

Dalit Assertion in India: A Case Study of Punjab

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the material embodied in the present work, entitled “**Dalit Assertion in India: A Case Study of Punjab**”, is based on my original research work. It has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other diploma or degree of any University/Institution of National Importance. References from other works have been duly cited at the relevant places.

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SWATI SOAM

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TERM USED

Adi Granth: The Guru Granth Sahib (q.v.), the sacred scripture of the Sikh recorded by Guru Arjan in 1603-4.

Akali: follower of Akal Purakh(q.v.); member of the Akali Dal (Akali Party)

Akal Takhat: The principal takhat (q.v.), located immediately adjacent to Harimandir sahib(q.v.), the Golden Temple).

Akhand Path: Unbroken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib

Amrit :"Nectar of immortality",sweetened initiation water used in amrit sahskar(q.v.)

Amrit chhakna:"To take of amrit'(q.v.) to under go initiation into the khalsa

Amrit-dhari : A Sikh who has 'taken amrit' viz, an initiated member of the khalsa

Anand Karaj: The Sikh Marriage ceremony.

Ardas: The Khalsa Prayer,a formal prayer recited at the conclusion of the most Sikh rituals.

Baba: 'Father' a term of respect applied to Holy men.

Banis : works of the gurus and other poets included in Sikh sacred scriptures.

Got (gotra): Exogamous caste grouping within a zat

Gurdwara (gurudawa) : Sikh temple.

Guru: A spiritual preceptor, either a person or the mystical voice of Akal Purakh

Guru Granth Sahib: A Adi Granth specifically in its role as Guru

EK Onkar: The one being benedictory formula from the Adi Granth

Khalsa : The religious order established by Guru Govind Singh at the end of seventeenth century.

Langar: the kitchen/refectory attached to every gurudwara (q.v.). From which food is served to all regardless of caste or creed

Misl: A military court of the mid-eighteenth-century

Namdhari: Member of the Namdhari Sikh sect (Also known as kuka sikhs), followers of Balak Singh and Ram Singh.

Nanak-Panth: The community of Nanak's followers; the early Sikh community

Nirankar: 'without form', a name of Akal Purakh(q.v.)used by Guru Nanak.

Nirankari : Member of the Nirankari Sikh Sect, follower of Baba Dayal (1783-1855) and his successors. So-called because the sect emphasized the nirankar form of Akal Purakh

Panghat : sitting in line, the custom where by equality is maintained in the langar.

Panj Piyare: The Cherished Five or Five Beloved; the first Sikh to be initiated as members of the Khalsa .

Panth : A "path" or "way" system of religious belief or practice.

Panthic (panthik): Concerning the Panth

Rahit: The code of belief and conduct of the Khalsa

Ramdasia: The Sikh section of the Chamar or leather-worker caste; an Outcaste Sikh.

Ramgarhia : A Sikh artisan caste ,predominantly drawn from the Tarkhan or carpenter caste, but also including Sikhs from the black Smith, mason and barber castes.

SachKhand: The "Realm of Truth".

Sadhan: Method of Spiritual liberation.

Sahaj-Dhari: Anon-Khalsa Sikh, one who does not observe the Rahit.

Sangat: Congregation group of devotees.

Sant: One who knows the truth ;a pious person ;an adherent of the sant tradition.

S.G.P.C: Shri Siromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Community

Shabda(sabda): words of Hymn of Adigranth

Singh Sabha: Reform movement in the Panth (q.v.) initiated in 1873. The Singh Sabha became the arena for a struggle between the conservative Sanatan Sikhs(q.v.) and the radical Tat Khalsa.

Udasi: Adherent of the Udasi panth(q.v.) an order of ascetics (normally celibate) who claim as the founder Shri Chand(One of Gurunanak's Son)

Varna : colour of the classical caste hierarchy or a division in the four sections are Brahman, kshatriya, Vaisha, and Shudra.

Zat(jati): Endogamous caste grouping Caste.

ABBREVIATIONS

DICCI: Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

SC: Scheduled Caste

ST: Scheduled Tribe

MHRD: Ministry of Human Resources and Development

OBC: Other Backward Classes

AISCF: All India Scheduled Caste Federation

BAMCEF: Backward and Minority Employees Federation

BSP: Bahujan Samaj Party

ASP: Azad Samaj Party

RPI: Republican Party of India

U.K: United Kingdom

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

Social stratification and inequalities are age-old and ubiquitous in societies, apparent on the basis of gender, caste, race, and class. In India, social inequalities have been elaborately constructed in its social fabric in the form of 'Caste' structure. Caste is considered as the structural unit of social stratification and as the system in itself. The caste system consists of a unique ideology and framework with the exclusionary phenomenon that puts an unremitting impact on political, economical, social dimensions, and on the cultural life of the Indian People.¹ The caste system placed the people into the hierarchical structure consists of social groups having unequal rights & privileges and enjoys a different social status in the society on the basis of birth.

The system of caste is further stratified into class inequality and oppression emanates from the social and cultural construct of the society. The Indian caste system has a very unique nature of division based on '*Varna- Vyavastha*', which is very different and eccentric from the division of social classes found in other countries in the world. The hierarchically ranked hereditary groups get treated as an institutionalized system in the caste system. The economic and cultural concomitants with institutionalized inequality furnished the caste as the unique system of stratification. The social structure which is embedded with structural inequality of caste stratification segregates certain social groups as untouchable castes from the general population. In Indian society untouchables, are kept segregated as much as possible from other members of the social groups of the society.²

In the Indian caste system, individuals are stratified into a number of endogamous hierarchical groups based on the concepts of '*Varna*' and '*Jati*'.³ The caste system is generally associated with Hinduism, but the caste-based differences are also prevalent in

¹ Kamble, N.D. (1981). *Atrocities on Scheduled Castes in Post Independent India*. New Delhi, India : Ashish Publishing House, pp.4

² Moon, Vasant (Ed.). (1991). *Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Writings & Speeches*, Vol.9, Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, p.278.

³ Béteille, A. (1996). Varna and Jati. *Sociological Bulletin*, 45(1), 15-27. Retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23619694>

different regions and other religions like Islam, Sikhism and Christianity present in the Indian subcontinent.

'*Varna*' is the fourfold classification of the classes based on '*Guna*' and '*Karma*' of the people. As per the Hindu mythology, the birth of individual in particular '*Varna*' get decided on the foundation '*Guna*' (Instinct) and '*Karma*' (deeds). '*Guna*' further divides into three categories, namely '*Sattva*', '*Rajas*' and '*Tamas*' which represent the mental temper & different shades of color. The '*Sattva*' denotes by colour white, represent the class or group of people who have the qualities of wisdom, honesty, goodness, and intelligence. '*Rajas*' denotes by colour red, represent the class with the qualities like pride, valor, and passion. '*Tamas*' denotes by colour black, with negative qualities like dullness and lack of creativity. Individuals, who possess any of the dominant qualities in them, end up adopting the appropriate occupations.⁴

The '*Varna*' system mentioned in '*Manusmriti*' and some other ancient '*shastras*', states the division of society based on '*Chaturvarna*' or functional specialization of the classes namely as *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishya*, and *Shudra*. Every social class likely to dedicate itself to perform several duties allotted to them-Brahmin or priests were there for the spiritual & intellectual quest and to impart the knowledge, Kshatriya class duty was to maintain law and order as well provide defense from the aggression and external threats to the state. Vaishya duties were related to agricultural activities, industry, commerce, and so on. The Shudra's considered as the artisan's class and the servants, assigned to serve the prior three classes. It was thought of, that division of labour based on their greater degree of specialization of the acquired skills. During that period though the functions were regarded, as hereditary is an exception, the people were freely allowed to the function of their choice. But with the due course of time, the whole situation has become so inflexible that underscores on birth, not on traits.⁵

Caste consists of relatively closed status groups; in which each group has a commensal unity and possesses a distinct name. These units are locally called '*jatis*'.⁶The *jati* is the most basic unit or social group of the caste system. Each *jati* or sub-caste has

⁴ Ghurye, G.S. (1979). *Caste & Race in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., pp.45-47

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bêteille, Op.cit..

endogamous properties and traditional associations with a particular occupation. *Jatis* behavior governs by certain rules and customs related to their ritual status.

The ranking of *Jatis* determined by the traditional occupation or by the activities of purity and pollution in which the individual is involved. The positioning of individuals in the ritual hierarchy has an impact in every sphere of life, especially in commensal relations with other groups both at a personal level and in intermarriages.

There are regional variations among the *jatis* and *sub section of jatis*, which follow the different set of rules in social separation. A section of *jatis* may interline with each other but do not intermarry, the rules and customs differ from one *jati* to another *jati* with its regional specificity.

There are many *jatis* in one cultural region, and the members of the *jati* have the particular lifestyle and subject to perform certain duties. *Jatis* are distinct from *Varnas* categorization; *Jatis* have the characteristics of groups whereas *Varnas* are considered as categories. *Jatis* are the sub-section of the *Varnas* but have many complications and ambiguities. A *jati* in one area does not necessarily belong to the same *Varna* or a similar *jati* in another area, the considerable disagreement can be seen in the allocation of *jati* to which particular *Varna* it belongs to.⁷

The theoretical system postulated group classes, *Varna* as ideals and explained the fact of thousands of endogamous *Jatistruly* prevailing within the country as being the results of historical compounding of 'pure varnas'. The *Varna Shankara*⁸(of hybrid *Varna*) term accustomed denote those communities that don't slot in any of the four *Varnas*. The tribals, nomads, and foreigners who don't get fit into the norms of Hindu society were get excluded from the society. Another cluster consists of the lower section of '*Shudras*', untouchables not fit in the four-fold classification of *Varna* were also considered as *Varna Shankara*.

The caste structure is based on the idea of purity & pollution, considered as the main criteria for the determination of a caste or subcaste within the ranked order. The Brahmins claimed to be the purest group and placed at the top of the caste hierarchy.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Wilson, J. (1976). *Indian Caste*. NewDe1hi: Deep Publicaton, vol.1, P.54

Scheduled Caste also named as untouchables or Dalits, engaged in the polluted occupation placed at the lowest level of caste hierarchy.

The term 'Dalit' is often used for the people who are known as 'untouchables', 'downtrodden', and faced oppression. At the time of British rule in India, they were known as 'Depressed classes'⁹. Dalits were considered 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold Varna hierarchy. They were compelled to subsist at the bottom of India's rigid social order known as the caste system. Their segregation is attributed to ritual impurity. They were considered under the fifth group named as (*panchma*) or *avarna* (without *varna*) assigned to perform tasks considered too menial or degrading to be performed by the upper three *Varnas*. The fifth category of *Varna* conceptualize as 'Untouchables class' and menials, relegate to carrying out very menial and polluting work related to bodily decay and dirt. Whereas the top three ranked *Varnas* are often designated as 'twice-born' (on the worn sacred thread by the '*Upnayansanskar*' and clean castes, whether Dalits considered as 'unclean' and prohibited from *Upnayansanskar*.¹⁰

The 'untouchables' or Dalits have the stigma of untouchability due to the acute pollution and impurity associated with their traditional occupation. They were considered impure and polluting, therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society.

The caste system has such strong roots in India that it formed the social and economic framework for the people of India. The system stratified the people into favorable and unfavorable positions, created the hierarchy of unequal and uneven social groups, and the basic rights and duties get assigned on the basis of birth, not on the capabilities, which are not subject to change. Dalits were placed at the lowest rung of the hierarchy, termed as *Ati-Shudras* or *Avarna*, treated as outcaste and *achutts* (*untouchables*).¹¹ In the past, they were suffered from innumerable humiliations, extreme poverty, and social segregation. Most of them indulge in jobs

⁹ Pillai, N. (2007). Who are the Other Backward Classes? *Student Bar Review*, 19(1), 31-49. Retrieved February 16, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44308349>

¹⁰ Fuchs, S. (1946). Changes and Developments in the Population of the Nimar District in the Central Provinces of India. *Anthropos*, 41/44(1/3), 49-68. Retrieved December 16, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40449171>.

¹¹ Schwartz, M. (1989). Indian Untouchable Texts of Resistance: Symbolic Domination and Historical Knowledge. *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, (25), 131-141. Retrieved December 16, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23163056>

which are considered highly polluting such as involving or handling of the dead animals for example the leather workers (called Chamar), scavenger (called Churas and bhangis), street handcrafters, laborers. They were neither permissible to worship in the temple with others nor to use the common reservoirs, from which other castes drew their water. They are prohibited to avail formal education, using the public road and market place and even their shadows were considered as impure. The other caste people don't interact with them and they were compelled to live outside the villages.¹²

Dalit are further stratified into several sub-castes and follows the hierarchy and social discrimination among themselves. The washerman (*dhobi*), barber (*nai*) considered as upper caste among the Dalits not have interaction with the castes associated with the occupation of scavenging and handling of carcasses of dead animals. The people engage in these occupations regarded as ritually impure and placed at lower hierarchy in the Dalit class themselves. All this further led to the separation of Dalits from full participation in social life. They were exclusively socially and economically marginalized people.

Several political thinkers and social reformers addressed the pitiable conditions of Dalits. B.R.Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, M.K.Gandhi are the most prominent names among the few, who raised their voice in the favor of Dalits and took some remedial steps to improve their social status.

Dalit agitates for their rights against discrimination & exploitation faced by them and demands for the enactment of stronger laws against the disabilities imposed on them. After independence, the Government of India made several provisions and legislations for the upliftment of the Dalits. The abolition of untouchability is one of the attempts to eliminate the practice of discrimination from society. Special legislation exists to counter manual scavenging, bonded labour, and atrocities on Scheduled castes. Special commissions have been enacted to setup to monitor progress in eradicating caste discrimination.

¹² Velassery,S. Patra,Reena., (2016), Caste Identities and the Ideology of Exclusion, NewDelhi; Overseas Press India Private Limited, pp.14-15.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution proclaims the objective of equality of status & opportunity, justice in political, social & economic spheres, and liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship. The constitution of India guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens for their development. As per the constitution of India, *Article 14* states for “equality before the law and equal protection of the laws”, *Article 15* makes “prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them”, *Article 15(2)* makes the ‘public places’ open to all citizens, *Article 16* states for “equality of opportunity in matters of public employment”, *Article 17* abolish untouchability, and declares the practice of it as a punishable offense, *Article 18* states for the abolishing of titles.¹³

In addition to the provisions referred to above, the constitution ensures civic equality by making a provision of a universal adult franchise (*Article 326*) with the aim that no person is either excluded from the general electoral roll and no person is ineligible on the basis of his or her religion, race, caste or sex (*Article 325*). The civil rights act 1955 and Prevention of Atrocities act 1989 with the provision of affirmative action’s introduced by the government of India for the upliftment of marginalized classes. In order to provide a safeguard against exploitation and promote social, economic, cultural, and educational development among the scheduled caste, the National Commission for Scheduled Caste was formed by the 89th amendment act, 2003, which introduced the new article 338A.¹⁴

With the provision of protective discrimination, the Government of India attempted to provide equal opportunity to the Scheduled caste category with the reservation in jobs in central and state government offices and with special education benefits. The improved access to education is reflected in the literacy rate among the scheduled castes which was 10.3% in 1961 and 66% in 2011 as per the census reports.¹⁵ With the equal opportunity to access the education and governmental special provisions for the scheduled caste, the emergence of the significant educated dalits working in white collar occupation and agitating for their rights. Though, this is true only for a selected few.

¹³ Basu, D.D. (2012). *Introduction to the Indian Constitution*, Wadhwa & Company, New Delhi; Law Publishers.pp. 102-110

¹⁴ Ibid.pp.108-109

¹⁵ Census 2011, available at <https://www.census2011.co.in/scheduled-castes.php>

The urban setting featuring the anonymous crowd, less bother about the caste affiliation of the people. The changing scenario has occurred with the far-reaching effects in caste practices among the people in the urban spaces. In the modern occupation, caste affiliations become unknown, and the observance of purity pollution rules is considered insignificant. Various restrictions on interactions with other castes are more relaxed in the cities.

The new means of occupation, representation in political affairs with education, raised the status of many Dalits but they are very few in numbers, the majority of the Dalits are still facing inequality in their lives. Dalit emancipation can be seen in political parties, caste associations, interest groups, etc. The political mobilization among the Dalits was reflected in the success of the Bahujan Samaj Party. In 1990, the political involvement of the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh was considered the new dawn in the Dalit movement.

The continuous struggles of Dalits facilitate them to be a part of mainstream agenda of the dominant political discourse. Academically, a considerable section of intellectuals critically reviews not only the Indian tradition and culture but also new paradigms of modernity and Marxist paradigm. The prolonged investigations reveal the myths constructed by Brahminical ideology. A good deal of pressure on the ruling classes was also effectively built up by the Dalit movements. However, many scholars and activists claimed that Dalits have been reduced to a pressure group within the mainstream political culture.

After the two decades of economic reforms, it seems that India is witnessing the assertion among the marginalized section especially from the Dalits to some extent. With time and space, along with the shifting of paradigm, the caste system has undergone many changes. The arrangement of a caste system in traditional ritual hierarchy corresponded largely with its position in the economic and power hierarchies. The 'closed' status group of caste increasingly seems to be 'open'. Liberation policy has created new types of economic and political power for the members of the lower castes, created opportunities

that did not exist in the traditional society. Class mobility is gradually gaining the upper hand over the caste rigidities.¹⁶

The implementation of LPG reforms and development of the new capitalist forces of production along with the affirmative actions and transformative power of education have opened new avenues for skilled persons. Through which the excluded section can get rid of ascribed identities and can achieve a new identity through economic and social mobility.

Modern political ideals such as liberty and equality were implemented with the introduction of a new mode of production and western education. Caste-based journals and caste conferences were initiated by educated leaders to bring awareness and consciousness to the masses.

Cooperative communities based on castes are becoming the common feature of urban social life. Different sections of the sub-continent began to see the rise of 'caste associations' at the beginning of the late nineteenth century, paving the way for the development of an organization such as the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DICCI), with the slogan '*Be the work providers rather than remain job seekers*' with the goal '*Fight caste with a capital*'¹⁷, lays foundation new way of Dalit Assertion. Dalit identity has nearly become a core issue of the Dalit movements. This includes a coordinated approach at the local level against discrimination and exclusion. Dr. Ambedkar's sculptures and images are considered as an emblem of Dalit consciousness and the identity declaration among Dalits. Dr. Ambedkar's sculptures are found not only in urban settings but also in many villages where their population concentration is comparatively high.

But there is another side of the picture as well; three-fourths of the Dalits (approximately 150 million) are still living in villages, impoverished, landless workers, facing jobless economic development, isolation, discrimination, illiteracy, and low social status.

¹⁶ Sheth, D. (1999). Secularisation of Caste and Making of New Middle Class. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(34/35), 2502-2510. Retrieved November 15, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4408346>

¹⁷ Website: https://www.dicci.org/info_zone.php

The welfarist notion of democracy does not bring any major change for them. The untouchables in India are still considered as ‘*unfavorably included*’¹⁸ and in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of the state. Only a minuscule section of the Dalit population is able to avail the benefits of affirmative actions and government policies. It is commonly observed that they are generally denied equal treatment, and continuously deprived of their rightful place in society.

Concept Used

‘Dalit’ and ‘Assertion’, are two main terms used in the current research, which has been interpreted in a numerous way by different scholars. Before dispensing further in research, it is congruous to elucidate the terms as distinctly as feasible.

The first concept is 'Dalit,' which is used on the premise of caste oppression of people who were considered 'outcaste.' They are considered 'outcaste' because they were not in the fourfold graded caste structure of Indian society or not seem fit to be included.

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In the chronicle of Indian history, Dalit was addressed with different nomenclatures like Chandalas, Avarna, Achhuts, Namashudra, Parihas, Oppressed Hindus, Adi Dravid's, Adi Dharmis, Depressed classes, Harijans, Scheduled Castes, etc.²⁰ There are several other titles or names besides these prior names, which are continually used to denote Dalits at the regional level, some example like Chuhras in Punjab (in north-west India), Bhangi or Lal Begi in Hindi (in north India), Mahar in Marathi (in central India), Mala in Telgu, Paraiyan in Tamil, and Pulayan in Malayalam (in south India), Chandala or Namoshudra in Bengal.²¹

James Massey discovered that the term Dalit is one of the oldest terms and is also shared by some of the oldest languages in the world with almost the same origin and meaning. The roots of the term Dalit can be found in the pre-Biblical (classical) and

¹⁸ Sen, A. (2000). Social Exclusion: Concept, application, and scrutiny, *Asian Development Bank*, Manila, Philippines, Office of Environment and Social Development, also at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29778/social-exclusion.pdf>.

¹⁹ Massey, J. (1995). *Dalit solidarity* (ed by Bhagwan Dass), Delhi:ISPCK, p. 13.

²⁰ Kumar, V. (2001). Globalisation and Empowerment of Dalits in India. *Indian Anthropologist*, 31(2), 15-25. Retrieved December 16, 2018, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41919895>

²¹ The Interpreter's dictionary of the Bible, an illustrated Encyclopedia, vol.3, *Abingdon Press*, Nashville, Sixteenth Print, 1986, p.883.

Hebrew and pre-classical Sanskrit era. In Akkadian, which is ancient East Semitic groups languages, the root word 'dalulu'²² which means weak, The root word 'dalalu'²³ (weak, or humble) in Assyrian, and the root word 'dall'²⁴ (poor, below, decreased, helpless) in Hebrew, similar to the Sanskrit root word 'dal'²⁵ (to crack, open, split, crush, destroy, downtrodden, etc).

Some Indian regional dictionaries also enclosed the definition of the term Dalit. In Bhasa Sabad Kosh, the term Dalit stands for the section “*underdeveloped or backward section of people such as among Hindu untouchables (achut) or shudra (both serving caste) or group (jati)*.”²⁶ In the Marathi language, the term ‘Dalit’ implies those “*who have been broken, ground down by those above them deliberately and actively*”²⁷. The Mahan Kosh, Punjabi language dictionary created by Bhai Kahan Singh defines 'Dalit' as the people who belong to the lowest caste ('*Hinjati*') and have been trampled or broken under the feet ('*paireon tale Dalia Gia ho*') by the upper caste ('*Unchi jatan*')²⁸.

Professor Gangadhar Pantwane defined the Dalit as “*Dalit is not a caste. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. The Dalit believes in humanism. He rejects the existence of God, rebirth, soul, sacred books that teach discrimination, fate and heaven because these have made him a slave. He represents the exploited man in his country*”.²⁹

Marathi reformer and revolutionist Mahatma Jyotirao Phule used the word Dalit commonly for the Shudra- Atisudra. Mahatma Phule was the first person who used the term ‘Dalit’, he used the word in connection with caste as *dalitodhar* (uplift of the depressed)³⁰. In 1973 The ‘Dalit Panthers’ revived the term Dalit into the broader meaning, which includes “*members to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Neo-*

²² Ibid.

²³ Dall, S.V.(1957). *Francis, Brown: Hebrew and English Lexicon Old testament*. At Claredon Press, Oxford, ,(reprinted).p.195.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Williams, Sir Monier. (1988). *A Sanskrit – English dictionary (reprinted)*, Delhi, p.471 and also ‘*The Practical Sanskrit- English dictionary*’ by Vaman shiva ramapte, Delhi,(reprinted), p.493.

²⁶ Sukal. Ramasarkar. (1971). *Bhasa- Sabad* (in Hindi) Allahabad, pp.778-779.

²⁷ Zelliott, Elenor. (1992). *From Untouchable to Dalit*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication , p.267.

²⁸ Singh, Bhai Kahan. (1981). *Mahan Kosh (in Punjabi) (reprint)*, Patiala, pp.624-625.

²⁹ Pantwane, Dr. Gangadhar. (1986). *Evolving a New Identity: The development of Dalit Culture in Untouchable voice of the liberation Movement* edited by Barbara Joshi, London: Zed Books, p.79.

³⁰ Zelliott, Elenor, op.cit. p.271.

Buddhists, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion”³¹. Zelliott defines the term Dalit as 'It means those that have been intentionally and systematically broken and grounded by those above them in the social hierarchy. There is an inherent rejection of pollution and justified the caste hierarchy in the word itself.³². Sunita Reddy Bharati defines the term ‘Dalit is not a caste, it is a constructed identity of the subaltern communities that for centuries have endured injustice, now recognize themselves as Dalits, it is the word that generates a sense of pride and self-assertion. It is like a brand essentially useful to achieve a sense of cultural identity³³

Here in the study the word ‘Dalit’ only refers for the scheduled caste category.

Dalit Assertion

The Cambridge dictionary defines the word assertion means to behave in a certain manner that expresses confidence, importance, control and earns the respect from others. The assertion causes others, by their assured and forceful actions, to accept one's authority. Assertiveness consists that of making sure that's one's own needs are heard and get respected, rather than get disregarded.

Dalit assertion can be experienced as the product of democratization in post-independence times. The upsurge is noticed by social groups that have historically remained oppressed and marginalized in society. The educated generation remained marginalized, not willing to take oppression more. They are constructing their own identity of Dalit, which is an alternative to the primordial identity of Brahminism.

Sudha Pai defines assertion “as a means to challenge the hierarchical caste structure and resisting the norms of purity and pollution provided in the *Manusmriti* placed the Dalit or ex-untouchable at the bottom, below the line of pollution”³⁴. The Dalit claim is equated by Pai as a strident rebellion or upsurge from below by the Dalits themselves against their social ostracisation. It exhibits itself in the socio-economic, cultural, and political domain as the outcome of an upsurge from below and takes

³¹ Murugkar, Lata. (1991). *Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra*, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, p.237.

³² Zelliott, Elenor, op.cit, p.271.

³³ Bharti.S. Reddy. (Oct 19-25.2002). Dalit : A term Asserting Unity. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol-37, no-42, pp.4339- 4340.

³⁴ Pai,Sudha. (2013). *Dalit Assertion*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

various forms such as the anti-caste discrimination movement, protest literature, and folklore.³⁵ As per Sudha Pai, there are three contemporary forms of assertion a) grassroots assertion b) political parties and c) middle-class activism.³⁶

The Dalit assertion at the grass-root is a subjective phenomenon; it is not a product of the mobilization activities of Dalit movements or political parties. Rather it is much bigger and deeper than that. The failure of the state to protect the life and property of Dalits, instigate them to improve their socio-economic conditions and end the practice of untouchability. In order to build political consciousness and social movements against injustice and supremacy of Brahmanic ideology, Dalits have constructed alternative philosophies such as Ambedkarization. The grass root assertion has enabled Dalits to challenge oppressive practices and atrocities by the dominant castes, it has also created the homogenization of identity among the Dalits.

An educated generation of Dalits introduced middle-class activism which has brought a new dimension of social equality into the Dalit movement. Protective discrimination, through reservation in government jobs and admission in educational institutions, has created an influential and vocal Dalit middle class creating the confidence and hope of improvement in their condition.³⁷

CP. Bhambri³⁸ explores, that India with poverty, backwardness, and underdevelopment also inherited the “unequal social order” in post-independence. After the seventy years of independence, India is still an “unequal society”, contain the socially and economically prosperous minority of dominated castes and classes with the majority of the deprived poor section of the society. The uneven distribution of income and wealth in different sections of the society increased the “absolute inequality” and as well “economic inequality”. The Dalits and marginalized sections of the society are mainly from the backward castes, having the ‘lowest’ status in caste hierarchy faced the dual attack of both poverty and caste-based discrimination. In industrialization and modernization, the caste character is ‘changing’ but the ‘inequality’, the core feature of the caste system had been remained intact because of

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid, pp.30-35.

³⁸ Bhambri, CP. (15 Jan 2018). Dalit Assertion for Social Equality, *The Tribune*, retrieved from: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/dalit-assertion-for-social-equality/528578.html>.

“economic inequality” strengthened the “caste-based inequality” and atrocities. The assertion is the fight for their rights and dignified life. The absence of social security, deprivation pushes them to become assertive and make them react.

Bhalchandra Mungekar³⁹ analyzes that, with the urbanization, spread of literacy and education, and the upward mobility of castes, now the Dalits are not meekly surrendering to the wishes of the upper castes. Now the higher education and professional access have provided horizontal and vertical mobility to the Dalits. This new educated class, refuses the conventional social stigmatization and subordination of Dalits. The Ambedkar’s movement is one of the examples which provide strength and confidence and assertion in the Dalit community.

G.Sampath⁴⁰ wrote that the Dalit assertion now a day differs from previous mobilizations in one important respect; it recognizes the importance of social unity over political unity. The loyalty of the Dalit community precedes every other affiliation, including the political parties. The current wave of Dalit assertion seems to have an implementation of Ambedkar’s slogan of “Educate, Agitate, Organize”, which was to succeed in invoking the Dalit pride as a common factor.

Valerian Rodrigues⁴¹ in his article ‘A new idiom of Dalit Assertion’ highlights that there is a new kind of awareness among the Dalits, now they are aware of their rights, raising their voice for a dignified life and social equality. Dalits are now reacting and reporting the atrocities on them. This new assertiveness is very different from the old ways of Dalit politics which mainly includes the conversion, Bahujan appeal, and paternalism. The assertion featured with the arguments in social media for networking and communication. The movement of Assertion placed B.R.Ambedkar at the flagpole as the symbol of Dalit solidarity. The highly educated Dalit leadership is conscious of historical injustice, building the current Dalit ideology in parallel with Brahminism.

³⁹ Mungekar, Bhalchandra . (7June 2017). Understanding Dalit Assertion, *The Indian Express*, retrieved from: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/understanding-dalit-assertion-saharanpur-clashes-bhim-army-narendra-modi-4692188/>.

⁴⁰ Sampath, G. (24 Sep, 2018). A pan-India Dalit Assertion, *The Hindu*, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-pan-india-dalit-assertion/article25022245.ece>.

⁴¹ Rodrigues, Valerian. (19 Nov. 2016), A new idiom of Dalit Assertion, *The Hindu*, retrieved from <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/A-new-idiom-of-Dalit-assertion/article16667613.ece>.

Review of Literature: A literature review is an integral part of the research process as it is an analysis of contributions made by others like authors, researchers, experts, etc. Also, it provides a theoretical background to the study. Besides, it helps in finding the research gap and brings clarity to the research problem. I have taken into consideration of the existing literature on the caste and its socio-cultural analysis, phenomenon of Dalit assertion in India vis-à-vis Punjab.

Literature that discerns the nature of caste and caste system in India is mainly:

H.H.Risley (1908)⁴² stipulates and colonized the caste system in his narration, Risley narrated caste system in an antagonistic manner, he defined the commensal relations among the different castes, elaborated the different social norms of the distances followed by the different castes and ranked them in hierarchical order in the census.

Dr. B.R.Ambedkar (1916)⁴³ Dr. Ambedkar explored that prohibition, absence of endogamy, are the essence of the caste system. He argued that “*Caste in India means an artificial chopping off the population into fixed and definite units, each one prevented from fusing into another through the custom of endogamy*” (only characteristic peculiar to Caste). The text relates the problem of Caste with reference to the surplus woman and surplus man. He was of the view that caste system exists before the Manu. He was an upholder of it, but certainly, he did not and could not ordain the present order to Hindu Society, Manu’s work only deals with the codification of existing caste rules and the preaching of Caste Dharma. He further wrote, the sub-division of a society is quite natural. But the unnatural thing about these sub-divisions is that they have lost the open-door character of the class system and have become self-enclosed units called *Castes*. As conclusion Dr Ambedkar discern four important points: 1. Among the Hindu population there lies a organic unity. 2. That caste is a parceling into bits of a larger cultural unit; 3. That there was one Caste to start with; and 4. That classes have become Castes through imitation and ex-communication.

⁴² Risley, H.H. (1908). *The People of India*, London. 2nd Edition published by, Delhi, Orient Books.

⁴³ Ambedkar, B.R. (1916). *Caste in India: Their Genesis, Mechanism and Development*, paper read at anthropological seminar, New York: Alexander Goldenweiser. Later published in: *Ambedkar's writings and speeches* (1979); Volume 1, Bombay: The Education Department of the Government of Maharashtra

Denzil Ibbetson (1916)⁴⁴ opines that it is tough to give a precise definition of caste. All societies in the world are arranged in strata that are based upon differences of social or political importance, or occupation. Here in India the classification is on hereditary rather than the individual to the persons. The artificial standard was attached to the caste, the rules forbid social intercourse between the castes of different rank. Ibbetson wrote, *“it is the tribe or section of the tribe that alone can improve its position, and thus it can do only after the lapse of several generations, during which time it must abandon a lower for a higher occupation, conform more strictly with the arbitrary rules, affect social exclusiveness or special sanctity, or separate itself after some similar fashion from the body of the caste to which it belongs”*.

Dr.B.R. Ambedkar (1936)⁴⁵ under the title "Annihilation of Caste," this text was written as a speech note and sent in advance to the "JatiPatiTadak 'Mandal to deliver a speech at their annual conference held in Lahore in 1936 on the caste system in India."It is the most comprehensive explanation of why in India untouchability continues and why caste should be eliminated. Ambedkar puts forward a strong case against the caste system in Hinduism with his undeniable observations and sound arguments, especially in the sense of its effects on the Dalits and other deprived groups. In his work, he fearlessly commented that *"they hate me!" I am the snake in their garden to them because I have challenged the authority of the Mahatma that they revere so eloquently*".With his writings, Ambedkar questioned the Brahmanical order, which is supported by strong evidence from ancient Hindu texts such as Vedas and scriptures that challenge the practices of faith, customs, and slavery.

Dr. B.R Ambedkar (1946)⁴⁶Dr.Ambedkar wrote the book provocatively after studying the religious history of India over fifteen years. He wrote that the present-day Shudras are a collection of castes drawn from heterogeneous stocks, are racially different from the original Shudras of the Indo-Aryan Society. In the book, he critically analyzes: the riddle of Shudras, The Brahmanic Theory of the Origin of the Shudras. Ambedkar pointed out that scriptures of Hindus from where the understanding about the caste system emanates.

⁴⁴ Ibbetson, Denzil. (1916). *Panjab Castes*, Lahore: Printed by the Superintendent, Government Printing.

⁴⁵ Ambedkar, B.R. (1936). *Annihilation of Caste in Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, Vol 1, 1979.

⁴⁶ Ambedkar, B.R. (1946). *Who were Shudras: How they came to be the fourth Varna in the Indo-Aryan Society*, Bombay: Thacker &Co.Ltd.

It is divided into 2 parts. Part 1- has 6 chapters that explains the brahman theory of origin and status of Shudras, shudra versus Aryans, Aryans against Aryans, Shudras, and dasas. Part 2 - Explains hidden story Shudras were, Kshatriya, degradation of Shudras and story of reconciliation. Ambedkar also explained here Aryan& Indo Aryan migration theory. Especially he stated here that shudras of Hindu society is entirely different from that of Indo-Aryan society.

J.H. Hutton (1951)⁴⁷, gave the historical context of the Indian caste system with the racial elements. Hutton wrote about the diversity of the Indian population about language, customs, and physical appearance. Hutton elaborates the taboos in the society due to the caste system. He also described the further points through which the exterior castes suffer, for example wearing ornaments of gold only limited to only upper castes, wore specific dresses worn by specific castes, and limited to perform the certain customs to the upper castes. When other exterior castes perform customs or follow the rituals of upper castes, they were got punished and faced violence.

Rajni Kothari (1954)⁴⁸ pointed out the importance of caste in Indian politics, especially in the political mobilization during elections which has given prominence to caste in various parts of Indian society. Further she said that mobilization of different caste groups might have been a major strategy for multiple political parties to increase their support base. The author stressed that political mobilization in Indian politics has given prominence to caste in different parts of Indian society. On the effect of Caste in rural settings, Rajni Kothari finds that caste is becoming more and more strengthened because of caste affiliation established by castes. Caste-based representatives have become increasingly dominant in electoral politics. They aim to provide advantages for their caste members based on affirmative actions in government employment. These castes are therefore trying to improve their status and obtain as much political authority as possible.

N. Parsad (1956)⁴⁹, traced out the Indian philosophy or the Hindu philosophy as the reason for the survival of the caste system in India. Author analyzed the Indian philosophy justified the caste hierarchy and behavioral differences. The author carried out the empirical study on the railway workers of Chapra, to study the urban and industrial

⁴⁷ Hutton, J.H. (1951). *Caste in India*, Bombay: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁸ Kothari, Rajni. (1970). *Caste in Indian Politics*, New Delhi: Orient Longman.

⁴⁹ Parsad, N. (1956). *Myth of Caste System*, Patna India: SamjnaPrakashan.

impact on the caste system. He found out that Hindu mythology and the caste system have a stronghold over the people and having reforms in that are rigid in nature. The caste system has been deeply rooted in the thoughts and behavior of the people. He suggested some remedies to get rid from the myth caste system such as providing the opportunity of education for all, encourage inter-caste marriages, removal of the practice of untouchability, and inculcate the value of equality in the society.

M. N. Srinivas (1957)⁵⁰ in the study author study provides a comprehensive account of various aspects of the Dalits, their situation, growth, and life of the Dalits in various part of India. In all groups, including the communist parties of India before and after independence, the upper class holds the role in decision-making. The writer noted that scheduled castes are the important part of the village life. In agriculture, they perform important tasks, they are mostly village servants, messengers, and sweepers, and at village festivals, they beat the drum and remove the leaves on which people have dined at group dinners. M. Srinivas attempted to highlight the role of caste in modern India's democratic processes; Srinivas shows that universal suffrage has failed to achieve its objective. People vote to whom they know and feel affiliation.

D.R. Chanana(1961)⁵¹ analyzed the changing pattern and mobility of the lower caste towards the urban areas. As the 'Srinivas' concept of 'Sanskritisation' can be seen among the people migrated towards the towns. The lower castes get Sanskritised and the upper caste are getting more and more westernized. The provisions of reservation in jobs and educational institutions are resulting fruitful to elevate their socio-economic status. But their number is proportionately less because of lack of awareness & education, economic constraints and not having well build kinship, who can guide them towards the upward mobility.

V.S,D'Souza (1962)⁵² wrote that scholars like F.C. Bailey analyzed, the social status change along with the change in socio-economic conditions, but in the Indian social hierarchy, Brahmins at the top and the scheduled caste at the bottom remain unchanged. The change in people's economic conditions does not bring any change in people's social

⁵⁰ Srinivas, M. (1957). Caste in Modern India. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 16(4), 529-548.
doi:10.2307/2941637

⁵¹ Chanana, D.R. (June 24, 1961). Caste and Mobility, *The Economic Weekly*

⁵² D'Souza, V.S. (01 Dec, 1962). Changing Status of Scheduled Castes, Vol. 14, Issue No. 48, , *The Economic Weekly*

status. After re-examining Bailey's data and other studies, he refutes Bailey's concept. He analyzed that the correlation between the socio-economic issues and social status is not necessary always to be inverse in relation. He argues that if the socio-economic conditions of the group change, there are certain factors also which make a corresponding change in social status. But he also concludes that kind of uneven change mostly faced opposition in society and tension.

H.Issacs(1965)⁵³, analyzed the changed in the life of ex-untouchables by interviewing the fifty different educated professional personals from the scheduled caste category in the urban spheres. He discovers the major changes occur in the life of these people after getting educated, it carved out the new opportunities and way for the life. The upward mobility has been seen among them with the anonymity to the caste they belong to after getting certain status in the society. Most of them do not like to keep their ties with their rural kins and try to hide their untouchable identity. They profoundly want to dissolve the Hindu caste system.

Andre Beteille (1966)⁵⁴ defines that the caste is alike any other social stratification which consists of many other systems in it, which are less flexible and have mobility in the very limited area. The evolution of the caste system includes the various sub-structures which are ideologically antagonistic systems in nature.

Llyod I.Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph (1967)⁵⁵ observed that the caste system in India has responded to change in its economic and political environment by transforming itself from below and within. Rudolph focuses on the 'adaptive function' of caste and analyzed that the caste system in India has responded well to the changes that occurred in the political and economic environment and they were transformed from below and within, now the caste is playing an important role in affiliating its members to the political ideas, processes and institutions. According to Rudolph, Caste is not only a means to persist the old order's inequalities by destructing the moral basis and social structure, now the hierarchy, privilege, and moral parochialism no longer exhausts its secular significance.

⁵³ Issacs, H. (1965). *India's ex-untouchables*. New York: John Day Company.

⁵⁴ Beteille, Andre. (1966). Closed and Open social Stratification in India. *European Journal of Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, Vol.VIII. pp.224-246.

⁵⁵ Rudolph,L. I. And Rudolph, S.H. (1967). *The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India*. Delhi: Orient Longman.

O.M.Lynch (1968)⁵⁶ has done an empirical study of the Jatavs (chamar or leather workers) of Agra. With the adoption of a parliamentary form of democracy, the Jatavs have the quest for a new identity. In the new environment, the jatavs came out as a powerful community, form internal solidarity and unity among themselves. He discussed how the traditional leatherworkers setup the monopolistic shoe industry in Agra. He analysis how the Jatavs evaluates themselves and elevate their economic status. By following the teachings of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar they make their political participation to get upward mobility. They secure the mobility not with the Sanskritization but with the active political participation and marking the strength of unity of the community.

T.N.Madan (1971)⁵⁷ wrote that Indian society is largely static society, which is still continuing to being static in the present also. By defining the ‘internalist’ and ‘externalist’ aspects, he wrote the change in society has occurred but the change of society is yet to take place.

Sachchidananda Sinha (1977)⁵⁸, the study traces the aspect of change, social mobility among the Scheduled castes in Bihar. The book analyzes how the rapid stride of education among scheduled castes led to the emergence of a new class, which occupies elite positions and elite roles in their societies. The author covers the status of the educated elite in their society and how the scheduled caste elite is absorbed in the general society elite. The author elaborates on the emerging status pattern of Harijan Elites, how did their networks, in their community and outside the community help them, the perception and role of social transformation by the Elites.

Louis Dumont (1981)⁵⁹stressed the importance of hierarchy in traditional society as opposed to individualism and egalitarianism. For him, Indian hierarchy is rooted in the Hindu world-view, in a cosmology where all living beings from Gods to animals are hierarchically ordered. For Dumont, this ideology is too deeply rooted in Hindu thought to be dislodged by borrowings of egalitarian ideas from the west. Hierarchy is seen as fundamental to all complex societies until Western modernity creates a singular, alternative form. Dumont explains why Indians must live with it- until modernity

⁵⁶ Lynch, O.M. (1968). *The Politics of Untouchability*. New Delhi: National Publishing House.

⁵⁷ Madan, T.N. (1971). On Understanding Caste. *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. vi, No.34, pp.1806-8.

⁵⁸ Sinha, Sachchidananda. (1977). *The Harijan Elite*. Faridabad: Thompson Press.

⁵⁹ Dumont,Louis. (1981). *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste system and its implications*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

transforms Indian thought in a way similar to what happened in the West. Caste, in his view, is a way of thinking about society, allowing for the existence of very different kinds of humans, with values for ordering and ranking them. In the critical, He observes that the relation, far from obvious, between these ideological constructs, is based on texts. The Post–Modernist theories reject Dumont's theory of synthesis.

Sharad Patil (1990) ⁶⁰tried to found the contradiction of caste and class in pre-colonial India. According to the author after the independence, with the emergence of new capitalist forces, the social structure of the caste system is changing.

Irfan Habib (1995) ⁶¹observes and quotes that “the caste system, in its classic form, could therefore function with as much ease in a natural economy as in a market-oriented one. In either case, it helped essentially to maintain not a fabric of imagined purity (if it did, this was incidental, but a system of class exploitation as rigorous as any other”⁶². Habib also states in his writing that the caste system is an important pillar of the class exploitation system in medieval times in India.

Gail Omvedt (1995) ⁶³Omvedt presents the Dalit approach that "proclaims an identity policy" and describes "Hinduism" as an oppressive caste/class/patriarchal force itself. Omvedt tries to touch the ideas of different Indian actors such as Jyotiba Phule, Ramabai, Tarabai, Periyar, even Sita's Curse and Shumbuk's Silence in various chapters of his book .Omvedt's works end with the Dalit inspirational poem of the balladeer Waman Kardak: “*Chaase away the army of darkness, search the sky, the moon, the stars, the light is in you, the light is in you, be tomorrow's sun*”. We are encouraged by this tract to rethink our thoughts, listen to those voices that we always fail to hear, and recognize the dreams that aspire to change the world in which Dalits live.

Harsh Mander (1997) ⁶⁴, revealed the economic and social deprivation of the people engaged in their traditional unclean occupation like human scavenging and tanning and removing dead animal carcasses. By these occupations, they make their living and also

⁶⁰ Patil, Sharad. (15 Dec,1990). Should ‘Class’ be the Basis for Recognizing Backwardness? .*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.25, Issue no.50.

⁶¹ Habib,Irfan. (1995). *Essays in Indian History: Towards a Marxist Perception*. New Delhi: Tulika Publishers.

⁶² Ibid, pp.161-179

⁶³ Omvedt,Gail. (2006). *Dalit Vision*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman Publishers.

⁶⁴ Mander, Harsh. (1997). Dalit status Agenda for state intervention. *The Administrator*, Vol.XII,Jan-March, pp.101-121.

the reason considered as 'untouchables' in society. They have to confront the dilemma of survival, as these occupations gave them economic security as no other group is willing to perform their task but due to these occupations, they are socially degraded and became a victim of untouchability. To aspire for social dignity they have to abandon the traditional occupations.

J.K.Pundir (1997)⁶⁵ analyzed the changing living pattern of the Scheduled caste. He wrote no doubt that the SC's were the victim of the injustice, exclusion, and suppression but now with time and space their lives have been changing. The author studied the transformation that took place in the scheduled caste of north India. He explored the multiple aspects of changing scenarios with the theoretical conceptual framework.

K.L.Sharma(1997)⁶⁶ defines caste in theory and practice as the system of inequality, difference, and discrimination. According to the theoretical explanation given by Sharma, 'caste is more state of mind of an individual, which generally assumes as an ideology dictating collective actions'. There is the nexus between caste and class relations which are getting into a change constantly, the formation of new power elites, new power blocks, alignments are some examples of it. The new classification of the categories namely 'forwards', 'upper backward', 'lower backward', 'minorities', 'SC's', 'ST's', 'Dalits', 'Bahujan Samaj' etc. has replaced the old conventional hierarchy and reflects the paradigm shift in the sections of society.

Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany (1998)⁶⁷ wrote that the wide range of governmental policies and the affirmation actions by the government of India have opened up the government services and the opportunity of education to the Dalits. However, the sectors in which avenues are open is limited to those sector which come under the control of state or central government or public enterprises. Exclusion from cultural and social networks emerges from the Dalit's crucial exclusion from the system of castes.

⁶⁵ Pundir, J.K. (1997). *Changing Patterns of Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication.

⁶⁶ Sharma, K.L. (1997). *Social Stratification in India: Issues and Themes*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

⁶⁷ Mendelsohn, Oliver. &Vicziany, Marika. (1998).*The Untouchables: Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Ramakrisna Mukherjee (1999)⁶⁸ Discussed caste and class in context of Indian society, the debate surrounding the relationship between caste and class is discussed in historical and contemporary perspectives in India.

Ghanshyam Shah (2001)⁶⁹ found out that in the time immemorial Dalits were untouchables politically and culturally marginalized as well economically and socially oppressed. Now in the current scenario, they began to assert themselves and forming a new social order on the principles of liberty and equality. Although several of them reached positions where they have status along with political and administrative recognition but the majority of the community are still living in inhuman conditions and facing inhuman atrocities.

Vivek Kumar (2001)⁷⁰ analyzes the impact of Globalisation, on the empowerment of Dalits in India. The author used the term 'Dalit', for ex-untouchables of Indian society. He wrote the social stigma on Dalits or ex-untouchables has such a stronghold that their exclusion & segregation remains the same even they occupy the highest office of the land or transcends national boundaries and gain economic and political empowerment. So, it is better to call the socially deprived groups Dalits. Due to the impact of Globalisation, the Dalits who constitute the bulk of the poor and unemployed suffered most. Dalits were late starters in the realm of education and also technically unequipped with modern technology so not able to use the scarce opportunities. The process of globalization along with its appendage processes of information revolution and privatization has not had any impact on the stigmatized status of Dalits.

Vivek Kumar (2002)⁷¹ attempted to study the issues of the Dalit leadership. He studied the Dalit leadership in detail from its origin, growth, and development with relevant data and facts & figures. In the academic discourse or the mainstream academic, the study of the Dalit discourse and leadership is absent. The studies of mobilization, empowerment, and the dynamics of Dalit leadership are not part of college and university study. He elaborates on the importance of Dalit leadership in mapping the assertion.

⁶⁸ Mukherjee, Ramkrishna. (July 3-9, 1999). *Economic Political Weekly*, Vol.34, No.27, pp.1759-1761.

⁶⁹ Shah, Ghanshyam. (2001). *Dalit Identity and Politics: Cultural Subordination and the Dalit Challenge*, New Delhi: Sage Publication.

⁷⁰ Kumar, V. (2001). Globalisation and Empowerment of Dalits in India. *Indian Anthropologist*, 31(2), from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41919895>

⁷¹ Kumar, Vivek. (2002). *Dalit leadership in India*. New Delhi :Kalpaz Publication.

Vivek Kumar (2003)⁷² the author analyzes the politics of change after the formation of the BSP, which led to the change in the social structure in Uttar Pradesh. The change can be seen in the incidences of retaliation of Dalits against the upper castes. It mostly occurs after the formation of the BSP government in 1995. The author writes, that in the new roles Dalits are now the part of legislature, bureaucracy, panchayats, police stations, this change is not only at the governmental level but at the social level also. With the emergence of BSP, Dalits have deconstructed and reconstructed many primordial identities. It created a sense of pride, confidence, self-respect, and assertion among the erstwhile deprived Dalits.

Sagarika Ghose (2003)⁷³, wrote about the position of Dalits in India, how in the area of contemporary social exchange and culture, only the identity of “Untouchable” is the only definition of the Dalit person, no matter how good carrier the person achieved in its life. The author’s main argument in the research paper is that despite the far-reaching reservations in legislature and educational institutions for SC and ST, and their undoubted benefits, the cultural hegemony of the *dvija* remains virtually intact. The practice of untouchability still got followed, the tendency Dalitness continues to persist as much as an idea as a social reality. Those empowered, remains in a social trap, because this empowerment comes on the basis of the very social category that he is trying to rise from. The Dalits are linguistically and regionally divided, not united to become a truly mass movement without building links with other minorities, such as Muslims.

P.Muthaiah (2004)⁷⁴: The author wrote about the Dalits in different contexts of their designation impregnated with politics of designator and designates. It gets start with the designated the Chandala at lower strata of society due to political interest of Aryans, who made the aborigines of India as Dalits. Then the British rulers in India designated Dalits as depressed classes, exterior caste, and scheduled castes for providing certain concessions in the political interests & tried to prove the legitimacy of its rule in India. The author analyzes that, M.K.Gandhi uses the word Harijan for untouchables for his political ambition. With time, the new identity Neo-Buddhist became a new identity of

⁷² Kumar. Vivek. (2003). Uttar Pradesh: Politics of Change. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol.38, Issue no.37

⁷³Ghose, S. (2003). The Dalit in India. *Social Research*, 70(1), 83-109. Retrieved February 09, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40971608>

⁷⁴ Muthaiah, P. (2004). Politics of Dalit Identity. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 65(3), 385-402. Retrieved February 09, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41856064>

Dalits in India. After that, the Dalit Panther in the 1970's, provide the new term 'Dalit' to the depressed classes. The author analyzed that the designations like scheduled castes, Dalits, and Bahujan were elite manufactured categories for their political benefits. For the common people the term Dalit, Bahujan, Dalit-Bahujan are confusing terms. Reservation broke the monopoly of one or two castes in various fields but it preserves the caste identities.

Ayan Guha (2014)⁷⁵ in his study establishes that Marxist theory is insignificant in the study of caste as it focus is on the analysis of class as a basic unit. In the Indian social context caste is one of the most important social reality and it can't be equated with class.

Harald Tambs-Lyche (2017)⁷⁶ deeply analyzed the perception and preliminaries of the caste, the author deeply dwells on the enigma of Caste with the different theories of castes in the different periods. The author reveals how the individual identity will transform in the identification of Community, then on village and caste, it also highlights the interconnectedness of hierarchy and power relations with the examples. The author provides the different abstraction of identity-centric models present in the past and present Indian society; it further discusses the discourse that structures hegemony.

Dalits in Punjab: Literature that discerns the nature of caste and caste system in Punjab are mainly

Denzil Ibbetson (1916)⁷⁷ there is nothing that can be more variable and more difficult to define than caste. All societies in the world are arranged in strata that are based upon differences of social or political importance, or occupation. Here in India the classification on hereditary rather than the individual to the persons. The artificial standard was attached to the caste, the rules forbid social intercourse between the castes of different rank. Ibbetson wrote, "it is the tribe or section of the tribe that alone can improve its position, and thus it can do only after the lapse of several generations, during which time it must abandon a lower for a higher occupation, conform more strictly with

⁷⁵ Guha, Ayan. (April 2014). Marxist Discourse on Caste in India: A Critique. *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science*, Volume 3 Issue 4 PP.38-41.

⁷⁶ Lyche, H. T. (2017). *Transaction & Hierarchy: Elements for a Theory of Caste*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication.

⁷⁷ Ibbetson, Denzil. (1916). *Punjab Castes*, Lahore: Printed by the Superintendent, Government Printing.

the arbitrary rules, affect social exclusiveness or special sanctity, or separate itself after some similar fashion from the body of the caste to which it belongs.

BaldevRajNayar (1966)⁷⁸ pointed out the cleavages based on rural-urban divide, religion, caste, and class amongst the individuals of the state and also inquired the importance of different cleavages in the politics of the state of Punjab.

J.S.Brar(1989)⁷⁹ studied and wrote about the communist party in Punjab. The author studied the evolution and working of the communist organization in detail. He analyzed the organization in the context of caste and leadership with the strategy used by the communist party to form and strengthen its support base.

D.C.Ahir(1992)⁸⁰ analyzes the influence of Dr. B.R.Ambedkar on Punjab's Dalit community. The book started with the Ad Dharm movement and the influence of B.R.Ambedkar on it, the author also wrote about in details the three visits of Dr. Ambedkar at Punjab and their important associates in Punjab. The author wrote about the influence of Buddhism in Punjab its relation to the B.R.Ambedkar,

Pushpendra(1999)⁸¹ is of the view that democratic process and institutions are much valued by the scheduled caste and it make them conscious about the importance of numerical strength. This transform them from being a passive voter to actively participation in the poster-sharing discourse, which obviously results in to actively shifting of traditional loyalties. This shift in the loyalty and believe in the democratic process lead the erosion of support base for Congress party in many states and emergence of scheduled caste based parties like BSP and left front.

Surinder S. Jodhka (2002)⁸² pointed attention towards the absence of empirical evidences about the practice of untouchability in the Punjab, although much has written about it. Based on the extensive field survey he produce a mapping of the caste relations and untouchability practices especially in the rural Punjab. In the context of agrarian transformations that the Punjab countryside has experienced in the wake of the success of

⁷⁸ Nayar, Baldev. Raj. (1December,1966). *Minority Politics in Punjab*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

⁷⁹ Brar, J.S. (1989). *The Communist Party in Punjab*, New Delhi: National Book Organisation.

⁸⁰ Ahir,D.C.(1992). *Dr.Ambedkar and Punjab*. Delhi: B.R.Publishing Corporation.

⁸¹ Pushpendra. (1999). Dalit Assertion through Electoral Politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34(36), 2609-2618. Retrieved February 5, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4408373>

⁸² Jodhka,Surinder S. (2002).Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab. *Economic &Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, Issue No. 19

green revolution technology, the author specifically emphasizes the process of change, particularly wrote that though some aspects of caste in Punjab have been studied, but there was no detailed empirical documentation available for the practice of untouchability in Punjab. Based on an extensive field study, paper provides a broad mapping of prevailing caste relations and the practice of untouchability in rural Punjab.

Surinder S. Jodhka (2002)⁸³ Dalit of Punjab see no virtues in the hierarchical structure of caste, they all aspire for better materialistic conditions and dignified life. Due to various social movements, technological advancement, and economic development, Dalits are forwarding for self-respect and dignified life. The structural changes are also marked in Punjab, with the commercialization of traditional 'unclean occupations, the discrimination due to idea of purity and pollution is very less, but the subordination of Dalits in rural Punjab is institutionalized due to the prevailing agrarian structure of the relationship. But now, with the more connectivity in the towns and availability of new means of livelihood in the villages, with the new employment opportunities, the traditional structure getting a dent in itself. Dalits want to preserve their own autonomous culture and do not want to forget their caste identity, they have also constructed their separate Gurudwara's to attain a certain degree of cultural autonomy. In rural Punjab caste still exists, the difference in the degree.

Paramjit S. Judge (2003)⁸⁴ the author highlighted the hierarchical differentiation among the Dalits of Punjab and its social implications. How the nomenclature of the caste changes, with time and space. Castes also experience the changes with the interaction of religion and social movements, which further can be one of the reasons for hierarchy among them. In Punjab, Ad-Dharmis are at the top of hierarchical structure, whereas Balmiki's or the Mazhabis are at the lowest rung, but the position of the 'sansis' is very low. The castes, which occupy the top position in the hierarchical structure of SCs acts as a dominant caste, even not reconcile with the other caste of the SC category, socially refrain from them. There were the 'oppressors' and 'oppressed' in the Dalits also, and the phenomenon of high caste and low caste observed in them.

⁸³ Jodhka, Surinder. S. (May 2002). Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, Issue No. 19.

⁸⁴ Judge, Paramjit S. (12 July 2003). Hierarchical Differentiation among Dalits. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, Issue no. 28.

Ronki Ram (2004)⁸⁵the notion of purity and pollution in Caste with the practice of untouchability can be found in Hindu religion. Punjab which seems to be caste free society is not an exception. The untouchability prevalent throughout the country, have unique characteristics in the region. The research paper is a detailed exploration that how the practice of untouchability came to practice in the region, although the Sikh doctrine does not provide any place to the institution of caste, in social practice, it is present. The author further analyzed how the caste clashes of Boota Mandi, Talhan make the

Surinder.S.Jodhka (2006)⁸⁶presents a political sociological analysis of the caste identity and henceforth mobilizations in the recent years. His gazes of electoral politics and caste associations focuses primarily on macro analysis of electoral politics or caste associations. This paper is based on the three case studies of Dalit assertions and caste-related conflicts in the rural areas of Punjab he tried to reflect, that historically the politicization of caste identities varies significantly across different caste groups. Also, the psychological aspect was touched by the author as he pointed out the experiences of being a member of ‘upper’ caste and ‘marginalized’ caste. The author urges for a more differentiated understanding on the subject, which can be best derived from microanalyses of changing caste relations in contemporary times.

Surinder S Jodhka, Avinash Kumar (2007)⁸⁷emphasizes the important questions of quotas and wrote that much before the question of quotas within quotas in jobs reserved for the scheduled castes acquired prominence in Andhra Pradesh, Punjab had introduced a twofold classification of its SC population. When the Andhra case went to court, Punjab had to rework its policy. It is useful to closely examine the Punjab case to see if the internal classification of SCs for quotas in jobs has served a purpose. The research paper is based on the exploration of the act 1975, which introduced the quota within quotas and it very well explores the caste entitled in the list of scheduled castes of Punjab, with are different in their religion pattern, their traditional work are different. In fact, different region of Punjab is marked with a different kind of mobilization, which puts the impact on the scheduled castes in a different manner. Similarly, reservation policy in the job has

⁸⁵ Ram,Ronki. (November/December 2004). Untouchability in India with a difference: Ad Dharm, Dalit Asssertion and Caste conflicts in Punjab, *Asian Survey*, vol.44, pp.895-912.

⁸⁶ Jodhka,Surinder.S. (January- April 2006). Caste and Democracy: Assertion and Identity among the Dalits of Rural Punjab.*Sociological Bulletin, Indian Sociological Society*, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 4-23

⁸⁷ Jodhka,Surinder S. &KumarAvinash, (27th Oct 2007).Internal Classification of Scheduled Castes: The Punjab Story, *Economic Political Weekly*, Vol.42, Issue no. 43.

impacted in positively and negatively both to the different communities. But still, this quota within quota is running successfully in Punjab. The act leaving the Balimiki-Mazhabi struggle for quota in educational institutions.

Paramjit S. Judge and Gurpreet Bal (2008)⁸⁸ The research is based on empirical evidences and attempted to find out the changes in the socio-economic conditions of Dalits in Punjab. After the constitutional provisions, reservation policies, special development provisions and change in traditional caste-based occupational structure the inequalities and exclusion still exist at the level of the caste system. The author analyzed these findings on the basis of studies of social ecology, religious places, and economic conditions. The traditions, however, work as the impediments for the Dalits to emerge as a homogeneous category. The caste system is embedded with discrimination, exclusion, oppression, and exclusion, but it also situates them to form or in a system as a collective identity. Dalits want to end all kinds of discrimination, oppression, and exclusion, but not the caste system.

Paramjit Singh Judge and Gurpreet Bal (2009)⁸⁹ empirically investigated the Dalit households of rural and urban areas from Jalandhar and Amritsar districts. It explores the changing status of Dalits in Punjab at four parameters namely education, empowerment, entrepreneurship, and emigration. The study analyzed the social, economic, and cultural conditions and characteristics of the surveyed households. There is a class formation among the Dalits and each caste is not economically equal. Gurpreet Bal believed that the Chamar caste is one step forward among all scheduled castes. According to the survey, Most of the families were nuclear and had modern means of communication and transportation. No Significant participation in higher education, Punjab is one of the highest emigrant states has a complex relationship with social mobility. The study traces the pattern of emigration from pre-independence and points out that the place of migration largely determines the status of migrants.

⁸⁸ Judge, Paramjit S. and Bal, Gurpreet. (11 Oct. 2008). Understanding the Paradox of Changes among Dalits in Punjab, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 43, Issue No. 41.

⁸⁹ Judge, P. and Bal, G. (2005). *Mapping Dalits: Contemporary Reality and Future Prospects in Punjab*. Delhi: Rawat Publications.

Surinder S. Jodhka (2010)⁹⁰ Dalits who setup their business, has gone through all the hardship, but for the sake of their dignity or we can say in the desire of dignified existence of life, they moved away from traditional occupation and setup their enterprises and come out from the ‘slavery’ of the dominant caste. The Dalit in Haryana is more vulnerable to the Dalits of UP. The caste identities were among one of the causes of discrimination in the economic area, which affects their business negatively. The caste discrimination is shared across the caste groups; balmikis faced more discrimination in comparison to chamars. Caste is still a reality in contemporary times and the market economy also. But Dalits are fighting all these odds and independent entrepreneurship is rising. The author suggests that to get success, a Dalit entrepreneur not only has to be a good businessman but invariably also a social & political entrepreneur.

Dr. Vinay Kumar (2014)⁹¹ wrote on the historical analysis of the Ad Dharm and the British Raj, the author proceeds that the Ad Dharm Movement had contributed a lot to uplift the Ad Dharmis. The leaders of this movement many times send memorandums and demand charters to the British government in favor of the *qaum*. The important leader of this movement namely Mangoo Ram Mugowal, was in his youth, a big enemy of the British, and even joined Gadhar Movement against them. He justified because the world is changing and similarly the Ad Dharmis should have to change themselves. It is also significantly mentioned in the Ad Dharm Mandal Report that tries to send members to the councils and start the *Qaum* and get united to form a better life and destroy the caste and creed barriers. Ad Dharm Mandal refused to boycott the Simon Commission hearings as the Congress had urged them to do so, contrary they intended to make as much use of the event as possible.

Ronki Ram (2017)⁹²elaborates the caste heterogeneity and hierarchy within the scheduled castes of Punjab. The SC’s of Punjab are divided in the same manner of hierarchy that separated them from the various categories of upper castes as per the Brahminical social order epitomized by the varna system. Punjab has the highest no. of SC population in terms of percentage but fails to become a social and political force to

⁹⁰ Jodhka, Surinder S. (13 March, 2010). Dalits in Business: Self- Employed Scheduled Castes in North-West India. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 45, Issue No. 11.

⁹¹ Kumar, Vinay. (May 2014). Historical Analysis of Dalit Assertion in Punjab: A Study of Ad Dharm Mandal Report, *International Journal of Research (IJR)* Vol-1, Issue-4.

⁹² Ram, Ronki. (21 Jan, 2017). Internal Caste Cleavages among Dalits in Punjab. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 52, Issue No. 3.

reckon with due to the caste heterogeneity and sharp cleavages. There is still a struggle for upward mobility, within their caste.

Statement of the Problem

The trajectory of Indian social structure is based on the caste system in which a certain bunch of castes, which are backward, was clubbed together as Dalits, who clamored for equality in social, political, and cultural perception and behavior from other castes. The post-independence era, especially the post-liberalization phase seems a paradigm shift in the mobilization and assertion of many caste and communities, and it was hurriedly concluded that market forces will overshadow the primordial caste identity is fading. Also, various constitutional provisions and laws of the state grant Dalits a certain number of privileges, affirmative action's, preferential policies to reduce the status gap among forward and backward. However, this has benefitted only to few castes in the different regions depending on the local socio-political specificity and a vast majority of them remained at the periphery despite the constitutional and legal provisions. This results in the development of class within caste and class within a class and the boundaries of caste and class identity criss-cross each other at numerous juncture. The proposed study is the study of the impact of the developmental discourse of Punjab on the Dalit castes both in terms of intra and inter-caste contradictions and conflict especially in the region where caste and religion play a crucial role in the determination of the socio-economic positions of the marginalized caste communities. The present study aims to find out and analyze the way and process of Dalit assertion in India vis-a-vis Punjab, the nature and factors of assertion, caste involved, and its implications. The whole inquiry tries to analyze the phenomenon from two perspectives: One that the Dalit assertion has benefitted the scheduled caste in general and it has developed a sense of pride in all the caste communities of the scheduled caste category. Obviously, this inquiry is based on the assumption that Dalit as the class is more or less homogenous. Second, that the phenomenon of assertion is limited to few castes and this is because of the reason that Dalit as a class is not a homogenous community. The two dominant paradigm needs positivist inquiry which this study try to supplement with the field study of Punjab.

Objectives of the Study:

- To conceptualize and locate the phenomenon of Dalit assertion.
- To analyze the socio-political-economic factors, which resultant in mobility among the Dalits in general and Dalits of Punjab in particular.
- To analyze the contribution of Dalits towards the emancipation of their caste in particular and class in general.
- To find out the role of economic factors along with others responsible for Dalit assertion.
- To find out the hierarchy and contradiction within the Dalit consciousness movements.

Hypothesis

1. Dalit consciousness movement in India in the post-liberalization phase shows both continuity and change and a significant cultural assertion.
2. The rise and growth of capitalism (in terms of economic determinism) led to the overshadowing of primordial identity like caste by the class identity and lead to the emergence of a new consciousness among the Dalits.
3. Economic mobility enhances the possibilities of assertion among the caste groups.
4. The Dalit assertion is not homogenous and limited to few dominant castes of the region but has some trickling effect on the other castes of the group. movements are in fact caste assertion

Research Design

The present research is descriptive and explanatory in nature. Here attempts have been made to describe the phenomenon of Dalit assertion in its regional specificity with special reference to the state of Punjab. The role of traditional factors in the generation of consciousness among the Dalits has been inquired. The study has been an attempt to

conceptualize and refine the phenomenon of Dalit assertion. To find out, is there any kind of assertion among the Dalits of Punjab. If, the assertion is there what are the prime factors responsible for it, and how the Dalits emancipate their community.

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. As the design suggests both positivist and post-positivist methods have been adopted for collecting empirical evidence from the field. The data from the field have been collected through the methods of interview schedule, case studies, iconography with the combination of participant observation of the respondents. The interview schedule consists of a semi-structured questionnaire, which has both structured and unstructured questions, as it is indeed for the study. The structured questions used for the investigation have single response as well as with the multiple response questions.

For exploring, furtive beliefs on social and community concern unstructured questions are used in the research tool. The unstructured questions as the research tool make the respondent answer from their cognitive minds; allow them to express their views openly. The unstructured questions helped in getting rich insights, which provide the opportunity to explore the various dimensions over the dichotomous structured questions. It also proved as a helpful research tool in the collection of rich data, provides the basic raw material and the qualitative data, also enabled the researcher to expand and contract the research tool whenever necessary.

The interview schedule, questions were arranged and asked in a “funnel structure”, which begins in an interview by asking the factual & simple questions followed by the unstructured questions, moved gradually towards eliciting responses on more & more complex phenomenon. The factual questions helped a long way to prepare the respondent for deeper involvement in the interview. The schedule was pretested before it was administered.

The respondents were selected based on a purposive stratified sampling method. The respondents were selected by “the web technique” and the snowball sampling techniques. The “web technique” is a method for connecting the respondents, where the researcher relies upon the interviewed person to further locate the new respondent for interview from their informal contacts. Respondents were selected both from the urban as well as rural areas from *Majha*, *Malwa*, and *Doaba* regions of Punjab. Amritsar and Gurdaspur

districts from Majha, Jalandhar & Nawashehar districts from Doaba and Ludhiana, and Firozpur districts from the Malwa region were selected for the study.

The respondents are Dalit leaders, eminent Dalit writers, public servants, Dalit activists, academicians writing about Dalits, Dalit student activists, Dalit sarpanchs, Dalit urban local representatives, Dalit human rights activists, Dalit entrepreneurs. The study has sample size of sixty respondents.

The observation method was also advantageous in the research. It helped to find out the real feeling of the respondents in the various matters on which they are questioned. It also provides additional clues for the understanding of their state of mind, which could not be ascertained through the interview schedule.

Iconography was also selected as an approach or the method of study, it immensely helpful in the research to decode the meaning of symbolized objects, visuals at graffiti's of the places visited specific icons, and many more things. It incalculably helped the study to decode the new identities created through cultural specific.

Apart from primary data, the research also used secondary data. The research used the census reports, district gazettes, and statistical abstracts of Punjab, the relevant publications of government, books, journals, articles, newspapers. Simple statistical tables have been worked out where necessary. The information furnished by the respondents was transferred from the interview schedule to data sheets and sorted out.

The Universe of the Study

Dalits make up nearly 16 percent of India's population⁹³; their proportions vary at the regional level. As Punjab is a province with a Sikh majority, many claims that the state does not have a caste. Although Punjab's social structure is indeed different from other regions of India and the influence of Brahmanic Hinduism is very weak here, but caste discrimination, particularly in the rural environment are very sharp.

The state of Punjab has the highest percentage of the Schedule caste population among all the states of the country as per the Census 2011, 88.60 Lac is the scheduled caste population in Punjab, which is 31.94% of the state's total population

⁹³ Census 2011.

(277.43 Lac).⁹⁴ In India, Punjab accounts for 2.3% of the total population and 4.3 % of the scheduled caste population. The Scheduled Caste population's decennial growth rate recorded in the state is 26.06 % (census 2011) as opposed to 13.89% for the state as a whole.⁹⁵ However, a large number of families of the Schedule caste still live below the poverty line.

Punjab has witnessed the successful green revolution, mechanization of agriculture which seems to reduce the dependence of the Dalits on agriculture and diversify into other occupations. According to the 2010-11 Agriculture Census, the number of SC operational holdings is 63,489, spread over an area of 1,26,966 hectares, comprising 6.02% and 3.20% of the state's total landholding and area, respectively. Of these holdings, major bulks (85.54 percent) are unviable to be less than the size of 5 hectares.⁹⁶

The presence of Sikhism, a religion that ideologically and theologically decried caste. Punjab is the first state in north India to witness an early emergence of the Dalit assertion through various movements. The Scheduled castes form the majority of districts in Punjab with one-third or more of their population. Of the total 12,168 inhabited villages in the state, 57 villages have a 100% scheduled caste population⁹⁷ and 4,799 villages have 40% and more scheduled caste population.⁹⁸

Limitation of the study:

Since the study is based on the field experiences derived from the limited number of respondents in the different districts of Punjab, the findings can't be generalized for the whole country or any other region in particular. Secondly, opinions expressed by the respondents may be influenced by any specific phenomenon and human emotions, which

⁹⁴ Department of Social Justice & Empowerment ,Government of Punjab, available at <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/PDF/SCSP/BasicscData2/DistrictWiseRuralUrbanTotalPopulation.pdf>

⁹⁵ Population Statistics of Punjab, available at <https://www.esopb.gov.in/Static/PDF/Publications/PopulationStat/PopulationStatistics-1971-2011.pdf>

⁹⁶ Agricultural Census, available at <http://agcensus.nic.in/document/agcensus2010/allindia201011H.pdf>

⁹⁷ Department of Social Justice & Empowerment ,Government of Punjab, available at <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/PDF/SCSP/BasicscData2/VillagesWith100PerSCPopulationCensus2011.pdf>

⁹⁸ Department of Social Justice & Empowerment ,Government of Punjab, available at <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/PDF/SCSP/BasicscData2/VillagesWith40PerorMoreSCPopulation.pdf>

is beyond the control of the researcher. Last, not least, since the selection of respondents was made randomly and through the snowball method.

Chapter Plan:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Stratification, Caste, and Dalits in India
- Chapter 3: Dalit Assertion: Forms & Manifestation
- Chapter 4: Positioning Dalits in Punjab
- Chapter 5: Analyzing Dalit Assertion in Punjab: Field Study
- Chapter 6: Major Findings

CHAPTER-2
STRATIFICATION, CASTE AND
DALITS IN INDIA

CHAPTER-2

STRATIFICATION, CASTE AND DALITS IN INDIA

Social Stratification & Social Inequality in Societies

Human societies are arranged into a number of segments and the theories of social stratification somewhere deals with the social inequalities in various forms like wealth, prestige or power leads to exploitation & oppression of one on another, which ranks them differently on a different stratum of hierarchy. These social inequalities are age-old and omnipresent in societies.¹ In the structural form, stratification implies ordering, reordering, distribution, and redistribution of people and resources, respectively. Social inequality refers to the existence of different social classes in various variables such as prestige, income, and status that are ranked one above the other. The specific group or subgroup has a shared interest and common identity and often shares a similar lifestyle that separates them to some degree from members of other social strata. It is widely acknowledged that among the various types of stratification the caste and class are the prominent ones. India is an example where the caste and class both existed in the same society.²

Max Weber³ while describing the bases of distribution of power, emphasizes the 'status' as one of the determinants of power along with 'class' economic base and 'party' political parties. Weber clarified that the 'social order' of society determines the status of the individual in the society. The group to which the person belongs are communities, but different from 'classes', but not considered as communities, but considered as the status group. Weber considered the Caste as an ideal example of the status group, where the division in a society is based on conventions and rituals which postulate the social inequalities.

¹ D' Souza, Victor. (1981). *Inequality and its Perpetuation: A Theory of social stratification*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication. pp.23-27.

² Ibid. pp.171-176.

³ Weber, M. (1946). *Class, Status, Party*. In H. H. Girth, & C. W. Mills (Eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (pp. 180-195). New York: Oxford University.

On the other side, thinkers like Karl Marx⁴ propounded the theory that social inequality and exploitation related to the means of production. Marx defines a society as stratified into classes. The two classes namely the capitalist (bourgeoisie) class ruling over the majority members of the society the labourers (proletariat), both the classes are antagonistic in relations. The capitalist class which owns the means of production tends to exploit the proletariat class. Ralf Dahrendorf⁵ challenges the concept of social stratification defined by Marx, according to him social inequality is caused by the inequality in authority. As defined by Dahrendorf the unequal distribution of authority is inherent in every structure of society and the exercise of authority is an essential element of it. It is not only the exercise of authority but also the exercise of exclusion from the authority which is the root cause of the social inequalities in society. Dahrendorf only divides the people into the dichotomic divisions, in the people who exercise the authority and those who do not exercise the authority or are excluded from exercising it.

The structural-functionalist defines social inequality as inescapable in the society, it may be based on hierarchical status or rank differences. The functionalist equates social stratification with social inequalities and analyzes the system of stratification that the stratification refers to the rights and privileges of different positions in society. Functionalist argues that the society has distributed different positions among its member, some are important positions and ascribed difficult functions to perform. Davis & Moore(1967), Kingsley Davis(1944), Walter Buckley(1958) are functionalist scholars, emphasize the functional view of the stratification.

Warner⁶ used the terms rank, prestige, and power synonymously with status. Society is consist of the status hierarchy, with social classes, the member of classes more or less equal in status and the different classes from the hierarchy. There is an unequal distribution of status which depends upon the performance of certain necessary differential functions. When analyzing the different forms of stratification in the societies, it is hard to find out the similarities among them.

⁴ Peet, R. (1975). Inequality and Poverty: A Marxist-Geographic Theory. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 65(4), 564-571. Retrieved on February 18, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2562423>

⁵ Dahrendorf, Ralf. (1969). *Essays in the Theory of Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp.238-39.

⁶ Warner, W. Lloyd, Marchia Meeker and Kenneth Eells . (1960). *Social Class in America: A Manual of Procedure for the Measurement of Social Status*. New York: Harper.pp-274.

In the Indian context, the stratification can be analyzed in different segments. As defined by Yogendra Singh⁷, the stratification in India can be analyzed with the four approaches that emerge as a logical class on caste stratification (a) cultural universalistic, found in the traditional societies where the social ranking based on the honour, (b) cultural particularistic c) structural universalistic d) structural particularistic. He further elaborates that the caste system ranked on the Varna system, which also coincides with caste and the sub-castes, occupational sub-specialization, and accumulation of wealth.

MacIver and Page⁸, differentiated the concept of caste from the class, they define a class as “any portion of a community marked off from the rest by social status”, as an individual's status is not defined or set. They wrote, “ when the status is wholly predetermined so that men are born to their lot in life without any hope of changing it, then class takes the extreme form of caste.”⁹ MacIver and Page explored the evolution of the caste system from the class system. Whereas in the Indian context Victor D'souza wrote that in society, class and caste coexist, but it doesn't mean that only within the caste community can the class system work, it is the form where both systems cut across each other.¹⁰

Stratification can be categorized into basically two forms the open and closed stratified system. In a society where its members are free to compete for the resources and have equal access to acquire wealth, power, status, prestige, and authority. But in close societies, the status, power, prestige & authority are recognized and established on the basis of birth, inheritance, and due to family background. In the social system, where an individual gets born in a specific stratified group, identifies the status from his/her birth, and does not have the opportunity to move or change the stratum is known as the caste system.¹¹

The Indian caste system is one of the examples of social stratification in society. Yogendra Singh¹² defines the Indian caste system as one of the forms of social

⁷ Singh, Yogender. (2014). *Social Stratification and Change in India*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication, pp.18-34.

⁸ MacIver, R.M. and Page, C.H. (1949). *Society*. New York: Rinehart and Company, Inc, pp.348-58.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ D'Souza, Victor S. (Reprint 2017). *Caste and Class* in 'Social inequality in India' (eds.) K.L.Sharma. pp 240.

¹¹ Beteille, Andre. (1966). Closed and Open social Stratification in India. *European Journal of Sociology*, Cambridge University Press, Vol.VIII. Pp.224-246.

¹² Singh, Yogendra. (2014), op.cit.

stratification as well as a system in itself, which can be bifurcated at the time of the level of analysis, in the cultural phenomenon and structural phenomenon. The Indian caste system is the closed stratified system, where the status, power, prestige, class are ascribed on the basis of birth, inheritance, and family background. In the caste system, the hierarchy also affects the structure of power in society, which regulates social supremacy rather than economic power.¹³

The Term Caste

The term 'Caste' is of 'Spanish' and 'Portuguese' origin, carved from the word 'Custus' in Latin, meaning pure. The word was first to use by the Spanish people, but the Indian application comes from Portuguese origin, applied in the middle of the 15th century.¹⁴ Indian social system is characterized by the hierarchy of the caste system. It is the product of traditional laws practiced in the ancient the later Vedic period.¹⁵ The Caste system has the rigid rank order in which, '*Brahmin*' placed at the top level of the hierarchy, '*Kshatriyas*', warrior class placed next to Brahmins, '*Vaishya*' commercial class placed at third level, and '*Sudra*' working class at the substructure of the hierarchical system. Mostly the western scholars have mistaken the caste system as the 'Class', but it is more than the 'class'. The individual's caste is defined by the person's birth, ascribed to his or her parents' caste. The caste defines the social status & role of the individual in the community. Some people were put in the advantageous position of society by the caste system based on inequality, where they can enjoy status and rights, and some in the redundant position of hereditary misery, destitution.

Caste is an English word, introduced by the Britishers in India at the time of their colonial rule, to the closed community groups of the social system. The caste is more or less referred to as the 'Jati' in India. James Manor¹⁶ analyzed that the word 'caste', refers to the three different things: Varna, Jati, and Jati Cluster. The caste system is said to be the phenomenon of the Hindu system, but it is the reality of pan-India society. Other religions such as Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians also have castes or caste-like subdivisions among

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ketkar, S.V. (1909 reprint in 1990). *History of Caste in India*. New Delhi :Low Price Publication, p.12.

¹⁵ Panikkar, K.M. (1955). *Hindu society at the Crossroad*, Bombay : Asia Publishing House, p.121.

¹⁶ Manor, James. (2010). *Caste in Indian Politics by Rajni Kothari*; revised by James Manor, New Delhi: Orient Black Swan Private Ltd, p.XIX.

themselves. M.N.Srinivas¹⁷, described caste as the system which is functionally interrelated in a rigidly stratified society. Caste refers to the four huge sub-divisions in the traditional Hindu hierarchy. Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra are the four groups, each of the categories consists of a large number of jati within it or 'endogamous caste' groups, which is confined in their group. Now in modern times, multiple jatis pursue similar occupations have often grouped collectively in jati-clusters and recognized as 'Caste'.

The Onto- Genesis of the Caste System

The origin, rise, development, and establishment of the caste system in India are explained by several theories. In India, traditional theory, occupational theory, ethnic theory, and many more are based on understanding the caste system.

1.1 Traditional Theory

From Purusha-Sukta of Rig Veda, which explains the root of Varna, the traditional theory of caste structure can be traced and later metamorphosed into castes. The three interrelated characteristics of the Varna Vyavastha are the Varna structure, casteism, untouchability, and social segregation.

From the very beginning of the human race, the root of the Varna system seems to have existed. The Varna came from the great sacrificial Purusha, according to the Rig Veda (the Primal man). The distinctive Varna were made from various parts of his body. The Brahman from the head, the Kshatriyas originated from arms, The Vaishya from the thighs, and the Shudras from the feet. The initial three Varnas procured the status of 'Dwija' or 'twice-conceived', the subsequent birth happening at their Upanayana function, though 'Shudra' considered of the lower varna, but at the lower part of the social hierarchy of importance. This cosmic origin of different varnas performed different duties in a different order. The Brahman is the highest varna had to devote to studies, had to do only the work considered purer, they are the priests and the arbitrators in the society. The Kshatriya assigned the work of soldiers and administrators, the Vaishya is the commercial class, placed below the Kshatriya's, they assigned agricultural activities and trade, and the

¹⁷ Srinivas, M. (1957). Caste in Modern India. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 16(4), 529-548.
doi:10.2307/2941637

‘Shudra’s last in the descending pyramidal structure perform the manual work and to serve these three Varna’s.¹⁸

The Brahminical religious principle of purity & pollution is the core principle of defining the social hierarchy and the social stratification in the society based on the ‘Varna-Jati’ system. ‘Varna’ is the class term, whereas ‘Jati’ is the (caste) term. By and large ‘Jati’ is an endogamous community, and their sub-castes (sub jatis) splits into a group based on the same ‘Gotras’¹⁹.

There is also one more traditional version of the caste system theory, which is according to the ‘Guna’ and ‘Karma’. It is to be said that the caste of the individual is determined by the ‘Karma’ ‘Dharma’ doctrine. This division is performed in compliance with the ‘Guna’ (quality) and Karma (the functions, action/ work). The doctrine was also endorsed in Geeta by Lord Krishna. The four-fold structure (Chaturvarna) was developed by me according to the division of qualities and functions (Guna's) (Karma).²⁰ In the Indian caste system, there are to be said three qualities or Guna’s, namely Sattva (purity) as Wisdom, intellect, sincerity, goodness, and other positive qualities. Second is Rajas (passion) which include the quality like pride, valor, and passion. the third is Tamas (inertia), dullness. In humans, these three features are discovered in varying proportions, according to these innate attributes individuals follow various forms of occupation. The people who have the preponderance of Sattva are the Brahmins, and they are the thinkers, priests, ministers, or philosophers to the kings or ruling class. The people predominated of Rajas are ‘Kshatriyas’, the warrior class, their work is to defend the country. The people predominant with Tamas are Vaishya (inertia) engaged in business and agriculture. Sudras are the servants, having no qualities developed in them, they served other three classes.²¹

1.02 Aryan Theory

According to the theory, Aryans and Dravid’s both are coming to settle down in India from some other parts of the world. The pre- Dravidian settlers were the natives of India, they were the aboriginals of India, attacked by the Dravidians first. Dravid’s were

¹⁸ Ram, Ahuja. (1999). *Indian Social System*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication. pp.228-250.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Velassery, S. (2005). *Casteism and Human Rights: Toward ontology of the social order*. Singapore: Marshall Cavendish International. pp. 204-206.

nomadic tribes, settled in India, they defeated natives. Where some natives joined the life of the Dravidians and some fled away in the forests and mountainsides. The Dravidians have no distinction among themselves, they mingled up with the aboriginals and became one united social entity. After the Dravidians, a major attack against India was made by the Aryans, they defeated aboriginals and made them their 'slaves'. These slaves have been taken into the fold of Hinduism by placing them in low status in society & allotting the duties of serving other people. Those, who did not accept slavery were remained aboriginals and have social, cultural & economic distinctions.²²

The ancient society was divided into four parts: The Aryans, The Anaryas, the aboriginals, and the nomadic tribes. It was the time of the early Vedic era. At the time of the early Vedic era, only two main classes, Aryas and Anaryas, were said to exist. At that time, the class division of rulers and the governed, the masters and the slaves, the haves, and the haves were not found.²³

After the Aryan's invasion, various institutions evolved out of the requirements of a new set-up, the old structure of society drifted towards new horizons of certainty. The Aryans made the Anaryas 'Dasa', divided the people into classes and the victory of Aryans over the Anaryas gave rise to the caste system. In the Aryan social order, the defeated aboriginals and Dravid's, 'Anaryas' were declared 'Sudra's'. The word 'Sudra' occurs once in the Rig – Veda and seven times in *Atharva-veda*. The Varna –Vyavastha was established in the Vedic period, and *Dasa –Pratha* was at its initial stage in the Rig Vedic times.²⁴ The symptoms of the caste system were there, but there were some provisions also to change one's Varna.

Though the Varna system was fully established, there was no established form of caste by birth, the symptoms of casteism were visible but its basis was an occupation. The Varna & Jati pursuits were not so much rigid, different pursuits were adopted by different members of one family. In that, the author of four *Suktas* of the 10th Mandal of Rig- Veda

²² Thapar, R. (1996). The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics. *Social Scientist*, 24(1/3), 3-29. doi:10.2307/3520116

²³ Jadav,, P. L. (2000). *Encyclopaedia of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes*. Vol. I, New Delhi: Artmal Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 2000.

²⁴ Leopold, J. (1974). British Applications of the Aryan Theory of Race to India, 1850-1870. *The English Historical Review*, 89(352), 578-603. Retrieved February 08, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/567427>

was Kavasa Elusa describes that he was the son of a Dasi, his father was physician, and by the virtue of his being a learned man can also become a priest.²⁵

By the Post Vedic period, in the due course of time, the roots of Varna Vyavastha become rigid & complex. After the end of the Vedic era, the Varna Vyavastha becomes a permanent social institution. And, in due course of time, it grew so rigid that the trench of discrimination was never bridged up. In the post-Vedic era, we find a very complicated form of four Varnas. The differences concerning Karma, occupation, and conduct had become clear and steady.²⁶ Not only this, several sub-castes had evolved out of the four varnas, having separate distinctive features regarding food & conduct. In the age of Ramayana & Mahabharata, the Varna had acquired the form of *jati vyavastha*. The numbers of castes were getting developed in place of four Varnas (on account of *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* marriages). Gradually, the *jati – vyavastha*, grew rigid more and more and the Brahmin's strengthened the roots of Varna Vyavastha, which got permanence in the social structure. The rigidity in the caste system based on birth became the permanent feature in the Buddhist and Sutra age. Brahmin's wrote the Sutra's against the progressive ideas of Jainism & Buddhism, to gain the supremacy and prestige which they lost in the Buddhist age.²⁷

In the Dharma Sutra age, due to rigid Varna Vyavastha, the society has been divided into various castes, regarded as higher castes and lower castes, Brahmins were having the highest place in the social order, whereas Sudra's were at the lowest rung of social order.²⁸ It is said the feeling of untouchability grew in this period. By the feeling of high caste and low caste rigidity completely divided the people and untouchability grew in the minds of people. Society has very rigid rules of occupation, food, conduct & marriage. The marriages outside the Varna and Caste were considered awful. The offsprings from these marriages were called 'Varnashankra' (means having no caste). The aboriginals who were got defeated in the beginning and those who lived outside the villages were called Asprasya, Antya, Bratyas, and Anteyavasin. At the time of Mahabharata, some of them were described as soldiers (Shanti Parv), but in the age of Sutra- Smritis, they were

²⁵ *Vedic Heritage*: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, also at <http://vedicheritage.gov.in/samhitas/rigveda/>.

²⁶ Thapar, op.cit.

²⁷ Sharma, A. (2005). Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on the Aryan Invasion and the Emergence of the Caste System in India. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 73(3), 843-870. Retrieved February 08, 2019, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4139922>

²⁸ Ibid.

declared as untouchables. After the Buddhist age, under the Muslim rule, the caste system got more and more patronize, the feeling of low & high and untouchables were got nurture in practice, and numerous castes were also get develop in that age.²⁹

1.03 Occupational Theory

It is one of the theories that attempt to provide a logical reason for caste origin. According to the theory, caste arose from the division of labor or the functional specialization in the society of different roles. The theory explains the social disabilities of certain classes of people as arising from distortion of a system that was different in its pristine purity. J.C. Nesfield, A division of occupations is the basis of the caste system, and the gradation of castes corresponds to the distinct levels of civilization at which these traditional occupations originated. According to him “*Function & function alone is responsible for the origin of caste system*”³⁰. Nesfield provides grading to the occupations; the people who are engaged with primitive occupations were the members of the lowest caste, Kshatriya, as they were protectors, are superior caste, and the Brahmin the priests & spiritual guru’s are at the top. The artisan castes were similarly divided according to whether they came before the age of metallurgy, the artisans class, the social positions were divided on the basis of occupation, Nesfield cited the example that the people engaged with the metals ranked higher than those who engaged with the primitive occupations like hunting, fishing, etc.³¹

The hierarchy in the system is based on the superiority & inferiority of the occupations, the social positions in the society depend upon the industry in which person is engaged and to which stage of the culture (the advance and primitive). The technical skills passed to the generation’s from generations, they are hereditary, with the time & space and due to practicing the same occupation, the ‘occupational guilds emerged which later known as caste.’³²

Nesfield's interpretation was criticized by several scholars, Sachidanand Sinha criticized that caste gradation is not strictly according to Nesfield’s scheme everywhere. He placed

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nesfield, J.C. (1885).*Caste System of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*. Allahabad: North-Western Provinces and Oudh Press.pp.88-90.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Based on a summary given by R.V.Russell (1975).*Tribe & Caste of the Central Provinces*,Vol.I. ;Delhi :Cosmo Publication.

hunting in the lower strata, but it was also done by Kshatriya as their favourite pastime. All the caste can't be placed in the occupational category, there were several castes like Dusadh, Musahar, etc, who cannot be placed in any particular occupational category. Sinha wrote, that most of the crafts are much later in origin than agriculture, but agriculture always held higher than all other occupations in India.

1.04 Brahmanical Theory

Abe Dubois, who wrote Brahmin's in order to have & maintain their higher social order, originated & developed the Caste system in India. The Brahmin's in order to retain their authority imposed several social restrictions on 'Non-Brahmins', particularly on Sudra's. To maintain their purity, they placed limits on dietary habits, social contacts, and endogamy. They gave themselves a higher place in the books and put the other one inferior to them.³³ Dr. Ghurye (1961) also supports the 'Brahminical theory', he describes that the "Caste is the Brahminic child of Indo- Aryans culture cradled in the land of Ganges and hence transferred to other parts of India by Brahminic prospectors". Ghurye in his work analysis that "The Brahmin literature classified as 'Dwijas' and '*ekjati*' (the Sudra). The restrictions on marriage, acceptance of food, etc, contemplated only four classes in the society, came to be the characteristic of every well-marked group".³⁴

1.05 Racial Theory

Sir Herbert Risley proposed the racial theory of caste. According to him, there is a distinction on the basis of the twice-born groups and the Sudras, the Indian structure rests on the basis of racial antagonism by the prominence granted to the factor of color (Varna). The racial theory has its idea of ceremonial purity. The Aryans had their superiority and inferiority concerns; they considered themselves superior to the original inhabitants. The 'Aryans' were 'Patrilineal' in nature, and the aboriginals who were conquered by them were matrilineal. The conquerors took the country's women as concubines or wives, but they did not give their daughters to them, the children from that marriage did not get acceptance in society, they were called 'Chandals.' They were regarded as the half-breed community allocated the lowest role in society, the feeling of racial superiority eventually responsible for the root of the caste system in India. The six

³³ Dubois, J. A., and Henry K. Beauchamp. (1978). *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. 3d ed. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 160-367

³⁴ Ghurye, G.S. (1961). *Caste, Class and Occupation*. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, pp (169-172).

caste formation processes were written by Risley as; the shift in traditional occupation, customary shifts, migration, preservation of old customs and practices, enrollment in the Hindu fold, and the position of religious enthusiasts.³⁵

1.06 Caste identified by Thinkers

S.V. Ketkar³⁶ defines the caste as a social community with two characteristics: membership is limited to those who are born of members and comprises all individuals so born; second, members are prohibited from marrying outside the group by inescapable social rule. The author chooses to give characteristics of the caste instead of a simple description since he feels that this will give the caste a clear identity. Besides, the author also stated that *"the word caste and sub-caste are not absolute but comparative in meaning. 'Caste' is the larger group, while 'sub-caste' is the smaller group"*³⁷.

Senart³⁸ provides the explanation of caste in context to the similarities of three systems namely, Indian, Greek & Romans. These three civilizations were the oldest ones, have many similarities in their customs, social practices, and social relations. Senart cites the example of the 'Gotra' custom of the marriage system of India and Rome, the transfer of female 'Gotra' after marriage to that of her husband. The presence of caste panchayats in India is similar to Rome and Greece. Senart concludes, after the assessment and comparisons, that the caste is the natural creation of ancient Aryan institutions.

J.H.Hutton³⁹ propounded the principle of 'Mana' was promoted by a mysterious impersonal force at the root of the caste system, which is attached to people, structures and locations. 'Mana' is a spiritual force that can do good or bad for individuals and can be conveyed by touch and social interaction. To provide security steps, the 'mana' has its accompanying taboos, the taboos are placed on behaviors such as commensality, intermarriage, touch, etc. to save the one tribe from the 'mana' of the other tribe. Food sharing and getting connections were restricted, as it is a belief that these activities can be tainted with others' dangerous soul matter. Hutton wants to prove that even before the Aryan invasion, a caste was present in India. Hutton cited the principle of Mana in other religions also it is 'Shakti' in Hinduism, 'Kudrat' in Islam, and 'Iddhi' in Buddhism.

³⁵ Risley, Herbert. (1969). *The people of India* (2nd Edition), Delhi: Orient Books, p.47.

³⁶ Ketkar S. V. (1909). *History of Caste in India*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, p.15.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Senart, E. (1930). *Caste in India: The Facts and the System*. London: Methew & co., p.35.

³⁹ Hutton, J.H. (1961). *The Caste in India*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nicholas Dirks⁴⁰ analyzes that the caste is taken as the expression of traditional India & the core value of the Indian culture. The Indian society before the British rule was fragmented into the communal grouping, which are the centers for social identity. Dirks wrote that in Colonial times ‘caste got framed as we know it’, it gets framed and becomes a single term for all the diversified forms of social identity. Caste becomes a colonial representation of Indian ‘civil society’ that in turn, justified colonial presence.

G.S. Ghurye⁴¹, provided the core features of the Hindu caste system instead of describing 'caste' as a term: segmental division of society, hierarchy, restriction of social interaction, civil and religious disabilities and privileges, limited choice of occupation, and marriage restriction.

Celestin Bougle⁴²: defined the caste in the three characteristics hierarchy, hereditary specialization, and repulsion, he explained it as the “hereditarily specialized and hierarchically arranged groups”. According to his analysis different caste has the characteristics of repulsion, they repel with each other rather than attraction. The repulsion through the manifestation of endogamy and commensality.

Krober defines it as “an endogamous and hereditary sub-division of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem in comparison with other such divisions”. Kroeber's notion is much related to the functional theory of stratification, the caste is much like the special forms of social classes present in every society, have distinct customs & laws which are rigid in nature. In the strict stratification of the Indian society ‘Sudras’ were kept at the lower strata with bountiful restrictions.⁴³

1.07 Marxism & theory of Caste

The Marxist theory correlates the relationship between the economic position and the social position. The economic interpretation is too mechanical in nature. R.S.Sharma extends his explanation of the division of classes with relating to Senart’s division, wrote “It seems, then, that in the beginning, the Upanayana was the affair of the whole tribe, but

⁴⁰ Dirks, N. (2001). *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*. PRINCETON; OXFORD: Princeton University Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctt7rq9d

⁴¹ Ghurye, G.S. (1961). *Caste, Class and Occupation*. Bombay : Popular Prakashan, pp. 2-19.

⁴² Bougle, C. (1958). The Essence and the Reality of the Caste System. *Contribution to Indian Sociology*, No.2, p. 9

⁴³ Krober (1950), ‘Caste’ in Edwin, Seligman and Johnson Alvina (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Macmillan Company, New York, pp245-257.

as the tribe disintegrated into classes, it became a prerogative, an honorific distinction to be attained by means of wealth, high social position, which gave the initiated access to, more or less exclusive, often secret societies. Following Senart's view that clan exogamy and tribe endogamy later developed into the feature of the caste system, it may well be argued that the tribal initiation was transformed into the Upanayana of the three higher Varnas, with the result that it helped to bring about the social degradation of the Shudras".⁴⁴ R.S.Sharma has not provided any evidence in the support of the theory, he contradicts his statements himself, at one place he wrote Shudras were a conquered tribe, but he also wrote Shudras were a conquered tribe, but he also wrote that the consequent on their becoming poor due to denied Upanayana, because they were poor. Ambedkar also wrote, the degradation of Shudra due to denied of Upanayana by the Brahman. Sachidanand Sinha, wrote that the theory of economic origin is true so all the low caste people being poor, and the caste & class system would get merge and the caste system would get diminished. But the system was divided into some other factors, the change in the economic position of the individual does not lead to change in his caste positioning.⁴⁵ The Marxist & functionalist views appear to be valid only within a certain range and in a certain context.

B.R.Ambedkar was the first scholar to establish that the untouchables were non-Hindus, through his writing in the book "*Who were shudras*". For that he used the Census Commissioner report of 1910, cited the ten points criteria used by the census commissioner to determine or categories a new set of people who were 'not hundred percent Hindus'. Census reporters from most parts of India found that most of the untouchables fall within the framework of the ten-point criterion from different parts of India. As to get qualify as Hindu, a person must follow a minimum of five tenets which are:

1. Accept the authority of the Vedas.
2. Accept the authority of Hindu Gods and Goddess.
3. Bow before the authority of Hindu temples.
4. Accept the supremacy of Brahmans
5. Revere Cows.

⁴⁴ Sharma,R.S .(1958). *Shudra in Ancient India*. New Delhi:Motilal Banarsidas Publisher Pvt.ltd, p.69.

⁴⁵ Sinha, Sachidanand. (1982).*Caste System: Myths Reality Challenge*. New Delhi : Intellectual Publishing House, pp42-44.

The Indian caste system is complicated in itself, as it is diverse in different regions. In South India, we don't find there any indigenous Kshatriya and Vaisya categories, whereas the Sudra category is extremely bigger there than else. In South India, Sudra's and Brahmin's both were inordinate in size and traditionally dominant castes in southern villages and the various caste which they dominate are from the Sudra category. Being belong to the Sudra category is different in different regions.

Caste, not only implies the hierarchy, segmentation but also the difference. The transformation can be seen from the subservience to negotiations in the lower status group. In contemporary times, the former importance of the Varna system is lost, the institution of the jati becomes strong and it continuously exercises its persuasive influence over the behavior of most of the people. Subrata K.Mitra analyzes that before the decline in the power of caste hierarchies had become fully apparent, an increasing preoccupation with jatis and jati-clusters has eroded 'the ideological basis of the Varna scheme'. K.L. Sharma, defines the caste system as a "socio-religious system concerning mainly with the caste endogamy and clan exogamy combining hypergamy and hierarchy has not only become visibly weak, but it has also turned into a politico-economic formulation".⁴⁶

Defining Scheduled Caste

The word 'Scheduled Castes' refers to the groups and communities that were the victims of the caste system. To serve the other castes, they were put outside the caste system or at the lowest rung. These groups suffered from socio-economic inequality, discrimination, and restrictions due to their association with unclean occupation and were treated as untouchables.⁴⁷

In British rule, 'scheduled castes' were known as "depressed castes" and British India passed the caste disabilities removal Act XXI in 1850, to remove the caste disabilities faced by these lower caste/depressed classes. The inspector general of education also mentioned the word '*panchama*' and "depressed classes" in 1914-15.⁴⁸ In the census of 1931, they were systematically listed and were formally incorporated in 1932 as depressed castes.

⁴⁶ Sharma, K.L. (2017 Reprint edition). *Social Inequality in India*, ed. By K.L.Sharma, Jaipur: Rawat Publication.p.15.

⁴⁷ Kamble,N.D. (1982).*The Scheduled Castes*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, p.30.

⁴⁸ "India In 1921-22 Report Prepared For Presentation To Parliament In Accordance With The Requirement Of The 23th Section Of The *Government Of India Act*"

In the same year Dr. B.R. Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference in London demanded to change of nomenclature for the untouchables, he proposed that the untouchables should be called protestant Hindus or non-conformist Hindus. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also raised the demand for a separate electorate for the untouchables and won his point. The 1935 Act, which came into force in 1937, introduced the term 'Scheduled Castes' means such castes, races, or tribes or parts of or group within castes which appears to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as "the depressed classes". After the independence, the term was retained in the constitution of India as defined in the 1935 Act.

The Simon commission was the first to coin the term 'Scheduled Caste' in 1935. The untouchable castes, identified in India's 1931 census, are referred to in the Government of India Act 1935 as the 'scheduled caste'. "Scheduled Castes" means those castes, races, and tribes that refer to the classes of persons officially identified as the "depressed classes" as may be specified by His Majesty in Council.⁴⁹ After the independence, the Indian Independence Act, 1947, defined the term "scheduled caste" as meaning the castes, races or tribes, or parts of groups that appear to respond to the classes of persons formally known as the "depressed classes," as the Governor-General may be ordered to specify the classes of persons formally known as the "depressed classes.

The term Scheduled Caste is the generic term given in the 1930s, including many castes and sub-castes that form the hierarchy between them and the Hindu castes. Varna-Ashrama Dharma presented occupational qualities much less rigorously in the Vedic period but was crystallized in due course of time. The Epics, Puranas, and Upanishads, in particular, laid the firm foundation for the elaborate propagation and growth of the Indian Social System in the post-Vedic period. The scheduled caste are the classes of individuals facing prejudice, deemed deprived, downtrodden or backward, and faced social segregation from the higher castes. In the context of India, the term 'scheduled caste' is described in Article 366 (24 clauses) as castes, races or tribes are considered to be scheduled castes for the purposes of this constitution under Article 341.

The term Dalits is the narrow connotation inclusive of the Scheduled Castes, the erstwhile untouchables, or the depressed classes residing in different parts of the country. The

⁴⁹ Upadhyay, H.C. (1991). *Reservation for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe*. New Delhi: Anmol Publication.

practice of untouchability and the caste system, highlight the question of Dalits, that who are included in the category of Dalits.

In Indian society, the term 'Dalit' implies the oppressed segment of the population placed at the lowest strata in the caste system. The term 'Dalit' is profoundly used to address the section of society that faced segregation from the mainstream on the basis of caste, and not on the class. Dalit was not a homogeneous group, have significant differences among them, but also there are several things common among them. The prominent significant verity is the social disgrace they experienced, which is the same for the Chuhra of Punjab, Namashudra of Bengal, or the Pulaya of Kerala. Dalits in a general sense are the categories were considered Pollutants and untouchables in the sense that, the presence of them will pollute the purity of other castes (upper castes).

Contextualizing Dalits in India: Socio-Economic Perspective

The Scheduled caste in India is a heterogeneous community, with regional variations, economic and cultural differentiation. Various socio-economic studies and governmental data reflect the considerable improvement in the health, social, economic & education sectors but still, it is not enough to bridge the gaps between Scheduled castes and the other categories. The constitutional provision of affirmative actions and 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments ensure the participation of scheduled caste in rural & urban local bodies by reserving the seats for them.

The various initiatives of the government do not get the desired results and procedural equality seems to be not contemplated with the substantial form of equality. The various socio-economic-educational indicators reflect the marginalization with structural inequalities in the system.

Table: 2.1**Scheduled Castes Population of India**

	Scheduled Caste population in percentage (%)				
Year	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total	14.8	15.7	16.5	16.2	16.6
Rural	16.4	17.3	18.0	17.9	18.5
Urban	8.8	10.6	12.0	11.8	12.6

Source: Census Report 1971,1981,1991,2001,2011.

In the 1971 census, the Scheduled caste population was recorded 79,092,841 that time constituted 14.8 % of the total population of India which is now increased to 201,378,372 constitute 16.6 % of the population of India in the 2011 census. The census data shows an increasing trend in scheduled caste population from 1971 to 2011, except the census year 2001. A slight declining trend has observed in between the census year 1991 – 2001 in rural and urban areas. The share of rural scheduled caste population was high in comparison to urban scheduled caste, in 1971 rural scheduled caste population was 88% which is 76.4% in 2011 census. Consequently, the rise in urban scheduled caste population can be seen from 8.8% (12% of SC population in 1971) in 1971 to 12.6% (23.6% of SC population in 2011) in the census year 2011, with the higher growth rate. The Scheduled caste decadal growth rate is less about 2% points from the overall growth rate

Table: 2.2**Demography of Scheduled Caste population with their literacy rate**

Scheduled Castes population - census 2011										
S.N	State/ UT	2011	2011 (Rural)	State/UT-wise % distribution of Scheduled Castes by sex in India -2011(URBAN)		State/UT-wise % distribution of Scheduled Castes by sex in India 2011(RURAL)		Literacy rate (%) among the Scheduled Caste population		
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
2	Andhra Pradesh	16.41	19.2	49.33	50.67	49.95	50.05	62.3	70.2	54.4
3	Arunachal Pradesh	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
4	Assam	7.15	6.8	50.95	49.05	51.41	48.59	77.0	83.2	70.4
5	Bihar	15.91	16.6	52.48	47.52	51.90	48.10	48.6	58.0	38.5
6	Chandigarh	18.86	17.2	53.36	46.64	55.81	44.19	76.5	83.6	68.3
7	Chhattisgarh	12.82	12.8	50.26	49.74	50.10	49.90	70.8	81.7	59.9
8	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1.80	0.7	52.52	47.48	59.49	40.51	89.4	93.1	85.0
9	Daman and Diu	2.52	3.6	51.63	48.37	51.13	48.87	92.6	96.8	88.1
10	Delhi	16.75	19.6	52.93	47.07	53.32	46.68	78.9	86.8	70.0
11	Goa	1.74	1.7	49.99	50.01	48.98	51.02	83.7	89.9	77.7
12	Gujarat	6.74	6.6	52.11	47.89	51.55	48.45	79.2	87.9	69.9
13	Haryana	20.17	22.5	52.84	47.16	53.04	46.96	66.9	75.9	56.6
14	Himachal Pradesh	25.19	26.0	52.34	47.66	50.55	49.45	78.9	86.2	71.5
15	Jammu and Kashmir	7.38	8.2	53.60	46.40	52.33	47.67	70.2	78.8	60.7
16	Jharkhand	12.08	12.6	51.75	48.25	51.14	48.86	55.9	66.9	44.2
17	Karnataka	17.15	20.0	50.11	49.89	50.32	49.68	65.3	74.0	56.6
18	Kerala	9.10	10.4	48.64	51.36	48.61	51.39	88.7	92.6	85.1
19	Lakshadweep	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
20	Madhya Pradesh	15.62	15.7	51.95	48.05	52.15	47.85	66.2	76.7	54.7
21	Maharashtra	11.81	12.2	50.90	49.10	51.04	48.96	79.7	87.2	71.9
22	Manipur	3.78	2.7	49.69	50.31	50.73	49.27	76.2	83.5	68.9
23	Meghalaya	0.58	0.5	53.11	46.89	52.59	47.41	68.6	74.9	61.4
24	Mizoram	0.11	0.1	65.00	35.00	70.13	29.87	92.4	93.1	91.0
25	Nagaland	--	--	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
26	Orissa	17.13	17.8	50.53	49.47	50.30	49.70	69.0	79.2	58.8
27	Puducherry	15.73	27.9	48.57	51.43	48.71	51.29	77.9	85.2	71.0
28	Punjab	31.94	37.5	52.62	47.38	52.28	47.72	64.8	70.7	58.4
29	Rajasthan	17.83	18.5	52.04	47.96	51.99	48.01	59.7	73.8	44.6
30	Sikkim	4.63	4.4	49.85	50.15	51.62	48.38	77.5	82.8	72.0

31	Tamil Nadu	20.01	25.5	49.74	50.26	49.98	50.02	73.3	80.9	65.6
32	Tripura	17.83	16.1	50.65	49.35	51.26	48.74	89.4	92.8	86.0
33	Uttar Pradesh	20.70	23.0	53.12	46.88	52.30	47.70	60.9	71.8	48.9
34	Uttarakhand	18.76	21.3	52.41	47.59	50.85	49.15	74.4	84.3	64.1
35	West Bengal	23.51	27.5	51.26	48.74	51.27	48.73	69.4	77.2	61.2
	India	16.63	18.5	51.37	48.63	51.43	48.57	66.1	75.2	56.5

Source: Census 2011 and Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics, (2018) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, New Delhi

Table 2.2 shows the distribution of rural and urban scheduled caste populations with the literacy rates in the states in 2011. As per the census data, the highest concentration of scheduled caste population resides in Punjab (31.94%), Himachal Pradesh (25.19%), West Bengal (23.51%), Uttar Pradesh (20.70%), and Haryana (20.17). They are top five states respectively in the percentage of scheduled caste population with the range of 32-20% population composed more than the half of scheduled caste population of the country. Punjab has the highest percentage of scheduled caste population, one-third of the population of the state belongs to the scheduled caste communities. While the states namely Mizoram(0.11%), Meghalaya (0.58%), Goa (1.74%), Dadra & Nagar Haveli(1.80%) & Daman & Diu (2.52%) are the bottom five states and UT in the percentage of scheduled castes population. The variation is observed in the distribution of rural scheduled caste populations. The highest percentage of rural scheduled caste population was again seen in Punjab (37.5%), followed by Puducherry (27.9%), West Bengal (27.5%), Himachal Pradesh (26%), and Tamil Nadu (25.5%). Whereas the lowest percentage of rural Scheduled castes observed in the Mizoram (0.1%) preceded by Meghalaya(0.5%), Dadra & Nagar Haveli(0.7%), Goa (1.7%), and Manipur (2.4%). The concentration of urban scheduled caste population ranges between 16.7% to 22.7%. Punjab remains at the top with 22.7% of the urban scheduled caste population followed by Tripura(22.6%), Chandigarh(18.9%), Himachal Pradesh(17.8%), and NCT of Delhi (16.7%) as per the census 2011. In the gender-wise population distribution of scheduled caste in both Urban and Rural areas, the percentage of the male population is higher in the majority of the states in comparison to the female population. The literacy rate is one of the important indicators of human development. With the analysis of census report 2011, Daman & Diu (92.6%), Mizoram (92.4%), Tripura (89.4%), Dadra & Nagar Haveli(89.4%), and Kerala (88.7%) are the top five states and UT in the literacy rate of scheduled caste population. Whereas, Bihar(48.6%), Jharkhand (55.9%), Rajasthan (59.7%), Uttar Pradesh(60.9%), and Andhra Pradesh(62.3%) records the low level of

literacy rates in the scheduled caste population. Bihar has the lowest literacy rate in both urban-rural areas, with the 60.6% and 47.7% respectively. The gender differences in literacy rates of the scheduled caste can be observed in the table. The male literacy rate is more than the female literacy rate, even some states like Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh has the wide gap among the literacy rate of both the gender. It presents the patriarchal structure of Indian society and shows that gender difference is present in all the social classes.

Table:2.3

Literacy Rates of Scheduled Castes (Gender wise)

Year	Scheduled Castes		
	Male	Female	Persons
1961	15.06	2.52	8.89
1971	20.04	5.06	12.77
1981	27.91	8.45	18.48
1991	45.95	19.45	33.25
2001	63.66	37.84	51.16
2011	72.6	52.6	62.8

Source: Census2011.

Table 2.3 shows the literacy level among the Scheduled Castes on a gender basis, the wide gap in male and female literacy rate is observed and census data reflects it exists in every census year. In the year 1961 literacy rate for Scheduled Castes women was a mere 2.52%% which increased to 52.6%% in the year 2011. These figures can be interpreted in two senses: firstly there is a considerable improvement in the literacy rate in the last fifty years, however, this improvement is not up to the desired level. Secondly, the gender gap in male and female literacy rates among the scheduled caste communities reflects the patriarchal construct of the society.

Table:2.4**Name of the districts in State / UT which have more than 25% Scheduled Caste population-Census 2011.**

Sl. No.	State/UT	Districts consist> 25% Scheduled Castes Population			Total No.
		> 40%	>30-40%	>25-30%	
1.	Punjab	Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar, Ferozpur, Muktsar,	Jalandhar, Faridkot, Moga, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Tarn Taran, Mansa, Bathinda, Barnala, FatehgarhSahib, Amritsar	Sangrur, Rupnagar, Ludhiana, Gurdaspur	18
2.	Uttar Pradesh		Kaushambi, Sitapur, Hardoi, Unnao, Rae Bareli	Auraiya, Jhansi, Jalaun, Chitrakoot, Bara Banki, Mirzapur, Kheri, Kanpur Dehat, Azamgarh, Mahoba	15
3.	West Bengal	Koch Bihar	Jalpaiguri, Bankura, South Twenty Four Parganas	Nadia, Birbhum, Dakshin Dinajpur, Barddhaman, Uttar Dinajpur	9
4.	Tamil Nadu		Thiruvarur, The Nilgiris, Nagapattinam, Perambalur	Viluppuram, Cuddalore	6
5.	Himachal Pradesh	-	Sirmaur	Mandi, Solan, Kullu, Shimla, Bilaspur	6
6.	Haryana	-	Fatehabad	Sirsa, Ambala, Yamunanagar	4
7.	Karnataka		Kolar	Chamarajanagar, Gulbarga	3
8.	Madhya Pradesh			Ujjain, Datia, Tikamgarh	3
9.	Jharkhand		Chatra	Palamu	2
10.	Bihar	-	Gaya	Nawada	2
11.	Rajasthan		Ganganagar	Hanumangarh	2
12.	Jammu & Kashmir	-	-	Samba, Udhampur	2
13.	Odisha			Subarnapur	1
14.	Uttarakhand			Bageshwar	1
		4	29	41	74

*Source: Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics, (2018) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, New Delhi*

Table 2.4 shows the State & UT-wise districts' names which have at least more than twenty-five percent of the Scheduled caste population in the census 2011. Geographically India is the seventh-largest country in the world and it comprises 739 districts in the different states and union territories. Out of these 640 districts, 74 districts witnessed a scheduled caste population of more than 25%. The 18 districts of Punjab have a scheduled caste population of more than 25% from which three districts of it have more than 40% of the Dalit population, 11 districts are in the range of 40%-30% scheduled caste percentage, and four between the range of 30% -25%. In the state of West Bengal only the district Koch Bihar have the scheduled caste population greater than 40%. Uttar Pradesh's 15 districts records more than 25% of the SC population, 5 districts in the range of in between 30 to 40%, and 10 districts of Uttar Pradesh have the scheduled caste population in the range of greater than 25% to 30%. In the third-place, West Bengal's total of 9 districts consist the scheduled caste population of more than 25%, 3 districts of the West Bengal consist the scheduled caste population in the range of more than 30% to 40%, and 5 districts of it have the population of SC' category more than 25% to 30%.

Table 2.5

School Drop-Out percentage among the Scheduled Caste population (Rural & Urban, combined)

Stage/Class	Drop-out Rates		
	Boys	Girls	Total
1990-91	46.3	54.0	49.4
1995-96	43.7	48.5	45.7
2001-02	43.7	47.1	45.2
2002-03	41.1	41.9	41.5
2003-04	36.8	36.2	36.6
2004-05	37.2	36.1	34.2
2005-06	32.1	33.8	32.9
2007-08	34.3	24.5	30.0
2010-11	29.8	23.1	26.7
2011-12	22.3	24.7	23.5

Elementary (I – VIII)			
1990-91	64.3	73.2	67.8
1995-96	64.7	70.5	67.0
2001-02	58.6	63.6	60.7
2002-03	58.2	62.2	59.9
2003-04	57.3	62.2	59.4
2004-05	55.2	60.00	57.3
2005-06	53.7	57.1	55.2
2007-08	53.5	51.1	52.4
2010-11	46.7	39.0	43.3
2011-12	43.3	36.4	40.2
Secondary (I – X)			
1990-91	74.3	83.4	77.7
1995-96	--	--	--
2001-02	71.1	74.9	72.7
2002-03	69.7	74.9	71.9
2003-04	71.4	75.5	73.1
2004-05	69.1	74.2	71.3
2005-06	68.2	73.8	70.6
2007-08	68.0	68.9	68.4
2010-11	57.4	54.1	56.0
2011-12	55.0	55.6	55.3

Source: Rural Development Statistics.http://nirdpr.org.in/nird_docs/RDS/RDS2014-15/data/sec-10.pdf

The Government initiatives and social awareness towards education, enrolment has been increased in the several years among all the communities. But on the other side, the dropout rates are higher among the scheduled caste population. As per the report of MHRD, Statistics of School Education 2011-12, the above data sheet reflects the persistence of the dropouts while moving to the senior level of the studies. The data indicated that dropout from primary to upper primary level has been reduced but has increased from upper primary to secondary level.

Table: 2.6**Work Profile of Scheduled Caste category in India**

India/State/ Territory	Union	% of Households with salaried jobs in			highest earning % of Households with monthly Income of household member w.r.t Total HH		
		Govt	Public Sector	Private Sector	<5000	5000 - 10000	>10000
Jammu & Kashmir		1.81%	0.08%	0.30%	6.87%	1.28%	1.62%
Himachal Pradesh		4.34%	0.29%	1.62%	15.83%	4.23%	3.91%
Punjab		2.24%	0.30%	1.29%	29.00%	5.16%	2.56%
Haryana		1.49%	0.13%	0.76%	18.29%	3.02%	1.56%
Bihar		0.40%	0.08%	0.10%	14.15%	2.32%	0.47%
West Bengal		0.98%	0.43%	0.44%	24.89%	2.36%	1.20%
Jharkhand		0.66%	0.21%	0.19%	10.63%	1.43%	0.89%
Odisha		0.54%	0.06%	0.20%	16.63%	0.92%	0.48%
Rajasthan		0.73%	0.10%	0.36%	15.33%	2.21%	0.94%
Gujarat		0.29%	0.06%	0.28%	4.80%	1.05%	0.41%
Maharashtra		0.69%	0.13%	0.42%	9.96%	1.50%	0.88%
Goa		0.31%	0.04%	0.57%	0.78%	0.44%	0.36%
Andhra Pradesh		0.37%	0.05%	0.33%	15.60%	2.32%	0.63%
Karnataka		0.60%	0.16%	0.60%	14.02%	3.10%	0.94%
Kerala		0.57%	0.10%	0.39%	9.02%	0.75%	0.55%
Tamilnadu		1.11%	0.16%	1.16%	21.71%	2.89%	0.94%
Telangana		0.48%	0.28%	0.35%	14.87%	2.43%	0.71%
Uttarakhand		1.43%	0.30%	1.26%	14.70%	2.66%	1.43%
Uttar Pradesh		0.70%	0.27%	0.46%	19.61%	3.15%	1.02%
Chhattisgarh		0.60%	0.04%	0.07%	12.79%	0.67%	0.35%
Madhya Pradesh		0.50%	0.08%	0.11%	13.70%	1.09%	0.42%
Sikkim		0.85%	0.07%	0.49%	4.38%	0.64%	0.48%

Arunachal Pradesh	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%
Tripura	1.84%	0.08%	0.07%	14.68%	2.16%	1.25%
Nagaland	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.02%	0.01%	0.01%
Mizoram	0.17%	0.01%	0.03%	0.35%	0.04%	0.04%
Manipur	0.37%	0.01%	0.05%	1.71%	0.41%	0.37%
Meghalaya	0.17%	0.01%	0.08%	0.65%	0.22%	0.17%
Assam	0.57%	0.07%	0.22%	6.73%	1.31%	0.66%
Chandigarh	2.45%	0.62%	6.73%	11.13%	4.46%	3.03%
Nct Of Delhi	1.45%	1.14%	6.27%	4.28%	5.95%	2.95%
Daman And Diu	0.34%	0.04%	1.47%	1.32%	0.85%	0.50%
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.21%	0.09%	0.78%	0.84%	0.49%	0.28%
Lakshadweep	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Puducherry	2.06%	0.89%	3.87%	19.05%	2.84%	1.94%
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
All India	0.73%	0.17%	0.45%	15.41%	2.17%	0.86%

Source: <https://secc.gov.in/categorywiseIncomeSlabReport?reportType=SC%20Category#>

The share of the scheduled caste population in the organized sector remains very low and this directly affects their economic conditions. The constitution of India aims for equality and welfare of the citizens, this aspiration led to the establishment of many affirmative steps for the welfare of the scheduled castes. The provision of reservations in various governmental and public sectors is one such provision. The constitution of India makes provision for the reservation of 15% of the seat for the persons of the scheduled caste community in governmental job opening as well as in educational institutions. The very purpose of the reservation policy was to provide access and level field to the marginalized section of the population. However, the figures from the states as well as of the central government reflect that this is one of the least accomplished tasks. Only in Himachal Pradesh, the share of scheduled caste community in the govt. the sector is 4.34 %. In very few states, in counting only 9states/UT the participation of scheduled castes in the government job range from 2.45% to 1.11%, in the majority of the states, the total population their share in government jobs is less than 1%. Punjab with the 31.94%

scheduled caste population only shares 2.24% of government sector employment of the Scheduled caste population.

At the all India level, as per the figures of the Census 2011, scheduled caste is 16.63% of the total population but their share in the government job is limited to 0.73%. The above table indicates the share of scheduled caste population in the public and private sector in different states of the country. Their participation in the public sector at all Indian level is limited to 0.17% and in the private sector is a mere 0.45%. This indicates that despite the constitutional guarantee this particular section of the citizenry is not able to assert their citizenry rights and hence comparatively remains a marginalized community. If we analyze the percentage share of the scheduled caste in different income groups we find that in the group of poorest, where the monthly income of the household is less than Rs 5000/- their share is 15.41% of the total at all India level. The majority of the scheduled castes either in the states having their majority population or they are less than the majority, they are among the lowest income group and are under the 'vicious cycle of poverty.

Table:2.7

Representation percentage of Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes in Central Government Services in India (as of 1/1/2015)

Group	SCs		STs		OBCs		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
A	10122	13.31	4484	5.89	8952	11.77	76066
B	36502	16.27	15132	6.75	27801	12.39	224337
C (Excluding Safai Karmcharis)	494678	17.35	245190	8.6	541047	18.97	2851905
C (Safai Karmcharis)	20442	42.92	2881	6.05	5857	12.3	47631
Total	561744	17.55	267687	8.37	583657	18.24	3199939

Source: Source: Rural Development Statistics. http://nirdpr.org.in/nird_docs/RDS/RDS2014-15/data/sec-10.pdf

The above table reflects the representation of the Scheduled caste category people in the group A,B,C, and D services of the Central Government of India. Total 17.55% of Scheduled caste category people are employed in the Central Government services, but the majority of scheduled caste population 42.92% are work as the Safai Karamchari's only 13.31% are employed in the Group A services. The lack of education and economic guarantee by traditional occupation is still prevalent in the scheduled caste groups.

Table:2.8
Income source of SC Households

States/ UTs Name	% of SC Househ old	No. of Households with an income source						
		1 = Cultivati on	2=Man ual Casual Labour	3=Part- time or Full-Time Domestic Service	4=Fora ging Rag Pickin g	5=Non- agricultu ral Own Account Enterpris e	6=Beggin g/Charity / Alms collection	7= Others
Jammu & Kashmir	9.76%	2.31%	4.46%	0.30%	0.00%	0.06%	0.02%	2.62%
Himachal Pradesh	23.97%	9.01%	6.54%	1.59%	0.03%	0.54%	0.06%	6.18%
Punjab	36.75%	1.62%	28.88%	1.12%	0.05%	0.23%	0.06%	4.77%
Haryana	22.89%	1.28%	17.45%	0.92%	0.04%	0.22%	0.07%	2.88%
Bihar	16.94%	1.11%	14.73%	0.23%	0.03%	0.05%	0.03%	0.77%
West Bengal	28.45%	4.67%	18.87%	0.48%	0.06%	0.66%	0.29%	3.43%
Jharkhand	12.95%	2.02%	8.84%	0.48%	0.07%	0.09%	0.04%	1.41%
Odisha	18.03%	2.41%	13.04%	0.46%	0.05%	0.23%	0.13%	1.70%
Rajasthan	18.50%	5.00%	11.31%	0.43%	0.07%	0.14%	0.15%	1.38%
Gujarat	6.26%	1.05%	4.29%	0.07%	0.03%	0.12%	0.04%	0.65%
Maharashtra	12.33%	2.07%	8.07%	0.28%	0.03%	0.14%	0.04%	1.69%
Goa	1.58%	0.02%	0.34%	0.16%	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%	1.03%
Andhra Pradesh	18.57%	2.79%	13.16%	0.30%	0.02%	0.09%	0.03%	2.15%
Karnataka	18.06%	5.86%	7.84%	0.62%	0.34%	0.17%	0.03%	3.20%
Kerala	10.32%	0.37%	7.66%	0.13%	0.01%	0.06%	0.02%	2.08%
Tamilnadu	25.55%	2.35%	20.41%	0.37%	0.03%	0.47%	0.01%	1.91%
Telangana	18.02%	3.57%	11.18%	0.36%	0.03%	0.33%	0.04%	2.51%
Uttarakhand	18.79%	6.19%	8.05%	0.83%	0.02%	0.26%	0.03%	3.41%
Uttar Pradesh	23.80%	7.01%	14.44%	0.43%	0.03%	0.12%	0.05%	1.71%
Chhattisgarh	13.84%	3.32%	9.36%	0.30%	0.02%	0.03%	0.12%	0.68%
Madhya Pradesh	15.20%	2.84%	11.23%	0.24%	0.04%	0.04%	0.09%	0.73%
Sikkim	5.50%	1.80%	1.76%	0.22%	0.00%	0.14%	0.00%	1.57%
Arunachal Pradesh	0.02%	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Tripura	18.11%	2.69%	10.00%	1.02%	0.03%	0.43%	0.07%	3.85%

Nagaland	0.04%	0.01%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.02%
Mizoram	0.43%	0.28%	0.06%	0.01%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.08%
Manipur	2.49%	0.91%	0.61%	0.23%	0.00%	0.02%	0.00%	0.72%
Meghalaya	1.04%	0.06%	0.50%	0.06%	0.00%	0.04%	0.03%	0.34%
Assam	8.70%	2.03%	3.91%	0.47%	0.02%	0.17%	0.05%	2.04%
Chandigarh	18.62%	0.13%	5.35%	1.07%	0.11%	0.42%	0.01%	11.52%
Nct Of Delhi	13.17%	0.45%	2.70%	1.99%	0.08%	0.14%	0.06%	7.76%
Daman And Diu	2.67%	0.03%	0.30%	0.08%	0.00%	0.00%	0.01%	2.25%
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1.61%	0.25%	0.34%	0.46%	0.04%	0.03%	0.03%	0.46%
Lakshadweep	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Puducherry	23.83%	5.52%	10.82%	1.19%	0.05%	0.16%	0.08%	6.01%
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
All India	18.45%	3.39%	12.41%	0.40%	0.05%	0.19%	0.07%	1.92%

Source: <https://secc.gov.in/categorywiseIncomeSourceReport?reportType=SC%20Category>

The data from the earlier tables found that most of the scheduled caste people are low at literacy level, having high school dropout rates, and are among the lowest income group of India. The household data of the socio-economic caste census 2011 shows the income source of the scheduled caste household. As per the census data, the share of the scheduled caste in the total household count is 18.45% and out of this 3.39% of households have cultivation as the main source of income, while 12.41% get their earnings while working as a manual laborer on the fields. 0.40 % of them earn their livelihood by working as part or full-time domestic laborers, while 0.05% work as rag pickers. Only 0.19% of them are having their venture or enterprise and 0.07% of them are dependent on the charity of others. Only 1.92% of them earn their livelihood while working in organized sector units.

Table no: 2.9**Poverty Ratios Among Scheduled Castes 1993-94, 2004-05 & 2011-12 (Rural)**

S. No.	State	1993-94		2004-05			2011-12	
		SC	All	SC	Others	Total	SC	Total
1.	Andhra Pradesh	26.02	15.92	15.4	4.1	32.3	13.1	11.0
2.	Assam	45.38	45.01	27.7	25.4	36.4	28.2	33.9
3.	Bihar	70.66	58.21	64.0	26.6	55.7	51.7	34.4
4.	Gujarat	32.26	22.18	21.8	4.8	39.1	22.3	21.5
5.	Haryana	46.56	28.02	26.8	4.2	24.8	23.6	11.6
6.	Himachal Pradesh	36.89	30.34	19.6	6.4	25.0	16.5	8.5
7.	Jammu & Kashmir	--	30.34	5.2	3.3	14.1	18.8	11.5
8.	Karnataka	46.36	29.88	31.8	13.8	37.5	37.1	24.5
9.	Kerala	36.43	25.76	21.6	6.6	20.2	17.8	9.2
10.	Maharashtra	51.64	37.93	44.8	18.9	47.9	23.8	24.2
11.	Madhya Pradesh	45.83	40.64	42.8	13.4	53.6	41.3	35.7
12.	Odisha	48.95	49.72	50.2	23.4	60.8	41.4	35.7
13.	Punjab	22.08	11.95	14.6	2.2	22.1	14.7	7.7
14.	Rajasthan	38.38	26.46	28.7	8.2	35.8	18.6	16.1
15.	Tamil Nadu	44.05	32.48	31.2	19.1	37.5	23.3	15.8
16.	Uttar Pradesh	58.99	42.28	44.8	19.7	42.7	41.1	30.4
17.	West Bengal	45.29	40.80	29.5	27.5	38.2	22.6	22.5
18.	Chhattisgarh	--	--	32.7	29.2	55.1	48.2	44.6
19.	Jharkhand	--	--	57.9	37.1	51.6	40.4	40.8
20.	Uttarakhand	--	--	54.2	33.5	35.1	15.9	11.7
	All – India	48.11	37.27	36.8	16.1	42.0	31.5	25.4

Source: Rural Development Statistics. http://nirdpr.org.in/nird_docs/RDS/RDS2014-15/data/sec-10.pdf

Table no. 2.9 shows the poverty ratio among the scheduled caste population in different years and their state-wise variation in the rural areas. In the financial year 1993-94, the all-India poverty ratio was 37.27 % whereas the poverty ratio in Scheduled caste for that financial year was 48.11%. In the year 2011-12 the positive changes in the poverty ratio reflects in comparison from the year 1993-1994, at both all India level and in scheduled caste community. But the average scheduled caste poverty ratio is still very high from the national average. One positive thing can be noticed here, Punjab with the highest scheduled caste population witnesses the lowest poverty ratio among the states and recorded the second-lowest among the scheduled caste.

Table:2.10

Poverty Among Scheduled Castes (1983-84, 1993-94 , 1999-2000 , 2004-05 & 2009-10) in Rural & Urban India⁵⁰

Year	SC		Others		Total	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1983-84	58.1	56.5	37.0	39.1	45.6	42.2
1993-94	48.1	49.9	31.3	30.6	37.1	33.7
1999-2000	36.2	38.6	21.6	20.6	27.1	23.7
2004-05	52.7	40.0	26.2	15.8	41.8	25.7
2009-10	43.5	33.0	21.1	11.9	33.8	20.9
2011-12	31.5	21.7	22.7	15.4	25.4	13.7

Sources: GOI, Planning Commission, Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-2012,

During the last two decades, poverty among the Scheduled castes has record declined approximately at the rate of 1% per annum. The above table shows the poverty level in the different financial years. Rural areas of the country are more poverty-stricken in comparison to Urban settings. It may give an assumption that the opportunity for getting work may be higher in the urban settings and cities in comparison to the rural areas.

⁵⁰ Inclusive Growth and NSSO primary data 2009-10. Working paper on Social, Religious and Economic Groups India and its largest States, by Arvind Panagariya, Columbia University. Volume I,

Table:2.11**Coverage of SC/ST Under MGNREGS – All India**

S. No.	Year	Total Number of Households Provided Employment (in Lakhs)	Persondays of employment (In Lakh)	
			SCs	Total
1	2006-07	210.16	2295.2	9050.56
2	2007-08	339.09	3942.34 (27.4)	14367.95
3	2008-09	451.15	6336.18 (29.3)	21632.86
4	2009-10	525.30	8644.83 (30.5)	28359.60
5	2010-11	549.54	7875.65 (30.6)	25715.25
6	2011-12	498.00	3616.70 (22.5)	16055.15
7	2012-13	497.00	4579.46 (21.72)	21080.19
8	2013-14	476.00	4941.00 (22.6)	21867.00
9	2014-15	414.00	3721.00 (22.4)	16628.00

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentages to the total. Source: www.nrega.nic.in, as on October 2015.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), an employment generating program introduced by the government. It was the first time the right to work was legally recognized and guaranteed 150 days of employment in the financial years. The majority of the Indian population resides in rural areas & depends on the agriculture sector for employment. They face the issues of seasonal employment and during the slack season, a large number of the rural population migrates in the search of work. The acts provide a social safety net to the poor people by providing the guaranteed 150 days of employment and aim to strengthen the rural economy with inclusive growth. Besides employment, it also promotes economic empowerment and social inclusion among the marginalized groups of the society. As per the Ministry of Rural Development report 2011-12, 22.56% of scheduled caste people get employment through the act. In the rural settings, the hierarchical caste structure dominates the social order, and marginalized communities still facing the denial of rights as well as other employment opportunities. MNREGA plays a significant role in improving the condition of the marginalized caste & groups as well as ensure their involvement in local self-government. But the trend of

employment share of Scheduled caste shows the declining trend from the financial year 2011-12.

Table: 2.12

Various groups in Scheduled Caste categories and their living conditions

S.N.	State & UT	Scheduled Caste percentage 2011	State/Ut-Wise Number Of Castes Specified As Scheduled Castes (Scs) (Under Article 341 Of The Constitution) (As On 26.10.2017)	State/Ut-Wise Percentage Share Of Scheduled Castes (Scs) To Total Slum Population In India % Of Scs
1	Andhra Pradesh	16.41	61	14.0
2	Assam	7.15	16	21.5
3	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0.0
4	Bihar	15.91	23	21.0
5	Chhattisgarh	12.82	44	17.8
6	Goa	1.74	05	2.5
7	Gujarat	6.74	36	11.1
8	Haryana	20.17	37	29.9
9	Himachal Pradesh	25.19	57	26.2
10	Jammu and Kashmir	7.38	13	1.7
11	Jharkhand	12.08	22	15.6
12	Karnataka	17.15	101	28.0
13	Kerala	9.10	69	10.9
14	Madhya Pradesh	9.10	48	22.0
15	Maharashtra	11.81	59	15.7
16	Manipur	3.41	07	-
17	Meghalaya	0.58	16	2.8
18	Mizoram	0.11	16	0.1
19	Nagaland	0.00	0	0.0
20	Orissa	17.13	95	20.6
21	Punjab	31.94	39	39.8
22	Rajasthan	17.83	59	28.2
23	Sikkim	4.63	04	5.3
24	Tamil Nadu	20.01	76	32.0
25	Telengana	-	59	
26	Tripura	17.83	34	28.8
27	Uttar Pradesh	20.70	66	22.0
28	Uttarakhand	18.76	65	18.9
29	West Bengal	23.51	60	16.5
30	Andman& Nicobar Islands	0.00	0	0.0

31	Chandigarh	18.86	36	30.7
32	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1.80	04	-
33	Daman & Diu	2.52	05	-
34	NCT of Delhi	16.75	36	27.0
35	Lakshdweep	0.00	0	-
36	Pondicherry	15.73	16	23.9
	India	16.63	1284	20.4

Source: Handbook on Social Welfare Statistics, (2018) Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, New Delhi

Table 2.12 depicts the percentage of scheduled caste population and the number of cases specified in the scheduled caste population as per article 341, the constitution of India. As per the census 2011, scheduled caste consists of 16.63% of the total population which consists of 1284 castes in the scheduled caste category. Among these 20.4% of the Scheduled caste categories living in the slum areas. Karnataka with 17.15% of the scheduled caste population has 101 castes in the scheduled caste category and 28% of its SC castes living in the slum areas. Punjab has the highest percentage of scheduled caste category living in the slum areas.

CHAPTER-3
DALIT ASSERTION: FORMS
AND MANIFESTATION

CHAPTER-3

DALIT ASSERTION: FORMS AND MANIFESTATION

The term 'Dalit Assertion' comprises refers to the special behaviour (assertion) by a particular group of individuals(Dalits). The very subjectivity involved due to relative deprivations and marginalization makes it difficult to define the word 'Dalit. However, in general parlance, this word connotes the bunching of marginalized caste groups, who are placed into a scheduled list, first established by the Government of India Act 1935 and later adopted by the Indian constitution. This bunching or clubbing of different castes does not refer to a 'class behaviour' as it involves heterogeneity and cultural, economic, political, and social differentiation. As Leach said, "if a whole caste group plays the role of a political factor by competing with other such factions for some common economic and political goals, it thereby acts in defiance of caste tradition"¹. Also, the community character like endogamy, hereditary membership, occupation, ritual status, and a specific style of life, has emerged in the writings of Beteille² maintained the distinctiveness of caste despite a greater similarity in marginality and exclusion. The demand for equality by this marginalized section of the Indian society and subsequent change in the caste and power relation has been branded by the term 'Assertion'. This word has been defined as a confident and forceful statement of the fact and belief (oxford dictionary), as a statement which you strongly believe is true (Cambridge University dictionary),and insistent and positive affirmation maintaining or defending (as a right or attribute) (Merriam Webster).

The term 'Assertion', derived from the word 'assert' means to behave in a manner that expresses confidence, importance, power, and respect from others. The term assertion, contains the consciousness or the awakening of self and community, the demand of equality in political, social, and economic spheres and led to mobilization and mobility of them and the formation of identity. When we use the term 'Dalit Assertion' is not merely a word it is the conscious effort among the oppressed classes to challenge the unequal hierarchy, awareness for their rights, self-love, self-affirmation, and an attempt towards a dignified life. Dalit Assertion is not only the mobilization but also the consequence of

¹ Leach, E.R.(1960). *Aspect of caste in South India, Ceylon and North-Western Pakistan*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

² Beteille, Andre. (1971). *Caste, Class and Power*. Berkley: University of California Press.

many movements which came out from the struggle for equality for their identity, pride, and dignity.

The word Dalit was not only to be understood as 'the oppressed' but also as 'the proud, the defiant' by Eleanor Zelliot. He suggested the idea that the untouchables of India had chosen a new name that of 'Dalit' when explaining the title of his book 'From Untouchables to Dalit', reflects their sense of the faulty caste system of India. It is signified to look at how the marginalized section is coming forward and asserting their due rights.³

Why Assertion: The Basic Human Need

In the society, when the privileges like prestige, authority, wealth, and valuables enjoyed only by some section of the society on the basis of birth, race, faith, and community of prestige, authority caused the dispute among those who feel less favored. Dalits are the marginalized section and less favored section of the Indian society, facing inequality and violence due to the structural classification of the society. Inequality hinders society's smooth progression. It destroys the capacity of the individual and creates social frustration and conflict, which Johan Galtung called systemic violence. According to Johan Galtung, structural violence is a system of differential, unequal access to the means for closing the gap between the actual and the potential, where those at the bottom' of some hierarchically structured relational system.⁴

The situation of structural hierarchies with violence and oppression characterized by hostile interaction between communities, where, due to lack of growth, hate, political and economic injustice, and other types of victimization (perceived or actual) run along on caste or identity-based lines to a great extent. The asymmetrical power relations affect the growth of society and are in direct conflict with the theory of basic human needs. John Burton, the exponent of human needs theory, contemplates the existence of certain universal needs that must be satisfied if people have to resolve protracted social conflicts.⁵ The theory of human needs claims that some ontological and genetic needs will be sought. The non-negotiable basic human needs can be categorized into basic material

³ Zelliot, Elenor. (1992). *From Untouchable to Dalit*. New Delhi: Manohar Publication, p.267.

⁴ Galtung, Johan. (1969). Peace, Violence and Peace Research. *Journal of Peace Research*, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, Vol. 6, p. 171.

⁵ Burton, John. (1993). *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*, New Zealand :Macmillan Press Ltd.,

needs includes food, shelter, health care, employment-freedom from want, the second is cultural need includes right to worship, language and the third one is social needs, which desires to have respect, lives with dignity, and freedom from fear in the society.⁶ There is a human need for identity, to get recognition, attain justice & rights to feel secure for the personal development and dignified life. People are becoming more and more aware of their status and are asserting their cultural, social, and economic needs. Dalit is no exception to it, the Dalit community made its efforts for the liberation of its masses from the atrocities faced due to the caste system and untouchability. They made their demand for justice and equality in the society to gain self-respect in the society.

Dalit movements are the movements of their consciousness of their own identity. These movements are reformative in nature in the caste system and for the abolishment of untouchability.

Buddhism: The rise of sect

The caste system and discriminatory practice of untouchability got entrenched in the conduct of the Indian society with time and space. From time immemorial there were several voices raised against these discriminatory practices. Gautam Buddha was the first one who revolted and condemned the *Varna-Vyavastha* and supremacy Brahmanism their rituals and scriptures. Buddha emphasizes equality among the people and higher values on morality.⁷ Buddha's ideal is to establish the classless ideal society; Buddha held that "all men are born equal".⁸ All system was wrong. According to Buddha, there may be different species of plants and animals but as such no different species can be found among the human being. The *Varna-vyavstha* division is solely superficial. The teachings of Buddha were lightened with the flame of equality among the outcastes. Gautam Buddha brings into being a new religion the Buddhism, which is now the world's fourth-largest religion. Buddhist tradition welcomes 'Chandala' and 'sudra' in its fold. Buddha emphasis on deeds, by the deeds alone one, can is Brahmin and by the deeds alone one is an outcast. The thoughts and teaching of Buddha brought a new consciousness among the outcastes or untouchables. It established the new tradition based on equality and deeds, denouncing the birth-based caste system. Like the Buddhists, the Jains too fiercely

⁶ *Transcending Conflict*, WISCOMP, New Delhi, 2003, p. 23.

⁷ Ram, Jagjiwan. (1981). *Bharat mein Jaatiwd aur Harijan samasya*, Rajpal and Sons, Delhi, pp.12.

⁸ A.K. Warder, (1980). *Indian Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass. p. 164& 169.

condemn the Varna-Vyavastha. Mahavira advocates for equality among the people and broke down the barriers of caste, creed, and gender.⁹

Several other schools were also coming into existence, the materialistic school of philosophy, Lokayata or Carvaka also opposed the Vedic religion and Brahmanic philosophy. During the Saint-tradition, another school 'Sahajayan' appeared on the sight, which also opposed the Brahmana dharma. Sahajayani deploras the Brahmins as hypocrites and also critical towards the pilgrimage & idol worship. They said

Jabbe mana atthamana jai tanututtaibandhana

Tabbe samaras sahajebajjaiduddanabahmana.

“Whenthe mind is free, the body has not bondage, only then can there be harmony and spontaneity. At this time, there is no Sudra, no Brahmana”.¹⁰

Santraditions, have another offshoot known as the 'Nath' sect and Gorakhnath was very much prominent among the Nathas. They believe in the equality of the people and negate the caste system, according to them all the four varnas are located in the nature of the individual. Nath tradition emerged as a sect, not as a social movement, but did much for human equality. The Nath tradition left an ideology of 'Nirgunavada', which later followed and continued by the Kabir-Panth. It has been seen that the Nirgunavadais are mostly followed by the people, who earn their livelihood by their own occupation. Besides Kabir, in the saint tradition, there were Ravidass, Dadu, Sundardas, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, etc. they vehemently opposed the jati-vyavastha and raised the slogan of equality. They tried to influence the people by singing, teaching, and writings but were not able to change the social structure of the society.

Bhakti movement: Preaching and Teaching of Equality

It was an attempt to bring Hindu religion from the clutch of dogmatism and ritualism and to make it more societal and egalitarian. Leading nationalist and reformist M.G.Ranade considered it very significant as it was “like the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixteenth century, there was a religious social and literacy revival and reformation in India.

⁹ G.L.Sharma. (2003). *Caste, Class and Social Inequality in India Volume II*. Jaipur (India): Mangal deep Publications,

¹⁰ Ibid.pp-88-89.

This religious revival is not Brahmanical in its orthodoxy; it was heterodox in its spirit of protest. This religious revival was the work also of the people, of the masses, and not of the classes. And its heads were saint and prophets, poets and philosophers who sprang chiefly from the lower order of the society-tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shopkeepers, barbers, and even Mahars- more often than Brahmans”¹¹. The attempt to refute orthodoxy although started in the 7th century A.D especially with the preaching of the Vaishnavite and Shaivite poets of the Tamil region (Alvar and Naynars). However, as a movement, the Bhakti cult seems to be more prominent during the 12th to 16th century. This movement after Buddhism left a great appeal for the establishment of an egalitarian society. ¹² Bhakti saints belong to different regions and caste. Generally, they do not have any familiarity with each other and nor did they had any institutional arrangement or platform, still, their arguments have several discernible commonalities and also preachers belong to different castes and more often from the depressed class. In the Karnataka region (Bijapur), a Brahmin priest, Basavana through his preaching (*Vachana*), decry the ritualism and hierarchal social order (i.e. caste system). In the Maharashtra region, Jnandev- A Deshash Brahmin, Namdev-a Shipmi (tailor), Tukaram-Kunbi, Eknath- Brahmin, and Chokhamela- Mahar were the prominent figures of the Bhakti movement. One of the noticeable points is that both higher caste (like Bhramins) and Lower Caste (Mahar, Shimpri) saints were part of these movements. Namdev and Tukaram’s philosophy of egalitarianism negated caste and caste-based discrimination. Eknath considered Chokhamela(a Mahar) wider in spiritual matters than the Bhramins and allowed untouchables in his Bhajan session.¹³Through his poem, Chokhamela challenged the very basis of the caste system and the Bhramanic order's dominance was also seen as an anti-caste struggle. At the same time in the 13th – 14th century, Kabir was the famous bhakti movement figure in north India who preached monotheism, condemn hypocrisy, and orthodoxy. According to Adi H Doctor “The bhakti saints and poets of the 17th century such as Kabir in North India and Tukaram in Maharashtra had also criticized Brahmanism, but their protest was of a very different order”¹⁴. In the 15th -16th century Guru Ravidass himself belongs to the leather working ‘Chamar’ community, which have

¹¹ Ranande, M.G. (1961). *Rise of the Marathi Power and other Essays*. Bombay: University of Bombay, p.62 as quoted in Eleanor Zelliott

¹² Zelliott.Op.cit

¹³ Zelliott.Op.cit.

¹⁴ Doctor, Adi H. (1991). Low Caste Protest Movements in 19th and 20th Century Maharashtra: A Study of Jotirao Phule and B.R. Ambedkar. *The Indian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 4, No. 2 Sage Publications, New Delhi/Newbury Park/London, p.202

had a lasting impact on the bhakti movement. Ravidass through his poems challenges caste discrimination and stressed the casteless society. In the famous poem ‘Begumpura’ he raised his concern towards the suffering of the lower caste people in the Brahminical society. In the 15th century, Guru Nanak Dev also rejected the caste system, through his teachings have made efforts to abolish discrimination in society.

Satnami movement: Gaining self-confidence

Aims to develop a non-hierarchical social order and negated caste-based discrimination. It was believed that it was founded by Birbhan in the Narnaul area of Punjab in 1672. A similar version was founded by Jagjivandas of the Barabanki district in the late 17th century. However, this sect culminated in a movement by the reformer of Chhatisgarh-Ghasi Das. The basic tenets of the Satnamis were the worship of the “True name of the one God”, the cause and creator of all things. In this sense, Satnamis denied the plurality of god but not its existence. Among his followers were the low caste Hindus such as Chamar and he succeeded in establishing some community of thought between himself and Islam.¹⁵ Their preaching is quite close to nirvana as they oppose idolatry and enjoined to cast all idols from their home. Guru Ghasidas preached the Satnami way of life which refers to a distancing from alcohol and other intoxicants, meat, etc, and the belief in the one god along with the adoption of some typical Bhramanical Practices (like cow worship), broke the bounds of the occupation-based rigid caste system. This boasts a sense of confidence among the lower castes especially among the Chamars of Central India and also broke the bounds of occupation bounds based on an occupation-based rigid caste system.¹⁶

Jyoti Rao Phule: Reinventing the Texts

In the mid of 19th-century contribution of **Jyoti Rao Phule** (1826-90), as a social reformer and as a writer (Gulamgiri & caste), is quite important. He was well aware of the rich Bhakti tradition of Maharashtra, however, his style of criticism and protest was of a different order. Phule made a direct attack on the Bhramanism as in his work ‘Slavery’ he writes “*if the ancestor of the progressive and learned men had understood the meaning of patriotism, they would not have written essays in their books in which their own*

¹⁵ Hasting, James. (1913). *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethic Vol XI p 210.

¹⁶ <https://www.forwardpress.in/2019/12/200-years-on-the-legacy-of-guru-ghasidas-satnam-revolution/>

countrymen, the Shudras, were regarded lower than an animal"¹⁷. The theory of the Aryan race, the prevailing explanation of caste and Indian culture, provided the basis of his theory in his time.¹⁸ Phule was influenced by the writings of the Jacobians especially that of Thomas Paine, and was of the view that all men enjoyed certain natural and inalienable rights which every just society recognize¹⁹.

Phule criticized the Hindu social order for taking away the natural rights of the Shudras and ati-shudras. Also, he accused Bhramanism of seeking an advantage for themselves of writing 'false books' in the name of god and violating the basic rights of fellow beings. Though he himself belongs to the Mali caste (a dominant OBC) he argued for the unison of the Shudra (Non-Bhramin other castes) and ati-sudras. According to Phule Shudras are oppressed and exploited masses whereas the Dalit (ati-sudras) are more oppressed and downgraded due to heroism in fighting with the Bhramin domination. He radically reinterpreted the puranic mythology or built the alternative mythology, which is anti-caste, anti-Vedic, and anti-Aryan. He viewed Vishnu's various avatars as India's different stages of conquest and the Rakshasas as the people's heroes. Gail Omvedt describes Phule's theory as an incipient historical materialism interwoven with economic exploitation and cultural dominance.²⁰

Phule founded the Satya ShodakSamaj (the truth-seeking society) in 1873 in Maharashtra, the movement was against casteism, gender, and caste-based discrimination, the practice of untouchability, express disapproval of socioeconomic inequalities, injustice, and discrimination. According to Phule's argument, knowledge, education & science were the weapons elitist masses, they used Western science and Eastern morals to preserve Brahmanic traditions. For Phule, 'Vidya' or knowledge was in sharp contrast to the Brahmanic or ritualistic shastra and a tool for freedom and human liberty as well as economic development. Phule also set up a school for the children of untouchables castes.

Phule's writings are revolutionary at his time as he directly challenges the established practices of the religion and myth/contrives in favour of a particular (Bhramin) section of the society. Also, he established a direct link between the caste system and religion and

¹⁷ Phule, Jotirao.(2002). *Slavery* in Keer and Malshs (ed) *The Collected work of Mahatma Phule* (Marathi) Bombay: Maharashtra state society for literature and culture

¹⁸ Omvedt, Gail. (2011). *Understanding Caste: From Buddha to Ambedkar & Beyond*. Orient Blackswan. P.25

¹⁹ Doctor, Adi H.Op.cit, p.207

²⁰ Omvedt (2011), Op.cit.

criticized both not only in caste terms but also from the standpoint of economy, gender and culture. Deshpande is of the view that his method in his book *Slavery* is dialogical. He vehemently questions the double standards for the Brahmins and Shudra and Ati-Shudra whereas both belong to the same religion. He further says “ Phule’s thinking on religion can’t be separated from his thinking of caste. His method in the analysis of caste was not to separate jati from varna. As the Brahmanical system derived its authority from Vedas, and especially from the Purusha Sukta of Rig Veda which asserted varna superiority, it was necessary to develop a counter-discourse to in varna terms”²¹

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Arya Samaj: Get back to Veda’s

Arya Samaj with the teaching of Swami Dayanand at its core is one of the major reform movements, especially for Hinduism. Reform of the caste system and its rigid hierarchical structure is one of the major offshoots of the movement. 'Arya Samaj arose as a revivalist socio-religious reform movement seeking to revive the Vedic faith and their return to the Vedas was not as understood by the conventional scholarship of Indian Orthodoxy or by Western critical scholarship, but as Dayanand, himself interpreted'.²² Dayanand concluded that the key to the social reform in Hindu India lays in the return to the precepts enshrined in the Vedas and in what he considered perfectly in line with a well-established western oriental perception²³. Dayanand criticized idolatry, untouchability, and innumerable rigidities of caste distinction. He is of the view that the ‘Varna Ashram system’ as provided in ‘Vedas’ is based on the ‘Karma’ and not on birth. The medieval degeneration of religion led to orthodoxy and makes this system hereditary. Also, in the Varna system, all were interlinked and functioned in close cooperation²⁴. The Vedic hymn prays from

²¹ Deshpande. G.P. (ed).(2002) *.Selected writings of Jotirao Phule*. New Delhi: Left world Publication, p 209

²² Dua, Veena .(1970).Social organization of Arya Samaj: A study of two local Arya centre of Jullndhar, *Sociologiacl bulletin*, p 33 Source:<http://ijsw.tiss.edu/collect/sbj/archives/HASH3aed.dir/doc.pdf>

²³ Brill’s. (2013). *Encyclopaedia of Hinduism*. Handbook of oriental studies, Vol-V (edt) Knut: Jacobsen Boston , p 390

²⁴ <http://www.aryasamaj.com/enews/2011/feb/2.htm>

God for the betterment of all humanity and not of a particular Varna. Swami was first to assert the rights of the lower caste, the right to education, the right to recite Vedic mantras, the right to inter-dining, the right to marriage, and the right to draw water from the common well.²⁵ Arya Samaj undertook the problem of religious conversion of Hindus. Arya Samaj started the 'Suddhi Movement' to bring the converted Hindus back into Hinduism. It attempted to bring the untouchables the status of the upper castes Hindus. So, unlike the Jyoti Rao Phule who denounce religion as a Bhramanical contrive, Dayanand emphasized the understanding of true religion and for this, there is only one source – Vedas. Therefore rather than renouncing the social constructs, he had provided an alternate interpretation that was humanistic and logical in the approach.

Adi Movement: Movement of Aboriginal Identity

Adi-movement, with its several regional variants, was a rational and radical attempt to re-define the caste relations in India with a pointed attack on the evil and discriminatory practices in Indian society. The movement was an attempt for a social and cultural consciousness among the deprived section towards their identity and an endeavour to re-define it. Adi-movement has its genesis in the Adi-Hindu movement, which was promulgated and promoted by the Swami Achutanandalongwith some of the associates of the Arya Samaj Dalits. The core argument of the Adi-Hindu movement was :

- a. Dalits are original inhabitants of India, and
- b. For Adi-Hindus, Bhakti is the original religion

During the first quarter of the 20th century, 'adherence to Bhakti religion and veneration of Kabir, Ravidas and other lower caste saints became much more widespread among the urban untouchables migrants in Uttar Pradesh, which led to the emergence of new sectism with Kabirpanthis, Shivnarayanai or Ravidasi/Raidas added to their name as a surname²⁶. Temple dedicated to bhakti saints²⁶ were dedicated were also refurbished or newly constructed in the early twentieth century²⁷. It is significant that in the resurgence of heterodox devotionalism among the poorer untouchables, bhakti was conceived

²⁵ ibid

²⁶ Briggs. G.W.(1920).*The Chamar*, London:Low Price Publication , p 19

²⁷ Singh, Om Prakash . (1900-1950). *Evolution of Dalit identity*, History of Adi Hindu movement in, *United province Proceedings of Indian History congress*, Vol 70 (2009-10) , p 576

explicitly and primarily as an egalitarian ideology that opposes caste hierarchy²⁸. This egalitarian bhakti tradition was believed to have a spiritual genealogy stretching back to the pre-Aryan period before the advent of Vedic Hinduism²⁹. During the same phase, the publication of ‘The people of India’ by Herbert Rishley (1908) provided support to the Adi-Hindu conception, which was later on reiterated by Dr. Ambedkar in his writings. The idea of the pre-Aryan origin of the bhakti devotionism, alongwith the exclusive claim of untouchables over egalitarian, heterodox bhakti lint fuel to an emerging belief that the untouchables were the original Indians or Adi-Hindus, and in turn, developed into a social movement in the early 1920s –Adi-Hindu movement³⁰.

Bhakti movement believes in the innate equality of mankind while the Adi-Hindu movement challenges the ground of discrimination by establishing Dalit as an original inhabitant of the land. In various parts of India, various Dalit castes posed this problem separately by stating that they had discovered a pure history and a pure identity within or outside the Hindu religion.³¹Adi-Hinduism through radical racial explanation of caste relations attempted to deconstruct the ‘Higher or lower status’ and tried to establish that, by using religion as a tool, upper-caste occupy higher positions in the society. Also, they have added a new word in the Dalit movement lexicon- i.e. indigenous(Adi)-the original inhabitants, which provides a ground to claim their lost positioning and rights. Christopher Jaffrelot is of the opinion that “ far from establishing a separate identity that would pull the Dalit out of the caste system, the Adi movement used their so-called original identity as a means of promoting their status within the system³².

There was an Adi movement in both northern and southern India. It is Adi-Andhra in Andhra, AdiDravida in Tamil Nadu, Adi Karnataka in Karnataka, in Uttar Pradesh as Adi Hindu Movement. In Punjab as the AdiDharm movement, formed a distinct religious identity, free from the prejudices of Hinduism, also described as the “*religious revolt of the untouchables*” in the Indian Census report of 1930. It rejected Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam and tried to develop the distinct identity of the Dalits.

²⁸ Fuller, C.J. (1992). *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, Princeton , p 155

²⁹ Jijnasu, Chandrika Prasad. (1968). *Adi Hindu Andolanka prabantak Sri 108 Swami Acchutanand Harihar*, Lucknow, 2ndedt, p 106.

³⁰ Singh, Om Prakash, Op.cit., p 576-77

³¹ Ibid, p 577

³² Jaffrelaot. C . (2003). *India’s Silent Revolution*. India: Columbia Press University, p 204.

Gandhi and Untouchables: A move towards respectable recognition

In the initial years' Congress was not much inclined towards the social reforms. However, under the leadership and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, the vision of the party changes its trajectories. With the emergence of Gandhiji in congress, the new era of lower caste consciousness and movements focuses on the elevation of the social status of lower and backward castes. In 1922, the working committee of Congress (Bardoli) passed the resolution for the depressed classes for the improvement of their social, mental, and moral condition.³³ Gandhiji wanted to refurbish the old Hindu society structure by eliminating the discriminatory social practice of untouchability.

The contribution of Gandhi to caste reform is very integral to his definition of society. There was the practice of untouchability in Indian society and caste-based discrimination. In the 1930s the demand for a special electorate suddenly aggravated the caste issues. During this period, when he was in Yedarva jail (due to disobedience of salt tax), a new organization, Harijan Sewak Sangh was founded to combat untouchability and a new weekly journal 'Harijan' was started³⁴. However, Gandhiji's solutions to the question of untouchability were also religious in nature. As a substitute for the backward or suppressed class, he embraced a neologism, Harijan (Child of God).³⁵ The socio-economic reforms issues were added to the Congress party agenda due to the initiative of Gandhiji.

Gandhiji believed that the practice of untouchability in Hinduism or Hindu scripture was a socio-religious evil and had no penalty. He pointed out "Manusmriti and other similar treatises, put before us, seem to be different from what they are in original form.... There is no sanction in Shastras for untouchability"³⁶. Gandhiji was not against the fundamental principles of the religion. He was even of the view that work for the service for the Harijan "is purely religious and must be carried out on a regular spirit"³⁷. Gandhiji believes in the innate goodness of human beings and of the belief with continuous 'aagraha' for the 'satya' (equality of behavior in this context) will definitely lead the

³³ The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, vol.54,p.18.

³⁴ <https://www.mkgandhi.org/biography/campaign.htm>

³⁵ Choudhary, Adrija. (September 5, 2018). Why dalits want to hold on to Dalit, not Harijan, not SC, *Indian Express*, retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/research/dalit-scheduled-caste-information-and-broadcasting-media-5341220/>.

³⁶ The collected work of Mahatma Gandhi, vol 41 pp177-178

³⁷ Ibid, Vol 55, pp124-125

‘change of heart’ especially among the caste Hindus. Gandhiji said that As extended to the masses, the ‘anti-untouchability movement is of mere heart change and shifting their (caste Hindus) mindset towards Harijan, the vast majority of Hindu castes do not have to disrupt their everyday activity in order to serve the Harijan’³⁸. Besides, he notes that its (eradication) is bound to be part of every future constitution and there is no difference of opinion on it. The untouchables have the same rights as any other in the constitution.³⁹

At the organizational level, for the disseminating his ideas and appeal to the masses, he started a journal ‘Harijan’(after the discontinuation of young India), the first issue of which carries the appeal of Gandhiji under the column ‘To the readers’ which says “ Will you become a fellow worker in the movement of liberating over 40 million human beings from an intolerable yoke of purifying Hinduism⁴⁰”. He has undertaken ‘Penance fast’ in 1932 and 1933 at least three times, which was joined by many others, especially to appeal to the conscience of caste Hindus. Besides, he has undertaken a Harijan tour with a purpose to understand the plight of thedepressed class’ and to establish a campaign against untouchability. For this, he established the ‘Harijan Purse Fund” with the purpose of welfare of the ‘depressed class’. Also, he supported ‘Temple entry satyagrahato make Hindu religious place open to all.

Overall, Gandhiji and HarijanSewakSangh seem to work on a three-pronged argument: firstly, untouchability is not a part of Hinduism in its original sense, and therefore being religious one can be free of this evil. Secondly, he tries to abolish the evil practice of untouchability in a reformative manner and this reform began with the individual. Thirdly, due to his innate belief in inhibited goodness in human nature,he believes that this evil practice will be abolished through the ‘change of heart’ at the individual level and the total of all such change will create a spillover effect on the general attitude of the society. Gandhiji tries to culminate morality both at the individual and societal level to end this malpractice

Justice Party Movement: Denial of Supremacy

In November 1916, the organization,“The South Indian Liberal Federation” was formed in Madras by a group of non-brahmin citizens namely Dr. T.M.Nair, Sir PittiTheagaraja

³⁸ Ibid, vol 51 ,pp 434-435.

³⁹ Ibid,vol 46, pp362-363.

⁴⁰ Ibid, vol 53, p 264.

Chettiar, and Dr. C.Natesa Mudaliar. It was the first step in south India initiated to unite the non-brahmin youth. It was seen as the start of the Dravidian movement established to represent the Non-brahmin interest in Madras.⁴¹ The organization was formed to advance, safeguard promote the interests of the non- Brahmin community. The movement challenges the supremacy & domination of the brahmins in the educational system, the political sphere, and in government services. The SILF published the daily newspaper in English language, named 'Justice', which became so popular that it became the name of the organization. The watchwords of the party are 'Equal opportunities for all and injustice to none'. The justice party raised the issues and consciousness through the daily newspapers 'Tamil daily', 'Dravidian', 'Telugu Daily, and 'Andhra Prakasisni'.⁴²The justice part was not satisfied with the working of the Home Rule Movement and considered it as a conspiracy of Brahmins against the non-Brahmins.⁴³

Self Respect Movement: Establishing New Society

The Self Respect Movement was the social revolutionary movement, aimed at dismantling the current discriminatory Hindu social order and establishing a new society without caste, religion, and god, founded on rationality.⁴⁴It opposed the domination of Brahmins as the superior class and encouraged the backward castes to live with self-respect, raised their voice against the social structure of casteism, which considered them lower in the hierarchy. The movement was founded by S.Ramanathan in 1925, invited the E.V.Ramaswamy Naicker also famous as Periyar to join the anti-brahmin movement. EVR headed the movement in Tamil Nadu, also regarded as the 'Father of Modern Tamil Nadu'. Naicker broke his ties with Congress on issues of representation of non-Brahmins and social justice. The journal named 'KudiArasu' was launched by the EVR, in which he stated "Self Respect Movement was inaugurated not for talking ill of particular community or sect, but to destroy the social evils as a whole".⁴⁵ The self-respect movement along with its journal 'KudiArasu' wants to reform the society for that has had several operational programmes. EVR stated "Man is disgraced by caste and the caste is disgraced by the religion. How can we destroy one, keeping the other alive?".⁴⁶ The

⁴¹ Chatterjee, A.C. (1936). *A short history of India*. London: Longman Publication, p.475

⁴² G.O.Ms. No.512, Rural Development & Panchayat Raj.

⁴³ G.O.no. 695, Rural Development and Panchayat Raj.

⁴⁴ Thandavan. R.,2001, *The Dravidian Movement*, Chennai, p.9.

⁴⁵ KudiArasu, 2nd August, 1931, p.4

⁴⁶ Hansen, Bent Smidt. (1974). *In respect of Periyar Ramasami in Janardhanam*, Madras. P.18

movement was against the caste system as well as the religious practices it advocates self-respect marriages which are without the presence of a priest and favours the inter-caste marriages. The movement against the practices of using caste names, caste costumes, and caste marks. In 1926, it established the self-respect leagues all over Tamil Nadu, which organizes the conferences at the Taluks as well as at the district levels.⁴⁷ The movement dedicated to generating a sense of pride among the non-Brahmins based on their Dravidian past and denied the superiority of Brahmins. It perpetrated that non-Brahmins were the aboriginals having the Dravidian origin whereas Brahmins were Aryan invaders from the north. The self-respect movement was much more popular than the justice party.⁴⁸ The self-respect movement makes to generate feelings of self-respect, consciousness, and self-confidence among the backward classes or the non-Brahmins. It spawns the confidence in them to fight for social justice. It was due to the movement the separate dining places for Brahmins were got slowly given up, due to their continuous practices the name board of hotels was get replaced from “Brahmin Hotel” to “Vegetarian Hotel”.⁴⁹ The movement has played an important role in the political, social, and religious life of South India's people.

Dr. Ambedkar and Socio-Political Arrangements

No discussion on the Dalit movement and assertion seems to be complete without understanding the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. His efforts have had a huge influence on the country's future social and political dialogue. Ambedkar always believes that “the political revolution in India was preceded by social and religious reforms led by the saints”⁵⁰ he rejected the varna interpretation of the caste as an economic division, rather considered it as ‘harmful institutions’. He called upon the Hindus, in accordance with the concept of democracy, to annihilate the caste, which is a greater obstacle to social unity, and to create a new social order based on the principles of independence, equality, and fraternity⁵¹. Ambedkar examined different principles and hypotheses of the origin and validity of the caste system in his seminal work 'Annihilation of Caste' and debunked all of them due to logical incoherence and empirical inappropriateness.

⁴⁷ *Kudi Arasu*, 6th May, 1928, p.1.

⁴⁸ Irschick, Eugene F. (1969). *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press .p.330.

⁴⁹ Anita, Diehl's. (1979). *Periyar E. V. Ramasami: A Study of the Influence of a Personality in Contemporary South India*, New Delhi :B. J. Publications, 54. Janpath, p.52.

⁵⁰ Speech and writings of Dr . B.R.Ambedkar, Ministry of social Justice Vol 1, p XIV

⁵¹ *Ibid* , p XV

It is believed that the structure of castes and related notions of ‘purity’ and ‘pollutant’ embedded in the socio-cultural aspect of religion. He also said that “*not only did the Hindu have little effect on the humanitarian cause of civilizing the savages, but higher caste Hindus intentionally prevented the lower castes within the pale of Hinduism from rising to the higher caste cultural level*”⁵². He also lamented the Hindu religion for the lack of the feeling of community and brotherhood. Further, he says that “*the effect of caste on the ethics of the Hindus is simply deplorable. Caste has killed the public spirit and destroyed the sense of public charity. Caste has made public opinion impossible*”⁵³. Unlike Gandhiji, he was critical to the Chaturvarna system i.e. division of society into four classes. he considered the labeling of ‘Bhramin’, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra as unnecessary and was of the opinion that men can be honoured without labeling. Also, he considered the varna order as “impractical, harmful and a miserable future”⁵⁴ Ambedkar pointed out the numerous contradictions embedded in the dominant construct of religion with an array of citations from the past and in tune with the ‘rational’ societal construct especially taking reference from the European society. “He attempted to forge India’s moral and social foundations to a new strove for a political order of constitutional democracy that is sensitive to the disadvantaged, inherited from the past or engendered by providing social relations”⁵⁵

He encapsulated the feature of caste in the following words: “ this critical evaluation of the various characteristics of caste leave no doubt that prohibition rather than the absence of intermarriage-endogamy to be concise is only one that can be called the essence of the caste when rightly understood. But some may deny this on the abstract anthropological ground, for exist endogamous groups without giving rise to the problem of caste, societies, culturally different making their abode in localities more or less removed and having little to do with eath other are physical reality”⁵⁶

Ambedkar adopted a multi-dimensional strategy to counter the problem of untouchability and henceforth exclusion and marginalization. He believed that a substantial chunk of the

⁵² Annihilation of Caste, *ibid*, p 53

⁵³ *Ibid* p 54

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p 59

⁵⁵ Rodrigues, Valerain. (2002). *The essential writings of DrB.R.Ambedkar*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, p 1.

⁵⁶ Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, The critical evlution of various charaterstics of caste, p 46 as cited in C.D.Sing “ Dr Ambedkar perceives caste system as inherently pernicious, *Indian Journal of political Science*, April-June 2011, vol 72, no 2 pp 523-527

Indian population was denied their legitimate rights by the oppressive and dominant social customs and traditions. He described the state of slavery of untouchability and the denial of human rights before the Reform committee(franchise) and Southborough committee on January 27, 1919.

He argued for the generation of class-consciousness among the untouchables and favours for the steady and systematic upliftment of the downtrodden through the educationalandsocial reforms. The satyagraha launched by Ambedkar has aimed at the self-respect of the untouchables .the right movement initiated by Ambedkar to inspire the depressed classes to fight for their right gradually gained momentum and successfully brought about an improvement in their economic and social conditions, political representation, educational and cultural achievements. He called for the union of different marginalized castes under one platform to project their united strength and to hold the balance of power in the new democratic setup. he declared that “political power is the key to all social progress and the schedule castes can achieve their salvation if they capture their power by organizing themselves into a third party and holding, balancing the power between the rival political parties.”⁵⁷

In the view of Ambedkar, the economic marginalization of the Dalits had its place in the laws of Manusmriti, according to which the Dalits were subject to the law of inheritance. The same text considered the acquisition of knowledge by the Dalits as a crime. The Brahaminical construct was not only responsible for the downtrodden status, economic misery, and backwardness of the untouchables but also it had prevented the non-Hindus from economic competition. the element of social boycott and punishment in a long run resultant in the suppression of the community and a low, dirty, and menial occupational status for the Dalits. Ambedkar favour for industrialization to break these shackles. He was of the opinion that it would destroy the land premium and minimize the demand on it, and that decreasing population pressure on land and increasing the use of capital and capital goods would forcefully establish an economic imperative to increase the holding⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ Ambedkar, B.R. (1976). *Bhahiskrit Bharati Agrulekh* (Marathi) edited by R.Ganveel . Bhusaval: RatnamitraPrakashan, pp137-138

⁵⁸ Mungekar, B.L (2004). *Dr Ambedkar on India's Agrarian Problem*. Debendra Kumar dass(ed) .*Great Indian Economists: their creative vision for socio-economic Development: B.R.Ambedkar*, Vol.3 New Delhi Deep and Deep Publication, p 275.

In 1942, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar established a political organization for the Dalits in the Depressed Classes Conference in Nagpur, the All India Scheduled Castes Federation (AISCF) which limited to the untouchables in the hope of getting all the untouchables together in a new movement to gain political rights and representation for the Dalit people. As a rival organization to Congress, the AISCF used to continuously challenge the argument of Congress to represent Dalit interests, Bombay remained its main center in the initial period, but it spread all over India in a very short period. The primary goal of the AISCF was to unite and fight against the domination and untouchability of the upper caste.

The RPI was the first political party founded in India in October 1957 by the post-Ambedkar leadership. By changing the name, the Republican Party of India came into existence from AISCF. The party's mission was to unite the oppressed, to combat the atrocities committed against the Dalits, and to eradicate their disabilities. The philosophy of the Republican Party of India reveals that it took up several problems that related to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in keeping with its efforts to create a broad-based framework. Initially, the Republican Party of India did some positive work as it attempted to serve and address Dalit issues. It plays an important role in the formation of organizations for workers, organizations for students, organizations for women, etc. Unfortunately, as each leader posed as a junior Ambedkar, over time, the tempo and the revolutionary zeal of the party leaders were lost in mutual conflicts. They failed to bring forward the momentum of the Dalits (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) movement in this rivalry, which contributed to the party's decline. The party did not understand the root cause of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes problems. The party split into many groups after that. There is no ideological basis for the split in the RPI, but it occurred due to a clash of personalities and personal political ambitions.

Kanshi Ram and Bahujan Movement

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar through his activism and institutional reforms emphasized education and organization-based mobility and Jyotiba Phule aimed for radical re-reading of Indian history. In the Post-independence period, however, there have been material changes in the condition of the people and most importantly being the emergence of a

larger body of educated youth, who had benefitted from the Phule-Ambedkarite legacy in so far as it had been enshrined in the Indian constitution in the form of reservations in the elected offices, government jobs, and educational institutions⁵⁹. This new emerging middle class of the marginalized achieved a better position in socio-economic settings of the country but having a stigma of ‘reserved category’ in the dominant caste construct. Considering the need of these employees and for providing a collective platform for the dignified life the Bamcef came into being into stages⁶⁰. Kashi Ram one of the key arch in the foundation of Bamcef, emerged as the biggest and most creative leader in the post-Ambedkaritedalit movement⁶¹. Born in 1934 in a mediocre Ravidasi family of Punjab, Kanshi Ram impelled to the path of social activism in 1971. Although at that time mainstream Dalit politics was represented by the Republican Party of India and frustrated Dalit youth in the form of Dalit Panthers⁶². Instead of investing his resources in the reconstruction of these institutions, on December 6, 1973, Kanshi Ram discovered the potential in an unlikely class of government employees belonging to Dalits, other backward classes (OBCs), and religious minorities and founded the All India Backward and Minority Employee Federation (BAMCEF).

He claimed that only 15% of the upper castes, along with religious minorities, ruled over 85% of backward and lower castes. Therefore, the 85 % fraction could come together and take advantage of democratic politics-the bulk of which will run the nation forever.⁶³. Unlike the Marxist scholars, he never tried to create an alternate system of governance, rather he showed his belief in the representative model of democracy and urged Dalits and Minorities to become in power by consolidating the number into ‘united power’

“jiski jitni sankhya bhari, uski utni bhagidari” (The more the number, the more the share in power).

⁵⁹ Lochan, Rajiv. (2014) . Paying back to society: The Bamcef-An Idea and its network in N.Jayaram, *“Interrogating Ideas, institutions and Process: Essay in memory of Satish Saberwal*, Orient Blackswan.

⁶⁰ ibid

⁶¹ Teltumbe, Anand. (2006). An Enigma called Kashi Ram. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Nov 4-10, Vol 41, No 43/44 pp 4531-32

⁶² ibid

⁶³ Singh, Shyam .(2010). Dalit movement and emergence of BahujanSamaj Party in Uttar Pradesh: Politics and Priorities; Working paper Sereis 242, *The institute for Social and Economic Change*, Bangalore , p.6

He mooted the idea of 'bahujan' which comprises 85% of the society⁶⁴. He never aimed for an egalitarian society but a system of rational distribution of resources. He said that 'We are the majority 85 % of the population; on the basis of our numbers we came to power. He coined a slogan affirming the Dalits right ⁶⁵to undistributed excess lands " *Jo zamin sarkari hai, who zamin hamari hai*" (the land lying excess with the government, belong to us)

Before the BAMCEF he launched the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes and other backward classes and minority communities employer Association in 1971, which precedes BAMCEF. The purpose was of the launch of such an association was to defend the interest of "Bahujan Officials' who are gradually forming a Dalit middle class.

Kashi Ram transformed the BAMCEF into a secret organization, due to harassment from different agencies and founded a parallel political party for which BAMCEF provided a skilled cadre.⁶⁶ In 1981, Kashi Ram felt the need for some more action and formed the Dalit Soshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (popularly known as DS-4) which would parallel to the BAMCEF with Khaparde as its president⁶⁷. DS-\$ was far more aggressive in its stances, under the slogan '*Brahmin, Thakur, Bania ChorBaki sab hai DS-4*'. However, the aggressive stand of this newly created organization has not paid much, and to channelize the numerical strength of non-upper caste groups, he set up the BhaujanSmaj Party in the formal arena of politics in the year 1984, with a slogan '*vote humara, raj tumhara, nahi chalega*⁶⁸. Although Punjab is the birthplace of Kanshi Ram and had a considerable influence on the Ambedkarite and Adi-movement, BSP does not gain ground in the state. On the contrary in a larger state like Uttar Pradesh, in which, the hereditary within Dalit cluster is manifested, the party gradually occupied a significant position, however, due to different reasons.

In the year 1989, BSP entered into the fray of representation and that was competitive electoral politics was the time Dalit movement in UP transformed itself as a political movement with less focus oneconomic equality and social reforms. The rise of politics of

⁶⁴ ibid

⁶⁵ Roy, Bhaskar. (2002). Paradoxes of Dalit Politics in Uttar Pradesh. *India International Centre Quaterly*, Monsoon , vol 29, no 2 pp 107-116

⁶⁶ Jafferlot, Christopher. (2010) . Caste and Politics. *India International Centre Quaterly*, Autumn 2010, vol 37, No 2, Autumn , pp 94-106

⁶⁷ Lochan, Rajiv (2014). Op.cit.

⁶⁸ Teltumbe, Anand. (2006). An Enigma called Kashi Ram. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Nov 4-10, Vol 41, No 43/44 pp 4531-32

Hindutva by BJP and violent communal tension and announcement of the Mandal commission reports recommendation, all set for the polarization of communities along caste and religious line. “These opportunities provided a clear avenue for the BSP to use its political leverage”⁶⁹. However, it was heavily dependent on the lower castes and not on other sections of society. this restricted the expansion of the electoral base of the BSP⁷⁰. The electoral success gradually became a top priority to the BSP and this is because as Kanshi Ram said “*We wish that no political party could get the proper majority, then only we will be politically important for others*”⁷¹. Sudha Pai in her analysis found “*Therefore, the political priorities of the BSP during its early years were surrounded by the need to acquire a dominant place in UP politics. The party believes that state power is the ‘key’ or ‘agent’ to introduce social change*”⁷².

The decline of BSP and Dalit Politics in contemporary times

Dalit politics & consciousness movement has gone through many phases. Dalit politics witness the rise with the success of BSP in 1984. After the Kanshi Ram, Dalit leadership get strengthen by his successor Mayawati. She was the first female leader from the Scheduled caste category to become the Chief Minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh. She serves the state not only once but four times as the chief minister. The success of BSP and its popularity observed to get declined in 2014. The national party BSP marks its majority in Uttar Pradesh state assembly election in 2007, got the steep decline in 2014 Lok Sabha elections when it failed to secure a single seat in the lower house of the parliament. In 2017, Uttar Pradesh state assembly elections, BSP only secured 19 seats and 10 seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. It was perceived that Mayawati shifted its base from the Dalit politics to ‘Sarvjan’ based politics, the party only favored the ‘Jatav’(the sub-caste among the scheduled caste in Uttar Pradesh, to which Mayawati herself belongs) and the certain upper caste people, who helped her to win in 2007 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

New Wave of Dalit Mobilization: Negation of Existing Stereotype

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ Lerch, Jens. (2003). Hamlet, Village and region, Caste and class differences between low caste mobilization in east and west uttarprades in Roger Jeffery &jenslerche *Social and Political Change in Uttar Pradesh*, New Delhi, Manohar publication.

⁷¹ Akela, A.R. (2006). *Kanshi Ram Saheb ke Saatchatakar*, Aligarh: Ananda SahityaSadan

⁷² Pai, Sudha. (2002). *Dalit Assertion and Unfinished Democratic Revolution BSP in Uttar Pradesh*, New Delhi: Sage.

The downfall of the BSP created an opportunity for many new faces of Dalit leaders to emerge. The new wave of Dalit mobilization does not rely on the conventional way of electoral politics but a different style. The new wave focuses heavily on the dignity of Dalits, self-respect, and socio-economic gains. Several new Dalit leaders emerged at that time, with new ideas and movements forming their organization like Azad Samaj Party (ASP) by Chandra Shekhar Aazad, Jignesh Mevani in Gujarat from the Una AtyacharLadat Samiti, and in Maharashtra, Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi founded by Prakash Ambedkar.⁷³ There is no pan India uniform movement or the political party seen after the BSP, most of the Dalit movements have the character of regional requirements and heterogeneous in nature.

i. Bhim Army and the rise of Chander Shekhar

The rise of the Bhim Army by a youth named Chander Shekhar, a social activist & lawyer from Gharkoli village in western Uttar Pradesh in 2015 was a whirlwind movement. Among the Dalit youth, it was very popular and concentrated on the issue they faced or go through such as unemployment & social inequality. Later he setup the 'Azad Samaj Party' for political ambitions. The Bhim Army was formed with the goal of *"direct confrontation-based action to preserve or restore the dignity of the Dalits"*. The Bhim Army has received tremendous support from the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh since its foundation. The BSP is much focused on electoral politics, Bhim Army much involved in the issues of insecurities and protection against atrocities faced by the Dalits. In April 2017, the incidence of violent clashes was reported between the Bhim Army and the other upper caste at the Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Chandrashekhar and Bhim Army provide support to the various demonstrations related to Dalits and minorities, such as the expression of injustice at the death of Rohith Vemula, Una incidence, Bhima Koregaon one, and also provide support to CAA and NRC protest.⁷⁴

The Dalit symbols, icons, and cultural memories of the Dalits are get rearranged in the Bhim Army symbolization. The images of Ambedkar and Buddha were at the top of the symbolic hierarchy of community icons during the time of Kanshi Ram & Mayawati and the saints like Ravidass, Kabirdass, and others were placed lower down in the symbolic

⁷³ Gharhi, Arti. (24 April 2018), 'The Changing face of Dalit Politics', *HW News*, also at <https://hwnews.in/news/opinion/changing-face-dalit-politics/38448>

⁷⁴ Pai, Sudha. (20 March, 2020), Future of Dalit Politics Swings Between Decline and Regeneration, *The Wire* retrived from <https://thewire.in/politics/dalit-politics-chandra-shekhar-aazad>.

representation. Chandrashekhar disrupts the hierarchy, Ambedkar still holds the top spot, but Buddha is replaced by the Ravidass, the Ravidass projected as a guru to whom the queen was his disciple.⁷⁵ The Ravidass as a deity worshiped by the several scheduled caste community belongs leather related work, such as the Chamar community, Mochis, Jatavs, Ramdassia Sikhs. By putting the Ravidass as they symbolize affiliation with Bhim Army, he is expanding his influence among the Dalits of Northern India, especially in the states of Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. Slogans like '*Chamar da Puttar*', '*Mai Ravidassi Chamar*', are the symbols of the identity-based assertion.⁷⁶

ii. **The suicide of Rohith Vemula: Assertion of Bahujan Identity in Campuses**

The suicide of Ph.D. research scholar Rohith Vemula at Hyderabad Central University boosted the protest movement among students and Dalits across the nation in January 2016. Following Vemula's suicide, members of his family, friends, and some social groups claimed that he committed suicide because he was the victim of caste discrimination. His death did not take place like any other student's demise, the incident became the mass movement of Dalit-Bahujan students.

His death took the caste system debate to the center stage at the campuses and colleges of Indian Universities, previously confined only to the political domain. The Dalit-Bahujan solidarity was seen in the student organizations at the protest sites and in campaigns, in oppose to Brahminical hierarchy.

At the protest sites and campaigns, the banners were seen with the pictures of Ambedkar, Phule with the pictures of Karl Marx. Most of the places of agitation had the demonstration with the red flags (symbol of Marxist solidarity) along with the blue flags (symbol of Dalit solidarity) together. The new identity of the Dalit class along with its sub-identity of the proletariat class in capitalist society was established by that scenario. Marx and Ambedkar which are in contrast to each other in thoughts were taken together in the contemporary society after that incident.

⁷⁵ Narayan, Badri. (19 March, 2020), Chandrashekhar Azad leans on new symbolism to change Dalit-Bahujan equation, *Buisness Standard*, retrieved from https://www.business-standard.com/article/opinion/chandrashekhar-azad-leans-on-new-symbolism-to-change-dalit-bahujan-equation-120031900615_1.html.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

In the academic world, the incident has raised several debates on the caste system at multimedia platforms, several seminars & conferences were held on that issue, intellectuals raised the consciousness through their writings, it became a matter of discussion and seems to be a new political Dalit wave of assertion and consciousness.

In the symbolization, the statue of Rohith Vemula was installed in his memory at the protest site. The statue was put there as a symbol to assert their identity among the fellow Dalits of the country. That incident of death mobilized the Dalit students and Bahujan politics and compelled them to fight for their rights by asserting their identity.

iii. Bhima Koregaon: Milestone in the making of Dalit Narrative

In the trajectory of the Dalit struggles, Bhima Koregaon has its important place. It has been seen as the act of Dalit valor against the upper caste Peshwas. The Dalits are providing the contemporary meaning to the battle fought 200 years ago. It was the battle fought at Koregaon, near the banks of Bhima river, the last battle of the Anglo-Maratha war fought between the Peshwa Baji Rao II (Maratha Confederacy) and the East India Company. The battle was won by the East India Company had 500 Mahar soldiers out of 800 total soldiers. The battle has been seen as a symbol of Dalit pride as they conquered the Brahmin (the Peshwa).⁷⁷ The Vijay Stambh has been built in memory of the victory. In 1927, B.R. Ambedkar visited the memorial obelisk, after that number of Dalits regularly paying their visit to the site. The victory has been seen as the victory of the untouchable over the oppressor class 'the Brahman' and an important event of Dalit assertion which gets celebrated with huge pomp and show.

iv. Alternative Media: Their Media

Many social reformists, thinkers work for the emancipation of the Dalits. Several politico-legal provisions have also been enacted for the betterment of their position. Media which is considered as the fourth pillar of democracy plays a vital role in interest articulation and aggregation. In the social reform movements and inarticulate, the interest of the people for specific concerns role of media is undeniable. Dalits who are marginalized from the mainstream of society, are also neglected in the mainstream media. The news

⁷⁷ <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/battle-over-a-200-year-old-battle-was-bhima-koregaon-really-a-brahmin-dalit-tussle/articleshow/62349485.cms?from=mdr>

related to the concern of SC/ST found very less or no space in the mainstream media. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar opines that Dalits need to have their publication to become empowered and awakened. Ambedkar himself 100 years ago, 31st January 1920 laid the foundation of 'Mooknayak' newspaper, which was very vocalized on the issues of Dalits. As per Dr. Ambedkar, the newspaper is the best source of remedy for injustice in society in the present as well as in the future. In the earlier times, newspapers, journals, magazines & radio were among the prominent sources of communication, which are mostly owned by the upper castes. Ambedkar soon realized that Dalits will never get supported by the mainstream media.⁷⁸ In support of the Dalit media, BSP founder Kanshi Ram shared his views that the mainstream media is biased and dominated by the upper caste/class people who do not highlight the problems and plight of the Dalits. Dalit has to print its magazines and newspapers to make them hear them. "The Oppressed Indian" published by the BAMCEF, "Bahujan Times" was the Dalit newspaper started from New Delhi, both were edited by the Kanshi Ram and considered as the evolutionary step to form the alternative print media.⁷⁹

As per the report by Oxfam India, entitled "Who tells Our Stories Matters: Representation of marginalized caste group in Indian Newsrooms" ascetically claims that the marginalized groups do not have any representation in the leadership positions of media houses, these are people who decide how much space have to give for the particular news. No efforts have seen to make equal representation in the newsrooms.⁸⁰ As per the report out of 121 newsroom leadership positions 106 are occupied by upper-caste journalists. In the shows of flagship debate, over 70% of the news channel panelists belong to the upper caste. Approx 5% of the articles of English language and 10% of the articles of Hindi language were written by Dalits and Adivasis. The majority of the writings in English & Hindi newspapers about caste were written by upper caste people.⁸¹

The mainstream media is still the same as it was at the time of Dr. Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram. The mass media channels of the marginalized section are also regarded as the

⁷⁸ Ambedkar's journalism and its significance today: *Forward Press*; retrieved from <https://www.forwardpress.in/2017/07/ambedkars-journalism-and-its-significance-today/>

⁷⁹ Kumar, Vivek. (1999). Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Dalit Identities in U.P; *Dalits: Assertion for Identity* (ed.) Ambrose Pinto, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

⁸⁰ <https://www.oxfamindia.org/press-release/who-tells-our-stories-matters-representation-marginalised-caste-groups-indian-newsrooms>

⁸¹ Report by Oxfam India. (2 Aug, 2019). 'Who tells Our Stories Matters: Representation of marginalized caste group in Indian Newsrooms'. retrieved from https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Oxfam%20NewsLaundry%20Report_For%20Media%20use.pdf.

Alternative Media. These media sources sympathize with the real problems of the neglected masses and show the real picture, which is unheard & unseen by the mainstream media. The mainstream media considers the media of capitalism, entertainment, and consumerism. It is alleged that the mainstream media has failed to pick the real issues of marginalized sections and only serve the interest of the capitalist class, a corporate class that can benefit them.⁸²

Multiple alternative media have arisen in the digitalized world of the internet to put their views on which the mainstream media is silent. Alternative media is the innovative form of media that came, it can be in the form of print media, digital format, audio-video, etc. It differs from current established mainstream media in their content, layout, in targeted audience as well. Various efforts have been taken by Dalit reformers to start their media.

Alternative media is challenging the dominant discourse of the mainstream media. In the digitalized world of the internet alternative media serving on the platforms of social media with content sharing. Many of the Dalit activists are having their voice on social media platforms like Youtube, Facebook, Twitter. It also works for interest articulation and interest aggregation among the Dalit classes. It provides the stage for the oppressed section to promote its rights, without any financial constraint.⁸³

There are around 150 print and online platforms on the issue of caste, in Hindi, English, and various regional languages. **Dalit Dastak** is the monthly magazine and the youtube channel covering the issues of marginalized sections. In 2012, the magazine was launched in Delhi in the presence of eminent Bahujan thinkers and senior journalists. It was founded by Ashok Das, a post-graduate in IIMC, JNU, Delhi. The youtube channels have recorded the subscription of 8 Lac people. The magazine has the picture of Dr. Ambedkar on its front page, inscribed in the name of the magazine. As per the magazine, there were so many magazines published in the past for the Bahujan concerns and some of them are publishing in present as well. But there are very little efforts has seen in keeping them continue, 'Dalit Dastak' magazine is an endeavour to provide information & news concerning the Bahujan society on monthly basis. The magazine profoundly writes on the issues concern with Bahujans such as political issues of Dalits,

⁸² Croteau, David and Hoynes, William. (2006). *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*, Pine Forge Press. p.33.

⁸³ Atton, Chris. (2002). *Alternative Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

representation of Dalits in parliament & political parties, on the issue of reservation, Role of Dalits and Adivasi in Cinema, Subaltern leaders, Buddhist Religion, Constitutional Provisions, Campus based politics, Caste-based census, Dalit journalism, Achievements of Bahujans and recently the issue of Corona epidemic and the Bahujan, these are the issues which get largely missed by the mainstream media.⁸⁴ The youtube channel of channel is the forerunner in the Dalit issues, a much popular channel that has in-depth ground reporting videos, data stories, commentaries, and comprehensive interviews with eminent personalities of Dalit concern.

Forward Press website is one of the forerunner websites on the Dalit Bahujan issue, aims to bring the different and in-depth perspective of the Indian SC, ST, OBC, and northern India's converted minorities. It began as the bilingual magazine from Delhi in 2009, now with the era of digital media get transformed into a website. Forward Press also publishes the book under the imprint of the forwarding Press publication. The dictum of forwarding Press is 'to become medium of education & the voice of "silenced majority"'. It analyses its issues from the Bahujan lens of Phule and Dr. Ambedkar. The website has separate columns of News & Politics, Campus Compass which is related to the news related to University campuses, reservation issues, and any other issue related to SC/ST and OBC in varieties. The people can get the issue of national & international interest with the special reference to Dalit /Bahujan and minority concerns. It wrote about the sufferings of blacks and Dalits. It is the website, where one can get voluminous information about the Bahujan culture, their Arts & Crafts, books written on Bahujan culture & Literature, heroes of Bahujan, their festivals & films and their tradition & culture. The website also provides information about issues of employment, vacancies, educational opportunities, and employment. The books published by the forward press are now also available on 'Kindle'.⁸⁵

Dalit Camera is another important youtube keeping the repository of Dalit discussions, songs, talks, and opinion pieces of Dalits, having more than 72 thousand subscribers. It gets started in 2011 by the voluntary effort of Ravichandran Bathran. It covers the news from the DABM perspective, stands for Dalit, Adivasis, Bahujan, and Minorities. As per the information from its website, "*Dalit Camera get started as a counter view to the*

⁸⁴ <https://www.dalitdastak.com/magazine-archive/>

⁸⁵ <https://www.forwardpress.in/>

cartelized hegemony of the English news channels.”⁸⁶ In 2013, Dalit Camera also has the winner of Dr. Ambedkar International Award issued by FFEI, USA. Dalit Camera, captures the Dalits' histories, narratives, public gatherings, songs, talks lectures, and discussions related to Dalits. It is voluntary run by the students on their expenses, and actively working in Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Calcutta.⁸⁷

Velivada, the website for independent Dalit journalism, is also quite active on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Telegram. The website came into existence after the Rohith Vemula incident, the website got registered on 15th March 2017, at the birth anniversary of BSP founder Kanshi Ram. The website is dedicated to those who fought & believe in equal rights. The ‘Velivada’ a Telugu word meaning “*Dalit Ghetto*” as per the website it is existed in ‘where Dalits pitch their battle tents’, ‘where the struggle is there to remember’ & where the Asuras fight for their equal rights⁸⁸. Velivada YouTube channel is a very active multimedia channel for Dalit issues, it has more than 40 thousand subscribers.

Ambedkar Caravan is one of the important websites started by a Dalit guy, who is an engineering graduate, from the inspiration of teaching of Guru Ravidass Maharaj & Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. The website has the aim of “*Cultivate Buddhist Culture & Heritage and to expose achievements and contribution of Talents of the unexposed to the world*”. The website has provided the pdf for the books written by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, which contain original photographs of him, movies on him, and quotes of Dr. Ambedkar. The website also provides information about the Dalit history, Dalit heroes include (Guru Ravidass, Mahatma Phule, Savitri Bai Phule, E.V.R. Periyar, Babu Mangu Ram Mugowalia, Jogendernath Mandal, Shahu Maharaj, Iyothedass, Bhagya Reddy Varma.) It also provides the link and pdf file for the other important books & videos related to the Dalit concerns. Ambedkar Caravan’s Facebook page has more than 2 lakhs followers.

The other means of media such as Twitter, Instagram, Dalit voices are have marked their presence. ‘The Dalit Voice’ Twitter account active from March 2018, has more than 32 thousand followers, it is a non-profit organization, which campaigns against the atrocities, poverty & discrimination that the 260 millions of Dalit are suffering from.⁸⁹ The group of Dalit feminists also active on Instagram, the ‘Dalit Feminist’ account has around

⁸⁶ <https://www.dalitcamera.com/>

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ <https://velivada.com/>

⁸⁹ <https://twitter.com/ambedkariteind?lang=en>

30thousand followers with 529 posts. It has regular updates on scholarships/ Jobs/ study-related issues of the Dalit community. It regularly posts the art made by Dalit artists, Dalit poetry, songs, talks, audiobooks. The page also provides the space to share their own experiences of atrocities & discrimination with the Dalit community.⁹⁰ ‘Dalit Women Fight’ is theTwitter account, joined Twitter on September 2031, has more than 42 thousand followers, with the caption ‘a community-led digital project to amplify the voices of Dalit women for Justice’. It actively makes tweets on the Dalit women issues and atrocities faced by them.⁹¹

⁹⁰ <https://www.instagram.com/dalitfeminist/?hl=en>

⁹¹ <https://twitter.com/dalitwomenfight?lang=en>

CHAPTER-4
POSITIONING DALITS IN
PUNJAB

CHAPTER-4

POSITIONING DALITS IN PUNJAB

The name Punjab is derived from the Persian words: ‘Punj’ and ‘ab’. Punj (five) and ‘ab’ means ‘water’ or rivers. The name Punjab symbolizes the five rivers flown in the region namely Sutlej, Ravi, Beas, Chenab & Jhelum. Before 1947, this land of five rivers was united under one state. In 1947, when India gets independence from British rule, the Punjab province was divided between India and Pakistan. The Muslim-dominated area was given to Pakistan and the eastern portion remained a part of India. In 1966, the Indian Punjab has divided again with the formation of Haryana & Himachal Pradesh.

The boundaries of Punjab were got contracted and expanded in various phases of time. The geographical features of Punjab have a huge impact on its historical proceedings as well as on the social structure of Punjab. In the Rigvedic times, its territory is known as ‘Sapta Sindhu’ ‘the land of seven rivers’ namely Vitasta (Jhelum), Parshuni (Ravi), Asuki (Chenab), Sutdru (Satluj), Vipas (Beas) Saraswati (now dried one) and the Sindhu. It is also called Brahmavarta and the territory inhabited by the Panch-Janans or the five major tribes namely Anus, Yadus, Purus, Turvasus, and Bharats.¹ In 326BCE, Alexander invaded Punjab, after that, the vast Mauryan empire was established there, which includes the trans-Indus territories of Gandhara&Kamboja and Punjab also.² Punjab was part of the western province of the Mauryan empire with Taxila as the provincial capital. It serves as an important imperial highway for trade & cosmopolitan center of art and learning. In the 2nd century, Menander the Greek king, ruled over Punjab upto the Ravi, after Shaka’s rule was established. In the first century of the Christian era, Shaka was get replaced by the Kushanas. Under the Kanishka rule, Punjab was the part of the empire that covered much of northern India, Afghanistan & the Central Asian region. In the 5th century Huns and early 7th century Harsha ruled over the area of Punjab upto the Beas. The upper remaining Doabs influence Kashmiri kings, while the Taka kingdom covered the lower Doabs. In the 9th and 10th centuries, different rulers dominated over the different parts of the Punjab namely Shahis in North (Western Punjab), Tomars (Yamuna-Sutlej divide). Multan was dominated by the Arabs at that time and this was the time when

¹ Narang, K.C. (1969). *History of Punjab 1500-1858*. Delhi: U.C Kapoors & Sons. Pp-1-6.

² Grewal, J.S. (2008). *Historical Geography of the Punjab*. (PDF). Punjab Research Group, Volume 11, No 1. *Journal of Punjab Studies*. Punjab. pp-3-10

Jammu and Kangra kingdoms were got founded. In the 11th Century, Ghazanvi conquered India via Punjab, and make the Punjab one of the parts of its empire. At the time of Delhi Sultanate, the Punjab frontier extended upto Peshawar.³ Till the conquest of Babur, Punjab was divided into provinces, which were ruled by Afghan and Turkish governors. Up to two centuries, Mughal ruled the Lahore empire, with the province of Multan and Delhi. In the late 18th century, with the rise of Sikh power, its boundaries were again re-casted. Maharaja Ranjit Singh strengthens and united the Sikh power and extended his kingdom up to the KhyberPass in the west and up to the Sutlej in the east. He established the hold over the former Mughal Province of Lahore and Kashmir and some parts of the provinces of Multan & Kabul, at this time it was called 'Lahore kingdom' or 'Lahore Province'. At this time the Yamuna & Sutlej chiefdoms were under British rule.⁴ In 1849, after the subversion of the Lahore kingdom, Britishers covered & ruled over the entire region of Punjab and came to be called 'The Province of the Punjab'.⁵

Punjab due to its prime geographical location witnessed the changing pattern of states with the change in its political and administration also. It simultaneously brought the different cultures at one place impacted the readjustment and dislodgment of many people as well as the tribes and brought the social and cultural change. A substantial number of Turks, Afghans, Arabs, and Persians adopted Punjab as their home, and before them the social order well absorbed the Greeks, Shakas, Kushans, and Huns.⁶ The richness and complexity both can be seen in the social formation of Punjab. After the partition in 1947, there have been the two Punjab's, the one at the Indian side 'Indian state of Punjab', and the other at the Pakistan side 'Pakistani province of Punjab'.

Punjab one of the most prosperous states located in the north-western region of the Republic of India. The state is bordered by Himachal Pradesh in the east, Rajasthan in the southwest, Haryana in the South & Southwest, and the Pakistan province of Punjab in the west. In the north, it is bounded by Jammu & Kashmir. Punjab has an area of 50,362 sqkm, extended from the latitude 29.30 ° to 32.32 ° and longitudes 73.55° east to 76.50 ° east. Geographically and culturally Punjab can be divided into three sub-divisions namely (a) Malwa (b) Majha (c) Doaba. Punjab south region to river Sutlej is known as Malwa region, consist eleven districts. This region is famous for cotton farming. The districts in

³ Narang. Op.cit

⁴ Grewal, .op.cit

⁵ Narang. Op.cit

⁶ Grewal, .op.cit

the Malwa region are Ludhiana, Rupnagar, Sangrur, Patiala, Mansa, Bathinda, Fazilka, Firozpur, Moga, Rajpura, and Ajitgarh. Majha the historically significant region, it is also called the heartland of Punjab and celebrated as being the 'Cradle of Sikhism', it also has modern districts of Amritsar, Pathankot, Tarn-Taran & Gurdaspur. The third region, Doaba is between the rivers Beas and Sutlej. The name 'Doaba' literally translates to 'land between two rivers'. The region is the most fertile one and the center of the green revolution in India. Doaba consists of Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Rupnagar, Nawashahar & Kapurthala.⁷

Punjab has been the meeting ground and battlefield for a bewildering variety of cultural traditions.⁸ The caste studies in India follow more or less the dominant trend of the Varna system and fourfold classification with the Brahmanical hierarchy at the top and untouchables at the bottom. There are regional variations that exist in the society that defined the social relations among the different caste groups, the ethnic background, and political-economic trajectories on which the social relations were built up. Punjab is no exception from the system of caste hierarchy and untouchability in the region. Punjab doesn't have the hierarchies of the Varna system, it has its regional specificities, and there is a complete lack of Brahmanical literary tradition in Punjab.

Punjab, Sikhism and Caste System

Before the partition of India, Punjab was a Muslim-dominated area but after the independence and its reorganization in 1966, the religious composition has been changed in the state. Punjab is a Sikh-dominated state, Sikh comprises the majority of the population the state comprises 57.69% of the total population of the state. Hindus are the second-highest population of the state, which is almost 38.49% of the population.

Sikhism traced the beginning back to Guru Nanak, and as the initiator of a new panth(sect). Sikhism is a religion based on the ideology of religious and cultural innovation of Guru Nanak & his successors. Sikhism now a separate & independent religion, emerged as a protest movement against the discriminatory practices in Hinduism and Islam, based on the oneness of God, humanity, equality among the races, castes, and

⁷ Punjab govt. website, retrieved from <https://punjab.gov.in/know-punjab/>.

⁸ Juergensmeyer, Mark.(1988). *Religious rebels in the Punjab : the social vision of untouchables*. New Delhi: Ajanta Publication. P.18.

gender. The background of Sikhism can be traced to the 'Sant' movement of northern India. Guru Nanak influenced both doctrines the Sufi movement of the Muslims and the Bhakti movement of the Hindus.⁹

According to John Clark Archer in 'The Sikhs' "*the case of Sikhs it is difficult to determine whether the Sikhs are a race, a caste, a religion, or a community, he analyzed or conclude that the Sikhs have developed a self-consciousness somewhat equivalent to a caste within the Hindu background*"¹⁰. Sikhism is based on the teachings of Sikh gurus' emphasized equality. The social stratification among Sikhs is very different from the Hindus which is based on the caste system, gets rejected by Sikhism. In the late nineteenth & early twentieth centuries, the Singh Sabha Movement reforms emphasized the distance between Sikhs and Hindu tradition, with a result Sikhism emerged as a separate and distinct identity from Hindus. They rejected the 'Varna' system and the notion of purity and pollution.¹¹

Guru Nanak was the first Sikh Guru to sermonize for the egalitarian society, he pointed out God considered all human beings are equal, laws of nature are equal for everyone, and does not treat individuals differently. The caste hierarchy is purely a myth created by the people. The institution of community kitchen 'Langar' is based on the equal status of all human beings. W.H McLeod, "*This practice ensures that high castes consume food received in effect from the hands of the lower castes or even outcastes and that they do so from a common dish*".¹²

Sikhism does not have any provision for the priest. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, compiled the Adi Granth, which contains the writings of all communities without any discrimination. In 1699 Guru Gobind Singh setup the democratic society by the establishment of egalitarian society 'Khalsa', he assembled his apostles, and five of them were initiated into a new fraternity called the Khalsa, known as Punj-Piyaras, or the 'Five Beloveds', or the 'Pure'. Out of the 'PanjPyaaras' (cherished five), of whom one belonged to Khatri (north Indian trading caste) and the other four belongs to lower castes. They were told to consume from the same bowl and given new names with the "Singh" or

⁹ McLeod, WH.(1997). *Sikhism* . New York: Penguin Books, pp. xxi-xxxii.

¹⁰ Archer, John Clark. (1946). *The Sikhs*. New Jersey: Princeton, pp.227-279

¹¹ Puri, Harish. K (2003), Scheduled Caste in sikh community: A historical perspective, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38(26) 28, 2693-2701

¹² McLeod, WH. (1996). *The Evolution of the Sikh Community: Five Essays*. Oxford University Press, Delhi.

"Lion" suffix added to them. Sikh Guru's promoted equality by placing 'Singh' suffix for men and 'Kaur' for the females.¹³

With time the two major sectism were seen in the religion of Sikhism, the Keshdhari Sikhs (the Khalsa) and the Sahajdari Sikhs. Many other sects were also developed in Sikhism, mainly known as Nankpanthis, Sewapanthis, Udasis, the Nirmala's, and the Nihangs who were also called Akalis or Shahidis. The sects or parties carved out from Sikhism have had their origin from the unsuccessful claimants to the title of Guru, the Ramraiya and Udasia are the examples of that. Even there were many sects in most cases were organized along the caste lines, following the caste of the founder of the sect. There were religious reformist movements also there such as Nirankaris and Namdharis directed to keep Sikhism free from Hindu elements.¹⁴

With the establishment of Khalsa, the militant tradition begins by the Guru Gobind Singh get continue even after his death. The regular invasions at the land of Punjab made the emergence of Sikhs as the fighter group. The rise of Sikhs as a sovereign power seen with the rise of Ranjit Singh, it was the period when the Sikh confederacies called the 'Misals' were at their pinnacle. Misals later divided into two groups, namely the Budha Dal (old) and the Tarun Dal armies (new), which subsequently broke down into twelve misals at a different part of the province. These misals were: 1. Bhangi 2. Ramgarhia (Ramgharia) 3. Ahluwalia 4. Nakkai 5. Kanheya 6. Sukerchakia 7. Phoolkia 8. Dulewalia 9. Nishania 10. KroraSinghia 11. Singhpuria or Daliwala 12. Shahid. Some of these misals took their names from their leaders who belong to different castes, eg: Bhangis from the founder's addiction to Bhang (hashish), Kalal (distiller) caste now known as Ahluwalia, the leader of Dulewalia or Daliwala was the Khatri shopkeeper, Ramgharia were of the carpenter caste. Later on, the significant rise can be seen in the Sukerchakia misal of Ranjit Singh, who ruled Punjab. Most of the leaders of these belong to the Jat community which resultant in creating Jat aristocracy.¹⁵ Maharaja Ranjit Singh very well understood the position of Jats which create the powerful Jat aristocracy.

¹³ Jodhka, S. S. (2004). Sikhism and the caste question: Dalits and their politics in contemporary Punjab. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 23(1&2), pp 165-92.

¹⁴ Marengo, Ethne K. (1976). *The transformation of Sikh Society*. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers. pp.9-12.

¹⁵ Ibid. pp.30-37.

At the time of the fifth Sikh guru, Arjan Dev, the tendency or transformation of the Jat faith was into Sikhism. Irfan Habib While studying the Jats and Sikhism, provides the reason why Jats had the status of shudra in the Hindu caste fold due to of their involvement in cultivating occupation and they were lag behind in their economic position and social status in the Hindu caste fold.¹⁶ With the conversion to Sikhism themselves, they get the opportunity to raise themselves.

The argument of Habib was later criticized by Paramjit Singh Judge, according to him the relationship between the two was dialectical, both reinforced each other. Due to conversion in Sikhism, Jat got the opportunity to improve their social status helps to attain economic prosperity, Jats also contributed to the expansion and consolidation of Sikhism.¹⁷ In the 1881 census, the total population of Sikhs was about 63% of Jat. The launch of the 'Singh Sabha Movement', the 'Punjabi Suba Morcha', led the way for the establishment of a Punjabi speaking state. The Jat were in the majority, were also at the center of Sikhism and in the socio, economic & political life too. In 1849, when the Britishers captured over the Punjab Jats had already attained the power of upper caste in Punjab. In the census of Punjab from 1881 and 1921, there were more than 25 castes, recorded within the fold of Sikhism, mainly includes Jats, Aroras, Khatris, Ramgarhias, Bhapas, Ahluwalias, Bhatras, Sainis, Rais, Lobanas, Kambojs, Ramdasias, Ravidassis, Rahitas, Mazhabis, and Rangretas¹⁸. The census 1931, reflects the overpowering presence of Jat Sikhs. Jats were around 60% of the total population at that time. The Sikh egalitarian philosophy had worked hard to minimize the caste's rigidity, but the advent of new upper castes in it preserved the caste's basic structure.

Gurharpal Singh has analyzed and classified the stratification in Sikhism close to the Hindu Varna system, he categorized it namely as Amrit-Dhari, Kesh-Dhari, Mona Sikh, and Sahaj-dhari Sikhs. But the dichotomy between Sehajdri –Keshdhari became more complex as if one would examine the relationship among the Sikhs empirically would encounter a different reality.

¹⁶ Habib, Irfan (1976). Jatts of Punjab and Sind. In Singh Harbans, & Gerald Barrier N. (Eds), *Punjab Past and Present: Essays in Honour of Gr. Ganda Singh.*, (pp. 92–103). Patiala: Punjabi University

¹⁷ Judge, Paramjit S. (2002). Religion, caste and communalism in Punjab, *Sociological bulletin*, 51 (2): 175-94.-. 2005. Religion, identity and nationhood: The Sikh militant movement. Jaipur: Rawat Publication

¹⁸ Verma, Archana B. (2000). *The Making of Little Punjab in Canada: Patterns of Immigration*. New Delhi: Sage.p.223.

According to Paramjit S. Judge, the dominant caste system paradigm is the core to understand the caste system. The Hindu caste system presented as natural social order with fixed Varna and mobile castes. The hierarchy is so rigid that it can be a dominant caste if Shudra becomes wealthy and politically dominant, but not eventually becoming an upper caste. This kind of system legitimizes the caste system and hegemony. In Sikhism, the caste hierarchies were qualitatively distinct from those of the Hindus. It was different in the positioning of the caste and in describing the hierarchical values as well.¹⁹

In Punjab the Jat-Sikhs, are the dominant group, mostly belongs to landowners and agriculturists class and the strength of the peasantry. With the entry of Jats into Sikhism, the caste system in Sikhism can be understood to a great extent, which not only saved them from their low status but also transformed them into a strong dominant group community. Their presence in large numbers in Sikh religion with the stronghold over the landownership and as well on the economic & political aspects of the state make them placed at the top position in Sikhism. At the time of 1857-58 mutiny Jats provides their invaluable support to the Britishers, which consequently into the recruitments of Jats into the British Indian Army.²⁰ Furthermore, the Punjab Land Alienation Act 1901 positions the Jats (the agricultural caste) in an advantageous role by refusing to provide non-agricultural castes with landholdings and discriminating against other castes who do not participate in agricultural activities. The Singh Sabha movement and state reorganization act in 1966 form the Sikh majority state with the Jat at the social, political, and economic dominant position. The green revolution in Punjab followed by the Akali leadership structure in the state added the financial and political power of the Jat Sikhs. Social gaps have also been broadened by rapid social mobilization, economic growth, party competitiveness, and functionalism.²¹ The shrinking role of other caste groups in the political affairs of the state created internal cleavages within the Sikh community. In the Sikh community, caste discrimination is not based on the dichotomy of purity and pollution, as in the Brahmanic community, but rather on the power of land ownership.²² The Urban trading castes were got placed next to Jats in the hierarchy, they

¹⁹ Judge, Paramjit S. (2002). Religion, caste and communalism in Punjab, *Sociological bulletin*, 51 (2): 175-94.

²⁰ Ibbetson, Denzil (1916). *Punjab Caste* : Being a reprint of the chapter on *The Races, Castes and Tribes of the People* in the Report on the Census of the Punjab, published in 1883.

²¹ Kumar, Ashutosh. (2005). Electoral Politics in Punjab: 1966-2004. *Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol.12, Issue 1, pp.111-128.

²² Ram, Ronki. (2004). Untouchability in India with a Difference: Ad Dharm, Dalit Assertion, and Caste Conflicts in Punjab. *Asian Survey*, vol.44, No.6, pp.895-912.

were economically prosperous and having control over trade and industries in the state, mostly consist of Khattris, Aroras, and Baniyas. In a subordinated position to the Jats and the other castes, the Scheduled Castes remain behind.

Contextualizing Dalit in Punjab: Socio-Economic aspects

The caste stratification can be seen in every religion in India: Muslims, Sikhs, Christians all somewhere embedded with the social structure of caste. The Sikh doctrine has no space for a caste institution, but in practice, it is entirely different.²³ In Punjab there are also menial and untouchable castes, they vary from one area of the province to another. Sir Denzil Ibbetson's report on the census of Punjab in 1881 was written in the 19th century, classify the various menial castes and untouchable groups in Punjab

Table: 4.1

List of Menial Caste in Punjab by Ibbetson

S. No.	Castes	Religion	Traditional Occupation
1.	Jhinwar	H.S.M.J	Carried water, Palanquins, and burdens
2.	Kahar	H.S.M.J	Carried water, Palanquins, and burdens
3.	Machhi	M	Carried water, Palanquins, and burdens
4.	Bahrupia	S.H.M	Actors and mimes
5.	Batwal	H.S.M	Village watchmen and makers of mats.
6.	Barwala	M.H.S	Village watchmen and makers of mats.
H: Hindu, S:Sikhs, M:Muslims, J:Jains, B: Buddhists			

²³ Puri, Harish K. (June 28-July 4, 2003). Scheduled Castes in Sikh community: A Historical Perspective. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38:26 p.2693.

“Impure” or Outcaste Groups

S.no.	Castes	Religion	Traditional Occupation
1.	Labana	S.H.M	Carriers, rope makers, hunters
2.	Banjara	H.S.M	Carriers, itinerant traders. The Banjaras sold earrings and nose rings and pierced the ears and noses of children.
3.	Mahtam	H.S.M	Partly vagrant hunters, partly cultivators.
4.	Bawaria	H.S.M	Vagrant hunters, workers in straw
5.	Jogi – Rawal	M.H.S	Itinerant astrologers
6.	Meg (Megh)	H.S.M	Field laborers, grass cutters, weavers
7.	Kanchan	M.H	Dancers, singers, prostitutes
8.	Changar	M.H.S	Gypsy vagrants, basket makers, and reapers at harvest.
9.	Aheri (Heri)	H.S.M	Workers in reeds and grass and reapers at harvests
10.	Dom	H.S.M	Gypsy musicians and scavengers
11.	Dagi and Koli	H.S.M.B	Hill menials, corresponding to the Chuhras in the Plains.
12.	Chamar (Ramdasia) (Mochi)	H.S	Tanners and Leatherworkers
13.	Khatik	H.M.S	Pig-keepers, tanners, and leatherworkers (sheep and goat hides.)
14.	Chamrang	H.M.S	Tanners of buffalo hides and ox hides.
15.	Chuhra (Bhangi, Mehta, Rangreta)	H.S.M.J	Sweepers and Scavengers
16.	Dhanak	H.S.M	Scavengers and weavers; did not remove night soil
17.	Musalli(Kutana)	M	Scavengers and sweepers
18.	Mazhabi	S	Scavengers and sweepers; refused to touch night soil.
H: Hindu, S:Sikhs, M:Muslims, J:Jains, B: Buddhists			

Source: Ethne K. Marengo, in The Transformation of Sikh Society. Pp.238 & 320-321.

Sir Denzil Ibbetson, classified the various menial castes and untouchable groups in Punjab are Jhinwars, Kahars, Machhis, Banjaras, Labanas, Batwals, Barwals. The Jhinwars were considered true village menials they carried water, palanquins, and burdens and in central and west Punjab, the Jhinwars were called Machhis when converted to Islam. The Batwals and Barwalas group worked as watchmen and make mats, their first group is predominantly Hindu and the second one is Muslim.

The lower caste groups in the scale have also existed like the Chuhras, Chamars, Dhanaks, Musallis, Mazhabis, Dagens, Kolis, and Doms, they were considered untouchable castes. The Chuhra group considered lowest on the scale, they also known as Mehtars, bhangis, Ranreta, they worked as scavengers and sweepers and those who dispose of scavenging practice and had taken the leatherworking known as Rangretas. Mazhabis were Chuhras converted into Sikhism, Rangretas considered higher than the Mazhabis. Musallis or Kutas were Chuhras converted into Islam. Dhanaks was also considered as a low caste group, engaged in scavenging and weaving but differ from Chuhras as they would not remove the night soil. The chamars were the tanners and leatherworkers mostly Hindus and Sikhs, as they generally refrain from scavenging; they ranked higher than the Churas. Chamar was called Mochi when converted to Islam, and Ramdasia when converted to Sikhism. The name Ramdasi (Ramdasi) was taken from the fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Dass said to be the first to receive Chamars into Sikhism. Another group also existed called Raidasis or Rabdasis. They were Nanakpanthi Sikhs, followers of Guru Nanak and Sahaj Dhari, or unorthodox Sikhs. Ramdasis took the '*pahul*' whereas Raidasi did not take the *pahul* and followed the Bhagat Ravi Das, who himself belongs to the Chamar caste.²⁴

²⁴ Marengo, Ethne K..(1976). *The Transformation of Sikh society*. New Delhi: Heritage Publishers. pp.249-251.

Table: 4.2

Religious Composition of Punjab, 1971-2011

Community	Census 1971	Census 1981	Census 1991	Census 2001	Census 2011
Sikh	60.21%	60.75%	62.95%	59.91%	57.69%
Hindu	37.54%	36.93%	34.46%	36.94%	38.49%
Muslim	0.33%	1.00%	1.18%	1.57%	1.93%
Buddhists	0.06%	Negligible	0.12%	0.17%	0.12%
Jains	0.16%	0.16%	0.10%	0.16%	0.16%
Christians	1.20%	1.10%	1.11%	1.20%	1.26%
Others	0.03%	0.01%	0.07%	0.04%	0.04%

Source: Census reports 1971,1981,1991,2001,2011.

The Hindu religion, which is more than 80 % of the population of India, are in minority in the state of Punjab. The religion-wise distribution of the population of Punjab can be seen in the table. The dominant religion in Punjab is Sikhism, followed by Hinduism. According to the census report 2011, Hindus constitute only 38.49% of the population. The Sikhs are in majority in the state of Punjab constitute 57.69% of the population, Muslim 1.93%, Christian 1.26 %, Buddhist 0.12%, Jain 0.16%, Other religion, not stated 0.04%.

Punjab is the land of reformist movements of Sikhism & Sufism. Punjab is a Sikh-dominated state, but the hierarchical difference among castes is also present in Sikhism. The existence of Brahmins is there in Punjab but only in the small numbers, as a caste only, not as dominant Brahminical ideology. Daniel Ibbstein in his caste survey of Punjab, find out that the Brahminical influence was not so strong in Punjab as it in the other parts of India. The presence of different religions prevents the influence of caste. He wrote that Punjab was more "Mohammedan" than Hindu and people were much more bound by social and tribal traditions than any religious laws or strict rituals of purity & pollution.²⁵

²⁵ Ibbetson, Denzil (1916). *Punjab Caste* : Being a reprint of the chapter on "The Races, Castes and Tribes of the People" in the Report on the Census of the Punjab, published in 1883.

The social organization and the value system, especially in rural Punjab, differ from that of Hindu India, writes Joyce Pettigrew, an eminent anthropologist. The "caste" and the laws of purity and pollution, guilt & insult do not apply to the dominant form of social cooperation and the form of political solidarity.²⁶

Paul Hershman has done an empirical study in the village of Punjab near Jalandhar. Find out that the caste divisions do exist among the Sikhs. The hierarchy of the caste system is different from rest of the India, but Punjab's caste system containing the core features of the caste system.²⁷

Table: 4.3

Scheduled Caste Population to total Population Punjab

Year	SC Population in Percentage in Punjab			Non-SC population in Punjab		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1961	22.27	22.40	22.23	77.73	77.60	77.67
1971	24.82	24.58	24.71	75.18	75.42	75.29
1981	27.03	26.69	26.87	72.97	73.31	73.13
1991	28.42	28.17	28.31	71.58	71.83	71.69
2001	28.60	29.14	28.85	71.40	70.86	71.15
2011	31.69	32.21	31.94	68.31	67.79	68.06
INDIA 2011	16.61	16.66	16.63	83.39	83.34	83.37

Source: Statistical Abstract of Punjab

In the 1961 census, the scheduled caste population in Punjab was 22.23% and the non-SC population was 77.67%. By analyzing the census from 1961 -2011, the rise in scheduled caste population can be observed in every decade. Whereas the declining trend can be observed among the non-scheduled caste population in every decade. Punjab reported the

²⁶ Pettigrew, Joyce. (1975). *Robber Noblemen: A study of Political system of Sikh Jats*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pg.4.

²⁷ Hershman, Paul. (1981). *Punjabi Kinship and Marriage*, Delhi:Hindustan Publishing Corporation. pg21.

highest number of scheduled caste communities among all Indian states, as per the 2011 census data. The projected caste population is 31.94 percent, which is 88.60 lac in the state population's 277.43 lac estimates. 4.3% of India's projected caste population and 2.3% of the total population are accounted for by Punjab.

Table: 4.4

The decennial growth rate of SC population in the state of Punjab

Decade	The total growth rate of the population	SCs growth rate
1971- 1981	23.89%	34.74%
1981-1991	20.80%	27.28%
1991-2001	20.10%	22.39%
2001-2011	13.89%	26.06%

Source: <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/SCPopulation.html#:~:text=Punjab%20accounts%20for%202.3%25%20of,the%20State%20as%20a%20whole.>

The Scheduled caste population in Punjab has consistently been rising in every census. The SC population's decennial growth rate in the state of Punjab is high compared to the overall population growth rate in the state. In 1971 -1981, the decadal growth of Scheduled Caste population was recorded 34.74%, which was highest till now. After that, the declining trend can be observed till 2001. In 2011, the rise in decennial growth among the SC can be seen from 2001. The scheduled caste population decennial growth rate recorded 26.06% in the 2011 census as compared to 13.89% for the state as a whole.

Table: 4.5

District wise Scheduled Caste Population in Punjab

S. no	District	2001			2011		
		%of SC male to total male	%of SC females to total females	%of SC population to the total population	%of SC male to total male	%of SC females to total females	%of SC population to the total population
1.	Gurdaspur	24.5	24.95	24.75	25.14	25.39	25.26
2.	Amritsar	27.13	27.59	27.34	30.79	31.13	30.95

3.	Tarn Taran	32.00	32.19	32.09	33.72	33.71	33.71
4.	Kapurthala	29.82	30.04	29.92	33.75	34.15	33.94
5.	Jalandhar	37.40	38.01	37.69	38.61	39.33	38.95
6.	SBS Nagar	40.68	40.21	40.46	42.46	42.56	42.51
7.	Hoshiarpur	34.33	34.22	34.28	35.14	35.13	34.14
8.	Rupnagar	25.35	25.36	25.36	26.39	26.46	26.42
9.	SAS Nagar	21.87	22.75	22.27	21.61	21.89	21.74
10.	Ludhiana	24.29	25.85	24.99	26.12	26.70	26.37
11.	Ferozpur	22.71	22.94	22.82	41.57	42.85	42.17
12.	Faridkot	35.88	36.50	36.17	38.74	39.12	38.92
13.	Shri Muktsar Saheb	37.77	37.74	37.75	42.15	42.48	42.31
14.	Moga	31.98	31.68	31.84	36.59	36.40	36.50
15.	Bathinda	29.64	30.36	29.97	31.88	33.09	32.44
16.	Mansa	30.10	30.59	30.33	33.35	33.95	33.63
17.	Sangrur	26.56	26.80	26.67	27.82	27.97	27.89
18.	Barnala	29.93	30.25	30.08	31.99	32.53	32.24
19.	Patiala	22.96	23.20	23.07	24.39	24.73	24.55
20.	Fatehgarh Saheb	30.36	31.04	30.67	31.76	32.43	32.07
	Punjab	28.60	29.14	28.85	31.69	32.21	31.94

Source: Director Census Operations, Punjab

As per the census 2011, Punjab has the highest percentage of Scheduled caste population among all the Indian states. The table shows the scheduled caste population percentage in all the districts of Punjab. Between the two 2001 to 2011 censuses, steady growth in the scheduled caste population can be observed. The difference in the scheduled caste population distribution is expressed in the table. As per the 2011 census, more than 40 % of the scheduled caste population was registered in the three districts of Punjab, namely SBS Nagar, Ferozpur, and Shri Muktsar Saheb. More than 20 % of the scheduled caste population is made up of all districts of the state. The eleven districts have a 30 % - 40 percent scheduled caste population.

Table: 4.6**District wise Decadal Scheduled Caste Literacy Rate: 1971-2011**

S.No	District	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1.	Gurdaspur	19.08	29.51	47.60	64.03	72.89
2.	Amritsar	12.11	17.49	33.71	50.1	59.16
3.	Tarn Taran	NA	NA	NA	40.05	51.37
4.	Kapurthala	15.85	28.56	47.82	63.96	71.29
5.	Jalandhar	24.49	35.69	56.61	70.48	76.68
6.	SBS Nagar	NA	NA	NA	73.53	77.72
7.	Hoshiarpur	29.16	41.57	63.82	77.66	82.49
8.	Rupnagar	24.1	35.23	57.38	69.42	78.40
9.	SAS Nagar	NA	NA	NA	68.73	76.10
10.	Ludhiana	20.81	30.98	50.48	65.07	72.65
11.	Firozpur	8.85	12.07	24.40	40.12	55.38
12.	Faridkot	8.05	12.29	24.27	42.17	54.91
13.	ShriMuktsar Saheb	NA	NA	NA	38.11	50.46
14.	Moga	NA	NA	NA	42.22	55.23
15.	Bathinda	5.56	9.25	20.68	41.45	53.09
16.	Mansa	NA	NA	NA	42.22	48.72
17.	Sangrur	8.96	13.64	27.15	49.78	57.60
18.	Barnala	NA	NA	NA	42.44	54.91
19.	Patiala	12.87	20.19	38.53	52.26	62.28
20.	Fatehgarh Saheb	NA	NA	NA	63.63	72.19
	PUNJAB	16.12	23.85	41.09	56.22	64.81

Source: <https://www.esopb.gov.in/Static/PDF/Publications/PopulationStat/PopulationStatistics-1971-2011.pdf>,

Source: 1. Economic and Statistical Organisation, Punjab 2. Director, Census Operation, Punjab.

The table shows the growth of literacy rate in different decades among the scheduled caste population. The literacy rate of the country is 73.00 %; the literacy rate of the state of Punjab is 75.84 %, the literacy rate of 64.81 % among SCs. The female literacy rate among the SCs is 58.39 %, which is marginally higher than the country's 56.46 % SC

female literacy rate. The scheduled caste male literacy rate of Punjab is 70.66%, which is much lower in comparison total male literacy rate of the state, which is 80.44%.

The literacy rate has a constant trend of rising in all the decades with the fine growth rate. In 1971 the literacy rate in Punjab was 16.12% rose to 64.81% in 2011. It reflects the constant efforts to get themselves educated and the consciousness among the scheduled caste population. Hoshiarpur records the highest scheduled caste literacy rate 82.49% among all the districts of Punjab, which is also more than the average scheduled caste literacy rate of the state. Shri Muktsar Saheb recorded the lowest scheduled caste literacy rate among all the districts of Punjab. The variation can be seen in the literacy rate among the districts of Punjab due to several factors. The Hoshiarpur district has a history of consciousness from the time of the Ad Dharm movement, the district also records for the highest number of immigrants. In all the districts of the state, the level of consciousness varies.

Table: 4.7

Work Profile of Scheduled Caste Population in Punjab

	District Name	% of SC Households (Rural)	% of Households with salaried jobs in			% of Households with monthly Income of highest earning household member w.r.t Total HH		
			Govt	Public Sector	Private Sector	< 5000	5000 - 10000	> 10000
	State Total	36.75%	7.48%	0.85%	4.48%	29.00%	5.16%	2.56%
	Gurdaspur	24.49%	13.66%	0.79%	4.11%	18.36%	3.44%	2.68%
	Kapurthala	38.30%	8.54%	2.64%	5.00%	27.98%	7.17%	3.14%
	Jalandhar	50.88%	5.36%	0.67%	5.54%	34.84%	11.83%	4.21%
	Hoshiarpur	36.91%	12.22%	0.72%	5.75%	24.01%	7.56%	5.30%
	Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar	42.95%	6.86%	0.43%	4.24%	28.04%	10.16%	4.64%
	Fatehgarh Saheb	37.04%	7.50%	0.44%	5.41%	29.58%	4.53%	2.92%
	Ludhiana	38.61%	7.16%	1.42%	10.63%	29.94%	5.71%	2.95%
	Moga	38.22%	4.95%	0.41%	2.34%	32.56%	4.09%	1.39%
	Firozpur	49.36%	4.56%	0.26%	1.33%	40.78%	6.01%	2.56%
	Muktsar	44.57%	4.50%	0.19%	1.13%	39.56%	3.64%	1.36%
	Faridkot	41.05%	4.85%	0.81%	2.02%	34.90%	4.66%	1.49%
	Bathinda	37.50%	5.27%	0.52%	1.77%	32.77%	3.30%	1.42%

	Mansa	38.08%	4.53%	0.23%	1.36%	35.12%	1.92%	1.02%
	Patiala	31.42%	6.45%	0.82%	4.44%	25.57%	3.91%	1.94%
	Amritsar	29.15%	7.39%	1.45%	4.25%	23.65%	4.11%	1.38%
	Tarn Taran	32.31%	6.46%	0.34%	2.34%	27.58%	3.48%	1.25%
	Rupnagar	27.16%	13.27%	0.74%	6.89%	19.28%	4.34%	3.54%
	Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar	29.83%	10.11%	1.56%	14.83%	22.24%	4.78%	2.80%
	Sangrur	32.85%	6.02%	1.86%	3.73%	28.45%	2.73%	1.66%
	Barnala	34.34%	4.33%	0.53%	1.96%	29.98%	2.90%	1.46%

Source: <https://secc.gov.in/districtCategorywiseSalariedJobReport>

The share of the scheduled caste population of Punjab in the government sector is 7.48%, the Public sector is 0.85% and in the Private sector 4.48%. Gurdaspur has 13.27% of the SC population employed in the government sector, recorded highest among the districts followed by Rupnagar and Hoshiarpur. The public sector employment is in very deplorable condition in Punjab. Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar records the highest in private sector employment which is 14.83%, Ludhiana is at second position with 10.63%. The 29% of the state SC household population has a monthly income of less than 5000/ month. The 5.16% of the SC household population monthly income is between 5000-10000/month and only 2.56% of the SC household population earns more than 10000 monthly income.

Table: 4.8

Scheduled Castes Govt. Employees in Punjab

Total no. of Scheduled Castes in Govt. Job	In Nos.	In Percentage
TOTAL	66834	24.16%
Group A	1838	17.03%
Group B	3883	17.52%
Group C	42155	22.40%
Group D	18958	34.14%

Source: Census of Punjab, Govt. and Semi Govt. employees as on 31.3.2011., issued by Economic Advisor To Government of Punjab, Chandigarh. Employee-Statistics-Punjab-2011.pdf

The above table 4.8 shows the number of Scheduled Caste people who get employment by the government of Punjab. As of 31.3.2011, From the total 276769 filled up posts of Government employees, 24.16% of the people of the SC community which is 66834 in numbers, employed in the government sector. 1838 (17.03%) are in Group A, 3883 (17.52%) employed in Group B, 42155(22.40%) work in Group C, and the highest number of scheduled caste employed in Group D, which is 18958 in numbers and 34.14% in terms of percentage.

Table: 4.9

Scheduled Caste in Punjab employed in Govt. and Semi Govt. Organizations

Employees in Govt. and Semi Govt. organizations	Total no. of Employes	Number of SC employees	SC employees in the percentage
Total no. of SC in govt. job	276769	66834	24.16%
Semi Govt. Employees in Boards/ Corporation	67429	14127	20.95%
Employees of Municipal Corporation/ Municipal Committees/Nagar Panchayats (139 Municipal)	26076	16628	63.77%
Employees of Improvement Trusts (22 improvement Trusts)	759	157	20.69%
Employees of Zila Parishad (20 Zila Parishads)	3616	1099	30.39%
Employees of Market Committees	3399	690	20.31%
Employees of Panchayat Samittes (141 Panchayat Samitis)	5118	1278	24.97%
Aided Institutions	10444	1122	10.74%

Source: Census of Punjab, Govt. and Semi Govt. employees as on 31.3.2011., issued by Economic Advisor To Government of Punjab, Chandigarh. Employee-Statistics-Punjab-2011.pdf

The above table 4.9 evaluated the job data of the government and semi-government organizations of scheduled caste individuals. The highest number of SC employees recorded in the Municipal corporation/ Municipal Committees and in Nagar Panchayats which is 63.77% in percentage and 16628 in numbers out of 26076 of the total employees. The second highest SC employment percentage is in Zila Parishads, which is 30.39% and 1099 in numbers out of 3616 of the total. Only 10.74% which is 1122 in numbers of SC employed in the Aided institutions.

Table: 4.10

Income source of SC Households in Punjab

District Name	% of SC Household (Rural)	No. of Households with an Income Source						
		1 = Cultivation	2=Manu al Casual Labour	3=Part-time or Full-Time Domestic Service	4=Foraging Rag Picking	5=Non-agricultural Own Account Enterprise	6=Begging/Charity/ Alms collection	7= Others
State Total	36.75%	1.62%	28.88%	1.12%	0.05%	0.23%	0.06%	4.77%
Gurdaspur	24.49%	1.04%	18.09%	1.23%	0.03%	0.17%	0.03%	3.90%
Kapurthala	38.30%	1.92%	28.83%	1.31%	0.13%	0.40%	0.06%	5.64%
Jalandhar	50.88%	1.79%	35.88%	1.31%	0.16%	0.34%	0.10%	11.30%
Hoshiarpur	36.91%	1.14%	24.03%	1.41%	0.07%	0.27%	0.08%	9.88%
Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar	42.95%	1.36%	30.62%	1.57%	0.10%	0.38%	0.04%	8.77%
Fatehgarh Sahib	37.04%	0.58%	29.60%	1.33%	0.02%	0.26%	0.07%	5.18%
Ludhiana	38.61%	1.12%	29.47%	2.66%	0.06%	0.20%	0.08%	5.02%
Moga	38.22%	1.60%	33.18%	0.71%	0.05%	0.09%	0.07%	2.34%
Firozpur	49.36%	6.84%	39.27%	0.59%	0.01%	0.25%	0.05%	2.33%
Muktsar	44.57%	1.03%	40.83%	0.56%	0.05%	0.29%	0.04%	1.75%
Faridkot	41.05%	1.58%	36.04%	0.70%	0.02%	0.24%	0.04%	2.43%
Bathinda	37.50%	1.29%	33.02%	0.79%	0.02%	0.14%	0.04%	2.19%
Mansa	38.08%	1.11%	33.59%	0.85%	0.08%	0.09%	0.07%	2.26%
Patiala	31.42%	0.91%	25.31%	0.59%	0.01%	0.25%	0.07%	4.28%
Amritsar	29.15%	0.47%	24.62%	0.60%	0.02%	0.21%	0.04%	3.19%
Tarn Taran	32.31%	0.89%	28.13%	0.82%	0.04%	0.16%	0.07%	2.20%
Rupnagar	27.16%	2.17%	17.29%	1.44%	0.13%	0.22%	0.06%	5.84%
Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar	29.83%	0.91%	19.51%	1.75%	0.03%	0.37%	0.07%	7.18%
Sangrur	32.85%	0.79%	26.64%	0.87%	0.04%	0.30%	0.05%	4.14%
Barnala	34.34%	0.77%	30.12%	0.72%	0.03%	0.11%	0.04%	2.54%

Source: <https://secc.gov.in/districtCategorywiseIncomeSourceReport>

In Punjab, among the total Scheduled caste population, 35.88% labour force constitutes only the scheduled caste population, which contains 79.20% of main workers and 20.80% of the marginal workers. The majority of them working as agricultural laborers or engaged in low-wage and grueling occupations to earn their living. Household data from the 2011 socio-economic caste census indicates the source of income for the scheduled caste households in rural Punjab. As per the data, the majority of the scheduled caste population 28.88% works as manual and casual labour in the state. 1.62% of the Scheduled caste population engaged in the cultivation work, 1.12% works as domestic helpers, 0.23% have their enterprise, and 4.77% engaged in other organized sectors.

Table: 4.11

List of Scheduled Castes in Punjab

1	Ad-Dharmi	21	Koli, Kori
2	Barar, Burar or Berar	22	Marecha, Marija
3	Bangali	23	Mazhabi Sikh, Mazhabi
4	Batwal	24	Megh
5	Bewaria, Bauria	25	Nat
6	Bazigar	26	Od
7	Balmiki, Chuhra or Bhangi	27	Pasi
8	Bhanjara	28	Perna
9	Chamar, Ramdasia or Ravidasia, Jatia Chamar, Rehgar, Raigar,	29	Pherera
10	Chanal	30	Sanhai
11	Dagi	31	Sanhal
12	Dhanak	32	Bhedkut, Sansi, Manesh
13	Dumna, Mahasha or Doom	33	Sansoi
14	Darain	34	Sapela
15	Deha, Dhaya, Dhea	35	Sarera
16	Dhogri, Dhangri, Siggi	36	Sikligar
17	Gagra	37	Sirkiband.

18	Gadhila or Gadai	38	Mochi
19	Julaha or Kabirpanthi	39	Rai Sikh, Mahatam
20	Khatik		

*Source - Website of Punjab Scheduled Castes Land Development and Finance Corporation,
Government of Punjab.*

As per the Punjab government, the distribution of the population of the scheduled castes into the state comprised 39 communities. Ten caste communities make up 92 percent of the state's total scheduled caste population: Mazhabi Sikhs, Ramdassias, Ad Dharmis, Balmiki, Bazigars, Dumana, Megh, Sansis, Julaha, and Dhanak. Ad-dharmis the dominating scheduled caste of the Doaba region are most mobilized, active, educated, and prosperous among the rest of the scheduled caste groups.²⁸ The other sub-castes are relatively more disadvantaged and less mobilized; they are marginalized within the scheduled castes. Punjab government to the development of these castes has identified 13 communities as 'depressed scheduled castes'. Out of these 13 castes, 7 are notified as to the 'de-notified tribes', at pre-independence known as 'criminal tribes' as they followed the nomadic way of life, the government designated them as 'De-notified tribes'.²⁹

Table: 4.12

Percentage of Major Scheduled Castes in Punjab

Sr.no	Caste	Year 1991		Year 2001		Year 2011	
1.	AD-Dharmi	15.9%	40.17%	14.9%	41.1%	11.48%	34.93%
2.	Chamar/ Ravidasia/ Ramdasia	25.8%		26.2%		23.45%	
3.	Balmiki	11.1%	41.8%	11.2%	42.8%	9.78%	39.51%
4.	Mazhabis	30.7%		31.6%		29.56%	
5.	Remaining Caste	16.5%		16.1%		25.56%	
	Total	100		100		100	

Source: Census report 1991, 2001, 2011.

²⁸ Judge, Paramjit S. 2002. 'Religion, caste and communalism in Punjab', Sociological bulletin, 51 (2): 175-94.-. 2005. Religion, identity and nationhood: The Sikh militant movement. Jaipur: Rawat

²⁹ Jodhka, S. S. (2004) Sikhism and the caste question: Dalits and their politics in contemporary Punjab. Contributions to Indian Sociology, 23(1&2), pp 165-92.

The scheduled castes of Punjab are divided into 39 different Dalit communities. The large majority of the scheduled caste belongs to two castes clusters. Currently, they are scheduled under diverse names. They can be known as Mazhabi Sikhs & Balmiki / Bhangis. Ad Dharmis and Chamar/Ravidasis/Ramdasis Sikhs form the second community or cluster. Together, these two clusters make up about three-quarters of the state's entire Dalit population. The 33 remaining caste groups constitute the third group in the scheduled caste population of Punjab, which is very few in numbers. The roots of the Balmikis and Mazhabis Sikhs are the same, the word 'Chuhra' is used for both. The 'bhangi' known as Balmiki follows Hinduism as the religion, whereas Mazhabi professes Sikh religion and Mussali as Muslims. The Chamars have sub-categories within them known as Chamars, Ravidasis, Ramdasis, Ad Dharmic. They mainly believe in the teachings of Ravidass but profess different religions. The Ravidassi & Ramdassi profess Sikh religion, Raigar follower of Hindu religion and Ad Dharmis follows the Ad-Dharm. Those who converted to Christianity, known as Masieh. As per the 2011 census, Ad-Dharmi with Chamar/ Ravidasia and Ramdasia constitute 34.93% of the Scheduled caste population, and the second cluster Balmiki and Mazhabi form 39.51% of the scheduled caste population of the state.

Table: 4.13

District-wise number of villages of Punjab have 100% as well as more than 50% population of Scheduled Caste

District of Punjab	District wise No. of Villages having 100% Scheduled Caste population in Punjab	District wise Villages having 50% and above Scheduled Caste population in Punjab
Amritsar	01	146
Firozpur	12	383
Gurdaspur	04	187
Hoshiarpur	05	393
Jalandhar	04	439
Kapurthala	11	172
Ludhiana	05	238
Moga	03	58

Rupnagar	06	96
SAS Nagar	01	52
SBS Nagar	02	178
Shri Muktsar Saheb	01	77
Tarn Taran	02	46
Barnala	-	10
Bathinda	-	28
Faridkot	-	39
Fatehgarh Saheb	-	88
Mansa	-	26
Patiala	-	97
Sangrur	-	47
Total	57	2361

Source: <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/PDF/SCSP/BasicData2/VillagesWith100PerSCPopulationCensus2011.pdf> and <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/PDF/SCSP/BasicData2/ListofVillagesWith50PerOrMoreSCPopulation.pdf>.

The Scheduled caste population predominantly resides in a rural area, as per the 2011 census 73.33% of the Scheduled caste population lives in villages, and 26.67% Scheduled caste population resides in urban areas of Punjab state. According to the 2010-2011 Agricultural Census, 63,480 scheduled caste operational holdings spread over an area of 1,26,966 hectares constitute 6.02 percent and 3.20 percent of the state's total land holdings and area. In which 85.54 percent of land holdings are unviable, less than 5 hectares are less than the size. There is a total of 12,168 inhabited villages in the state of Punjab, in which 57 villages have 100% SC population, 2361 villages have 50% and above Scheduled Caste population and 4799 villages (39.44%) have 40% or more Scheduled caste population. Out of 217 towns, 175 have 20% or more Scheduled caste population, majority of them are either census towns or small towns.

The caste stratification presents in Sikhism also, perpetuating through endogamy, social exclusion with a certain degree of restrictions on social interactions among the communities. The Jats, who occupy the top position among the caste hierarchy in Sikhism are considered 'Shudras' the lower level in the Hindu caste hierarchy. The Scheduled Caste were placed lower down the Shudra's, they were not considered the part of the Varna system. They were called 'Avarna', Ati-Shudra, Ahhut (untouchables). Traditionally both

Shudra and Ati Shudra were engaged in manual labor but get distinguished with the occupation in they were engaged, those engaged in unclean, dirty, polluted occupation termed as 'untouchables'. The caste system in Sikhism is based on power and privileges whereas the Hindu caste system has a strong ideological base. In Hinduism, commensal taboos exist among the castes, whereas these rituals and taboos were weak in the Sikh community. But the restrictions & ritual taboos were there for Sikh untouchables castes, for the Mazhabis and Ramdasias. In the Hindu caste system, it is impossible to transit from one caste to another caste, but the change in caste status can be possible by the adoption of new occupations. Whereas Sikhs convert themselves into Sikhism as they want to escape from the inequalities faced by them due to their unequal status, due to their low caste position in the Hindu hierarchy. The change in caste status was considerable upward mobility of the corporate caste among the Sikhs.

Punjab is the agricultural dominant society. The caste discrimination in the state is based on land ownership; Jats are the landlords, most of the land is owned in Punjab by Jat Sikhs. The scheduled caste forms the higher proportion of the population of the state but their land ownership is negligible. The landlessness enforced them to depend on the land-owning community due to a lack of other means to make their livelihood. The asymmetrical agrarian structure of the rural economy makes them subordinate to the landowning community. The process of cultivation has occupied Dalits at various levels, so the system of purity and pollution-based untouchability is not so rigid here.³⁰ But ecological segregation in Punjab cities such as Amritsar, Ludhiana & Jalandhar has the pattern of social spaces in a way that is highly likely to reinforce caste identities. In the villages or rural areas, the Dalit have segregated houses. In the south-western direction of the villages, the site of the Dalit colonies, as well as different names for it, examples Dalit colonies in Amritsar known as 'Thathi' and 'chamarhli' in Jalandhar.³¹ Jat Sikhs is a dominant caste in social, economic, political, and religious spheres as well. Jats have multiple identities, by caste, they are Jat Sikhs, Khalsa or Singh by religion, martial, served in the army in past and present also and landowners by virtue. Sikhism provides new social status to the people who embraced it but the aim of egalitarian social order remains far distant in it. The caste structure with its hierarchical features, get emerged in

³⁰ Jodhka, Surinder S. (May 11-17, 2002). Caste and Untouchability in Rural Punjab. *Economic and Political Weekly* 37:19, p.1815.

³¹ Judge, Paramjit S. and Bal, Gurpreet. (Oct 11-17, 2008). Understanding the Paradox of Changes among Dalits in Punjab. *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol 43, No 41.

the Sikh society. It placed the Jat Sikh at the top and the Dalit Sikh at the bottom of a social hierarchical system.

The communities at the bottom face exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion from the communities at the top. The inter-dining, inter-marriages are found absent between Jat and scheduled caste communities. After the conversion in Sikhism the taboo of 'pollution' or being untouchable not get changed for the Dalits. They get discriminated against and excluded from society as they earlier before the conversion, there is no change in their social status. Discrimination at religious places, in day-to-day life, at the workplace with the Dalit Sikhs, and no commensal relations of them with the upper-status Jat Sikhs. The socio-economic complexities, with discrimination and social exclusion, brought these two communities into the confrontation.

The success of the Green Revolution led to an agrarian change in the post-1960 period, transforming the conventional subsistence character of agriculture into the commercial practice of farming. During that time the division between Dalit and jat got further deepened. The commercial or the market-oriented agricultural change favored the land-owning agriculture community of jats.³² The green revolution also causes the fragmentation in the villages of Punjab, loosened the hold of dominant castes over the Dalits, provide them the alternative means of occupation and living. It provides the opportunity to explore the urban spaces and more employment opportunities.³³ The advent of new educated Dalit middle class with the Abmedkarite movement of consciousness gets witnessed during that time.

The Dalit consciousness persuades the Dalit farm laborers to demand high wages, even though they refused to work without the landowners raising their pay. Traditional farming provides the round year work to the laborers which get reduced in the commercial farming setup. The phase of Dalit immigration to Europe, North America, and the Gulf countries was of great significance at the same time. The immigration process coincided with the influx of migrant workers from Bihar and the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh and, compared to the Dalit workers of Punjab, employed at cheap rates. It further aggravated the contradiction between the dominant peasant caste and the landless Dalit agricultural

³² Gill, Sucha Singh. (2000). Agrarian Change and struggle of rural labour in Indian Punjab. *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol 7, No 1, January-June, pp73-91.

³³ Jodhka, S.S. (March, 2010). Dalits in Business: Self Employed Scheduled Castes in North –West India. *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 45, Issue No. 11, 13.

laborers. These circumstances led the Dalits to seek employment in other alternative sectors. The alternative opportunities for jobs decreased their dependency on the landowners. The emancipation from the traditional occupation with the diversified employment opportunities provide a kind of social mobility, the emergence of conscious new educated Dalit middle class facilitated the Dalit assertion in Punjab. The better-off sections among the Dalit communities are leading the struggle against caste inequalities, discrimination, and social exclusion. The intercaste interactions in Punjab have seen a rise in intercaste contestations.

A social boycott is used for social isolation in rural areas. The social boycott was put on Dalits who were trying to assert or lift their voice for their rights and equal participation in the local power system, partnership in the common land of the village, membership in religious bodies' management committees, entry into the institution of Panchayati Raj, etc. Pandori khajoor village in Hoshiarpur district, Meham and Athaula villages in Jalandhar district, Bhattian Bet village in Ludhiana district, Talhan, Aligarh village in Ludhiana district near Jagron Patteraiwal village in Abohar district, Jethumajra and Chahal village in Nawan Shahr district, Abuul Khurana village near Malout in Muktsar district and Dallel Singh wala, Kamalpur and Hasanpur villages in Sangrur, , Domaeli and Chak Saboo villages in Kapurthala district, Dhamiana in Ropar district, Jhabbar village in the district of Mansa are among the prominent cases of Jat –Dalit conflicts in the state of Punjab.³⁴

Internal Classification of Dalits in Punjab

Dalits in Punjab are divided into 39 castes and subcastes, they are heterogeneous and hierarchical in nature. Dalits are economically backward, socially and politically neglected, and scattered in different religions. Unlike the Brahmanical social order in the Varna system, the Scheduled Caste in Punjab are split in the same manner of hierarchy that distinguishes them from the different groups of the upper castes.

The Chamar's predominant in the Doaba region converted into Ad-Dharm under the influence of the Ad-Dharm movement led by Mangoo Ram in 1920. They were considered impure due to their occupation which deals with animal carcass and hides.

³⁴ Ram, Ronki. (6 Oct 2007). Social Exclusion, Resistance and Deras: Exploring the Myth of Casteless Sikh Society in Punjab. *Economic & Political Weekly*. Vol. 42, No. 40 (Oct. 6 - 12, 2007), pp. 4066-4074.

They excelled in the hierarchical skills and established the leather industry in the Doaba region. The social consciousness, level of education, social and economic mobility, and immigration are much higher in Ad Dharmis in comparison to other scheduled caste communities in Punjab. Chamar is a group of umbrella caste comprising Chamar, Jatia Chamars, Rehgars, Ramdasiaa and Ravidassias. They are mainly located in the Doaba area, but also Gurdaspur, Rupnagar, Ludhiana, Patiala, and Sangrurur. They claimed themselves to the lineage of Chandravanshi clan and also claim the highest social status among the scheduled castes in Punjab. The section of leather workers among them known as Ravidassi and community engage in weaving, initially follows the Hinduism and converted into Sikhism known as Ramdasias. Most of them are Sahajdhari Sikhs popular as 'Khalsa birader'. They get often confused with the Sikhs, Beards, and unshorn hairs like baptized Sikhs are held by most of them and some even worship Guru Granth Saheb, but some of them do not mark themselves as Sikhs.

Mazhabi the second dominant scheduled caste in Punjab, found all over the state, dominant in Amritsar and Firozpur, Faridkot, Mansa, and Bhatinda. Those who baptized to Sikhism known as Mazhabi and those who engage in their traditional occupation of scavenging known as Bhangi and Chuhra. They ranked lowest in the caste hierarchy and nowadays some of them are engaged as agricultural laborers, their women work in the household of farmers. The majority of their population reside in rural areas, those who were living in urban areas working as industrial workers and some are in govt. jobs. Chuhras claim themselves as the descent of saint Balmiki.³⁵ The Mazhabis concentrated in Majha&Malwa area and considers Baba Jiwan Singh as their guru. They formed the most deprived section among the scheduled caste despite having large numerical strength. They have the lowest literacy rate among the Scheduled castes. Occupation wise majority of them works as agricultural laborers on low wages.

The Meghs are Kabirpanthis, also known as Bhagat at some places, have the hereditary occupation of weaving. Some of them settled in Sialkot & Jalandhar engaged in the sports goods industry and making surgical instruments. They rank themselves higher in caste hierarchy than Chamars, as they engaged in cleaner occupations. The Ods are mainly Muslims who rear sheep. Sansisisis also known as Bhedkut and Manesh claimed to belongs to Rajput ancestry. They are wandering tribes have origin from Rajasthan and

³⁵. Judge, Paramjit S & Bal, Gurpreet. (2009). *Mapping Dalits*. New Delhi: Rawat Publication, , pp.40-43.

mostly reside in rural areas and engaged in agricultural labour and low jobs. Dunnas, Dum or known as 'Mahasha', the name 'Mahasha' given to them by Arya Samajis to upgrade their status after the re-conversion to Hinduism from Islam. Traditionally they worked as scavengers and bamboo workers. Now, the majority works as agricultural laborers, working in factories, construction sites, and rickshaw pullers. The Bazigars a nomadic tribe, mainly concentrated in rural areas of Punjab.³⁶ Among the depressed caste clusters, 13 castes were included and 7 castes were notified as Denotified tribes / Vimukta Jatis. This cluster forms 16.53% of the total scheduled caste population. The stigma of criminal tribes with denotified tribes is still attached and the reason for their harassment in society. 18 castes are mostly invisible in the Scheduled caste of Punjab due to their very low population. These are Batwal, Bawala, Dhogri/Dhangri/Siggi, Gagra, Sansoi, Sapela, Sikriband Kabirpanthi/Julaha, Marija/ Marecha, Perna Chanal, Dagi, Darain, Deha/Dhaya/Dhea, Dhanak, Pherana, Sanhai, Sanhal, and Mochi. The numerical strength of most of these castes is less than 100 people, except the Dhanak. Many of them engaged in informal means of employment.³⁷

The religion-based exclusion is not there but the hierarchy of status can be found within the Scheduled Caste group communities. Meghs claim their superiority over chamars, whereas Chamars claim their superiority to all the Scheduled castes in Punjab. Balmiki & Mazhabi divided over the baptism or religious belief they follow in Hinduism & Sikhism. The multi-variation in the identity among the scheduled caste of Punjab is observed.

Punjab has the highest number of Scheduled Caste population but is divided into several religions, sects, and Deras. Their numerical strength is not reflected in the political strength. In addition to the endogamous multi-caste layers with distinct social identities and varying economic levels, they are segmented. The Chuhra and Chamar, the main two caste clusters of Scheduled Caste, split over the religion, sect, the profession they pursue, and advantages/disadvantages they derive from the reservation scheme. Punjab has a 25% share of scheduled caste in job reservation against the 15% Scheduled caste reservation at the National level. A two-fold division of the scheduled caste population was introduced under the leadership of then Chief Minister Giani Zail Singh in 1975. The 25% reservation

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ram, Ronki. (January 21, 2017). Internal Caste Cleavages among Dalits in Punjab. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol LII No.3.

in jobs for SC distributed into 50%(12.5% of the total)to the Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis on a priority basis, but no such reservation policy was implemented in educational institutions.³⁸

³⁸ Jodhka, S., & Kumar, A. (2007). Internal Classification of Scheduled Castes: The Punjab Story. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(43), 20-23. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40276592>.

CHAPTER-5
ANALYSING DALIT ASSERTION
IN PUNJAB: FIELD STUDY

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The discussion of the preceding chapter establishes the fact that the state of Punjab witnessed the presence of all major religions of the land and there were cases of mass conversion from one set of faith to another, especially when the religion of ruler changes with the change in the regime. Besides, the effect of the colonial rule and socio-cultural reform movement during this phase of colonial rule and socio-cultural reforms movements, during this phase of history has a deep impact on the present socio-cultural settings of present Punjab. Also, the gradual transformation in the means of production especially in the non-agrarian sector led to the emergence of some new occupational caste of which some are dominant and some are less dominant. The general perception that Punjab is a state, where people follow the religion of Sikhism seems to be partially true as this part of the land exemplifies the plural character of the nation. This plurality of religion and their interface with the existing caste and emerging sectism, resultant in multiple layers of hierarchy and fragmentation within a caste group, and this fragmentation and hierarchy vary from one region to another depending on the regional equation of the caste and economic positioning. The notion of ‘Dalit consciousness’ which symbolizes the collective aspiration of the different caste groups has subsided by the internal differences among the communities. Inter-caste division among the Dalits has led to the formation of various caste-based social clefts that pushes them further into the cobweb of various protracted social conflicts resulting in fault lines in Dalit unity in contemporary Punjab.

The present chapter is based on the reflexes and observation gathered through the field study in the select district of the state of Punjab especially during the year 2017 to 2019. Since the population studied is very large and most of the person of a caste group are not able to understand the technical terms like assertion and consciousness, I had restricted my inquiry to the political/caste leaders, who play an important role in interest articulations as well as ‘interest aggregation’. Besides, the non-participant observation was also an important tool of inquiry especially in understanding the role of ‘icons’ and ‘symbols’ and structures in understanding the phenomenon of Dalit assertion in Punjab.

Also, participation in informal gatherings, marriage function, etc. as an observer helps in understanding the 'caste consciousness movements' in Punjab. The semi-structured interview schedule was the main tool used for gathering information from the respondents. Since the study area and population are very vast, I have based my study on the interview of the select political and social leaders in the different realms of the Dalit movements. Also, the selection of the respondent was based on purposive random sampling and the snowball method proves very helpful in this regard.

As discussed in the preceding chapters a total of thirty-seven caste has been placed in the scheduled caste list. However, majority of them can be grouped together into two or three major clusters. The first cluster of Mazhabi Sikhs that of *balmikis/bhangis* constitute a total of 41.9 % (30.75 and 11.15 % respectively) of the total scheduled castes population. Similarly, the second case cluster made up of Ad Dharma (15.74%) and Ravidass/Ramdasia Sikhs (25.85%) together constitutes another 41.59 %. Although there is no official data about the distributive pattern of these castes, the reflections from the field suggest that demographically they are also divided on different geographical reasons of the state. *Chamar* has a thick population in the Doaba region and the *Mazhabi* settled in the Malwa/Majha part of Punjab.

Fieldwork provided me the important insights into the dynamics of caste and society in Punjab. For the fieldwork, I visited the main cities namely Amritsar, Jalandhar, towns, and villages of Majha, Malwa, and Doaba. The field study results have been compiled into several sections according to mapping the Dalit castes their fragmentations & differentiations and different forms, manifestations of Dalit assertion. Some affinities and differentiation have already been pointed out among these different caste groups in the earlier studies. The dominant literature on this aspect of Punjab already established the existence of various caste clusters and the context in which they emerged. During the course of the field study, one of the very starting points of inquiry is that how these different caste clusters came into existence in the society of Punjab and also what kind of relationship this group carries within a larger framework of the Dalit identity. It was an inquiry that how these caste groups perceived each other and how and why they place a certain group below or above to a particular group in a larger social construct.

Religion Identity, Cultural assertion, and Fragmentation

Punjab is the land of a conglomeration of several religions. The search for humanistic aspects in then-existing religions led to the birth of Sikhism, however, the persistent inequality and discrimination result in dissatisfaction in Sikhism and this led to the emergence of the Ad-Dharm movement, and several other sects or such faith groupings like the emergence of Ravidassi Deras and many more which continues up to recent past. And this makes Punjab a state of people having different religious faith & affiliations. In my fieldwork in the different villages of the Districts of Jalandhar, Gurdaspur, Nawashehr, Ludhiana, Ferozpur & Amritsar reflected the different religious faith among the people, especially the community belongs to the scheduled caste. There are several movements with spiritual, social, and cultural activities that led to the awakening of Dalits and identity formation among them. Religious beliefs and customs along with the regional peculiarities result in the establishment of many castes and their proto-types with their specificity. In an interview, a Dalit leader of the Amritsar city pointed out the general feature of caste composition in Punjab. The *Mazhabi* and *Blamikis* together constitute the 'Chura' caste cluster. However, their religious affiliations are different. This caste community worshipped *Balmiki* and follows the religion of Hinduism. However, they hold a low positioning in Hindu society. *Balmiki* temple having some feature of *Guru Granth Sahib* is the center point of their community. However, in the last few years, *Valmiki-Ambedkarite* identity has taken root with many sections of the *Balmiki* community. This gradual evolving identity with a slogan 'educate, agitate and organize' aimed for the spread of education and critical consciousness among *Balmiki*-comparatively a less educated schedule castes in Punjab. *Mazhabi* Sikhs are the single largest Dalit community of the state. Historically, they are *Churas* who embraced Sikhism, they traced their religious affiliation from *Bhai Jaitaji*, who become popular with the name *Baba Jeewan Singh* after baptism by the 10th Sikh Guru Govind Singh. Among the *Mazhabis*, *Baba Jeewan Singh* is popular with the name 'Rangretta guru ka beta' (Rangretta as guru's son). This affiliation with Sikhism makes them keener and more enthusiastic towards their religion and their Gurudwara in the village. *Mazhabis* are concentrated in the Ferozpur, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Faridkot, Mansa, and Bhatinda districts of Punjab. Despite their highest population number, they are the one most marginalized section among the Dalits with the lowest literacy rate.

The *Chamar* caste cluster consists of *Chamar* and *Adi-Dharmis* and the Ravidassias –who have both affiliations with the Hindus and Sikhs but are more inclined towards Sikhism. There are a few cases of conversion to Christianity and Islam. However, the general inclination of the *Ravidassias* is towards Sikhism and the *bani* (writings) of *Guru Ravidass* have been honoured to be a part of Guru Granth Sahib.¹ However, this does not ensure equality of treatment. Dalit Sikhs do not receive equal treatment in the upper caste gurudwaras as reflected in the number of *gurumats* (resolutions) adopted by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee from 1926-33 . One section of Chamar follows Hinduism as their religion and claim themselves scion of *Chandravanshis* (for example weaver '*Julaha*').

Boota Mandi was the ideological fulfillment of Ad-dharm movement. Boota Mandi founded by the single caste Chamar, where they are known as Ad-Dharm with Ravidass as the cultural symbol. As the Ad-Dharm movement strengthen it reinforced the other identities to emerge. Boota Mandi is the symbol of proud, self sufficiency, financial well of and social consciousness. The boota mandi means 'Boot Market' or more accurately, 'Leather Market'. The prominent leather trade has contributed immensely to the growth of Boota Mandi. Until around 1930, there was nothing, where Boota Mandi now stands. Boota Mandi was brought on the map of Dalit politics by the Ad-Dharmis of two main sub castes *Kaler* and *Mahey* who were outcaste from their villages. Boota Mandi has emerged as the most important economic and political center of the entrepreneurs of Ad-Dharmis in Punjab. The enterprising Ad-Dharmis finding the avenues modified their skills and ventured into leather and sports goods industries.²

Ad-Dharmis occupies a significant position among the Dalits of Punjab. The consciousness and assertion movement led by Mangoo Ram during the 1920s and 1930s mobilized a substantial chunk of *Chamars* of the Doaba region and played a significant role in transforming their social status and identity. The *Ad-Dharm* movement followed the teachings of *Guru Ravidass* and in 1931 succeeded in registering themselves as a distinct religious community with a demography of 418, 789 members of the community but the movement dissipated soon after its grand success in 1931.

¹ when 5th Sikh guru , Guru Arjun Dev compiled the Adi-Granth he added the bani of Guru Ravidass along with the other gurus and Sufi saint,

² Juergensmeyer, Mark.(1988). *Religion as the Social Vision: The movement against Untouchability in 20th –Century Punjab*. England: University of California Press.

The theology of Ad-Dharm believes that there was a creator god, Adi Purkh (Original being), whose wisdom is based on the ideas of the Saints like Kabir and Ravidass, Gurus, and protestant Bhakats. The backbone of this Movement is the protestant Sant Guru Ravidass, who himself belonged to a Chamar Community. Adi Dharmis use the picture of Saint Ravidass as the mark of Adi Dharmi identity or at their logo. His writings are considered sacred texts. The Ad Dharm followers practice their reverence as the Hindu worships their god and Sikh worships their Guru's. Now, the Ad Dharm transformed into the caste. Ad Dharma is the most prominent caste in the Doaba region of Punjab. The devotee of Ad Dharma worships Guru Ravidass and Ad Dharma was successfully mobilized the Chamar community of the Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur Districts and gave them a kind of confidence. The Ad Dharmis are today among the most well-off, prosperous, educated Caste among the other Dalit communities of the country and far ahead of other communities in Punjab.

Ad Dharma developed the own autonomous religious identity, with the Ravidass as an icon. The Ravidassi refurbish and re-store their community identity with the emergence of Dera Sachkhand Ballan and this Dera further become the Centre of Dalit Activities of Punjab.

In the fieldwork, I came across the fact in some interviews that the Gurudwara's, Dera's, sects are one of the important resembling factors of identity formation or mark themselves different. It also propagates to negate the dominated ideology by establishing their belief system, celebrate their festivals, and have their own icons. Somewhere it also part and parcel of economic prosperity and make the parallel of culture-centric hegemony.

Ad Dharm invented the religious identity as well, their greetings to one another is '*Jai guru dev*' (victory of the divine guru) which has the reciprocity of '*Dhan Guru Dev*' (blessed be the divine guru). The followers adopted the Upanishadic phrase '*Soham*' (I am that) as a mantra, as it implied the basic unity and equality of the world. The followers also appeal to wear red colour either in form of Turbans or as armbands, in part because upper-caste Rajputs in the area near Rajasthan refused to allow lower caste members to wear such a regal color. These methods were meant to differentiate them from the other religions.

However, *Ad-dharma* was the only movement in north western India that has the goal of a respectable place for the SCs through the cultural transformation and political assertion. After a phase of the eclipse, the *Chamars* of the Doaba witnessed a new kind of resurgence under the aegis of *Dera Sachkhand Ballan*. This is a new centre of the emancipation of the *Chamars* of the same Doaba region. Ad-Dharma movement started in Hoshiarpur district and the *Dera* has its head centre in the Jalandhar. The Dera emphasis on the freedom from vices and the campaign against alcohol and narcotics soon culminated in a larger following across the caste community. The Deras became a common point for the followers of different religious practices.

This division among the Chura caste community into various sub-caste groups either due to adaptation of different religious practices or due to change in occupational status or both resultant into increasing layered hierarch among the scheduled caste. Caste endogamy was the way of life for Indian society and it was the first principle of division among the Dalit castes. None of them inter-married and any such instance could invite the wrath of the caste community, particularly the caste of the girl in a patriarchal society. Internal divisions among the untouchables became highly functional for the sustenance of the caste system

The assertive social movement led to the cultural assertion among the various group of Dalit communities in the form of Dera's, which challenge the cultural hegemony of Jat Sikhs. The Dera's are the mode of assertion for the subaltern religiosity and the means of social change. The Dera's are caste-centric, having their religious symbols and religious methods. Dera Sachkhand Ballan in Doaba preached the teaching of Saint Ravidass has the huge following of Chamar Dalits in India and overseas. At the time of the Ad-Dharam movement, the image of Guru Ravidass has projected in a manner that concretizes the newly conceived Dalit cultural space in the state. Ravidass, one of the important names from the Bhakti movement, make attacks or criticizes social oppression and untouchability. Dera Sachkhand in Ballan village near Jalandhar and Dera Chak Hakim near Phagwara was prominent at the time of the Ad Dharam movement, their spiritual spaces provide the path for the manifestation of the social consciousness among the Dalits. Not only in Ravidassi Deras the religious metaphors are also reflected in other Dalit communities with the construction of Balmiki temple at Amritsar by its followers, the building of separate gurudwara by Dalits whether Mazhabi's or else and finding an

alternative in Dera like Sacha Sauda. The modern cultural assertion is also reflected in fusing Ambedkar's identity with Ravidass, the modern teachings with spirituality. The role of Dera is not limited to the subaltern consciousness but they also form the political consent of the different caste groups among their followers.

Dera Sachkhand Ballan is the center of social mobility and social consciousness among the Dalits of Punjab. The Dera Sachkhand Ballan, located in the village Ballan, 12 kilometers from the Jalandhar city. Juergensmeyer writes the Dera dedicated to saint Ravidass "not only provided focus on the spiritual life, but they also functioned as lower caste Centre as well." Dera Ballan comprises the shrine, a communal kitchen (langar hall), dispensary, outbuildings, library, and congregation hall for the capacity of 25,000 devotees with the charitable eye hospital. It publishes a vernacular weekly and distributes Dalit literature free of cost. It also established the school for poor children and providing free education to them.

Dera Sachkhand Ballan is having the same status as Mecca is for Muslims and the Golden temple for the Sikh faith. Dera Sachkhand Ballan has a prominent role in raising the social consciousness, imbibes the feeling of pride among Dalits, and brought cultural transformation among the Dalits of Punjab. It has emerged as the prime 'protector' of Ravidassi identity in recent times. Although Dera has its roots in the 1920s at the Ad Dharm movement Dera was setup by Sant Pipal Dass in early the 20th century. Sant Pipal Dass known as Sant Sarwan Dass lived in the village and taught the poor and the Dera was known as Dera Sant Sarwan Dass. Later a landlord of the village gifted him the land of one Kanal near to his shelter, where the Dera is situated now. Sarwan Dass remained head of the Dera from 11 October 1928 until he died in June 1972. He was succeeded by Sant Hari Dass and Sant Garib Dass. The Dera is presently worked under the headship of Sant Niranjana Dass.

Dera Sachkhand Ballan is a religious institution, preached humanistic values and spirituality and the Ravidassi message for the formation of the casteless society. The Dera is very much active in the local Dalit issues, a focal point in Dalit politics and for Dalit activism. Sant Sarwan Dass was in contact with the Mangoo Ram and at the time of the Ad Dharm movement, Mangoo Ram had visited the Dera Ballan for solidarity among the Dalit masses. The marginalized section of Punjab was oppressed due to the Jajmani system of the caste-based hierarchy and the division of caste among the religions. The

head of Dera Ballan established separate religious centers in Punjab. In 1950 SarwanDass visited Banaras (UP) at the birthplace of Guru Ravi Dass. After witnessed that nothing concrete has existed in the name of Guru Ravi Dass, the Dera Ballan took the task to build the temple at Ravidass's birth city Banaras. With the contribution of Dera Sachkhand Ballan, the mammoth Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan Mandir in the city of Banaras took place. The followers of Dera from India and abroad enormously funded to build the temple which gets completed in 1994. The then president of India K.R.Narayanan inaugurated the temple monument gate, the ceremonial installation of the golden dome atop of the temple was performed by the then BSP head, Kanshi Ram.

Every year at the birth anniversary of the Ravidass, Dera makes special arrangements to the devotees by train from Jalandhar to Banaras to visit the holy shrine of Ravidass. The train is popularly known as Begum Pura express among its followers. The Dera also have strong transnational networks across the globe.

Interestingly most of these caste groups have intra-caste differences over the religious followings and practices, for example, the Chura caste community who were traditionally involved in the practice of scavenging and weaving, in due course fragmented and divided into different religious lines. The Chura Sikhs, called Mazhabi after conversion³, took *Pahul*⁴ abstained from the use of tobacco, wore long hair, and were generally strict in their observance of their orthodox or Kesh Dhari Sikhism. Those who give up their job of scavenging and switched to leatherworking known as 'Rangretta' considered being higher than ordinary mazhabis. The Churas having faith in Islam, called Mussalis and Kutanas and were divided into two groups one who renounced the polluting nature of the job (like scavenging) and restricted themselves to pure food and observed Islam and there were those, who had not made such changes. In the frontier towns of the North-western provinces as in Peshawar, the *Musalli* was a sweeper and grave digger. In the southwest part of Punjab, the *Kutanas* were Muslim sweepers who had settled on the bank of the lower Indus and has given up scavenging and eating carrion. They had taken to making ropes and working in the grass and heeds and some even cultivate the land.

³ The majhabi became a separate caste in Sikhism, In 1881 census both Chura Sikhs and mazhabi sikh are listed.

⁴ *Pahul* or Amrit Sanskar, is the name given in the Sikh tradition to the Baptism ceremony which is also known as the initiation ceremony into the Khalsa "brotherhood

5.1.1 Emergence of a New Religious Identity with Conflict

It is a very important incident that changed the whole structure of Caste emancipation and triggered the disturbances in Punjab by followers of Dera and the other Dalit groups. On the 24th of May, 2009, Six upper castes men armed with guns entered the Guru Ravidass Gurdwara in Vienna (Austria), and started shooting, targeted the two visiting Saints Niranjn Dass and Saint Ramanand from Punjab, who were giving a sermon at that time. Ramanand has died and serious injuries were reported to Niranjn Dass, the head of Dera Sachkhand Ballan. The assailants were offended by the heterodox religious practices of the Dera and believed to be part of the Sikh fundamentalists group. More than 30 followers of Dera were reported injured. When news of the Vienna Attack and death of Saint Ramanand spread, strong violence erupted in Punjab, a state-level curfew was imposed, and the army was called in to restore order.

After this unfortunate killing and attacks on Dalit leaders, had triggered into the violent clashes in Punjab and the followers wants establish a new religion as '*Ravidassi*' different from Sikhism altogether. At that time Akali Dal and SGPC did their best to please Dera Sachkhand Ballan, Jalandhar, so that Dalits don't leave Sikhism but at the same time Government of Akali Dal arrested several Ravidassia leaders during the campaign for the new religion. The Dera Sachkhand Ballan compiled its holy book the Amritbani based on the teachings of Guru Ravidass. The announcement of the new religion was made by the present head of the Dera Niranjn Dass in January 2010 from the birthplace of Gurudwara Ravidass in Banaras. Their new holy book was installed in the Jalandhar temple on the Birth Anniversary of Guru Ravidass on February 1, 2012.

Despite the Dera Ballan other Dera are also very prominent in Punjab. According to the famous newspaper Desh Sewak, Chandigarh, there are more than 9000 Sikh as well non-Sikh Deras in the 12000 villages of Punjab. In Sikh Deras code of conduct (Sikh rahit) is observed whereas non –Sikh Deras like Radha Soamis, Sacha Sauda, Nirankaris, Namdharis, Divya Jyoti Sansthan, Bhaniarwala, and Ravidassi among, they follow the different practices according to their faith.

In the fieldwork, I came across the reality of the presence of more than one worship place and Gurudwara in a single village along with several local Dera's and sects. In the villages, Jatts have one Gurudwara, but the other castes also had constructed their own

place of worship or Gurudwara, which are plural in numbers, for example, Mazhabi has a different one, Ravidassi has a different one. Dera's are also prominently seen there.

The Daulatpur village (a village on the way towards the city Jalandhar), has five worship places, the village has three Gurudwaras, two Muslim Dargah, three cremation grounds. One Gurudwara was constructed by the Jatts, the other two Gurudwaras belongs to the Ravidassi community, the village also has two Dera's, one of Radha Soami Dera and the second are Nirankari Dera. Dera's were considered separate from the religious belief system. The cremation grounds belong to mainly two major communities the Jatts and Ravidassi, meanwhile, the third cremation ground was under construction belongs to the Chuhra community.

The Gurudwara built by Ravidassi followers has the statue of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in the courtyard of Gurudwara. 'Ravidassi Bani' placed in the Gurudwara same as the 'Guru Granth Saheb' get placed & worship in the Sikh Gurudwara's. followers do '*Shabd*' '*Kirtan*' of Ravidass Maharaj. They have a slogan also "*bolo Soh Nirbhau, Shri Guru Ravidass Maharaj ki Jai*" which is similar to Sikh's '*Jo Bole SonihalSatSriakal*'. The priest and followers having the conception that 'RavidassJi' was much elder to Nanak Ji and Nanak preached the teaching of RavidassJi Maharaj. The village population mostly consists of elderly people.

In Ludhiana, the Tarkhan's (OBC) have separate Gurudwara & prefer to go to their own constructed Gurudwara. In an interview the respondent not comfortable calling himself 'Balmiki' as the 'Balmiki' related to Hinduism and the rituals, he insists to call himself 'Bhangi'.

The religion is blended in Punjab, some of the Mazhabi, Balmiki& Chamar community people celebrate the festivals celebrated by the Muslim community and Hindu community. When a respondent (a lawyer & Dalit activist), when asked about the religious affiliation, he belongs to Bhangi community, did not want him to call himself Dalit, he said Mazhabi & Balmiki community does not have any clear take on religion because they follow Sikhism, Hinduism & Islam all. They used to went together for the pilgrimage tour of Anantpur Saheb followed by Naina Devi and Balaknaath and the Pir dargah.

When an educated Mazhabi Sikh respondent (Dalit political activist) asked about religion, he said, ‘professing any religion, the community does not get anything, he said the elder people are more inclined towards the religious faith, whereas the new generation is much religious, they were more practical and aware. He shares the experience one of known in the Gurudwara of Sikhism, “A person from Mazhabi Sikh community got the job as the contractual peon, later he developed religious faith in Sikhism, became the true follower through the religious ceremony of ‘Amrit chakna’, the person used to come to Gurudwara at 4am and did the cleaning work there. Till his lifetime he worked as the cleaner at the Gurudwara never became the priest ‘the Granthi’. While talking to the respondent, I infer he wants to say that they do not follow Sikhism because it has the characteristics of fundamentalism and dominancy somewhere.

The trend of so multiple Gurudwara’s in a single village is the reflection of the struggle of caste in the religious spaces in past and present as well as the hegemony and the reason for the separate place of worship.

One of the respondent ‘Chamar’ by the community, said ‘Sikhism’ has the concept of Langar & Pangat, but it also has discrimination, shared one of the incidents of his village that ‘one of the chamar community girls of his village wants to help in making the langar, but the ‘Jatt’ females not allowed her to make it’. He supported the Dera’s, especially the Dera of Sachkhand Ballan, who said it is proud that somewhere scheduled caste are leading the community and head of the institution.

In the interview with the Dalit activist of Punjab, who belongs to Chura community, said the ‘Sikhism’ initially followed by all the people without any difference, but with time its got dominated by the ‘Jatt’ community, who are Shudra’s in Varna but practice Brahmanism in practice in social & religious aspects. People embrace Sikhism but also follow their dominant culture, practices & discrimination. Most of the Gurudwara’s have the managing body of the Jatts community, they have a financial hold over the Gurudwara’s working, which makes them dominant in religious affairs. There is no space for the SC community in the managing committee, no financial hold in management, no say and power over there. The discriminatory practices of the dominant caste in religious aspects compels the other caste to have their own religious space for worship, no matter it is big or small.

In the Doaba region, there were so many Ravidassi temples in the region, these temples also have Ambedkar's statues or photos, they call Ambedkar '*tiewala baba*', they said '*Ravidass ko ser jhukana hai, Ambedkar kibaat manni hai*'.

At 'Rahpur Khurd' village near Amritsar, one of the respondents told us that 'there are two cremation grounds, one of the Jatts and other of Dalis, due to some consequences once the Dalit get cremated into the cremation ground belongs to Jatts, but later they don't allow to collect the ashes (*Phool nhi chugne dete*)'.

5.1.2 Cultural Assertion of Dera with Social & Cultural factors

The emergence of the Dera can be seen as the emergence of alternate sectism due to incongruence in the basic ideals of Sikhism and persistent inequality in the society. On the issues of Dera, it was found during the study that people were hesitant to admit their faith towards Dera. In the rural areas, especially the marginalized poor Dalit individuals were found a sense of identity which is more respectful and alternative to the dominant interpretation. A respondent, when asked, said Dera's are a matter of moral concern not offers the people anything more than spirituality, not beneficial in financial terms and political terms.

One of the respondents, who is also the student leader of SFI, has the view that 'Dera have exacerbated the phenomenon of castism & discrimination in the society. Their significance is that the followers uplifted themselves from the caste and ritual bondages of the primordial societies'.

The interview with one of the noted scholars and activist K.C.Sulekh provided a deep insight into the trajectory of the Dalit socio-political and cultural construct of Punjab. He shares his view that on 'Dera', according to him the lack of education, superstition among the people led them to follow the Deras. It is the very much 'Brahmanvadi' ideology led the people to become the follower of Deras. The emergence of Dera's is the 'bad fortune of Punjab' it's a setback to the rationality and broad-minded culture of Punjab. Dera's make the people mental slaves.

When asked about Darshan Kumar, layman people don't know him, only the people read and write about Punjab Dalit heard about him having the view, that he is a confused person, he worships Ambedkar, who himself refutes the Dharmashastra and rituals. He

worships 'Ravana' puts the surname 'Asur' as a suffix in his name. It is also an act to focus on or highlight the identity. Darshan Kumar is completely against the teaching of Dr. Ambedkar in manifestation.

One of the respondents, a Dalit leader of Amritsar on the issue of religion & Dera said that the presence of numerous Dera's are there to divide their community into fractions. The unity of the community is broken down; make them divided into every sphere. The SC community is in this trap of the dominant caste, 'he said they divided the SC community as they want to dominate. They know if Dalits were getting united they will agitate, make demands for their rights. Dera's work as that kind of division.

5.1.3 Symbols & Identity

Saint Ravidass is an icon for Dalit, the compilation of his teachings considered as '*Bhagvat Gita*' for Hindu's and '*Quran*' and '*Bible*' for Muslims and Christians respectively. Dalit people have their own religious spaces, different Dera's have their own symbols and flags. Dera Ballan has 'SOH, and 'HARI' like Sikhs have 'EK OMKAR', the Dera have its own '*Amritbani*', '*Ravidassibani*'. The Ravidassi followers at the nameplates of their homes have the inscription of 'SOH' on it, pictures of Ravidass can be seen at the main gates. The graffiti of the Ravidassi village or colonies have the inscription of the teaching of Ravidass. One of the slogans is "*Aisa raj mein kisbhi ko mile Ann, Chote bade sab sam base, rahe Ravidass ke sang*".

The fragmentation among the scheduled caste can be seen, the superiority complex among the scheduled castes, Mazhabi, Ramdassi, Ad-dharmi, Balmiki & Chamar communities have a kind of superiority complex due to their history. The 'Rai Sikh' (lower caste) does not relate with other SC castes. Chamar & Chuhra are distant from each other, there are no commensal relations between the two communities. The assertion cannot only be seen through political participation and mobilization but also through the use of religious and cultural practices and symbols.

Political Mobilization, Representation & Leadership

The political dimension is an important aspect in analyzing the position of Dalits in Punjab. The various factors like religion, caste, kinship, region, language, and leadership are the important determinants in Dalit politics. As the state Punjab consists highest no. of

Dalit population, it consists of the highest share of votes in the electoral politics of Punjab. There are 57 villages in Punjab which have 100% of the scheduled caste population and 2361 number of villages have more than 50% of the scheduled caste. The introduction of a democratic setup and the introduction of constitutional rule in India provided the right to vote to all its citizens without any discrimination. The provision makes every class and section recognize their votes. Dalit becomes an important ally for everyone in factional politics.⁵

In Punjab, the party politics mainly concentrated between the national party the Congress I, and the regional party Shiromani Akali Dal with the CPI, CPI (M), and BSP also mark their presence here. The Akali Dal has been dominated by the upper caste Sikhs (the Jatts). The Akali gain popularity in 1953, by the demand of Punjabi Suba. Akalis claims to have to represent all the Sikhs, but they're always sharp differences in the Sikh community. In the internal classification of the Sikh community caste is the important factor. Punjab being having the highest population of Dalits but did not have that reflection in their political presence. Akali Dal has the domination of Sikh upper castes, the Khatri, and the Jatts. The Dalits who constitute around 25-30% of the Sikh population, remained to the margins of "community affairs". Whereas the Congress party, has good alliance with the non-dominant Sikh caste groups, urban traders, and the other backward & Dalit groups. In 1972-77, Giani Zail Singh was the last non-jaat Chief Minister. The mostly CM were from the dominant community 'JATTS'. Dalits were not ever converted as a political asset in Punjab. Dalits in Punjab the heterogeneous community, having multiple religious practices and they are divided not just in their beliefs but in socially & politically also. In the initial years, Mazbhabi Sikhs have the more inclination towards Sikh religion and Akali politics, whereas Balmiki community with a substantial presence in urban areas, "Hindu" politics of the Jan Sangh in a communally changed politics.

Ad Dharm was the first movement by the scheduled caste of Punjab which has the political edge also. Later it was got supported and get merged with the Ambedkar Scheduled Caste Front. The All India Scheduled Caste Federation was the first party that belongs to the Dalit to contest the elections in Punjab. After the SCF, the Republican Party of India (RPI) came forward in the elections but failed to emerge as a strong Dalit

⁵ Verma, P.S. (1999). Akali-BJP debacle in Punjab: Wages of non-performance and fragmentation, *Economic and Political Weekly* 35,50: 3519-3531.

party. But RPI makes its effort to mobilize the Dalits, make them conscious about Buddhism and propagate the message of Ambedkar.

Till the 1980's Congress party was considered as the secular & neutral party and created the social base among the Muslim minority, landless people, Dalit, and in the middle-class community by its 20 point program for 'total rural regeneration'. In 1975, under the Chief Ministership of Giani Zail Singh, the Congress government in Punjab has introduced a twofold classification of its scheduled caste population. The 25% jobs reserved for the Scheduled caste, of which 50% (12.5% of the total) were offered to Majhabi Sikhs and Balmikis on a priority basis. The scheduled caste community, especially the Balmikis and Mazhabis supported the Congress.

Dalit politics in Punjab entered into a new phase when the Bahujan Samaj Party came into existence. Kanshi Ram a Ramdasia Sikh belongs to the chamar community from Ropar, a leader who shaped the Bahujan Samaj movement into the full-fledged political party on April 14, 1984, on the birth anniversary of B.R. Ambedkar to fulfill the political aspirations of the Dalits of India. BSP adopted the B.R. Ambedkar's ideology and soon turn out to be the political voice of Dalits. It provides new hopes, an alternative, and a strong platform for the Dalit leadership. With the BSP Dalit politics in Punjab entered into a new phase. BSP's ideological plank was there to fight against the issues of purity & pollution and the Brahmanical social order. BSP had marked its presence in the state politics of Punjab in the first election it fought in 1985, especially in the Doaba region of the state when the Ad-dharmis the supporter of the congress switched their loyalties for the Bahujan Samaj Party. BSP used the caste as the medium of political propaganda and succeeded in making the Dalit community politically aware. With the emergence of BSP, Dalits get the alternative choice and also the new point of view.⁶In the initial years of BSP, it was able to attract the Dalit voters, who were the traditional voters of the other political parties. In 1992 BSP contested 105 seats in Punjab and won 9 seats and get 16.19 percent votes out of the total votes polled all over Punjab. In the 1997 assembly elections BSP got only one seat out of 67 which were contested by it. Its vote percentage also declined. Only 7.49 percent of votes were polled. The decline seems to be the resultant of the deep splits and power-sharing decisions with the alliances. Due to that alliance, Dalits feel a detachment from the BSP. The declining trend of BSP continued in 2002 and 2007

⁶ Ram Ronki.(2004). The Dalit Sikhs. *Dalit International Newsletter* (Waterford, CT), 9(3), October, 5–7.

Assembly Elections its performance was also bad as it got only 5.69 and 4.10 percent votes only. The Party gets its lowest phase in the 2012 and 2017 elections, in the last two terms BSP gets zero seats and its Voting percentage is 4.28 and 1.5 respectively. After the 1997 assembly elections, the BSP could not win a single seat in the assembly nor the Parliamentary elections in Punjab. Even its vote share reduced from 16.32% in 1992 to 1.5% in the 2017 Legislature elections as it failed to inspire voters. With the time BSP lost its grip in Punjab, it is not as dominant as it was in the other states, like Uttar Pradesh.

According to Neeru Sharma, BSP failed to get understand the regional, cultural, social, and cultural specificities of Punjab.⁷The notion of purity and pollution, Brahmanism are the main ideological planks of BSP found misfits into the social and cultural domain of Punjab.BSP, which claims to be the party of the oppressed section of the society, had a shocking result in assembly elections of Punjab, even it creates existential crises for the BSP. Even the Scholar raising the question of the idea of assertion which is also connect with the presence of BSP. As per Nirmal Singh, It proves that people are no longer interested in just caste or religion-based politics. The prospect of real development is more important and attractive than dry words like “ethnic identity” and “assertion of caste identity or Dalit identity”.⁸

The Political awareness of Dalits and assertion has been studied by their understanding of Political mobilization, their political participation, and political sociology. Here I discuss the view of those respondents who are actively participated and engaged in the activities of Dalit Politics.

Table: 5.1

Scheduled Caste representation in Panchayats of Punjab 2011-2012

S.no	District	Panchayat	No. of Panchayat in which SC sarpanch elected	Total no. of members elected	
				total	Scheduled Caste
1.	Gurdaspur	1260	194	2617	1117
2.	Pathankot	399	96	1797	594
3.	Amritsar	817	258	5139	1645
4.	Tarn Taran	534	112	736	171

⁷ Sharma, Neeru . (2012) .Caste in Punjab: Political Marginalisation and Cultural Assertion of Scheduled Castes in Punjab. *Journal of Punjab Studies*, 19(1): 27-47.

⁸ Singh,Nirmal. (2014).BSP in Punjab Analyzing, *Economic & Political Weekly* http://www.epw.in/sites/default/files/cache/epw_masthead-new.p, Vol. 49, Issue No. 48, 29 Nov, 2014

5	Kapurthala	549	176	3193	730
6.	Jalandhar	901	474	5545	2621
7.	S.B.S.Nagar	458	122	637	182
8.	Hoshiarpur	1362	485	7821	2821
9.	Rupnagar	590	105	3350	603
10.	S.A.S. Nagar	357	64	1895	489
11.	Ludhiana	908	216	5953	1422
12.	Ferozpur	752	157	4141	802
13.	Fazilka	-	-	-	-
14.	Faridkot	190	39	1364	335
15.	Shri Muktsar Sahib	263	72	2017	665
16.	Moga	337	111	862	773
17.	Bhathinda	314	68	2469	547
18.	Mansa	244	76	1839	592
19.	Sangrur	585	177	4161	1276
20.	Barnala	156	40	1201	274
21.	Patiala	979	294	5909	1646
22.	Fatehagarh Saheb	431	109	2476	757
	Total	12386	3445	65121	20055

Source: <http://welfarepunjab.gov.in/Static/PDF/SCSP/Archives/SCSP-2012-13END.pdf>

The table shows the representation of Scheduled Caste community people in the villages of Punjab in 2011-2012. Punjab the agrarian land, majority of the population living in villages has very less representation of the Scheduled caste community in the Panchayat affairs.

During the course of field study, it has been observed that Dalits contest and win the elections of the Panchayats by having the support of dominant caste members. At the reserved seats, the dominant castes often had a say in deciding who amongst the Dalits should contest the polls. In some cases, even when a Dalit became Sarpanch, the real power remained with the landowning Jatt whose faction had supported the candidate.

As per the discussion with one of the respondents, who branded himself as an Ambedkarite political activist about the political participation of Dalits- “There is rural – Urban and community wise differences as well in the Scheduled caste political participation and in voting behaviour. BSP has only 1-2% stakes in Punjab. Power comes through money. BSP is not there in Punjab as the ruling one, it is incapable to fulfil the interest of the people, as there is no money with the candidates or the followers of the BSP. The leaders didn’t do work at the ground level.”

Respondents have affiliation from any political party have their response according to that, the respondent, who is a retired army officer and the husband of Dalit sarpanch and an Akali supporter said, “Almost all political parties are here, but Akali Dal tries to development of the Dalits. The welfare schemes of Akali dal attract the community. On a similar question, the response of BJP candidate, who is also a two-time counselor of Municipal Corporation Amritsar said, “Dalits still vote for Congress, they feel Congress is good, but Congress looted them for 60-70 Years.”

Another respondent, who is the social and political leader of Dalit said, “Dalit people are the innocent ones, most of them are unaware of their rights, people or the leaders of another party use their weakness for their gains”. Similar views were expressed by the Head of BSP Amritsar who said, our peoples (Dalits) and voters are daily wagers, most of them are poor, illiterate, and unaware, these upper-class parties used them according to its needs, and at the end, they divided our community into different sub-castes.

On the same line, another respondent talked about the Buta Singh, Ex. - Cabinet Minister of Congress belongs to the Dalit community, he said, “He was a home minister of India, a powerful position in the Indian context and can exercise many powers as the Home Minister. But he never helps the people of their community. Another respondent who belongs to Mazhabi Sikh Community feels the same kind of alienation by the Dalit leaders based on the internal classification of Caste.

One of the respondent, the MLA belongs to Balmikis Community feels hopeless when he asked about the future Dalit leadership, being himself as a Dalit Leader he is not so confident about the changing nature of Dalit politics, the respondent said, “We don’t have a capable leader, if any leader is selected then he worked for the party he is affiliated. Another senior leader of the Dalit community, who has 35 years of service in Ambedkar’s mission seems disappointed by the present Dalit leadership, as respondent said “present Dalit leadership is meaningless, they are failed to come together in last 70 years. There is also no hope for future unity that’s why people should stand for ourselves.”

Some of the respondents praise the quota system no matter got benefited from it or not, one respondent who belongs to the Balmikis community, who is not directly benefited by the reservation of 1975 supported the Congress, respondent said, “in our area, only two parties are working Congress and Akali Dal-BJP, BSP is not present there, out of these

two parties, he said that Congress party is better, because it gives them reservation quota. He further criticized the BJP said it has the anti Balmikis policies and said, “We are against BJP because it didn’t support us.”

One of the respondents, an active Dalit political leader at the age of 70 years, respondent said, from last 30-40 years, we are without any capable leader, if we have our leader, people were not supported that leader, we don’t have unity even the Dalits are divided, all opposed each other, we had a Leader, but people were not supported towards him.

The Dalits are facing a crisis of leadership, they feel they don’t have any leader and a political party, as per respondent, “ We don’t have any leader, No one support us, If we have some or create anyone, He becomes corrupt, other parties give some money and then he loses its identity”. Another Respondent added his views in the conversation and said, “If some Dalits register themselves for the elections as the contestant, then others were may kill that person or give some money for the withdrawal of name from the election.

In another interview, the respondent, a Daily wager and active member of Chura Community, said, “In the elections all leaders of the political parties doing fake promises. They only interact with the people at the time of elections to make fake promises, after that they didn’t give any attention to our community. They didn’t give any grant to us, a few thousand rupees of the grant is given to us at the time of Congress which is used for building a roof of 50 sq. yard of the Local religious space.”

In Punjab the local organizations prevail, the voting to any of the political party doesn’t matter, because local level organizations are very much strong and work at the ground level. In earlier times, people buy votes from money, now the organizations have the vote bank, they influence the political parties with it.

When I asked, why the BSP is not so strong in the region, a sarpanch replied “ BSP is not working at the ground level, not work for the education of Dalits, not raised the strong voice against the atrocities over the Dalits. BSP is only making a community urge to them at the time of elections, for vote-seeking purposes”. There are a lot of people nowadays who read & write on Ambedkar. The salutation and greetings of ' JAI BHEEM, JAI AMBEDKAR' are there. Lots of programs, seminars organized on the name Ambedkar, but not get transformed into the votes.

According to K.C. Sulekh 'There are identity crises in leadership after Kanshi Ram among the Dalits, the leaders now don't have to sacrifice will not have care for the community. Only profit and interest-seeking leaders with the aim to get the power to govern by politics.

There should be 3C in leader- **Commitment:** have principles, dedication to the cause

- **Consistency:** not changing the view
- **Contribution:** in concrete terms like B.R.Ambedkar his children die, but not deviate to the cause.

One of the respondent said "*Kanshi Ram have sacrificing nature, he also connected with the people at ground level, but "Maya mein phans gaye"*(engrossed in the affairs of Mayawati). Dalits need a social & Cultural Revolution is a must before the political revolution. Dalit leaders in Punjab not financially strong & lacking a political base.

According to the L.R.Balley (RPI- National Secretary for 6 yrs, RPI also gets 2 seats when he was National Secretary when get asked about the Dalit leadership in Punjab, replied 'RPI was there, but congress makes it vanishes or destroyed it. Being the vice-chairman of All India Action Committee he puts 14 points demands and agitates. Baba Saheb Gaikwad (chairman of the All India Action committee) proposes to have a compromise with Congress. Books written by Baba Saheb Ambedkar are just like GITA but no one truly follows them. There are so many 'Jati's and as much as 'Jati's same no. of Political parties are there, so the fractions are much. The really downtrodden people, the people who work on roads, don't have '*Chetna*', ('Consciousness'), they do not awaken people. For the leadership, we need –Honesty, Dedication, and Devotion. And have to win the confidence of the people. Now, the people are lacking all the things.

He claims himself as the unsung hero of Dalit causes. Did so much for his community, went to jail so many times for that, 35 cases were registered against him. Now no one has that much courage to fight for that cause.

When asked about BSP presence in Punjab, the Sarpanch of a village, who himself a Dalit, responded 'BSP is nowhere in Punjab. BSP candidates and the BSP followers have

no money with themselves, so how could they work to help others. So, why do people go for BSP?

When questioned about the current Dalit leadership situation from A respondent who is a Mazhabi Sikh (worked as an ex .Town Planner in Punjab government) said ‘There is one for Dalits, there were so many political parties on the name of Dalits but did nothing for them, for their upliftment. There is no Dalit representation of Dalits in Punjab. The scenario and situation of Dalits are different from one district to another. One district people didn’t support people of another district people.’ The most deprived section is the laborer one, daily wager, these are not educated, engaged in to meet their daily needs, so how can they came to know about Ambedkar and his teachings. **“baah fadn wala chahida hai”** (need a leader to back them up at every point to time) said they need strong leaders who can fight for their community, resolve their plights, and lead their community.

On the question of Dalit leadership and BSP, the Ambedkarite political activist replied ‘there is no big leadership among the Dalits, all who claims to be Dalit leaders are self-centered people, and YES men of the big political parties seeks for their advantages. BSP in Punjab is just like **“Nalayak baccha jo school nahijate, 11.5 months Padhta nhi, te last 15 din wich syllabus khatam krna chahida h, ta pass hona”**. It is just like a school kid who never went to school but wants to geta pass and promoted to the next class without hardwork. .” BSP didn’t look 5 years in our condition, it comes at the time of elections for the votes only. There is no strong BSP leader in Punjab. If ever the BSP leader won, they only concern for themselves, not for the people. He further said Avtar Singh Karimpuri is a member of Rajya Sabha for 6 years but he didn’t look in our area, he works for his area only”. Presently BSP is just like a shop or business party. Mayawati (Head of Bahujan SamajParty) collected crores of rupees, but she didn’t spend a single rupee for Punjab. After the death of Kanshiram, Mayawati becomes ignorant towards Punjab. Another respondent response to the same question, “In our area, the condition of BSP is very bad and miserable. They work in U.P only. The leaders of BSP are not working for Punjab. If BSP invests in the cause of Dalits in Punjab, then only Dalits will think about it. Another respondent replied that ‘There is no name or popularity of BSP supremo Mayawati is there in Punjab, as she doesn’t visit there not concern over their

plights. After Kanshi Ram's death, no Dalit wave by any political party has been seen in Punjab to unite them. Even Kejriwal did visits, and raised the Alcoholism & Drugs issue'.

The respondent who was earlier part of BSP feel disappointed with the role and performance of BSP in Punjab, The ex-member of BSP said, "On 6 Dec 1956, The topic of Dalit was wrecked after the death of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar. In 1964, Kanshiram revives the discourse, raised the hopes of a new beginning for Dalits but after the death of Kashi Ram on 9 Oct 2006, again the efforts stopped up. Now BSP is in an awful condition not in Punjab, but in the whole of India, the party is in a miserable condition. BSP is in urgent need of a leader like Kanshiram. Now there is no hope of the restoration of BSP in upcoming years."

One of the respondents and president of BSP Amritsar said, the electoral democracy of our country is in threat; people only listen to the louder voices, which make their base by the utilization of money, power, and media. Other political parties have economical resources, muscle power, and good contact in the administration. He added, "What we the Dalits have, our peoples are unaware, uneducated, poor and unemployed." We are in day-to-day struggle, but media avoid us, they don't want to recognize and raise our voices."

Mazhabi Sikhs of Punjab also want political mobilization and their active role in political participation. One of the respondents belongs to Baba Jiwan Singh Sanstha, Amritsar respondsto the question of BSP said, "Bahujan Samaj Party is the party for Dalits, but due to fractions among the Dalits, the united stand has not been seen yet, people vote mostly to the personality of the leader, not the party. If all the sections of Dalits get united party will definitely grow.

One respondent of Balmikis Community and the head of Balmikis Yuwa Sabha Amritsar Said, "from Childhood we are seeing only two parties, one in Congress and another is Akali, BSP is an Uttar Pradesh based party, here we even don't know about the party's Candidate.

When asked about the question of Dalit leadership in Punjab, most of the respondents replied that Dalits are not allowed to come forward for active leadership. Mostly the big parties bribe the local contestant or they make low profiling of him by having the propaganda. Even some of the respondents do not consider BSP as the political party of Dalits, they said it is for the 'Bahujans', not for Dalits, it includes all castes which only

exploit Dalits, they want to maintain the hierarchy of upper castes on lower caste communities.

BSP is only best at the time of Kanshiram but not after that. Even the BSP is a poor party in Punjab that has no funds for its candidates. The other political parties focused on fetching votes, not focused on the real problems of Dalits. Group discussions with Dalits and some personal interviews with Dalit representatives reinforced that caste continues to be an important player in political power relations. The majority of people feel that they don't have any political representation; they know the importance of their numerical majority in electoral politics but feel marginalized. They are suffered from leadership crises. In the conversation with different leaders, one thing is observed that the leaders do not seem to be economically mobilized.

Education among the Dalits

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar believes that deprivation from education remains one of the important reasons for the marginalized position of Dalits in Indian society and he laid down a strong foundation for the importance of education among the Dalits. The element of rationality will increase with the horizontal and vertical expansion of education and this helps in breaking various shackles which the Dalit society owns in various part of the land. The importance of education has been seen in the slogan 'Educate, Agitate and Organize' given by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. Before the Constitutional rights in India, all the people were not able to attain equal rights of education. From the very beginning of the Varna social order, Dalits& women were not allowed for learning Vedas, and also are excluded from formal education. Dalits always struggle for education and remained deprived socially, economically, and educationally backward. JyotibaPhule and B.R.Ambedkar encouraged the Dalits for the education and put effort into their upliftment. Savitri bai Phule, wife of the Jyotiba Phule works in the direction of the education of the women, which she considered as indispensable for empowerment. During the phase of colonial rule, the opportunity to avail the education was very limited, and only upper castes/classes have the opportunity to avail themselves of it. Generally, the section of scheduled castes and tribes remained aloof of it with some exceptions. But the introduction of western education has also opened new horizons and various forms of mobility to those people who get access to education. Very few people from the scheduled caste were successful in

able to gain an education. The unevenness in the literacy rate among the categories of unreserved, SC & ST reflects the discrepancies.

Table: 5.2

Literacy Rate among the Scheduled Castes in Punjab

S. No	Caste	Population			Literacy Rate (%)		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
1.	Chanal	97	49	48	86.2	95.5	76.7
2.	Sarera	14,419	7,433	6,986	84.8	89.5	80
3.	Ad Dharmi	1,017,192	519,947	497,245	81.5	87.2	75.5
4.	Kabirpanthi, Julaha	84,711	44,323	40,388	79.8	84.1	84.1
5.	Darain	865	460	405	79.2	85.7	71.9
6.	Bhanjra	3,659	1,850	1,809	76.9	81.7	71.9
7.	Dumna, Mahasha, Doom	202,710	106,370	96,340	73.4	79.3	67
8.	Batwal, Barwala	19,979	10,473	9,506	73.1	79.3	66.2
9.	Chamar, Jatia Chamar, Rehgar, Raigar, Ramdasi, Ravidasi, Ramdasia, Ramdasia Sikh, Ravidasia, Ravidasia Sikh	2,078,132	1,097,815	980,317	72.8	78.6	66.2
10.	Dagi	322	181	141	72.6	78.3	65.3
11.	Khatik	14,482	7,651	6,831	71.6	79.1	63.1
12.	Megh	141,023	74,331	66,692	69.8	76	62.9
13.	Barar, Burar, Berar	8,451	4,417	4,034	69.1	75.4	62.2

14.	Balmiki, Chuhra, Bhangi	866,953	449,929	417,024	65.9	71.5	59.9
15.	Perna	68	38	30	63.9	65.7	61.5
16.	Sansoi	456	246	210	63.3	74.4	50.6
17.	Kori, Koli	24,921	13,513	11,408	63.2	70.5	54.4
18.	Sirkiband	57,555	30,246	27,309	60.6	66.5	54
19.	Sanhal	1,538	831	707	60	69.5	49.2
20.	Marija, Marecha	260	158	102	59.6	60.1	58.6
21.	Pasi	39,111	21,456	17,655	57.4	64.9	48.1
22.	Bazigar	241,125	124,033	117,092	57	67.1	46.4
23.	Mahatam, Rai Sikh	516,695	265,553	251,142	55.9	65.5	45.9
24.	Dhanak	89,406	47,157	42,249	55	61.7	47.4
25.	Mazhabi, Mazhabi Sikh	2,633,921	1,391,552	1,242,369	54.5	59.3	49.1
26.	Sansi, Bhedkut, Manesh	122,201	62,889	59,312	50.3	57.8	42.5
27.	Mochi	8,763	4,585	4,178	50.3	57.4	42.4
28.	Dhogri, Dhangri, Siggi	391	207	184	49.1	55.8	41.9
29.	Pherera	80	47	33	48.6	68.2	15.4
30.	Od	32,061	16,725	15,336	47.2	55.9	37.7
31.	Sanhai	359	191	168	45.6	58.1	31.1
32.	Gandhila, Gandil Gondola	3,513	1,825	1,688	45.1	55.1	34.4
33.	Bauria, Bawaria	125,259	65,107	60,152	43.3	51.2	34.8
34.	Bangali	4,690	2,436	2,254	35.6	39.7	31
35.	Sikligar	11,807	6,219	5,588	34.8	39	30.2
36.	Gagra	799	421	378	34.3	43.2	24.3
37.	Deha, Dhaya, Dhea	10,560	5,325	5,235	19.6	23.2	15.8
38.	Nat	3,902	2,032	1,870	18.6	22.5	14.4
39.	Sapela	5,872	2,997	2,875	15.5	18.5	12.3

In Punjab AD-Dharmis and Chamars are the most educated community among the scheduled castes. Most of the government offices are dominated by the Ad-Dharmis& Chamars but they did not mobilize the other scheduled castes such as Mazhabis. Chamar has the kind of dominating situation among the Scheduled Castes in Punjab, Mazhabis&Balmikis are the most deprived section and also felt threatened by the situation.

Education is a very important aspect to measure the growth of the community. An educated person has status in society, can also do productive for his community. Mazhabi's, Balmikis, Sansi communities are the poorest among the Scheduled Castes; the literacy level is also very low among them. Dalits are uneducated and even the majority of people are not able to write or read basic words. They know the value of education and want their kids and the next generation to be educated. There are several reasons responsible for the lack of education among Dalits. During fieldwork, I observed a few of them through the respondent's views on questions related to education.

On the question of why the Balmikiis not much educated and what being the situation of education in their community. A Balmiki respondent replied: 'we don't have any 'role model/ideal types in our community in this regard he absence o which results in a near absence of urge and awareness among the fellow community members. We are not stopped from school or getting educated. But the problem is that one needs to set an example. In old times "if one get educated and get the job, the person was 'ideal' for that community. But now the mentality is changing, people are getting graduate and postgraduate is normal. Now it is easy to get the work and meet the needs of daily life.

Mazhabi Sikhs, Ambedkarite respondent, when asked about the awareness and importance of education opined that-' Education has a significant role in awareness and to get jobs. Baba saheb aware about its importance and we are following that, now we are enrolling ourselves in college education to gain the knowledge and to come in the stream of life. To get more people of our community aware of the importance of the education system, we do a screening of Baba Saheb movie screening in our village, so the people get to understand the value of education.'

One of the respondents on replied on the question of education said, No quality education for the Dalit students. As most of the Dalits are poor, not able to send their children to private schools so they mostly went to government schools. Private Schools have some quota for economically weaker sections, but now Brahmin's, Jatt's have their quota in economical backwardness, Dalits left behind here also. Only general category children able to get 80-90% marks, they have the facility of tuitions, private education, and English medium education. Dalit children study in govt. schools, with no facility, the teacher education ratio is also miserable. So, how can they compete with other children? There are very less SC children who get around 80% marks.

SC is relatively less educated than the other communities, so how can they relate it with education. Those who got educated, don't care about their community for upliftment. They are not united, separate castes in SC's, superiority and inferiority complex among them. No job leads Dalit youth towards alcoholism, they mostly earned easy money by 'just delivering the drugs(pudiya)'. As the work of laborers now done with the people coming from UP,Bihar, Jharkhand, called them 'Bhaiya'.There is a Public and private school divide needs education for emancipation.Need or demands for equal education & employment. ***"We won't need Aata –Dal scheme."*** Education should be there so society will progress.

One respondent from the Balmiki, working as the sweeper in Municipal Corporation Amritsar, when get asked about the need for education that, "we know the importance of education and we are trying it hard. We know this thing that if we are S.C and our marks are less then also we get a job. But the situation is not so simple, we don't have food to eat, our family conditions are not survivable, if our children are not supported us, then we are not able to feed ourselves.

A similar response comes from another respondent who is Mazhabi Sikh and the ex-army personal said that, what do you think, we are happy with this condition, no we are not, we are just helpless, my son was got good marks, but in 12th standard, he was failed twice, then he leaves the school, I had a dream that my son becomes a high-rank officer in the army', further he added that 'the Education is for rich peoples only, we don't have tuitions, we don't have money for private schools that's why we are not achieving our goals'.

Even the Akali government also cheats Dalit students in the name of free education for those who get 80 percent marks in class, how we get 80 percent marks without sufficient resources, general students have proper classes and tuitions as well. Dalit students are going to government schools where the everyday teacher is absent, only less than half of staff members are present. 80 percent marks only get by the general students. The government propagated that they made meritorious schools for us, but there is no student of Dalit studying there.

Respondent and head of youth Sabha related with Balmiki community said educated people are well behaved, Educated person consider everyone equally. But an Illiterate person thinks that he knows everything and considers others as an idiot. The illiterate person never takes work seriously.

A shopkeeper and social activist of Balmiki community on the question of less proportion of students in schools and universities said, “We are poor, we have only two options first to feed ourselves or second to teach ourselves, some are educated in the field of humanities but they still jobless, if they are engaged in some work then there is less chance to move in the wrong way. The contemporary education is also double standard, one of our known have two degrees in the master of arts, he was trying a lot to get a job but failed, now he is binding the books, another has a degree of B.com and after study for years, he is run a meat shop.

Another respondent of nearly sixty years age and who is Mazhabi Sikh responded to the question of awareness said, “People more aware when they get an education, educated person create more awareness. If someone has money he is also going to the wrong side, if someone has no money but has an education then he can stop thousands of those who are going to the wrong side”.

A respondent who is the senior leader of Dalit community and the famous Ambedkarite, have deep faith on their knowledge and skills said, we are the disciple of Balmiki, you may be noticed in every sculpture or image Balmiki has a Pen in its hand and he writes a “Ramayana” a most important epic of India, Our community indulges in sweeping, they forget that they have to choose pen not to broom. It is observed in Doaba also those who are related with their hierarchal occupations they are marginalized.

One respondent and the head of Balmiki mandir said, we are not dumb or weak, we are backward due to our limited resources, you see, Dr. Ambedkar is also from our community, he wrote the constitution of India, no one is more educated than him.

“People think we need their feeding, they thought we need their help, No we don’t. We need our rights only, which is taken by us through planning. We are the natives of this land, this land is our, they (Brahmins) come for shelter only, we provide them, they use our innocence and slowly and gradually became the master of us. They occupy our resources, ideas, and even land, we are forced to live outside the villages. But it was past. Now we speedily get an education, we are enlightened, we have knowledge of our history, our heroes and our Movements. Now the " Dalit - Raj is coming soon.” reply of the respondent on the question on Education.

Migration: A building of Status or Prestige

The state of Punjab witnessed a high rate of migration, mostly to foreign countries. The migration from Punjab has a historical context that starts from the British times, after the annexation of Punjab as the colonial territory. Britishers recruited the Mazhabi Sikhs in the British army and developed the canal colonies in Punjab. In many of the official texts and narratives, they were branded as a martial class.

In Punjab, the Doaba region has a very high rate of migration, even some villages are having a population of elder people, in local language these village known as ‘Jatheriya de Gaon’, villages of old people. Dalits who got settled abroad have also invested back in Punjab by different means and re-affirming their asserting identity. There are so many Dalit gurudwara’s and Dera’s that have been built by the support and contribution of the Dalit diaspora. The Dera Sachkhand Ballan in Jalandhar and Ravidass temple in Banaras has been built with the support of Dalit NRI’s. “*The ceremonial installation of the golden dome atop the temple and the temple’s monumental gate, built with the financial support of the Dalit diaspora, on July 16, 1998*”.⁹

The financial mobility changes the nature of the rural structure of Jatt hegemony in Punjab. However it is also true that all the Dalits are not get benefitted and they are still

⁹ Jodhka, S. S. (2004). Sikhism and the caste question: Dalits and their politics in contemporary Punjab, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 38, 165–92.

facing marginalization, the migration is very different for them, engaged in the blue-collar job in Arab countries. The Poor and Dalits send their children to Arab Countries, Dubai and Iraq are the first preference. The majority of Dalits going to Singapore, Malaysia, and the Gulf Countries However, as Judge and Bal (2005) have argued, the migration of the Punjabi Dalits neither followed any such perception that their conditions would undergo change nor was there any increase in migration rate.

One of the respondents belongs to the Chuhra community from Amritsar, on the question of Dalit migration responded that ‘every parent desire to saw their children as the settled one, having a good source of income and rich. In the Punjab dynamics due to the migration trend and the social prestige attached to it, most of us also want our children to get settled abroad, live alive and happy life. But due to limited resources, our children were going to Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Dubai. The survival in these Arab countries is also very tough, most of the people from our community engage as the workers there due to low education level. Even for some people, it is difficult to know whether their children are alive or not.

The migration of Dalits is not in western countries, who are rich and get well educated can only afford the lacs of rupees for the Visas of England and America. Dalit are the poor ones, to send our children in Arab countries we have to collect loan from society, Only some can survive there and get success but the majority have come back to the native places.

The respondent from Mazhabi Sikhs from Amritsar on the migration issue said ‘In the area of Jalandhar-Hoshiarpur-Nawanshahr from every single house they have someone settled outside India because of prosperity in their houses. In Amritsar, migration is not an observed phenomenon. We have limited outskirts approach.

The respondent, who is a senior Dalit leader from the Majha area said, ‘lots of people from Majha area lived in foreign countries but support to their community is less observed, which is the much-observed phenomenon in the Doaba area. The respondent said we have to learn something from the Doaba. They are united, they fight for each other not from each other’.

Similar views are given by the Mazhabi Sikh respondent from Amritsar, retired army personnel said, the major problem with our Mazhabi community is that they don’t learn

from the experiences from other communities of Punjab. The Chamars of Doaba have a good status and have migrated to western countries. The Chamar community migrated to Canada now have Canadian citizenship because they are united in every problem and supported each other. But the people of our region and community are divided. There is no single leader from our area, no consensus on one name, they don't want to unite. The prevailing social-economical backwardness is somehow is the result of all this.

Another Mazhabi Sikh respondent, on the question of the impact of foreign migration, said, the Ram Tirath of Rishi Balmiki also the outcome of NRI's funding. In Amritsar the Balmikis have full of resources, they have foreign migration, setup their business, and also have government jobs. They occupy all the structures of politics.

Dalit Consciousness & Hierarchy

As there are 39 scheduled caste communities in Punjab residing in a different part of Punjab, economically some are more equipped in comparison to others. This section of the study is an attempt to discern the caste-differentiation and analyzed their relationship with other communities.

One of the respondents, a social worker, working for the post-matric scholarship of Dalits, said there is a superiority complex in some of the SC caste community from the other caste communities of the SC. Politicians make advantages of the reservation & division of 50% for the SCs in Punjab. The congress has divided in whole India as well as Punjab's Scheduled caste. If there are a total of 10 seats, they are divided into 6:4. Dalits are fighting why they got 6 and why we get 4. We (Dalits) have to fight collectively for the one-fourth share in total.

One of the respondents, a Dalit political activist said, 'Some Privileged Scheduled caste has a superiority complex. Mazhabi, Ramdassi, Ad-Dharmi, Balmiki, Chamar have superiority complex due to their history. There are Rai Sikhs (lower caste) who do not relate with other SC caste. Rai Sikh is placed in the SC list in Punjab, considered as OBC in UP, and ST in Himachal Pradesh. Kanshi Ram wants to unite all the Scheduled Castes. There is the misconception assumed by the other castes of the SC, that BAMCEF and RPI are the parties or the group of the Chamar's not for Valmiki's and other SC. This misconception is spread by Brahmin's & Baniya's. Balmikis the workers attached with

cleaning occupation worked in the households who mostly belong to the upper caste and mislead the Balmiki about the RPI and BAMSEF’.

As per Sulekh 91 years old, renowned Dalit writer and activist on the question of fragmentation among Dalits said, “This is the tragedy that no status, no representative till now is much strong among the Dalits, ‘who will unite all the Dalits’ this is the question in the present scenario and for future also. Only Baba saheb Ambedkar fights to take a stand for the unity of Dalits, now Dalits are fragmented and separate communities claim them. Dalits are not conscious and united due to fragmentation among them now the Dalit movements are jati-focused (Caste-Centric) (Sulekh) said and write that Dalits have to transform ‘Bhim shraddha’ into ‘Bhim Shakti’. Baba Saheb has the power to unite the people, created the revolutionary consciousness among Dalits. Power is called only the power of unity, nowadays we have several Dalit associations, different in different cities which is the worst scenario. Various rallies take place in Ambedkar’s name by various political parties, Dalit organizations but it would not come into ideology, it’s the worst tragedy’.BAMCEF came with the ray of social consciousness, but divided into many more parties”.

The respondent, who is a political activist who belongs to the Chamar community, on the question of Dalit consciousness responded “People are very less aware of the collectivity, he gave the example of the reaction of Dalits on the SC/ST act judgment of atrocities act, he said when you asked the Dalit community about the act nobody will be able to provide the correct answer. Most of the people had the misconception that it is related to the reservation in jobs and scholarship. This misconception is due to a lack of education, awareness, and consciousness. There are leaders, Professors. and many educated persons but they don’t correct the agitators. Even from the agitators, no one tells them about the true interpretation of the act. There were very few people who know about the ‘Shamlat’ land. If they know about it, there were no struggles for it. Not aware of Dalit rights and Dalit lands.

Another respondent, who is a social worker and also works as a facilitator for availing post-matric scholarship for the Dalits. There is no collective consciousness in Dalits of the Malwa region due to Communism. Communists brainwashed and mislead the people. They don’t lead the people to work for their community and its unity. Respondent gave the example of Punjab University Dalit student organizations have the picture of Bhagat

Singh, who himself detach from the 'caste', it detaches the Dalits from their roots and struggle, engage them into something else. The Communist organizations in Punjab have much influence on the life of the people. They formed various unions like Kisan Union, Mazdoor Union but the leaders are JATT (dominant caste) and the bonded labor is still there. Dalits are still working as the bonded laborers; they are not the leaders in communist organizations. There is a difference between Doaba Dalits and Malwa Dalits, the latter one is the most backward one.

One of the respondents who activist of Dalit rights, on the question of consciousness among Dalits said, 'In the Scheduled Caste community the caste identities were maintained in the past and the present also, there is lack of commonality, no common symbols to relate with each other. There is no umbrella party or an ideology where they feel the belongingness. In the search for identity different Dalit communities followed different routes and practices. Political parties are also not interested to make them united, the division and marginalized status of Dalits benefitted the political parties. The westernized education and lifestyle helpful to have a good life but it is not working about their unification'.

The respondent belongs to the Chura community and an Ambedkarite said 'Sikhism main reason for not having the consciousness among Dalits. Sikhism is good in the initial years but now dominated by Jatt Sikhs, who have a Brahmanical mindset. Lower castes follow Sikhism, are not able to get the true teachings of Ambedkar. The Chamar are the most prosperous community among the Dalits in Punjab as they studied hard and followed the teachings of Ambedkar. Among the Balmiki's only a few prosperous mostly are deprived. Those who are prosperous dominate the large community. The prosperous don't guide their community and people for the upliftment who are backward. Most of the Dalits still under the below poverty line only a few of them are economically prosperous.

The respondent, on the issue of consciousness, said, 'The reservation has the false propaganda that only conscious class and the creamy layer is getting benefitted by the reservation making the deserving lower caste, not the beneficiary. In the 'A' or 'B' group jobs the reserved seats not get filled whereas the group 'D' jobs reservation overflows. If the so-called creamy layer doesn't get it then who will? The poor are not educated how can they get the job.' Only a few are educated get the reservation benefits. The 'circulation of Dalit elite' concept is there when it comes to the benefits of reservation.

Creamy layer concept not applied to SCs. Discrimination is only legally eliminated but still in practice and can be seen in the attitude of the people. The superiority attitude and complex behavior of the upper caste with the lower one are still there.

The respondent working as the town planner said on Dalit consciousness and upliftment that 'Employment is the most important thing for consciousness and upliftment. But there is a low literacy rate among the Dalits, mostly are unemployment. Poverty among Dalits is another major problem. The unemployment led them to be inclined towards drugs & alcoholism. He further added "*Nasha sudha rgaya to bahut kuch sudhar sakta h*".

The respondent from Mazhabi Sikh community on the fragmentation of Dalits said, Division among the Dalit community is planned and it was the conspiracy of Manuwadi people. There are different jatis in SCs. It has been done to maintain them as separate and easy for domination. Jatt's were also Shudra's, but they were getting highlighted. The Dalit communities follow the teaching of Ambedkar get flourished and become the elite class in Dalits. Some communities have the clashes like Balmiki and Mazhabi communities have clashes in Amritsar.

Dalit Literature and Consciousness

Literature always played a major role, to make people awaken & conscious. The intellectual activities reflected in literary expressions have a major contribution to the formation of Dalit dialogue and consciousness of Dalits. The writings from the Dalits are one of the visible forms of protest. The Dalit concerns can be traced in the writings of Gurmat, Bhakti movements, and the Sufi movements. The poetic style of literature with folklore and folktales makes a great impression on society. The untouchability and discrimination within the Punjabi society addressed by the writings and poetry.

As per Prof. Raj Kumar Hans's the literary tradition of Dalits is age-old. It was getting started in (1655-1705) with Bhai Jaita also known as Jeevan Singh. It was said that he carried the severed head of Guru Teg Bahadar Ji from Delhi to Amritsar. He composed the devotional epic 'Sri Gur Katha' based on Guru Gobind Singh's life. There were several Dalit poets and writers get noted that was Sadhu Wazir Singh (1790-1859), Giani Ditt Singh (1852-1901), Sadhu Daya Singh Arif (1894- 1946) was the first Dalit Punjabi poet

who enjoyed the popularity as enjoyed by Waris Shah, Daya Singh's poetry was secular and contemplated as the Sufis way.¹⁰

In the 1920s the Ad-Dharm movement strongly opposed the caste system and its two weeklies namely *Adi Danka* in the 1930s and *Ujala* in 1948 had a significant role in raising the Dalit consciousness. *Adi Dharm Mandal* from Jalandhar circulated the *Adi Danka* weekly in both Urdu and Punjabi languages. *Adi Danka* not only renowned and successful among the *Adi Dharm* community of Punjab but also among the NRI's who hails from Punjab. '*Ujala*' was started in 1948, at Dr.B.R.Ambedkar's birthday. The weekly brought the consciousness among the Dalits through the philosophy of Ambedkar and views of other prominent writers published in it. The weekly was followed by other monthly and weekly papers, which served as the means of social activism. The two poets namely Gurdas Ram Aalam and Chanan Lal wrote in a very radical way regularly in the '*Adi Danka*' columns. Gurdas Ram Aalam was said to be the first Punjabi poet with Dalit consciousness. The poetry books written by him were revolutionary in writing, they were focused on the social and economic segregation faced by the marginalized section due to the caste system.¹¹

Bhagwant Rasulpuri, in '*Dalit Literature in Punjabi*', extensively analyzed the writing on the Dalit issues in Punjab, from the time of pre-independence of India to the present time. He divided the writings of the Dalit literature into four stages. The first stage consists of the time of pre-independence of India, the writers raised the voice of Dalits through poetry and brought out social, economic & mental plights of Dalits through the collections of a poem like '*Je mai mar giya*', '*Alle Phatt*', '*Uddiya andhooraan*', '*Apna aap*'. Prof. Puran Singh, Mohan Singh, Dhani Ram Chatrik, and Dhani Ram Chatrik were the famous poets of that time. The second-generation Dalit writings were more rebellious in writings, they criticize the Brahmanic character of the society. The writer highlighted the miserable conditions of Dalit in society and the socio-economic exclusion they face in their day-to-day life. The main writers of second-generation are Dr. Manmohan in his work '*Neelkanth*', Jaipalin '*Nazam Kadon Chupsi*', Mohan Tyagi in '*Dhooa in da*

¹⁰ Hans, Rajkumar. (22Nov.2011). *Rich Heritage of Punjabi Dalit Literature and its exclusion from Histories*; retrieved from https://roundtableindia.co.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3085:rich-heritage-of-punjabi-dalit-literature-and-its-exclusion-from-histories-12022&catid=124&Itemid=140#:~:text=The%20Punjabi%20dalit%20literary%20tradition,around%20Guru%20Gobind%20Singh's%20life.

¹¹ Ibid.

dastawej’, Boota Singh Ashantiin ‘Chanani do Boota’, Sadhu Singh Shudrakin ‘Nav Manthan’, Nanak Singh Sant Sekhon, Gurbaksh Singh Pritlari, Santokh Singh Dhir, Hira Singh Dard, Sujan Singh.¹²

Later in the third generation, writers wrote about the multi-faceted expression of Dalit life. It presented the horrifying details of Dalit life, the tragedies they faced, exclusively the slavery, poverty, and atrocities faced by the Dalits from the upper castes. Kirpal Kazak, Prem Gorkhi, Bhoora Singh Kaler, Nachhattar, and Atarjit were the main writers at that time. Atarjit’s ‘*Bathloo Chamar*’ was a very famous book written on the mental state of the Dalits. The writer also wrote the Dalit labour sufferings and presented the caste & class dimension in their stories, ‘*Mitti de rang*’, ‘*Jeen Maran*’, ‘*Arjan Safediwala*’, ‘*Dharti Puttar*’ were the famous ones. 1980 onwards the fourth generation of Dalit writers, were considered the golden age of Punjabi Literature. Dalit stories were written in an effective manner and also became an integral part of research and teaching at an academic level. The Dalit plight and their exploitation are expressed through autobiographies, novels, and plays as well. The sufferings of women were also get addressed¹³.

Sant Ram Udasi and Lal Singh Dil were considered the revolutionary poets in the Punjabi literature; they brought the Dalit consciousness with their writings to the masses. Sant Ram Udasi, a Mazhabi Sikh by caste, risen with a strong Dalit consciousness and emerged as the strong powerful Dalit poet. He addresses the plight of the Dalit landless peasantry through his poetry books, ‘*Lahu Bhije Bol*’, ‘*Saintan*’ and ‘*Chounkarian*’ and created consciousness among them. The Ghettos of Dalits, also known as Chamarlees and Thattis in Punjab, were portrayed in Udasi’s writings. Udasi wrote in one of his well-known novels,

¹² Rasulpuri, Bhagwant.(Jan-Dec 2009). Dalit Literature in Punjabi, in *Journal of Literature & Aesthetics*, Vol 9, Number 1& 2.pp131-140; Retrived from <http://www.parwazparkashan.com/pdf/journal-of-lit.pdf>.

¹³ Ibid

“ਮਾਂਧਰਤੀਏ! ਤੇਰੀਗੋਦਨੂੰ ਚੰਨਹੋਰਬਥੇਰੇ

ਤੂੰ ਮੱਘਦਾਰਹੀਵੇਸੂਰਜਾਕੰਮੀਆਂਦੇਵੇਹੜੇ

ਕਿਥੇਤੰਗਨਾਸਮਝਣਤੰਗੀਆਂਨੂੰ,

ਜਿੱਥੇਮਿਲਣਅੰਗੂਠੇਸੰਘੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ,

ਜਿੱਥੇਵਾਲੇਤਰਸਦੇਕੰਘੀਆਂਨੂੰ,

ਨੱਕਵਗਦੇ, ਅੱਖਾਂਚੁੰਨੀਆਂਤੇਦੰਦਕਰੇੜੇ¹⁴

English : *Maa dharteye, Teri godh nu chann hor bathere, Tu magh da rahin ve surja kammian de vehre, Jithe tang Na samjhan tangiaan nu, Jithe Milan anguthhe s anghiaan nu, Jithe Vaal tarsade kanghi aannu, Nakk vagade, Akhaan chunyaan Te dund Kar here.*”

Due to his radical writings, against the exploitation of upper caste, rich peasants, and governmental issues, he is popularly known as a Naxalite poet.

Another revolutionary Dalit poet Lal Singh Dil was born in the Ramdasia Sikh family. He had a very unique place in Dalit literature have the literary status of ‘poet’s poet’. His writings and poems were very sensitive and gave the true expression of poverty, injustice, and oppression faced by Dalits. His autobiography ‘*Dastan*’, about the caste-based discriminatory behaviour in school, Naxal parties, and the police force. His writings make assertiveness among the downtrodden of the society. His writings were based on real experiences that highlighted the sufferings of being Dalit and compels for intellectual exploration. It is said that at the time of his college days when his female friend invited him for tea at her home. The mother of the girl reminded his caste to him while offering the tea, from the humiliation he faced, inscribed that in the poetry as:

“ਮੈਨੂੰ ਪਿਆਰਕਰਦੀਏ

ਪਰ-ਜਾਤਕੁੜੀਏ

¹⁴ <http://punjabijanta.com/bhangra-punjabi-lyrics/magda-rahi-ve-surja-26062673258425982622-2608261726242562-26132631-2616262626082/msg390549/?PHPSESSID=qj188fo8aonsrtc1trkk3l3ch0#msg390549>.

ਸਾਡੇ ਸਕੇਮੁਰਦੇਵੀ

ਇਕ ਥਾਂ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਲਾਉਂਦੇ।¹⁵

(the high caste girl loves me but she didn't know that even after death the kin's of our not allowed to burnt together)

His famous work was '*Satluj di Hawa*', '*Bahut Saare Suraj*' and '*Sathar*', through his writing he gets a unique place in Punjabi Dalit literature. Through his writings, he makes assertiveness among the downtrodden of its society. Sant Ram Udasi and Lal Singh Dil were the two revolutionary poets of 1990 among the Dalits, who challenged the dominant discourse of upper caste literature by their poetries.

Alternative Media and Identity in making

Dalit communities of Punjab also created their alternative media, as they believe caste-based discrimination is rampant in mainstream media both print and electronic. With the social consciousness and efforts, they created their own resources for their development. Through them, they get the opportunity to get recognized in the modern world of multimedia. They have their own magazines, newspapers, journals, even very much active in social media through Facebook, Twitter, some groups also have their youtube channels.

In the modern digital world, different multimedia platforms are the new sources for exchanging information and forming solidarity. The various options of Social media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube are there. These platforms are utilized by communities to exchange and spread information about their action, struggles, reactions, to form the belief system and emancipation also.

The Popular Dera's of Dalits in Punjab namely Dera Sachkhand Ballan, Dera Radha Swami, and Dera Sacha Sauda have their websites, their own YouTube channels, and Facebook pages. Dera Sachkhand Ballan, of Jalandhar, belongs to the Chamar community, it has the highest place in the Dera's Contribution in assertion among Dalits

¹⁵ <https://www.punjabi-kavita.com/PunjabiPoetryLalSinghDil.php#Dil5>.

of Punjab. Dera Sachkhand Ballan has its YouTube Channel, has its own website, and owns an e-paper weekly known as 'Begum Pura Shehar' which is published in three languages, Hindi, English & Punjabi. It is one of the famous mouthpieces, based on the principles of Guru Ravidass, an icon for Dalits and religious figures of the Bhakti movement in the 15th and 16th centuries. The mouthpiece is the product of globalization as it starts in 1991. The new initiative of subaltern literacy fulfills the vacancy felt by the absence of Dalit literature at the streets of print media. The basic objective of the weekly mouthpiece is to raise the issues of the oppressed and downtrodden communities.¹⁶ Guru Ravidass believed in humanity, Karma, and the unity of human beings, known as the poet of egalitarianism, and propounded the idea of 'Begumpura', which means the city where there is no suffering or fear and all human beings were considered as equal.¹⁷ This was the initiative of the 4th generation of Dera Ballan, Sant Garib Dass Ji was the first one to publish the mouthpiece on 15th August 1991.¹⁸ Now the weekly is weekly at online also has its audience at national and international level. 'Begumpura' is based on the composition of multiple feeds, based on political, cultural, economic, and religious debates. The prime focus is to provide the alternative to their masses of mainstream media, which is always claimed as the biased media by the Dera and editorial of the weekly. On the issue of reservation weekly wrote, "*Reservation is not a charity, not a Maundy, nor a service and not even a security. It is our freedom, which was suppressed from decades*"; ('*jo sadio se dabayigayithi*). The weekly has dedicated a regular full page for the biography of Dr. Ambedkar to enthusiast and educate the society and compels them to think in a rational manner towards social justice. The issue of the subaltern community was continuously raised weekly. The mouthpiece consists of the spiritual teaching of Guru Ravidass towards an equal society, 'according to the weekly human existence is in danger because they abscond the idea of unity, and believe in superiority and inferiority of human and forget the message of Guru Ravidass to make the egalitarian society'.¹⁹ The issue of health of the deprived section does not get enough attention from the mainstream media but 'Begumpura' has immensely written over that issue, they wrote, the marginalized people died regularly due to lack of health facilities and basic

¹⁶ <http://begumpurashaher.net/index.php>.

¹⁷ Mishra, Vandita. (6th Feb, 2012). Anti- Dhakkashahi in *Indian Express*; retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/antidhakka-shahi/>.

¹⁸ Begumpura.op.cit.

¹⁹ BegumpuraShehar, 06/03/2017.

health services.²⁰The weekly also provides a space for the new writings, religious preachers, community events, and the activities of Dera.

Dalit Rap and Pop Music

Alternative media is providing the platform for the unheard voices and building their own narratives. In the digitalized world the reach and impact of social media are all and music is one of them. Punjabi rap and pop music is a well-established and internationally flourished one. With time & space the forms of assertion got changed, music is one of them. Music by Dalits and Bahujans is very bold and full of confidence, writing the new narratives of identity assertion. The Dalit rock music, Dalit pop, the music of Ravidass, Bhim rap music, chamar pop are making their place in the market and blooming in the market. Several Dalit singers, composing & singing the songs on the caste discrimination & atrocities faced by the people of Dalit communities in the various spheres of life.

It has widely observed that most of the songs valorized the Jatts, pictorized with fast-moving cars, flashing the guns, big houses, foreign locals, lavish life, and unchallenging dominance over the region. Dalit pop & music comes as retaliation to the Jatts dominancy. Roop Lal Dhir, a singer from Nawashehr is considered one among the genre of the Chamar pop community. He started making the Chamar pop in the '80s, '*Risky chamar*', '*Charche Chamara de*', '*Putt Chamaran de*' were some famous songs of Dhir.²¹Raj Dadral another famous from Nawashehar claims that had written & sung more than 200 songs in the chamar community. He also performed overseas mainly in U.K, France, Italy, and Canada, '*Hummer gaddi wich aaunda putt Chamar da*', '*Munde Chamara de*', '*Balle Balle Chamaran de*', '*Tor Chamaran di*', '*Jhande GadeRavidass ne*' were the songs of him.²² It has been said that the murder of Saint Ramanand in Vienna hails to the Ravidassia community led to the rise in Dalit political music, which gets famous all over the world.²³

²⁰ BegumpuraShehar, 19/06/2017.

²¹ Kohli, Namita.(NOV 03, 2016). Punjab's protest pop: How the Dalits are telling the world they've arrived, *Hindustan Times*; retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/punjab-s-protest-pop-how-the-state-s-dalits-are-telling-the-world-they-have-arrived/story-8UxGda8YwWcf0PDT6dc1RJ.html>.

²² Bhalla, Manisha.(15 Nov.2018). How Dalit music in Punjab transformed from a religious to a political soundtrack, *Sabrang India*, retrieved from <https://sabrangindia.in/article/how-dalit-music-punjab-transformed-religious-political-soundtrack>.

²³ Ibid.

Gurkanwal Bharti alias Ginni Mahi from Jalandhar, a Ravidassia Sikh by faith is among the young sensation in Dalit pop music. Her songs are tuned on Punjabi folk, she started with devotional songs, hymns, amritbani of Saint Ravidass. Now it also includes praising songs on Dr.Ambedkar to valorizing the Chamar identity in pop songs. Gini Mahi emerged as a brave new voice of the Dalit community in Punjab. Her two songs in particular—‘Danger Chamar’and ‘Fan Babasaheb di’ (I’m a fan of Babasaheb) caught particular attention from the local people of Punjab and at the national and the international press also.

Ginni Mahi performed at the opening ceremony of the Deutsche Welle Global Media form 2018. Her song “ *Mein dheer hann Baba Saheb di, Jinhe likha Samvidhan*” is the most popular song that has more than 42lakh views at youtube.²⁴ Her song “*Agar Bheemji iss dunia mein aate naa*”²⁵ is for paying gratitude to Dr.Ambedkar for being the torchbearer to the Dalit community. ‘Raaj Baba Saheb da’, ‘Har de Nishan’, ‘Balle Balle Ravidass ki Kirpa’, ‘Chadat Chamar de’, ‘Bolo Jai Bheem’ were some of the most popular songs sung by her. The recent song of her ‘Danger Chamar 2’²⁶, is different from the earlier songs, it is picturized with the rough & tough image of Ginni Mahi, with bodybuilders in the background. On the Facebook page, Ginni Mahi has around six lakh followers.

With the inflow of economic resources, other new Dalit singers are also launching their music albums, glamorize the caste-based identity of theirs with the iconography of Ravidass and Dr.Ambedkar in the chamar community.

The other majority caste among the scheduled caste in Punjab ‘Mazhabi sikhs’ has also their songs, they have sung the gallantry of Bhai Jaita Singh, dedicated to saint Kabir and courage of Majhbi Sikhs. The song “*Mazhabia de munde nahi darr de, Balmikia de munde nahi darr de*”, about the fearless attitude of the boys who belongs to the Mazhabi community. Sahota Brothers, are one of the composers, singers of the Mazhabi community-based songs. Their youtube channel named ‘Sahota Brothers’, compile a number of songs on the fearlessness of Mazhabi Sikhs, the song “*Majbi Singh aaj bhi taiyar khaade, Panth de Raksha lai*” had around 1.5 lakh views, the song visuals has

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H5XzHJBNoI>

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4BEMoPZ0i0&pbjreload=101>

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSBHI_wh8vk

some 'Gatka' playing Sikhs and some Sikhs display the guns and swords in their hands.²⁷ Another song "*Mazbi Singh de Itihass bolde*", is about the courageousness of Bhai Jivan Singh, who bring the severed head of Guru Teg Bahadar from Delhi for the cremation. The song "*Navratre , Dussehra, Diwali tyohar naa hunde, je shrishti karta Balmiki Bhagwan na hunde*"²⁸, the song directly staunching the Hindu lord's Ram, Krishna, and Hindu religious festivals, said they all are the propaganda of the Mannuvadi thoughts. The songs praise the Lanka king Ravana, Saint Balmiki, and sung about the injustice done with the Shambhook rishi and Eklavya. The aarti of Balmiki has also there onyoutube, has more than 14lakh views.

Now the songs and raps are coming forward from Dalits showing the pride of their caste. They are working as the counter to the upper caste, especially 'Jatts' songs, and making themselves inferior to no one.

During the fieldwork , when asked about the consciousness of identity through songs, the majority of the respondents said, 'Initially not liked the concept of songs which exaggeration of some caste names. Initially not like the songs by Ginni Mahi, but these songs are also an option and an answer to the JAT songs. 'Till date, we are dancing on the songs of somebody else, the persons or the class which dominates us from centuries did discrimination and atrocities but now we have our songs.' "*Aaj tk mein kisi aur ke ganno pe naach rha tha*, but now we have our songs".

The respondent from the Mazhabi Sikh community said, In Punjab, all songs are for Jatt only, nothing written for any other caste. Now the songs of '*Putt Chamara*', are very aggressive (*bhadkau*). The old people don't like these kinds of songs. It will lead to clashes or hidden hatred.

One of the Ravidassi community respondents said, the songs, the Dalit Dera's, and caste & community name embossed T-shirts strengthen the community in some sphere. But community emancipation only possible with education, if the person would get the right education then he or she will be able to get the right path in life. If the person only gets the money mostly will be get spent on alcoholism.

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTMVii-jJBE>

²⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_hYaNm-p0

The respondent belongs to the Chura community on the songs of Dalits responded that 'Don't like the songs which exaggerate the caste names either on 'Jatts' or on 'Chamars'. But till there were songs on 'Jatts' then 'Putt Chamara' is also good and acceptable. 'If Jatts' have Guns as they flaunt them in their songs, we also have guns. Proud to wear T.shirts with caste names, printed T.shirts of Baba.

During the fieldwork, I got the opportunity to attend the wedding from the Chamar community, where I observed the DJ was playing the songs of Ginni Mahi 'Danger Chamar' & songs related to the chamar community only.

Now the new song by the Dalits of Punjab following the same trend of songs they picture with the big and costly cars, having bouncers at the background, flashing guns, foreign locations, and glorification of the caste. It is just like the 'Sanskritization' of the music, following the trend of the dominant caste and showcasing they are not less than anyone.

The Dalit music industry or the personnel comes from the Doaba region of Punjab, which is more upward mobile and economically affluent region in the state of Punjab. These songs are mostly focused on 'Chamar caste not focusing on other Dalits of Punjab'. It brought a sense of solidarity among the people of the Chamar community internationally.

The platform of alternative media providing as the strong medium, which let the feelings of excluded classes against the inequitable social, political and economic conditions of the existing society. These alternative media paves the great role in the construction of the new identities, knowledge and awareness which further leads to the mobilization of the marginalized classes of the society.

CHAPTER-6

MAJOR FINDINGS

CHAPTER-6

FINDINGS

Societies across the globe are arranged in stratified manner involving various inequalities like gender, caste, race, class, prestige, power, wealth, and many more which ranks in ordering, reordering of the individuals and groups. These inequalities lead to subjugation and mistreatment of least benefitted sections from the rest. Scholars across the discipline analyzed the social inequalities in different societies with their root causes. Max Weber analyzed the stratification in the society on the basis of 'status' in the social order as one of the components along with 'class' and 'party'. Karl Marx defined the stratification in the society on the basis of the mode of production into the capitalist class and proletariat class. Ralf Dahrendorf challenges the Marxist concept of inequality and elaborates the cause that 'social inequality is due to inequality in authority'. Structural-functionalists argue that inequality is based on functions. However, among the different kinds of stratification, class and caste are the noticeable ones. In India, social inequalities are intricately made within its social structure in the form of caste, which is also the structural unit of stratification and the system in itself. The caste system is made up of a particular belief system and structure with the phenomenon of exclusion. The caste system is further stratified into class disparities and the social and cultural structure of society emanates from oppression. The caste system emanates from the *Varna* division of the system, which is functional and under which individuals are stratified into a number of endogamous hierarchical castes. 'Caste' is an English word introduced to the closed community groups of the social hierarchy by the British people in India at the time of their colonial rule. The caste is more or less referred to as the '*Jati*' in India.

Caste refers to the conventional Hindu hierarchy of four enormous sub-divisions. The four classes are Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra, each of the categories consisting of a large number of '*jatis*' or 'endogamous caste' groups within it, which are confined in their community. Many of the '*jatis*' pursue similar occupations have often grouped collectively in '*jati-clusters*' and recognized as 'Caste'. The caste system is based on the principle of purity & pollution, considered within the graded order as the key criterion for the determination of a caste or sub-caste. Avarna also known as Panchama, the fifth

category of the Varna order has been assigned to perform tasks considered too menial or degrading for the upper three Varnas to perform. Varna's fifth group is conceptualized as the 'class of untouchables' and menials, confined to rather menial and polluting jobs related to body decay and dirt. They were considered impure and polluting, thereby being physically and socially excluded from the rest of society and segregated from it. In India, the caste system has such deep roots that it shaped the social and economic structure of India's people. Dalits who were put at the lowest level of the hierarchy, known as Ati-Shudras or Avarna, treated as outcasts and *achutts*, suffering from countless humiliations, severe poverty, and social segregation. The term Dalit generally refers to the grouping of oppressed caste groups that are put on a scheduled list, first established by the 1935 Government of India Act and later adopted by the Indian Constitution. India is an example where the caste and class both existed in a similar society.

The demand for equality and for a considerable share in the society by the marginalized section is evident in different phases of India history, which varies from a tone of reforms to rebellion. The initial phase make contributions with the notion of spreading the thoughts of an equitable society: It starts with Gautam Buddha, the first to rebel and reject the discriminatory practices, scriptures of the *Varna-Vyavastha* & dominance of Brahmanism and emphasizes equality amongst humans with higher moral standards. Buddha's thoughts and preaching, among the outcastes or untouchables, introduced the new consciousness. It created a new tradition based on equality and deeds, rejecting the caste system based on birth. Jains oppose *Varna-Vyavastha* too fiercely. Several schools of philosophy like Lokayata or Carvaka, in Saint tradition 'Sahajayan', Nath' sect believe in people's dignity and negating the caste system. Later on, the Bhakti movement was an endeavor to detach Hindu religion from the dogmatic and ritualistic clutch. 12th to 16th-century Bhakti movement had a great appeal for the establishment of an egalitarian society. The movement heads were saints and prophets, poets and thinkers who, more often than Bhramans, were vendors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shopkeepers, barbers, and even Mahars, sprang from the lower order of society. Vaishnavite and Shaivite poets of the Tamil region, Basavana from Karnataka region (Bijapur), The prominent figures in the Bhakti movement like Jnandev, Namdev, Tukaram, Eknath, and Chokhamela- Mahar, Kabir, Ravidass challenges the discrimination of castes and emphasized the casteless culture, Guru Nanak Dev also rejected the caste system, through his teachings have made efforts to abolish the discrimination in the society.

The second is comparatively more radical and it denounce the Brahmanic culture or had a very staunch reaction against it. This phase witnessed the formation caste-based associations and newspapers, journals, magazines as an effort of awareness for the Dalit consciousness. The Satnami movement of the 17th century and radical writings of Jyotiba Phule can be seen in this context. Phule, founded the Satya Shodak Samaj, the move was against discrimination based on casteism, gender, and caste, the custom of untouchability, express disagreement with socio-economic inequalities, oppression, and discrimination. Phule's writings are innovative as he explicitly questions the existing traditions of religion and myth/contrives in favor of a specific segment of society (Bhramin). For Phule, '*Vidya*' or knowledge was in sharp contrast to the Brahmanic or ritualistic shastra and a tool for freedom and human liberty as well as economic development. A significant offshoot of the revolution is the reform of the caste system and its rigid hierarchical structure. As exemplified in Arya Samaj which originated as a revivalist socio-religious reform movement seeking to restore the Vedic faith and their return to the Vedas was not as interpreted by Indian Orthodoxy's conventional scholarship or Western critical scholarship, but as interpreted by Dayanand himself. Also, with its many regional versions, the Adi movement was a conceptual and radical effort to redefine India's caste ties with a pointed assault on the evil and unjust practices in Indian society. The Bhakti movement believes in humanity's inherent equality, while the Adi-Hindu movement challenges the ground of prejudice by identifying Dalit as an original land inhabitant. There was the Adi movement in both northern and southern India. They're Adi-Andhra in Andhra, Adi Dravida in Tamil Nadu, Adi Karnataka in Karnataka, Adi Hindu in Uttar Pradesh.

In the third phase, the struggle for independence against the imperialist powers was at the national level, along with the demand for equal rights was raised and the political representation of Dalits was put before the colonial government. M.K.Gandhi and Dr.B.R.Ambedkar were the prominent names who raised the voice against the plight of Dalits and also suggested some remedial measures for their better condition. The devotion of M.K.Gandhi to caste reform is very integral to his conception of society. Gandhi emphasized the lower caste consciousness and movements focuses on the elevation of lower and backward castes' social status. His approach is reformative and towards better positioning of Scheduled caste into the Hindu fold. Gandhi created a new organization 'Harijan Sewak Sangh' and 'Harijan Purse Fund' for the welfare of the depressed class.'

He also sponsored "Temple entry Satyagraha" to make the Hindu holy place available to all. Literature was the most important tool to make the consciousness at the colonial time. It was the time, when the caste-based weekly and associations were found their grounds.

In 1916, The 'South Indian Liberal Federation' was formed by a group of non-brahmin citizens in Madras. The organization was founded to promote, protect and promote the interests of the non-Brahmin community. In the educational system, the political sphere, and government services, the movement questions the superiority & dominance of the Brahmin. In 1925, The Self Respect Movement, was the social revolutionary movement, aims to destroy the discriminatory Hindu social order and create a new society without caste, religion, and god, based on rationality. It perpetrated, Non-Brahmins were the aboriginals of Dravidian descent, while Brahmins were northern Aryan invaders. The self-respect movement generates feelings of self-respect, understanding, and self-confidence among the backward or non-brahmin groups. This gives them the courage to fight for social justice. '*KudiArasu*' was the journal published to demand reforms in the society and make aware the people about the programmes by the self-respect movement.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, one of the prominent socio-legal reformer have had a huge influence on the development of social and political dialogue. He called on the Hindus to annihilate the caste, which is a greater obstacle to social unity, and to create a new social order in line with the concept of democracy, founded on the principles of independence, equality, and fraternity. He established the AISCFC at an All India Depressed Classes Conference, in the hope of uniting all the untouchables in a new political battle with the aim of securing political rights and representation for the Dalit people, it limited to the untouchables. Later on In October 1957, the Republican Party of India was the first political party founded in India by the post-Ambedkar leadership. The party aimed to unite the oppressed, combat the atrocities committed against the Dalits, and eradicate their disabilities. But with the passage of time party failed to carry forward the momentum of dalits and party leaders got lost in their mutual conflicts.

In the post -independence period, in order to reform the position of the Dalits, the Government of India enacted numerous social laws, which included eliminating untouchability and prejudice against them. There is strict legislation to address manual scavenging, bonded labourers and even the atrocities. The provision of affirmative action and reservation in government jobs and educational institution also get introduced in

order to increase their status in such a way that they can enjoy an equal status with other sections. The Ambedkar movement of Dalit reforms along with institutional reforms, created the new class of active & educated youth among Dalits. The emergence of new middle class from the marginalized community achieved the better socio-economic status in the country with the education and government provisions.

In the fourth phase, the post-independence period, in particular the post-liberalization process seems to be a paradigm shift in the mobilization and acknowledgement of many castes and communities. Globalization provides the opportunity to loosens up the strangulation of traditional occupation and opens up possibilities that were previously beyond the scope of an ascriptive & hierarchical social order's lower strata. In that era, Dalit emancipation can be seen in political parties, caste associations, interest groups, etc. The political mobilization among the Dalits was reflected in the Bahujan Samaj Party's success. The political participation of the Dalits in Uttar Pradesh was seen as the new dawn of the Dalit movement in 1990.

Several Dalit groups also reported that time sought to liberate its masses from the atrocities suffered by the caste system and untouchability. In order to achieve self-respect in society, they made their plea for justice and equality in society. Dalit agitates for their rights against discrimination and abuse that they face and calls for stricter anti-disability legislation to be enforced. The new avenues of employment got introduced in the area of industrialization and urbanization. For the communities of the lower castes, the liberation strategy has created new kinds of economic and political force, creating possibilities that did not exist in conventional society. Class mobility steadily acquires the upper hand over the rigidities of the caste. With the introduction of new modes of production and growth of new capitalist development powers alongside affirmative action and the transformative influence of liberal education, new opportunities have been opened for citizens. From which through economic and social mobility, the excluded section will get rid of ascribed identities and obtain a new identity. With the opportunity to avail higher and professional education has provided for horizontal and vertical as well as social and economic mobility among Dalits, creating intellectual groups, Dalit administrators, and entrepreneurs. The rise of an organization such as the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DICCI), with the slogan *'Be the job providers rather than remain job seekers'* with the objective *'Fight caste with a capital'*, paves the way for Dalit

emancipation in economic structure. The leather industry by Jatavs in Agra and Boota Mandi by chamars in Punjab were some examples, that how they excelled their traditional skills into a business opportunity, which get them prestige, status, economic mobility as well as political recognition. The new class posing the challenge to the conventional stratification of the caste system and refuse their subordination to the other dominant upper castes.

With the introduction of liberal political values such as liberty, equality, justice, and rights, an upsurge or new consciousness among the Dalits has been seen. Dalit movements are the movements of their consciousness of their own identity. These movements are not only demeaning the caste system but assertive towards their aboriginal identity. The New kind of agitation and assertiveness can be seen with the decline of the Bahujan party (popularly known as the party of the marginalized section) simultaneously with the rise of Dalit identity and agitations in the different forms. Dalit identity has nearly become a core issue of the dalit movements. The sculptures and photographs of Dr. Ambedkar are considered a symbol of Dalit consciousness and the declaration of identity among Dalits. Celebration of birth and death anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, reading & writing, as well as academic research on Dalit poetry & literature, are some noticeable steps of assertion their Dalit identity.

The ascend of Chander Shekhar, the celebration of Bhima Koregaon battle win, take the Dalit social, political ascription in a new way. With modern technologies, a new form of assertion can be observed in alternative media created and run by Dalits, which includes mass media channels, caste specific journals, conference, YouTube channels, Facebook, Twitter even the caste based commercial activities.

PUNJAB

The state of Punjab has the highest percentage of the Schedule caste population among all the states of the country, 88.60 Lac is the Punjab schedule caste population, which is 31.94 percent of the total population of the state (277.43 Lac). Punjab one the most prosperous state, rank 9th in the HDI index, is a plural society in religion and full of variation in a cultural context. It is the land of reformist movements of Sikhism & Sufism with the existence of many religions Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity. Punjab was the Muslim-dominated region before the partition of India in 1947, but the religious

composition in the state was altered after independence. Punjab is a Sikh-dominated state consist 57.69% of the total population of the state. Sikhism has arisen as a separate and independent religion, founded on the unity of God, humanity, equality between races, castes, and gender, as a reformist movement against discriminatory practices in Hinduism and Islam. Although Sikhism is an egalitarian religion; caste stratification still exists and continues through endogamy, exclusion, and some degree of restriction of social interaction. In Punjab, the caste system is very distinct from the rest of India. The caste system and structure in Punjab present a different picture, as it is not a typical Brahmanical society and caste positioning is much determined by the share in the agrarian land.

Regional differences occur in a way that has traditionally established social ties between various classes of castes. Punjab is the agricultural dominant society. The caste discrimination is based on land ownership; Jats are the landlords & agriculturists, formed the dominant community. Jats had the status of shudra in Hinduism, by embracing Sikhism, they not only were rescued from the lower caste status but became the dominant caste in the state, which provided them an opportunity to raise their status in the society. In Punjab there are also menial and untouchable castes, faced discrimination from the dominant community of the society. Even after conversion into Sikhism the status of the scheduled caste category does not get changed, they faced discrimination, inequality, and exclusion there also. Due to the dominant agrarian relationship framework, the subordination of the Dalits in Punjab is institutionalized. Scheduled caste is not a homogeneous category; there are 39 scheduled caste categories in Punjab. Two caste clusters are the largest component of the scheduled caste category. They are currently being scheduled under various names, the first group or cluster known as Mazhabi Sikhs & Balmiki / Bhangis. The second group or cluster consists of Ad Dharmis and Chamar/ Ravidasis/ Ramdasis Sikhs. Together, these two clusters make up about three-quarters of the state's entire Dalit population, the 33 remaining caste groups from the third group, which are very few in numbers. The state of Punjab witnessed the caste assertion and self-consciousness movement at a different phase of time. The establishment of the egalitarian democratic setup of '*Khalsa*' by Guru Gobind Singh is the first instance of the assertion of Dalits. The Ad Dharm movement, the famous Dalit movement of Punjab for the Dalit consciousness contributed to the social, political & economic upliftment of Dalits. Ad Dharm movement which started as the movement gets transformed into the caste identity.

Later the Ravidassis refurnish and restore themselves with the emergence of Dera Sachkhand Ballan, later the Dera become the center of Dalit activities. The establishment of Boota Mandi by Chamars by excelling their traditional skills to a successful business with the incidences of clashes between the Jats and scheduled castes led to consciousness among Dalits. These incidences make them aware of human rights and civil liberties, somewhere it also cause the evolution of assertion.

The field study in different pockets of Punjab and its finding can be summarized under the following heads:

Cultural Assertion

The history is very much silent about the history of Dalits, now the dalits reinventing their identity. The reviving & reinventing of their own cultures and traditions are the process of constructing the Dalit identity, distinct from the Brahminical one. The construction of Dera's and Ad Dharm's identity is the form of cultural consciousness and assertion. Ad Dharm movement played important role in awareness towards the distinct identity of aboriginal and having pride in it. The new religious faith culture is constructed through the Dera's. DeraSach Khand Ballan exemplifies, the spiritual awareness created social awareness and with time it becomes the center of Dalit political activities. The Dera has its own spiritual ways for generating socio, cultural and religious revival. They have their own texts, hymns, and spiritual guru. In Ravidassi Dera's Guru Ravidass is the main saint, compiled their teachings as '*RavidassAmritbani*', followers of Dera greet eachother with '*Jai guru dev*'salutation, '*Soham*', They have a slogan also '*bolo Soh Nirbhau*', '*Shri Guru Ravidass Maharaj ki Jai*' which is similar to Sikh's '*Jo Bole Soniha lSatSri Akal*'. Ravidassi has a transnational presence, Deras constructing the new identities with the construction of ponds, schools, hospitals, and parks. Some community members put the pictures of Saint Ravidass and the hymn '*soham*' at their main entrance of house and at the gates of villages; it marks the identity of their presence. Even the Ravidassi gurudwara and temple were observed during the field visit. This Gurudwara observed with the presence of sculpture or with the poster of Dr. Ambedkar it its premises. The community people consider saint Ravidass as a leading light in spiritual matters and Ambedkar as the modern mentor. At one village the NRI belongs to the Ravidassi community funded to construct the Ravidassi gurudwara in the memory of his parents and get it inaugurated by the leader of the Jat community. Dera's have their commercial

market also with their own CDs, calendars, lockets, and posters. The presence of Dera's is the dominant phenomenon of Punjab state, especially in rural areas but not all dera's are the same, DeraSachkhand Ballan is the prominent one in context of cultural assertiveness. Dera's are the result of the conflicted culture of the past, now functioning as an alternative religion.

Balmiki Mandir was observed during the study but they are not as lavish as the Ravidassi temples and gurudwaras were. The BudhhaJayanti, Ambedkar birth, and death anniversary, RavidassJayanti, BalmikiJayanti get celebrated with huge pomp and show at very large scale.

The intellectual class has the opinion that Dera's are the result of '*Brahmanic*' ideology. It's a great loss for Punjab's rationality and broad-minded society. Dera makes people mental slaves. Most of the Dera's headed by the people of the Jat community, which is seen as the trap to divide the Dalits.

Changing Narratives/ Stigma

The term Dalit is the term of assertion, self-recognition, and identity. The word provides a sense of solidarity among the scheduled caste, who doesn't want to identify themselves from the traditional identities. In the state of Punjab, this phenomenon is in contrast, after embracing Sikhism by the majority in the state of Punjab, caste-based movements and the proliferation of several religious sects and can be seen. Later the movement itself converted into caste identity and soon after gets splinted into several identities based on the caste. AdDharm started as the movement then transformed into the caste and later get splinted into Ramdasi and Ravidasi.

Dalits are now claimed their aboriginal identity but strive for changing the stigma and narrative associated with primordial identities and in this recourse emphasize is on the separate identity from traditional Hinduism, Islam, or Christianity. Some of the scheduled caste community members have unwillingness about the usage of the term Dalit, they want to acknowledge their identity, proud to call themselves Chamars, Balmiki, Mazhabi, and Chuhra.

Dalit now has their own pop songs, prestigiously highlighting their Chamar ,Chuhra & Mazhabi identity. Earlier the trend was noticed that, the people who get asserted or get

economically well of shed their identity by changing their surnames and cutoff their ties with their kins and natives.

On the other side, now the quest for identity is noticed among the people. They adopt different methods to get recognition, having the surname '*Asur*', a song like '*Hum Munde Chamara de*' is the way to regaining the proud existence.

The struggle for identity is observed enclose the amalgamation of class and caste character. The caste that gets prosperous behaves dominantly in society. It creates a new hierarchy within the community.

Developmental Factors

Various scheduled caste in its regionalities were benefitted by the change in 'mode of production' and more especially with the integration of regional economy with the global ones. 'Leather work' which is traditionally a menial pollutant job, however became most economically beneficial for the 'Chamar' caste of the 'Doaba' region. The demand for leather goods around the globe and the social monopoly of the caste or the production process gradually led a upward mobility and consciousness among the 'Chamer' castes. The economic prosperity and the global interface led the emergence of a new consciousness with an amalgamation of the constitutional and political reforms of the Ambedkar. Similar phenomenon can be observed for the 'Adi-Dharmis' of the different pockets of the Punjab, who has been getting benefitted by the outward migration especially towards North America and Europe. A similar phenomenon was observed in the 'Mazhabi Sikhs' in some pockets of Punjab. However, nothing similar has happened with the other scheduled castes of Punjab like Chuhra including Bhangi, Megh, Sansi, Dagi, Koli, Dhanak, etc. The affirmative action of the state (in the form of reservation) also limited to the few caste clusters and more importantly to the group 'D' or 'C' jobs; for example, most sweepers or scavengers employed in the state (regular or contractual) basis belongs to Chuhra, Dhanak or Mussali castes.

The differential level of economic mobility has created class within the broader class categorization of 'Dalit' as a class and more importantly, this sub-class carries the identity of the caste (especially in term of occupational caste) which rather than 'annihilation' seems to the rebirth of 'caste' on a new flavor. Also, the comparative prosperous scheduled caste carries the same notion of 'purity' and 'pollutant' which the dominant

caste practices to the 'scheduled caste'. This is one of the important factors which limited to the cultural and identity assertion limited to the few castes in the state of Punjab.

This is the reason why the assertion through new media, reinvention of narrative related to the caste and icon/leadership worship in Punjab is limited upto few castes especially to the Chamar, Adi -Adharmis, and Ravidassis. The phenomenon of assertion is not uniformly spread to all castes and the 'collective consciousness' is missing among the Dalits. If we generalize the field data and observation, the whole phenomenon can be said as 'assertion of the few caste' with a new course of demand for redistribution in politico legal terms and with reinventing the primordial identity with their own alternate narrative.

Political Assertion

Despite the upward mobility and consciousness for the rights among few castes, the state of Punjab has not witnessed any collective consciousness among the Dalits as happened in Uttar Pradesh. The reflection of field study pointed two or three major features for this phenomenon first Dalits in Punjab as pointed out by many other studies are not homogeneous and various primordial identities like caste, religion, and sets criss-crossed their collective identity. Secondly, the demand for the share in the redistributive interactions has already bifurcated them in to two major sections and the whole focus has been shifted "from the total" to "against the each other". Thirdly as discussed earlier the benefits of the green revolution and liberalization policies along with the educational mobility have been limited to two or three major castes of the region and this created various sub-classes among the Dalit fold which messed the feeling of collectivity. Re-Inventing and affiliation with the new identities like that of Dera, or Sect or Ravidassi/Ramdassi and association on the caste line especially through the new media sharpen their differences rather than providing them a new ground for the "social solidarity". After the Ad-Dharm movement under the leadership of Mangoo Ram and BAMCEF under Kashi Ram, the state witnessed a marked vacuum in term of leadership and in last five decades the Dalits voices remains fragmented under the aegis of the different political parties not a single political party has emerged for the "Bahujan" voices. The hierarchy and fragmentation are among some reasons why the BSP is not performing well in the state from where its sprouting has been started. And that's why Punjab has low Dalit representatives both at the state and national level.

Education as upward Mobility:

The importance of education has been seen in the slogan '*Educate, Agitate and Organize*' given by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar. Education is a vital factor to accelerate upward mobility. The capitalist market forces somewhere diversified the occupations and especially the informal sector provide the opportunity to get rid of traditional occupation for the skilled person. Due to the reservation & affirmative action's the level of education gets improved among the Dalits, the improved literacy rate is proof of that. But a majority of the Dalits is enrolled in government schools; they won't be able to afford private school education and the private tuitions as well. In the rural areas access to quality education which make the person skilled for the job is a problematic issue. Dalits are aware about the importance of education. The Doaba belt is the best example of assertion among the Dalits through education, with the highest literacy rate in Jalandhar.

The intellectual activities reflected in literary expressions have a major contribution to the formation of Dalit dialogue and consciousness of Dalits. Literature with the folklore, folktales, autobiographies of Dalit, memoirs, books raising the issue of inequality, Dalit peasantry, and plays focused on Dalit issues among the sources of social consciousness.

No annihilation of caste can be seen, which is dreamt by Dr. Ambedkar. The Dalit class has pictures & sculptures of Ambedkar in their Mandir, Gurudwaras, but the building of temples & worship never supported by the Ambedkar when he was alive.

H1: Dalit consciousness movement in India in the post-liberalization phase shows both continuity and change and a significant cultural assertion.

Evidence from both primary and secondary sources suggests that the post-liberalization phase of Dalit assertion is not a complete departure from the earlier forms. Rather, the techniques of mobilization and assertion of identities have taken a new recourse.

The capitalist system of society & LPG reforms resultant into a positive manner, as it opens new options for occupation; it is interlinked but not wholesome dependent on the capitalist system. Other factors are also equitably responsible for the assertion.

H2:The rise and growth of capitalism (in terms of economic determinism) led to the overshadowing of primordial identity like caste by the class identity.

It was found that Primordial identities are still playing an important role, but nature and structure vary from region to region. As every region have its specificities. Corporatism changes the socialization pattern among the society, caste identities somehow not much visible in Corporatism but in social and commercial relations caste is an important factor. Dalit is a class identity when they are together (against other castes), but in inner social structure they follow the casteism

H3: Economic mobility enhances the possibilities of assertion among the caste groups Economic prosperity definitely led to the change in the social positioning of a particular caste and other related dimensions like education, caste-based consciousness, and Sanskritization. Regarding Punjab, this is manifested for the Chamar caste (Boota Mandi) and Adi-dharmis (migration).

H4: The Dalit assertion is not homogenous and limited to few dominant castes of the region but has some trickling effect on the other castes of the group. movements are in fact caste assertion

The Dalit assertion in India is generalized as the ‘collective consciousness movement’ for the demand of equitable positioning in the social, cultural, economic, and political spheres of the society. However, evidence from the field suggests that this consciousness is not homogenous for all the caste communities and the developmental discourse has created a multi-level hierarchy and fragmentation, which can’t be generalized as ‘collective consciousness. Also, these consciousness movements rather than the negation of caste identities make it firmer.

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