

Bottom of the heap

Despite reservation and various other social justice programmes, the pursuit of higher education continues to be an arduous task for Dalits. By RAMESH CHAKRAPANI

The suicide of Rohith Vemula, a Dalit research scholar in the University of Hyderabad, on January 18 is symptomatic of a larger malaise that plagues our education system, at both the school and higher education levels. The nationwide outrage that the death has sparked and the suicide note that Rohith Vemula left behind have brought into sharp focus the odds stacked against members of the Scheduled Castes (S.Cs) in their pursuit of education.

In keeping with Dr B.R. Ambedkar's exhortation to Dalits to educate, agitate and organise, they have been showing remarkable progress in literacy rates in the "7+" and "15+" age groups, but a closer look at available educational statis-

tics reveals that Dalits still struggle to stay in school and move on to higher education.

While S.Cs have posted impressive growth in literacy rates, unfortunately their dropout rates are alarmingly high at the senior secondary level. Their gross enrolment ratio (GER) is higher than the national figure at primary and upper primary school levels but starts falling at the senior secondary level and is much lower in higher education in many key States. (The GER is a measure of the number of persons in a particular level in school or college out of the total number who are in the relevant age group for that level. It can be above 100 owing to grade repetition or students being at a level at ages younger or older than the typical age



for the level.)

According to Census of India data, in the age group of seven years and above, the literacy rates of S.Cs grew by an impressive 11.4 percentage points in the decade between 2001 and 2011 (from 54.7 per cent to 66.1 per cent), compared with 8.2 percentage points for all categories. The growth was even higher among S.C. women, at 14.5 percentage points. In adult literacy too (15+ age group), S.Cs posted significant growth rates of 15.3 percentage points overall and 20.1 percentage points for women.

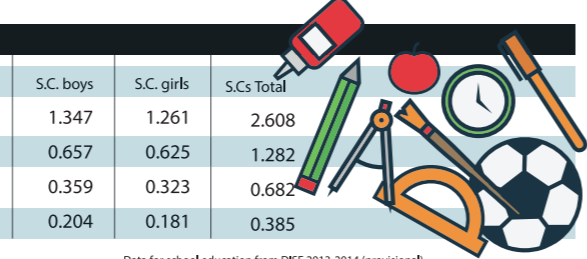
DROPOUT RATES IN SCHOOL EDUCATION (IN %)

	Classes I-V	Classes I-VIII	Classes I-X
Boys	21.2	39.2	48.1
Girls	18.3	32.9	46.7
All	19.8	36.3	47.4
S.C. boys	17.7	42.4	51.8
S.C. girls	15.4	34.4	48.0
All S.Cs	16.6	38.8	50.1



GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO IN SCHOOLS

	Classes I-V	Classes VI-VIII	Classes IX-X	Classes XI-XII
Boys	98.1	84.9	73.5	49.1
Girls	100.6	90.3	73.7	49.1
All	99.3	87.4	73.6	49.1
S.C. boys	110.8	93.2	76.0	48.1
S.C. girls	112.2	96.5	76.2	49.7
All S.Cs	111.5	94.8	76.1	48.8



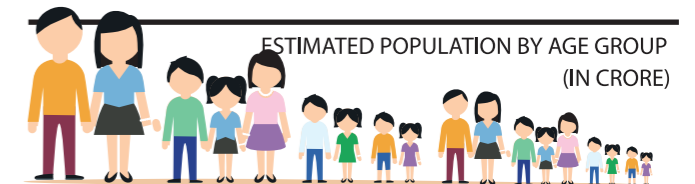
ENROLMENT IN SCHOOLS (IN CRORE)

Levels	All boys	All girls	Total	S.C. boys	S.C. girls	S.Cs Total
Classes I-V	6.723	6.276	12.999	1.347	1.261	2.608
Classes VI-VIII	3.375	3.203	6.578	0.657	0.625	1.282
Classes IX-X	1.949	1.747	3.696	0.359	0.323	0.682
Classes XI-XII	1.175	1.040	2.215	0.204	0.181	0.385

TEACHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION BY SOCIAL GROUP (KEY STATES)

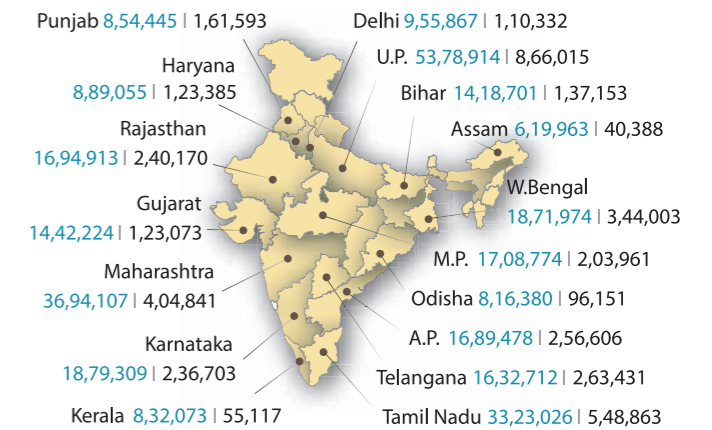


State	ALL CATEGORIES		S.Cs		RATIO S.Cs: Total
	Total	Total	Total	Total	
All India	14,18,389	1,02,534	7.2:92.8		
Tamil Nadu	2,03,223	17,284	8.5:91.5		
Maharashtra	1,59,786	15,120	9.5:90.5		
Uttar Pradesh	1,31,221	7,128	5.4:94.6		
Karnataka	1,36,584	9,093	6.7:93.3		
Telangana	1,04,699	11,426	10.9:89.1		
Andhra Pradesh	99,469	13,527	13.6:86.4		
Rajasthan	67,752	4,227	6.2:93.8		
Madhya Pradesh	66,252	3,135	4.7:95.3		
Gujarat	52,675	2,634	5.0:95.0		
Punjab	49,823	3,087	6.2:93.8		
West Bengal	49,217	3,087	6.3:93.7		
Kerala	49,082	1,238	2.5:97.5		
Haryana	48,632	2,219	4.6:95.4		
Odisha	41,088	1,275	3.1:96.9		
Bihar	27,326	502	1.8:98.2		

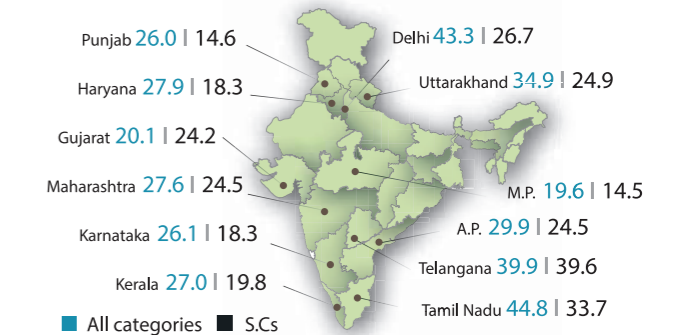


Education level	Age group	Total 2012	2012 S.Cs	Total 2013	2013 S.Cs
Classes I-V	6-10	13.114	2.336	13.089	2.332
Classes VI-VIII	11-13	7.604	1.339	7.522	1.325
Classes IX-X	14-15	5.069	0.888	5.024	0.880
Classes XI-XII	16-17	4.543	0.781	4.508	0.774
Higher Education	18-23	14.055	2.404	14.080	2.407

ESTIMATED ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN KEY STATES



GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN KEY STATES



However, dropout rates among S.Cs were higher with rising levels of education. Data from the Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2014, show that the dropout rate was only 16.6 per cent for classes I-V, but it zoomed to 38.8 per cent between classes I and VIII and peaked at 50.1 for classes I-X.

The GER for S.Cs at the primary and upper primary levels is above 75 but plummets to 48.8 at the senior secondary level. In higher education, the GER is much lower at 18.5 compared with the national figure of 23.6 for all categories. Among key States, Tamil Nadu topped the list in the general category (44.8), while Telangana was number one in the country for S.Cs (39.6).

