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**CHAPTER-4**  
**POSITIONING DALITS IN**  
**PUNJAB**

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## CHAPTER-4

### POSITIONING DALITS IN PUNJAB

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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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> century Huns and early 7<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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 18<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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'.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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<sup>3</sup> Narang. Op.cit

<sup>4</sup> Grewal, .op.cit

<sup>5</sup> Narang. Op.cit

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

Punjab has been the meeting ground and battlefield for a bewildering variety of cultural traditions.<sup>8</sup> 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

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

<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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*"<sup>10</sup>. 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.<sup>11</sup>

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*".<sup>12</sup>

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

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

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

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

<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup>

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.<sup>14</sup>

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.<sup>15</sup> Maharaja Ranjit Singh very well understood the position of Jats which create the powerful Jat aristocracy.

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<sup>13</sup> 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.

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

<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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, Bhasas, Ahluwalias, Bhatras, Sainis, Rais, Lobanas, Kambojs, Ramdasias, Ravidassis, Rahitas, Mazhabis, and Rangretas<sup>18</sup>. 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.

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<sup>16</sup> 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

<sup>17</sup> 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

<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> The Urban trading castes were got placed next to Jats in the hierarchy, they

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

<sup>20</sup> 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.

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

<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Castes</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Traditional Occupation</b>
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			

<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> 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**

<b>Community</b>	<b>Census 1971</b>	<b>Census 1981</b>	<b>Census 1991</b>	<b>Census 2001</b>	<b>Census 2011</b>
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.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup>

**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
<b>INDIA 2011</b>	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

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

<sup>27</sup> 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**

<b>S.No</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2011</b>
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
	<b>PUNJAB</b>	<b>16.12</b>	<b>23.85</b>	<b>41.09</b>	<b>56.22</b>	<b>64.81</b>

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
	<b>State Total</b>	<b>36.75%</b>	<b>7.48%</b>	<b>0.85%</b>	<b>4.48%</b>	<b>29.00%</b>	<b>5.16%</b>	<b>2.56%</b>
	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**

<b>Employees in Govt. and Semi Govt. organizations</b>	<b>Total no. of Employes</b>	<b>Number of SC employees</b>	<b>SC employees in the percentage</b>
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
<b>State Total</b>	<b>36.75%</b>	<b>1.62%</b>	<b>28.88%</b>	<b>1.12%</b>	<b>0.05%</b>	<b>0.23%</b>	<b>0.06%</b>	<b>4.77%</b>
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.<sup>28</sup> 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'.<sup>29</sup>

**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.*

<sup>28</sup> 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

<sup>29</sup> 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**

<b>District of Punjab</b>	<b>District wise No. of Villages having 100% Scheduled Caste population in Punjab</b>	<b>District wise Villages having 50% and above Scheduled Caste population in Punjab</b>
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
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>2361</b>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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

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

<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> 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

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<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup>

### **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.

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<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup> 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

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<sup>35</sup>. 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup>

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

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 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>.