CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

One of the prominent aspects of economic, political and social relations revolves around the issues of inequality based on class, caste, race and gender. In the context of India, caste based politics has always remained in the forefront. But during the last two decades, the assertion of the people from low castes including the Dalits has assumed unprecedented significance. The Dalit question is one of the most important questions in today’s political and academic debates in India. Dalit assertion, Dalit leadership and voting pattern of the Dalits etc., are the elements of these debates.

Dalits are underprivileged in all social, economic and political fronts which leads to their misery, discrimination, exploitation and oppression by the caste dominated society. The theory of the caste system is interlinked with the varna model which divided the Hindu society into four orders-the Brahmins, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya and the Sudras.\(^1\) The first three castes are considered twice born or 'dvija' since the men from these castes were entitled to use the sacred thread at the Vedic site of Upanayana, which the Sudras were not allowed to perform.\(^2\) Sudras were the people who cultivated the land, mended the shoes, washed the clothes and did all types of menial works. Members of this caste, however, shared
the stigma of untouchability; they were frequently denied the chance to eat, smoke or even sit with members of the upper castes, and they often must use separate wells from those maintained for the use of others.  

This pitiable condition of Dalits was seen and well addressed by some eminent social and political philosophers like Joytiba Phule, Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar and others and during their long careers they had taken some ameliorative measures in order to raise their social status.

India after gaining independence enacted different social legislations to reform the position of Dalits which included-to remove the untouchability and discrimination against them and secondly to elevate their status in such a way that they have an equal status with other segments. The provisions of voting rights, reservation in education and jobs and in the political fields, are the steps which have been in existence since the adoption of the Constitution. Efforts are still going on to remove different discriminatory practices against them. One of the major aspects of the socio-economic status of Dalits is their political consciousness and awareness about various political activities and participation in these activities. The Dalit consciousness about political activities
may contribute in various decisions relating to their rights and privileges. Thus political awareness and participation of the Dalits is an important area of study.

At the outset, it may be pointed out that though the term Dalit signifies a broad canvas, yet it is generally used as an alternative for the Scheduled Castes as recognized in the Indian Constitution.

Punjab is a state where the percentage of the Dalits is the highest in the country. Dalits constitute 28.85 per cent of total population of Punjab. The overall percentage of Dalits in India is 16.23 per cent (census 2001). The proportion of the Scheduled Castes to the total population in Punjab has consistently been rising from 22.5 per cent in 1961 to 24.7 per cent in 1971, 26.8 per cent in 1981, 28.3 per cent in 1991 and 28.85 in 2001. This rate of decadal rise in the Scheduled Caste population has been consistently higher than the rate of rise in the non-SC population since 1951.

However, it is interesting to note that it is not Punjab but Uttar Pradesh where the Dalits (21.1% in the population) are in a position to make a recognizable impact on the politics of the state. The other states like Maharashtra have much lower percentage but
there also the mobilization of the Dalits is more organized as compared to Punjab. The rise and expansion of BSP and Dalit aspirations symbolized by the leadership of Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh is seen as an example of Dalit assertion, but Dalits in Punjab (inspite of the substantial ratio) have not been able to emerge as a political force. To understand this we need proper understanding of the pattern of political participation of Dalits in Punjab.

In political participation, we do not confine ourselves to the act of voting alone, since there are other political activities which are important indicators of political participation. The participation covers a wide range of activities like participation in rallies, becoming members of different political parties or the other pressure groups, forming their own political party or raising issues of political importance through different mediums-radio, television, newspapers etc. or participating in elections at all levels-voting, campaigning or contesting. The political consciousness and level of participation of Dalits in these activities in Punjab has not yet been explored by any of the researchers. Therefore, considering the importance of these facts an attempt has been made to understand and analyse the political participation of Dalits in Punjab.
The present study focuses on the political participation of the Dalits in two important districts of Punjab—namely Nawanshehar [now Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar (SBS Nagar)] and Patiala. The two districts have been selected purely on the basis of the concentration of Dalit population. Whereas Nawanshehar has the highest percentage of Dalit population i.e. 40.46 per cent and has two out of three Assembly seats reserved, Patiala has the lowest percentage of Dalit population 23.05 per cent in the state and has only one seat reserved out of eight Assembly seats.

CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The two concepts which have been used in the present study are Dalit and political participation. Before presenting the details of the present study, it is pertinent to clarify the above mentioned terms as clearly as possible.

Dalit

In India, Dalit is a modern term for the untouchables, who have been exploited and subjected to atrocities due to the social stratification of Indian society. In many cases, Dalits are easily targeted even now in this independent nation where the constitution guarantees equal rights and privileges to every citizen. Throughout the century they have been victimized religiously, socially, culturally and most of all economically.
Dalit is an expression of the existing contradiction, inequality and exploitation in the Indian hierarchy. In the annals of Indian history, Dalits were referred to with different nomenclatures like Chandals, Avarnas, Achhuts, Adi-dravidia, depressed classes, oppressed Hindu, Harijan, Scheduled Castes etc. at different points of time. However, after the emergence of the Dalit Panther movement, they preferred to be called as Dalits.

The word Dalit, should normally refer to all oppressed classes including not only Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes but also the extremely backward among other backward castes. However there is a general agreement about the fact that the Scheduled Castes form the hard core of Dalits, who face more oppression and social indignities than the OBCs. Our main concern in this work, therefore, is with Scheduled Castes.

**Definition of Dalit:** The term Dalit is derived from the Sanskrit root *dal* which means burst, split, broken, down trodden. Dalit has become part of the vocabulary of the North-Indian languages. For example, in Punjabi the well-known Punjabi dictionary 'The Mahan Kosh' by Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha defines Dalit as one who belongs to the lowest caste (Hini jati) and has been trampled down by or broken under the feet of the upper castes (Uchi jati).
The most appropriate definition is given by Professor Gangadhar Pantawane, founder editor of Amitadarsh (Mirror of identity):

"To me, Dalit is not a caste, he is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of his country. He does not believe in God, rebirth, soul, holy books teaching separation, fate and heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution."

It was used in the new context in Marathi by New Buddhist activists, the followers of B.R. Ambedkar in the early 1970s. Dalit refers to those who have been broken, grounded down by those above them in a deliberate way, there is in, the word itself, an internal denial-pollution, Karma and justified caste hierarchy.

It was seemingly first used in the context of caste oppression by the great nineteenth century reformer Joytiba Phule. It is interesting that the category Dalit was used by Ambedkar himself in his fortnightly Bahiskrudit Bharat. He defines it comprehensively: Dalithood is a kind of life condition which characterizes the exploitation, suppression and marginalization of Dalits by the social, economic, cultural and political domination of the upper
 caste Brahmincal order. He, however, did not use this category often, preferring to deploy different terms depending upon changing context. For example, when dealing with the imperial state he used the category of depressed classes and when addressing high caste Hindus he used the category 'bahiskruit' meaning total out-caste.

If one takes this view, all the exploited, and the downtrodden producers, who have been deprived from the ownership of the means of production, denied basic rights of a dignified social life and livelihood, discriminated through biased socio-economic and political decisions taken in favour of non-producers and privileged classes and kept deliberately away from the mainstream advantages of progress are to be considered Dalits. It is to be noted that economically, a poor person is different from a Dalit. A poor person may be deprived in the economic sphere, especially of income necessary to participate in the economy. However, he/she may not be necessarily deprived in social and cultural spheres, that is, he/she may not face the same type of exclusion in the social and cultural life of his neighborhood as a Dalit faces.

The recent use of the term Dalit has been developed in the manifesto of Dalit Panther movement in 1973: “Who is Dalit?” in this regard, this manifesto says members of Scheduled Castes and
Scheduled Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited socially, politically, economically and in the name of religion. So Dalits are exclusively the socially and economically marginalized people of India.

A variety of other names have been used in both English and Indian languages before and after independence to designate these people who are at the lowest rung in the social structure. Besides the term Scheduled Castes and untouchables the term- chandals, Avarnas, depressed classes and Harijan have become well known. James Massey points out that these have been changed occasionally, in most cases, to despise them or to show contempt. Since they were considered outside chaturvarna- the four-caste system, they were labelled out-castes and untouchables and alienated from the main stream of the society. Untouchable is the word used by Ambedkar for those castes who are lowest in the Hindu scale of pollution. It first appeared in 1909. However, the word had now disappeared from ordinary parlance following widespread education and constitutional provisions. Before Independence the Government used the term “depressed classes”: this term was replaced by Scheduled Castes in government of India.
Act 1935 when these castes were placed on a Schedule as qualifying for special rights. In the arena of competitive politics, Ambedkar also preferred the term Scheduled Castes. It was evident when he used this term for establishing the political party-Scheduled Caste Federation. Although this term has been used as a nomenclature in the present Constitution of India, it is not explicitly defined.

Mahatma Gandhi an ardent champion for removing untouchability within the Hindu-Chaturvarna frame-work called the untouchables as Harijans-men of God. Basically Harijan word was first used by Narsinha Mehta but later propagated by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi himself clarified this in one of the issues of the weekly Harijan. He argued that, 'it is not a name of my coining-some year ago, several untouchable correspondents complained that I used the word Asprishya in the pages of Navjivan, 'Asprishya means literally untouchable: I then invited them to suggest a better name, and one of the untouchable correspondents suggested the adoption of the name Harijan, on the strength of its having been used by the first known poet saint of Gujrat. But Ambedkar believed untouchables do not regard Gandhi as being earnest in eradicating untouchability.
to him "Saints never carried on a campaign against caste and untouchability. The saints of the Bhakti sect were not concerned with the struggle between man and man. They were concerned with relation between man and God". Later, a section of Scheduled Caste leaders rejected the term Harijan considering it an insult rather than an honour. The term Dalit, in Gail Omvedt's opinion, provides a militant alternative to the Gandhian term Harijan. All those who have been converted to Buddhism use the term Buddhist and rejected all other nomenclature, including their original caste names.

In the mid 1970s, again, the Dalit leaders coined a new identity in the name of 'Bahujan' with the emergence of Backward And Minorities Communities Employees Federation (BAMCEF). Kanshi Ram used the term Bahujan to encompass Dalits, Adivasees, OBCs, and minorities together for a greater alliance. In recent years the term Dalit has been discarded as a social reactionary category by a section of the community who prefer Bahujan with both the Buddhist as well as Dalit categories. Kancha Ilaiah in his book 'why I am not a Hindu' (1996) used the term 'Dalit-Bahujan' to maintain the special identity of Dalits while expressing a broader alliance.
What is most important to emphasize at this point is that Dalit is the term which down trodden people have given to themselves. This helps to account for the popularity of the term among Dalit people of different protest movement in India. Dalit is thus not a mere descriptive name or title, but an expression of hope for recovery of their past identity. They were realized of themselves as Dalits, the very acceptance of the state of Dalitness is the first step on the way towards their transformation into full and liberated human beings.

With the trend of Dalit assertions becoming stronger many Dalit organizations have started propagating and popularizing the term Dalit more vigorously. One the other hand the word “Chammar” which is one of the sub-castes in the Dalits has come out openly as a separate entity and formed “All India Maha Chammar Sabha”. They put up posters and banner all over the Punjab recently declaring “xoZ ls dqks ge pekj gSa” (say with pride that we are Chammar).

Political Participation

As Aristotle said, man is a political animal by nature and his political activity may take place either explicitly or implicitly within his own group. But that state structure has undergone great
transformation from city state to modern democratic nation state, from his time to present. As a result, the nature of political participation of human beings should be qualitatively different from that of Aristotelian times. The political participation in present nation state has to be highly conscious and constant in order to establish democratic institutions which are useful for each and every individual.

In these days everybody accepts the wisdom and need of people's participation in various state activities. People's involvement in setting the goal and implementing the policies is considered highly essential. The necessity or desirability of such participation by the people has thus assumed much importance and with it, political participation which gives the people a chance to shape their destiny, has also become a matter of political importance.

Political participation plays a significant role in the survival of an ongoing democratic political system. Lack of political awareness and passivity of the general masses make the political system irresponsible and ultimately non-functioning. It is political consciousness and political awareness which brings the sense of interest articulation among the general masses. When the interest
is articulated as a result of political consciousness, it leads to interest aggregation. When the interest is aggregated, the resultant is mass mobilization. When the masses are mobilised the outcome is effective participation of the masses in the affairs of the political system.\textsuperscript{29} In this framework the significance of political participation acquires a paramount importance.

The process of political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which members of a society show active interest and play a role in the selection of rulers. It includes voting, seeking information, discussing, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with the representatives, enrolment in a party, canvassing and registering voters and working in campaigns. It is clear that the term political participation draws our attention to political activities rather than attitude and behaviour of private citizen to those who are professionally involved in public affairs.\textsuperscript{30}

Social scientists broadly define political participation as being the process through which an individual plays a role in the political life of his society, has the opportunity to take part in deciding what the common goals of that society are, and the best ways of achieving these goals. Political participation refers to actual
participation in those voluntary activities by which members of a society show interest in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly in the formation of public polity.

To understand the issue involving political participation, firstly, it becomes necessary to discuss what political participation is. Secondly to see what are the factors in making people participate in politics, or what are the different environmental factors that can influence the political behaviour of individuals or groups.

Participation means that people are closely involved in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives. People may, in some cases, have complete and direct control over these processes - in other cases the control may be partial or indirect. The important thing is that people have constant access to decision making and power participation in this sense is an essential element of human development.31

To define political participation is a very complicated problem and to decide what activities constitute political participation is no simple a matter, because it is a product of various factors.32 Some people devote their full time and energy in politics, others choose to remain deeply interested as passive spectators. For some, politics is a matter of continuous and responsible attention, for others,
political activity is episodic or emerges only in time of crisis. Thus, the political participation ranges from most passive and sporadic, to the most active and consistent.\textsuperscript{33}

Political participation is a civil duty and it is a good sign for political health of country. The term political participation has very wide connotation. Political participation can be regarded as the principal means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in the democracy and the rulers are made accountable to the ruled.\textsuperscript{34} Political participation implies participation by the various people in the politics of the country.\textsuperscript{35} Political participation is a necessary ingredient of every political system.\textsuperscript{36}

Defining political participation Myron Weiner says The concept of political participation refers to any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organized or unorganized, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods intended in influencing the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs or the choice of political leaders.\textsuperscript{37}

Dowse and Hughes say that people participate in politics in many different ways, with different degree of emotional involvement and at different levels of the system.\textsuperscript{38}
According to Verba, Nie and Kim, political participation refers to "those legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and/or the actions they take."\textsuperscript{39}

According to Milbrath and Goel, political participation may be defined as "those actions of private citizens by which they seek to influence or to support government and politics." This definition is broader than most others; it includes not only active roles that people pursue in order to influence political outcomes but also ceremonial and support activities.\textsuperscript{40}

McClosky views political participation as "those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers, and directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy."\textsuperscript{41}

Rush & Althoff explain that political participation consists of voting, membership or activity connected with political groups such as movements, parties, pressure groups, office holding in political institutions, informal activities such as political discussions or attendance at political meetings, political persuasion of authorities or members of the political public.\textsuperscript{42}
Though political participation has been defined in various ways, yet in nutshell it refers to the participation of individuals in the political process, and that it ensures that individuals are able to take part in deciding the common goals of the society and the best ways of achieving it. Activities related to political participation typically include, voting-discussing and changing options, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with representatives.

Lester Milbrath brings these activities under the following three categories-

(i) Gladiatorial activities
(ii) Transitional activities
(iii) Spectator activities

(i) **Gladiatorial activities**: Gladiatorial activities are carried out by a small number of party activists through active association with party activities like:

(a) being a candidate for office,
(b) soliciting political funds,
(c) holding public and party office,
(d) attending a caucus or a strategy meeting,
(e) becoming an active member in a political party,
(f) contributing time in a political campaign.
(ii) **Transitional activities:** Transitional activities are following:

(a) attending a political meeting or rally,

(b) making a monetary contribution to a party candidate,

(c) contacting with public officers or leaders.

(iii) **Spectator activities:** Spectator activities are following:

(a) voting,

(b) wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car,

(c) making and joining a political discussion,

(d) influencing others to vote in a particular way.

From the above, it is clear that political participation is a complex phenomenon that is influenced by a variety of factors. Some of the most researched studies of political behaviour concern themselves with the association between political participation and various social and environmental factors. There are a number of variables, which work behind the concept of political participation.

**Variables of Political Participation**

Although participation appears to be a complex phenomenon that depends upon great many variables of different relative weights, according to Milbrath the variables which determine the pattern of political participation can at-least be grouped into three categories:

(i) The Psychological variables
(ii) The Social variables

(iii) The Political variables

(i) **The Psychological variables:** Psychological, involvement refers to the degree to which citizens are interested in and concerned about politics and public affairs. Men participate politically because they detest isolation and want to have the association of others. Again one of the fundamental psychological traits of man is that he is a curious animal.

This pursuit of meaning also serves as an important psychological reason for one's political participation. Individual becomes politically involved because he is keen on deriving meaning from the political environment in which he is living. All these however are a conscious psychological grounds of political participation. Thus, psychological involvement is a central variable determining exposure to political stimuli, so it is a control attitudinal variable relating to participation in politics.

(ii) **Social variables:** Political participation is constantly influenced by social environment. A person's social characteristics such as his socio-economic status, his social ethnic group, his education, age, sex and religion whether he lives in rural or urban or whether he belongs to voluntary organizations, and so on, are likely to influence his political participation.
**Occupation:** A person's socio-economic status is likely to influence his political participation. People with high occupational status, high income earnings and having high exposure to mass media are likely to be more participative than those who have less of the above. It has been seen that the people who are, economically sound, take active part in political activities. For a hungry man, politics has no meaning.

**Age:** The age factor also has been playing an important role in this field. Many studies over the world have found that participation increases steadily with age until it reaches a peak in the middle years and the gradually declines with old age. For conventional activities other than voting, a similar curve has been reported in the five nation survey of Austria, India, Japan, Nigeria, and the United State.\(^46\) In each nation, participation rises in the early years, reaches a peak in the middle years, and decline in old age. At the young age due to lack of stability and security they are unable to understand the conflicting situations. Similarly the sense of political efficacy starts dropping at the old age. Such persons normally approach the retirement which makes an end of active life. In the meantime, this saps his self confidence and in turn it affects his life and the rate of political participation.
Religion: Religion also has impact on political participation. Religious values are often invoked to justify and legitimize political action and political arrangements, and this link in with the ways in which it affects voting behavior and other manifestations of political behaviour or political struggle.

In a secular society the principle that religion and politics are independent realms is accepted, but religion continues to influence politics in a number of ways. In India, in addition to religion, caste is a very strong factor in politics. A person’s caste may still be considered significant in the selection of candidate on grassroots level, state Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies as has been revealed in many studies on political participation.

Education: Understanding the relationship between education and political participation requires an important qualification. Education is one of the most important variables which promotes political consciousness among the people. The higher the education, the greater are one’s sense of civic duty, political competence, interest, responsibilities and also self-confidence and articulateness. The more educated are better able to transmit their political interest and knowledge to their children and hence, to perpetuate the relationship between education and participation.
The educated citizen is more likely to engage in political process than the uneducated person.

(iii) **Political Variables:** If the social environment is important for understanding the character of political participation, political environment is no less important in influencing political participation. Political participation is open competition for power in a society and more is the competition based on established and accepted forms of procedures, the greater will be the tendency to participate. The overall government programmes are also important. People may be so disappointed with inefficiency of the government of different political parties that they tend to become indifferent. The fact of indifference to politics by many citizens should not be taken to mean that government would function well if citizens ignore it completely. In order to keep public actions responsive to the wishes and desires of the people, citizens must at least participate in the choice of their public officials.\(^{50}\)

Of all political influences on participation, the party is probably the most potent. A political party performs wide range of important functions. Political parties were invented, among other reasons, to help citizens interpret political information and events and to organize and channel their political participation.\(^{51}\) The
political variables in respect of participation are, no doubt, important, but it should be noted that, as far as participation is concerned, the same political variables are often found to produce different results and this may be because the operation of the political variables is very much limited by the psychological and social variables.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

During the last few decades there have been a number of works done on various aspects of Dalits in the different parts of India. Most of them are sociological, anthropological and some of them are political in nature. However it is also important that more or equal attention should be given to the participation of Dalits in the political system of the society. Although many studies have been undertaken on the role of Dalits in Indian politics and their status in Indian society, yet in the context of Punjab, barring a few scholarly works, not much research work has been undertaken in this field, particularly on the issue of political participation of Dalits. A brief review of the existing literature on Dalit issues in India and in Punjab is given below.

Denzial Ibbetson’s, *Punjab Castes* (1916) explains the genesis of caste on the basis of occupation. The emergence of a new
occupation or a change in the traditional occupation led to the birth of a new caste. To Ibbeston castes are nothing but groups of people having specific occupation, and these occupations have been arranged in a pollution-purity continuum and this ranking has a bearing on the social intercourse of these groups, that is, caste. He further maintains that these occupations are preserved through certain religious principles.

Rajani Kothari, the well known political scientist, in his pioneer work *Caste in Indian Politics* (1954) exhibits the role of caste in Indian politics. The author emphasizes that political mobilization of various sections of Indian society has given salience to caste in Indian politics. He also points out that mobilization of different caste groups has been a major technique with various political parties for expanding their support base.

To analyze the relationship between social status and occupational status of the Scheduled Castes, D’ Souza (1962) conducted a study of three villages of Gujrat, Mysore and Maharashtra. The study brings out that in Gujrat and Mysore occupational status of the Scheduled Castes was the lowest in their respective villages. In the social evolution too, they were ranked lowest by others and by themselves but the situation was different
in the Maharashtra villages. The occupational status of the Scheduled Castes was higher than that of some other castes. Mahars (SC) had also given up their traditional unclean occupation. This did bring about some change in the attitude of the villagers towards the social status of Mahars but social tension and oppression had arisen in their relation with the other castes. The author also observes that people would take some time to forget past occupation of the Scheduled Castes.

Baldev Raj Nayar (1965) while writing on the role of caste in Punjab, takes up the case of the victory of an Akali Dal supported Scheduled Caste candidate in a rural Sidhwan Bet constituency elections of 1962. He shows the powerful influence of religious loyalties in the voting behaviour of both Hindus and Sikhs and the important role played by the gurdwaras for the Akali Dal candidate. But he also suggests that many other factors cut into religious loyalties. In the particular case under study the conflicts among Jat-Sikh factions within the village and the candidate's use of kinship ties were among the more important factors which led a number of Sikhs to vote for the Congress rather than Akali Dal. Loyalties to caste, religion, faction and party were thus all present: the voter had to make a choice among his conflicting loyalties, and
the skill of successful candidate lay in his ability to build a coalition of diverse loyalties.

Nayar in his illustrious Minority Politics in Punjab (1966) pointed out the cleavages based on religion, caste, rural-urban divide and class amongst the people of the state and raised the question as to the significance of these various cleavages in the population of Punjab for the politics of the state. His work was, however, mainly concerned with the role of religion in Punjab politics. Despite this, he made some valuable observations regarding the role of caste as well.

In Social Change in Modern India, Srinivas (1966) has defined the process of Sanskritization: Sanskritization is the process by which a low Hindu caste, or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high, and frequently twice born caste. The low caste takes to the conduct, customs and rituals of higher caste. By Sanskritization a caste or a tribal community ventures to gain higher status in society. In the process of Sanskritization a claim is made for higher status in the social structure and it is therefore a vertical movement. But in Sanskritization there is improvement of status only, there is no structural change.
Chandidas's (1969) study examined how close to equality were the Scheduled Castes. The data was taken from Data unit of Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS). The author concluded that after two decades of special concessions to bring them at par with the general population, the Scheduled Castes remained at the rear end of development. In the agricultural sector, where the Scheduled Castes were concentrated, their position as compared with that of the non-Scheduled Castes, was inferior regarding land as well as size of holdings. Their rate of urbanization and education and their average per-capita income in comparison to the non-Scheduled Castes was lower.

A study by Saberwal (1972) of three reserved assembly constituencies in Punjab shows that Scheduled Caste leaders have relatively limited political resources and political socialization. Therefore, the net result of this adverse condition is that the leaders refrain from adopting a stable political stance and depend on the patronage given by upper castes and the constitution. Saberwal concludes in his study that without political reservation, the access of the SCs to various elite settings in the political arena would decline, leading to greater inequalities in society. Thus, it is clear from the study that due to political reservation, Scheduled
Caste leaders are not inspired to group the larger institutional mechanisms which underlie inequalities, at the same time, the provision for reserved constituencies is indispensable for better political participation of the Scheduled Castes.

Mahar's (1972) edited volume on Dalits is one of the best collections of articles by eminent scholars. The introduction to this volume is written by Opler who argues that interaction of themes such as hierarchy, 'dharma' and ritual purity is pertinent to the understanding of culture of Hindu society. He contends that so long as these themes persist, the existing inequalities would continue. Some of the papers in the book highlight the role of untouchables in rural communities. They stress, what is now common place, that the problems of untouchables are predominantly socio-economic and that the upper castes do not react favourably to the growing awareness of the untouchables stemming from their education, government and political privileges. Mencher's paper observes that the problem of untouchability is an economic one and cannot be solved in isolation from the overall economic development of the nation. The history of untouchables in the past century or so points to several attempts by them to gain a new identity through religious conversions. Alexander's study of the new Christians of Kerala highlights this point. Despite
conversions, the Pulays in Kerala have hardly rid themselves of their traditional allegiances. Owen Lynch's study of Jatavas explains the attempts of this community to gain a new identity through conversion under the leadership of Ambedkar. Zelliot's comparative analysis of Gandhi and Ambedkar who held such divergent views brings out their historic roles and stresses the two main dimensions of the problem.

Another study *Beyond the Village: Sociological Explorations* by Saberwal (1972)\textsuperscript{61} based on the survey of industrial township of Punjab, explores the underlying social processes involved in the transformation of closed status group, i.e. caste into an open unbounded system in which any person of a group could take part according to the group's achieved role. He describes how the political processes led the Dalits to a higher level of consciousness of their rights, and how the former relation between caste and occupation was being eroded leading many of them to join the high status network. The processes of social mobility and change have been explained in the context of only one variable i.e. industrialization.

Shah's work *Politics of the Schedules Castes and Scheduled Tribes* (1975)\textsuperscript{62} deals with the political awareness and behaviour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. His findings are that in
the last two decades the political participation of SC's and STs has increased considerably. But the political parties have failed in lessening the gap between the deprived communities and the upper castes at political participation. The main object of the study is to examine the nature and extent of political participation of the SC and ST leaders in Gujarat. The study contains ten chapters and covers a vast spectrum of state politics. The author has appraised various types of movements-social, religious political before and after independence. The contributions of M.K. Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar and Gaekwad have been acknowledged in particular. The author has successfully attempted to examine socio-economic and psychological attributes of political and non-political leaders and their attitude and cognition towards their communities, political system and society at large. Thus, the study has a comparative analytical description of various aspects of the phenomenon of politics.

I.P. Singh's (1975) analysis of a Sikh village in Punjab and of changing Sikh traditions in relation to dominant Hindu tradition illustrates a process of differentiation that is fairly characteristic of Indian civilization- the rise of dissenting sects. The Sikhs share with the Buddhists, the Jains and Bhakti movements, an anti -
caste sentiment which at the inception of the movement promises significant social and cultural changes but later mellows into some form of compromise with the orthodox position. He finds upper castes and low castes clearly distinguished and not a single case of inter marriage. In the field of performances, Sikh festivals celebrating special Sikh heroes and saints have been added to traditional Hindu festivals.

N.D. Palmer (1976) has done splendid work on elections in respect of South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Nepal. However, the major portion of his book is devoted to the study of elections and voting behaviour in India. The book may safely be designated as a classic of electoral studies in India. The author has tried to correlate electoral politics and voting behaviour with the process of political development in India. He has highlighted the functions of elections in political system which according to him is political choice, political participation and political socialization. He gives a summary of elections from 1951 to 1972. He has also produced a profile of Indian voters and thoroughly discussed the determinants of voting behaviour of the Indian electorate. But the book, based as it is on aggregate data, has formulated certain generalizations regarding the behaviour of
Indian voters in general and does not provide though study of voting behaviour of the down trodden people i.e. Dalits.

Maharia (1978)\textsuperscript{65} conducted a study to examine the effects of development and welfare programmes on weaker sections in India. The author defined weaker sections as those persons who strikingly fell below the prescribed standards or were placed at the lowest level of society. Characteristics of backwardness might be identified as untouchability, lower social status, unclean occupations, poverty and unemployment, lack of education and low level of living. The author observed that many programmes had been introduced for the benefit of weaker sections in our country but they had not made any impact because even if we had resources (i.e. capital, labour force, technical knowledge etc.), their use was restricted; people were not able to utilise them.

Leela Vasaria (1979)\textsuperscript{66} conducted a study "The Harijans Worsening Plight" in four districts of Tamil Nadu of 1000 rural families-800 Harijans and 200 non-Harijans. The study attempted to measure, through economic and social status indices, the level of discrimination suffered by Harijans as also to study the trends in poverty in the two decades between 1950 and 1970. The per capita income of Harijans in 1970 was Rs. 277 as against Rs. 406 of the
non Harijans when Harijan and non-Harijans were employed as coolies. The daily wages of Harijans were less than non-Harijans. The Harijans' income was less because of the small land holdings and the low paid menial jobs.

Pimpley (1980)\textsuperscript{67} sets out to assess the status of the Scheduled Caste students of Punjab and identify the difficulties and experiences of discrimination. Based on well designed sample survey of 487 students from schools and colleges, the author concludes that Scheduled Castes have not fully utilized the educational opportunities provided to them by the state government. Two major factors in the form of conjectures for low utilization have been offered by the author. These are general poverty and lack of the culture of education. The comparison of school and college sample shows the difference in their response on several dimensions but without changing the major conclusion. The author feels that a radical transformation of the social structure is necessary to ameliorate the condition of the Scheduled Castes. On the whole, the study provides an illuminating profile of the Scheduled Caste students of Punjab.

D' Souza's \textit{Educational Inequalities among Scheduled Castes-A Case Study in Punjab} (1980)\textsuperscript{68} supports the hypothesis that inequalities have a systematic character and that when Scheduled
Castes who are structurally differentiated are subjected to uniform condition of change, different castes respond differently, with the result that gulf between them widens further. Caste differences and the concentration of different Scheduled Castes in various educationally and socio-economically different regions are responsible for widening the gap. The solution suggested to tackle the issue is to improve the socio-economic conditions for the structurally disadvantaged sections. Such a suggestion in no way helps the planners to evolve any action plan. The measure of 'coefficient of equality used by the author seems to be promising techniques to analyze the increasing gap.

Khan (1980) made an attempt to assess the changes, which have taken place in several aspects of the life of the Scheduled Castes who were subject to several forms of disabilities in the past. Endeavour has also been made to evaluate the working of the governmental policies and programmes for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes since independence. He observes that Scheduled Castes have not been benefited much from the governmental measures and their economic condition has not improved much.

Joshi’s Democracy in Search of Equality: Untouchable Politics and Indian Social Change (1982) analyses the role of SC legislator’s and finds reservation for SCs and STs as the major
factor for their political activities. However Joshi observes that the provision for reserved seats is not enough for the Scheduled Castes to reduce their political dependence on the higher castes.

Sachchidananda in his remarkable work *The Harijan Elite* (1985) points out that reservation measures in jobs, scholarships and seats in legislatures has created a section among the Harijans who do not care for their own community. This is the rise of the 'elite class' within the Harijans. He suggests economic upliftment of all the Harijans.

Mandal's book *Tribals at Polls* (1986) is a longitudinal study of a parliamentary constituency in tribal Bihar. It brings out in detail the political process at work from 1977 to 1984 parliamentary elections. It deals with the changing scenario of the political climate and the changing attitude of the electorate in India.

Narayanan in his "Reservation in Politics and Scheduled Caste Elite" (1986) finds that the present system of political reservation benefits only the Scheduled Caste elite and not Scheduled Caste masses. She concludes that the Scheduled Caste leaders are in a better position to represent SCs' interests but as the policy of reservation for SCs and STs exists today, it tends to
create an elite section and the system has not worked to benefit the common SC and ST population.

Kiran Shukla in *Caste Politics in India: A Case Study of Bihar* (1987)\(^4\), has tried to illustrate the impact of caste on state politics. The author attempts to find the actual influence of caste on the state politics. According to her the impact of caste on politics has progressively been increasing and if the present situation is any indicator of the future, it is very unlikely that the impact will be reduced in future. In the second chapter the author, taking the period from 1912 to 1980, has shown that from the beginning it has been due to economic and social predominance that caste has been influencing politics. In the third chapter the author concludes that caste is playing its role under the shade of class interest.

Juergensmeyer has done a pioneer work *Religious Rebels in Punjab : The Social Vision of Untouchability* (1988)\(^5\). The author has explained the social condition of Dalits in Punjab. This book is about the particular segment of Punjabi society, the so called untouchable castes and their non-violent movements for social change in which lower caste activities have been involved throughout the present century. The Dalit rebels revolted against untouchability on the basis of religion in organized way rather than
on the basis of caste. The book also explores other avenues of expression that were available to socially minded Punjabi untouchables in the 20th century. The author also highlights the political awakening among the Dalits through various movements.

Jatinder Kaur’s book *Punjab Crisis: the Political Perceptions of Rural Voters 1989* is an analysis of the Punjab problem at the grass root level. This study probes the political outlook of the rural people of Punjab and the extent to which this outlook strengthens democratic structure especially the electoral process. The author analyses the level of political awareness and the participation of the people in the electoral process.

Benjamin (1989) observes that the Scheduled Castes of rural Bihar have not reached the level of power sharing despite state help. There is some association at lower levels between social mobility and political participation. Social mobility is not taking place among the Scheduled Castes primarily because of the obstructive role of neo-rich middle castes or classes operating through musclemen and senas.

Panday’s study "Protective Discrimination and Social Uplift Among Scheduled Castes" (1991) is an empirical analysis of the impact of special privileges along with democratic secularism in the
social mobility and upliftment of Harijans in modern India. The study also gives special analysis of their rise in social hierarchy, social position, mobilization in attitude towards social institutions, patterns of behaviour, style of life, social contacts and nearness with upper castes.

*From Untouchables to Dalits* (1992) by Zelliot provides an overview of the Dalits' political and religious movements in Maharashtra from the Bhakti tradition of Chokhamela and Ekanth to the Mahar movement under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar to the consequence of Buddhist revival and finally to the literary movement in the 1970's. He has written extensively on the life, thought and works of B.R. Ambedkar, and maps out the historical linkage of the untouchable protests with that of the religious movements as modes of protest and change; from the Bhakhti movement in the fourteenth century to the Buddhist revival in the 20th century.

*Kshirsagar* (1994) important study deals with the Dalit movements and its leaders in India. It provides the socio-political profile of all those leaders who had worked for the emancipation of their brethren from the curse of untouchability and caste system, especially during 1857 to 1956. No doubt there are certain other
books on Dalit movement and its leaders, but they are scanty and scattered. As most of them are written in the regional languages, they are not accessible to others. Hence such leaders and their movements remained unknown to other regions. This book gives knowledge about all the Dalit movements all over India. In addition the author has also included the contribution made by non-Dalit leaders and their organizations aimed at Dalit upliftment.

Surinder Mohan in an article published in *Mainstream* "Paradox of Dalit Politics" (1994) has analyzed the paradoxes of Dalit politics in India. He observed that Ambedkar had grasped certain fundamental lessons about how the Dalit politics had to be developed. Ambedkar pleaded for an alliance between the Dalits and other backward castes, both being oppressed by inequitous caste system. In fact Ambedkar wanted to make Dalits effective constituents of a viable political force. The authors suggested that a long term political strategy is required to be built up on the guidelines of Dr. Ambedkar for the downtrodden people to unite together politically for participating in the electoral politics of the country.

Singh and Jammu in their well documented study "Untouchability in Rural Punjab" (1995) highlight the sense of untouchability prevailing in the villages of Punjab. They collected
the information from five villages of Patiala district. The findings of the study indicate that SCs still live in separate places in the villages. Although, the sense of untouchability in physical terms is almost negligible but some of people still hesitate to touch the lower caste people. Though people of higher Caste and SCs can sit on the same cot but inter-caste circle of friendship is quite narrow. SCs are not fully free at religious gatherings, they even have different religious places.

Sangwan's work *Social System and the Dalit Identity* (1996) covers the social structure including the dynamics of the caste system, the evolution of the system, the law and its interpretations, the present status and the hopes and aspirations of the Dalit communities in term of social and economic betterment. Recent years have seen a great upsurge of Dalit sentiment and determination in India. He argues that it happened only with the collective efforts. The collective consciousness of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes represents the consciousness of the large part of India. However the political implications are diverse and the political diversity of India is tied up inextricably with its social and regional realities. As with other movements the Dalits constitute a vocal and decisive segment of the population of the country. They are a force to be reckoned with.
Ghosh and Ghosh's study (1997) mainly deals with the Dalit Women. The author discusses various types of Dalit communities which are considered lowest in the social hierarchy beyond the four Hindu Varnas. The author not only analyses the status of Dalit women in Indian society but also the status of Dalit women in Dalit society. Constitutional and legal protections given after Independence are also discussed in detail.

James Massey's work Down Trodden - The Struggle of India's Dalits for Identity, Solidarity and Liberation (1997) tries to deal with the terminology which is being used for Dalits and the origin of untouchability in India. He deals with some of the religious movements in India which worked for the upliftment of Dalits. He also deals with internationalization of Dalit issues and tries to show the condition of Dalits in the era of liberalization.

Suresh Kumar's article "India At Fifty: The Dalit Situation" (1997) expresses the view that violation of civil and human rights and atrocities against the Dalits have been on the rise over the years. The Dalits are still far behind the general population in terms of literacy and education. Despite preferential treatment as a part of the affirmative action of the state, the majority of the Dalits can not afford higher education as they are still below poverty line.
But despite the shortcomings and limitations of the affirmative actions of the state, the Dalits have been able to forge an independent identity in its various terms and manifestations. According to the author the growing sense of awareness and assertiveness among Dalits have brought them together on many common platforms. They are now able to express and articulate their common Dalit identity through collective communication action.

Bandyopadhyay (1999) states in his article that the Dalits in the Indian society have been often suppressed by the elite class even after independence. He explains that the system of administration lacks accountability to the people. The bureaucratic system below the state level, was nurtured in such a way that they are almost non-accountable to the people. The author hopes that the new panchayati Raj system will remove the inherent weakness of the administration at the local level. He states that elected representatives of the people should have the right to exercise superintendence and control over government officials. He argues that the democracy of the elites is on the offensive against the democracy of the Dalits.
V.B. Singh's article "Deprivation and Political Consciousness" (1999) examines the nature of deprivation of the Scheduled Castes and also discusses its implications for effective political participation. He observes that the phenomenon of deprivation arises out of inequitable distribution of and access to both material and non-material resources in a society. As a matter of fact, in every society, certain groups enjoy disproportionate share in social resources. The Scheduled Castes as a group, with a long history of socio-economic deprivation, present a very good sample for examining the nature and extent of deprivation.

Pushpendra's article "Dalit Assertion through Electoral Politics" (1999) examines the data on voting behaviour of the Scheduled Castes and traces the change in party preferences of the Scheduled Castes. In order to explain why this assertion took place through elections, the author has analysed the opinion of the Scheduled Castes about the legitimacy of the political system. A further attempt is made to find internal differentiation among the Scheduled Castes regarding their voting behaviour.

Michael's edited work *Dalits in Modern India: Vision and Values* (1999) throws light upon almost every aspect of Dalit life. It is a collection of articles by eminent scholars. The articles focus
on the major concerns of the Dalits. The book is divided into four parts. First part deals with historical aspect and traces the origin and development of untouchability in Indian civilization. The Dalit vision of Indian society is not same as the upper caste Hindu vision. The second part has articles studying the contribution of Jyotiba Phule and B.R. Ambedkar, who laid the foundation for the Dalit movements and who are also known as the fathers of the Indian social revolution. Part III deals with methodological and operational aspect of Dalits in Indian society. Here the articles give critique of traditional Indian sociology which look at Indian society mainly from a Sanskrit perspective. In the course of this critique, the author also makes an attempt to propose a method for the study of complex nature of Hinduism and Indian society. The fourth and last part concentrates on the economic condition of the Dalits where problems of employment of the Dalits are also discussed.

Interrogating caste is wide-ranging and amply illustrated account of the working and function of caste in India. Gupta's *Interrogating Caste: Understanding Hierarchy and Difference in Indian Society* (2000) draws upon insights from a variety of disciplines including sociology, anthropology, history and Marxian
theory, to analyse the caste system and to provide fresh insights into reality that often appears too familiar to us. As the subtitle denotes, the book is about understanding hierarchy and difference in Indian society. The author challenges the view that there is a single caste hierarchy to which every caste acquiesces ideologically; this is not only the most prevalent academic view, but also the dominant notion about caste in India. He instead argues that there are probably as many hierarchies as there are castes in India. He challenges one of the fundamental assumptions of electoral politics in India that if the caste composition of electoral constituencies is known, political outcomes can be predicted. By treating caste in this fashion, he has produced a work that is timely, very much needed and extremely accomplished. It corrects many of our misconceptions about castes.

Ramashray Roy’s *Dalit Development and Democracy* (2000) is an important work on the Indian Dalits. The author examines the social, economic as well as political issues concerning development of the Dalits. The study, therefore, has a wide canvas. It takes up aspects related to economic betterment, social upliftment and political empowerment and in that process sheds new light on several facts of Dalit life. As the author points out, the
continued depressed socio-economic condition of the Dalits in India raises questions about the relationship between development and democracy.

Sudha Pai’s *Dalit Assertion and Unfinished Democratic Revolution: the BSP in Uttar Pradesh* (2002) traces the growth of BSP in UP and in the process dispels several myths and historical interpretations. The author says that Dalit assertion in the context of UP means assertion against upper caste domination, against the state for its failure to improve the socio-economic condition of Dalits and remove the practice of untouchability.

Vivek Kumar’s article "Caste Mobilization in UP and its Impact on Assembly Election" (2002) examines the nature of caste mobilization in Uttar Pradesh. According to Kumar caste mobilization can be easily observed at two levels: one at the level of caste connections organized by different socio-political organizations and second in the form of formation of single caste based politics. A major threat of this caste mobilization can be seen in the election of UP Assembly election 2002 which was again resulted in a hung Assembly.

Malhotra’s study *Gender, Caste and Religious Identity-Restructuring Class in Colonial Punjab* (2002) focuses on how the notion of being 'high caste', as it developed and transformed during
the colonial period, contributed to the formation of a middle class among the Hindus and the Sikhs. While many reformist Sikhs and Hindus either denied or re-conceptualized caste, the author draws attention to the innovative ways, in which older privileges shaped newer identities. This in turn, had an impact on gender relation, and encouraged the re-examination of women's role and place in society. The author deals with the problem of women's relationship to the concepts of caste and religiosity in the context of the reformist imagination of the period. Caste was seen as a quality 'attached' to men, making women's relationship to it ambiguous. The late nineteenth century high caste men tried to grapple with this conundrum and upgrade women to a life suitable to the high caste, modernist middle classes. The author further highlights how the new notions of ideal femininity were hidden under the gamut of new and often oppressive cultural practices. He maps the emergence of new high caste, middle class partriarchal structures among the Hindus and the Sikhs, and the ideological pillars, on which they rested. By focusing on the issues of caste, religion and gender in the formation of a middle class, the author fills a major gap in the social history of colonial Punjab.
Vivek Kumar in his *Dalit Leadership in India* (2002) envisages to conceptualize the Dalit leadership in modern day national politics. It traces its origin, growth and development and examines its nature and dynamics, besides inquiring into its strategy or strategies adopted for mobilization and empowerment of the Dalit masses. On the basis of existing temporal reality the author has divided the Dalit leadership into two categories - one dependent category which wanted the upliftment of the Dalits within the Hindu social order and other independent category insisted for Dalits' upliftment outside the people of Hindu social order.

Vivek Kumar in his another article (2003) observes that the Dalits have changed their style of assertion with the structural changes in the Indian society. The change in their style is testimony to the increasing level of consciousness among them. The political assertion of the Dalits in the state has broken the political hegemony of the twice born castes. The article has deconstructed the myth of homogenized Hindu - whole by giving them a separate identity with the construction of different socio-cultural symbols. It says that the political mobilization in the state has checked the communal mobilization of the Sangh Parivar by weaning out the
Dalits from its fold. The Dalit assertion has strengthened the Indian democracy and today representative democracy is moving towards participatory democracy in the state as the Dalits themselves are sitting in the institutions of power, taking and implementing decision on their own.

H.K. Puri's article "Scheduled Castes in Sikh Community: A historical Perspective" (2003)\(^9\) is an understanding of the distinctive pattern of caste hierarchy in Sikhism which points to a new pattern of competing hierarchies, parallel to that of the Hindus. It calls for deeper insight into the dynamics of political power and economic relations both at the local and regional levels. Not looking closely at the ground level social reality may leave the impression that overall Sikh community represents homogeneity of castes rather than division. In the explanations rooted in the primacy of ideology or culture, on the other hand, the survival of casteism according to the learned scholar, is sometimes regarded a consequence of incomplete liberation of Sikhism from the strong hold of Brahmanism, emphasizing greater distancing of Sikhs from the Hindus.

Jodhka touched the issue of untouchability, role of various reform movements, question of Sikh identity, the Singh Sabha
movement and the Ad-Dharmi movement in his paper entitled "The Scheduled Castes in Contemporary Punjab" (2003)\textsuperscript{99}. Chamar and Ad-Dharmi communities have turned out to be more successful entrepreneurs than other small and less mobilized groups among the Scheduled Castes. He holds that the institution of caste is comparatively weak in Punjab.

Gill in his paper "Reservation and Protective Justice" (2003)\textsuperscript{100} finds it a social reality, which not only provides ground for social exploitation but also avenues for the mobility of Scheduled Castes. The study finds that there is structural inequality despite reservation policy. The author raises the question of constitutional equality in the context of reservation policy. The study is limited to the urban populace only. The analysis points out that reservation provides an opportunity to the lower section of the society to achieve those qualities and attributes on which modern industrial society lays premium essential for social and economic mobility.

Yagati’s work *Dalit’s Struggle for Identity* (2003)\textsuperscript{101} deals with the familiar story of Dalits with a new perspective. Often social scientists in general and historians in particular interpret Dalit consciousness as ‘false consciousness’ which undermines their radical political self assertion. This work mainly deals with Dalits'
political consciousness, their struggle for identity, and the manner
in which they rose from a stage of being political nonentities to a
stage when they could develop their own self definition and roles
within the dialectics of nationalist anti-colonial struggle. The
strength of this work lies in drawing upon vernacular sources and
in presenting an insider’s perspective.

Chandra’s work *Liberation & Social Articulation of Dalits*
(2003) in two volumes tracks down Dalit history, their
marginalization, welfare measures and awakening of Dalits.
Besides, the work also suggests ways and means to bring Dalits
into mainstream society. The first volume traces the social history
of Dalits, their ethnicity and racial conflicts, their exclusion from
mainstream society, and land laws related to Dalits. The Second
volume deals with social disabilities of Dalits, their rights,
educational development and welfare programmes aimed at them.
The burning issues of Dalits and racially discriminated people are
elaborately described in the volume. The role of state and social
agencies in the mainstreaming of these people are also discussed.

Muthaiah’s article “Politics of Dalit Identity” (2004) is
devoted to the study of designation of Dalits in different contexts of
their designation-impregnate with politics of designator and
designates. Designations like Scheduled Castes, Dalits and Bahujan are elite-manufactured categories with politics of their own but alien to common people. Reservation broke monopoly of one or two castes in various fields but preserved caste identities.

Ronki Ram’s article "Untouchability, Dalit Consciousness and the Ad Dharm Movement in Punjab" (2004) is confined to Ad-Dharm movement in Punjab. Its aim is to explore first the social and political arrangements in colonial Punjab during the 1920s which led to the rise of this movement and second, to document the present status of the movement in Punjab. The article explores the circumstances in which the Ad-Dharm movement originated in 1925 and what accounted for its so called demise in 1968, who were its protagonists, what objectives did it seek to achieve and what were the tactics and strategies adopted for the realization of these objectives.

Puri’s edited book Dalits in Regional Context (2004) has assessed the present condition of Dalits in Punjab. It is a collection of articles by eminent scholars of Punjab. These articles cover a wide range of local-regional differences in the historical evolution of caste hierarchies, the differential impact of socio-economic changes, the state’s affirmative actions, the individual and
collective Dalit aspirations and coping strategies, and the experience of political resistance and mobilization within different regions. This regional case study contributes to a more nuanced and composite understanding of the Dalits’ position in this continental polity. The legacy of Ad Dharm in the radicalization of Dalit consciousness in contemporary Punjab is explored by Ronki Ram in his article "Limits of untouchability, Dalit Assertion and Caste violence in Punjab". He also deals with the source of untouchability, caste and domination and the state of untouchability in Punjab. The article reflects briefly on the role of upper caste social reformers in the eradication of untouchability.

Mark Juergensmeyer in his article "Cultures of Deprivation: Three Case Studies in Punjab" in the above cited work has captured the intertwining of the social and the economic dimensions through a more inclusive meaning attached to the words-culture and deprivation. His comparative study of three villages representing three different locales points to different levels of the cultures of deprivation in one and the same state. S.S. Jodhka presents a picture of the impact socio-economic development and the strategies of social and cultural assertion made on the life and struggle of the Dalits. The title of the article
"Dissociation, Distancing and Autonomy" draws our attention to the dynamics of the process of social change that underlay the observable sense of autonomy in this section of the people in Punjab.

Another very interesting study in the book is 'Interrogating Changing Status of Dalits of Punjab' by Parmjit Singh. On the basis of his empirical survey of low castes and the Scheduled Castes, Judge points to not only the evidence of their autonomy but also to their assertiveness which includes a readiness for confrontation in case of discrimination and insult. Harish K. Puri's article "The Scheduled Castes in the Sikh Community" aims at exploring the difference between the doctrinal principles of Sikh religion and the ruling social and political interests in the context of the changes in society and economy of Punjab. Sucha Singh Gill’s paper is organized into three sections. The distribution of Scheduled Caste workforce across nine industrial categories is examined in comparison to Scheduled Caste workforce in section I. The educational status and progress is covered in section II. Section three analyses the role of reservation policy for Scheduled Castes. Shalini Sharma and B.K. Aggarwal’s article "Educating Dalit Women for Development" notices a close connection between higher levels of education in Dalit families and a higher incidence of
recourse to pre-natal diagnostic techniques and female foeticide, in precisely the same way as among the educated and better-off sections of higher castes. Parmod Kumar and Rainuka Dagar's study also brings out how in the post Green Revolution period the Dalit males’ taste of prosperity led them to emulate the upper castes not only in term of tightening control over their women but also in terms of violence against women. Their field work study shows that such incidence of control and violence has increased among the Dalits and exceeds that among the non-Dalits. Chaman Lal and Dwarka Bharti’s articles show the Dalit life in Punjabi novels and projection of Dalit sensibilities in Punjabi Dalit literature. These novels, stories and poems may well be a source of creative inspiration and support for their struggle, apart from being a source of social documentation of the facts of their living conditions and sufferings.

Thus the edited work of Harish Puri provides a multi-dimensional study of the Dalits in contemporary Punjab and is academically very important and relevant.

Buta Singh, the well known parliamentarian, in his *Dalit and Dalit Awakening in India* (2004) has laid thrust on Dalits’ status in ancient, medieval and modern India. He has given in detail, the origin of caste and caste system and social status of Dalits and
untouchability in medieval India. The Bhakti movement as the voice of revolt, devotion and its implications has also been discussed in detail.

Sudha Pai’s essay "Social capital, Panchayats and Grassroots democracy: The Politics of Dalit Assertion in two districts of Uttar Pradesh" (2004) examines the politics of identity, the role of social capital in resolving conflicts among social groups competing for the benefits of development within the new Panchayats established under the 73rd Amendment Act in U.P. The essay shows that the new Panchayats are an arena of conflicts and contestation over scarce resources, social status and political power. Conflicts have increased not only between the dominant castes and Dalits, but the increasing differentiation of identities and awareness has sharpened competition and conflicts between sections of the rural poor. The author argues that social capital in the form of communal solidarity has united the Dalits for joint social and political action against the upper and middle castes. But in negative terms, increased social awareness, politicization and the improvement in their economic position, has divided the group of their own community with whom they have common economic interests. This means that group identities have the potential to create strong reservoirs of social capital within segments.
Bhatia's article "Dalit Rebellions Against Untouchability in Chawada, Rajasthan" (2006) presents a detailed case study of Dalit rebellion against untouchables in Chakward, a village of Jaipur district in Rajasthan. The case study highlights the fact that, while many humiliating practices of the past have ceased, caste discriminations continue in many forms. Caste based hierarchy and power are still at the heart of the traditional social order and determine, to a large extent, the kinds of lives that people live. Further the polices, administration and state machinery have failed to protect the constitutional rights of Dalits and often end up aligning with the forces that suppress them. In the eyes of the law enforcing agencies, Dalits remain unequal citizens. The Chakwada story brings out the difficulties that Dalits face in breaking traditional forms of oppression. Any attempt to challenge the traditional social order makes them vulnerable to repression and violence, and also to isolation. The article also argues that this rebellion against untouchables did not really challenge the caste system itself.

After having reviewed the available literature on the themes related with our research problem, it may be stated that though a lot of literature is available on Dalit issues in general and on Dalit
Assertions in India, in particular yet not much has been written on the political participation of Dalits in Punjab. Hence there is a justification of an objective scientific study to understand the issue of political awareness among Dalits in Punjab where they are in such a great number and to evaluate their political participation. Thus the present study of political participation of Dalits in Punjab is academically and politically relevant. It may partially fulfil the gap in knowledge on this important theme.

**IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

In the present times when the issue of political participation of marginalized sections of society—religious minorities, tribals, women and the Dalits, is gaining great importance, an effort to gauge the pattern of political participation of Dalits in a state with highest concentration of Dalit population is being made through the present study. The study of political participation of Dalits is important because increasing participation of all sections of society in political process itself is considered an indicator of political development. As stated earlier political participation is a multifaceted process, involving participation before, during and after elections. It is necessary that participation which is undertaken in various programmes in all these fields should be studied. For the present study we have selected two important
districts of Punjab namely Patiala and Nawanshehar on the basis of the concentration of the Dalit population and reservation in Assembly seats. We tried to find out the Dalits' status in Punjab society and politics in the present context, and whether Dalit organizations and Dalit leaders have succeeded in empowering the Dalits in some way or not.

Research in this area is useful because it helps us in knowing the role of Dalit people in the political process. It helps us to know how far the Dalit leaders have succeeded in their aim of empowerment of Dalits and how they are utilizing their power in carrying out their objectives. 'Political Participation of Dalits in Punjab : A Comparative study of Nawanshehar and Patiala districts' is an empirical study through which a humble attempt has been made to enhance a better understanding of the participation of marginalized groups in the political process in Punjab politics.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study has been conducted to fulfil the following objectives:-

1. to assess the socio-political position of the Dalits in the society of Punjab;
2. to study the level of political consciousness among the Dalits in Punjab;
3. to analyse the pattern of political participation of the Dalits in various political processes;
4. to study the profile of emerging Dalit leadership and to find their support base;
5. to study the role of Dalit organizations and political parties in spreading Dalit consciousness;
6. to study the pattern of Dalits joining different political parties; and
7. to study the role of Dalits before, after and during elections.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In order to fulfill the above mentioned objectives the following research questions were formulated:

1) What is the socio-political position of the Dalits in Punjab in general and in the two districts of Patiala and Nawanshahar in particular?

2) Keeping in view the socio-economic profile of the respondents what is the level of their political awareness?

3) In what way the Dalits participate in various political activities like-campaign, voting, attending public meeting etc.
4) What type of political leaders are emerging from the Dalits from the two districts.

5) Are there any Dalit organizations which are performing the role of creating awareness among Dalits?

6) What is the role of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in raising Dalit issues and how is the party perceived by the Dalits?

7) What is the role of the Dalit masses before, during and after the elections?

**METHODODOLOGY**

The present study is basically an empirical study, which is based upon primary as well as secondary sources of information. In this study, we interviewed the Dalit leaders as well as common Dalit community members from the two selected districts viz. Nawanshehar and Patiala. The data was collected by conducting interviews with the respondents. For this a total sample of three hundred respondents was selected on the basis of purposive and random sampling method. Out of these three hundred, 150 respondents were taken from Patiala district and 150 from Nawanshehar. With a view to proceed further, an interview schedule-cum-questionnaire was prepared. It contained questions regarding the participation in different political processes as well as general questions regarding the socio-economic background of
respondents like: education, profession etc. It also contained questions to know the social and political awareness of the respondents, their attitude towards political parties, Dalit organizations and Dalit issues etc. After systematization and analysis of the data, conclusions have been drawn. In addition to the data collected through empirical survey, the Constitution of India, Census of India and Statistical Abstracts of Punjab have been consulted. The relevant books, journals and newspapers etc. have also been made use of as secondary sources of data.

**CHAPTERIZATION**

The study has been divided into seven chapters:

1. **First Chapter - Theoretical Perspective:** The chapter tries to locate the problem in the proper perspective. In addition to the review of the existing literature, the chapter includes the statement of the problem, the clarification of some important concepts related with the problem, the objectives of the study, research questions and methodology used.

2. **Second Chapter - Historical Perspective:** This chapter deals with historical background of Dalits. It analyses the evolution of the Dalits from ancient to medieval and modern times. It includes the different phases of Dalit movements in
India. The role played by these movements in the field of Dalit welfare and empowerment have also been discussed.

3. Third Chapter – Dalits in Punjab: This chapter gives an overview of the socio-economic status of the Dalits in Punjab and also discusses the status of the Dalits in Sikh religion. The chapter focuses on the role played by the Sikh Gurus to uplift the Dalits in different fields.

4. Fourth Chapter – Dalit Leadership in Punjab: The fourth chapter deals with Dalit leadership in Punjab from grassroot level to state Legislative Assembly. The chapter includes the socio-economic and political profile of the Dalit Legislative members.

5. Fifth Chapter – Profile of the Two Districts and of the Respondents: The chapter gives in detail the history and socio-economic profile of Nawanshehar and Patiala districts. It also discusses the socio-economic profile of the Dalit respondents from both the districts.

6. Sixth Chapter – Political Participation of Dalits in Nawanshehar and Patiala: The chapter gives an in depth description of the perceptions and views of the respondents. As this chapter attempts to gauge the level of political
awareness and political participation of the Dalit respondents from the two districts, it has a number of statistical tables to show the responses and reactions of the respondents to the various research questions.

7. **Seventh Chapter – Conclusions:** This chapter summarises the findings of the study. It also includes a few suggestions to improve upon the role and participation of the Dalits in Punjab politics.
REFERENCES


5. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, 'Mahan Kosh', (Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature), Language Department, Patiala, Punjab, 1930, p. 468.


28. Such posters and banners could be seen in the cities of Punjab during Guru Ravidas's Birth Anniversary in 2010.


34. S. Akinchan, *op. cit.*, p. 86.


42. For details see, Michael Rush and Philips Althoff, *Introduction to Political Sociology*, Western Printing Service, 1971, pp. 75-78.


45. *Ibid*.


75. Mark Juergensmeyer, *op. cit.*


79. Eleanor Zelliott, *op.cit.*


85. James Massey, *op. cit.*


100. M.S. Gill, "Reservation and Protective Justice" in M.S. Gill (ed.), *op. cit.*


