Year	Enrolment figures in millions of Classes				ACG%	Dropout percentage figures of Classes				ACD%
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Total		I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Avg.	
2001-02	21.50	7.50	2.95	31.95	-	45.2	60.7	72.7	59.53	-
2002-03	21.67	7.49	2.73	31.89	-0.18	41.5	59.9	71.9	57.76	-2.97
2003-04	23.13	8.08	3.23	34.44	7.99	36.6	59.4	73.1	56.36	-2.42
2004-05	24.76	8.70	3.54	37.00	7.43	34.2	57.3	71.3	54.26	-3.72
2005-06	25.31	9.15	3.76	38.22	3.29	32.9	55.2	70.6	52.90	-2.50
2006-07	26.27	9.45	4.09	39.81	4.16	35.9	53.1	69.0	52.66	-0.45
2007-08	26.29	9.93	4.22	40.44	1.58	30.1	52.5	68.4	50.33	-4.42
2008-09	26.71	10.54	5.04	42.29	4.57	26.6	47.3	59.8	44.56	-11.46
2009-10	26.01	10.87	5.44	42.32	0.07	30.0	51.2	59.0	46.73	4.86
2010-11	26.93	11.30	5.70	43.93	3.80	27.1	43.4	56.1	42.20	-9.69
Avg.	24.85	9.3	4.07	38.22	3.27	34.01	54.00	67.19	51.72	-3.27

ACG% - Annual Corresponding Growth Percentage, ACD%- Annual Corresponding Decline Percentage

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33

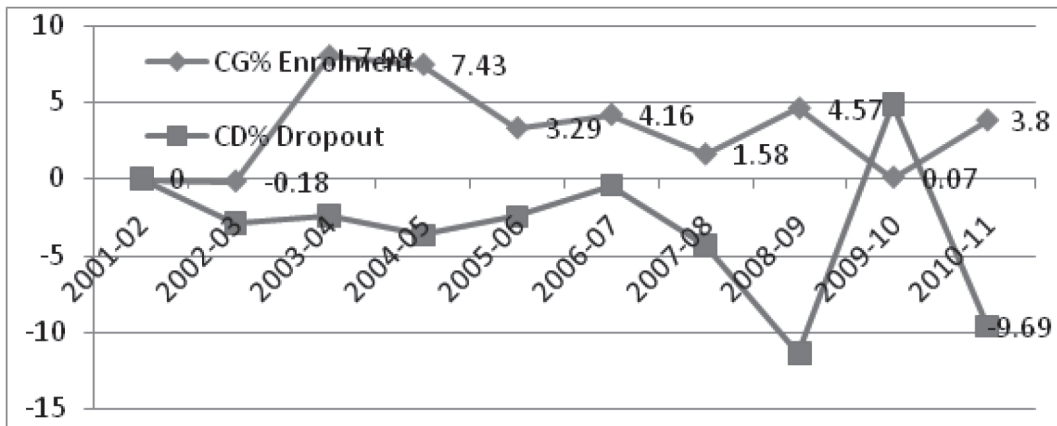


Fig. 1: Frequency Curves of Corresponding Growth in Enrolment and Corresponding Decline percentage in Dropout for all ST Children

enrolled at primary level, while as on average 9.3 million stand enrolled at upper primary level, which also means that 62.57 per cent SC children dropped out before reaching upper

primary level and accordingly 83.62 per cent SC children dropped out by the time they reached secondary level. The average dropout percentage of SC children up to primary level

Table 3
Enrolment and dropout of Scheduled Caste (male)

Year	Enrolment figures in millions of Classes				ACG%	Dropout percentage figures of Classes				ACD%
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Total		I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Avg.	
2001-02	12.25	4.55	1.83	18.63	-	43.7	58.6	71.1	57.80	-
2002-03	11.94	4.43	1.74	18.11	-2.79	41.1	58.2	69.7	56.33	-2.54
2003-04	12.76	4.73	1.98	19.47	7.50	36.8	57.3	71.4	55.16	-2.07
2004-05	13.76	5.10	2.18	21.04	8.06	32.7	55.2	69.1	52.33	-5.13
2005-06	13.99	5.31	2.30	21.60	2.66	32.1	53.7	68.2	51.33	-1.91
2006-07	14.46	5.47	2.46	22.39	3.65	32.3	51.6	66.6	50.16	-2.27
2007-08	13.71	5.33	2.39	21.43	-4.28	34.4	53.6	68.1	52.03	3.72
2008-09	13.98	5.62	2.83	22.43	4.66	29.6	50.3	59.6	46.50	-10.62
2009-10	13.49	5.75	3.04	22.28	-0.66	33.7	50.8	58.5	47.66	2.49
2010-11	14.03	5.98	3.14	23.15	3.90	30.2	46.8	57.4	44.80	-6.00
Avg.	13.43	5.22	2.38	21.05	2.27	34.66	53.61	65.97	51.41	-2.43

ACG%- Annual Corresponding Growth Percentage, ACD%- Annual Corresponding Decline Percentage

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33

during the decade remained at 34.01 per cent, for upper primary level at 54 per cent and for secondary level at 67.19 per cent. Although, a constant and continuous corresponding decline was observed in the overall dropout percentage, but still, on average, 51.72 per cent SC children dropped out annually. Except for the year 2009-10, corresponding decline was recorded in the dropout percentage of SC children, which on average declined by -3.27 per cent annually during the period of study, which is quite noteworthy.

The only aim to have separate analysis for both boys and girls was to assess, as how far the Indian social setup is still inclined towards the male child and how far the girl child suffers on this account. Accordingly, from the analysis, it emerges that the overall enrolment percentage of SC male students during the period of study has increased from 18.63

million in 2001-02 to 23.15 million in 2010-11, which constitutes the growth of 24.26 per cent, while as the enrolment percentage up to primary level increased by 14.53 per cent, for upper primary level at 31.42 per cent and for secondary level at 71.58 per cent. A mixed trend was observed in corresponding annual enrolment growth percentage at all levels, which on average grew by 2.27 per cent annually.

The average enrolment of male SC children at primary level remained 13.43 million, while as, on average, only 5.22 million stand enrolled at upper primary level, which also in a way means that nearly 61.13 per cent dropped out by the time they reached upper primary level. Accordingly, 82.27 per cent SC male students dropped out by the time they reached secondary level and the average dropout percentage of SC male students up to primary level during

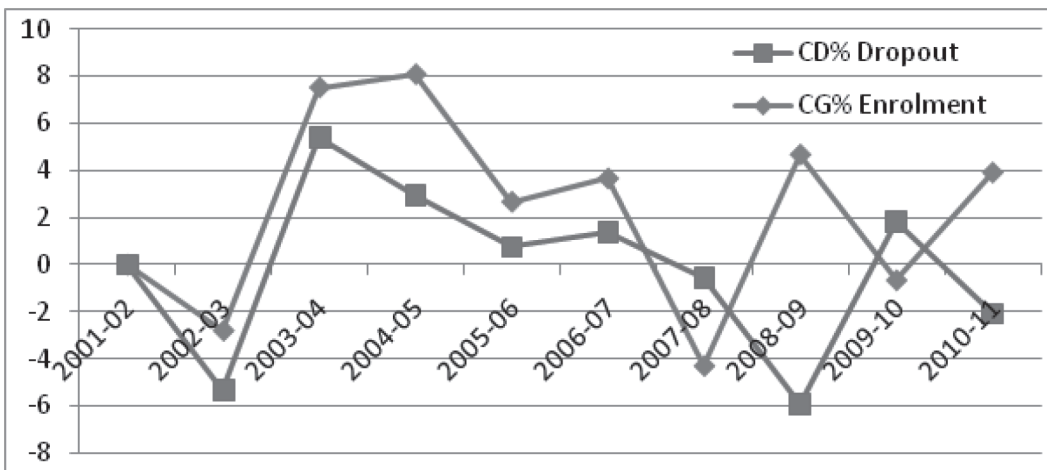


Fig. 2: Frequency Curves of Corresponding Growth in Enrolment and Corresponding Decline Percentage in Dropout for ST Boys

the period of study remained at 34.66 per cent, for upper primary level 53.61 per cent and for secondary level at 65.67 per cent, while as on average was 51.41 per cent SC male students dropped out annually. The dropout percentage of SC male students has shown a considerable decline during the each corresponding year, which on average declined by 2.43 per cent each year, except 2007-08 and 2009-10, when the dropout percentage appreciated by 3.72 per cent and 2.49 per cent respectively.

The overall enrolment percentage of SC female students during the period of study increased from 13.31 million in 2001-02 to 20.77 million in 2010-11, which constitutes a growth of 56.04 per cent during the decade. This enrolment growth of SC girl students is far higher and better than

the overall SC children enrolment percentage and more than double the enrolment growth percentage of SC male students for the same period. This growth percentage also corroborates the fact that there is a change of mindset, whereby girl child is being encouraged to receive formal education even by disadvantaged sections of the Indian society. The enrolment growth of SC girl child up to primary level increased from 9.25 million in 2001-02 to 12.90 million in 2010-11 which means registering a growth of 39.45 per cent during the decade. Accordingly, the enrolment percentage for upper primary level increased by 80.33 per cent, and for secondary level by 129.72 per cent. This also reflects the fact that retention of SC girl child in upper primary and secondary levels has

Table 4
Enrolment and dropout of Scheduled Caste children (Female)

Year	Enrolment figures in millions of Classes			Total	ACG%	Dropout percentage figures of Classes			Avg.	ACD%
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X			I-V	I-VIII	IX-X		
2001-02	9.25	2.95	1.11	13.31	-	47.1	63.6	74.9	61.86	-
2002-03	9.73	3.06	0.99	13.78	3.53	41.9	62.2	74.9	59.66	-3.55
2003-04	10.37	3.34	1.25	14.96	8.56	36.2	62.2	75.5	57.96	-2.84
2004-05	11.00	3.60	1.36	15.96	6.68	36.1	60.0	74.2	56.76	-2.07
2005-06	11.33	3.83	1.47	16.63	4.19	33.8	57.1	73.8	54.90	-3.27
2006-07	11.81	3.99	1.63	17.43	4.81	39.9	55.0	72.2	55.70	1.45
2007-08	12.58	4.60	1.83	19.01	9.06	24.5	51.1	68.9	48.16	-13.53
2008-09	12.73	4.91	2.21	19.85	4.41	23.0	43.3	60.1	42.13	-12.52
2009-10	12.52	5.12	2.40	20.04	1.00	25.6	51.5	59.7	45.60	8.23
2010-11	12.90	5.32	2.55	20.77	3.64	23.4	39.1	54.2	38.90	-14.69
Avg.	11.42	4.07	1.68	17.17	4.58	33.15	54.51	68.84	52.16	-4.27

ACG%- Annual Corresponding Growth Percentage, ACD%- Annual Corresponding Decline Percentage

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33

increased to a considerable level, but the worrying aspect is, that on average 11.42 million SC girl students stand registered up to primary level while as only 4.07 million stand registered at upper primary level, which also means that 64.36 per cent dropped out before they reached upper primary level. Accordingly, 85.28 per cent SC female students dropped out before they reached the secondary level.

The average corresponding enrolment growth percentage of SC female students during the period of study increased by 4.58 per cent annually, while as the average annual dropout percentage among SC girl students up to primary level remained 33.15 per cent, in the upper primary level it remained at 54.51 per cent and for secondary level the dropout percentage remained at 68.84 per cent. The overall average annual dropout percentage of SC girl students during the period was 52.16

per cent, which means more than half the enrolled SC girl students dropped out annually. Except for the years 2006-07 and 2009-10, the average corresponding decline in dropout percentage of SC girl students was at 4.27 per cent annually, which is far better and higher over average SC male students and overall SC children dropout decline percentage.

The overall enrolment of ST children during the period of study has grown from 16.27 million in 2001-02 to 22.44 million in 2010-11, which constitutes the growth of 37.92 per cent. It is equally noteworthy that the ST population during the same period has grown by 0.4 per cent. The enrolment percentage at primary level among ST students grew from 11.73 million in 2001-02 to 14.85 million in 2010-11, thereby recording a growth of 26.59 per cent. Accordingly, the enrolment percentage during the decade for upper primary level has

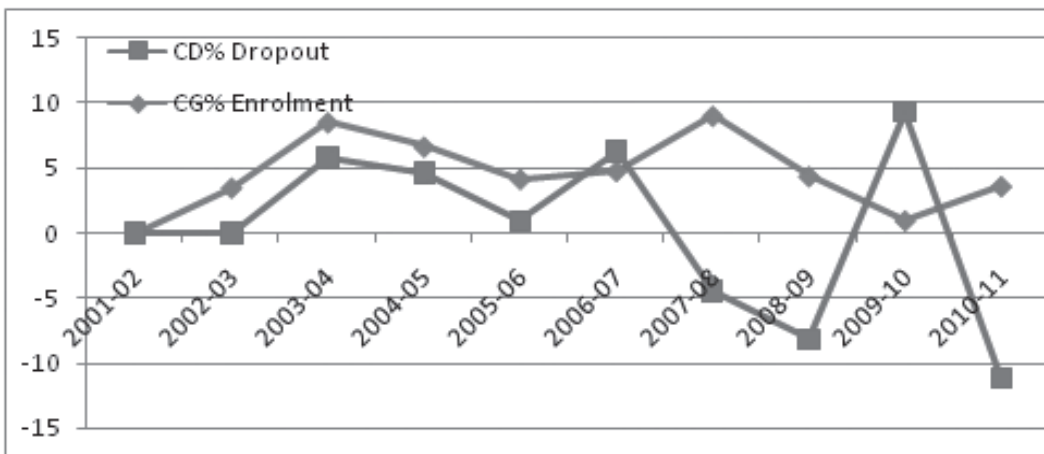


Fig. 3: Frequency curves of corresponding growth in enrolment and corresponding decline percentage in dropout for ST girls

Table 5
Enrolment and dropout of Scheduled Tribe children

Year	Enrolment (in Millions)				ACG%	Dropout Percentage				ACD%
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Total		I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Avg	
2001-02	11.73	3.36	1.18	16.27	-	52.3	69.5	81.2	67.66	-
2002-03	11.83	3.25	1.21	16.29	0.12	51.4	68.7	80.3	66.80	-1.27
2003-04	12.52	3.66	1.35	17.53	7.61	48.9	70.1	79.3	66.10	-1.04
2004-05	13.74	4.17	1.47	19.38	10.55	42.3	65.9	79.0	62.40	-5.59
2005-06	14.11	4.47	1.56	20.14	3.92	39.8	62.9	78.5	60.40	-3.20
2006-07	14.43	4.66	1.67	20.76	3.04	33.1	62.5	78.1	57.90	-4.13
2007-08	14.68	4.72	1.74	21.14	1.83	31.3	62.5	76.9	56.90	-1.72
2008-09	15.01	4.98	1.89	21.88	3.50	35.6	59.2	76.0	56.93	0.05
2009-10	14.92	5.16	2.07	22.15	1.23	36.8	56.8	74.9	56.16	-1.35
2010-11	14.85	5.42	2.17	22.44	1.30	35.6	55.0	70.9	53.83	-4.14
Avg	13.78	4.38	1.63	19.79	3.31	40.71	63.31	77.51	60.51	-2.23

ACG%- Annual Corresponding Growth Percentage, ACD%- Annual Corresponding Decline Percentage
 Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33

increased by 61.30 per cent and for secondary level is 83.89 per cent. It is equally noteworthy, that on average at 13.78 million ST students are enrolled up to primary level, while as only 4.38 million stands enrolled

at upper primary level, which also somewhere means that nearly 68.21 per cent ST children dropped out by the time they reach upper primary level. Accordingly, 88.17 per cent children dropped out by the time they

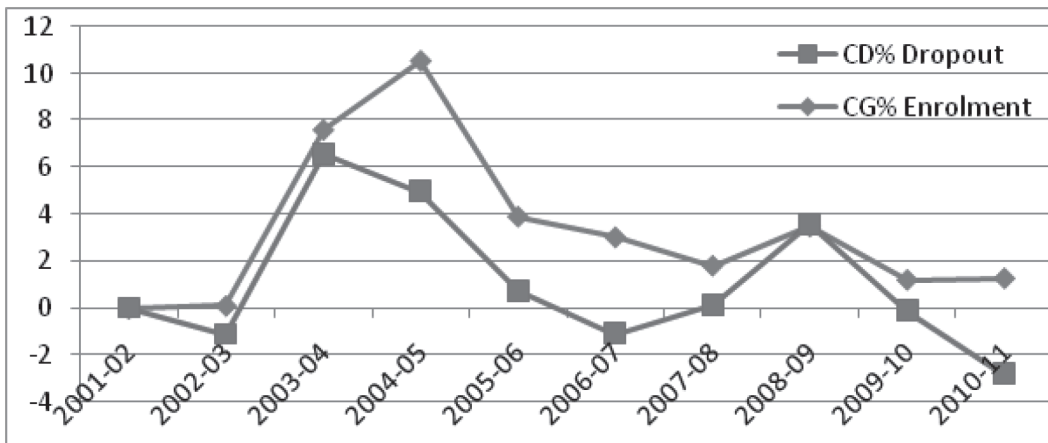


Fig. 4: Enrolment and dropout of all SC children

reached the secondary stage. The overall average corresponding growth in enrolment of ST children during the decade was 3.31 per cent annually.

The average annual dropout percentage among ST children up to primary level remained at 40.71 per cent, for upper primary level at 63.31 per cent and for secondary level at 77.51 per cent with an overall dropout percentage of 60.51 per cent annually. This also indicates the fact that more than 60 per cent ST children enrolled in school drop out annually. Except for the year 2008-09, a constant corresponding decline was observed in the dropout percentage of ST children, which on average declined by 2.23 per cent annually.

The overall enrolment of ST male students during the period of study increased from 9.48 million in 2001-

02 to 11.71 million in 2010-11, which means a growth of 23.52 per cent. The overall enrolment up to primary level increased from 6.69 million in 2001-02 to 7.67 million in 2010-11, which means a growth is 14.64 per cent. Accordingly, the overall enrolment of ST male children for upper primary level has increased by 38.53 per cent and 62.16 per cent in secondary level. On an average, 7.32 million ST male children are enrolled each year up to primary level, while 2.45 million is an average annual enrolment number at upper primary level, which means nearly 66.53 per cent ST male children drop out before reaching the upper primary level. Accordingly, nearly 86.88 per cent of the enrolled ST male children drop out before reaching the secondary level. Except for the year 2002-03, there has been a constant

Table 6
Enrolment and dropout of Scheduled Tribe children (Male)

Year	Enrolment (in Millions)				ACG%	Dropout Percentage				ACD%
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Total		I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X	Avg	
2001-02	6.69	2.05	0.74	9.48	-	51.0	67.3	79.9	66.06	-
2002-03	6.42	1.93	0.74	9.09	-4.11	50.8	66.9	78.4	65.36	-1.05
2003-04	6.78	2.14	0.83	9.75	7.26	49.1	69.0	77.9	65.33	-0.04
2004-05	7.37	2.40	0.90	10.67	9.43	42.6	65.0	77.8	61.80	-5.40
2005-06	7.51	2.52	0.93	10.96	2.71	40.2	62.9	78.0	60.36	-2.33
2006-07	7.64	2.61	0.99	11.24	2.55	30.6	62.8	77.3	56.90	-5.73
2007-08	7.66	2.61	1.02	11.29	0.44	31.0	62.6	76.0	56.53	-0.65
2008-09	7.80	2.71	1.09	11.60	2.74	36.0	58.5	75.4	56.53	0
2009-10	7.71	2.75	1.17	11.63	0.25	38.1	54.6	74.5	55.73	-1.41
2010-11	7.67	2.84	1.20	11.71	0.68	37.2	54.7	70.6	54.16	-2.81
Avg	7.32	2.45	0.96	10.74	2.19	40.66	62.43	76.58	59.87	-1.94

ACG%- Annual Corresponding Growth Percentage, ACD%- Annual Corresponding Decline Percentage

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33

and considerable increase in the corresponding enrolment percentage of ST male children, which on average grew by 2.19 per cent annually, during the period of study.

The overall average annual dropout percentage of ST male students during the period of the study remained at 59.87 per cent. While as, at primary level the average annual dropout percentage remained 40.66 per cent, for upper primary level at 62.43 per cent and for secondary level average 76.58 per cent. The corresponding decline in dropout percentage of ST male children is equally noteworthy, as, except for the year 2008-09, considerable decline was observed in the average dropout, which on average declined by 1.94 per cent annually.

The overall enrolment of ST female students during the decade increased

from 6.79 million in 2001-02 to 10.73 million in 2010-11, which constitutes a growth of 58.02 per cent. The enrolment of ST female children up to primary level increased from 5.04 million in 2001-02 to 7.18 million in 2010-11 with a growth of 42.46 per cent. Accordingly, the enrolment growth among ST female children for upper primary level during the decade was at 96.94 per cent and 120.45 per cent at the secondary level. The growing trend towards ST female child enrolment gets equally corroborated by the fact that their average annual corresponding growth remained 4.72 per cent annually.

The average annual dropout percentage of ST female students during the period of the study remained at 61.32 per cent, while as, for the same period, the average annual dropout percentage up to

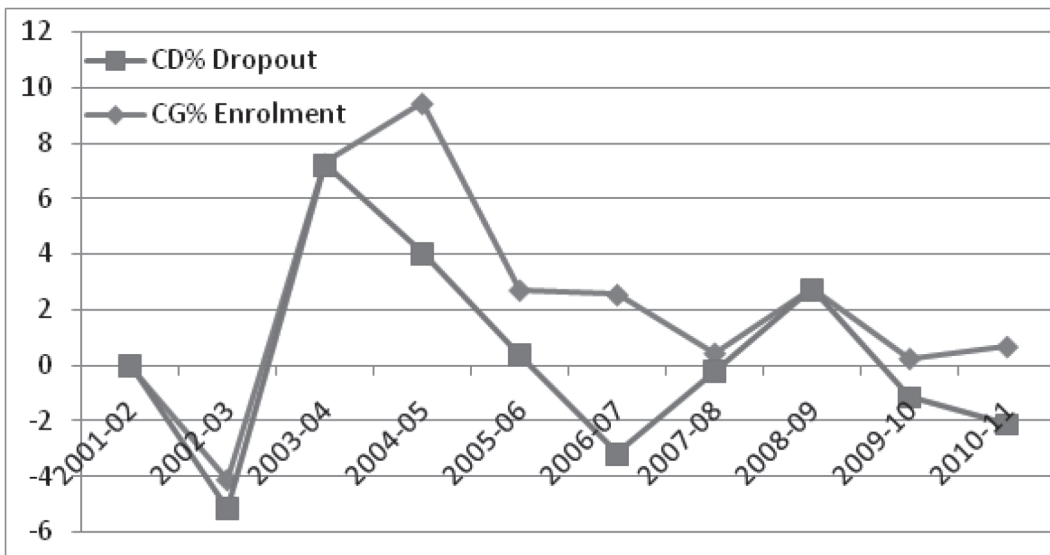


Fig. 5: Enrolment and dropout of SC boys in %

Table 7
Enrolment and dropout figures of female Scheduled Tribe children

Year	Enrolment (in Millions)			Total	ACG%	Dropout Percentage			Avg	ACD%
	I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X			I-V	VI-VIII	IX-X		
2001-02	5.04	1.31	0.44	6.79	-	54.1	72.7	82.9	69.90	-
2002-03	5.41	1.32	0.47	7.20	6.03	52.1	71.2	83.0	68.76	-1.63
2003-04	5.74	1.53	0.52	7.79	8.19	48.7	71.4	81.2	67.10	-2.41
2004-05	6.37	1.78	0.58	8.73	12.06	42.0	67.1	80.7	63.26	-5.72
2005-06	6.60	1.95	0.63	9.18	5.15	39.3	62.9	79.2	60.46	-4.42
2006-07	6.79	2.05	0.68	9.52	3.70	35.8	62.2	79.1	59.03	-2.36
2007-08	7.02	2.11	0.72	9.85	3.46	31.7	62.3	78.0	57.33	-2.87
2008-09	7.20	2.27	0.80	10.27	4.26	35.1	60.0	76.8	57.30	-0.05
2009-10	7.21	2.41	0.90	10.52	2.43	35.4	59.1	75.3	56.60	-1.22
2010-11	7.18	2.58	0.97	10.73	1.99	33.9	55.4	71.3	53.53	-5.42
Avg	6.45	1.93	0.67	9.05	4.72	40.81	64.43	78.75	61.32	-2.61

ACG%- Annual Corresponding Growth Percentage, ACD%- Annual Corresponding Decline Percentage

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, accessible at http://mhrd.gov.in/statist?field_statistics_category_tid=33

primary level remained 40.81 per cent, for upper primary level at 64.43 per cent and for secondary level it was 78.75 per cent. The good thing about the dropout percentage of ST female

students is that there has been a constant and continuous decline in the dropout percentage during the period of study which on average declined by 2.61 per cent annually.

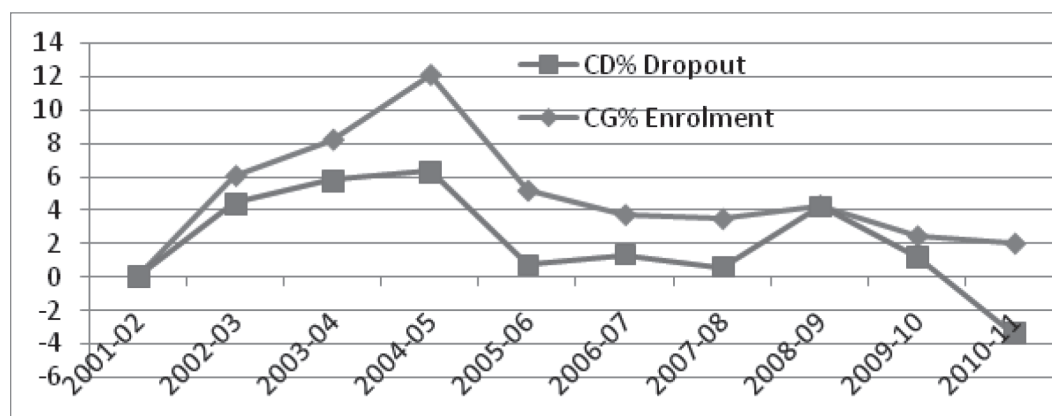


Fig. 6: Enrolment and dropout of SC girls in %

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The caste ridden Indian social setup can be termed as one of the main reasons to polarise the country's social setup. The children dropping out from schools is a common problem in social setup, while the children belonging to socially disadvantaged sections of society are vulnerable in school dropout. These children face a range of problems on day-to-day basis, with the result, sooner or later, they succumb before the circumstantial pressure, which they fail to resist for long, hence drop out.

The overall enrolment percentage of both SC and ST children during the period of study has improved by 37.49 per cent and 37.92 per cent. Therefore, their annual percentage dropout has declined annually by an average of 3.27 per cent and 2.23 per cent respectively. These sections of society need to understand that their educational backwardness gets reflected in all other sectors as well. These disadvantaged groups need to understand that their educational backwardness gets reflected in all other sectors as well. Government in general and SC and ST communities in particular should pay greater attention towards retention of their children in schools.

Compared to 45.13 per cent gross average national dropout percentage, the overall average annual dropout percentage of SC and ST children in the same period remained at 51.72 per cent and 60.51 per cent, respectively,

which is higher when compared to the overall dropout percentage of the country. The reason for the higher national dropout percentage can be owed to the fact that majority portion of such percentage comes from SC/ST groups. While as, the dropout percentage of general and other category of children during the period remained 23.18 per cent.

Accordingly, in the category of SC and ST male students the enrolment percentage has grown by 24.26 per cent and 23.52 per cent, at the same time their dropout percentage has declined on average annually by 2.43 per cent and 1.94 per cent. While as in case of female SC and ST students, the enrolment percentage has increased by 56.04 per cent and 58.02 per cent, while as their dropout percentage has on average annually declined by 4.27 per cent and 2.61 per cent respectively, which again is quite encouraging and noteworthy. It is equally interesting to note that the girl child enrolment percentage among both SC and ST communities has increased considerably and is far higher and better over their male counterparts.

During the period of study, compared to 51.41 per cent SC male students, 52.16 per cent SC female students dropped out and compared to 59.87 per cent ST male students, 61.32 per cent ST female students dropped out annually. These figures somewhere reflect the fact that male and female children do not receive the same treatment among the two

socially disadvantaged sections under study. Need it to pay more attention towards the retention of SC/ST girl child in schools and it is thereafter one can expect of some grass roots level changes in their overall welfare and betterment.

Compared to 88.17 per cent ST children, 83.62 per cent SC children dropped out by the time they reached secondary level and compared to 68.21 per cent ST children, 62.57 per cent SC children dropped out by the time they reached upper primary level. Among the two disadvantaged sections, Scheduled Casts are slightly on the better side than Scheduled Tribes at the enrolment and dropout front of school education.

The constitutional provisions under different articles, though apparently sufficient, have not yielded the desired results. All this has resulted government to grant an extension to all such policies and programmes from time to time, so that the maximum population of these two sections of society may get benefitted. The literacy rate of both SC and ST community has yet to go a long way to make it with the national literacy rate. The scenario of female literacy rate among both the communities is abysmal and needs to be improved significantly to make it at par with the national literacy rate.

FACTORS LEADING TO INCREASED SC/ST CHILD DROPOUT

It has been observed that the social disadvantages are directly

associated with economic status of an individual, a family, a community, a group, a section and society at large. Better the economic health of an individual or a section of society, better are the prospects of their being on the advantageous side. Accordingly, economic status of SC/SC communities is being seen as one of the main reasons for these groups being the disadvantaged lot. Education is one such grey area, where the children of these socially disadvantaged sections are lagging behind, but surely economics is not the only aspect responsible for their educational backwardness. From the above discussion and earlier studies undertaken, some other factors contributing to their educational backwardness, include

- It is always difficult for a first generation learner to let understand the value, need and importance of education to her/his predecessors who may have never attended the schools or may have never received the formal education.
- Illiteracy of parents is the prime factor, which contributes to the early dropout of SC/ST children.
- Treating girl child as a burden is very common among socially disadvantaged groups, as such, they may begin by enrolling their daughters in schools but mostly end up with forcing them to dropout
- Early marriage.
- Raring and caring of the younger siblings and the domesticated

animals is one of the prime reasons which forces children from SC/ST communities to drop out.

- Pushing younger children in doing odd jobs and to work as child labours to support their families is a common practice among SC/ST families.
- Children from SC/ST families, mostly show the tendency of psychological weakness, as they seem to have accepted poverty and other social disadvantages as their true identity, which they don't want to lose easily.
- The people belonging to the creamy layer of the SC/ST community are not putting in a generous effort towards the betterment of all downtrodden people of the community. These people seem more interested in securing their personal ends rather taking the welfare cause to their extended community brethren.

POSSIBLE MEASURES

Although there is no end to the measures, which can put forth or offer towards the improvement of the social standing of the SC/ST groups, but still there is a need to give heed towards the following few areas:

- It would be more ideal to segregate households of those disadvantaged sections who may have availed benefits in one or the other form, as such, the chance may be given to the beneficiary next in the queue.

- Need to regulate the type, kind and number of times these benefits should be availed by an individual beneficiary or household.
- Need is to identify those communities who for want of their identification belonging to SC or ST community remained deprived of all such benefits extended to such groups.
- Need is to extend all privileges to both boys and girls equally, with zero tolerance towards male dominance in all such matters where there is discrimination on the basis of gender in general and among these disadvantaged communities in particular.

Apart from these, there is far greater need to shun the conservative mind by Indian masses, be it about these social groups or towards the existing social stratification. Without bringing change in our outlook and imbibing the attitude of change towards growth and development, most of our efforts are bound to turn futile.

SOME GOVERNMENTAL MEASURES

Efforts of the government and its agencies towards the promotion of child enrolment in schools and their retentions is equally laudable, be it about the introduction of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) in 2001, *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhayala* (KGBV) residential schools for SC, ST, OBC and Muslim girl child, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL),

Mid Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), 1995, *Rashtriya Madhimayk Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) (2009-10) and many more scholarship schemes are there for both technical and other vocational education, concerning modernisation, infrastructure development, ICT applications, etc., Accordingly, PROBE (1999) ^[17] in its report has made some considerable observations and has put it like“..... parents are not generally opposed to female education, but they are reluctant to pay for it. School meals could make a big difference here, by reducing the private costs of schooling....)” (1999, p. 97)

CONCLUSION

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the two largest socially disadvantaged sections of Indian society, are still reeling behind in the race of life despite numerous provisions created under the Indian Constitution for their betterment and upliftment, even after 67 years of India's independence. There is something seriously wrong with the implementation of schemes launched for their welfare and betterment from time to time. Most of the benefits of all such schemes are generally reaped by people belonging to the creamy layer of these two disadvantaged sections of society. Still more, it is the urban cousins of these sections of society who are benefitted most by all such schemes for being more aware about the policies and programmes meant for them. On the other hand, people putting up in the countryside

and other rural areas are the ones who generally remain deprived of all such benefits. The Government and its executing agencies are required to develop a much broad based and fool-proof mechanism whereby all such schemes serve the real purpose for which these schemes are actually meant. Need is to ensure that benefit from all such schemes launched for these socially disadvantaged sections must reach the most deserving and needy and should not get hijacked by the creamy layer of these sections.

In fact, education is major agents for change and leveller of society, which plays its part in each sphere of human activity, be it social, political, economic, cultural and many more in overcoming the age-old barriers of caste, colour, creed or even for that matter the gender bias. Education can give wings to any downtrodden to fly and chase her/his dreams. There cannot be any other better instrument in the hands of common masses than education, which can bring social justice or reforms in any other form. There is no denial of the fact that despite putting in a lot of effort by the Government of India, neither there is any significant change on the ground, which may single the upliftment of these disadvantaged sections nor is there any substantial improvement in their betterment. A lot may have indeed already been done, but still there is a lot yet to be done. The foremost thing, which needs to be ensured, is to retain the children of these disadvantaged groups in schools by all possible means.

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