

**DALIT POLITICS IN CHANDIGARH:**  
**Identity Formation and Electoral Dynamics**

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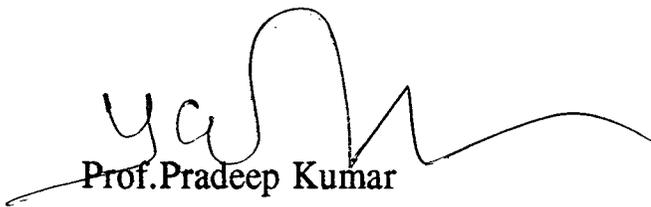
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## Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "*DALIT POLITICS IN CHANDIGARH: Identity Formation and Electoral Dynamics*", submitted by Navprit Kaur in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of *Master of Philosophy* is a bonafide research work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full for any other degree or diploma elsewhere.



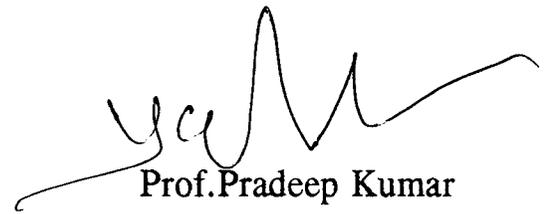
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## **PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*Politics in a democratic society does not operate in a vacuum. Politics always has a sharp bearing on how the socio-cultural relations are carried out, and the social and cultural conditions in turn deeply influence the dynamics of the relationship between the caste and the politics in the Indian society. In the post-colonial era, the traditional social structures have come face to face with the modern political institutions, based on the universal principles of equality and justice. In this process of the intermingling of the traditional and the modern, caste has emerged as a flexible and dynamic category. This impact is very much visible in the emergence of new representative capacity of various communities which have been historically marginalised. The Dalit politics also needs to be seen in the same context.*

*In order to understand the Dalit question and its nuances in the context of Chandigarh, it would be our task to develop certain crucial linkages between the architectural modernity of the city and its consequences for the Dalits. On the one hand, we notice the architectural splendor and the consequent "modern" life style of its residents, but on the other hand there are groups of people who largely constitute the category of the socially and economically marginalised and oppressed, living in the numerous slums and peripheral villages of the city. In the recent decades, the emergence of newer identities in different social, political and cultural terrain has provided an occasion to understand the boundaries of Dalit identity and its assertion in the city of Chandigarh.*

*I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my deep sense of gratitude to all those who, from the very inception of this study helped me in various ways to complete it. First of all, my deepest gratitude is to my supervisor, Prof. Pradeep Kumar at the Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh, for the affectionate and expert*

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*This study has been possible because of the cooperation I got from my respondents, who spared their valuable time for the intensive interviews, despite their hectic schedule and tough life. My interactions with them set the background for the research work and in the process, I have learnt a lot from them.*

*I will always be indebted to all my friends in the "Student's Discussion Forum CRITIQUE" where I got an opportunity to critically examine my observations and ideas, the group has always offered cooperation and support with its perceptive comments and observations at every stage of this work.*

*I take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all the members of my family for their supportive attitude, especially my mother who despite her illness has always been very caring and whose thoughts, dreams and actions forever inspire me.*

CHANDIGARH

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**NAVPRIT KAUR**

## ABBREVIATIONS

CONG	Congress
BJP	Bhartiya Janata Party
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
BSP (A)	Bahujan Samaj Party (Ambedkar)
SC	Scheduled Caste

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# CHAPTER – I

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary times, there have been various kinds of debates and discussions regarding the nature of Indian politics in general and the Dalit politics in particular. Generally, the social and political category of “Dalit” is understood in terms of caste identity and its structural-functional consequences for the development of hierarchical relations among the different communities in Indian society. Dalit as a discourse is not homogeneous, rather it carries the conflicts and contradictions among different lower caste groups due to their unequal status in socio-economic and political spheres. Dalit as a political category has expanding boundaries and rather than being fixed, it has got diverse forms in different historical and socio-cultural conditions.

To elaborate and explain it further, we need to go into the deeper aspects of Indian society and try to make an attempt as to how and in what manner the geneology of caste has got constructed in different times and spaces. We also need to understand the processes whereby the category of “Dalit” as a political category has got structured, and has in turn influenced the behavioural patterns of individuals and groups comprising it. To state more precisely, in order to understand the fundamental character of contemporary discourse on Dalits and its political landscape, we have to go into the definitional content of the word

“Dalit”, and see how it is being represented in the different kinds of socio-political and literary discourses of the Indian society.

Historically, the castes which come lowest in the hierarchical order, have been designated by various nomenclatures, such as the Avarnas, the Atishudras, the Panchamas, the Chandalas, the Depressed Classes, the Weaker Sections, the Servile Classes, the Scheduled Castes, the Untouchables, the Harijans and the Dalits etc. All the above nomenclatures represent the changing discourses, wherein a particular community is explained according to the needs of the users of these nomenclatures both the oppressors and the oppressed. Terms such as the Avarnas, the Atishudras and the Panchamas reflect the concepts of the purity and pollution as conceived within the hierarchical Hindu system, prescribed in the ancient texts. The categories like the Depressed classes, the Servile Classes and the Weaker Sections point towards the way in which the colonial British administrators viewed those in the lowest order of the caste hierarchy. Similarly, the term Harijan represents the Gandhian way of understanding the lowest of the low in the Indian society. The term Scheduled Caste, though initially used by the colonial administrators, and the same has been used in the post independence era by the Indian state for the purposes of positive discrimination through constitutional measures. The term Dalit, literally meaning the ground down or the downtrodden, is now fastly supplanting the other nomenclatures. Though this term was used

in the journalistic writings as far back as 1931, yet it gained currency in the early 1970s with the emergence of a radical movement in Maharashtra, called Dalit Panthers. The Dalit Panthers used the term in a broader sense to include not only the caste, but the categories of class and gender also.

In the recent years the term Dalit has been largely popularised by the lower caste parties in the north India. Gopal Guru while critiquing the nomenclatures other than the Dalit, says, "The category dalit is not a metaphysical construction. It derives its epistemic and political strength from the material social experience of the community. It is this social construction of Dalithood which makes it authentic and dynamic rather than passive and rigid."<sup>1</sup> Thus we find that the term Dalit reflects a constructive agenda for the transformation of the existential lot of those victimised and oppressed due to hierarchical order of the caste system. In the present study also we have largely used the term Dalit to denote the low caste status.

### **Caste and Indian Politics**

Politics in any democratic society does not operate in a vacuum. Politics always has a sharp bearing on how the socio-cultural relations are carried out and the social and cultural conditions, in turn deeply impact the dynamics of the political. Same can be said of the relationship between the caste and the politics in the Indian

society. In the post-colonial era the traditional social structures have come face to face with the modern political institutions, based on the universal principles of equality and justice. In this process of the conversation of the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, caste has emerged as a flexible and dynamic category. From being a rigid stratification system based on the principles of purity and pollution, caste has travelled a long way whereby it has come to play a decisive role as the mobilisational force in realising the goals of mass-based democratic politics. In words of Rajni Kothari:

The alleged casteism in politics is thus no more and no less than politicisation of caste. It is something in which both the forms of caste and the forms of politics are brought nearer each other, in the process changing both. By drawing the caste system into its web of organisation, politics finds material for its articulation and moulds it into its own design. In making politics their sphere of activity, caste and kin groups on the other hand, get a chance to assert their identity and to strive for position.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we may say that the process of the politicisation of the category of caste has transformed its basic character whereby the caste, rather than being an ascriptive category, has become an instrumental one which is invoked for the political mobilization of the masses in democratic politics.

Scholars such as D.L. Sheth consider the detachment of the caste from the ritual status and hierarchy as “secularisation of caste”, according to him, it has led to de-ritualisation and

politicisation of the category of caste.<sup>3</sup> Thus in his words, the above changes have further (a) pushed the caste out of the traditional stratificatory system (b) linked it to the new structure of representational power, and (c) in their cumulative impact they have made it possible for individual members of different castes to acquire new economic interest and social-political identification and own class-like as well as ethnic type identities.<sup>4</sup> Thus we notice that the different linkages between the caste and the politics have transformed the fundamental character of the politics as well as the caste. The impact is very much visible in the emergence of new representative capacity of various communities which were previously marginalised. Consequently, this has resulted in the changed distribution of political power in the different segments of the Indian democracy.

### **Politics and Dalit Assertion**

We witness different languages of Dalit assertion across various times and spaces reflected in the historical, political and cultural trajectories of the Indian politics. The very first phase begins with pre-colonial India; in this period we find different kinds of social, cultural and religious protest movements such as the Ad-Dharm movement (Punjab), the Adi-Hindu movement (Uttar Pradesh), the Namashudras movement (Bengal), Narayan Swami Guru's movement (Kerala), the Adi-Andhra movement (Coastal Andhra) and the Adi-

Dravida movement (Tamil Nadu). Though these movements had some intervention in the politics through one forum or the other, yet they were mainly focused on the socio-cultural and economic upliftment of the Dalits by raising their consciousness. The establishment of Indian Labour Party (ILP) in August, 1936 by Ambedkar is a pointer in the case where, "The programme of the ILP, published in 1937, described it as a labour organisation in the sense that its programme was mainly to advance *the welfare of the labouring classes*".<sup>5</sup> *(emphasis is mine)*

The early years of the post-colonial period, witnessed the lack of an autonomous Dalit assertion (except in the states like Maharashtra) in the political sphere of Indian democracy, uptill the decades of late 1980s and early 1990s. Lower caste formations such as the Scheduled Caste Federation, various factions of Republican Party of India, and numerous other small lower caste parties failed to make any significant contribution towards the formation of a separate Dalit identity in the political sphere. The Congress remained the only dominant party at the Centre and in the states, thereby working as an umbrella organisation to coordinate the various interests, cutting across the lines of caste, class, religion and region etc.<sup>6</sup> D.L. Sheth points towards this by stating that:

The Congress party projected its politics and programmes at the national level as representing 'national aspirations' of the Indian people. At the regional levels, the party

consolidated its social base by endorsing the power of the numerically strong and upwardly mobile dominant, but traditionally of lower status, castes of landlording peasants, e.g., the Marathas in Maharashtra, the Reddys in Andhra, the Patidars in Gujrat, the Jats in Uttar Pradesh, and so on. In the process it created patron-client type of relationships in electoral politics, relationships of unequal but reliable exchanges between political patrons- the upper and dominant (intermediate) castes-and the numerous 'client' castes at the bottom of the pile, popularly known as the Congress' vote banks.<sup>7</sup>

Thus we notice that the Dalits, with their low status in the caste hierarchy, and without any means or resources at their disposal, were unable to enter as autonomous agents in the modern political arenas. The Dalits, like many other marginalised groups of the Indian society, remained tied to the Congress party for fulfilling their socio-economic and political aspirations.

During the initial years of the independence, the Dalits remained attached as the clients of the modern welfare state system, where the state behaved as a trustee and guardian of the lower castes, proclaiming itself responsible for everything; from the jobs and the educational institutions to the ration cards.<sup>8</sup> However, despite all its welfare activities, the Indian state failed to establish a public vocabulary for the Dalits, who rather than being autonomous agents in their political deliberations, remained the subjects unable to understand the alien language of the middle class Congress elite which largely managed the affairs of the Indian democracy.

With the onset of the decline of the Congress system in the decades preceding the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Congress remained no longer the pole against which every political formation was defined. Subsequently, this led to the emergence of the regional political formations along the lines such as the caste, religion and the region. This further culminated in their decisive role in the coalition politics at the Centre. While observing the above trend in Indian politics Sunil Khilnani states, "The new political entrants considered themselves and acted as - members of groups and communities, rather than liberal individuals. Conflicts were arising among social groups whose identities could be activated for political ends: religious, urban or rural, caste, language, class or ethnic origin."<sup>9</sup> With the emergence of coalition era in the Indian democracy, we find the rise of the consciousness of different ethnic, social and political communities which were earlier almost marginalised in the political process. These have now got new opportunities to interact and negotiate for transforming their existential lot through the regional parties such as the Lok Dal, the Janata Dal, the Samata Party, the BSP and many more other regional parties. In this process, the BSP has emerged as a powerful lower-caste political formation in the north Indian states of the Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. The rise of the BSP can be seen as a powerful and autonomous assertion by the Dalits in the electoral politics. Pointing towards the reasons for this Kanchan Chandra argues:

The BSP's success in replacing the Congress is built upon two factors. First, affirmative action for the Scheduled Castes has led to the emergence of a middle class among them. The new middle class is made almost entirely of government officers and clerks. Despite experiencing upward mobility, these officers have continued to face social discrimination. Endured silently earlier, such discrimination has by now led to a firm resolve to fight for respect and dignity. Second, the Scheduled Castes within the Congress experienced a 'representational blockage'. Most district committees of the Congress were dominated by upper-caste politicians. Scheduled Caste leaders were mere tokens and were dominated by upper-caste politicians. The new middle class eventually took over as local BSP leaders. Their strategy was to argue that humiliation, rather than economic deprivation, was the main problem of the Scheduled Castes, and that greater political representation, instead of material advantage was the principal solution.<sup>10</sup>

The immense politicisation of the Dalits for the electoral purposes is an indicator of a larger shift in the dynamics of the Dalit politics, where the focus is mainly on the political empowerment of the Dalit masses, rather than making efforts to raise their consciousness at the socio-cultural and the economic levels. This is in clear contrast to the stress on the socio-cultural and economic upliftment of the Dalit masses of the Dalit masses by the earlier Dalit-based movements.

The focus on the empowerment of the Dalits through electoral politics has led to a shift in the language through which political mobilisation is carried out. From the legal-political discourse of Ambedkar, expressed in a language quite incomprehensible, to the

oppressed and marginalised Dalits, we notice the raw narratives on the social justice and equality in the political discourse of the parties such as the BSP which largely is expressed in the vernacular language, the *Bhasa* and is mainly targeted at the poor, the downtrodden and the illiterate sections among the Dalits. Ashutosh Varshney has termed the above mentioned trend as the “Southernisation of the north Indian Politics” [Varshney, 2000]. According to Varshney :

Southern Politicians were not only ‘vernacular’ but, as the 1950s evolved, they were also increasingly from the lower castes. By the 1960s much of South India had gone through a relatively peaceful lower caste revolution... In the 1980s and 1990s, a southern-style plebian politics has rocked north India. The names of Mulayam Singh Yadav, Laloo Yadav, Kanshi Ram and Mayawati – all ‘vernacular’ politicians who have risen from below – repeatedly make headlines.”<sup>11</sup>

Thus we notice a vast change in the nature of politics in the post-colonial India which in turn has led to the upsurge of the Dalits in the political sphere. The rise of political consciousness among the Dalits in north Indian states is an attempt by these Dalits to find ways and means of autonomous assertion.

### **Dalits, Modernity and Chandigarh**

In order to understand the Dalit question, in the context of the city of Chandigarh, it would be our task of develop certain crucial

linkages between the architectural modernity of the city and its consequences for the Dalit politics. While trying to understand the claims of modernity in the context of Dalit empowerment and its different linkages for understanding the character of the city as a symbol of modern life-world, we need to identify the particular characters of modernity as reflected in ideas and images of the city. On the one hand we notice the architectural splendor and the consequent "modern" life-style of its residents but on the other hand, there are groups of people who largely constitute the category of the socially and economically marginalised, oppressed and downtrodden, living in numerous slums and peripheral villages of the Union Territory of Chandigarh. The issues regarding the Dalit politics in Chandigarh need to be looked at in this context. By and large, the Dalit as a socio-political category has been ignored in the process of the development of architectural modernity of the "city beautiful."

In the post-colonial era, the idea of possible India was reflected in the vision of its most towering leader Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, who wanted the future India to be the one where the traditional identities would pave way for the modern ones based on rationality, science and technology. The emergence of the city of Chandigarh on the geographical as well as the mental map of the country, could be seen as a part of this modernity project. Sharma *et al*, while discussing the social landscape of the city, points out that :

It was conceived by a modernist town planner, at the behest of a like minded political leader who was out to lead his country from *the darkness of tradition and history* to, what was then considered to be the *light of modernity and science*. If it was possible to abort traditions and beget modernism through town planning, Chandigarh was expected to do so".<sup>12</sup> (*emphasis is mine*)

Thus the city was needed to represent that facet of modernity, where its residents would be faceless "citizens", deprived of any other identity such as caste, language, religion or region. Anupama Roy while pointing towards the notion of universal citizenship embedded in the modernity project states:

...(c)itizenship constitutes an overwhelming identity masking all other identities to produce unmarked (and therefore) 'equal' citizens of the nation. This promise of equality is premised on effacing ascriptive (heirarchical) inequalities and masking differences (of culture, caste, gender etc.) to make them irrelevant for the exercise and enjoyment of the rights of citizenship.<sup>13</sup>

Hence in the very inception of the city, the vertical cleavages like caste, religion, language and region were kept at bay, in preference for the modernity and the nation-state.

But there is substantial evidence to show that the caste tensions existed in the social life world of the "modern" villages, on whose land was constructed the city of Chandigarh. Tracing the land holding pattern in the villages before the upcoming of the city, Sharma *et al* point towards the socio-economic status of the tenants, named "chaakars" (lit. servants) which according to them, "Usually

were of a low caste, without land and presumably at the mercy of the land owning family to which they were attached through social links. They had houses in a distinct part of the village, the lower castes among them had a separate well of their own and were prohibited by custom from using the well of the upper castes".<sup>14</sup>

The present study is an attempt to unravel and explore the subordination and hierarchies along caste lines, which operate at subtle and not so subtle levels in the setting of the city of Chandigarh. While studying the Dalit question in context of Chandigarh, the concept of modernity also gets challenged in the process.

## **Review of Literature**

Much has been written on the Dalit question and its related aspects such as the emergence of the caste system, the socio-cultural and occupational hierarchies within it and the different socio-political movements at various times and spaces, which challenged the subordination and domination of the upper castes by lower caste masses. The studies by Gail Omvedt (1994, 1995), Declan Quigley (1999), Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Viczinay (1998), S.M. Michael (1999), Kancha Ilaiah (1996) and Brian K. Smith (1995) make an attempt to trace the history of the caste and Dalit movement from different perspectives. These also study the contradictions inherent in it.

In the post-colonial era, the adoption of the constitutional democracy has led to a process where the category of caste has come face to face with the modern democratic institutions. The juxtaposition of caste and politics has been analysed by different scholars from different viewpoints. Studies by scholars such as Rajni Kothari (1973, 99), M.N. Srinivas (1996), D.L. Sheth (1999), Sudipta Kaviraj (1997), Sunil Khilnani (1997), Yogendra Yadav (1999), Hans Blomshevik (1997), Ashutosh Varshney (2000), Pushendra (1999) and Javeed Alam (1999) come in this genre of Dalit literature.

Gopal Guru (1998), Aditya Nigam (2000), Eleanor Zelliott (1998), Sharmila Rege (1998), Leela Dube (1996) and Ramesh Kamble (1998) probe the question of Dalit identity in the context of culture, modernity and nationalism. Apart from the above mentioned works, we find numerous studies which focus on the Dalit question in the context of north India. Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh (1997), Sudha Pai (2000), V.K. Rai (1999), Soran Singh (1987), Pradeep Kumar (1999) and Meenakshi Jain (1996) study the Dalit question in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Similarly, studies by Juergensmeyer (1982), Pimpley and Sharma (1985), Satish K Sharma (1985), Gloria Goodwin Raheja (1989), Surinder S Jodhka (2000) and Ronki Ram (2000) focus on the question of the emergence of the Dalit identity through various movements such as the Ad-Dharm and the *Shuddhi* movement in Punjab. The study by Narendra Kumar (1999) focuses on the process of transition of the Scheduled Castes in Haryana whereas S.K.

Sharma (1999) studies the issue of untouchability in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

It would be pertinent to mention here that to the best of researchers knowledge, uptill now there has been no study focused entirely on the questions related to politics and identity formation among the Dalits in the city of Chandigarh. However, there are some studies related to the political participation of Scheduled Caste women in Chandigarh (Kumari, n.d.), and the problems and prospects of the scheduled caste college students in the city [Kaur, 1989]. The present study is thus a modest attempt to study the politicisation and identity formation among the Dalits in Chandigarh.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the present study is mainly to understand the Dalit politics in Chandigarh through the twin processes of electoral dynamics and the identity formation. The study tends to explore the political preferences of the Dalits in order to ascertain if there exists any kind of autonomous assertion by the Dalits in the political realm. Further, an attempt has been made in the present study to know as to how, in what form, and to what an extent, the caste based identities are invoked by the Dalits in the process of assertion as a social group. We shall try to examine the content and the context of this assertion.

## **Research Questions**

Some of the research questions examined, may be in the following manner:

1. What is generally the nature of the Dalit assertion in Chandigarh? Is it political? i.e. do the Dalits use the political means for assertion? Or alternatively is it that the process of Dalit assertion has remained limited to the social sphere only? i.e. is the Dalit assertion only through the process of social identity formation without this identity getting translated into a political one?
2. What are the contours of the Dalit identity i.e. Dalit identity formation consists of what kind of the issues and the questions?
3. Whether there exist any kind of intra-Dalit tensions in the city of Chandigarh? If yes, what is the nature of these tensions?, i.e. whether these are social in nature or are reflected in the political preferences of the Dalits?
4. Is there any variation in the patterns of the political preferences and the processes of identity formation among the Dalits from the rural and the slum background?
5. Are there any differences on the basis of the class status and the educational level of the Dalits with regard to the processes of political and social identity formation?

## **Research Methodology**

For the purpose of the present study of the Dalit politics in Chandigarh, two sample areas, one slum and one village were selected. Both, the village as well as the slum, have the highest proportion of the Scheduled Caste population among all the villages and the slums in Chandigarh, respectively. A sample of the total 70 respondents was taken for the purpose of the present study. Out of the total respondents, 40 were from the slum (the Janta Colony) and the rest of the 30 respondents were from the village (Khuda Ali Sher). Out of the total 40 respondents from the slum, 14 were women (i.e. 35 percent of the total respondents from the slum). Similarly, 11 out of the total 30 respondents from the village were women (i.e. 36 percent of the total respondents from the village).

Since there was no list available of the Scheduled caste population in the slum, a method of random sampling was adopted for drawing a list of the respondents from the slum as well as the village. One respondent each from every fifth household was taken in order to remove any bias on the part of the researcher. The households were randomly drawn, but care was taken to cover all the segments of the Dalit population in terms of their age, class, educational status and occupation, in proportion to their share in the total Dalit population in the slum as well as the village.

To investigate the questions raised in the study, it was decided to administer a schedule (For details see appendix). A reasonably

exhaustive schedule was prepared and at the stage of pre-testing, it was administered on three respondents, in order to check the appropriateness of the questions covered by the schedule. With some minor changes, the same was finalised. It contained a series of questions about the background of the respondents, ranging from the simple factual questions like age, sex, caste, education, income and occupation etc. to increasingly sensitive and complex questions relating to the voting-pattern, party-association, bloc-voting, perception of discrimination by upper-castes, participation in the religious and cultural activities of one's own community, and the self-identification of the respondents.

Both types of questions, the open ended and the close ended, were used in the present study. These were supplemented by an informal discussion with the respondents to probe into the various dimensions of their answers. Interviews were conducted by the researcher herself and care was taken to interview the respondents only when they were alone. The average interview lasted about one and a half hours. The questions were asked in Hindi and Punjabi, the languages comprehensible to the respondents.

The present study is divided into five chapters. Apart from the introductory part, the second chapter gives a detailed profile of the city of Chandigarh. It also provides a glimpse of the sample area, the slum and the village, along with detailed profile of the respondents. The third chapter mainly deals with political preferences, awareness

and the assertion of the Dalits in Chandigarh. The focus of the fourth chapter is basically on the process of identity formation among the respondents. The fifth chapter is a concluding note of the entire study and lists the main findings.

## ***Endnotes***

1. Gopal Guru, "The Politics of naming," *Seminar*, No.471, Nov. 1998, p. 16.
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3. D L Sheth, "Secularisation of Caste and Making of New Middle Class", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 34 & 35, Aug. 21, 1997, p. 2504.
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6. For more details see, Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* (New Delhi : Orient Longman Ltd., 1972), PP. 152-223.
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9. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
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13. Anupama Roy, "Community, Women citizens and a Women's Politics", *Economic and political Weekly*, Vol. XXVI, No. 17, April 28, 2001, p. 1441.
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## CHAPTER II

### CHANDIGARH : A PROFILE

#### Introduction

The institution of caste is generally believed to be the core defining characteristic of the traditional social & cultural domain of Indian society. Despite the commonly held view about pan-Indian nature of caste, there exists a considerable degree of variation in the way in which social relations among different caste groups have been formulated in the different regions of the country. As is being observed by Surinder Jodhka, "The specific historical trajectory, the patterns of politico-economic changes experienced during the post independence period and the composition of different ethnic communities determine the actual caste relations in a given region."<sup>1</sup> Thus in order to understand the Dalit politics in Chandigarh, we do need to situate it in the historical, socio-cultural, economic and the political milieu of the city.

The present chapter is broadly divided into two parts. In the first part, a brief historical account of the city, with its demographic, economic and political profile is presented. In the second part is given, the profile of the respondents with some socio-economic variables, and a brief introduction to the sample village and the slum.

# I

## **Chandigarh : A Brief Historical Account**

Chandigarh as a Union Territory appeared on the administrative map of India consequent upon reorganisatoin of the Punjab state on the linguistic basis on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1966. The hilly areas were merged with the adjoining state of Himachal Pradesh and a new state of Haryana was carved out of the then districts of Ambala, Karnal, Rahoak, Gurgaon, Hissar, Mahendergar and part of Sangrur. The district of Shimla, Kangra, Kulu, Lahul-Spiti, parts of Gurdaspur and Ambala district being hilly areas were merged with Himachal Pradesh. The remaining area of Punjab State comprising old districts of Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Jullundar, Amritsar, Bhatinda, Sangrur, Patiala and Kapurthala constituted the state of Punjab. After the re-organisation, Chandigarh Union Territory comprises the capital Project – Mani Majra Town of Ambala district and 27 villages of erstwhile Kharar tehsil.

With the partition of Punjab on India's Independence, the headquarters of erstwhile Punjab Government were shifted to Shimla, but soon it was realised that Shimla was not suitable for the State Capital due to non-availability of infrastructural facilities and its distance from the plain areas of Punjab. Therefore, efforts were made to have a State Capital located centrally, and after the search for appropriate

place, the site chosen came to be a patch of 20,000 acres between two hill torrents (locally called *choes*) coming down from the Shivaliks. This was to be the area for the first phase of the town. In the later phases it would be expanded further towards the south. On the east flowed the Sukhna *choe*, and boundary to the west was made by the Patiali Rao. Later on, in 1966, an area of 26 sq. miles between the two *choes* would become the administrative area of the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India wanted Chandigarh to be made a model city for entire country and task of planning the city was entrusted to the experts of international repute. The plan of the city was, designed by Le Corbusier with the assistance of Pierre Jeanneret. The City is a model of architectural grandeur which is displayed in its layout and its buildings.

## **1. Demographic Character of the City**

According to the Census report of 1991, the total population of Chandigarh is 6,42,015. The percentage of Scheduled Caste population to the total population is 16.51 percent in the city. Table 1.1 shows the sex ratio, population growth and literacy in Chandigarh from 1951 to 1991.

**Table 1.1**

**Sex Ratio, Population, its Growth and Literacy in Chandigarh**

Year	Sex Ratio*	Population	% population growth	Literacy %
1951	780	24261		na
1961	651	119881	394	na
1971	749	257251	114	na
1981	769	451610	75	66
1991	790	642015	42	78

Source : *Census of India.*

\* Sex ratio is measured in females per 1000 males.

The sex ratio in Chandigarh has been worse than in Punjab, there being about 790 women to 1000 men in Chandigarh (1991 census), as compared to 810 in the neighbouring state of Punjab. In 1981, 1971 and 1961 it was even lower at 769, 749 and 652 respectively, indicating that either the people of Chandigarh are greater misogynists than their compatriots in the neighbouring state or that there may be more single men coming to work in Chandigarh, who do not bring their families.<sup>2</sup> This is further substantiated by two facts. One, that the proportion of working to non-working people in Chandigarh remains very high. The dependency ratio for all of urban India was at 72 according to the 1981 census, in Chandigarh it was 59. That also shows that the proportion of people in the 15-16 years age group in Chandigarh is higher.

**TABLE 1.2**

**Religious Distribution of the Population of Chandigarh**

Religion	1981	1991
Hindus	75	76
Muslims	2	2
Sikhs	21	20
Others	2	2

Source : *Census of India, 1991*

\* Figures are in percentages of the total population

Table 1.2 shows the religious distribution of the population of the city. In terms of religious distribution of the population too, Chandigarh is not very different from other major towns of Punjab; in that, most people reported themselves to be Hindus, a smaller number stated themselves to be Sikhs.

Among the other main religious groups the largest were the Muslims who accounted for 2% of the population of Chandigarh, the Christians were barely over one percent. Among the important sects within the Hindus were recorded the Ad-Dharmis, the Anand Margis, the Arya Samajis, the Dev Samajis, the Radha Swamis, and the Vedic Dharmis.<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Class Character of the City**

With the offices of three governments located in the city of Chandigarh, it is generally considered to be a city of *babus*, the

government servants, who are mainly of the middle class background. While tracing the social history of the city Sharma *et al* point out that:

What made Chandigarh significantly different from other towns of Punjab, however, was the quality of life in the city, the assertive middle class that populated it, the large body of students working towards their first degree, and the relative invisibility of those involved in the dirt and grime of economic production. Primarily Chandigarh was, and substantially continues to be, a city of youthful people who, on the whole, did not dirty their hands in commerce, industry and agriculture<sup>4</sup>.

The city, over a period of time has become an abode to many a migrant from the states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and from far off places like Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. According to a survey conducted by Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development, Chandigarh (CRRID), the highest proportion of migrants hail from UP (i.e.55%), 12 per cent each have come from Haryana and Punjab and only 6.5 percent are from Bihar and four percent are from Himachal Pradesh. Therefore, 83 percent of the slum dwellers are from UP, Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.<sup>5</sup> In the absence of any planned housing arrangements, these poor and needy migrants, who come to the city in search of job opportunities, settle down in the slum areas. Most of the slums in the city are encroachments on government land or on

private land in connivance with the landowners.<sup>6</sup> Most of the slum dwellers in the city are involved in the non-skilled jobs.

**Table 1.3**  
**Percentage of Main Workers, Marginal Workers and Non-Workers to the total Population**

Total / Rural/ Urban	Main workers			Marginal workers			Non-workers		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
Total	34.83	54.24	10.28	0.11	0.10	0.11	65.07	45.66	89.61
Rural	41.36	64.34	5.01	0.18	0.09	0.33	58.46	35.57	94.66
Urban	34.08	52.95	10.80	0.09	0.10	0.09	65.82	45.95	89.11

Source : *Census of India, 1991.*

Table 1.3 shows the percentage of main workers which include the cultivators, agricultural labourers, live stock, forestry, fishing, hunting and plantations, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, processing, servicing and repair, constructions, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communications. Along with the percent population of main workers, the table also reveals the percentage of marginal and non-workers to the total population.

According to the survey report of CRRID, following is the Dependency Ratio in the Union Territory of Chandigarh.<sup>7</sup>

### **Dependency Ratio**

Dependency Ratio Chandigarh (UT), 1991 = 170

Dependency Ratio All slums = 132

**Table 1.4**

**Occupation wise no. of Workers in Slums of Chandigarh**

S.no.	Occupation	Total no. of workers	% age of total workers
1.	Govt. Employees	12,027	17.45
2.	Private sector employees	22,352	32.43
3.	Labourers	14,661	21.27
4.	Hawkers/Mobile Vendors	1,837	2.67
5.	Horse Rehra / Rehri / Rickshaw	4,566	6.63
6.	Shopkeepers	2,812	4.08
7.	Mechanized Transport	691	1.00
8.	Cobblers	320	0.46
9.	Masons	677	0.98
10.	Carpenters	864	1.25
11.	Weavers	272	0.39
12.	Cultivators	414	0.60
13.	Agricultural Labourers	631	0.92
14.	Dhobi/Washerman	239	0.35
15.	Auto Repairers	232	0.34
16.	Electronics Repairers	300	0.44
17.	Contractors	108	0.16
18.	Others	5,913	8.58

Source : Socio-economic profile of slum-dwellers in Chandigarh, *Man & Development*, Sept. 1999.

Table 1.4 Shows the occupational structure of the slum-dwellers in Chandigarh. The study by CRRID further states that the migrants, when settled in the colonies authorised by administration, tend to become economically active.

**Table 1.5**  
**Percentage of Different Categories of Main Workers in**  
**Rural Areas of U.T. Chandigarh**

Sr. NO.	Categories of main workers	% of males	% of Females
1.	Cultivators	5.8	1.9
2.	Agricultural labourers	3.0	4.0
3.	Live Stock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting and Plantation orchards and Allied activities	4.4	11.9
4.	Mining and Quarrying	0.01	-
5.	Manufacturing, Processing, Servicing and Repairs	24.8	8.6
6.	Constructions	18.7	7.15
7.	Trade and Commerce	13.7	8.9
8.	Transport, Storage and Communications	10.7	0.6
9.	Other Services	18.5	56.6

Source : *Census of India, 1991.*

Table 1.5 shows the percentage of different categories of main workers in the rural areas of Union Territory. The table indicates that a substantial number of people in the rural areas are engaged in activities such as manufacturing, processing, servicing, repairs and construction work. Only five percent men and one percent women are cultivators according to the census report of 1991.

The onset of the migration from outside has considerably affected the socio-economic fabric of villages, on whose land such large numbers of people have been “dumped”.<sup>8</sup>

We notice considerable tensions related to the phenomenon of urbanisation in the city, which in one way or the other defy the usual image of Chandigarh as a city mainly of the middle class government servants. Madhu Sarin points out these contradictions by stating that:

With the planning norms and building standards taking little account of the low incomes of the very people needed to build, service and run the city, they have been forced to build unauthorised settlements in vacant spaces. These have lacked the very infrastructure and services, the planning promised to assure all its citizens. Over the years, rather than review and adopt the norms for land allocation and increase the affordability of planned development for the lowest income groups, Chandigarh’s mode of planning has compelled them to live in filth and insecurity for years on end.<sup>9</sup>

### **Political Profile of the Union Territory of Chandigarh**

At the time of reorganisation, there was no politics of Chandigarh itself and no political parties of the region. So the national-level parties such as Indian National Congress, Jana Sangh, (Now Bharatiya Janata Party) Swatantra Party and Communist Party of India (Marxist) participated in the general elections in 1967. The entire area of the Union Territory was constituted into one parliamentary constituency returning only one member to the Lok

Sabha. At present also, there is one Lok Sabha seat in the Union Territory.

**Table 1.6**

**Winner Parties and the Runners-up in Various Elections held for Chandigarh Parliamentary Constituency.**

Year	Party that Won the Elections	Runner-up
1967	Bhartiya Jana Sangh	Congress
1971	Congress	Bharatiya Jana Sangh
1977	Janata Party	Congress
1980	Congress	Janata Party
1984	Congress	Janata Party
1989	Congress	Janata Party
1991	Congress	BJP
1996	BJP	Congress
1998	BJP	Congress
1999	Congress	BJP

Table 1.6 shows the Party that won the Lok Sabha seat from the Union Territory of Chandigarh from 1967 to 1999. The election results show that for most of the time the Lok Sabha seat was captured by the Congress party except in 1967, 1977, 1996 and 1998 elections.

The political climate of the city has not been very live as there is only one seat for the parliamentary elections from this constituency.

Secondly, a majority of the residents of the city are government employees and they cannot participate openly in the political activities. It is only during the elections, more particularly during an election wave, that their participation and political activities become obvious. For the last few years, i.e. after the constitution of the Municipal Corporation in Chandigarh in 1996, there has been some political activity in the city. There are in total, 29 members in the corporation, out of which 20 are elected and 9 are nominated members. Table 1.7 shows the party wise breakup of the councillors of the Municipal corporation.

**Table 1.7**

**Party wise Composition of Municipal Corporation of U.T. Chandigarh**

Sr. No.	Name of the Party	No. of Members
1.	Congress	5
2.	BJP	13
3.	SAD	2

\* In addition to these, there are 9 nominated members in the municipal corporation.

The major demands of the various political parties are the abolition of lease hold system, active participation of the people in administration through local democratic set up, more educational and sports facilities, better and adequate housing, better water supply, expansion of transport facilities and upliftment of labour colonies etc.

Results of the elections to the Chandigarh parliamentary constituency point towards the impact of the national level political happenings on the voting preferences of Chandigarh voters. This point is substantiated by the Congress party's predominance uptill the decades of 90s and after that the two consecutive victories of BJP in 1996 and 1998 point towards the steady decline of the Congress party. In the 1999 Lok Sabha election also the Congress won the seat, but the winning margin was only 5,449 votes. The BJP was the runner-up party in this election. The predominance of the BJP in the Municipal corporation also points towards the declining hold of the Congress party on the city's voters.

## **DALITS\* IN CHANDIGARH**

Out of the total 6,42,015 population of Union Territory – 16.51 percent consists that of the Scheduled Castes, out of which 16.33 percent are males and 16.73 percent are females.<sup>10</sup>

Under Articles 341 and 342 of the constitution the president is empowered to specify the list of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for each state and Union Territory.

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\* The terms, Dalit and Scheduled Caste have been used interchangeably, because in the census report "Scheduled Caste" is being used.

Accordingly, the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes for each state and Union Territory under a presidential order are listed. In Chandigarh Union Territory, 36 Scheduled castes have been notified. There is, however, no Scheduled Tribe, listed as such in the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

**Table 1.8**

**List of Notified Scheduled Castes in the Union Territory of Chd.\***

S. No.	Name of Scheduled Caste	S. No.	Name of Scheduled Caste
1.	Ad Dharmi	19.	Khatik
2.	Bangali	20.	Kori or Koli
3.	Barar, Burar or Berar	21.	Marija or Marecha
4.	Batwal	22.	Mazhabi
5.	Bauria or Bawaria	23.	Megh
6.	Bazigar	24.	Nat
7.	Balmiki, Chura or Bhangi	25.	Od
8.	Banjra	26.	Pasi
9.	Chamar, Jatia Chamar, Rehgar, Raigar, Ramdasi or Ravidasi	27.	Perna
10.	Chanal	28.	Pherera
11.	Dagi	29.	Sanhai
12.	Darain	30.	Sanhal
13.	Dhanak	31.	Sansi, Bhedkut or Manesh
14.	Dhogri, Dhangri or Siggri	32.	Sansoi
15.	Dumna, Mahasha or Doom,	33.	Sapela
16.	Gagra	34.	Sarera
17.	Gandhila or Gandil Gondoia	35.	Sikligar
18.	Kabirpanthi or Julaha	36.	Sirkiband

Source : *Census of India*, 1991.

\* There is no Scheduled Tribe listed in the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Table 1.8 shows the list of Scheduled Castes notified under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution. According to the Census of India, 1991 report there are total 25 villages in the Union Territory of Chandigarh . There are 12 slum areas stated as Jhuggi Jhopri Colonies in the *Census of India, 1991*.

**Table 1.9**  
**Percentage of Scheduled Caste Population in Villages and Slums**  
**of Chandigarh**

Population	Total % of SC Population in villages	Total % of SC population in Slums
Persons	21.36	39.7
Males	19.9	37.38
Females	23.5	43.27

Source : *Census of India, 1991*.

\* The percentages are calculated by taking the total population of the villages and slums separately.

Table 1.9 shows the percentage of Scheduled caste population in the villages and slum areas of Chandigarh. The table suggests the higher percentage of SC population in the slum areas as compared to the villages.

Table 1.10 shows the percentage of Scheduled Caste population in each village to the total population of the village. This is clear from the table that Khuda Ali Sher has the maximum number

of Scheduled castes, among all the twenty five villages of the Union Territory.

**TABLE 1.10**

**Percentage of Scheduled Caste Population in the Villages of U.T. Chandigarh**

Sr.No.	Name of the Village	Total % of SC Population
1.	Kaimbwala	5.10
2.	Khuda Alisher	38.15
3.	Khuda Jassu	11.40
4.	Lahora	12.5
5.	Sarangpur	18.5
6.	Dhanas	22.5
7.	Shahpur	32.8
8.	Dadu Majra	21.26
9.	Maloya	29.6
10.	Palsaura	25.41
11.	Badheri	12.6
12.	Kujheri	25.47
13.	Nizampura Kumbra	30.49
14.	Nizampura Burail	18.21
15.	Jhumaroo	37.7
16.	Burail	27.5
17.	Chahar-Tarf-Burail	-
18.	Bair Majra	6.25
19.	Karsan	-
20.	Hallo Majra	16.5
21.	Behlana	15.23
22.	Raipur Khurd	9.33
23.	Raipur Kalan	3.9
24.	Mauli Jagran	22.23
25.	Daria	10.7

Source : *Census of India, 1991.*

The table also reveals that there is no SC population in the Chahar-Tarf-Burail and the Karsan Villages. Raipur Kalan is the village with minimum Dalit population among all the villages of the Union Territory.

**Table 1.11**

**Percentages of Scheduled Caste Population in the Slums of  
U.T. Chandigarh**

Sr. No.	Name of the Colony*	Total % of SC Population
1.	Gandhi, Madrasi and Sansi Labour Colony Sector-26	35.81
2.	Sanjay Randhawa Labour Colony, Manimajra Rural	9.31
3.	Gawala Colony - Manimajra Rural	6.67
4.	Sanjay Colony, Northern Gatta Industrial Area	28.15
5.	Labour Colony No. 4 Industrial Area	35.8
6.	Sardar Bhagat Singh Colony	68.8
7.	Labour Colony Sector-31	34.5
8.	Labour Colony No. 5 Nizampur Burail and Nizampur Kumbra Area	22.9
9.	Janta colony Sector - 25	88.49
10.	Kumhar Colony Sector -25	81.20
11.	Nehru Labour Colony, Kujheri	41.40
12.	Labour colony Palsaura	28.41

Source : *Census of India, 1991.*

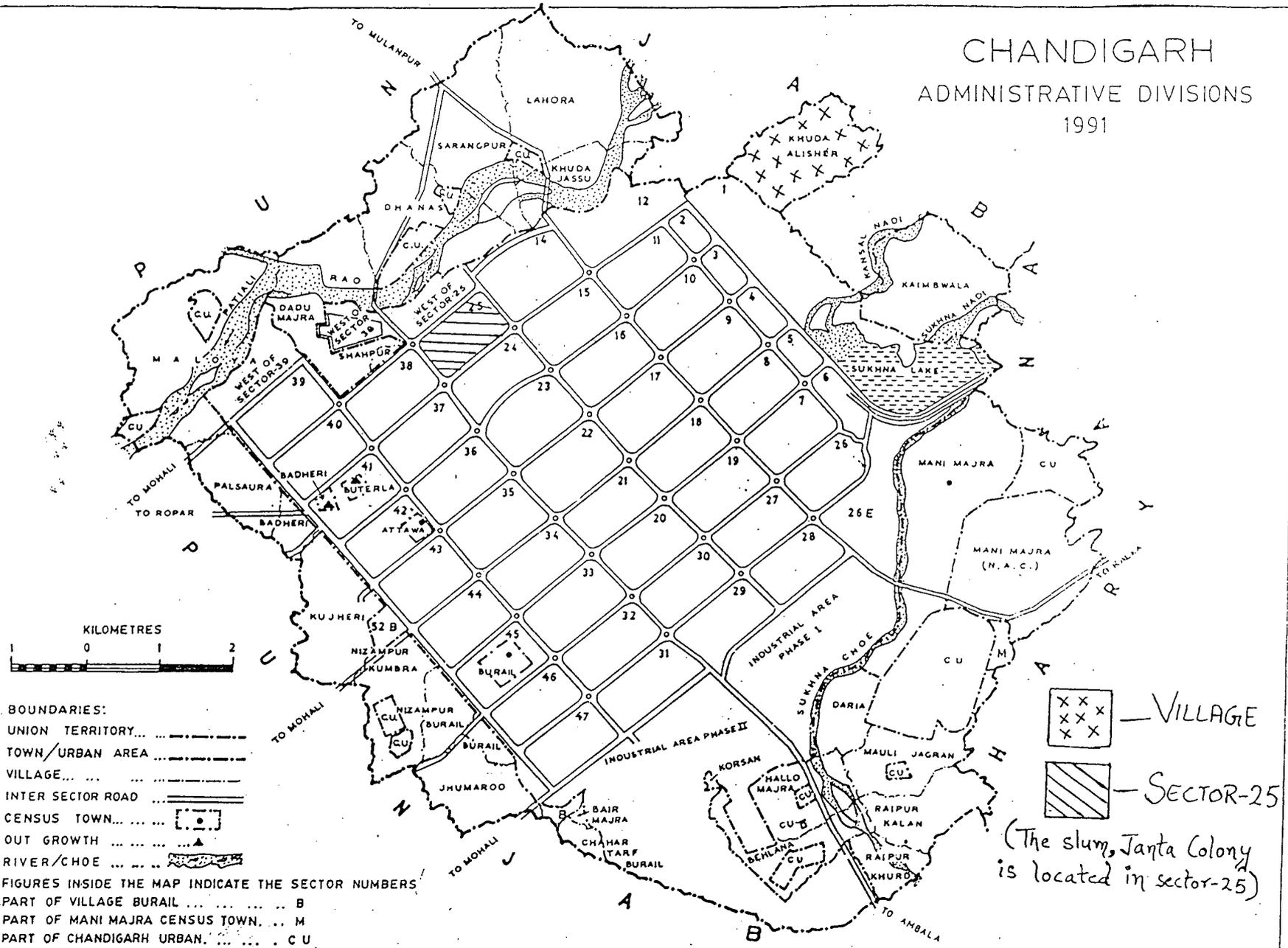
\* The Slum areas are referred to as 'Colony' in the census report.

Table 1.11 shows the percentage of SC population to the total population for each of the twelve slums in the Union Territory. Janta Colony, located in Sector-25 of Chandigarh has the maximum, i.e. 88.49 percent of Scheduled caste population, followed by the Kumhar Colony in the same sector.

## **II**

In this part, we will briefly discuss the profile of the sample area i.e. the village, Khuda Ali Sher and the Slum, Janta Colony. The profile of the sample population according to different attributes is also discussed.

# CHANDIGARH ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS 1991



- BOUNDARIES:  
 UNION TERRITORY... - - - - -  
 TOWN/URBAN AREA... - - - - -  
 VILLAGE... - - - - -  
 INTER SECTOR ROAD... = = = = =  
 CENSUS TOWN... [Symbol]  
 OUT GROWTH... [Symbol]  
 RIVER/CHOE... [Symbol]
- FIGURES INSIDE THE MAP INDICATE THE SECTOR NUMBERS  
 PART OF VILLAGE BURAIL... B  
 PART OF MANI MAJRA CENSUS TOWN... M  
 PART OF CHANDIGARH URBAN... C U

- [Symbol] - VILLAGE  
 [Symbol] - SECTOR-25  
 (The slum Janta Colony is located in sector-25)

The village Khuda Ali Sher, located on the north-east of the Union Territory is spread over 186.16 hectares. The total number of households in the village is 588, out of which about 200 are Scheduled Caste. Literacy rate in the village is 56.20 percent as compared to 77.81 percent for Chandigarh. There are two primary, one middle and one high school in the village. The village Khuda Ali Sher is at the distance of one kilometer from the city of Chandigarh and a *pucca* road connects the village to the city.

The village is largely dominated by two communities, the Jat Sikhs and the Dalits, who are also predominantly the Sikhs. Other castes like Brahmins, Banias and Khattris are negligent in number. There are three Muslim households in the village. Among the Dalits, the majority is of the Ravidasias.

The sarpanch of the village is from Ravidasia community. The village panchayat is dominated by the Jat Sikh community. Out of the total nine members in the village panchayat, five are from the Jat Sikh community, one is an OBC and the rest three are Dalits. All the three Dalit members are women.

The young men of the village have formed a youth club, whose president is from Dalit community. Recently, some of the Dalits from the village have formed an association, the Ravidasia Committee, named after the 16<sup>th</sup> century Chamar saint-poet of Varanasi. The committee with total number of 25 members, eleven of whom are

registered members, aims to get freed the village common land from the landlords, along with organising religious functions.

There are three Gurdwaras (the Sikh religious shrines) in the village. The oldest one was constructed by a Dalit in 1947 and is presently controlled by the Dalits of the village. The other Gurdwara, established in 1973 is basically under the control of the Jat Sikhs, who contributed towards its construction. The third one is controlled by some "Nihangs" (a religious sect among the Sikhs) of the village. Thus we notice the caste cleavages playing a role at the religious level.

The slum, Janta Colony is located in Sector-25 of the Union Territory. The slum has a total population of 58,275, out of which 88.49 percent are the Scheduled Castes. Literacy rate in the slum is 37.15 percent. Near about 26 percent males and 10.21 percent females in the slum are literate according to the census report of 1991.

A survey carried out by CRRID in 1999 reveals that enrollment rate for primary, middle and matric level is 63.07, 25.28 and 12.24 percent respectively.<sup>11</sup>

The slum dwellers in Janta colony have mainly migrated from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Bihar. According to the socio-economic survey of CRRID, the sex ratio in the Janta Colony is 810. Most of the migrants in the slum are in age group of 15-50. This point is substantiated by the following table :

**Table 1.12**

**Age Distribution of Population in Slums of Chandigarh**

**Age - Groups**

	0-14	15-34	35-39	40-49	50-59	60
Total (in%)	39.57	39.25	7.58	8.16	3.19	3.57

Source : Socio-Economic Survey, 1998, CRRID.

The living conditions in the slum are deplorable, as most of the slum-dwellers live in *Kuccha* hutments. A sense of insecurity prevails among them as they fear demolition of their hutments by the administration. Most of the respondents interviewed mentioned their apprehensions of displacement. The slum presents a general picture of neglect, where the basic facility like drinking water is not available to the residents. Due to the lack of adequate arrangements for drinking water, many a women-folk has to spend a large chunk of time in getting water from the only municipal tap. There is a primary school in the slum, set up by the administration, but the slum-dwellers face many difficulties in getting their wards admitted to the school. They are not educated enough to understand the ticklish procedures like the proofs of date of birth and Scheduled Caste status certificates required to get admission and benefits from the government. Thus the daily life in the slum is full of hardships and

miseries, for the ones who might have had migrated to the city in hope of making it good in life.

### **Profile of the Sample Population**

In order to understand the socio-economic and political background of the sample population, a profile of the respondents by different attributes such as sub-caste, age, religion, educational and occupational status is given below. The row-wise percentage in each table are mentioned in the parentheses.

#### **(I) Distribution of the Sample Population by Residence**

Table 1.13 shows that out of the total 70 respondents, a slightly more than two-fourths are from the village and a little less than three-fifths are slum dwellers.

**Table 1.13**

#### **Distribution of Sample Population by Residence**

Place of Residence	Males	Females	Total
Village	19 (63.3)	11 (36.6)	30 (100)
Slum	26 (65)	14 (35)	40 (100)
Total	45 (64.28)	25 (35.7)	70 (100)

\* Residence here means the village, Khuda Ali Sher and the slum, Janta Colony.

Among both the village and the slum dwellers, nearly two-thirds are men, and one-third are women.

**Table 1.14**

**Distribution of Sample Population by Sub-Caste**

Sub-caste	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Balmikis	- (0)	- (0)	25 (64.10)	14 (35.8)	39 (100)
Ramdasia/ Ravidasia/ Jatav	19 (61.29)	11 (35.48)	1* (3.22)	- (0)	31 (100)
<b>Total</b>	19	11	26	14	70

\* Only one man in the slum reported his sub-caste as Jatav, all others mentioned Ramdasia or Ravidasia as their sub-castes, which have been put together in view of their being the different variants of the Chamars. All the Balmikis are concentrated in slum and all the Ramdasias/ Ravidasias in the village.

**(II) Distribution of the Sample Population by Sub-Caste**

Fifty-five percent of the total respondents in our sample are from the Balmiki community where as 42 percent are from the Ramdasia or the Ravidasia communities, the variants of the Chamars. Table 1.14 shows that only one respondent stated himself to be from the Jatav Sub-caste.

**Table 1.15**

**Distribution of Migrants in Sample Population**

**By**

**State of their Origin**

State of origin	Males	Females	Total
Uttar Pradesh	21 (80.7)	5 (19.23)	26 (100)
Haryana	5 (35.7)	9 (64.28)	14 (100)
Himachal Pradesh	2 (100)	- (0)	2 (100)
Total	28 (66.6)	14 (33.3)	42 (100)

\* There are 28 non-migrants in the sample, who are natives of the village , Khuda Ali Sher in the Union Territory of Chandigarh. 40 out of the total 42 migrants are slum-dwellers and the rest two who live in the village, are from Himachal Pradesh.

**(III) Distribution of Migrants in the Sample Population by State of their Origin**

As seen in the table 1.15 there are a total of 42 migrants, out of the sample population of 70 respondents. Forty of these migrants reside in the slum, where as the rest two living in the village, have migrated from the state of Himachal Pradesh. Near about three-fifths of the total migrants, are from Uttar Pradesh. One-third have migrated from Himachal Pradesh. Among the total migrants from Uttar Pradesh, four fifths are men and one-fifth women. In case of the migrants from Haryana, near about two-thirds are women and slightly more than one-third are men.

**Table 1.16****Distribution of Sample Population****By****Age**

Age Group	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Low (18-34 yrs)	9 (26.4)	5 (14.7)	12 (35.29)	8 (23.5)	34 (100)
Middle (35.54 yrs)	5 (20)	5 (20)	11 (44)	4 (16)	25 (100)
High (55 yrs. and above)	5 (45.45)	1 (9.09)	3 (27.27)	2 (18.18)	11 (100)
Total	19	11	26	14	70

**(III) Distribution of Sample Population by Age**

Table 1.16 shows the age-wise distribution of the respondents. A slightly less than fifty percent are placed in the low category, near about fifteen percent in the high and 48 percent are placed in the category of middle in terms of their age.

**(IV) Distribution of the Sample Population by Occupation**

Table 1.17 shows the distribution of the respondents by various occupational categories.

Table 1.17

**Distribution of the Sample Population by Occupation<sup>§</sup>**

Occupational Categories	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Govt. Service	8 (44.4)	1 (5.5)	8 (44.4)	1 (5.5)	18 (100)
Lowly Paid Manual Unskilled Job*	1 (4.34)	- (0)	13 (56.5)	9 (39.13)	23 (100)
Lowly Paid Manual Skilled job**	7 (50)	1 (7.14)	5 (35.7)	3 (7.14)	14 (100)
House-wife / Husband and Other Non Earners***	3 (20)	9 (60)	- (0)	3 (20)	15 (100)
Total	19	11	26	14	70

\* This category includes occupations such as daily wage labourers in construction work, rag pickers, house maids, domestic servants, etc.

\*\* It includes weavers, shoe-makers, masons, priests, peons in private sector and tailors etc.

\*\*\* The category of non-earners includes those not earning and dependent on other & students.

§ For a detailed information regarding the occupations of the respondents see Appendix I

One-fourth of the total respondents are government employees and nearly one-third are engaged in lowly paid manual unskilled occupations. One fifth of the total respondents are lowly paid manual skilled workers. Nearly same proportion of the respondents come under the category of non-earners, which includes the house wives and the students.

**Table-1.18**

**Distribution of Sample Population by Religion**

Religion	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Hindu	2 (5.55)	- (0)	23 (63.8)	11 (30.5)	36 (100)
Sikh	16 (61.5)	10 (38.46)	- (0)	- (0)	26 (100)
Balmiki/Ravidasia/Ramdasia*	1 (20)	- (0)	1 (20)	3 (60)	5 (100)
Others**	- (0)	1 (33.33)	2 (66.6)	- (0)	3 (100)
Total	19	11	26	14	70

\* One respondent residing in the village reported his religion as Ravidasia, where as 4 slum dwellers stated Balmiki as their religion.

\*\* One female respondent from the village reported her religion as Nirankari, while one male slum dweller stated "humanity" as his religion, the other one reported himself to be a Nirankari. Even though most of these are considered to be Sects/Castes with the Hindus/Sikhs, they are being mentioned separately as reported by the respondents.

**(VI) Distribution of the Sample Population by Religion**

More than half of the total respondents are the Hindus, while more than one third are the Sikhs. Five respondents stated their sub-caste as their religion. Two reported themselves to be Nirankaris (a religious sect in northern India) and one stated "humanity" to be his religion. Table 1.18 shows that among the Hindus, three-fifths are

men and near about one third are women. A similar pattern regarding male-female ratio is observed among the Sikh respondents.

**TABLE 1.19**

**Distribution of Sample Population by Membership of Political Parties and Social Organisations/Associations\*.**

Membership	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Political parties	5 (27.7)	1 (5.55)	12 (66.6)	- (0)	18 (100)
Social Organisations/ Associations	6 (60)	- (0)	4 (40)	- (0)	10 (100)
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>28</b>

\* For a detailed information regarding the political parties and social organisations/associations see appendix II.

**(VII) Distribution of The Sample Population by Membership of Political Parties and Social Organisations/Associations.**

Table 1.19 indicates that out of the total respondents 28, i.e. two-fifths are members of various political parties and social organisations. Two-thirds of the men, living in the slum are members of one or the other political party, whereas this proportion is one-fourth in case of the village males. Out of the total 10 members of various social organisations, six are from village and four from the slum. Interestingly, only one woman reported to be a member of a political party in the total sample.

**Table 1.20**

**Distribution of Sample Population by Class**

Religion	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Low*	7 (17.07)	6 (14.6)	16 (39.02)	12 (29.26)	41 (100)
Middle **	6 (37.5)	2 (12.5)	6 (37.5)	2 (12.5)	16 (100)
High ***	6 (46.15)	3 (23.07)	4 (30.7)	- (0)	13 (100)
Total	19	11	26	14	70

\* Includes people engaged in the lowly paid manual unskilled jobs such as that of rag pickers, daily wagers in construction work, house maids etc. As a top-up, people who live in *kutch*a accommodation are included.

\*\* Includes people engaged in the lowly paid manual skilled jobs such as that of weavers, tailors, masons, white-washers and shoe-makers etc. As a top-up, people who live in *kutch*a-*pucca* accommodation are included.

\*\*\* Includes those in Govt. service or those who earn more than 8,000 per month. As a top-up, people with some agricultural land or with *pucca* accommodation are included.

Note: For the students and the housewives, the index is calculated with reference to their father's/husband's class.

**(VIII) Distribution of the Sample Population by Class**

Table 1.20 shows that nearly three-fifths of the total respondents are from the low category in terms of their class status. Approximately one-fourth come under the category of middle and near about one-fifth are placed in the high category in terms of their respective class status.

**Table 1.21**

**Distribution of Sample Population by Education**

Educational status*	Village		Slum		Total
	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Low	4 (11.7)	5 (14.7)	12 (35.29)	13 (38.23)	34 (100)
Middle	11 (39.28)	3 (10.7)	13 (46.42)	1 (3.5)	28 (100)
High	4 (50)	3 (37.5)	1 (12.5)	- (0)	8 (100)
Total	19	11	26	14	70

Notes: The low = Non literates, Below primary & primary pass/middle fail.

Middle = Matric and, Intermediate/college no degree.

High = Graduate or equivalent and post Graduate & above (There is no post graduate respondent in our sample)

\* See Appendix III and IV for more details.

**(IX) Distribution of the Sample Population by Education.**

As seen in table 1.21 , near about half the total respondents come under the category of low, in terms of their educational status. Two-fifths of the total respondents are placed in the category of middle and one-tenth in the category of high by their educational status.

## ***Endnotes***

1. Surinder S. Jodhka, “ ‘Prejudice’ without ‘Pollution’? : Scheduled Castes in Contemporary Punjab”, *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy*, vol. XII, Nos. 3-4, July-Dec. 2000, p. 382.
2. Kavita Sharma *et. al.* *Chandigarh Lifescape : Brief Social History of a Planned City*, (Chandigarh : n.p., 1999), p.59.
3. *Census of India*, 1991, Chandigarh (Religion).
4. Sharma *et. al.*, no.1, p. 65.
5. V.P. Dubey *et. al.*, “Socio-Economic Profile of Slum Dwellers in Chandigarh,” *Man and Development*, Sept. 1999, p. 132.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
7. *Ibid.*, p.132.
8. Madhu Sarin, “In defence of Free Debate and Discussion : Some Reflections on the recent Chandigarh Conference”, *Internet*.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Census of India*, 1991.
11. *Dubey et al*, n.4, p. 133.

## **CHAPTER – III**

### **ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL PREFERENCES AND DALIT ASSERTION**

#### **Introduction**

In the recent years caste has emerged as a critical factor of Indian politics and its role has been reinforced through elections in the practice of Indian democracy. Caste and caste affiliations have provided a significant base for political participation, leadership and political awareness to the citizens of democracy. Dalit politics can also be understood within this broader framework. Political means have played the role of catalyst in the emergence of the Dalit consciousness in last some decades. Due to the role of elections as an impetus for political participation of the Dalits in Indian democracy, Dalit politics has travelled a long way, from the patron-client relationship of the Dalits with upper caste parties towards an independent Dalit assertion through their own caste parties, like BSP in north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. As stated by Pushpendra:

The BSP's emergence in the 1980s and the 1990s as a force to reckon with in the four north Indian states has its causality in the altered political context and the changes in the SC community itself. The steady decline of the Congress, which earlier used to more or less represent the majority of the SCs all over the country, created a

political vacuum. This space has not been occupied by the BJP as it is dominated by the twice-born castes<sup>1</sup>.

Thus we notice the powerful assertion by the Dalits through the electoral politics. This shows their concern to gain political strength in order to occupy the social, political and economic space.

The politics in Chandigarh is generally influenced by the national level political happenings, and the issues that matter at the national level have a bearing on the electoral results in the Chandigarh parliamentary constituency. Table 1.1 shows the comparison of the party that formed the government at the centre and the party which won the election to the Chandigarh parliamentary seat.

**Table 1.1**

**Winning Political Party in Lok Sabha Elections at the Centre and in the Union Territory of Chandigarh**

Year	Party that formed the Govt. at Centre/ the Major Partner in case of Electoral Alliance in the Central Govt.	Party which won the Chandigarh Parliamentary Seat
1967	Congress	Bhartiya Jana Sangh
1971	Congress	Congress
1977	Janata Party	Janata Party
1980	Congress	Congress
1984	Congress	Congress
1989	Janata Dal	Congress
1991	Congress	Congress
1996	BJP	BJP
1998	BJP	BJP
1999	BJP	Congress

**TABLE 1.2****VOTE SHARE OF THE CONGRESS, THE BJP AND THE BSP AT ALL INDIA LEVEL AND FOR CHANDIGARH  
PARLIAMENTARY SEAT**

Party	1991		1996		1998*		1999	
	All India	Chandigarh						
Congress	36.6	35.5	28.8	29.33	25.9	38.37	28.30	46.9
BJP	20.0	28.5	20.3	38.48	25.5	42.0	23.75	45.06
BSP	1.6	4.6	3.6	4.03	4.7	-	4.1	2.7

\* The BSP contested 1998 Lok Sabha election in alliance with the Congress Party in the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

The table indicates that before 1977 two major parties in the Chandigarh parliamentary constituency have been the Congress and the Jana Sangh. In 1977 there prevailed an anti-Congress wave in the whole of the north India, the Janata Party captured the power at the centre and the same trend was reflected in the electoral result from Chandigarh parliamentary constituency. Similarly in the decade of the 1990s, the decline of the Congress and the subsequent rise of the BJP is also demonstrated through the electoral results to the Chandigarh parliamentary seat.

Table 1.2 shows the vote share of the two major contestants for Chandigarh parliamentary seat, the Congress and the BJP. The vote of the BSP, which is generally considered to be a party of the Dalits is also given in the table. The table shows that the performance of the BSP in terms of its vote share for the Chandigarh parliamentary seat has been better than its all India performance (except in 1999 elections).

The primary aim of this chapter is to understand the dynamics of the Dalit politics in Chandigarh. Our study tends to understand the relationship of the political preferences of the Dalits and their assertion. Our focus is basically on the voting pattern, party association, bloc-voting and the intra-Dalit tensions reflected in their attitude towards the Dalit politics. For the present study, a sample of seventy respondents was taken. The village, Khuda Ali Sher and the slum, Janta Colony, where the study was conducted have the highest

percentage of the Dalit population among all the villages and slums of the Union Territory, according to 1991 census report.

The interviews of the respondents have been carried out with the help of an interview schedule, but along with that the study is also based upon the informal interaction with a cross-section of the sample population.

## **POLITICAL PREFERENCES AND DALIT ASSERTION**

### **1. VOTING PATTERN**

Voting is an important tool in the hands of the individuals and groups in a democracy through which they can assert, by exercising political choices. The voters thus indicate their preferences for and against the “political” – structures, issues and ideologies.

To know the voting pattern of the Dalits in Chandigarh in the parliamentary elections over an extended period of time, mainly three questions were asked to know their voting pattern in the elections held earlier, i.e. in the decade of 1990s, in the last parliamentary election, i.e. in 1999 election and their voting preference for the next election to be held at a future date.

The responses were then analysed in terms of sub-caste, class, place of residence and the educational status of the respondents.

**Table 2. 1**  
**Voting Pattern**  
**By**  
**Sub-caste**

SUB - CASTE	EE *						LE**						FE***					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
Balmikis	29 (74.35)	1 (2.5)	- (0)	2 (5.12)	7 (29.16)	39 (100)	24 (61.5)	7 (17.9)	1 (2.5)	- (0)	7 (17.9)	39 (100)	21 (53.8)	3 (7.6)	1 (2.5)	8 (20.5)	6 (15.38)	39 (100)
Chamars	12 (38.7)	- (0)	10 (32.25)	1 (3.22)	8 (25.8)	31 (100)	8 (25.8)	1 (3.22)	15 (48.38)	2 (6.45)	5 (16.12)	31 (100)	12 (38.7)	- (0)	9 (29.03)	1 (3.22)	9 (29.03)	31 (100)
Total	41	1	10	3	15	70	32	8	16	2	12	70	33	3	10	9	15	70

\* EE here means earlier elections, which include broadly the Lok Sabha elections held in the decade of 1990s

\*\* LE means the Last election i.e. the Lok Sabha election held in 1999.

\*\*\* FE means the projection for any future election.

Other parties include mainly the BSP (Ambedkar), the Janashakti and the Janata Party.

\$ Among the other parties, the BSP (A) has got six out of the eight votes of the Balmikis in any future election.

## 2.1 Voting Pattern by Sub-Caste

Table 2.1 shows the voting pattern of the respondents by their sub-caste. The data in the table suggests that the Balmikis are more inclined to vote for Congress as compared to the Ramdasias/Ravidasias, the Chamar\*subcastes. The BSP has emerged as a significant contender for the Chamar votes along with the Congress. However the BSP, being true to its Chamar-party image among many of the Dalit sub-castes, has not been able to make any significant dent in the Balmiki votes. Though the Congress remains the predominant choice among the Balmiki voters, yet the vote share of the party has shown a steady decline.\*The table indicates the Congress getting three-fourths of the Balmiki votes in the earlier elections, i.e. the Lok Sabha elections held in the decade of 1990s. However, this share goes down to be half of the total Balmiki votes for any future election. The vote share of the BJP among the Balmikis, generally considered to be a party of twice-born castes, has increased over a period of time. This increase in the vote share of the BJP among the Balmikis might be considered as a pointer towards the community's search for alternative political formations, following the decline of the Congress which traditionally carried the image of a party of the downtrodden, and the simultaneous inability of the BSP

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\* Hence forth, we are using the term 'Chamar' which broadly includes the Ramdasias and the Ravidasias.

to take these in its fold. Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh also point towards the intra-Dalit rivalry, leading to the support for upper-caste parties like BJP, among many a section of Dalits in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>2</sup>

The voting pattern of the Chamar respondents points to their hostile attitude towards the BJP. The reason may be that they already have a party, the BSP, which espouses to work for their cause. The Chamar votes are scattered between the Congress party and the BSP, the BJP is almost a non-entity among the Chamars.

Thus the analysis of the voting-pattern by the sub-caste of the respondents clearly indicates towards the intra-Dalit variations, whereby the two conflicting sub-castes among the Dalits have shown considerable differences in their voting pattern.

## **2.2 Voting Pattern by Class**

Table 2.2 indicates towards the Congress party getting the highest percentage of votes from the low category Dalits, in terms of their class status. Among all the three categories of the Dalits in terms of class, the Congress has consistently got the maximum proportion of the votes from among the poor sections of the Dalits, which is compatible with the party's image of being a party of the poor and the downtrodden. Heath and Yadav (1999) in their study of the social profile of the Congress voters also point towards it, "In terms of community as well as class Congress appears to be a party of the

underdogs when it faces the BJP... the poorer the voter, greater the chances of their voting for the Congress and *vice-versa* for the BJP”<sup>3</sup>.

A similar trend of the low among the Dalits in terms of their class, voting for the Congress is also visible in Chandigarh. It may be mentioned here that in the elections held in the decades of the 1990s for the Chandigarh parliamentary constituency, the main contest has been between the Congress and the BJP.

The BSP has got more than two-fifths of the high category Dalit votes in the last Lok Sabha election. The party is likely to get more than one-third of the votes of the relatively well-off Dalits in any future election. Thus we notice a steady increase in the vote share of the BSP, as we move from the lower class to the higher class Dalit respondents. The above data does not conform to the findings to the CSDS data (by Pushpendra) which indicates that, “The BJP is highly preferred among the middle class and the rich SCs. The BSP, the Left and the Janata Dal are clearly the favourite parties of the poor SCs. The Congress is the exception in the sense that it has a wide vote base across all the class groups”.<sup>4</sup> This however, is not true of our sample respondents.

It further states, “There has been a two-dimensional shift in the SC votes the poor SCs preferring for the broad Left and the well-off SCs opting for the BJP and the Congress”.<sup>5</sup>

As opposed to the above, the BSP gets the maximum support in terms of votes from the relatively well-off Dalits, which might be

**Table 2.2**  
**Voting Pattern**  
**By**  
**Class**

CLASS	EE						LE						FE					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
Low*	27 (65.8)	1 (2.43)	4 (9.7)	- (0)	9 (21.9)	41 (100)	22 (53.6)	5 (12.19)	5 (12.19)	1 (2.43)	8 (19.5)	41 (100)	18 (43.9)	2 (4.8)	2 (4.8)	7 (17.07)	12 (29.26)	41 (100)
MIDDLE **	8 (50)	- (0)	2 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	4 (25)	16 (100)	7 (43.7)	1 (6.25)	5 (31.25)	- (0)	3 (18.75)	16 (100)	9 (56.25)	1 (6.25)	3 (18.7)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	16 (100)
HIGH ***	6 (46.15)	- (0)	4 (30.7)	1 (7.6)	2 (15.38)	13 (100)	3 (23.07)	2 (15.38)	6 (46.15)	1 (7.6)	1 (7.6)	13 (100)	6 (46.15)	- (0)	5 (38.46)	- (0)	2 (15.38)	13 (100)
TOTAL	41	1	10	3	15	70	32	8	16	2	12	70	33	3	10	9	15	70

\* Includes people engaged in the lowly paid manual unskilled jobs such as that of rag pickers, daily wagers in construction work, house maids etc. As a top-up people who live in *kuccha* accommodation are included.

\*\* Includes people engaged in the lowly paid manual skilled jobs such as that of weavers, tailors, masons, white-washers and shoe-makers etc. As a top-up, people who live in *kuccha-pucca* accommodation are included.

\*\*\*Includes those in Govt service or those who earn more than 8,000 per month. As a top-up, people with some agricultural land or with *pucca* accommodation are included.

Note : For the students and housewives, the index is calculated with reference to their father's/husband's class.

explained by stating that their status might have led to greater caste consciousness among these Dalit voters. Due to their relatively high status in terms of class, they might have had greater access to education and greater exposure, hence the heightened caste-consciousness among them.

It is pertinent to mention here that the sub-caste profile of the high category Dalits in terms of class status suggests that a majority of them are the Ramdasias or Ravidasias. Thus a linkage between their being Chamars and their voting for the BSP is also not ruled out.

### **2.3 Voting Pattern by Residence**

In order to understand the Dalit politics in the city of Chandigarh, we need to situate it in the specific socio-cultural, economic and the political milieu of the respondents. The focus of our study is basically on the Dalits from the slum and the rural areas of the Union Territory of Chandigarh. There is a significant difference in the life-worlds of the Dalits from the village as compared to those residing in the slum. The Dalits in the village are relatively well-off and better educated as compared to their counterparts in slum. The slum-dwellers are primarily engaged in fulfilling the basic necessities of the life, whereas those from the village have been able to translate their resources for the purpose of assertion i.e. by forming their own-caste committees etc. Thus the life world of the respondents

**Table 2.3**  
**VOTING PATTERN**  
**BY**  
**RESIDENCE**

RESIDENCE	EE						LE						FE					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
VILLAGE	12 (40)	- (0)	10 (33.3)	1 (3.33)	7 (23.3)	30 (100)	8 (26.6)	1 (3.33)	15 (50)	2 (6.66)	4 (13.33)	30 (100)	12 (40)	- (0)	9 (30)	1 (3.33)	8 (26.6)	30 (100)
SLUM	29 (72.5)	1 (2.5)	- (0)	2 (5)	8 (20)	40 (100)	24 (60)	7 (17.5)	1 (2.5)	- (0)	8 (20)	40 (100)	21 (52.5)	3 (7.5)	1 (2.5)	8* (20)	7 (17.5)	40 (100)
TOTAL	41	1	10	3	15	70	32	8	16	2	12	70	33	3	10	9	15	70

Others mainly include the BSP (Ambedkar), the Jan Shakti and the Janata Party.

\* BSP (A) strives to get seven out of the total eight votes in future election.

from the village is different as compared to those living in the slum. Due to the above reasons, we have taken into consideration the residence as a variable in order to understand the process of political and social identity formation in its entirety.

Table 2.3 indicates the voting pattern of the respondents by place of their residence, i.e. the village and the slum. A majority of the slum dwellers in our sample are the migrants. A total of 26 migrants are from the state of Uttar Pradesh, where as 14 have migrated from Haryana. The class and education profile of the slum dwellers points towards majority of these being poor and lowly educated.

The voting pattern of the slum-dwellers indicates the prominent position of the Congress party in the slum area. However, the vote share of Congress party has seen a steady decline and we notice the simultaneous rise in the vote share of some other parties like the BSP (Ambedkar) and the Jan Shakti.

The BSP, considered to be party of the Dalits, has a negligible presence among the respondents living in the slum. The reason may be their being Balmikis by sub-caste. Thus the sub-caste factor playing a role in the voting pattern of the slum dwellers might not be ruled out. As pointed out earlier, the BSP, with its image of a predominantly Chamar's party is not so popular among the Balmikis.

**Table 2.4**  
**VOTING PATTERN**  
**BY**  
**EDUCATION\$**

EDU. STATUS	EE						LE						FE					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
Low*	20 (58.8)	1 (2.9)	4 (11.7)	2 (5.8)	7 (20.5)	34 (100)	18 (52.9)	6 (17.6)	4 (11.7)	1 (2.94)	5 (14.7)	34 (100)	16 (47.05)	3 (8.8)	3 (8.8)	2 (5.8)	10 (29.4)	34 (100)
MIDDLE **	19 (67.8)	- (0)	4 (14.28)	1 (3.5)	4 (14.28)	28 (100)	12 (42.8)	2 (7.14)	9 (32.14)	1 (3.57)	4 (14.28)	28 (100)	14 (50)	- (0)	4 (14.28)	7 (25)	3 (10.7)	28 (100)
HIGH ***	2 (2.5)	- (0)	2 (25)	- (0)	4 (50)	8 (100)	2 (25)	- (0)	3 (37.5)	- (0)	3 (37.5)	8 (100)	3 (37.5)	- (0)	3 (37.5)	- (0)	2 (25)	8 (100)
TOTAL	41	1	10	3	15	70	32	8	16	2	12	70	33	3	10	9	15	70

\* mainly includes (a) the Non literates (b) those who have not passed primary (c) those who are primary pass/middle fail.

\*\* includes those (a) who have passed matric (b) those who have passed intermediate/those who went to college but did not pass graduation.

\*\*\* mainly the graduates or equivalent.

\$ See appendix III and IV for more details.

## **2.4. Voting Pattern by Education**

Table 2.4 shows that the Congress gets the highest proportion of votes from the Dalits placed in the category of low in terms of their educational status. The vote share of the Congress decreases in case of the Dalits, who come under the category of high in terms of education.

Interestingly, the above trend gets reversed in the case of the BSP. The table shows that as we move from the low towards the high category, the vote share of the BSP also increases. This indicates that the less educated among the Dalits may prefer the non-Dalit parties, whereas the highly educated ones may have a preference for own caste parties. This trend resembles the commonly held belief that the BSP has a powerful electoral appeal among the urban, educated middle class of the Dalits. The above data does not conform to the argument based on the National Election Surveys (NES) conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), according to which education has no direct connection to the political consciousness, and the assertion of the Dalit identity in politics is essentially the assertion of the non-lettered, but politically conscious Dalits.<sup>6</sup> As against the above mentioned views, the data in table 2.4 suggests that the less educated among the Dalits may prefer non-Dalit parties and the relatively high educated among the Dalits might have a preference for their own-caste parties.

Thus we might say that, as the deprived sections of the society move upwards in terms of social status, by acquiring new skills through education, they prefer the traditional identities like caste, as an effective means of assertion. Thus the character of caste gets transformed, from being an ascriptive category to an instrumental one.

One may also argue that the low level of preference for one's own caste parties among the less-educated Dalits might be an indication of their being co-opted by the other caste parties, due to the lack of sharpness in their consciousness level. This could also be the reason for preference for the BJP among the less educated Dalits.

## **PARTY ASSOCIATION**

Party Association means the closeness which an individual feels for a party regardless of the fact whether she votes for it or not. Party association is thus, more than the act of voting. An individual may feel close to a party but still may vote for some other party in the elections. This may be due to some compulsions, such as role of numbers in an electoral democracy.

The case of election to the Chandigarh parliamentary constituency in the 1984 elections might be cited as an example, where the party association of the electorate was different from their pattern of voting. In the 1984 Lok Sabha election for Chandigarh parliamentary seat, there was neck to neck contest between Jagan

Nath Kaushal (Congress I) and Harmohan Dhawan (Janata Party). After the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh riots in 1984, there prevailed a great deal of communal tension between the Sikhs and the Hindus in north India. Due to this, a majority of the Sikh voters, disregarding the Akali Dal, voted in favour of the Janata Party in order to make sure the defeat of the Congress. Similarly a majority of Hindu voters, instead of voting for the BJP, voted in favour of the Congress, due to their anti-Sikh sentiments. Thus many a Hindu and Sikh voter might have felt closer to the BJP and the Akali Dal as these represented the sentiments of both the communities very sharply. However due to the compulsions of electoral politics, both the communities voted for the parties other than these. Thus we find the difference between the party association and the voting pattern of the electorate in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections.

In the present study, an attempt is made to know the party association of the Dalits in Chandigarh. Their attitude towards the political parties in terms of their “closeness” and “distance” from a particular party is ascertained in order to know their party association.

### **3.1 Party Association by Sub-Caste**

Table 3.1 shows the party association of the respondents by their sub-caste. The data in the table reveals that near about half of

**Table 3.1**  
**PARTY ASSOCIATION**  
**BY**  
**SUB-CASTE**

SUB - CASTE	WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL CLOSE TO						WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL AWAY FROM					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
BALMIKIS	19 (48.7)	2 (5.12)	1 (2.5)	10* (25.6)	7 (17.9)	39 (100)	2 (5.12)	15 (38.46)	- (0)	2 (5.12)	20 (51.28)	39 (100)
CHAMARS	8 (25.8)	- (0)	14 (45.16)	1 (3.22)	8 (25.8)	31 (100)	1 (3.22)	9 (29.03)	- (0)	1 (3.22)	20 (64.5)	31 (100)
TOTAL	27	2	15	11	15	70	3	24	-	3	40	70

Other parties include the BSP (Ambedkar), the Jan Shakti and Janata Party.

\* Seven out of the total 10 respondents have stated their closeness to the BSP (A).

the total Balmikis feel close to the Congress party where as only one-fourth of the Chamars reported their closeness towards the Congress.

The BSP turns out to be favourite among the Chamars, as more than two-fifths of the Chamars reported their closeness towards the party. Only one out of the total thirty-nine Balmikis stated the same. It would be interesting to point out here that though the Balmikis may not feel close to the BSP, yet none out of the total 39 Balmiki respondents viewed it as a “distant” party. Thirty-eight percent of the Balmikis and 29 percent of the Chamars stated the BJP as the most “distant” party, which is an indication of the hostility towards the BJP among the Dalits.

It would be interesting to point out here that as many as 45 percent of the Chamars felt close to the BSP, but only 29 percent of them stated to vote for the party in any future election. Thus we find considerable difference between the voting preference and the party association of the Chamar respondents.

### **3.2 Party Association by Class**

Table 3.2 indicates the party association of the respondents by class. The data indicates that as we move from the low towards the high category in term of the class status of the respondents, the percentage of the Dalits, who consider themselves to be close to the BSP also increases. This suggests the popularity of the BSP among the relatively well-off Dalits. BJP turns out to be the “distant” party in

**Table 3.2**  
**PARTY ASSOCIATION**  
**BY**  
**CLASS**

ECONOMIC STATUS	WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL CLOSE TO						WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL AWAY FROM					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHER	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
LOW	13 (31.7)	1 (2.43)	7 (17.07)	8* (19.5)	12 (29.26)	41 (100)	1 (2.43)	13 (31.7)	- (0)	- (0)	27 (65.8)	41 (100)
MIDDLE	7 (43.7)	1 (6.25)	4 (25)	2 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	16 (100)	2 (12.5)	5 (31.25)	- (0)	3 (18.7)	6 (37.5)	16 (100)
HIGH	7 (53.8)	- (0)	4 (30.7)	1 (7.6)	1 (7.6)	13 (100)	- (0)	6 (46.15)	- (0)	- (0)	7 (53.8)	13 (100)
Total	27	2	15	11	15	70	3	24	-	3	40	70

\* Seven out of the 8 respondents have stated to feel close to the BSP (Ambedkar).

terms of the party association of the respondents, among all the three categories of the Dalits. A slightly less than one-third among the low and the middle categories, and nearly half of among the high category of the Dalits stated it to be a party from which they feel distanced.

It would be important to state here that according to the voting pattern of the low category respondents, more than two-fifths have reported to vote for the Congress in any future election, but in terms of party association near about three-tenths of them feel close to the Congress party. Similarly, among the middle category, 56 percent have cited the Congress as a choice in any future election, but only 43 percent feel close to it. Thus we may infer that some of the respondents might vote for the Congress in the elections, but it does not mean that they do feel close to the party.

### **3.3 Party Association by Residence**

Table 3.3 shows the party association of the respondents by the place of their residence.

Near about half of the total slum-dwellers stated to feel close to the Congress, in contrast to near about one-fourth of the village respondents. One-fourth out of the total slum-dwellers have stated to be close to parties such as BSP (A), the JanShakti and the Janata Party.

**Table 3.3**  
**PARTY ASSOCIATION**  
**BY**  
**RESIDENCE**

AREA OF RESIDENCE	WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL CLOSE TO						WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL AWAY FROM					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
VILLAGE	8 (26.6)	- (0)	13 (43.33)	1 (3.33)	8 (26.6)	30 (100)	1 (3.33)	9 (30)	- (0)	1 (3.33)	19 (63.33)	30 (100)
SLUM	19 (47.5)	2 (5)	2 (5)	10* (25)	7 (17.5)	40 (100)	2 (5)	15 (37.5)	- (0)	2 (5)	21 (52.5)	40 (100)
TOTAL	27	2	15	11	15	70	3	24	-	3	40	70

\* Seven have stated to feel close to the BSP (A) and the rest of three to the Jan Shakti and the Janata Party.

There is marked difference between the voting pattern and the party association of the village respondents. More than two-fifths of the village respondents have stated to vote for the Congress in any future election but only one-fourth of them have stated to feel close to the party. Similarly only 30 percent the village respondents have stated to vote for the BSP in a future election, but near about 44 percent of them reported their closeness towards the BSP. This indicates that though some of the village respondents may not vote for the BSP, yet they feel close to the party.

### **3.4 Party Association by Education**

Table 3.4 shows the party association of the respondents by their educational status. The data in the table indicates that near about three-fourths of respondents from the low category have not stated their distance from a particular party, however this proportion among those in the category of middle and high is low, as shown in the table. This might be an indication of the confidence among the relatively well educated Dalits, whereby they have openly pronounced their distance from particular parties.

We find a marked difference between the voting pattern and the party association of those placed in the category of middle. Four respondents out of 28 in the category of the middle have stated to vote for the BSP, however the number of those who feel close to the party is eight.

**Table 3.4**  
**PARTY ASSOCIATION**  
**BY**  
**EDUCATION**

EDU. STATUS	WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL CLOSE TO						WHICH PARTY DO YOU FEEL AWAY FROM					
	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	CONG	BJP	BSP	OTHERS	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
LOW	11 (32.35)	2 (5.8)	5 (14.7)	4 (11.7)	12 (35.29)	34 (100)	2 (5.8)	6 (17.6)	- (0)	1 (2.9)	25 (73.5)	34 (100)
MIDDLE	13 (46.42)	- (0)	8 (28.5)	6* (21.42)	1 (3.5)	28 (100)	1 (3.5)	14 (50)	- (0)	1 (3.5)	12 (42.8)	28 (100)
HIGH	3 (37.5)	- (0)	2 (25)	1 (12.5)	2 (25)	8 (100)	- (0)	4 (50)	- (0)	1 (12.5)	3 (37.5)	8 (100)
TOTAL	27	2	15	11	15	70	3	24	-	3	40	70

\* Five out of total six have stated to be close to the BSP (A).

## **BLOCK -VOTING AMONG THE DALITS**

In the Indian democracy, there has been a trend towards bloc-voting in the elections, where, the voter does not vote as an individual but as a member of a particular caste group. Bloc-voting points towards a phenomenon whereby the traditional identity like caste, when invoked by a particular caste group at the time of voting, gets transformed into a political instrument.

In the present study an attempt is being made to know the views of the respondents regarding the trend of bloc-voting in their community. Secondly, it is also ascertained whether the respondents are in favour of voting on the caste lines.

### **4.1 Bloc-Voting by Sub-Caste**

Table 4.1 shows bloc-voting of the respondents by their sub-caste.

### **4.2 Bloc-Voting by Class**

Table 4.2 indicates the bloc-voting by the class status of the respondents. The response of those in the category of the low and the high is almost similar. The response of those in the middle category in terms of their class status, is largely in the affirmative. More than two-fifths of the respondents in the category of middle have stated that they do feel that there is phenomenon of collective voting among the people of their community.

**Table 4.1**  
**BLOC-VOTING**  
**BY**  
**SUB-CASTE**

SUB-CASTE	DO YOU THINK PEOPLE OF YOUR CASTE VOTE COLLECTIVELY				DO YOU THINK ONE SHOULD VOTE AS THE OTHER PEOPLE OF ONES CASTE/BIRADRI DO.			
	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
BALMIKIS	7 (17.9)	32 (82.05)	- (0)	39 (100)	19 (48.7)	19 (48.7)	1 (2.5)	39 (100)
CHAMARS	12 (38.7)	18 (58.06)	1 (3.22)	31 (100)	14 (45.16)	17 (54.8)	- (0)	31 (100)
TOTAL	19	50	1	70	33	36	1	70

**Table 4.2**  
**BLOC-VOTING**  
**BY**  
**CLASS**

ECONOMIC STATUS	DO YOU THINK PEOPLE OF YOUR CASTE VOTE COLLECTIVELY				DO YOU THINK ONE SHOULD VOTE AS THE OTHER PEOPLE OF ONE'S CASTE/COMMUNITY DO			
	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
LOW	9 (21.9)	31 (75.6)	1 (2.43)	41 (100)	21 (51.21)	20 (48.7)	- (0)	41 (100)
MIDDLE	7 (43.7)	9 (56.25)	- (0)	16 (100)	9 (56.25)	6 (37.5)	1 (6.25)	16 (100)
HIGH	3 (23.07)	10 (76.9)	- (0)	13 (100)	3 (23.07)	10 (76.9)	- (0)	13 (100)
TOTAL	19	50	1	70	33	36	1	70

### **4.3 Bloc-Voting by Residence**

Table 4.3 indicates the bloc-voting by the residence of the respondents. More than four-fifths of the slum-dwellers have indicated the absence of bloc-voting in their community. However, when they were asked about the desirability of the tendency to vote on community lines, half of them have responded in positive. Thus it might be inferred that though a very low percentage of the slum-dwellers agree with any trend towards bloc-voting among the people of their caste, an impressive percentage of them agree that voting should be *en-bloc*.

### **4.4 Bloc-Voting by Education**

The data in the table 4.4. suggests that those in the category of low in terms of their educational status, disagree about any trend of bloc-voting among the people of their caste or community. However more than two-thirds of them do agree that voting should be *en-bloc*.

Thus it might be said that those who are relatively less educated, consider the elections as a means for the collective action. In the absence of any other means or skills, electoral politics becomes a major tool among the less educated for a collective assertion.

**Table 4.3**  
**BLOC-VOTING**  
**BY**  
**RESIDENCE**

RESIDENCE	DO YOU THINK PEOPLE OF YOUR CASTE VOTE COLLECTIVELY				DO YOU THINK ONE SHOULD VOTE AS THE OTHER PEOPLE OF ONE'S CASTE/COMMUNITY DO			
	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
VILLAGE	11 (36.6)	18 (60)	1 (3.33)	30 (100)	13 (43.3)	17 (56.6)	- (0)	30 (100)
SLUM	8 (20)	32 (80)	- (0)	40 (100)	20 (50)	19 (47.5)	1 (2.5)	40 (100)
TOTAL	19	50	1	70	33	36	1	70

**Table 4.4**  
**BLOC-VOTING**  
**BY**  
**EDUCATION**

EDU. STATUS	DO YOU THINK PEOPLE OF YOUR CASTE VOTE COLLECTIVELY				DO YOU THINK ONE SHOULD VOTE AS THE OTHER PEOPLE OF ONE'S CASTE/COMMUNITY DO			
	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL	YES	NO	CANNOT SAY	TOTAL
LOW	9 (29.03)	24 (77.4)	1 (2.94)	34 (100)	21 (61.7)	12 (35.29)	1 (2.9)	34 (100)
MIDDLE	8 (28.5)	20 (64.5)	- (0)	28 (100)	10 (35.7)	18 (64.28)	- (0)	28 (100)
HIGH	2 (25)	6 (75)	- (0)	8 (100)	2 (25)	6 (75)	- (0)	8 (100)
TOTAL	19	50	1	70	33	36	1	70

## **INTRA-DALIT TENSION AND POLITICAL PREFERENCES**

The Dalits are not a homogeneous category. There operate intra-Dalit tensions and conflicts at the various levels of Dalit politics. These intra-Dalit tensions reflect the perception of relative deprivation of some Dalit sub-castes, which feel left behind or discriminated against socially as well as politically, by the upwardly mobile sub-castes among the Dalits. According to Pradeep Kumar, "Balmikis versus Jatavs (Kureels) and Passis (UP), Mahars versus Matangs (Maharashtra), Madigas versus Malas, Reddis and Adi Andhras (AP), Madigas versus Holloyars (North Karnataka), Adi Karnatakas versus Adi Dravidas (Mysorean Karnataka), Hindu Dalits versus Christian and Sikh Dalits (Punjab) – all these definitely undermine any such thing as the unity of the 'Dalit class'."<sup>7</sup>

In order to understand the intra-Dalit tensions, as reflected politically, we have examined this with respect to the BSP which is generally perceived to be a party of the Dalits. However, it should also be kept in mind that the BSP not only reflects the rising consciousness among the Dalits, that has of late become more visible in the north Indian politics, but it also mirrors the intra-Dalit conflict as the party is considered by most Dalits to be a party of the Chamars.

An attempt is made to understand the Dalit-Dalit conflict and tension in the present study by ascertaining the attitude of the respondents towards the BSP.

**Table - 5.1**

**Attitude towards the BSP**

**By**

**Sub-caste**

Sub-caste	Party works for all Dalits	Party works for Chamars only	Works for none	Cannot say	Total
Balmikis	10 (25)	10 (25)	1 (2.5)	18 (45)	40 (100)
Chamars	17 (56.6)	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)	12 (40)	30 (100)
Total	27	11	2	30	70

**5.1 Attitude towards the BSP by Sub-Caste**

Table 5.1 shows the analysis of the attitude towards the BSP by sub-caste of the respondents. As many as one-fourth of the Balmikis think that the BSP works for the upliftment of the Chamars only. Fifty-six percent of the Chamars have stated that the BSP works for the welfare of all the Dalits, irrespective of their sub-caste. Only one Chamar respondent out of the total 31 Chamars has stated that the BSP works for the Chamars only. Whereas only one-fourth among the Balmikis have stated that the BSP, works for all the Dalits, irrespective of their sub-caste.

Thus we may say that a section among the Balmiki respondents feels being discriminated against by the BSP. This is

substantiated further, if we see the voting pattern and the party association of both the sub - castes. The Chamars

**Table 5.2**  
**Attitude Towards the BSP**  
**By**  
**Residence**

Residence		Party works for all the Dalits	Party works for Chamars only	Works for none	Cannot say	Total
Village	M	14 (73.6)	1 (5.26)	- (0)	4 (21.05)	19 (100)
	F	2 (18.18)	- (0)	1 (9.09)	8 (72.7)	11 (100)
	Total	16 (53.3)	1 (3.33)	1 (3.33)	12 (40)	30 (100)
Slum	M	9 (34.6)	10 (38.46)	- (0)	7 (26.9)	26 (100)
	F	2 (14.28)	- (0)	1 (7.14)	11 (78.5)	14 (100)
	Total	11 (27.5)	10 (25)	1 (2.5)	18 (45)	40 (100)

have shown a considerable degree of preference for the BSP, both in their voting pattern as well as the party association. However, the Balmikis still prefer the Congress both in terms of their voting pattern and the party association. The Balmikis have also moved towards alternative political formations such as the BSP (Ambedkar), the JanShakti and the Janata Party.

## **5.2 Attitude towards the BSP by Residence**

Table 5.2 indicates the attitude of the respondents towards the BSP by the place of their residence. More than half of those from the village have stated that the BSP works for the welfare of all the Dalits, irrespective of their sub-caste. The overwhelming number of respondents from the village are the Chamars.

One-fourth of the slum-dwellers consider the BSP to be a party of the Chamars. All those who stated so are men. None of the women among the slum-dwellers considers the BSP to be a Chamar dominated party. The reason may be that due to the low level of awareness and lack of politicisation, the women may be unaware of the Dalit-Dalit tensions as reflected in the politics of the BSP.

## **AWARENESS, ASSERTION AND THE DALIT LEADERSHIP**

Political awareness and assertion by the various segments of the people in a democracy has an important bearing on its functioning. Awareness leads to assertion and this fact is true in the case of the Dalits also. During every phase of the Dalit movement, leaders from the community have played an important role. If during the early phase of the Dalit movement in the colonial era, these were Phule, Periyar and Narayan Guru, in the late-colonial and post-colonial periods Dr. B.R. Ambedkar represented the aspirations of the Dalits, particularly in getting reservations in education and jobs, thus

extracting their share from the newly liberated nation - state which had followed the welfare model.

**Table 6.1**

**Awareness of the respondents regarding the BSP Leadership**

Sr. No.	LEVEL OF AWARENESS	TOTAL
1	Know both the BSP leaders	50 (71)
2	Know about Mayawati only.	5 (18.5)
3	Know about Kanshi Ram only.	2 (7.14)
4	Not heard the names of both the BSP leaders.	13 (2.8)
	Total	70 (100)

The recent upsurge of the Dalits in the north Indian politics has led to the emergence of a new generation of Dalit leaders - Mayawati and Kanshi Ram. These leaders in contrast to the sophisticated and legal-constitutional narratives of Ambedkar, strive for political power as the only means of Dalit assertion. They express their aims and agenda through a narrative which is raw, and is in the vernacular, the *Bhasha* easily comprehensible to their audience, which mainly consists of the ruralities, the slum dwellers, the low classes and the uneducated Dalit masses.

In the present study, we probed the questions regarding the awareness among the Dalits of their own caste leadership. Table 6.1 shows the level of awareness of the respondents regarding the BSP leadership. Slightly less than three-fourths of the total respondents have stated that they have some familiarity with the names of both the BSP leaders. Five out of the total 70 respondents have said that they know about Mayawati only and have not heard even the name of Kanshi Ram. Only two out of the total respondents have stated that they know about Kanshi Ram and have no idea about Mayawati. Eighteen percent of the total respondents have stated to have no knowledge about both the leaders.

It is interesting to analyse the awareness of Dalit leadership by sub-caste. Among the Chamars, the awareness regarding both the BSP leaders is higher than among the Balmikis. Eighty-seven percent of Chamars know both the leaders, as compared to 58 percent of the Balmikis. This low awareness level among the Balmikis is regardless of the fact that 26 out of the total 39 Balmiki respondents are migrants from the state of Uttar Pradesh, generally considered to be the hub of the BSP in the north India.

The role of the sub-caste may not be denied here. Thirty percent of the Balmikis have not heard the names of both the BSP leaders, as compared to only two Chamar respondents who are unaware of both the leaders. Four among the Balmikis have said that they know of Mayawati only and have no information about who Kanshi Ram is.

However, only one Chamar respondent said so. Interestingly, two of the Chamar respondents know about Kanshi Ram only and do not know who Mayawati is, whereas none of the Balmikis said so.

Among all the respondents, the most hostile responses towards the BSP leaders have come from the male Balmiki respondents who are more vocal in their opposition to both the leaders. These respondents, during the course of the interviews termed these leaders as casteist, opportunist and corrupt, who work only for the Chamars and ignore other Dalit sub-castes. The responses of the women Balmiki Dalits however indicate that these leaders work for the upliftment of the poor. These responses might be because of the lack of awareness and low politicisation of the women Balmiki respondents, due to which they might be unaware of the intra-Dalit tensions at the political level.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has been a leader to reckon with, in the post colonial political discourse of the Dalits. Ambedkarism has been used by various Dalit movements, the social and the political, to make appeal to the Dalit masses for getting united against the upper-caste oppression. In the present study, an attempt is being made to ascertain the awareness level of the Dalits regarding the leadership of Ambedkar. Forty-eight (68.5%) out of the total seventy respondents stated to have known about Dr. Ambedkar. Surprisingly, fifteen (21.42%) out of the total number of the respondents have stated that they do not know him. It is interesting

to note that out of these 15 respondents, 13 are women and two are men. Out of the total 13 women, the majority i.e. ten women respondents are from the slum area. All the fifteen respondents belong to the low category in terms of their class and educational status, which might be the reason for their low awareness level. It is also interesting to note that 12 out of the total 15 respondents are the Balmikis, rest of the three are from Chamar community.

Out of the total seventy Dalits, seven (10%) have responded that though they have heard the name of Dr. Ambedkar, they know nothing more about him. If seen sub-caste wise, then three-fifths of the Balmikis have stated that they know about Ambedkar in contrast to the Chamars where this proportion is nearly three-fourth of the total respondents.

## **DALITS AND THE BELIEF IN ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY**

Voting is an important act through which the individuals in a political system, express their belief in the electoral democracy. The higher number of voters is a sign of a greater belief in the electoral democracy, whereas the larger number of non-voters is an indication of the apathy of the individuals towards their political system. A number of scholars like Yogendra Yadav (1999), Ashutosh Varshney (2000) and Pradeep Kumar (1999) have pointed towards the growing presence of the lower rungs of society in the electoral arena in the last some decades. Dalits are not an exception to this trend, as more and

more of them now consider elections as a tool of assertion, thus the growing inclination among them to cast their vote.

In the present study, out of the total seventy respondents 84.28 percent have reported as having cast their vote in the last parliamentary elections. Out of the total respondents only eleven (15.7%) are non-voters. The young, low class, and lowly educated among the Dalit respondents are found to be non-voters. Among the total eleven non-voters, three have stated to be not able to cast their vote, as they were not enrolled at the time of elections.

Among the rest of the non-voters, only one is from the age group of fifty five plus while the others are young. If seen economically, six out of the total non voters are from the category of low in terms of their class status. Four of the total non-voters are from the low category in terms of their educational level.

The above mentioned profile of the non-voters in the present study does not conform to the all India profile of the non-voters. All India profile of non-voters points towards the greater participation of the lower rungs of the society in the electoral politics of India. According to Yogendra Yadav, "The socially and economically privileged sections of the society have recorded decreasing levels of political participation. An urban, educated, upper caste citizen is far more likely to be non-participant and cynical about matters political than his counterpart among the rural, uneducated, lower caste".<sup>8</sup>

The low level of participation among the young, low class and less educated Dalits might be due to the low level of awareness. This is also pointed out by Pushpendra, "With the rise in education, awareness regarding their rights, the realisation of the strength of the adult franchise to create space for raising their voice, growing stake in the electoral outcome - all account for the increasing numbers of SCs exercising their franchise. Thus casting vote has become an issue of social status for the Dalits".<sup>9</sup>

### **MASS MEDIA, POLITICAL AWARENESS AND THE DALITS**

Explosion of mass media, in the decades of 1980s and 1990s has played an important role in increasing the political knowledge and awareness among the Indian masses. Television has emerged as an important source of this. Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh have pointed towards the role played by the T.V. as an agent of political information among the Dalits.<sup>10</sup> During the course of interviews, it was noticed that an impressive number of Dalit households owned the television sets.

Out of the total respondents in our study, 74.28 percent have told that they get information regarding politics from television. Among the village respondents 86.6 percent have reported watching the T.V. to know about politics, while in the slum two-thirds of the total respondents watch T.V. for getting political information. Among the village respondents 10 out of total 11 women in contrast to 16

out of total 26 men, and among the slum dwellers five out of total 14 women in contrast to 21 out of total 26 of men, reported of getting information regarding the political matters from television.

The sub-caste analysis of the respondents indicates that a higher percentage of Chamars watch T.V. for getting political information as compared to Balmikis. Among the Chamars 87 percent and among the Balmikis 66 percent have reported the television as a medium of political information. Though it may be inferred from the above data that television might be one of the factors responsible for high level of awareness among the Chamars, yet this should not be considered as a final conclusion as a detailed probing is needed to assess the role of mass media as a harbinger of the Dalit consciousness. Many a respondent in the present study have reported to learn about political matters from family members, neighbours and local *mohalla* leaders. These kind of responses came mainly from women and old aged respondents. Along with watching television, some of the respondents also reported reading some vernacular newspapers like *Dainik Bhaskar*, *Punjab Kesari*, *Punjabi Tribune* and *Jag Bani*.

### **CO-OPTION, CONFLICT AND CONSCIOUSNESS : POLITICAL PREFERENCES OF DALITS IN CHANDIGARH**

The study of political preferences and electoral dynamics of Dalits in Chandigarh reveals a complex phenomena where the

co-option and conflict both go side by side and multiple factors like sub-caste, area of residence, education, class and gender play an important role behind this.

The Congress still is an important party as the data relating to voting pattern and party association reveals. It is interesting phenomena, as Congress has seen a decline in last some decades, both at the national and the state levels. The space left by Congress at both these levels has been filled up by BJP and regional parties, but our data indicates otherwise. The BJP has got a very insignificant response in the political preferences of the Dalits in Chandigarh. The reason may be its image of upper-caste party among the Dalits.

During the course of interviews a significant number of Dalits told that they preferred Congress as it was a party to which their *Baap-dada* (forefathers) had been voting for last so many years. Many a respondent also cited the welfare policies of Congress as a reason, substantial enough to vote for it. As one of our respondents remarked:

*Mujhe Congress hi pasand hai, kyon ke is party ne hamare logon ko roti, kapra aur mukan dilaya.<sup>11</sup>*

[I like Congress because it provided food, clothing and houses to our people.]

The male-female voting pattern shows that more number of men have moved away from Congress due to their politicisation and awareness of the new parties like the BSP and BSP (A), women still

prefer Congress and they have a reason to think in such a manner, as is reflected from a statement by one of the female respondents:

*Mujhe Congress hi sabse jyada achchi lagti hai. Hamare ma-baap kaha karte the ki Congress hi achchi thi, achchi hai aur hamesha achchi rahegi.*<sup>12</sup>

[ Congress is the party which I like most. Our parents used to say that Congress is good, was good and will always remain good.]

Many other women respondents talked in the similar vein, saying that they felt close to the Congress as everybody says it is good. The preference for Congress by Dalits may be termed as co-option. It seems that due to their perception of Congress as a party traditionally taking care of the Dalit's interests, and the low level of politicisation and awareness among them, has played a major role in keeping the Dalits under Congress patronage. Despite the Congress being an important party for the sample population of Dalits of Chandigarh, there can be seen a trend in the shift of political preferences of Dalits from the Congress towards the parties of their own caste. The BSP represents this shift at the village level, where the sample population mainly consists of the Chamars. At the colony level BSP (A) represents this shift as a party of the Balmikis. The feeling of closeness towards their own caste parties was found to be very strong among both the village and colony Dalits.

The aspirations and closeness towards the BSP (A) may be gauged from the following statement by a Balmiki respondent living in the colony:

*BSP (Ambedkar) hamari apni party hai. Jaise hum apna dukh-dard apne parivar-waalon ko bata sakte hain, bilkul vaise hi hum apni baat is party ko keh sakte hain.*<sup>13</sup>

[BSP (Ambedkar) is our own party. As we can share our grieves and sorrows with our family members, in the same manner we can tell our problems to this party.]

BSP has been successful in making a considerable base among the village Dalits, who are predominately Chamars. Bhupinder Singh, a member of the party and also the president of the Youth Club in the village told the researcher that among all the villages in Chandigarh, BSP gets maximum votes from their village. He also told that Kanshi Ram had visited the village quite a few times during the elections.<sup>14</sup>

The researcher noticed a very enthusiastic response towards the BSP among the village respondents. One of the respondents expressed it in the following way:

*Saanu hor koi party izzat nahin dindi, BSP ton illawa. Asin taan Gurdwara vi is kam lai vartde haan.*<sup>15</sup> (text in Punjabi)

[Except BSP, none of the other parties treat us with respect. We even use the Gurdwara for its purposes.]

He further told the researcher that there are frequent informal discussions on politics in the village Gurdwara premises. It would be

pertinent to mention here that there is a separate Gurdwara of Dalits in the sample village. Thus, this shows the rising levels of consciousness among the Dalits which is being reflected in a gradual change in their political preferences.

The caste consciousness has seen a rise as the study shows but along with that there seems the emergence of intra-Dalits conflicts and tensions, some times these being reflected on the surface very sharply and sometimes operating at a subtle level. This intra-Dalit tension is reflected in our study through the respondent's attitude towards the working of BSP. One of the statement by a Balmiki respondent may be a pointer in the case:

*BSP ne hamare liye abhi tak kuchh nahin kiya. Yeh party to sirf navin sharma logon, mera matlab hai, sirf chameron ki hi party hai, aur woh bhi sabhi halkon mein nahin, sirf kuchh mein hi.*<sup>16</sup>

[BSP has as yet not done anything for us. Thus is a party of the neo-Sharmas, I mean the Chamars only, and that also not in all constituencies, but only in some of these.]

There is both sarcasm and hostility at the same time in the above remark. The Balmikis do consider the Chamars as neo-Sharmas who have cornered all the benefits leaving the other Dalit sub-castes behind. Majority of respondents who remarked in the similar vein were found to be migrants from Uttar Pradesh.

The Dalit-Dalit tension some times operates at a very subtle level as it was noticed during the course of interviews. The statement regarding role of Ambedkar for upliftment of the Dalits aptly reflects it:

*Sirf Ambedkar ki wajha se hi hum log kam karte hain aur izzat ki zindagi jeete hain. Ambedkar ne humen azad karvaya. Chahe kuchh log kehte hain ki Ambedkar harijan the, par asal mein vah Balmiki hi the.*<sup>17</sup>

[It is only due to Ambedkar that we people work and lead a respectable life. Ambedkar liberated us. Though some people say that Ambedkar was a Harijan, but in reality, he was a Balmiki.]

This eagerness shown by certain sections of Dalits, in opposition to the others, for proclaiming affinity towards a figure like Ambedkar on the basis of sub-caste shows the working of intra-Dalit tensions in very subtle manner.

It may be pertinent here to point out the complexity involved in these intra-Dalit tensions, which cautions us against reaching clear cut conclusions in terms of pro/anti or for/against kind of language. The Dalit identity as it is reflected in the political dynamics, is a combination of both the fusion and fission at various levels. Our data points overwhelmingly towards these complexities.

Many of the Balmiki respondents in the study clearly termed the BSP as a Chamar party and the percentage of BSP among the Balmikis as the nearest or closest party to them came out to be negligent, as shown by the data. But interestingly enough none of the

Balmiki respondents in our study termed the BSP as the most non-favoured or “distant” party. The percentage with regard to the negative attitude towards BSP came out to be zero, both among the Balmikis and the Chamars. The highest percentage with regard to the most disfavoured party, both among the Balmikis and Chamars has gone to BJP, which is generally considered to be an upper-caste party. This shows the presence of a larger identity among the Dalits, irrespective of the intra-Dalit tensions. All the Dalits feel united in their opposition towards the higher caste parties, though they may have internal feuds and conflicts with one another. This trend is a very important pointer that though on the surface we may see the hostility and conflict among the Dalits, but at a very subtle level a larger Dalit identity operates which mirrors the cohesion and fusion of the Dalits, when faced with the “other”, the upper castes. A statement may be quoted with regard to the attitude of a Balmiki respondent towards the BSP leaders-Mayawati and Kanshi Ram :

*Yeh leader pehle hum se jure the, inhon ne hamara kisi bhi tarha shoshan nahin kiya, jo kuchh bhi kiya apne liye ya phir apni biradari ke logon ke liye hi kiya. Hamari party waalon ka (here he means BSP (A)) inse seat ke batware ko le kar matbhed tha, Is liye hum logon ne BSP se naata tor liya.<sup>18</sup>*

[These leaders were earlier connected to us, these have in no way exploited us, whatever they did was for themselves or for people of their community. The people of our party (here he means BSP (A)) had differences with them regarding the allocation of seats, so we people parted ways with BSP]

The above statement reflects that even as the Balmikis have a grudge against the BSP and strive for an identity independent of it, they do not consider it as their exploiter in a major way. Thus we should try to understand the complexities of intra-Dalit political behaviour and tensions involved in it.

Our interaction with the respondents revealed the role of gender as a decisive factor for the political preferences of the Dalits. The patriarchal structures have inhibited the emergence of political preferences independently and sharply among the women respondents, in contrast to the men. While the male respondents were more confident and upcoming, in spelling out their political choices and gave reasons for the same, the women respondents were some what hesitant to clearly point out their political preferences and when they did it, they lacked substantial reasons for their negative or positive attitude towards a particular political preference. Since the choices for or against a particular political entity are directly linked to the awareness level of the individuals, our study shows a very low level of political awareness among the women as compared to the men.

As compared to 82.2 percent among total male respondents, only 60 percent among the women respondents reported watching television for getting information regarding politics. This indicates that due to low level of awareness, the women respondents made political

choices on the basis of what “others” told them and in most of the cases these others were husbands or other male elders of the family.

As one of the women respondents from the slum revealed:

*Vote dene se pehle hum apne gharwale se baat karte hain, jaisa woh kehte hain vaise hi vote dalte hain.*<sup>19</sup>

[Before voting I do talk to my husband about it and I vote as he says.]

Similar type of responses emerged from the Dalit women living in the sample village. One of the women respondents from the village said that she would vote for that candidate to whom her father-in-law asked to vote for.<sup>20</sup>

Despite having these similarities it is important to note here that the women living in the village were more politically educated as compared to women living in the slum, some of these were forthcoming in spelling out their preferences for one party or the another in a very confident manner. As a young women respondent from village said, that she felt close to CPI(M) as this party did not discriminate on the basis of caste. She expressed here disliking for the BJP as she considered it to be a party of the upper castes, rich people who visit the poor people only to get their votes.<sup>21</sup> Similarly we came across a few women respondents who showed their apathy towards the electoral politics as they feel that none of the political parties or

leaders have done anything for them. A village women expressed it by saying :

*Mainu Kio vi party changee nahin lagdi, Eh party wale leader taan sirf vote mangan hi ande ne, us pichon koi nahin vikhai dinda.*<sup>22</sup> (text in Punjabi)

[I donot like any party, these party leaders come here only to get votes, afterwards they donot show their faces].

Thus the varied responses from the women respondents indicate that political identity is not that sharply formulated among them as in the case of their male counterparts. Here we may sense the patriarchal structures operating as a hindrance in the formation and cementing of the “political” among the women citizens in a democracy. Lack of identity formation among the women Dalits at the political level, puts a question mark on the democratic content of the Dalit movement itself. Example of Chamars and Balmikis may be a pointer in the case where the sub-caste identities reflected sharply during the course of interviews, but only among the male Dalits. Why the exclusion of the female Dalits as their targets of politicisation by the Dalit parties like BSP and BSP (A)? This shows that the “Dalit” represented by these parties is not only cut across along the sub-caste line, but exclusions are along gender lines also.

To conclude we may argue that despite various tensions, cross-cutting along the lines of sub-caste, education, class and gender in the political dynamics of the Dalits in Chandigarh, we still find a

gradual assertion by them through political means as reflected in their slow and steady shift from the other-caste parties towards the parties of their own caste. The Dalit assertion at political level has its own nuances and complexities, sometimes it is very sharp, but at another level this assertion is very subtle; which may have an important bearing on the way the identities and politics mould each other in the times to come.

## ***Endnotes***

1. Pushpendra, "Dalit Assertion through Electoral Politics," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 36, Sept. 4, p. 2616.
2. Sudha Pai and Jagpal Singh, "Politicisation of Dalits and Most Backward Castes," *Economic and Political weekly*, Vol. XXXII, No.23, June 7, 1997, p.1360.
3. Anthony Heath and Yogendra Yadav, "United Colours of Congress : Social Profile of Congress Voters, 1996 and 1998", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos 34 & 35, Aug. 21-28, 1999 p. 2522.
4. Pushpendra, n.1, p. 2614.
5. Ibid., p. 2615.
6. Pushpendra, n.1, p.2616.
7. Pradeep Kumar, "Bahujan Samaj Party : Breaking Ground in Uttar Pradesh", *Mainstream*, May 1, 1999, p.21.
8. Yogendra Yadav, " Electoral Politics in the Time of Change : India's Third Electoral system, 1989-99", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 34 & 35, Aug. 21-28, 1999, p. 2397.
9. Pushpendra, n. 1, p. 2616.
10. Pai and Singh, n. 2, p. 1359.
11. Gopal, 25 yrs., Balmiki, Uneducated, Working as a daily wager.
12. Kusum Rani, 24 yrs., Balmiki, Uneducated, Working as a house-maid.

13. Ishwar, 21 yrs., Balmiki, Matric, Working as watchman in Punjab Forest Deptt. (Chandigarh).
14. Bhupinder Singh, 27 yrs., Ramdasia Sikh, Working as a steno in Agriculture Deptt. (Punjab).
15. Babu Singh, 75 yrs., Ramdasia Sikh, Uneducated, Shoe-maker.
16. Radhe Shyam, 27 yrs., Middle pass, Balmiki, Rickshaw puller.
17. Shiv Kumar, 19 yrs., Middle pass, working as a daily wager in construction work.
18. Rakam Pal, 35 yrs., Balmiki, Member of BSP (A) , Middle pass, Working as sewerman on *ad hoc* basis with Deptt. of Water Supplies, (Chandigarh).
19. Santosh, 28 yrs., Balmiki, Uneducated, House-wife.
20. Gurdev Kaur, 35 yrs., Chamar, Uneducated, House-wife.
21. Jas Gurtar Kaur, 20 yrs., Chamar, studying in B.A. - I.
22. Surinder Kaur, 37 yrs., Primary pass, Chamar, House-wife.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **SOCIETY, CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE MAKING OF A DALIT IDENTITY**

#### **Introduction**

In order to understand the contemporary dialogue on Dalit politics, one needs to emphasise and recognise the expanding boundaries of Dalit consciousness and the way this consciousness has influenced the dynamics of Dalit politics. The recent Dalit upsurge in north Indian politics points towards the phenomenon where the Dalits have moved from being the subjects to being the agents, thus transforming their existential reality by acting consciously for establishing an egalitarian place for themselves in the Indian society.

In the previous chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the process of identity formation in the political realm and how the domains of political identities are being articulated, which consequently have created a ground for the Dalit assertion in politics. In the present chapter our focus would be mainly on understanding the process of identity formation among the Dalits at the social level in the city of Chandigarh.

There are mainly two traditions of research on caste related institution in Indian, one, the indological tradition based mostly on sacred texts, written by the Brahmins, which provides an ideological justification for the hierarchical nature of the caste system, based on

a close correspondence between status and varna, and the other is the secular modernist tradition which considers caste as synonymous with underdevelopment, hierarchy and prejudice, thus advocating its reform. Caste has remained somewhat embarrassing to the modernist elite in pre and post colonial India, which they need to shrug off in order to appear as rationalists. Aditya Nigam points towards it:

The unspeakability of caste... was not simply a matter of the casteism of the upper castes, it was also a result of the modernist discomfort with non-secular and 'retrograde' categories that really provided the overarching rationale within which the discourse of upper castes took shape.<sup>1</sup>

A new genre of writings by scholars like Inden (1990) and Scott (1985) lay stress on understanding caste in terms of categories drawn from the life-world of the individual, placed in the local arena.<sup>2</sup> Historically, and in the present times also, caste has provided a plural framework to the civil society, where by its socio-political structure has been invoked by the oppressed, to challenge the domination and inequalities of various types. The socio-political assertion of Dalit identity, questions the notions of the secular-modern universalism in form of the idea of abstract citizenship, which masks the hierarchies rooted in a particular culture. Aditya Nigam considers the coming to the fore of issues of caste oppression in north India as a critique of modernity, whereby the overarching Indian

identity has been ruptured by the innumerable smaller, “fragmented” identities.<sup>3</sup> Pointing towards the plural character of caste, Hans Blomkvist argues that, “In the contemporary Indian politics too, the state has to take caste into consideration....it is beyond doubt that the institution of caste operates as a counterweight to the (democratic) state”.<sup>4</sup>

Dalit assertion in the political realm may be of recent origin in north India, but the ideologies of resistance against the hegemonic and dominant Brahminic order are present in the history and culture of different north Indian states. The languages of resistance got articulated in the writings of Bhakti poets such as Kabir and Ravidas. Similarly, various reform movements, such as the Ad-Dharm in Punjab and the Adi-Hindu in parts of UP, Bihar and some other north Indian states, raised voice against the oppression by the upper castes. The role of these socio-cultural movements becomes even more important as the historicity of Dalits is being used by the parties like BSP to mobilize the Dalit masses. The raising up of the issue of the “original” founder of Lucknow, where Lakhan Passi, a Dalit belonging to some earlier centuries was credited with the work of founding the city of Lucknow by the BSP leadership, is a case in point.<sup>5</sup> Thus the political upsurge of Dalits in north Indian politics is related, in one way or the other, to a broader process of identity formation.

In order to understand the Dalit politics in Chandigarh, the process of identity formation in the social sphere is needed to be

taken into account. The city became a Union Territory as a result of the reorganisation of Punjab in 1966, and we find marked similarities between the village life in the Union Territory and the Punjab. Out of total seventy respondents in our sample twenty-six (37%) belong to the Sikh religion. Similarly, a majority of the slum dwellers are the Hindus (48%). Among the slum dwellers 37 percent of the total respondents have migrated from the state of Uttar Pradesh. All these factors might have a strong bearing on the process of identity formation among the sample population. So it would be relevant to point out briefly the specific historical trajectory of the process of Dalit identity formation in Punjab.

Punjab has been witness to some religious reform movements against untouchability. The Arya Samaj movement during the late nineteenth century, sought to include the lower castes into the Hindu society through the process of religious (reclamation) purification, the *Shuddhi*. It was presumed that untouchability emanated from ritual impurity. Therefore a ritual for removing impurity could render the untouchables touchables.<sup>6</sup> However a study conducted by Pimpley and Sharma (1985) found that the *Shuddhi* movement did not make any significant difference in the condition of the Dalits.<sup>7</sup> Another significant mobilisation of the Dalits in 1920s, was in the form of Ad-Dharm movement led by Mangoo Ram, a Dalit himself. The agenda was to create a new religion for the lower caste, for the Adi-people and to make them immune from the overarching influence of Hindus,

Sikhs, Muslims and the growing columns of Christianity.<sup>8</sup> The Sikh holy book also contains writings of some of the saints who came from the Shudra castes (such as Kabir, a weaver; Dhanna, a Jat peasant; and Namdev, a tailor ) and untouchable castes (such as Ravidas, a cobbler; Sadhan; a butcher; and Sain, a barber).<sup>9</sup> So we find Dalit assertion through the religious and cultural symbols in Punjabi society.

Construction of an identity based on the caste oppression may manifest itself through various forms. These may range from the terms used by Dalits for self-identification, participation in the religious – cultural activities of the community, preference for residence in terms of caste, perception of discrimination by the upper castes, to their choice regarding hypergamy. All the above mentioned indicators are taken into consideration in order to understand the identity questions in Chandigarh. The responses are analysed by relating these to sub-caste, class, residence and the educational status of the respondents. The percentages are given in the parentheses in each table.

### **PREFERENCE REGARDING SELF-IDENTIFICATION**

Historically, various nomenclatures ranging from the Atishudra, Avarna and Chandala to the Depressed class, the Untouchable, the Scheduled Caste, the Harijan and the Dalit have been used to describe the ones discriminated and oppressed due to their low status in the

caste system. All the above mentioned nomenclatures reflect the challenges and contradictions faced by the Dalits at a specific point of time. Pointing towards the politics inherent in these nomenclatures, Gopal Guru argues that :

These categories and their labeling (naming) change meaning, connotation and significance over time and over space, depending on the politics of the users who create these categories. In other words, in the domain of politics, these categories do not acquire an arbitrary character. They are not aimless or passive representations of the world out there, but are conscious constructions encoding either a positive or negative agenda.<sup>10</sup>

Thus the category which a Dalit uses for self-identification reflects her level of consciousness, awareness and assertion.

### **1.1 Self- Identification by Sub-Caste**

Table 1.1 shows that more than two-thirds of the respondents from Balmiki community do find meaning in their chosen name of Balmiki, referring to the author of the epic, *The Ramayana*. A slightly more than one-fourth of the total Balmikis have preferred the state-constituted nomenclature of Scheduled Caste for self-identification. Among the Chamar respondents, a slightly less than 30 percent have chosen to be identified with their sub-caste i.e. the Ramdasia and the Ravidasia. Near about one-third of the Chamar respondents have shown a preference for the category of Scheduled Caste for self-

identification. A slightly more than one-fifth from the same sub-caste have preferred the term Harijan for self-identification. However, none of the respondents from the Balmiki community has shown preference for this nomenclature. Thus we find that the response from among the Chamars shows a number of variations with regards to self identification. The Balmikis have mainly stuck to their sub-caste name and the state constructed nomenclatures.

**Table 1.1**  
**Self-identification**  
**By**  
**Sub-caste**

Sub-caste	Self-identification				
	Sub-caste	Scheduled caste	Harijan	Others	Total
Balmikis	28 (71.7)	11 (28.20)	- (0)	- (0)	39 (100)
Chamars	9 (29.03)	10 (32.25)	7 (22.5)	5* (16.12)	31 (100)
Total	37	21	7	5	70

\* Among others 2 preferred Dalit, 1 Indian and 1 preferred Chamar as the category for self-identification.

### 1.2 Self-Identification by Class

As is clear from table 1.2, the Dalits from the lower class have preferred their sub-caste name for self-identification. However, those

in the category of high, have shown a preference for the term Scheduled Caste. The reason might be its association with “modernity” or the anglicised nature of the term itself. Similarly, two respondents from the middle and the high class of Dalits, have stated the terms “Indian” as preferred category for self-identification.

**Table 1.2**

**Self-identification**

**By**

**Class**

Class	Self-identification				
	Sub-caste <sup>\$</sup>	Scheduled caste	Harijan	Others	Total
Low	28 (68.29)	7 (17.07)	4 (9.7)	2* (4.8)	41 (100)
Middle	7 (43.75)	7 (43.75)	1 (6.25)	1** (6.25)	16 (100)
High	2 (15.3)	7 (53.8)	2 (15.38)	2*** (15.38)	13 (100)
Total	37	21	7	5	70

<sup>\$</sup> Subcastes include the Balmikis, Ramdasias/ Ravidasias

\* One respondent from the low category has preferred the term Dalit whereas the another one has stated the word Chamar for self identification.

\*\* One respondent from the category of middle has stated the term Indian as an expression for identification.

\*\*\* One respondent has stated the term Indian while the another one has shown a preference for the word Dalit.

The use of the categories such as Scheduled Caste and Indian, by the relatively well-off points toward a self-perception which wants

to purge off the traditional identity like caste from their memory. Aditya Nigam has pointed towards this by stating, “This modern self, is not simply a traditional casteist in disguise. It is modern and in its self-perception, thoroughly purged of its traditional, caste – socialisation. Often, it sincerely believes that the best way to be modern is to erase all thought of caste and religion from its mind.”<sup>11</sup>

**Table 1.3**  
**Self-identification**  
**By**  
**Residence**

Residence	Self-identification				
	Sub-caste	Scheduled caste	Harijan	Others	Total
Village	9 (30)	10 (33.3)	6 (20)	5* (16.6)	30 (100)
Slum	28 (70)	11 (27.5)	1 (2.5)	- (0)	40 (100)
Total	37	21	7	5	70

\* Out of the total five respondents, two have indicated Dalit, one has indicated Chamar, and the rest of the two have preferred the term Indian for self-identification.

### **1.3 Self – Identification by Residence**

Table 1.3 Clearly shows that the slum-dwellers have shown greater preference for their sub-caste as a mode of self-identification as compared to those living in the village. One-fifth of the respondents

from the village have preferred the category Harijan, whereas only one respondent from the slum stated so. One-third of the respondents from the village have preferred to use the term Scheduled Caste for self-identification, compared to only one-fourth of the slum-dwellers. Thus the slum - dwellers do find meaning in the term Balmiki, which refers to the author of *The Ramayana*. However, the respondents from the village have shown a preference of the state constituted categories like Scheduled Caste.

**TABLE 1.4**

**Self-identification  
By  
Education**

Edu. Status	Self-identification				
	Sub-caste	Scheduled caste	Harijan	Others	Total
Low	24 (70.5)	6 (17.6)	3 (8.8)	1* (2.9)	34 (100)
Middle	11 (39.28)	13 (46.42)	3 (10.7)	1** (3.57)	28 (100)
High	2 (25)	2 (25)	1 (12.5)	3*** (37.5)	8 (100)
Total	37	21	7	5	70

\* One respondent has stated Chamar as the term for self-identification.

\*\* One has stated the term Indian for Identifying of one-self.

\*\*\* Out of the total three, one has stated Indian while the rest of the two respondents have preferred the term Dalit for self-identification.

#### **1.4 Self-Identification by Education**

As table 1.4 indicates, 70 percent of respondents from the low educational status have preferred to be identified by their sub-caste. More than two-fifths of the respondents from the category of middle have desired the category of Scheduled Caste as a preferred term for self-identification. This may be in tune with the general preference among the upwardly mobile middle class, for the categories that appear to be secular and modern in nature.

#### **OPINION REGARDING DISCRIMINATION BY THE UPPER-CASTES**

Discrimination by the upper castes in various forms has been a major cause of its resistance by the Dalit masses through different socio-cultural movements. As is widely known, there are different sets of caste groups in different regions of India. Thus, the preoccupation with purity and pollution is not equally marked in every part of the country.<sup>12</sup> Pollution by actual touch has not been a prominent reason for discrimination against the Dalits in north India, as has been the case in the South. Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany point this out by stating:

It was clear that in the north, distance pollution did not exist..... There was no public prescriptions as to the distance that any Untouchable had to preserve between himself..... and a Brahmin or any other Hindu. Nor did

pollution by actual touch provoke the same consternation and obligatory purification as it did in the South.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the discrimination in the north India has been somewhat subtle and complicated in its nature. The idea of purity and impurity were rather weak in Punjab. This was also observed in a colonial government report in the 1920s:

It would be misleading to attach too great importance to the existence of caste in the Punjab.... Not only is it the case that the Brahman has no practical pre-eminence among Hindus, but as between 'caste' and 'non-caste' Hindus the distinction is not so strongly marked as to create the political problem found elsewhere in India.<sup>14</sup>

In the present study an attempt is made to know the opinion of the respondents regarding the discrimination by other castes. Along with this, the views of respondents regarding the hurdles created by other castes in the path of Dalit upliftment, are also analysed.

## **2.1 Opinion regarding Discrimination by the Sub-Caste**

Table 2.1 indicates that two-thirds of the Balmikis think that they are being discriminated against by the upper-castes. More than half of the Chamars feel discriminated against by the upper-castes. It is pertinent to mention here that most of the Balmikis have mentioned the Brahmins, the Banias and the Rajputs as the castes which discriminate against them.

**Table 2.1**  
**Opinion regarding Discrimination**  
**By**  
**Sub-caste**

Sub-Caste	Discrimination by Other Castes			Other Castes creating hurdles In Dalit Upliftment		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Balmikis	26 (66.6)	13 (33.3)	39 (100)	29 (74.35)	10 (25.6)	39 (100)
Chamars	17 (54.8)	14 (45.16)	31 (100)	21 (67.7)	10 (32.25)	31 (100)
Total	43	27	70	50	20	70

However, an overwhelming number of Chamars consider the Jats and the Khattris as the main discriminating upper-castes. The reason may be the social and economic superior status enjoyed by the Jats and the Khattris as compared to the castes such as the Brahmins, the Rajputs and the Baniyas in Punjab.

## **2.2 Opinion regarding Discrimination by the Class**

As seen in table 2.2, more than three-fifths of the respondents from the low class, and almost the same number from the high class have reported the practice of discrimination against them.

**Table 2.2**  
**Opinion regarding Discrimination**  
**By**  
**Class**

Class	Discrimination by Other Castes			Other Castes creating hurdles In Dalit Upliftment		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Low	26 (63.41)	15 (36.5)	41 (100)	29 (70.7)	12 (29.26)	41 (100)
Middle	8 (50)	8 (50)	16 (100)	9 (56.25)	7 (43.7)	16 (100)
High	9 (69.23)	4 (30.7)	13 (100)	12 (92.30)	1 (7.6)	13 (100)
Total	43	27	70	50	20	70

Similarly, an overwhelming percentage from both the categories do consider the upper-castes as a hurdle in the Dalit upliftment. However, almost half of the respondents from the category of middle, in terms of their class status, think so. Thus we notice an overwhelming response regarding the practice of discrimination from among the low and high categories. The reason for it might be different in both the categories. It might be the case that the Dalits from the relatively poor sections, actually face discrimination at the hands of upper castes due to their low status both in terms of caste and class. In the case of the relatively well-off Dalits, the greater level of awareness might have led to a more sensitive perception of being discriminated against, where as in reality the actual level of

discrimination faced by them might be very low as compared to the relatively poor sections of the Dalits.

**Table 2.3**  
**Opinion regarding Discrimination**  
**By**  
**Residence**

Residence	Discrimination by Other Castes			Other Castes creating hurdles In Dalit upliftment		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Village	17 (56.6)	13 (43.33)	30 (100)	22 (73.33)	8 (26.6)	30 (100)
Slum	26 (65)	14 (35)	40 (100)	28 (70)	12 (30)	40 (100)
Total	43	27	70	50	20	70

### 2.3 Opinion regarding Discrimination by Residence

As seen in table 2.3, more than 70 percent of the respondents from the village as well as from the slum feel that the upper castes do create hurdles in the upliftment of the Dalits. However, a lesser percentage of the respondents, from the slum as well as from the village have a perception of being discriminated against by the upper castes. The reason might be that the upper castes now a days resort to covert forms of discrimination by creating hurdles in the Dalit upliftment, rather than openly discriminating against them.

**Table 2.4**  
**Opinion regarding Discrimination**  
**By**  
**Education**

Edu. Status	Discrimination by Other Castes			Other Castes creating hurdles In Dalit upliftment		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Low	19 (55.8)	15 (44.11)	34 (100)	19 (55.8)	15 (44.11)	34 (100)
Middle	19 (67.8)	9 (32.14)	28 (100)	24 (85.7)	4 (14.28)	28 (100)
High	5 (62.5)	3 (37.5)	8 (100)	7 (87.5)	1 (12.5)	8 (100)
Total	43 (61.42)	27 (38.5)	70 (100)	50 (71.42)	20 (28.5)	70 (100)

#### **2.4 Opinion regarding Discrimination by Education**

Table 2.4 shows that more respondents from the category of middle and high, in terms of their educational status, have reported to be discriminated against by the upper castes as compared to the ones in the category of low. The reason might be that due to greater access to facilities like education, the awareness level of the relatively well educated Dalits has also increased. This might be the reason for their

being more forthcoming in reporting their discrimination at the hands of the upper-castes.

## **PARTICIPATION IN THE COMMUNITY FESTIVALS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES**

In the recent Dalit upsurge in north Indian politics, there has emerged a trend of invoking the religious and cultural myths from the historical past of the Dalits which has been a part of the mobilisational strategy of Dalit masses by the parties like BSP. Thus the alternative religious and community practices have assumed an important role in the process of identity formation and assertion among the Dalits. Kancha Ilaiah has written at length about the gods and goddesses, which according to him are “non-Hindus” , by stressing the role of “alternative” practices and culture for forging a Dalit identity.<sup>15</sup>

In north India, and especially in states like Uttar Pradesh, there has emerged a trend to mobilise the Dalit masses by organising the *melas* on such religious occasions as Ravidas and Balmiki *Jayantis* (birthdays). In Chandigarh, a Balmiki *mela* is organised every year on the eve of Balmiki *Jayanti*, which is largely attended by the Dalit masses. Most of the respondents residing in the slum have reported having attended the *mela* almost regularly. The Dalits from the village hold a big ceremony in their own Gurdwara every year on the eve of Ravidas *Jayanti*. One of the respondents from the village

reported that as none except the BSP treats them with respect, they use even the village Gurdwara for the party's purposes.<sup>16</sup> In the present study, an attempt is made to know the opinion of the respondents regarding their participation in the religious and cultural activities of their community.

**Table 3.1**  
**Participation in the Community Festivals and Other Religious Activities**  
**By**  
**Sub-Caste**

Sub-caste	Response Regarding Participation		
	Yes	No	Total
Balmikis	32 (82.05)	7 (17.9)	39 (100)
Chamars	26 (83.8)	5 (16.12)	31 (100)
Total	58	12	70

### **3.1 Participation in the Community Festivals and other Religious Activities by Sub-Caste**

As seen in table 3.1 more than four-fifths of the Balmikis as well as the Chamars participate in the religious and other cultural activities of their community. Thus we notice a high participation among both the sub-castes.

**Table 3.2**

**Participation in the Community Festivals and other Religious Activities  
By  
Class**

Class	Response Regarding Participation		
	Yes	No	Total
Low	34 (82.9)	7 (17.07)	41 (100)
Middle	12 (75)	4 (25)	16 (100)
High	12 (92.30)	1 (7.6)	13 (100)
Total	58	12	70

**3.2 Participation in the Community Festivals and Other Religious Activities by Class**

Table 3.2 shows that the Dalits from the relatively high class status have shown a greater participation in the socio-cultural activities of their community, as compared to the ones from the low and the middle class categories. The reason might be that due to their being relatively well-off, they might have got enough time and resources to participate in such activities. Secondly, due to their being resourceful, they might have greater awareness and consciousness which has in turn enabled them to use such occasions for forging caste based identity.

**Table 3.3**  
**Participation in the Community Festivals and Other Religious**  
**Activities**  
**by**  
**Residence**

Residence	Response Regarding Participation		
	Yes	No	Total
Village	25 (83.33)	5 (16.66)	30 (100)
Slum	33 (82.5)	7 (17.5)	40 (100)
Total	58	12	70

### **3.3 Participation in the Community Festivals and Other Religious Activities by Residence**

Table 3.3 shows the participation of the respondents by place of their residence. Both, the slum-dwellers as well as the villagers have shown a high degree of participation in the religious and cultural activities of their community. More than four-fifths of the total respondents from the slum as well as the village have responded in affirmative regarding their participation.

It would be pertinent here to highlight, what Eleanor Zelliot has stated regarding the role of the religio-cultural myths and symbols in the process of identity formation, "There are a number of

interesting uses of the past among untouchable groups which do result in pride and often a sense of identity, but not in any change".<sup>17</sup> A somewhat similar phenomenon has been noticed in our study also. The Dalits residing in the village, who are mainly from the Chamar community have invoked their religious-cultural past for identity formation as well for challenging the domination of the upper castes. The formation of Ravidasia Committee, named after the 16<sup>th</sup> century Chamar saint-poet, is a pointer towards it. The aims of the committee are not purely religious in nature, but also include to get free the village common land from the control of the Jat Sikhs.<sup>18</sup> This kind of assertion is somewhat missing among the slum-dwellers, who though invoke their glorious past through the image of Lord Balmiki, have not been able to translate this into concrete action against the upper caste domination. Eleanor Zelliot also points towards this phenomena among the Balmikis by stating that, "(t) he Bhangis who find meaning in their chosen name of Balmiki, referring to the author of the epic, *the Ramayana*. There seems to be no perceptible effort among Balmikis to change their role in society as sweepers and removers of human waste, although individual Balmikis have certainly changed their status in society."<sup>19</sup>

Thus we may say that the slum-dwellers in our sample, mainly from the Balmiki community, derive a sense of pride from their historic myths and symbols, but have not been able to translate this into some kind of an institutional effort to challenge the

dominant caste structures. Reason might be the lack of educational as well as material resources on their part.

**Table 3.4**  
**Participation in the Community Festivals and Other Religious**  
**Activities**  
**By**  
**Education**

Class	Response Regarding Participation		
	Yes	No	Total
Low	27 (79.41)	7 (20.5)	34 (100)
Middle	24 (85.7)	4 (14.28)	28 (100)
High	7 (87.5)	1 (12.5)	8 (100)
Total	58	12	70

### **3.4 Participation in the Community Festivals and Other Religious Activities by Education**

Table 3.4 shows the participation of the respondents by their education. More than three-fourths of the respondents from all the three categories in terms of their educational status have reported in affirmative regarding their participation in the community festivals and other religious activities.

However, the participation level among the Dalits from the high category is greater as compared to those in the low and middle categories. The reason for this might be that their greater exposure and consequently greater awareness might have led them to use the

socio-cultural and religious activities as the instruments of identity formation.

## **PREFERENCE FOR RESIDENCE**

Living space of a particular community, reflects its life-world in form of culture, tradition and value-structure. It also indicates the shared world of sufferings and happiness, and in the process itself, there emerges a sense of collective consciousness among the groups or the communities. This sense of solidarity might lead to a common urge for fighting the dominant structures of power and hierarchy and same might be true for the Dalits also. Kancha Ilaiah points towards this by stating:

The dalit wadas and the cultural life that, dalits live has powerful potential to become universal... dalit music, songs and dance...can produce many Gaddars, many Illayarajas\*, it can produce many intellectuals whose knowledge is much more explosive.<sup>20</sup>

Traditionally, the location of Dalit households is usually on the outer side of the village, thus reflecting the segregation and discrimination on the basis of caste. However, there has been

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\* Gaddar is a popular folk singer in Andhra Pradesh and Illayaraja is a music director in Tamil films famous for introducing and popularising the folk drummings of pariahs in the movies.

considerable emphasis by scholars like Kancha Ilaiah [Ilaiah, 1996], Gail Omvedt [Omvedt, 1995] and A. Gajendran [Gajendran, 1998] on the role of separate culture, philosophy as well as life practices of the Dalits, in the formation of a Dalit identity.

In the present study an attempt has been made to ascertain the choices of the respondents with regard to their preference for residence in the locality largely dominated by the people of their caste and the one where upper caste people live. It is important to point out here that in the slum, (Janta Colony) with a population of 88 percent of Dalits, there is hardly any possibility for a separate cluster of Dalit households. However, in the village, (Khuda Ali Sher) the Dalit households are mainly located on the one side of the village whereas those of the Jats, the other major community in the village, are located separately.

Interestingly, the Dalit households are located on the upper side of the village, where as those of the Jats are on the lower side.<sup>21</sup> This is in contrast to the traditional location of the Dalit households on the lower side of the village which usually adds up to their miseries during the rainy season. The households of Dalit community being located on the upper side of the village, might not be a result of any kind of political assertion or social sensitisation. Ratherwards, the upper side of the village is surrounded with hilly rocks and the land on the lower side of village is fertile, which might have become a

reason for the concentration of the Jats on the lower side and the Dalits on the upper side of the village.

**Table 4.1**  
**Preference for Residence**  
**By**  
**Sub-Caste**

Sub-caste	With people of own caste			With upper caste people		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Balmikis	26 (66.6)	13 (33.3)	39 (100)	21 (53.8)	18 (46.15)	39 (100)
Chamars	22 (70.9)	9 (29.03)	31 (100)	17 (54.8)	14 (45.16)	31 (100)
Total	48	22	70	38	32	70

#### **4.1 Preference for Residence by Sub-Caste**

Table 4.1 shows the preference for residence by the sub-caste of the respondents. Two-thirds of the Balmikis and near about 70 percent of the Chamars have stated their preference for residence with people of their own caste. Most of the respondents consider their own caste people as more helpful as compared to those from the other castes. It is interesting to point out that when asked their preference for residence with the people of their own caste nearly one-third of the Balmikis have responded in negative. However, nearly half of the total Balmiki respondents have shown a preference to live

with the people of upper-castes. Similar is the case with the Chamar respondents. The reason cited by both the communities is that they want to enhance their present social status by living with the upper-caste people. Thus the urge for upward mobility in terms of social status has led half of the Balmikis and Chamars to have preference for residence in an upper caste locality.

Near about 45 percent of both the Balmikis and the Chamars have expressed against any preference for their residence with the upper-castes. The reason cited by most of the respondents is discrimination of one kind or the other, at the hands of the upper-castes.

Thus we notice, a conscious inclination at sanskritisation in the form of the preference for residence in an upper-caste locality, and also the fear of being discriminated against by the other castes. The overwhelming response in favour of residence in a Dalit locality might be considered as an indication of the process of identity formation among the respondents from both the communities.

#### **4.2 Preference for Residence by Class**

Table 4.2 shows that as we move from the category of low towards the category of high, in terms of the class status of the respondents, there is a decrease in the preference for living with the people of

**Table 4.2**  
**Preference for Residence**  
**By**  
**Class**

Class	With people of own caste			With upper caste people		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Low	30 (73.17)	11 (26.8)	41 (100)	20 (48.7)	21 (51.21)	41 (100)
Middle	11 (68.75)	5 (31.2)	16 (100)	10 (62.5)	6 (37.5)	16 (100)
High	7 (53.8)	6 (46.15)	13 (100)	8 (61.5)	5 (38.46)	13 (100)
Total	48	22	70	38	32	70

one's own caste. This shows that a greater number of Dalits from the low status in terms of class have a preference to live in the own caste locality as compared to the relatively well-off Dalits who have indicated a preference for residence with the upper-caste people. It might be the case that the respondents from the category of low, fear the discrimination at the hands of the upper-castes due to their being lower both in terms of caste as well as class. Those from the category of high might prefer to live with the people of upper-castes in order to achieve upward mobility.

### **4.3 Preference For Residence By Village/Slum**

Table 4.3 shows the preference for residence, of the respondents from the village and the slum. More than two-thirds of

the respondents from the village as well as the slum prefer to reside with the people of their own caste. Similarly, more than 50 percent of

**Table 4.3**  
**Preference for Residence**  
**By**  
**Village/Slum**

Residence	With people of own caste			With upper caste people		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Village	21 (70)	9 (30)	30 (100)	17 (56.6)	13 (43.3)	30 (100)
Slum	27 (67.5)	13 (32.5)	40 (100)	21 (52.5)	19 (47.5)	40 (100)
Total	48	22	70	38	32	70

the respondents from the village as well as the slum have indicated a preference to reside with the upper caste.

#### **4.4 Preference for Residence by Education**

Table 4.4 indicates that those in the category of low, in term of their educational status, have shown a greater preference to reside with the people of one's own caste as compared to those in the category of middle and high.

**Table 4.4**  
**Preference for Residence**  
**By**  
**Education**

Education	With people of own caste			With upper caste people		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Low	26 (76.4 7)	8 (23.5)	34 (100)	16 (47.05)	18 (52.9)	34 (100)
Middle	19 (67.8)	9 (32.14)	28 (100)	16 (57.14)	12 (42.8)	28 (100)
High	3 (37.5)	5 (62.5)	8 (100)	6 (75)	2 (25)	8 (100)
Total	48	22	70	38	32	70

The table also shows that more than three-fourths of the respondents from the category of high have stated a preference to reside with the upper-caste people. The reason might be that the relatively better educated among the Dalits may want to enhance their social status by residing in an upper-caste locality. Secondly, they might be less fearful of upper-caste discrimination and thus be more assertive as compared to the less educated among the Dalit respondents.

#### **PREFERENCE FOR HYPERGAMY\***

The literal meaning of hypergamy is marriage between a man of a higher caste and a lower - caste woman. However, the way the

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In this study, we are taking the general conception of hypergamy but at the same time, we have considered marriage within the Dalit sub-caste as "hypergamy", whereby a Dalit man from "upper" sub-caste marries a woman from the lower sub-caste.

concepts of sanskritisation and hypergamy are linked, each is seen as a consequence of the other. To make it more precise, sanskritisation is considered to be a product of hypergamy, but whether sanskritisation is followed by hypergamy or hypergamy is followed by sanskritisation, is matter of debate. Here we assume that hypergamy is a presupposition for sanskritisation. It would be important to remember that sanskritisation is not always an unambiguous concept linked with the upward mobility of the Dalits. This has been interpreted and explained in altogether different a manner, particularly in the writings of scholars like Kancha Ilaiah and in the autobiographical works of Dalit writers like Om Prakash Valmiki whereby they regard the phenomenon of sanskritisation as a hindrance to the creative realisation of Dalit identity and consciousness.<sup>22</sup>

### **5.1 Preference for Hypergamy by Sub-Caste**

Table 5.1 shows the preference for hypergamy by the sub-caste of the respondents. Nearly one-fourth of the total Balmikis have indicated a preference for marriage with non-Dalit castes. However, near about 28 percent of the Balmikis have indicated a preference for marriage with an “upper” Dalit caste.

**Table 5.1**  
**Preference for Hypergamy**  
**By**  
**Sub-Caste**

Sub-caste	Marriage With Non- Dalits			Marriage With an "Upper" Dalit Caste*		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Balmikis	9 (23.07)	30 (76.9)	39 (100)	11 (28.2)	18 (46.15)	39 (100)
Chamars	11 (35.48)	20 (64.5)	31 (100)	9 (29.03)	22 (70.9)	31 (100)
Total	20	50	70	20	50	70

\* The upper Dalit caste here means those castes which are considered to be higher within the hierarchy of the Dalit castes.

More than one-third of the Chamars have preferred hypergamy with non-Dalit castes, where as only 29 percent of them have shown a preference for "hypergamy" within the Dalit community. Thus, we find that the overall preference for hypergamy has been very low among both the communities, which points that the tendency for upward mobility through the route of hypergamy is missing.

## 5.2 Preference for Hypergamy by Class

Table 5.2 indicates that the preference for hypergamy with the non-Dalit castes has been greater among the respondents from the

category of middle as compared to the respondents from the low and high categories, in terms of their class status.

**Table 5.2**  
**Preference for Hypergamy**  
**By**  
**Class**

Class	Marriage with non-dalits			Marriage with an "upper" Dalit Caste		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Low	8 (19.5)	33 (80.48)	41 (100)	10 (24.3)	31 (75.6)	41 (100)
Middle	8 (50)	8 (50)	16 (100)	5 (31.25)	11 (68.75)	16 (100)
High	4 (30.7)	9 (69.23)	13 (100)	5 (38.46)	8 (61.5)	13 (100)
Total	20	50	70	20	35	70

The reason given for it by the low category respondents is that a majority of them fear discrimination by the upper-castes, in case of hypergamy. Some of the respondents also stated during the interviews that they might have to give more dowry to compensate their low caste status, if they were to marry their daughter in a caste higher than theirs.

### 5.3 Preference for Hypergamy by Residence

Table 5.3 shows that one-third of the respondents from the village have indicated a preference for hypergamy with the non-Dalit castes, where as only one-fourth of the respondents from the slum have stated so. Almost similar is the response regarding the “hypergamy” within the Dalit community. Thus we notice that a greater number of the Dalits from the village prefer “hypergamy”, both within the Dalit community and with the other castes.

**Table 5.3**  
**Preference for Hypergamy**  
**By**  
**Residence**

Residence	With people of own caste			With upper caste people		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Village	10 (33.33)	20 (66.66)	30 (100)	11 (36.6)	19 (63.33)	30 (100)
Slum	10 (25)	30 (75)	40 (100)	9 (22.5)	31 (77.5)	40 (100)
Total	20	50	70	20	50	70

It is important to mention here, that most of the Dalits living in the village are relatively well-off and better educated as compared to those in the slum. Thus, it might be that they have preference for

“hypergamy” in order to acquire higher social status, whereas, the slum-dwellers might have felt themselves incapable to even think of marriage in an upper caste.

#### 5.4 Preference for Hypergamy by Education

Table 5.4 shows clearly that the respondents from the category of low have shown a lesser preference for hypergamy with non-Dalits, as compared to those in the category of middle and high, in terms of their educational status. Near about one-third of the respondents from the category of middle have preferred the hypergamy with non-Dalits as well as with the upper castes within the Dalit community.

**Table 5.4**  
**Preference for Hypergamy**  
**By**  
**Education**

Edu. status	Marriage with Non-Dalits			Marriage with an “Upper” Dalit Castes		
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Low	7 (20.5)	27 (79.41)	34 (100)	8 (23.5)	26 (76.47)	34 (100)
Middle	9 (32.14)	19 (67.8)	28 (100)	10 (35.7)	18 (64.28)	28 (100)
High	4 (50)	4 (50)	8 (100)	2 (25)	6 (75)	8 (100)
Total	20 (28.5)	50 (71.42)	70 (100)	20 (28.5)	50 (71.42)	70 (100)

As we move from the low towards the high category, in terms of the educational status of the respondents, we notice that the preference for hypergamy with non-Dalit castes also increases. Interestingly, half of the respondents from the category of high have preferred the hypergamy with non-Dalit castes, but only one-fourth of them have shown a preference for marriage with upper castes within the Dalit community. This indicates that in order to attain higher social status, the relatively well-off Dalits prefer marriage with castes other than the Dalits and not the upper castes within the Dalit community.

Hypergamy as a process of sanskritisation is not acceptable to a majority of the respondents. This might be an indication that the Dalits actually appreciate the richness of their own culture, traditions and life-style and do not consider the phenomenon of hypergamy as liberatory and emancipatory one.

To conclude we may argue that at the social level, the process of Dalit assertion reflects itself, sometimes in the terms used for self-identification such as the "Balmiki" and the "Ravidasia/Ramdasia". At the other times it is reflected in their participation in the religious and the cultural activities of their own caste, thus using the myths and symbols of past for proclaiming a sense of pride. Similarly, the response of the Dalits towards the practice of hypergamy is also an indication of the appreciation of own caste practices and traditions, as most of the respondents in our study do not consider the marriage

in an upper caste as a means of upward mobility. Rather, they fear discrimination by the upper-castes, if they were to marry their children in an upper-caste family. Yet, we notice a slight tilt among the Dalits towards sanskritisation which is indicated through their preference for the residence in an upper-caste locality, despite many of the respondents considering the people of their own caste as more helpful and closer as compared to the people of other castes.

## ***Endnotes***

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5. Cited in Pradeep Kumar, *Dalit Politics : Then and Now*, paper presented at National Seminar on Liberalization, Dalits and the State, held at Panjab University, Chandigarh, 3-4 May, 2000, p.3
6. Prakash N. Pimpley and Satish K. Sharma, *Struggle for Status* (Delhi : B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1985), p.95.
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8. See, Ronki Ram, *Untouchability and the Question of Dalit Identity: A Critique of Ad-Dharam movement*, paper presented at National Seminar on Liberalization Dalits and the State held at Panjab University, Chandigarh, 3-4 May, 2000, p.13.
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10. Gopal Guru, "The Politics of Naming", *Seminar*, No. 471, Nov. 1998, p. 16.
11. Nigam, no. 3, p. 4263.
12. Andre Beteille, *Chronicles of Our Time*, (Delhi : Penguin Books, 2000), p. 172.
13. Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany, *The Untouchables : Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India* (New Delhi : Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 38.
14. Cited in Jodhka, n.9, p. 385.
15. See Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I am not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy* (Calcutta : Samya Publications, 1996).
16. Babu Singh, 75 yrs., Ramdasia Sikh, uneducated, Shoemaker.
17. Eleanor Zelliot, "The Roots of Dalit Consciousness", *Seminar*, No. 471, No. 1998, p.29.
18. Based on interview with Satpal Singh, 45 yrs., Ravidasia, Sikh, President; Ravidasia Committee.
19. Zelliot, no. 17, p. 29.
20. See Kancha Ilaiah, *Why I am not a Hindu : A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy* (Calcutta : Samya Publications, 1996). See also, Om Prakash Valmiki, *Joothan* (New Delhi : Radha Krishan Publications, 1999), (*text in Hindi*).

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the contemporary times, caste has come to play a decisive role in the political processes of Indian democracy. Caste based identities are invoked for the purposes of assertion by the groups and communities, which have over the centuries faced discrimination and marginalisation on the basis of their being lower on the caste hierarchy. In the present study we have made an attempt to understand the process of assertion and identity formation among the Dalits in the city of Chandigarh. Our study reveals that the Dalit politics is not a simple phenomenon, but it is very complex in nature. Some of the major findings of our study may be summarised in the following words.

Our study indicates that the Dalit identity in the city is yet in the process of making. This process of identity formation is taking place at both the levels, political as well as social. But the nature of these is markedly different. In the political sphere, the Dalit identity formation reflects itself mainly through the voting pattern and party association of the respondents. Though in the last few years the BJP has emerged as an important player in the politics of Chandigarh, our study shows that an overwhelming number of Dalits oppose it due to its image of being an upper-caste party. The Dalits have remained mainly stuck to the Congress, which still carries the image

of being a party of the downtrodden and the marginalised. Dalits in the village who are mainly from the Chamar sub-caste, have shown a preference for the BSP and the Congress. The Balmikis on the other hand have remained largely with the Congress, despite their slight shift towards their own caste outfits, like the BSP (Ambedkar). Thus we notice the concentration of the political preferences of the Dalits along the sub-caste lines. However, the opposition towards the BJP among all the Dalits, irrespective of their sub-caste, shows the presence of a larger Dalit identity.

At the social level, the process of assertion reflects itself, sometimes in the form of the terms used for self-identification such as the "Balmiki" and the "Ravidasia/Ramdasia". At the other times it is reflected in their participation in the religious and the cultural activities of their own caste, thus using the myths and symbols of past for proclaiming a sense of pride. Similarly, the response of the Dalits towards the practice of hypergamy is also an indication of the appreciation of own caste practices and traditions, as most of the respondents in our study do not consider the marriage in an upper caste as a means of upward mobility. Rather, they fear discrimination by the upper-castes, if they were to marry their children in an upper-caste family. Yet, we notice a slight tilt among the Dalits towards sanskritisation which is indicated through their preference for the residence in an upper caste locality, despite many of

the respondents considering the people of their own caste as more helpful and closer as compared to the people of other castes.

Thus, we might say that the Dalit identity is emerging in Chandigarh, both at the social as well as the political levels, these being different in nature. The social identity does get translated into the political one as we find that the Dalits in the city do use the political means for assertion. However, this also gets fragmented along the sub-caste lines.

The main issues and questions around which the Dalit identity formation revolves are primarily political in nature. The Dalits do consider the elections as a tool for assertion. This is reflected in the voting pattern as well as the party association of the respondents, whereby they have shown a gradual and steady shift towards their own caste parties. Similarly the presence of intra-Dalit tensions is also an indicator of a sharply formed Dalit identity along the sub-caste lines. Infact, Dalit identity is actually fractured on the sub-caste basis.

Our study indicates that there operate Dalit-Dalit tensions in the city. The Chamars and the Balmikis are two sub-caste groups, within the Dalit community, who have shown different patterns in their political preferences. Many among the Balmikis consider that the BSP works for the welfare of the Chamars only. The faultline is quite clear in the voting pattern of the two sub-castes. Only a negligent percentage of the Balmikis prefer the BSP-generally known to be a

Dalit – party. On the contrary, the Chamars have shown a considerable tilt towards the BSP, as most among them consider the BSP as the real party of the Dalits. Despite this, we notice the presence of a larger Dalit identity, where the Dalits irrespective of their sub-caste are opposed to the upper-caste parties like the BJP.

While the Dalits may have internal differences, none of the Dalits in our sample has termed the BSP as a “distant” party, rather they have mentioned the BJP as the most “far away” party in terms of party association. It may be pertinent to mention here that this intra-caste tension is seen only at the political level, and we hardly find any reflection of this in the social realm.

Considerable differences in the patterns and processes of identity formation among the Dalits can be observed in terms of their residence in rural or slum areas. The rural Dalits seem to be economically resourceful and have been able to assert in a more institutionalised manner. The formation of the “Ravidasia Committee” and the existence of a separate Gurdwara of the Dalits in the village are pointers in the case. The Dalits residing in the slum, being relatively less resourceful have been unable to evolve the institutions for assertion. The slum-dwellers very sharply feel being marginalised on the basis of their being from the lower caste but at the same time they are engaged primarily in fulfilling the basic necessities of life, and therefore lack the resources for channelling their assertion in an institutionalized manner.

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As we move from the low towards the high category in terms of the education and class, we notice the shift in political preferences of the Dalits from the Congress to the exclusivist Dalit parties. This shows that the relatively better-off among them prefer their own caste formations. Similarly the better-off Dalits have shown a greater degree of participation in the festivals and related activities of their community. Those among the Dalits who are well-off and somewhat better educated are more assertive due to their greater awareness and better exposure to politics. Those among the Dalits who are lower, in terms of class and education status are not adequately aware and equipped to use their caste as an instrument for assertion. It would be pertinent to point out here that the Dalits from the better-off sections of society have also shows a tilt towards "modernity" which is indicated in their preference for anglicised terms such as "Scheduled Caste", and also their preference for hypergamy. This should be seen as an indicator of their desire for upward mobility.

Thus we find the use of caste as an instrumental category for political assertion among Dalits. However, simultaneously sanskritisation process has also been used by the better educated and well-off sections among Dalits. Those who are deprived-off, both in terms of education as well as class, have found the tool of elections to be more useful an instrument for assertion.

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So we find the process of identity formation at the social as well as the political level, to be gradual and steady. A larger Dalit identity tends to take form despite some intra-Dalit tensions reflected in the divergent voting pattern among the Balmikis and the Chamars. The study also indicates the important role played by gender in the making of an identity among the Dalits, whereby the patriarchal structures have inhibited the sharpening of caste based identities among the women Dalits. This is also a challenge for the Dalit centred parties which claim to work for establishing an egalitarian and just order. Due to the limited scope of the study, it was not possible to probe these questions in a detailed manner. A more extensive research probing into the gender question in the realm of caste politics, may throw some light on this challenging aspect of Dalit politics.

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## APPENDIX-I

### OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS.

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES	SPECIFIC JOB	VILLAGE		SLUM		TOTAL
		M	F	M	F	
GOVT. SERVICE	SWEEPER	-	-	5	1	6
	PEON/WATCHMAN	2	-	4	-	6
	CLERK/STENO/ STORE-KEEPER/ HOMEGUARD	5	1	-	-	6
LOWLY PAID MANUAL UNSKILLED JOB	RAG PICKER	-	-	2	2	4
	HOUSE MAID/DOMESTIC SERVANT	-	-	-	7	7
	DIALY WAGE IN CONSTRUCTION WORK/RICKSHAW PULLER/OTHER UNSKILLED LABOURERS	2	-	10	-	12
LOWLY PAID MANUAL SKILLED JOB	PEON IN PRIVATE SECTOR	-	-	5	-	5
	WEAVER/TAILOR	2	1	-	-	3
	MASON/WHITE WASHER	2	-	1	-	3
	SHOE MAKER	1	-	-	-	1
	OTHERS LIKE PRIEST, VILLAGE HEALTH WORKER (MIDWIFE)	1	-	-	1	2
HOUSE WIFE/HUSBAND AND OTHER NON- EARNERS	HOUSEWIFE/ HUSBAND	-	8	-	3	11
	STUDENTS	3	1	-	-	4
	TOTAL	18	11	27	14	70

## APPENDIX-II

### MEMBERSHIP OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND SOCIAL ORGANISATION/ASSOCIATIONS

MEMBERSHIP	NAME OF POLITICAL PARTY OR SOCIAL ORGANISATION/ ASSOCIATION	VILLAGE		SLUM		TOTAL
		M	F	M	F	
POLITICAL PARTIES	CONGRESS	-	1	2	-	3
	BSP	5	-	1	-	6
	BSP (AMBEDKAR)	-	-	6	-	6
	JANATA DAL	-	-	3	-	3
SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS /ASSOCIATIONS	BALMIKI SABHA	-	-	2	-	2
	YOUTH CLUB	-	-	2	-	2
	SWEEPER'S WELFARE ASSCIATION	6	-	-	-	6
	TOTAL	11	1	16	-	28

## APPENDIX-III

### EDUCATION WISE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS.

	EDUCATIONAL CATEGORIES	VILLAGE		SLUM		TOTAL
		M	F	M	F	
LOW	NON-LITERATE	3	3	7	11	24
	BELOW PRIMARY	-	2	-	-	2
	PRIMARY PASS/MIDDLE FAIL	1	-	5	2	8
	TOTAL	4	5	12	13	34
MIDDLE	MARTIC	8	3	13	1	25
	INTERMEDIATE/ COLLEGE NO DEGREE	3	-	-	-	3
	TOTAL	11	3	13	1	28
	GRADUATE	4	3	1	-	8
HIGH	EQUIVALENT TO GRADUATE	-	-	-	-	0
	TOTAL	4	3	1	0	8

## APPENDIX- IV

**(I) LOW LEVEL OF EDUCATION :**

- (A) NON LITERATE :** Any one who cannot read and write (including those who may have been to school).
- (B) BELOW PRIMARY :** Literate but did not complete primary school (including those literate without going to school)
- (C) PRIMARY PASS/MIDDLE FAIL :** Completed class v but not class viii in formal schools.

**(II) MIDDLE LEVEL OF EDUCATION :**

- (A) MATRIC :** Stopped education after passing class X/matric/High school or equivalent.
- (B) INTERMEDIATE /COLLEGE NO DEGREE :** Completed class XII/Higher Secondary/ Intermediate/+2 or any post matric diploma, went to college but did not complete graduation.

**(III) HIGH LEVEL OF EDUCATION :**

- (A) GRADUATE OR EQUIVALENT :** BA, B.Sc., B. Com or other graduate degrees. Polytechnics, Computers, BTC, Paramedical, Nursing etc.

## **APPENDIX-V**

### **(INTERVIEW SCHEDULE)**

(This is an approximate translation of the interview schedule which was actually administered to the respondents in Hindi as well as in Punjabi).

Q.1. From which of the following do you get the information regarding the political matters:

- a) Family members
- b) Friends
- c) Neighbours
- d) Local/*Mohalla* leaders
- e) From the Political conferences/rallies
- f) Radio/Television/Newspapers
- g) Any other

Q.2. Regarding the last election, we came to know from various people that some of them voted and some could not cast their vote. Kindly tell whether you were able to cast you vote or not?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q.3. To whom did you cast your vote?

Q.4. Prior to this election, to which party have you been casting your vote generally?

- Q.5. In case, the elections are held tomorrow itself, to which party would you like to cast your vote for?
- Q.6. Do you believe that higher profession/occupation leads also to a higher status in the society?  
a) Yes b) No
- Q.7. Are you satisfied with the kind of work/job/profession/occupation in which you are presently engaged?  
a) Yes b) No
- Q.8. If not, kindly tell the reasons for the same.
- Q.9. Then, what kind of work/job/profession/occupation, would you prefer?
- Q.10. In what manner do you think it would be beneficial for you?
- Q.11. Do you feel that in the future your children should engage in a specific type of work/occupation/profession?  
a) Yes b) No
- 11.a. If yes, then what would it be?
- 11.b. What kind of benefits do you think it would lead to?
- Q.12. What do you understand by *Biradari*?
- Q.13. Do you participate in the festivals, celebrations and other religious activities related to your caste/*Biradari* (Community)?  
a) Yes b) No
- Q.14. Is there any temple, *Dharmshala* or any public building related to your caste/community, in your area?  
a) Yes b) No





Q.25. Do you feel that BJP/Congress/CPI (M) or any other national party has taken some specific measures for the welfare of your caste/community ?

a) Yes                      b) No

25.a. If yes, what are these measures?

Q.26. Do you agree that almost all the people of your caste/community do caste their votes collectively/to the same candidate ?

a) Yes                      b) No

Q.27. Is there any political party to which you feel most closely associated with ?

a) Yes                      b) No

27.a. If yes, kindly name the party.

27.b. Why do you feel yourself to be associated with this party ?

Q.28. Is there any political party from which you would like to keep distance or would never caste your vote for it?

a) Yes                      b) No

28.a. If yes, which is the party?

28.b. Why do you feel "distant" from this party??

Q.29. Do you agree that during the day-to-day interactions in the neighbourhood, people generally are conscious of the caste factor?

a) Yes                      b) No

Q.30. Did any candidate/party activist/*pradhan*/campaigner from your own caste/community come to your residence to ask for your vote during the elections?

- a) Yes                      b) No

Q.31. Do you think that you should cast your vote for the same candidate/party to whom the people of your caste/ community vote?

- a) Yes                      b) No

Q.32. By which of the following terms would you like to be addressed ?

- a) Dalit                      B) Scheduled Caste                      C) Harijan  
d) Something else

Q.33. Do you think that the people from the higher castes/ communities discriminate against the people of your caste/community?

- a) Yes                      b) No

Q.34. Do you think that the people from Other Backward Castes (OBCs) and the Scheduled Castes people generally cast their vote to the same candidate/party ?

- a) Yes                      b) No

Q.35. What is your opinion regarding the inter-caste marriage ?

Q.36. Do you think that matrimonial relations of your children with

the people of higher caste would enhance your status in society?

a) Yes                      b) No

Q.37. Do you think that the marriage of your children with the people of the caste a little bit higher than yours would enhance your status in society ?

a) Yes                      b) No

Q.38. Do you think that there has been any kind of improvement in the status /conditions of the people of your caste/community in comparison to the earlier times ?

a) Yes                      b) No

Q.38.a If yes, what a kind of improvement?

Q.39. Do you think that the people of other castes/communities create hindrances in the welfare and progress of the people of your caste/ community ?

a) Yes                      b) No

39.a. If yes, kindly mention these castes/ communities ?

Q.40. While casting your vote, to which of the following do you give most importance?

a) Candidate                      b) Party                      c) Caste/*Biradari*

d) Anything else.

Q.41. Are you familiar with these names; Mayawati and Kanshi Ram ?

Q.42. What do you think about these leaders ?

42.a. If they are good, why ?

42.b. If they are bad, why ?

Q.43. What is your opinion about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar ?

Q.44. Do you think that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has done any kind of work for the upliftment of the Dalits ?

Q.45. Is there any leader/*pradhan*/party activist from your caste in your area/*mohalla* ?

## Biodata of the Respondents

1. Name :
2. Age (in complete years) :
3. Gender : (a) Male                      (b) Female
4. Marital Status ;  
a) Married    b) Unmarried    c) Divorced/separated  
d) Widowed etc.
5. No. of children (if any)  
a) Male                                      b) Female
6. Place of residence : a) Rural                                      b) Slum
7. House : (a) Own/rented    (b) Kuccha/Pucca
8. Total agricultural land (in acres) :
- 8.a. Irrigated land (in acres) :
9. Income (Approx) :
10. Caste/*Jati-Biradari* (exactly) :
11. Religion :
12. Place of Origion : Rural /Urban  
State :
13. Level of Education :
14. Parent's Education : Mother                      Father
- 15.a. Occupation of the respondents (exactly)  
b. Whether family occupation : Yes/No
16. Membership of political party : Yes/No
17. Membership of social organisation/association/committee :
18. Languages known :