

# AMBEDKAR VIEWS ON EDUCATION AND PREVAILING CHALLENGES: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF SCHOOL-DROPOUT AMONG DALITS IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar opines that, "The progress of any society depends on the progress of education in that society." Ambedkar believed that education is decisive for empowering the weaker sections and trusted that education would equip the weaker sections with the necessary tools to stand up for their rights. Although education demonstrated to be the best way to the development, it has not obtained to the majority of the marginalized groups like scheduled castes. There are a large number of dropouts among dalits and adivasis. According to a survey, approximately two-thirds of male dropouts and nearly half of the enrolment of the girls get dropped out from the school education. An Analysis done by a research institute indicates that, dalits constituted nearly half of primary school dropouts in Karnataka during the period of 2012-14. This study intends to highlight the views of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar on education and to find out the challenges of dalit education. It examines the level of school dropouts in Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and tries to compare with the general students' dropout level. It aims to recognize the severity of the problem and also to find out major causes for the school drop-out among these marginalized groups with the help of secondary data.*

*Key Words: Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Dalit, Education, school drop-outs, SCs and STs*

## Introduction

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar has been described as a reformer, philosopher, a patriot, scholar, a writer, the constitution maker, a social revolutionary and a humanistic thinker. He contributed a great deal to the cause of education. Ambedkar believed that education also a one of the basic needs along with food, clothing and shelter. Dr. Ambedkar said that, "The progress of any society depends on the progress of education in that society". Ambedkar's life itself is a case history of how education can shape a leader and can frame the destiny of the depressed classes, whom he belonged to. On this viewpoint it is important to highlight the contributions made by Ambedkar in the education sector, his vision and the relevance of his educational philosophy in the present scenario.

The Indian social system suffers from the inflexibility of a rigid caste system. For centuries, caste had been a determining factor in education and employment. Large sections of the population belonging to the lower castes were denied education and also access to high income yielding and power imparting occupations. The caste system in India is still relevant in all stages of human life. It is not only manifested in the social discrimination but also in the educational acquirement.

## Dalit School Dropouts

A child is considered school Dropout when that child enrolled in a school does not complete the final stage of that school and does not enroll as a student in any educational institution or continue his studies. Nowadays too many children around the world cut short their schooling. In many countries poor children and rural children can go to secondary school. Then dropping out of school becomes inevitable. Similarly, school dropouts can be found in India too, and this aspect needs to be examined from a special perspective.

Studies show that the school-level enrolment for all castes and communities is roughly the same but there are many more dropouts among dalits and adivasis. Dalit children are generally marginal with respect to students of other caste or categories, and their dropout rate is an alarming situation in India. Among

dalits, the share of school students drops from 81% in the 6-14 years age groups to 60% in the 15-19 age groups. It drops further to just 11% in the 20-24 age groups in higher education. This fall is noticeable across communities and castes but it is the sharpest among dalits and adivasis.

Ambedkar stressed out that “The major object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of life” (**Ambedkar 1982: 40**). Ambedkar also cautioned about the trend of dropout rate at the initial stage, “...if we take the statistics, we find that out of every hundred children that enter a primary school only eighteen reach the fourth standard; the rest of them, that is to say, 82 out of every 100, relapse into the state of illiteracy” (**Ambedkar 1982: 40**).

There are 6.21 crore children out of school in India according to the Ministry of Human Resource Development's 2014 Educational Statistic report. In 2014, IMRB (Indian Market Research Bureau) conducted a survey and revealed the fact that Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have the highest number of schooldropout children. Uttar Pradesh has 1.61 million children out of which 560,000 are Dalits, 567,000 Muslims and 108,000 tribal children. In Bihar, 1.17 million children were found to be out of school, of which 524,000 were Dalits, 246,000 Muslims and 31,000 tribal children.

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development clarifies that nearly 6 million children are out of school in India, majority of them belong to Dalits, tribals and Muslim communities. Its statistics shows that, this is three times more than the number of children from other castes who dropped out of school. That means 75% of dropped out children belong to Dalits, tribals and Muslims. Out of a total of 6 million drop out school children, 32.4% belong to Scheduled Castes, 16.6% belong to Scheduled Tribes and 25.7% are Muslims.

According to a report by The Times of India on 5 December 2014, almost half of the children who drop out at the primary school level are Dalits. According to the statistics, a total of 2.9 lakh children drop out of school within 2 years of enrolment, of which 1.38 lakh children are Dalits. That is, about 48% of Dalit children drop out of school. The report is based on government data (**India Governs Research Institute**) and this information covers the primary school level of classes 1 to 5 for the period 2012 and 2014.

The report reveals that, in 2011-12, 14.97 lakh Dalit children were studying in class 1 to class 5 in Karnataka, while in 2013-14, 1,38,864 children dropped out of school. Out of 38.6 lakh students belonging to other communities, 1.52 lakh children stopped coming to school. An interesting fact is that most of the out-of-school children belong to Indi, Humanabad, Yalaburga, Chincholi, Chittapura, Sholapur, Devadurga, Bhalki, Basavakalyana and Hadagali and belong to North Karnataka zone.

Between 2001 and 2011, 187% of Dalit students and 164% of adivasi students got enrolled in colleges. Compared to other castes, this rate is 119%, and most of those who come to college for education are first generation and are from poor family background. An important point to note here is that while school enrollment is almost equal for all castes and communities but school dropout rates are high among Dalits and Adivasis. 81% of Dalits of 6 to 14 years of age, and 60% of 15 to 19 years of age drop out of schools.

Unified District Information on School Education + (UDISE+) 2019-20, was released by Hon'ble Ramesh Pokryal Nishank, the then Union Education Minister. Unified District Information on School Education + (UDISE+) provides complete statistics of publicly managed school education in India. UDISE+ was initiated in 2012-13 by the Ministry of Education by integrating DISC for elementary education and SEMIS for Secondary education). According to this, more than 33% of SC/ST/OBC children drop out of

school in their 10th standard. This report says that the process of dropping out of school of scheduled caste students is high till class 5.

A 2019-20 report by UDISE+ confirmed that children from Dalit and tribal backgrounds experience high school dropouts. According to this, more than 10% of students in secondary level (class 6 to 8) drop out across all classes. But tribal students drop out at 24.03%, Dalits at 18.64% and others at 10.94%. As revealed in the survey, the dropout rate is highest in class 10 across all groups in both government and private schools. But compared to the rest, 30% of Dalits, tribals and other backward classes drop out of government schools, while 14.63% of tribal children and 25.39% of dalits drop out from private schools. The report reveals that 31.5% and 30.9% of children drop out of school in class 9 to 10 in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, which have a high tribal population. About 26% of tribal students drop out at secondary level in Gujarat and Maharashtra. In Orissa and Jharkhand, the dropout gap is higher among other students and among Dalit and tribal students.

### Gender and School Dropout in India

The UDISE+ 2021-22 data reveals that the overall dropout rate in schools in India is 1.5 percent, which is lower than the 2020-21 of 1.8 percent. However, the rate is still a concern, especially in certain states.

Average Annual Dropout Rate by level of education and gender, 2021-22									
India/State/UT	Average Annual Dropout Rate (%)								
	Primary (1 to 5)			Upper Primary (6-8)			Secondary (9-10)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
India	1.6	1.4	1.5	2.7	3.3	3.0	13	12.3	12.6
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	0.2	0.7	0.4	0.9	1.0	1.0	6.0	3.9	5.0
Andhra Pradesh	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	1.5	1.6	17.5	15.0	16.3
Arunachal Pradesh	9.3	9.2	9.3	4.8	8.4	6.7	11.2	12.3	11.7
Assam	6.8	5.2	6.0	10.1	7.6	8.8	19.8	20.7	20.3
Bihar	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.0	5.2	4.6	19.5	21.4	20.5
Chandigarh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Chhattisgarh	1.0	0.6	0.8	4.8	3.3	4.1	11.5	8.1	9.7
Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.5	8.4	9.5
Delhi	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	3.7	4.8
Goa	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.1	5.5	9.0
Gujarat	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	5.8	5.0	19.4	15.9	17.9
Haryana	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.2	6.7	4.9	5.9
Himachal Pradesh	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	0.5	0.6	2.0	0.9	1.5
Jammu and Kashmir	3.9	4.1	4.0	2.8	3.2	3.0	5.6	6.3	6.0
Jharkhand	2.4	1.1	1.8	3.7	4.0	3.9	9.7	8.9	9.3
Karnataka	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.1	1.1	1.1	16.2	13.0	14.7
Kerala	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.9	4.1	5.5
Ladakh	7.5	5.5	6.5	2.2	0.0	1.1	4.0	5.7	4.9
Lakshadweep	0.5	0.4	0.5	3.2	1.9	2.6	0.4	0.0	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	3.2	2.9	3.1	8.6	9.0	8.8	10.6	9.7	10.1
Maharashtra	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5	1.6	1.5	10.8	10.6	10.7
Manipur	13.5	13.0	13.3	6.0	5.2	5.6	1.4	1.2	1.3
Meghalaya	11.1	8.6	9.8	12.0	9.4	10.6	23.3	20.4	21.7
Mizoram	7.1	5.6	6.4	3.8	1.6	2.7	13.1	10.8	11.9
Nagaland	5.6	4.5	5.0	4.6	3.4	4.0	18.9	16.2	17.5
Odisha	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.0	6.5	7.3	29.2	25.2	27.3
Puducherry	3.7	3.6	3.7	2.8	2.1	2.4	8.4	4.1	6.3
Punjab	1.6	1.0	1.3	8.7	7.1	8.0	18.3	16.0	17.2
Rajasthan	3.8	3.3	3.6	4.4	4.2	4.3	7.8	7.5	7.7
Sikkim	2.9	0.5	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.6	9.5	11.9
Tamil Nadu	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.3	2.5	4.5
Telangana	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.4	2.9	3.1	14.5	12.9	13.7
Tripura	1.2	1.0	1.1	4.8	4.3	4.5	8.5	8.2	8.3
Uttar Pradesh	2.4	3.0	2.7	1.3	4.7	2.9	9.5	10.0	9.7
Uttarakhand	1.0	0.5	0.8	3.0	2.4	2.7	5.4	4.6	5.0
West Bengal	9.1	8.2	8.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	18.4	17.7	18.0

Source: UDISE+ 2021-22 Unified District Information System for Education plus (UDISE+)

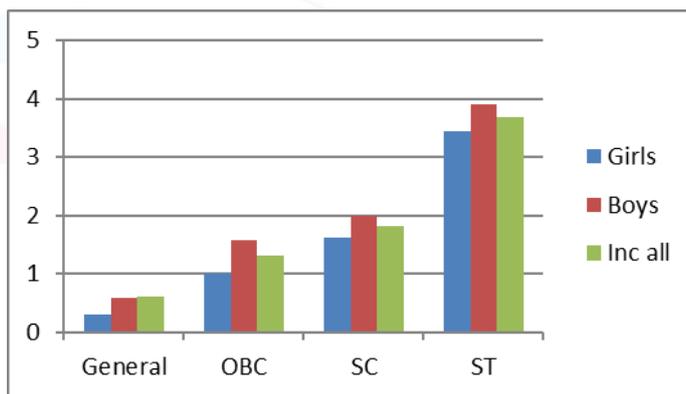
## Analysis

According to UDISC+ statistics, in government schools there are 11.02% of boys and 9.65% of girls. Boys drop out of school at the primary level more than girls in all categories. According to the report, 1/3rd of the total students in class 9 and 10 in Assam leave school. While boys drop out is more than girls drop out in several other states, girls drop out is more in Assam and Bihar.

## Dropout rate among students

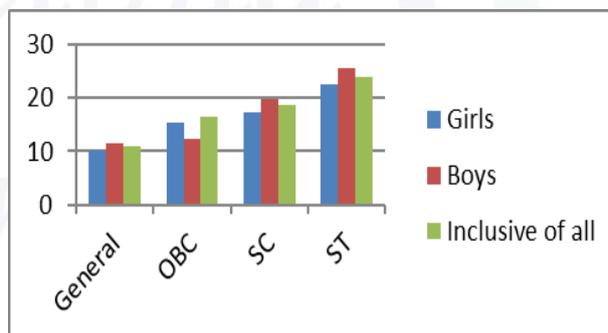
**Rate of Drop out students in Primary Level**

classes	Girls	Boys	Inclusive of all
General	0.3	0.58	0.6
OBC	1.01	1.58	1.3
SC	1.62	2.0	1.82
ST	3.45	3.9	3.69



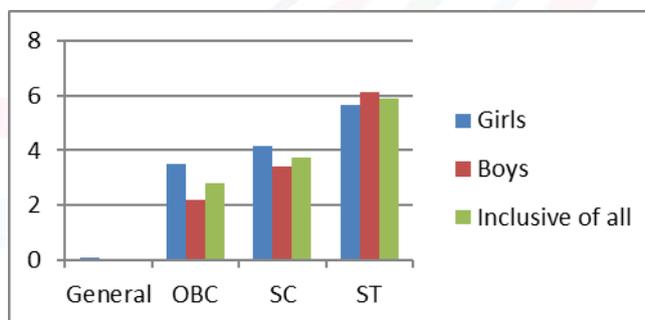
**Rate of Drop out Students in Secondary Level**

classes	Girls	Boys	Inclusive of all
General	10.25	11.58	10.94
OBC	15.43	12.46	16.49
SC	17.39	19.81	18.64
ST	22.49	25.51	24.03



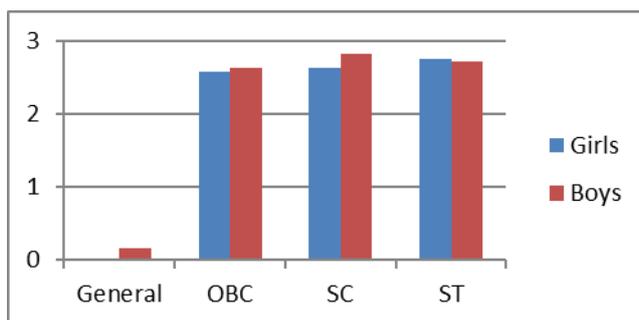
**Rate of Drop out Students in Upper Primary Level**

classes	Girls	Boys	Inclusive of all
General	0.07	0	0
OBC	3.49	2.19	2.82
SC	4.14	3.39	3.75
ST	5.65	6.15	5.9



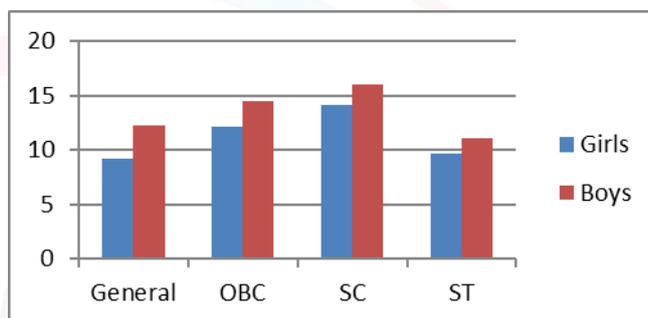
**Dropout rate in class 1 in private schools**

classes	Girls	Boys
General	0	0.16
OBC	2.59	2.64
SC	2.63	2.83
ST	2.75	2.73



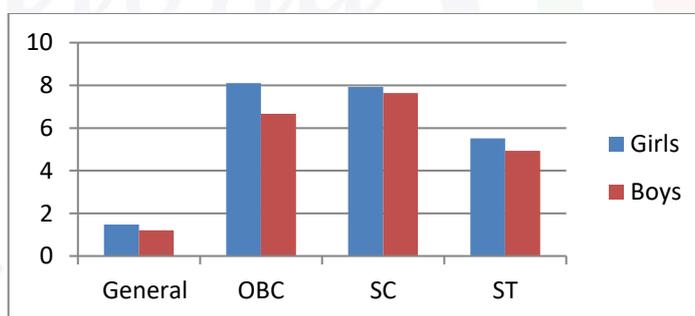
**Dropout rate in class 5<sup>th</sup> in Government Schools**

classes	Girls	Boys
General	9.2	12.23
OBC	12.11	14.52
SC	14.16	16.01
ST	9.65	11.02



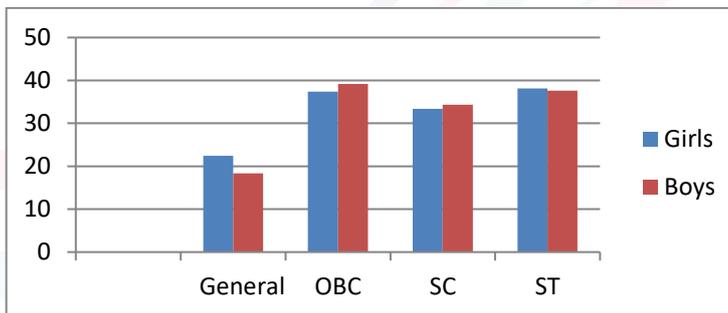
**Dropout rate in class 5<sup>th</sup> in Private Schools**

Classes	Girls	Boys
General	1.47	1.21
OBC	8.11	6.67
SC	7.93	7.64
ST	5.51	4.93



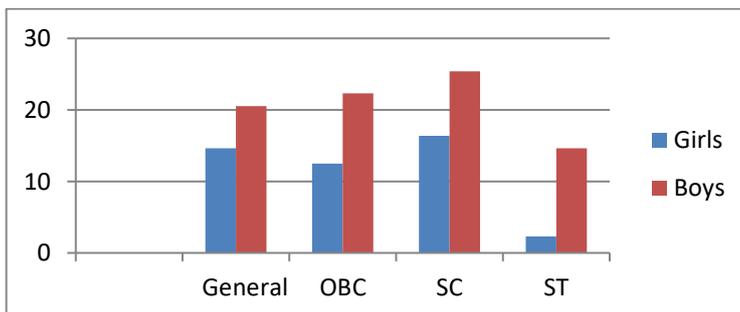
**10<sup>th</sup> class dropout rate in Government schools**

Classes	Girls	Boys
General	22.44	18.38
OBC	37.42	39.19
SC	33.35	34.33
ST	38.15	37.63



**10<sup>th</sup> class dropout rate in Private schools**

Classes	Girls	Boys
General	14.63	20.54
OBC	12.47	22.32
SC	16.36	25.39
ST	2.3	14.65



## Promotion Rate

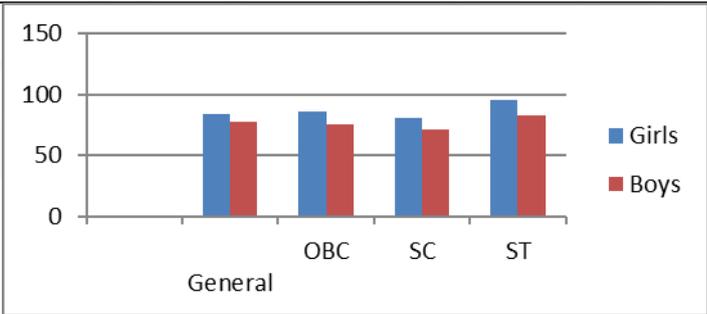
The report of UDISE+ says that, the rate of promotion from 8th standard to 10th in government schools, there is a significant decline in all strata, and also the rate of promotion of ST/ST/OBC students are lower than others. While students belonging to all classes of society have a 90% promotion rate up to 8th standard, there is a decline in SC/ST/OBC students. This 90% promotion is because of the Right to Education Act, which says that every child has to be promoted every year and no child should be kept in same class in primary level. (Later in 2019, the act was amended and the rule was removed)

### Rate of Promotion in Government Schools of students of all categories

Classes	8 <sup>th</sup> Standard		9 <sup>th</sup> Standard		10 <sup>th</sup> Standard	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
General	87.87	87.41	80.53	76.87	74.31	77.89
OBC	70.69	72.56	87.92	83.0	60.22	58.01
SC	73.87	75.13	80.93	75.37	62.75	61.45
ST	73.93	72.88	76.13	67.86	56.92	57.49

### Rate of promotion to class 10<sup>th</sup> in private unaided schools

Classes	Girls	Boys
General	84.07	77.81
OBC	85.79	75.51
SC	81.22	71.69
ST	95.39	82.95



## Major Reasons for Drop Out

According to Jawaharlal Nehru University professor and educationist TK Ooman, "due to poverty, children have to drop out of school as they help their parents in labour, and gradually they become the source of income themselves".

According to various reports and studies, some reasons for dropout of school in India include poverty, lack of access to quality education, inadequate school infrastructure like washrooms and resources, social and cultural norms, child labor, early marriage, and gender inequality. Studies say that poverty is thus the biggest barrier to pursuing education, and poverty levels are highest among dalits and adivasis. With this, these groups also face social discrimination. At a public hearing organized by the People's Trust and CRY in Salem, Tamil Nadu, a young dalit girl, who dropped out of school, said students like her were often taunted and abused by teachers as well as students. So she dropped out from the school and started working in brick kilns or fields. Unfortunately, the same atmosphere prevails in centers of higher education as incidents from various universities and the IITs show.

So, on an average, very few students at the higher levels of education are from dalit or adivasi communities. This highlights the sense of isolation among disadvantaged students. According to an NSSO survey, nearly two-thirds of male dropouts from school and college said that they were needed to supplement the household income while nearly half the female dropouts said that they were needed for domestic chores.

## Remedies

Ambedkar suggested several policy measures for the development of education starting from the primary to university level that are relevant even today to make the education sector effective and accountable. His suggestions are highly innovative. Ambedkar suggested that for utilising scarce resources for the development of education and also the idea of pooling the teaching resources of both city colleges and universities to avoid duplication and to improve efficiency etc. reflect his progressive views on education and must form part of educational reforms being envisaged in modern times. Ambedkar included Article 45 in the Directive Principles of State Policy which stated that, “the State shall Endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.” The Right to Education Act 2009 is a tribute to the contributions of Ambedkar to mass education. The policy of the Government of universalisation of elementary education focusing particularly on disadvantaged groups, poorer sections and the girl child, enhancing enrollment in secondary education as well as its commitment to expand education facilities will empower and equip youth to face the future with confidence. There is an urgent need to be framed such policies from the primary level to the higher stage that help to realize the vision of Babasaheb.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar stressed on the need to spend more money on primary education and argued, “I therefore request the Honourable Education Minister to spend more money on primary education, if for nothing else at least for the purpose of seeing that what he spends bears some fruit ultimately. ... unless we spend enough money, to see that every child that enters a school reaches the fourth standard, what we have already spent upon him is of no purpose whatsoever” (Ambedkar 1982: 40).

## Conclusion

Ambedkar was convinced that primary education is very important for the disadvantaged groups as it provides them the necessary platform to enter into public life. Ambedkar recognized the importance of education in shaping the future and cautioned the under-privileged not to lose any opportunity, ‘We may forego material benefits, but we cannot forego our rights and opportunities to reap the benefits of highest education to the fullest extent.’ As a member, Ambedkar submitted a report in a detailed manner about the deplorable conditions of the backward communities to the Bombay Legislative Assembly, suggesting steps for reforming the current iniquitous educational System. He made an appeal for more grants to develop primary education for all sections during 1927 in his Legislative Council Debates in the Bombay Assembly. Ambedkar pointed out that, “The object of primary education is to see that every child that enters the portals of a primary school does leave it only at a stage when it becomes literate and continues to be literate throughout the rest of the life” (Ambedkar 1982: 40). Ambedkar cautioned about the trend of dropout rate at the initial stage, “...if we take the statistics, we find that out of every hundred children that enter a primary school only eighteen reach the fourth standard; the rest of them, about 82 out of every 100, relapse into the state of illiteracy” (Ambedkar 1982: 40).

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Pratibha  
Spandan