
CHAPTER-1

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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 writes 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)⁹² elaborates 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