

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

MASTER THESIS

INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM AND DALIT MUSLIMS

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSOC. PROF. BETÜL AVCI SEBETCİ**

ISTANBUL, 2021

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INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM AND DALIT MUSLIMS

by

MOHAMMED SHAMSUDDIN

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Religious Studies**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
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ISTANBUL, 2021

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

HİNT KAST SİSTEMİ VE DALİT MÜSLÜMANLAR

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Kast sistemi, sosyal tabakalaşmanın en aşırı biçimlerinden biridir. Dünyada kast sistemi denildiğinde tartışmasız akla ilk gelen ülke ise Hindistan'dır. Hint kast sistemi esas olarak dört sınıfa ayrılmış olsa da, bu sınıflandırmanın dışında kalan ve tüm bu kastlardan dışlanmış olarak kabul edilen, Dalit adı verilen bir grup daha bulunmaktadır. Kast sistemi her ne kadar Hinduizm ile ilişkilendirilse de son yüzyıllarda gerçekleşen din değiştirmeler neticesinde bahsi geçen Dalit sınıfının yanında Müslüman ve Hıristiyan Dalit sınıfı ortaya çıkmıştır. Hindu kutsal metinleri kast sistemini sadece desteklemekle kalmaz aynı zamanda bu sistemin Hindular tarafından pratiğe geçirilmesini kolaylaştırır. Bu sistem, aynı zamanda çeşitli dini gruplar arasında, özellikle Hintli Müslümanlar arasında birçok farklı biçimde yayılmıştır. Bu tez, Hindu kutsal metinlerinde temsil edilen kast sistemini ve Dalitleri ele alırken aynı zamanda çağdaş bilim adamlarının konuya bakış açılarını da incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın önemli bir bölümünde Hindu Dalitlerin devlet nezdinde son dönemde kazandıkları siyasi, ekonomik ve istihdam önceliği gibi hakları elde etmek için, İslam'a geçtikten sonra Dalit kimliğini yeniden oluşturan Dalit Müslümanlara odaklanılmıştır. Ele alınan konuyla ilgili dünya çapında çok sayıda çalışma yapılmış olmasına rağmen, bu tezle birlikte Türkiye'deki Din Bilimleri alanında özellikle Dalit Müslümanlar konusunda yeni bir katkı sağlamak amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dalit, Din Değiştirme, Hint Kast Sistemi, Müslüman Dalitler.

ABSTRACT

INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM AND DALIT MUSLIMS

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The caste system is one of the most extreme forms of social stratification. When one thinks about the stratification system in the world, India is the first place that springs to mind. Although the Indian caste system is primarily organized into four divisions, there is another group called Dalits that falls outside of this categorization and is regarded as an outcast among all of these castes. While the caste system is associated with Hinduism, Indian Muslim, and Christian Dalit caste groups have emerged in recent centuries after their conversion.

The Caste system is supported not just by Hindu holy texts allowing Hindus to practice it, but it has also spread in numerous forms among various religious groups, particularly among Indian Muslims. This thesis examines the caste system and Dalits as represented in Hindu sacred scriptures, as well as contemporary scholars' perspectives on the subject. This study also focuses on Dalit Muslims, who establish Dalit identities after converting to Islam to obtain political, economic, and employment reservations from the government in the same way that Hindu Dalits do. Even though there have been numerous studies on this topic throughout the world, this thesis aims to provide a fresh addition to the field of Religious Studies in Turkey because Dalit Muslims is a subject that has not been studied in depth by Turkish academics.

Keywords: Dalit; Dalit Muslims; Indian Caste System; Religious Conversion.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social stratification is one of the most serious issues that people throughout the world are dealing with today. Caste, in particular, is a phenomenon that illustrates societal stratification in the most powerful form in India. Two of its characteristics ensure that the lowest caste remains where it is while the upper caste continues to control them. Those two characteristics are endogamy and hereditary occupation. It is also significant that this kind of social stratification is endorsed by sacred texts of the Hindu tradition. However, problems worsen when those who are oppressed by the ruling caste are unable to find a place in the various religions to which they convert. In today's Indian culture, the caste system and the status of Dalit¹ have evolved from social stratification fortified by religious texts into various different identities acquired by converted individuals in order to get government reservations. Hence, this thesis will explore how the converted people acquired Dalit identities and examine their struggles in Indian society.

Dalits were considered to be at the lowest rank in the Indian society. The Hindu sacred writings insisted on four castes and never authorized a fifth, which led to the rejection of India's tribal people. Hence, they were not listed among the primary caste rankings in the caste system. Many untouchables were subjected to serious criminal penalties if their presence contaminated certain things or places. For example, if a Dalit visits a temple, he is believed to defile it just by being there. They were also punished if they went into places inhabited by individuals of the superior caste. There were several rules and regulations that they had to follow in order to exit and enter various locations (Velassery, 2005: 7-8).

Thus, this thesis will inform about the caste system and the individuals who, despite their conversions, are unable to find a satisfactory life. These people are known as

¹ In traditional Indian society, they are untouchable, also known as Dalit, formally Scheduled Caste, previously Harijan, the old designation for any member of a wide range of low-caste Hindu communities and anybody outside the caste system.

Dalit Muslims. Some scholars from throughout the world have discussed social stratification and the caste system on numerous occasions. This thesis, as a contribution to these discussions, will initially describe the caste system as it is represented in Hindu sacred scriptures. The second chapter will explore various approaches and perspectives of modern and contemporary scholars on the caste system and Dalits. The third chapter will demonstrate the current status of Dalit Muslims and explore their satisfaction level after converting to Islam.

Defining the term "caste" turns out to be more complex than it looks. The word caste is derived from the Portuguese word *Casta*, which means species or race. It was initially employed in India by the Portuguese in the 16th century to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims. It was also used to define the system based on birth groupings (Bayly, 1999:105-07). It is considered as a:

(...) collection of families or groups of families who share a common name, claim common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine, profess to follow the same hereditary calling, and are regarded as forming a single homogeneous community by those with the authority to make such a decision (Hutton, 1963: 47).

It is also referred to as an “endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit with a greater or lower social status than other similar subdivisions” (Velassery, 2005: 2).

For example, based on the sacred texts *Manu smriti* and *Rigveda*,² in the Vedic varna system, there are four major groupings: First is the Brahmins, who are at the top of the caste hierarchy. They are priests and intellectuals. Second, the Kshatriyas are the rulers and warriors of society. Third, the Vaishyas are farmers and merchants. The fourth group is the Shudras, who serve the upper castes (Gupta, 2014: 665). Finally, there is a fifth group known as Dalits, who do not even belong to the Hindu caste system. In the Hindi language, Dalit means "oppressed." They are classified as outcasts since they do not belong to the primary caste structure. They are at the bottom of the hierarchical stratification system. “Untouchables” is another contemporary term employed for this group.

²Rigveda is an ancient Indian collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns, and Manu Smriti is one of the most authoritative books of the Hindu code in India.

Similarly, varna, jati, and biradari are other terms associated with the Indian caste system. They all share characteristics such as being hereditary, endogamous, and having hereditary jobs. Finally, they are classified hierarchically (Andre, 2012: 43). We will also take a closer look into Indian class distinctions.

1.1. Statement of the Problem, Background, and Need

For the aim of addressing the issue of social stratification, we will begin by examining the sacred writings of Hinduism. We will explore sacred Hindu scriptures for the sake of seeing why the caste system is not viewed negatively by the general public. We shall examine them in chronological order, beginning with the Vedas and ending with Manawa Dharmasastra. Following that, with the aim of comprehending how various contemporary intellectuals and scholars have treated the caste system and Dalits, we will examine their theories and thoughts concerning the caste system and Dalits. In chronological sequence, we will explore significant scholars ranging from Max Weber to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In addition to these, we shall also discuss the ideas and opinions of other contemporary scholars. This will also help us map out and review modern and contemporary literature on the topic.

Finally, for the aim of addressing discrimination among Dalit Muslims, we will examine conversion among them and tackle the difficulties they experience even upon conversion. In this section, we will also look into the purity-pollution issue. In addition, we will talk about Indian Muslims of foreign ancestry who employ *ka'fa* (a method of Islamic jurisprudence) to discriminate against indigenous converts, which are exploited as endogamy.

Upper-caste Hindus get their strong desire to enforce the caste system from their religious writings. In addition, modern and contemporary scholars have approached the caste system and Dalits from various perspectives. Moreover, Hindu Dalits converted to Islam because of the Islamic concept of brotherhood and equality. However, over time it took on the characteristics of the caste system and lived Islam became distinct from textual Islam. Therefore, Dalits know that their status will not change upon conversion but will remain the same.

1.2. Objective

This thesis studies modern and contemporary approaches and theories for the sake of comprehending the caste system and Dalits in a comprehensive manner. Furthermore, this thesis investigates the most current status of Dalit Muslims with respect to their struggle for political, social, and economic rights with the aim of highlighting the discernment they face today. This thesis will help us see how social stratification has been reinforced by empowering Hindu sacred texts. We will also see how liberation from Hinduism employs religious conversion as mass conversions to Islam, Christianity, and other religious traditions have taken place over the last hundred years.

As the author of this thesis, I believe that scholarship should contribute to positive liberty. Therefore, while raising the issue of current discrimination against Dalit Muslims, I hope to raise awareness of the problem in today's Turkish academia. Although there have been books on Hinduism, caste systems, Dalits, and other issues published in Turkey in the past, there have been few works on Dalit Muslims. To such an end, this study proposes to introduce and examine Dalits in the Indian caste system as well as explore the discrimination of Dalit Muslims after their conversion to Islam. We will also see how Dalit Muslims are denied from reservations in the political, economic, and job sectors.

1.3. Method

This thesis will be evaluative literature research since it will explore the caste system and Dalits via sacred Hindu writings. Examining the diverse approaches of various contemporary scholars will also reveal the qualitative nature of the thesis. Because we will be looking at the issue of Dalit Muslims being discriminated against after converting to Islam, we will examine the current status of Dalit Muslims based on various reports, news, and literature. All of the material will be acquired through a comprehensive examination of primary and secondary sources in the literature. Hence, a descriptive method of Religious Studies will be employed, also receiving help from quantitative information, i.e., state reports.

Most of my sources will be in English, which will talk about the caste system, conversion, and Dalit Muslim issues. However, I will also refer to Hindu sacred texts to highlight the topic of the caste system and untouchables in Hinduism. While researching sacred Hindu literature, I used Holy Hindu books written in the Hindi language, and in my regional language. The English translation was also utilized, and it will be listed in the bibliography. I will also use some sources which will be in the regional Indian language.

The sacred text's numbering follows a system used in Hindu texts. It is classified into three categories. The first is Mandala (the name of the sections of the book), the second is a hymn, and the third is verses. As an example, suppose I say Rig-Veda 10:90. Then it is the Rig-Veda book and Mandala 10, Hymn 90. I have occasionally used Roman numerals to clarify further details. For instance, Rig-Veda XC: 11-16. In this context, a Roman numeral always indicates a hymn. It is not a representation of the Mandala. The numbers after the hymn always signify scripture verses. Instead of a Roman number, I've occasionally used a dot after a hymn. As an example, suppose I say Manu 111.12. It refers to the book of Manu Smriti, hymn number 111, and verse 12. If there is no Roman number or dot in the source, it indicates that the book does not include any hymns. It solely has verses. For example, if I say katyayana, 715-716. Then it means the book of Katyayana and verses 715 and 716.

1.4. Outline of Thesis

The thesis will consist of four chapters, with an introduction part in chapter one, in which we introduce the statement, background, need, objectives, and methods of this study. The second chapter will cover common terminology of the Indian caste system and Dalits as well as its brief history. In the third chapter, we will examine various approaches of modern and contemporary scholars with prominent views and theories on the caste system. Some of these names are Max Weber, Susan Bayly, Louis Dumont, Marvin Davis, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, and others. The fourth chapter will discuss Dalits and their religious conversion. Here, I will highlight problems they still have been facing even after conversion.

1.5. Limitations of Thesis

- The scope of this thesis is limited to a brief explanation of the caste system and its history because it does not delve deeply into these subjects.
- This thesis is limited to modern and contemporary researchers' approaches and points of view. It makes no mention of the approaches of scholars who lived before the 18th century.
- This thesis is limited to the study of Dalit Muslims and does not investigate the discrimination suffered by Hindu Dalits.

1.6. Literature Review

My current literature will involve primary sources, commonly known as Hindu sacred scriptures such as the Vedas, Manu smriti, Dharma sastras etc. This is to have an overall understanding of how the caste and Dalits are depicted in religious texts. I will briefly discuss the caste system as it is stated in the above-mentioned sacred texts and then focus on the untouchables (Dalits) as they are described therein.

In this research, I use Dalit literature to contextualize Dalit Muslims. Dalit Muslims are particularly concerned with two themes in Indian Dalit discourse: caste discrimination based on Brahmanical ideals of cleanliness and defilement and Dalit methods of assertion. The caste persecution of 'untouchables' in Indian culture is based on the Brahmanical ideal of purity and defilement. As a result, this Dalit literature may be used to examine how 'purity and impurity' emerge among Dalit Muslims. Moreover, I will look into the literature written on Dalit conversions. This will help me comprehend the process of conversions and the challenges faced by Dalits in this process.

Smith's work *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian Varna System and the Origins of Caste* is a thorough investigation of the Varna system, which is a categorization framework given forth in traditional Hindu Vedas and considered to underpin the notion of caste, and which continues to have a profound and widespread effect over Indian culture. As a result, I believe that this book will aid me in my research of caste and its origins.

Thapar's work *A History of India* uses a political story as a framework and deftly mixes in information about the society, economics, religion, art, and architecture. However, there are various flaws in her portrayal of early India, not all of which would be obvious to the average reader. One of the really troublesome parts of Thapar's view of ancient India is her use of Vedic literature as a primary text for comprehending India's history between 1200 and 600 B.C. Thapar admits that we deal with complicated topics and that not every plot point can be closed. Her tale, however, glosses over the immense challenges of dating the Vedas and pulling history from them.

In addition to this, another work of Thapar is *The Penguin History of Early India: from the Origins to AD 1300*. It is a historical masterpiece of Indian history as well as ancient India's rich customs and traditions. The book beautifully analyses India's past, assisting readers in visualizing the birth of a country and how it expanded and prospered through centuries. Both of these works will aid me in my investigation of the caste system and Dalits from a historical standpoint.

Velassery's work *Casteism and Human Rights: Toward an Ontology of the Social Order* aims to comprehend the social aspect of casteism, its implications for human rights, its dynamism, and its philosophical significance. We review and analyze the origins and evolution of casteism, with an emphasis on how it created and supplied an atmosphere that supported an ideology of discrimination, justified, and validated by specific metaphysical precepts. The author examines the matter of human rights from Indian philosophical and moral points of view, and he also investigates the role of religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity, in the problem of human rights, showcasing favorable and unfavorable efforts that these religions have crafted to human rights were utilized to investigate the caste system and Dalits, as well as their history.

The Religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism is a work about the sociology of religion. It was written by Max Weber. In the book, the notion of varna shaped the Indian social order. It established a clear relationship between religious conviction and the segmentation of society into status groups. Weber then describes the Varna system. He focuses on Brahmins and explores why they have held the greatest position in Indian culture for so many generations. In terms of dharma, he

believes that Indian moral diversity differs greatly from the global ethics of Confucianism and Christianity. He observes that the varna system stifled the growth of urban status groupings.

Another work of Weber is *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. This classic compilation gathers his most important writings. This book begins with a detailed biographical article on Weber's life and career, followed by pieces on science, politics, power, faith, and social institutions. The book's key subjects include Power: Authority Systems; Class, Status, Politics; Bureaucracy, and so on. It also covers issues such as India, the Brahman and castes, Chinese intellectuals, and so on. Both of these texts will aid me in understanding caste and Dalits from Weber's perspective, as well as the social and political aspects of the caste system and Dalits.

Bayly's (1999) *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* uses a historical and anthropological perspective. The book attempts to explain the evolution and durability of India's caste system during the last 350 years. Unlike many other works on the issue, which are either extremely contentious or too specialized for non-specialists, this collection is aimed at students and the general public. This work addresses issues such as the historical beginnings of the caste system, Western orientalist and the colonial understanding of caste, the daily reality of caste in colonial India, and so on. This work will assist me in comprehending Bayly's viewpoint on the caste system and Dalits. It would also help me comprehend the condition of castes and Dalits during the Mughal and British eras.

Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus: The caste system and its implications* examine the caste stratification and the ascending propensity of lower castes to adopt the customs of higher castes. The fundamental premise of the Hindu caste system, according to Dumont, was the hierarchy. It was a religious hierarchy instead of a political hierarchy. Other important theological ideas were purity and pollution, as well as interconnectedness, in which parts are interconnected and tied to the whole. He claims that the caste system's philosophy is essentially opposed to our concept of an equal society and stems from the nature, circumstances, and constraints of realizing such a society. He emphasizes that we cannot comprehend the caste system just as a type of social stratification. This work will assist me in comprehending Dumont's viewpoint

on the caste system and Dalits, in addition to helping me with the research of the caste system and Dalits from the standpoints of purity and impurity.

In *A Philosophy of Hindu Rank from Rural West Bengal*, Davis extends the customary ideas of rank - usually linked with the discourse of caste - to the multiple worlds of the universe recognized by Hindu Bengalis. This would incorporate different life, such as Gods, humans, demonic beings, animals, plants, and objects, as well as the clusters into which man; in a community is categorized. Thus, according to Davis' understanding, all life forms are considered basically similar by Bengalis, differing only in the manner their unique physical aspect and behavioral code resemble that of Brahma, the apex deity in the Bengali cosmos. This is also true for the jati and the castes. This study will assist me in comprehending the work of Mavis, who developed the thesis of multiple types of existence associated with the caste system.

Ambedkar's work is Dr. *Babasaheb B Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Vol: 9*. In this work, he discusses how the British administration used untouchables as instruments to dominate India. Then he discusses the challenges that Dalits want to settle and the actions that untouchables want to take. He discusses the liberation of Dalits from Hinduism and warns against Gandhi since he does not wish to liberate them from it. Then he talks about how the Dalits would perish if they became a part of Hinduism in the future. They discussed how they would be discriminated against by the upper caste. This will help me understand Ambedkar's point of view as well as explore the Dalits in a more detailed manner. These works were used to investigate contemporary approaches to the caste system and Dalits.

A work of Sikand is *A New Indian Muslim Agenda: The Dalit Muslims and the All-India Backward Muslim Morcha*. In this work, he is talking to the Scheduled Castes, often known as Dalits, who make up about one-fifth of the Indian population. He also discusses how they are deemed untouchable by the caste Hindus and how they are unfortunate victims of India's most rigidly hierarchical social structure. Then he discusses how these Dalits have converted to other religions, namely Islam. As a result, the majority of Indian Muslims are low-caste converts from Dalits. He recently mentioned an increase in radical Dalit assertiveness. In terms of social and economic background, most Indian Muslims have a lot in common with Hindu Dalits. As a result,

his book discusses the 'new identity of Dalit Muslims,' which was developed in response to reservations.

In another work of Sikand, *Muslims in India since 1947: Islamic perspectives on inter-faith relations*, he talks about today's modern India and says that Muslims are reacting to the issue of religious plurality in a number of different ways. This book investigates the efforts of theologians and Muslim institutions to construct new conceptions of Islam in order to connect to people of other religions and contemporary society, as well as to address concerns like democracy and secularism. It investigates how a shared dilemma, defined by a feeling of confinement and the idea of being a persecuted minority, is giving rise to new forms of Islam, including some that aim to challenge non-Muslims and many others that urge for discussion, peace, and inter-faith unity. In chapters 7, 8, and 9, he discusses Muslim writings in which Dalits strive to persuade others to promote harmony in their society by eliminating prejudice. He also discusses the All-India Backward Muslim Morcha, an organization that is attempting to assist Dalit Muslims by providing them with a new identity as "Dalit Muslims." Finally, he discusses the Dalit Struggle for Freedom in Modern India. Both of these works will aid me in my investigation of Dalit Muslims and their struggle in modern India.

Ashok & Boopalan wrote *Indian Christians in Conflict: Dalit Christian Movement in Contemporary India*. In this work, they discuss the modern-day Dalit Christian movement in India. And they believe it's a struggle for social and religious identity. This study discusses caste among Christians as well as the historical context of social and religious strife. It also discusses the struggle of Dalit Christians to get rights and reservations from the Indian government. This effort will assist me in understanding the caste system among Christians in India and their fight for rights and reservations.

In Trivedi, Goli, & Fahimuddin's work *Does untouchability Exist among Muslims* they conducted a household survey in 14 regions of Uttar Pradesh to investigate contradicting allegations concerning the conduct of untouchability from non-Dalit Muslims and Hindus against Dalit Muslims in Uttar Pradesh. Untouchability is reported by a portion of Dalit Muslim survey participants in mealtime relationships, residence, social engagement, and entrance to holy sites. Surprisingly, a bigger number of non-Dalit Muslims back up these assertions. From this work, I will get to understand

discrimination and untouchability against Dalit Muslims. The above works were also used to investigate Dalit Muslims, and Dalit Christians and, their conversions.

Intiaz Ahmad, in his work *Caste and social stratification among the Muslims*, focused on the social stratification that occurred among Muslims in India. Then he compared it to the Hindu caste system. Endogamy and hereditary professions, for example, are prevalent in both Hindu and Muslim cultures in India. He speaks about Hindus who have converted to Islam. The *Kayastha*³ caste, for example, became Shaikh⁴ and Siddique⁵ after converting to Islam. They both belong to the highest caste of Muslims in India. And after those individuals converted to Islam, they were spread throughout 30 villages in India known as *kayasthana*. Shaikh and Siddique now have a wide range of occupations. They do, however, continue to practice their old rites and traditions. This is mostly owing to the Hindu culture's stronghold over them. This study will assist me in comprehending the caste-like characteristics seen among Indian Muslims. Furthermore, it will aid me in my exploration of Dalit Muslim identity in order to comprehend their situation in India.

³ It is a group consisting of a cluster of several different castes or sub-groups of different origins from India.

⁴ Shaikh caste is in second position in the Muslim caste, the third is Pathan, and first is Sayyad.

⁵ A caste who claims to be the descendants of Abu Bakr Siddiq, the first Muslim Caliph.

CHAPTER II

INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM AND DALITS

2.1. Introduction

Class stratification may be seen in various places of the world, but it becomes a significant and distinct issue when it is sanctioned and supported by sacred religious teachings. So, it serves as a key foundation for systematic hierarchy and unequal access to valued resources such as money, employment, power, and prestige. Interactions with people of various castes are likewise limited as a result (Sekhon, 2000: 39). As Thapar notes, a caste society must meet three conditions. The first is the recognition of social disparities. The second issue is that economic resources are dispersed unevenly. Third, a hierarchy founded on holy sacred scriptures is used to legitimize inequity (Thapar, 2015: 63-64).

There are numerous different ways to categorize individuals in India. For example, kinship, language, location, religion, and so on. Despite this, caste continues to be an important tool for social stratification, stigmatization, social exclusion, and discrimination (Jodhka & Shah, 2010: 100). As Susan Bayly notes, for more than 3000 years, caste has existed in India as a system of social stratification (Bayly, 1999:13). According to Dirks, “caste has always existed in Indian history since it defines India's essential traditions and constitutes a danger to India's modernity” (Dirks, 1992: 60). Abbe Dubois feels that the caste system is beneficial to India since it is the sole reason that Indians do not fall into the same barbaric state as their neighbors (Dirks, 1992: 62). J John Wilson, the missionary of the Church of Scotland, defines caste as “the soul and body of Hinduism” (Dirks, 1992: 65).

The caste system was employed not only to divide individuals into distinct groups but also to rank them in a hierarchical order. Therefore, Dalits were harassed and discriminated against in Indian society. This is why Dalits devised a variety of strategies to overcome prejudice. Converting to a new faith is one of them (John, 2001: 677). They attempted to convert to several religions over time, including Islam,

Buddhism, Christianity, and Sikhism. Hence, most Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Sikhs in India today are descended from Dalits and Shudras who converted (Sikand, 2001: 287). For example, one of the major conversion events that occurred in modern Dalit history was led by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. Ambedkar was an Indian jurist, economist, politician, and social reformer who battled injustice against Dalits by converting to Buddhism in 1956 with half a million people (Omvedt, G. 1980: 210-213). However, even after their conversions, as Ansari argues, Dalits faced discrimination from Muslims and Christians (Ansari, 1960: 35).

2.2. Varna System and Dalits

The social stratification in India that has its basis in varna is referred to as the varna system. The term varna comes from the Sanskrit language. It is taken from the character “vr”. The dictionary meaning of the character “vr” is to choose, select, classify, or count, and the dictionary meaning of the word varna is “color.” This term was originally used in sacred texts of Hindus. It is mostly used to categorize the social class divisions established during the Vedic period. Varna was mentioned for the first time in the Rigveda, hymn 90, verse 10. It was originally used to describe a being known as Purusha. This entity is thought to be the first created by fusing four varnas. Purusha's mouth is represented by the Brahmins. Following that, Kshatriyas represent its arms. Following the Kshatriyas are the Vaishyas, who represent its thighs. Shudras, who represent the feet, are the last in line. The varnas are classified into two groups (Chakravarty, 2003: 1-4). The first is *Savarna*, and the second is *Avarna*. *Savarna* refers to a group of people who belong to one of the four varnas. *Avarna* was a term used to describe people who did not belong to any of the four main varnas. Dalits, or the untouchables, fall under the *Avarna* category. This division of varnas has three main purposes. First, to assign different duties (jobs) and responsibilities to different varnas. Second, to preserve caste purity. Lastly, to ensure the everlasting order and prosperity of society and the cosmos (Jaiswal, 1991: 42-45).

2.2.1. Brahmins

Brahmin is the first of Hinduism's four major varnas. Rigveda includes the earliest mention of Brahmins as a social class. According to Rigveda, the deity is the creator;

who created Brahmins initially (Rigveda, 10.90). As a result, Brahmins are distinguished by their dominance. In order to control the whole caste system, the Brahmins employ their knowledge of the Vedas⁶, as well as the authority of sacrificial rites and rituals. Their primary job is to serve as priests at Hindu temples or during socio-religious rituals such as solemnizing a wedding with chants and prayers. However, they do have occupations such as teachers or gurus, as well as ayurvedic physicians. In the Rigveda, the term Brahmin also refers to a physician who cures and eliminates ailments (Rigveda, 10.99).

They justify their status in the caste system with respect to other castes because of these distinguishing characteristics. They also have an advantage because they were the first to be formed, and they possess the higher intellect and exclusive ritual ownership. They were esteemed and respected not just for their Brahmin birth but also for their abandonment of worldly life and development of divine attributes, and were considered to be always immersed in the meditation of God Brahman; thus they were named Brahmins (Smith, 1994: 48-49).

They will faithfully follow the Brahmacharya (celibacy) vow that had been imposed on them. Even married Brahmins were referred to as *Brahmachari* (celibate) for having sexual relations purely for the sake of reproduction and staying psychologically disconnected from the activity of intercourse. Some of the unique tasks and privileges of Brahmins include learning and teaching the Vedas (*Adhyayana*), accepting and offering gifts (*dana pratigraha*), and performing ceremonies in front of the holy fire while reciting sacred hymns from holy scripture (*Yajna*) (Kulkarni, 1964: 66-69).

Since they symbolize the connection between the supreme wisdom of the gods and the four varnas, Brahmins were the first picked as teachers for the newborn. Due to the fact that ancestral wisdom is maintained via teacher-student interaction, all people born in each varna will stay connected to the needs of their life. Brahmins were also known for their strength in eradicating ignorance while bringing all searchers to the pinnacle of absolute knowledge. The Brahmins, who were called Maha Rishi (elite priests),

⁶The four collections formed the earliest body of Indian scripture, consisting of the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda, which codified the ideas and practices of Vedic religion and laid down the basis of classical Hinduism.

were asked to advise rulers and the governance of their realms. All Brahmin males were permitted to get married to women from the first three varnas, but marrying a Shudra woman may result in the Brahmin's priesthood being severely jeopardized. Brahmin women were much more admired for their chastity and received unparalleled respect in society. A Brahmin lady is only allowed to marry another Brahmin; however, she is free to pick and choose the male of her liking. She is permitted to get married to a Kshatriya or a Vaishya only in extreme situations, but she is not permitted to marry a Shudra under any circumstances (Smith, 1994: 49-53).

The guidelines that a Brahmin must follow in his life are as follows: always being sincere, always adhering to the ceremonial purification rules, never harming any living thing while studying the Vedas, always being kind yet unyielding in approach, always maintaining composure, and treating everyone with kindness and liberality. Even if a Brahmin performs all the ceremonies and rituals, he will not be united with the supreme deity if he doesn't have the above-mentioned virtues. This is because living a virtuous life is more essential than performing ceremonies and rituals since virtue will ultimately lead to liberation or moksha (Olivelle, 1999:90-91).

When accepting gifts, a Brahmin must not take weapons, drugs, or alcohol as gifts. A Brahmin may convey Vedic knowledge to a teacher, family, friend, elder, or anybody who offers an exchange of information or pays for such study. A Brahmin may also work in agriculture, trade, and lend money on interest, however; in times of distress, a Brahmin may engage in the vocation of a warrior. A Brahmin should accept any work to support himself but resist Shudra jobs; nevertheless, if his life is in danger, a Brahmin may support himself by embracing Shudra jobs as well. A Brahmin must not trade in slaughtered animals, humans, meat, skins, weapons, barren cows, sesame seeds, pepper, and milk products, even in times of danger (Olivelle, 1999:89-94).

2.2.2. Kshatriyas

Kshatriyas are the second caste after the Brahmins. They are mostly kings and warriors by profession. They collaborated with Brahmins to govern their own kingdoms. The sacred books command the kings to administer the realm justly. In order to guard and

protect his citizens, the Hindu king must be a warrior. A Kshatriya is known for his physical and martial power (Smith, 1994: 47).

The country was ruled by a tribal king in Vedic India. This king was often referred to as Rajan. His position was mostly hereditary. Typically, the king was chosen by a tribal assembly (also known as the Samiti). Women were also present at this assembly. Rajan's primary duty was to protect the clan, its people, and its livestock. All of this was accomplished with the assistance of a priest, but he was not allowed to maintain a formal army. But the term Rajan was replaced by Kshatriya towards the end of the Vedic period, and the term Kshatriya represented authority over a particular territory (Thapar, 2002: 63-64).

Kshatriyas is a Sanskrit word that means "to rule" or "to be in charge." Kshatriyas are known for their bravery, discipline, alertness, and honesty. Priests and warriors were both powerful and superior to their peers. Both Brahmins and Kshatriyas were regarded as ruling and governing classes. Brahmins, on the other hand, were superior to Kshatriyas in every way. This is because Brahmins do not need to rely on others, but Kshatriyas must rely on Brahmins. As a result, Brahmins can exist in the absence of rulers, but rulers cannot survive in the absence of Brahmins. Kshatriyas are unable to carry out their responsibilities without the support of Brahmins (Smith, 1994: 42).

A Kshatriya needed to master weapons, combat, discipline, abstinence, governance, moral behavior, justice, and leadership. All Kshatriyas were sent to a Brahmin monastery at a young age until they were fully trained with the necessary knowledge of the world. They would learn management in addition to the penance of the Brahmins. Their essential role was to safeguard their land, fight against invasions, execute justice, rule righteously, and promote joy and tranquility to all their people, and they should seek advice from their Brahmin mentors on problems of national sovereignty and moral dilemmas. With mutual permission, they were permitted to marry a lady from any caste. However, a Kshatriya or a Brahmin lady should be preferred; Shudra ladies were not prohibited from marrying a Kshatriya. Kshatriya females, just like their male partners, were furnished with masculine skills, were well-versed in battle, had the authority to carry out responsibilities in the king's absence, and were well-versed in sovereign matters. A Kshatriya lady was perfectly capable and

strong enough to protect a nation in times of crisis and very good at teaching her offspring the ability to combat (Thapar, 2002: 65-66).

2.2.3. Vaishyas

Vaishyas are the merchants and farmers who come after the Kshatriyas in the caste system. The Vaishyas are in charge of society. They ensure the well-being of society, as it is represented by people who work as farmers, merchants, money lenders, and business owners. Vaishyas are also twice-born in the caste system. Like the Kshatriyas, they go to the Brahmins' monastery to study the norms of a righteous life. They strive to avoid intentional or unintentional misbehavior in their daily lives. Cattle husbandry is one of the Vaishyas' most prestigious jobs for them. They have a variety of animals in their possession. Furthermore, because of their ownership of the kingdom's excellent cows, elephants, and horses, as well as their management, they had an impact on the people's standard of living and their consequent prosperity (Smith, 1994: 54-57).

Vaishyas would often collaborate closely with the country's authorities. This was done in order to analyze, execute, and continually improve the living conditions of the country's inhabitants. This was accomplished by presenting them with profitable economic opportunities. As a result, the Kshatriya ruler would be preoccupied with addressing issues arising from Vaishya's disputes. Vaishyas were originally given conventional agricultural and cattle-rearing occupations, however; gradually, with time, they became landlords, merchants, and moneylenders. As a result, it was their duty to supply food for those upper-caste people. In comparison to the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas were weak and easily exploited (Sharma, 2003: 67-70).

Vaishya wives often assisted their husbands in business, cattle husbandry, and agriculture. They also shared their partners' employment responsibilities. They had the freedom to pick a partner from among the three castes. Choosing a Shudra, on the other hand, was strongly opposed. In the event of her partner's early demise, a Vaishya widow had equal rights to family properties (Thapar, 2002: 66-68).

2.2.4. Shudras

The Shudra varna denotes the final category in the varna system. They were thought to be the foundation of a flourishing economy. This is because they are regarded for their faithful performance of life obligations prescribed by Hindu sacred books. The views and opinions of scholars about Shudras are the most diverse, owing to what appear to be stricter limits on their behavior. This is also due to the fact that in ancient times, they were permitted to listen and memorize the Vedas. They were also permitted to enter a monastery to study the Vedas. They were also permitted to assist Brahmin priests in rituals arranged by monarchs in ancient times. However, this was regarded as prohibition to a considerable extent (Smith, 1994: 49-53).

Shudras, unlike the other three higher castes, are not regarded as twice-born. As a result, unlike the other three varnas, they are not compelled to wear the sacred thread on their body. A Shudra man was only allowed to marry a Shudra woman, whereas a Shudra woman could marry from any of the four varnas. Shudras would serve Brahmins in the monastery. Then they will also serve the Kshatriyas in palaces. Lastly, they will also work for the Vaishyas in commercial pursuits. While the Shudras are born from the supreme being's feet, educated folks of higher castes would always see them as a critical part of the community because an ordered society would be readily jeopardized if the feet were incredibly frail and clumsy (Sharma, 1990: 101-103).

Shudras, on the other hand, carried out their lords' commands without question. This was due to their understanding of reaching liberation or moksha. They had to perform their specified responsibilities in order to get moksha. This also aided their loyalty when serving the upper caste people. Shudra ladies also served as the queen's attendants, as well as their personal friends and guardians. They will also accompany the princesses to other kingdoms in connection with their marriage to other countries. Some Shudras were also permitted to work as farmers, traders, and in jobs previously held by Vaishyas. These exceptions from life responsibilities, however, would be made only under extraordinary cases, such as when the economy seemed to be declining rapidly. The Shudras were admired by certain educated higher caste individuals for their selflessness, as well as for their exceptional effort and loyalty (Thapar, 2002: 68-71).

2.3. Jati

Jati, also spelled jat, caste, in Hindu society. The term is derived from the Sanskrit *jāta*, “born” or “brought into existence,” and indicates a form of existence determined by birth. Each jati earns a living through a distinct vocation. People are born into a caste and cannot alter their caste status. Then, based on their jati, they inherit a vocation. This jati system is maintained through a complicated ceremonial system that determines the nature of social interactions among the jatis. This also ensures the survival of the hereditary vocation and its hierarchical ranking. There are several norms governing appropriate vocational pursuits, behavior within and between castes, and weddings, among other things (Sekhon, 2000,44).

Although there are only four varnas, the number of jatis is uncertain. Some researchers estimate that there are roughly 3,000 jatis, although the exact number is unknown (Thorat & Joshi, 2020: 39). Two jatis can be combined into one, or they can be subdivided into many more. As a result, the ranking of jati is not as absolute as the varnas. Both jati and varnas, however, are hereditary and decided by birth. A person's caste cannot be changed, and he must remain in it until he dies. Accordingly, it is believed that if an individual lived according to caste laws in his previous life, he would be reincarnated in the superior caste in his future life. He can only change his caste in his future life. Caste mobility is completely forbidden and may only be inherited; it cannot be obtained via any other methods. This is due to the fact that changing one's caste entails re-ranking oneself. This also implies that by changing his caste, he may obtain access to all of the benefits of the upper caste. As a result, the upper class cannot tolerate this caste transition. However, unlike varnas, there are certain relocation exceptions in jati. Marriage to a person from a different jati or adoption is two ways to change one's jati. However, of course, it comes with its own set of obstacles and hardships (An're, 1996: 25). Moreover, occupation alone cannot explain the origins of jati; endogamy and a fear of losing one's identity, fueled by *Totem and Taboo*, gave birth to jati. Because of the fear of losing authority, endogamy has grown in favor. As a result, people married only amongst their trusted circle. Similarly, fear of losing one's identity or purity pushed individuals to create the jati system (Jha, 1991: 27-29).

2.4. Biradari

The term biradari is an Urdu language word. It comes from the Persian language “baradari,” which means brother. The term biradari means brotherhood (Ahmed, 2009: 81-82). It has the same traits and properties as jati; this term is largely used by Muslims. Like jati, Biradari is endogamous, and it has a hierarchy. However, unlike jati, biradari is a small kinship group or brotherhood. This small kinship group shares a common male ancestor. As a result, we may conclude that it has a similar meaning to jati. This is a stratification based on ethnicity. The Hindu Caste can be compared to this one, but they are not identical. It is similar to the Hindu Caste system in terms of endogamy and hierarchical group rankings. Yet, it lacks the concepts of purity and pollution, as well as a priestly caste and ideological backing from religious scriptures. Therefore, biradari is analogous to the Hindu caste system (Ali, 1978: 32).

2.5. Origin and History of the Indian Caste System

Indo-Aryan nomadic people arrived in Northern India in 1700 BCE, bringing with them a religion focused on priestly incantations and religious sacrifices to God. They also carried their social customs to India. Their faith was distinct from that of the native Indians (Webster, 2007: 33). They utilized the caste system to subjugate local Indians. Their Aryan religion rationalized and legitimized the caste structure. Thus, the seed of the caste system was sown in India. As a result, Aryan⁷ people regard themselves as nobility, whereas native Indians are considered inferior to them (Thapar, 2015: 87).

The religious systems and practices of the Aryans distinguished them from the indigenous non-Aryans, also known as Dasyus⁸ and Meleccha⁹. Mleccha means "foreigners" or "barbarians," and Dasas¹⁰/Dasyus means "other" or "slave." It began as a simple idea of superior Aryans and inferior non-Aryans who were conquered by the Aryans. When the Aryans invaded India, they simply divided the population in half.

⁷ A member of the group of people who spoke an Indo-European language.

⁸ Dasyu, Sanskrit Dāsa (“servant”), were an aboriginal people in India who were encountered by the Indo-European-speaking peoples who entered northern India about 1500 BCE.

⁹ People of foreign extraction in ancient India.

¹⁰ Servant, an aboriginal people in India.

The superior (Aryans), and the lower (Dasa). Nevertheless, towards the end of the Vedic period, i.e., circa 1500 – c. 500 BCE, it was four rather than two classes (Doniger, 2010: 116-18). Later on, the ideology of varna supported and institutionalized today's Indian caste system. As a result, the Aryans rose to greater social status, while the Dasa fell to lower social status (Thapar, 2015: 133-137).

As noted, the caste system originated in ancient India, although it was not linear throughout history but rather dynamic and evolving. It was mostly reshaped and changed by members of the ruling aristocratic castes. This shift occurred in medieval India, then during the reign of the Mughal Empire, then during the colonial period, and finally in modern India.

During the early Vedic period, there was no caste division based on profession. Still, as the Vedic period progressed, caste prejudice became more prevalent. Dasas were afterward renamed Shudras. Aryas were transformed into Vaishyas, and two new castes emerged: Brahmins and Kshatriyas (Sharma, 1958: 29-31). The power of Brahmins and Kshatriyas began to grow during the later Vedic era, between 1000 and 600 BCE when they were given special positions during rites and rituals. They gradually rose above the Vaishyas and Shudras to become more recognized castes. Vaishyas and Shudras were both stigmatized by Brahmins and Kshatriyas (Sharma, 1958: 58-60).

Castes were divided into groups based on their vocations from 500 BCE to 300 BCE. Brahmins and Kshatriyas were regarded as high-ranking people in society. They were employed in high-level positions such as teaching, accountancy, and writing. The lowest castes were referred to as chandalas. They were assigned low-ranking occupations such as weavers and sweepers. But, at the time, the occupation differentiation was not rigorous and severe enough (Chakravati, 1958: 357-59). Around the same time, during the Maurya Dynasty in 321 BCE, guilds began to appear in Indian society, which developed in jatis during the post-Mauryan period (Gupta, 2000: 212).

Between 300 and 650 CE, castes were divided based on peoples' color and behavior. As Heltebeitel explains, Brahmins had a white complexion and were believed to behave

decently and truthfully. Kshatriyas were red, and they acted like they were brave and fearless people. Vaishyas were yellow, and they acted like folks who preferred to live a simple life raising cattle. Finally, Shudras were dark, and acted violently, and were typically filthy (Heltebitel, 2011: 529-32).

Many works and commentaries were written between the years 650 and 1000. They were written with the intent of interpreting and explaining religious scriptures in a variety of ways. It was at this time that the concept of untouchability became prevalent. The upper castes kept the lower castes apart. Almost everyone believed in and implemented the caste system in their daily lives. Caste was the law, and upper-caste individuals enforced it in ways that benefitted them the most (Derrett, 1968: 162).

From 1000 until 1750, the majority of the Indian continent was dominated by the Islamic empire. Prior to the coming of Islam, India's caste system was an intrinsic component of daily life. As a result, many people adopted Islam in order to abandon their low-caste status. (Maclean, 1989: 30-31). During this time, however, members from lower castes could also become warriors and soldiers, not just Kshatriyas (Jackson, 2003: 14-15). People from the same caste worked in a variety of vocations, including tax collection, agriculture, and military service. These folks, who worked in a variety of occupations, were all from the Jat caste (Habib, 2002: 250 - 51).

As Susan Bayly points out, the caste system was never rigorous and strict before the 17th century. It evolved into a rigorous, ritualized system of social stratification towards the end of the Mughal empire and throughout the colonial period. This is in the 18th and 19th centuries. According to Bayly, the governing elites of the post-Mughal empire are to blame for the rigidity of the caste system. As they attempted to achieve power by partnering with kings and priests and segregating people into castes (Bayly, 1999: 25-28). In the 17th century, the East India Company arrived in India with colonial authorities. They attempted to obtain power and many other economic advantages by maintaining and contributing to Hindu-Muslim tensions. As they became involved with kings and priests, they established regulations that were distinguished by religion and the Caste System (Peers, 2012: 104 - 108).

During the colonial period, the British used caste as their administrative force and governing structure (Bayly, 1999: 25-27). They counted and classified people based on their caste. British officials chose to use caste as a criterion to determine who was eligible for which job (Bayly, 1999: 125-26). Many people were labeled as criminals just because their caste appeared to be prone to violence and rebellion. Colonial administrators calculated land tax rates based on caste (Pels & Saleminck, 2000: 120 - 22). During the British time, it was established as a strict legal system. The British enumerated caste during the census, resulting in a defined system. Only upper caste persons were given administrative and governing positions by the British (Dirks, 2001: 198-202). The British class division in England was so rigorous that it inspired many to acknowledge and support the Indian caste system.

Yet, under British control, many Indians, even those from lower castes, had opportunities for education and the development of their own beliefs. As a result, numerous Indian philosophers and reformers contributed their unique ideas. Hence, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, many reformers recognized that the caste system was an issue and proposed various solutions to overcome it (Galanter, 1984: 22-23).

2.6. Caste System in Hindu Sacred Texts

Hinduism has a plethora of religious scriptures. Many religious writings are divided into a variety of texts. The primary and most important text is divided into two parts. The first one is the revealed texts (Shruti), and the second one is the remembered texts (Smriti). Revealed texts are the divine words that were heard by the primordial sages. On the other hand, the remembered texts were later on created by human beings. In addition to the Shruti and Smritis, Hindu scriptures include Shastras, Sutras, Tantras, Puranas, Itihasas, Stotras, Subhashitas, and others. Vedas come at the top of the revealed (Shruti) texts. Then the Vedas are divided into four texts. The first one is the Rig Veda; next comes the Yajurveda; after that, the Sama Veda; and lastly, the Atharva Veda. The earliest of the four Vedas, the Rig Veda, was written around 1500 BCE. And compiled around 600 BCE. The remembered (Smriti) texts are the post-Vedic texts. The two great epics, Ramayana and the Mahabharata, come under the remembered texts. Bhagavad Gita, which is a part of Mahabharata, is also considered

important by Hindus. Dharma-shastra also comes under the category of remembered texts.

In this section, we will examine Hindu sacred texts such as Vedas, Manu smriti, Manawa dharmasastra, Dharma Shastras¹¹, Brahaspati, Chandogya Upanishad, and Katyayana to have a better understanding of how the caste system and Dalits have been discussed and depicted in Hindu sacred literature. The primary purpose for studying these sacred texts is their inclusion of a caste structure. Some go into great length about the caste system, while others only go over the basics. As a result, we shall examine them based on the content of the caste system.

2.6.1. Vedas (1500-800 BCE)

The Vedas do not go into great detail on the caste system. Only the Purusha verse is mentioned in the Rig Veda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Athar Vada, in different forms and with different words but with the same meaning. Aside from that, there is no particular or detailed reference to the caste system in the Vedas. We shall not go into depth about the caste system in the Vedas because they do not say much about the caste system.

When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they apportion him? What do they call his mouth, his two arms and thighs and feet? His mouth became the Brahmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born (Rigveda, XC: 11-16).

Therefore, the Purusha verse only appears once in all the four Vedas in Rigveda (10.7.90.11-16), Samaveda Samhita (6.4), and Atharvaveda Samhita (19.6), Yajurveda Samhita (30.1-16).

2.6.2. Katyayana (1000 BCE)

It is one of the remembered (Smriti) texts. It is named after its writer Katyayana. The smritis are usually named after their authors, such as the smritis of Brahaspati and

¹¹ A Brahmanical collection of rules of life, often in the form of a metrical law book.

Kâtyâyana. Katyayana was the 9th of 18 scholars who are credited with writing dharma-related smriti books. It is also a law book, just like Manu Smriti. The main subject of this book was civil and religious laws and rules for Vedic sacrifices.

Katyayana talks about the enslaving system. Therefore, it says that a Brahmin cannot become a slave, however; a Shudra can become a slave of any of the upper three castes. Kshatriyas could only become slaves to Brahmins, and Vaishyas could only become slaves to Brahmins and Kshatriyas (Katyayana, 715-16.)

2.6.3. Chandogya Upanishad (800-600 BCE)

Another religious scripture is the Chandogya Upanishad. The Upanishads also come under the category of revealed texts; they are also known as Vedanta. The Upanishads, which were composed between 800 and 400 BCE, represent a continuation of Vedic thought. It is a passage found in Hinduism's Chandogya Brahmana of the Sama Veda. It is one of the most ancient Upanishads. It ranks 9th among the 108 Upanishads. The Chandogya Upanishad is an anthology of works that must have existed as independent manuscripts before being put together by one or more ancient Indian sages into a bigger volume. The Chandogya Upanishad addresses various facets of Hindu philosophy, such as Om chanting, good and evil, space, the cosmos as a whole, the Soul and Self, oneness with the world, and Brahman.

The fifth caste, the Dalits (chandalas), are also discussed in this text. They are referred to as chandalas. Because of their poor behavior in their former lifetimes, they are considered casteless or outcasts. They were both unseeable and untouchable, with no access to the privileges enjoyed by the upper castes (Chandogya Upanishads, 5.10.7). Manu Smriti, on the other hand, referred to them as Daysu since they did not come from the Supreme Being's body (Manu. X. 45). It is forbidden to touch someone from the lower caste (Vishnu, v. 104). All of the above texts demonstrate that Dalits' lives were destined to be difficult if they were born into a Dalit household. And he has to deal with all types of prejudice throughout his life.

2.6.4. Brahaspati (600-500 BCE)

Brahaspati is an ancient Sanskrit text named after its author Brahaspati. In Indian tradition, 18 scholars are credited with writing dharma-related smriti books. Brahaspati was the 10th of them. Like Manu Smriti, Brahaspati is a law book. It was composed in the 6th century BCE. This is a later addition to legal works such as Manu Smriti and many other law books. Brahaspati discusses several laws, such as debt laws, master-servant laws, purchase and sales laws, defamation laws, assault laws, and so on.

According to Brahaspati, abusing Shudras will not result in any penalty for a Brahmin. On the other hand, if a Shudra insults a Vaishya, he will receive the least severe penalty, and if he insults a Brahmin, he will receive the most severe punishment. If two persons mistreat each other, as long as their castes are equal, they will face the same punishment (Brahaspati, XX. 5-11). We can plainly see that the Brahmins were granted authority and privileges, while lower caste people were subjected to extremely severe punishments for minor offenses.

2.6.5. Manu Smriti (200 BCE and 200 CE)

Dharma Shastra is a category of Sanskrit texts on law and behavior that refers to Dharma treatises. There are around 100 Dharma Shastras, and each of the Dharma Shastras has a different and conflicting point of view.

Manu smriti, often known as Manawa Dharmasastra or laws of Manu, is the earliest Indian legal treatise and constitution among the several Dharma shastras. Manu Smriti is one of the most significant scriptures for understanding the caste system. We examine the caste system in Manu Smriti mainly because the structure of subjects and contents of the Manu Smriti indicate that it is primarily aimed at the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Manu Smriti has 1,034 verses that talk about the laws and attributes of Brahmins and 971 verses regarding Kshatriyas. The laws and norms of Vaishyas and Shudras are also mentioned in the book, but with fewer verses than the higher caste.

Manu Smriti begins by explaining how the world came into being. The universe was said to be in darkness and a profound slumber (Manu, 1.5). Following that, the

Supreme Being, the Creator, created all the components of the world by himself, thereby banishing the darkness (Manu, 1.6). Then, in order to make the universe more prosperous, he made Brahmins from his mouth, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishyas from his thighs, and Shudras from his feet (Manu, 1.31).

Accordingly, as Ghose explains, the Supreme Being formed four varnas from his body parts, but Dalits were excluded. Because Dalits have no bodily connection to the creator or Supreme Being, they were thus created unborn. All of the other castes are born from his bodily parts. Dalits were considered filthy and untouchable since they were not born from the same body. As a result, they do not belong to the four-fold varna system (Ghose, 2003: 88).

A Shudra should only marry another Shudra in marriage (Manu, 111.13). However, twice-born¹² males can marry women of any caste, but marriage between equal castes is preferred (Manu, 111.12). If a Kshatriya enters a Brahmin's residence during a house visit, the Brahmin may serve him food according to his wish, but he must eat after a Brahmin has eaten (Manu, 3.111). A Vishay or Shudra, on the other hand, can only eat with servants if they come as guests (Manu, 111.112). If a Brahmin is unable to live as a priest, he may live according to the law applicable to Kshatriyas (Manu, X. 75). If a Kshatriya is unable to support himself through his work, he may live according to the rule that applies to Vaishyas (Manu, X. 95). If a Vaishya is unable to support himself through his work, he may live according to Shudra law, but the prohibited acts of Shudras do not apply to him (Manu, X. 98). If a Shudra is unable to serve the upper caste, he might support himself via handicrafts (Manu, X. 99). If the Vaishyas and Shudras do not carry out their assigned responsibilities and jobs, the world would be thrown into disarray (Manu, VIII. 37).

2.6.6. Manawa Dharmasastra (200 BCE and 200 CE)

Manawa Dharmasastra (Manu smriti) is considered to be the most influential Hindu law literature in India. The common term for the work is Manu-smriti, although it is

¹² The concept is premised on the belief that a person is first born physically and, at a later date, is born for a second time spiritually, usually when he undergoes the ritual of passage that initiates him into a school for Vedic studies.

formally known as Manawa Dharmasastra. In this text, the Dalits are referred to as chandalas (untouchables). Although other texts do not mention Dalits, Manawa Dharmasastra tells us a great deal about Dalits.

Manawa Dharmasastra emphasizes maintaining proper behavior and discipline. It was a law that applied to all castes equally. Dalits had no sense of discipline since they were no different than dogs and pigs. As a result, untouchables (chandalas) were purposefully excluded from the varna system. They didn't fit in with the Brahmins and other elite castes (Manawa Dharmasastra: 1.31, 10.4, 4.79, 12.55). Chandalas were told to stay outside of the city. They were only able to rear donkeys and dogs. They should dress in the clothing of the dead. They must rely on others to feed them. They should eat from broken vessels. Other castes were warned to stay away from them at all costs. They should only marry people of their own kind. They are not permitted to go out at night in the village or town (Manawa Dharmasastra:10.51-55).

Shudras experience the same prejudice since they must serve the upper caste people in a subservient manner (Manawa Dharmasastra: 9.334-335). Shudras were subjected to similar limitations, such as having to consume leftover food from upper caste people, wearing old clothing from upper caste people, and using old household furnishings from upper caste people in their dwellings. They were not permitted to accumulate money (Manawa Dharmasastra: 10.123-125).

As previously said, good behavior was highly essential, and consequences were imposed if someone acted inappropriately. The harshness of the penalty was decided by the criminal's caste. The penalty becomes more severe as one's caste falls lower. If a person from a lower caste sits next to someone from a higher caste, his buttocks will be marked. If he spits in the direction of a higher caste member, his lips will be chopped off (Manawa Dharmasastra: VIII.279-283).

CHAPTER III

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO THE CASTE SYSTEM AND DALITS

The second part of this thesis focuses on various modern and contemporary perspectives on the caste system and the Dalits of prominent worldwide scholars. The primary reason for choosing these individuals is that they are well-known figures in their respective fields who have thoroughly researched the caste system and Dalits. We will observe how various people have varied perspectives on the caste system and Dalits. Some have researched the caste system and Dalits from an outside viewpoint, while others, such as Ambedkar and Imtiaz Ahmed, have given their insider perspectives on the caste system and Dalits. Outsiders' perceptions of the caste system are based on what they have read or heard. At the same time, insider perspectives on the caste system are based on their own experiences with the caste system and Dalits. For example, Ambedkar was a Dalit himself; hence his opinions and theories are based on his own experiences. Because they are from the caste and Dalit communities, they are considered insiders.

In this chapter, we also observe how different scholars have established various theories about the origin, development, and aspects of the caste system and Dalits. For instance, Susan Bayly discusses its development and expansion, whereas Louis Dumont studies the caste system and its structure based on the purity-pollution aspect of caste. We will discuss not only the approaches and perspectives of famous people about the caste system and Dalits but also the views and approaches of other less famous scholars and authors who have also examined the caste system and Dalits. We shall also explore the conversion side of the caste system, where some attempt to convert to other faiths while some Hindus attempt to persuade converts to revert to Hinduism. The major goal of this chapter is to comprehend the many perspectives and ideas of various researchers and writers from across the world on the caste system and Dalits. As a result, this chapter will give us the knowledge we need to understand and analyze the caste system and Dalits from many different angles.

3.1. Max Weber (d.1920)

Max Weber was a German sociologist who is famously known for studying and exploring the concept of caste, class, and status, among other things. He studied several global religions, including those of India, China, and ancient Judaism, with a focus on their economic implications and social stratification. In his book *The Religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (1958), he discusses caste and the social structure of India, where he delves into the concept of status and caste. Weber studied the notion of caste and identified it to be a status rather than a class. In his book, he referred to Hinduism and the caste system as a hindrance to capitalism, and he thought that the Indian caste system was a roadblock to societal advancement. In addition, in his essays *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (1946), he explores social divisions, norms, and rules as they pertain to the caste system. As a result, we study Weber because he is one of the prominent persons who have made significant contributions to the subject of sociology in terms of the caste system.

The caste system, according to Max Weber, is the outcome of Brahmanical theodicy. In ancient and medieval India, the caste system defined both productivity and property. He claims that the caste system has persisted in India since ancient times, owing to the tremendous influence of Brahmins. According to him, the notion of a caste system was first completely created and then absorbed into Indian culture. He goes on to claim that the caste system was not developed as a result of any economic circumstance. On the contrary, it was developed by rational thinking of Brahmanical theodicy since it incorporated both the notion of karma and the Hindu Caste System as a legal institution (Weber, 1958: 131).

Weber was particularly interested in Hinduism and its influence on India's societal structure. Caste, he claims, is distinct from other social organizations like tribes, guilds, and social classes. Tribal people labor in a variety of occupations, however; Hindu religious books determine the occupations of its caste members. Moreover, unlike the caste system, guilds were not inherited and were not accompanied by sacrificial rites. Ritual boundaries, he claims, are defined by religious beliefs (Weber, 1958: 38).

He refers to caste as a closed-status group. He distinguishes between caste and class by stating that a class is a group of individuals who share similar economic circumstances in terms of specific interests. Caste, on the other hand, is distinct in that the rank in the caste system signifies a level of social respect or a lack thereof. This is influenced by a certain way of living. He claims that the caste system's obligations and restrictions have been increased to the maximum extent feasible. The caste system is governed by a variety of barriers and restrictions, such as who should marry whom, who should dine together and who should not, what should be consumed, and so on (Weber, 1958: 39-40).

According to Weber, Brahmins were a small group of individuals who were in charge of Hindu rites throughout the Vedic period. As a result, they gained power over other castes. Kshatriyas were warriors who rose through the ranks to become Knights. Vaishyas were akin to European commoners. Shudras were enslaved laborers with no rights. He also describes a number of sub-castes inside these four primary castes. He makes some contradictory comments, such as claiming that opposing castes compete to advance their rank. This is contradictory because people are compelled to remain in the same caste and are unable to alter their status. Dharma, as he claims, is the most fundamental part of the caste system. Because dharma assigns a member a set of ceremonial tasks that he must carry out, this responsibility is bestowed on him by Hinduism's holy books. Other dogmas, such as karma and samsara¹³, make it even more vital to fulfilling one's tasks if one wishes to have a happy existence in the future incarnation (Weber, 1958: 58-65).

From the perspective of Atharvaveda, Weber discusses the belief in soul transmission (samsara). It is mentioned in Atharvaveda:

One who conducts noble actions obtains noble lives in the next births with strong a body and sharp intellect. Those who conduct bad deeds get birth to lower species. To experience the fruits of past actions is a natural trait of the soul. After death, the soul resides in *Vayu* (air), *Jala* (water), *Aushadhi* (medicine) etc. and again enters the womb to take next birth (Atharvaveda, 5.1.2)

¹³ The cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound.

According to Weber, the notion of soul transmission and reincarnation into other living forms, particularly animals, is more complicated than the concept of heaven and hell. He claims that the transmission of souls from humans to animals resulted from the racist idea of the Aryans. When Aryans encountered the dark-skinned native Indians, they assumed that monkeys and men looked the same. As a result, the belief in samsara was born (Weber, 1958: 119).

According to Weber, a Hindu has several lifetimes and an endless sequence of births and deaths. This is because he determines his next life circumstances based on his actions in this life, and this is the most coherent interpretation of the karma concept. He claims that there is no such thing as "accidental birth" or "birth that is not determined by his past life activities," which may be used to refute the karma system (Weber, 1958: 120). From these, we can infer that a person who converts to other religions yet continues to practice his previous religion's rituals do so because of the karma idea.

As Weber argues, an orthodox Hindu will only pass judgment on the lowest caste person based on his past life crimes. As a result, he will make the untouchables unclean for the sake of atoning for the misdeeds of his previous life. Untouchables, on the other hand, will follow caste laws with the aim of having a happy life in their future incarnation. As a result, he will become unclean and a servant of the upper caste. This leads to unfairness and discrimination, all because people were required to fulfill caste obligations and responsibilities for the sake of atoning for previous lifetimes and ensuring a good reincarnation in future life. Accordingly, as Weber notes, breaking caste restrictions can result in reincarnation as a dog or worm, while following the rules can result in reincarnation as a Brahmin (Weber, 1958: 121-22).

In India, as Weber claims, there are two social structures. The first is a collection of wise and knowledgeable individuals. The second category of individuals is the uncultivated peasantry. According to him, the caste structure in India is formed by the combination of a person's racial traits and visibly diverse racial characteristics (Weber, 1958: 124). Thus, for Weber, only imperialism can save Indians from the dangers of the caste system. The same solution was also underlined by Karl Marx (Weber, 1958: 325). However, Louis Dumont criticized Weber for referring to caste as having a racial

origin and for being ethnocentric. He also criticized Weber for treating religion as an afterthought to the caste system (Dumont, 1980: 62-3).

Many diverse factors, according to Weber, establish status differentiation. For example, societal norms and rules. Rituals are also one of the key causes of its survival. It means that status groupings grow into social strata, which subsequently evolve into castes (Weber, 1946: 191). The social divisions are maintained in such a way that simply coming into contact with someone from a lower caste renders higher caste persons unclean. As a result, they are forced to separate themselves from the lower castes in order to retain their social standing as pure people (Weber, 1946: 188-189).

Weber was criticized for omitting a crucial fact: not all Brahmins lived in the same way because some were princely chaplains, some were counselors, and yet others were theological instructors. Then, Weber concedes that just a few members from the status group occupied the characteristic positions in India (Weber, 1958: 139-40).

To determine if Hinduism led to capitalism, he investigated Hinduism thoroughly and found that because Hindu Emperors fostered the caste system, independent guilds and cities were weakened. As a result of the caste system, all Western aspects, such as individual permissions for training, engagement in market transactions, and citizenship, were cut off and received little attention (Weber, 1958: 131). According to Weber, the untouchables obeyed the caste laws and rituals because of the karma and samsara concepts and were hesitant to improve and better their lives. According to him, Indian literature has grown into something distinct from Western literature. He claims that the metaphysical and cosmological substructures of Indian literature provide a method of obtaining salvation from this world (Weber, 1958: 147).

3.2. Susan Bayly

Susan Bayly, a world-renowned scholar of Historical Anthropology, is one of the central figures in the South Asian caste system. Besides many other works, she is the author of *Asian Voices in a Post-Colonial Age: Vietnam, India and Beyond* and *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, in which she examines the history of the Indian caste system in the modern era.

According to Bayly, as she examines in her later work, caste developed as a sociological concept when colonial administrators and thinkers attempted to explain, theorize, and understand the caste system (Bayly, 1999: 104). As a result, all of the previously existing religious practices, rituals, and caste standards were tightened and compounded. Caste as an ideology was embedded in government institutions. Both the Indian and British governments took the lead in this process. Race was more prominent than caste until the colonial period emerged (Bayly, 1999: 4).

This is because, as she notes, caste was not rigidly followed in the Hindu lifestyle before the colonial invasion. During the post-Mughal period, from the 18th century onward, caste was formed and strictly adhered to. Also, the post-Mughal era witnessed a time of lawlessness in India, when all the elites of society cooperated with the monarchs and priests to acquire more authority by rigorously dividing people based on caste (Bayly, 1999: 25-28). When the East India Company arrived in India, they used the same tactic of dividing people based on caste in order to achieve political and economic dominance (Bayly, 1999: 28-31).

The law developed by colonial authorities in collaboration with the Brahmins was one of the key reasons why caste was strictly and firmly imposed throughout the colonial period. This was mostly due to the fact that literate Brahmins functioned as translators for colonial authorities. When it came to drafting the laws, they translated sacred Hindu texts, which colonial rulers regarded as authoritative sources. The translation by Brahmins was accomplished in such a way that the Brahmins benefited the most. As a result, Brahmins gained a significant amount of authority in Indian society (Bayly, 1999: 100). The census that took place during the colonial period was another reason why caste was severely enforced. During the census, Indians were classified primarily by caste, tribe, and religion. As a result, each individual is assigned to a certain caste (Bayly, 1999: 124).

Another reason why colonial authorities rigorously adhered to caste was that jati served as the foundation of caste ethnology throughout the colonial era. In India, individuals were counted and classified using jati. The census included various subgroups of jati that were categorized into a variety of occupational categories (Bayly, 1999: 125-126). Accordingly, the concepts of purity-pollution, occupational

backgrounds, and moral value were all utilized to rank caste to determine which one was superior to the other. Simultaneously, jati was utilized to judge whether or not a person is qualified to undertake a given profession (Bayly, 1999: 125-127).

3.3. Louis Dumont (d. 1998) and Purity-Pollution Theory

Louis Dumont was a famous anthropologist. He was an expert in Indian cultures and societies. His book *Homo Hierarchicus: Essai sur le système des castes*, among his many other writings, discusses caste hierarchy and the concepts of purity and pollution. Many people discussed the purity pollution aspect of Hinduism before Dumont, but he was the first person to make an in-depth analysis of the purity-pollution aspect. He was the first to discuss the impact of purity-pollution on the caste structure. This was until Dumont published *Homo Hierarchicus* in 1966, in which he proposed his hypothesis of analyzing India's caste structure. Dumont was the first to assert that it is impossible to describe the underlying purpose and nature of the caste system without first establishing and assembling a core principle that permeates all of the system's external characteristics. Hierarchy, separation, and division of labor are examples of these characteristics.

As he tries to explain the nature of the caste system, he states the key idea of purity-pollution that he formulated in his theory. He claims that the opposition to purity-pollution encompasses all of the caste system's obvious characteristics (hierarchy, separation, and division of labor) (Dumont, 1980: 43). He further claims that a system with rigorous and rigid social stratification cannot be called a caste system since the most critical feature, the basic relationship between caste; and Hinduism, is missing (Dumont, 1980: 43).

To begin with, we can see that Dumont has not provided us with a clear explanation of the purity-pollution notion. He tries to describe the notion of purity-pollution uncertainly by stating that purity is like a wide umbrella that encompasses all kinds of things that we can differentiate and that Hindu himself doesn't get mixed up with in all situations (Dumont, 1980: 60). Instead of providing a proper definition of purity, Dumont investigates and analyzes the interaction of various purity-pollution relationships. He also adds that the caste system ranks people according to their ritual

cleanliness. He explains why contact and interaction between castes are limited. First and foremost, the purity of pure caste must be preserved. Because their interactions with lower castes might pollute them, they must keep their interactions to a minimum. Second, a tight division of labor is imposed to prevent impure occupations from corrupting pure occupations. It means that dirty occupations should be willing to facilitate clean occupations in maintaining their cleanliness. He describes this as "the whole is founded on the necessary and hierarchical coexistence of the two opposites" (Dumont, 1980: 43). The basic contradiction of purity-pollution, according to Dumont, is not the source of the caste system. Purity-pollution, on the other hand, is a pattern of the caste system. In this way, the caste system can be understood, and its laws and regulations can be followed (Dumont, 1980: 45).

To create the ideal hierarchy, Dumont uses the caste system as an example, where the hierarchy has religious connotations. This perfect is "the principle by which the elements of a whole are ranked in relation to their whole" (Dumont, 1980: 66). As a result, he says that the fundamental rationale for using the caste system as an example of a perfect hierarchy is that everyone in the caste system is rated hierarchically based on their purity with regard to the pure whole. God (Brahman), or the absolute one, is represented here as the pure whole (Dumont, 1980: 66).

According to Dumont, in Hinduism, the purity-pollution dichotomy can be separated into two levels. The first is permanent, whereas the second is only temporary. The system ranks castes based on their permanent level of purity. As a result of their constant purity, the Brahmins are regarded as the first caste. Dumont states that everyone born into a caste has a certain level of purity or impurity that remains constant throughout their lives. In this way, his caste may be classified hierarchically in reference to the other castes in the system. As a result of their level of permanent impurity, the untouchable outcasts are considered the last or lowest caste (Dumont, 1980: 48). Dumont then tries to explain how purity-pollution manifests itself in the caste system. Purity-pollution, he claims, is primarily comprised of traditional occupations. Brahmins will be given duties such as studying and teaching, as well as executing religious rites because they have a continuous purity level. Untouchables, on the other hand, are given tasks such as cleaning toilets, removing the skin of dead

animals, and servicing upper-caste people because of their permanent impurity (Dumont, 1980: 48-50).

The separation of castes, which was initially a religious practice, is the second characteristic of the caste system. Here, Dumont claims that purity is venerable and helpless in the face of pollution and impurity. Therefore, in order to clean up this pollution, 'sacred' is necessary because sacred has the capacity to cleanse the impure. To distinguish the pure caste from the impure caste, Hindus have a variety of laws and restrictions ranging from food to family that prevent all Hindus from interacting with members of other castes. And, of course, these guidelines are derived from Hindu sacred books (Dumont, 1980: 140).

Dumont is mostly concerned with the laws and regulations governing food and water. As he argues, personal food interchange across castes is prohibited since even everyday food must be prepared with extreme delicacy and caution because it has the potential to induce temporary impurity. Food regulations are complicated since foods are ranked according to their cleanliness and pollution resistance (Dumont, 1980: 141). For instance, raw foods like fruits are pollutant-free. Because they are permanently clean, a Brahmin may eat fruits from lesser castes without being polluted. Cooked dishes are separated into two categories: *Kacca* (imperfect, not ripe) and *Pakka* (ripe, perfect). *Pakka* cuisine is prepared using a holy cow product, such as butter (Dumont, 1980: 141-42). *Kacca* food cannot be offered to a member of the upper caste by a member of the lower caste; it can only be consumed by members of the same caste. *Pakka* cuisine, on the other hand, can be utilized in inter-caste dining situations such as celebrations or journeys. Even though members of all castes can consume *Pakka* meals, there are certain limitations. To illustrate, upper caste people eat first, followed by lower caste people; additionally, upper caste people eat on chairs, while lower caste people eat on the floor (Dumont, 1980: 142-43).

At this point, Dumont gets to the third characteristic of the caste system, namely, the division of work. As he notes, it is also a religious trait; thus, we can see the components of purity and pollution in it. The occupations of pure castes are strongly intertwined with the vocations of lower castes. People from the upper caste are unable to preserve their purity without the assistance and services of those from the lower

caste (Dumont, 1980: 92-93). A washerman, in particular, washes the unclean garments of upper caste Brahmins, removing temporary pollution and allowing the Brahmins to restore the purity required to execute his vocation, i.e., religious rituals. On the other hand, a Brahmin conducting rituals and Vedic sacrifices might assist a lower caste in receiving God's blessings and being purified; however, this is only temporary (Dumont, 1980: 94-95).

Therefore, according to Dumont, this is not just a division of labor but also a system in which individuals exchange religious services with people from other castes, all in the name of achieving a particular degree of purity. Hence, according to Dumont, "the impurity of the untouchable is conceptually inseparable from the purity of Brahmin" (Dumont, 1980: 54). As a result, if a person from a lower caste comes into contact with someone from a higher caste, he will be temporarily polluted. So, how can a member of a lower caste serve a member of a higher caste if his mere touch pollutes him? To answer this question, Dumont makes a distinction between a general accidental touch and a specialized one. His argument is that if a lower caste person touches an upper caste person in order to conduct religious duties, such as washing his clothing or cleaning his house, etc. Then this touch is regarded as specialized, and it cannot defile a member of the upper caste (Dumont, 1980: 133-34). This signifies that a person from a lower caste does not pollute higher caste people when conducting a religious exchange duty because it is seen as fulfilling his responsibilities or providing services to higher castes.

According to Dumont, a washerman who visits upper caste homes just to provide his services, such as washing their clothing, does not contaminate the surroundings. However, if he visits the homes of upper-caste people for any other purpose, he will momentarily pollute them (Dumont, 1980: 133-34). But, when we look at the Indian caste system, we see that it is not simply restricted to the services of the upper caste and other activities. A specialized interaction might entail more than just cleaning, and certainly, it can include individuals of many religions other than Hinduism. For example, on different auspicious events, an untouchable caste called Parayar generally plays drums. Drums are made of leather, which is a very polluting substance. Yet, playing drums for upper caste individuals on religious occasions might be considered specialized contact and hence does not contaminate them. Muslim eunuch (*hijras*)

singers sing at the homes of upper-caste people after a baby is born. In this case, the higher caste's residences are not polluted (Dumont, 1980: 55).

One point that is equally crucial to this concept is whether the purity-pollution is physical or not. According to Dumont, "It is specialization in impure tasks, in practice or in theory, which leads to the attribution of a massive and permanent impurity to some categories of people" (Dumont, 1980: 47). A person is born into a lower caste as a result of his deeds in his previous incarnation; therefore his pollution is not the cause of his poor conduct, but rather the effect of his acts in his previous life. Their polluting effect originates here. Human life impurities are closely tied to caste impurities, and cleanliness and pollution can be relative and vary from person to person. According to Dumont, a man's wife and children are pure for him despite the fact that they are impure for others. According to popular belief, a wife can eat from her husband's plate, but a husband cannot eat from his wife's bowl since the wife's saliva will pollute the husband. As a result, a woman can be clean or filthy at different times. For example, the woman is regarded as filthy or contaminated during her menstrual cycle, and the deceased body is likewise considered impure or polluted. (Dumont, 1980: 87-88).

3.4. Marvin Davis and Gun (Material) Theory

Marvin Davis is a Brandeis University assistant professor of anthropology. The Gun (material) hypothesis is based on fieldwork research. From January 1970 to June 1971, he performed this research among Hindus in India's West Bengal region. His gun idea is highly influenced by the writings of McKim Marriott (American anthropologist) and Ronald Inden (major Scholar in South Asian and post-colonial studies). Among his other works, *Rank and Rivalry: the politics of Inequality in Rural West Bengal* and *A Philosophy of Hindu Rank from Rural West Bengal* talks about caste and inequality in West Bengal.

He presented his *gun* theory after conducting research and studying sacred Hindu texts. So, in his view, all entities in the world are made up of three basic *gunas*, ranging from God or the absolute being to the smallest minerals on the planet. All of the *gunas* of the absolute being or Supreme being (Brahman) are balanced. Except for him,

everyone else, including the gods, upper caste Brahmins, plants, etc., have one material that is more dominating than the others (Davis, 1976: 6; Madan, 1997: 85).

Sattva gun is the first material. It literally means "white substance," and it is made up of purity and kindness. Only the Gods and Brahmins have this substance as a dominating material over the other two (*gunas*). *Raja gun* is the second. It literally means "red substance," and it refers to a mixture of emotions and violence. In Hinduism, the second caste is the Kshatriya, who, like animals, have the *Raja gun* as a dominant material. *Tamogun* is the third material. Its literal meaning is "black substance," which includes darkness and stupidity. This *tamogun* is more prevalent among lower caste individuals and plants than in the other two *gunas* (Davis, 1976: 9; Madan, 1997: 85-86).

As previously said, every creature possesses a *gun*. *Gunas* are linked to many activities, such as diet, work, marriage, and so on. For example, because food is associated with diet, all foods have a *gun* that dominates the other two materials. So, a person belongs to one caste or another, which provides him permanent purity or permanent pollution, while interaction with individuals from other castes might give him temporary purity or temporary pollution (Davis, 1976: 12-13; Madan, 1997: 86-87). So, if a person consumes food containing a *Sattva gun* as a dominant material, his temporary purity level rises. As a result, individuals want to engage in various activities that have a dominant *sattva gun* in order to raise their momentary purity level. Participating in rituals, meditation, and other activities are examples of such activities (Madan, 1997: 87).

3.5. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (d.1956) and Issue of Conversion

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was an Indian social reformer. He was born into the Mahar caste of the Dalit community. As a result, he was discriminated against by the higher caste. Therefore, he spoke out against economic and social injustices against the untouchables in Hindu society in India. Prior to his death, he converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. He wrote many works about the caste system, Dalits, and untouchables. His most popular works are *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development*, *The Untouchables Who Were They And Why They Became*

Untouchables, The Annihilation of Caste, and Who Were the Shudras? In these works, he repeatedly opposed the caste system and discussed the advancement and development of Dalits.

Caste, Hinduism, and untouchability, according to Ambedkar, are all intertwined and interrelated. He claims that the caste system and untouchability are two major components of India's social stratification, both of which he considers to be societal problems. Caste, he claims, is unnatural and antisocial. He compares Hinduism to a prison, where the untouchable Dalits were subjected to a hellish existence. The sacred scriptures, such as the Vedas and others, were the items and tools that made their lives a living nightmare. This is because these writings create a law that, according to Ambedkar, is irrational since it assigns a position to a person at birth that he cannot change no matter how hard he works (Ambedkar, 2014a: 291-296).

According to Ambedkar, Hindus commit injustice and prejudice not because they are evil or cruel people but because they are zealous followers of their religion. He claims that caste is a basic concept in their faith and that urging them to forsake it would be like ordering them to quit their religion. As a result, all Hindus strive to live according to caste standards and laws. Therefore, Ambedkar's job was to figure out how to get people to forsake the caste system without offending their religion or sentiments. For Ambedkar, the caste system is not only a religious but also an economic structure. This arrangement permitted upper-caste individuals to economically exploit lower-caste people without fear of repercussions. He believed that individuals would never forsake power and position unless pushed to do so. As a result, following independence, he worked tirelessly to secure rights and a better living for Dalits through the Indian constitution (Ambedkar, 2014b: 53-67).

Ambedkar defines the caste system as a state of mind rather than a physical characteristic. Because caste and jati are determined by the location in which a person resides. That is, it is not defined at the national level but rather at the local level. Caste standards might differ from one place to another. And as individuals migrate from one location to another, information about caste is passed on (Ambedkar, 2014b: 68). Moreover, Ambedkar equates India's independence from the British to the liberation of Dalits from Hinduism. The most significant aspect of his plan was to create a

separate minority group for Dalits. By doing so, he may assert that Dalits are separate and distinct from Hindus. Thus, they are striving to be recognized as a distinct identity. This is all in the name of gaining political power for Dalits and obtaining constitutional rights for them (Ambedkar, 1946: 54).

A non-Brahmin movement arose in the early twentieth century. This group advocated for a racial theory. According to the theory, Brahmins and non-Brahmins belonged to separate races. Furthermore, their goals are vastly different. However, Ambedkar rejected any ideas that claimed caste was a racial, biological, or social science category, etc. He claimed that caste emerged many years after the integration of many races and cultures. As a consequence, he believes that classifying caste as a race is a tremendous mistake (Ambedkar, 2014b: 47-48).

Ambedkar covered two important subjects in his work *Dr. Babasaheb B Ambedkar, Writings and Speeches, Vol: 9* (2014a). First, he attempted to theorize the caste system by examining its origins and expansion. He then went on to discuss how the caste system may be abolished. To begin with, he stated that caste is not a scientific concept. He says that the removal of religious notions can eliminate caste, but inter-caste marriage and inter-caste eating cannot.

He also discusses why the Hindu faith is not a missionary in nature (Ambedkar, 1989: 424). The fundamental reason for this, as he argues, is that there is no social life in Hinduism. If someone converts to Hinduism, he claims, the issue of his social status is elevated. The caste system in Hinduism is endogamous. To put it another way, one can only be born into the caste system and cannot join from the outside. As a result, when a person converts to Hinduism, he must join a caste, although each caste is self-contained. It implies that there is no place for newcomers in Hinduism. The fundamental reason for this is that no one from any caste is prepared to welcome outsiders. Therefore, there are no missionaries in Hinduism because caste and conversion; cannot coexist (Ambedkar, 1989: 424).

A movement known as *Shuddhi* (purification) arose in the mid-nineteenth century. Its purpose was primarily to reintroduce Hinduism to persons who had previously converted to another faith. In other words, to re-convert them to Hinduism. However,

the caste system was a barrier to the development of this movement. Because if a person converts to Hinduism from another faith, he would have to live alone and will not be able to join any caste. If a large number of individuals convert to Hinduism as a result of the *Shuddhi* movement, they will have to form a new caste. Ambedkar believes that reuniting those who have converted and growing the Hindu population is unimportant. In Hinduism, the most essential thing is unity. He thinks that abolishing the caste system from Hinduism brings unity. Instead of unifying society, *Shuddhi* will cause it to dissolve. Because, in his opinion, more caste meant a more alienated and disintegrating society. He believes that the *Shuddhi* movement would not be able to help Hindus unless the caste system is abolished (Ambedkar, 1989: 424).

While explaining the causes of Hindu society's turmoil and disaster, he specifically stated that the caste system, as well as Hindus' foolishness in protecting and preserving the system, is the primary source of destruction. Many upper-caste individuals used to believe that their religion would exist forever. This is because they assumed that because it is one of the oldest religions on the planet, it would remain that way in perpetuity. It has experienced several challenges and invasions from foreign armies in the past. But it remained steadfast and had not shaken until now. However, with the Western invasion, new social and religious changes came to India. This storm shattered Hindu culture and the Caste System to its foundations. Ambedkar warns that because upper-caste people believe they can withstand any and all invasions, no matter how difficult, Hinduism would eventually be destroyed in the future. This is due to the fact that survival is never the same as it was previously (Ambedkar, 1989: 422).

He goes on to suggest that while Hindus may survive invasions from a variety of forces, they will no longer be able to live as Hindus but rather as slaves to the caste system. He claims that Muslims and Christians are outperforming and outnumbering Hindus in all aspects of life. It might be in terms of numbers, physical talents, or even a cultural way of life. Because Hinduism lacks a missionary system, it will be unable to attract new converts from other religions. Muslims and Christians, on the other hand, are not like Hindus; they preach and grow in numbers, with new individuals accepting their faith every day. They also have a large number of people who have converted from Hinduism as well (Ambedkar, 1989: 422).

Because of the brutal treatment they have experienced from their own Hindu faith; many Hindus adopt other religions, such as Islam and Christianity. The Hindu religion made their position so bad that they had to abandon Hinduism and seek salvation in other religions. Many people were readily persuaded to embrace Islam and Christianity due to the preaching of Islam and Christian missionaries in the past, and this will continue in the future (Ambedkar, 1989: 422-23).

3.6. Views of Other Scholars on Caste System and Dalit Muslims

In addition to Weber, Bayly, Davis, Dumont, and Ambedkar, there are many significant names who wrote on the Indian caste system. For example, M.K.A. Siddiqui, Geoffrey Oddie, and A.R. Momin, etc.

Prof. M.K.A. Siddiqui (b.1929) earned a Ph.D. in anthropology from Calcutta University and has worked for the Anthropological Survey of India. Among his other works, *Inter-caste and Inter-Community Relationship: developing patterns, and Marginal Muslim Communities in India* talks about caste among Muslims and the difference between Hindu and Muslim social stratification.

His first work *Inter-caste and Inter-Community Relationship: developing patterns*, discusses the differences between Hindu and Muslim social stratification. In Hinduism, stratification is based on caste, but in Islam, stratification is based on ruling class elite people and artisan class common people. He claims that the caste-like characteristics found among Muslims in India are not characteristic of Islam. Because of the Indian social structure's integration, such practices have spread among Indian Muslims. As a result, the Indian Muslims are divided into two factions. The first is *Ashraf*, whereas the second is *Arzal*. The *Ashraf* belongs to the upper caste, whereas the *Arzal* belongs to the lower caste.

According to Siddiqui, in his work *Marginal Muslim Communities in India*, Muslims are graded according to their regional origins. Occupation also has a significant role in their stratification. Panchayat¹⁴ meetings are held among Muslims who work in

¹⁴ The local governing body of a village.

hereditary positions. They must take part in it since it is regarded as mandatory for them. They are ranked according to their professions. Like Hindus, they prefer to observe some specific laws and restrictions when it comes to eating and dining.

Romila Thapar (b.1931) is an Indian historian. Her other works are *Ancient India*, *Medieval India*, and *Early India: From Origins to AD 1300*. Thapar, in her book *A History of India*, divides India's history into distinct eras to explain it. She also describes the social, religious, and political characteristics of each era, as well as how they relate to one another. She recounts the historical circumstances that led to the formation of India. As a result, the caste system is explained from a historical standpoint.

Geoffrey Oddie (b.1932) is an honorary associate at the University of Sydney. He mainly focuses on missionary activities that happened in India. In his book *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia*, he discusses how the conversion to Christianity proceeded in the nineteenth century in northwestern India. Then he explains the Kartabaja community and how they converted to Christianity in the 1800s. Then he recounts the conversion that occurred in central Kerala. Following that, he claims that French missionaries assisted Dalits in spreading Christianity on a large scale. He mostly discusses the conversions that occurred in South Asian countries throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

M. Darroll Bryant (b.1942) is a professor of Religion and Culture at Renison. He mostly focuses on various religions and their dialogues and debates. Christopher Lamb (b.1954) is a professor of religion and society at the University of Birmingham. He mainly focuses on Christianity and other religions' relationships. Lamb and Bryant, in their book *Religious Conversion* discussed the issue of individuals being converted to various religions during the British rule in India. People who convert to religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are discussed in the context of conversion. In the research, they investigate conversion and the thematic views on conversion. Then they discuss the stages of religious transition that occurred in India. Then they talk about his conversion to evangelism experience. Then they discuss the conversions that have occurred in other religions such as Buddhism, Chinese religion, Christianity, and Islam.

Imtiaz Ahmad (b.1943) is a political sociology professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University. His works are concerned with the growth and upliftment of Muslims in India. Imtiaz Ahmed wrote books about Muslims in India, including their lifestyles, cultural practices, and social activities. The first one is *Caste and social stratification among the Muslims*. The second is *Family, kinship, and marriage among Muslims in India*. He analyzes the caste system among Indian Muslims rather than Indian Hindus. He discusses how Indian Muslims have been influenced by Hindus and have formed various social stratification among them, similar to the Hindu caste system.

His first book is discussed in detail in the third part of this study. Imtiaz Ahmed's second book, published in 1976, discusses family ties, marriages, and kinship among Indian Muslims. He describes family structures and weddings among Muslims in India in a detailed manner. In his investigation, he discovered that the organizational structure among Muslims is based on stratification rather than kinship.

A.R Momin (b.1943) is a lecturer in sociology at Bombay University. *The Indo Islamic tradition* is one of his best works. *Muslim Castes in an Industrial Township of Maharashtra* is a part of Imtiaz Ahmad's book, *caste and social stratification among Muslims in India*. In this part, he discusses how industrialization has influenced Muslim stratification. He believes that the Muslim community is split into two groups. The first is *kokni*¹⁵ Muslims. Momin¹⁶ Muslims are the second group. Muslims in *Kokni* are also divided into two factions. The first is of higher occupational groups, and the second is of lower occupational groups. Higher occupational groups believe they are descended from Arab immigrants to India. Momin Muslims are the endogamous group. This group is socially stratified. This grading is based on their profession and familial background. Momin are the descendants of lower-caste people who converted to Islam.

Surinder S Jodhka (b.1944) is a Sociology Professor at JN University in New Delhi. He mainly examines caste and Dalit inequalities. Ghanshyam Shah (b.1939) is in the

¹⁵The Konkani Muslim community forms a part of the larger Konkani-speaking demographic and is predominantly located in the Konkan division of the Indian state of Maharashtra.

¹⁶ A caste of people who were originally followers of the Satpanthi Ismaili tradition of the fifteenth-century Ismaili Shi'i dignitary Imam al-Din.

Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences. He also studies Dalits and their cultural identities. In their work *Comparative Contexts of Discrimination: Caste and Untouchability in South Asia*, they mostly discuss the problems faced by Dalits. For example, how are Dalits treated by Indian society? Also, how Dalits are subjected to socioeconomic inequity and prejudice? They also emphasize the norms and regulations that must be followed by Dalits. Such as residential segregation and who and what is deemed pure and unclean. Also, what are the rules of inter-caste marriage, and who should dine with whom? All these topics are covered in their work.

Ranjit. K. Bhattacharya (b.1944) is an associate in the anthropological survey of India in Calcutta. He has written several articles on caste and social relations that have appeared in prestigious journals. Bhattacharya, in his work *The Concept and Ideology of Caste among the Muslims of Rural West Bengal*, which is published in Imtiaz Ahmad's *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, says that Muslims are separated into four factions. This includes ethnic groups such as Sayyad¹⁷, sheikh, Pathans¹⁸, and Mughals¹⁹. There are three more ethnic groups to consider. The first is Shah or *Faqeer*²⁰, the second is Momin or *Julaha*²¹, and the third is *Patuas*²². All of the above-mentioned groupings are stratified and are endogamous in nature. They have restrictions concerning who should dine with whom, similar to Hindu caste aspects.

George Mathew (b.1945) is a professor of sociology at the University of Chicago who specializes in the sociology of religion. Mathew, in his work *Politicization of Religion*, describes the history of conversion in India in general. He then goes into great detail on the conversions that took place in Tamil Nadu. He discusses the historical context of conversion in India. The conversions that occurred in medieval India and those that occurred previous to Indian independence. Then he discusses the conversions that

¹⁷ It is in the first position in the Muslim caste, followed by Shaik.

¹⁸ It is in the fourth position in the Muslim caste.

¹⁹It is in the third position in the Muslim caste, followed by Mughal.

²⁰ Beggar

²¹ Weaver

²² They are an artisan community.

occurred at Meenakshipuram, in the south Indian region. He also examines how people reacted to the conversion occurrences.

Christopher John Fuller (b.1949) is an anthropology professor at the London School of Economics. He has researched and written several books on the people of India, notably about Hinduism and the caste system. Fuller, in his work *The Nayars Today*, primarily discusses how people in Kerala converted to Christianity. The Nayars of Kerala, southwest India, trace their ancestry via the female lineage and used to have a marital practice wherein women may have multiple men at the same time. This technique has ensured the Nayars' continued notoriety in anthropological circles. Dr. Fuller examines survey data obtained among Nayars in a settlement in southern Kerala, a place with almost little contemporary anthropological material, in this 1976 research. In the last half of the work, Dr. Fuller examines the Nayars' conventional wedding practice and makes a few ideas for its functioning. He also explores the demise of the ancient joint-family system and makes some explanations concerning the process of fragmentation using statistics from southern Kerala. As he embodies an assessment of a constantly changing culture, he locates his study in its historical background more extensively than earlier authors. He also goes into detail on the social stratification that occurred among them.

Gyanendra Pandey is a historian who was born in 1949. He is a co-founder of the Subaltern Studies project. He has largely published his works about colonial and postwar South Asian minorities and Dalits in India. Pandey, in his work *The Time of the Dalit Conversion*, discusses the conversions that occurred prior to and following India's independence. He discusses their ascension to full citizenship and how this aided in the removal of untouchability. It also provided this Dalit population with legal and political rights. He claims that this conversion is not simply religious but also philosophical. He claims that the conversion of Dalits is a conversion to democracy as well. He mostly concentrates on conversions of Dalits.

Zarina Bhatti (b.1951) is a Humanist by faith, a sociologist by profession, and a committed feminist. Her famous work is *From Purdah to Piccadilly: A Muslim Woman's Struggle for Identity*. Zarina Bhatti, in her work *Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, claims that, despite Islam being a religion of justice and

righteousness, people are classified based on the date they accepted Islam. She discusses the Tamil Nadu backward caste movement. She then discusses power conflicts involving lower castes in UP and Bihar. She delves into caste observations among Muslims and Christians in India, as well as the problem of employment reservations. Finally, a review of the Mandal Commission Report. Also talks about the people who recently adopted Islam have a lesser social rank than those who converted previously.

Zafar Imam (b.1953) is a professor who specializes in Asian history, particularly colonial and Soviet decisions. His most well-known books include *Soviet View of India, 1957-1975*, and *Muslims in India*. Imam, in his work *Muslims in India*, says that Indian Muslims are split into several groups. There is social stratification among these groups. Each group has a distinct social standing. When compared to the Hindu Caste system, he claims that Muslim stratification is less rigorous. Upper caste individuals, on the other hand, have a higher occupation, whereas lower caste people have a lower occupation. This is identical to the Hindu caste system.

Sebastian Chang Hwan Kim (b.1955) is a theologian from Korea. He is an expert in public theology as well as Korean Christianity. Kim, in his book *In Search of Identity*, talks about the British invasion of India and the Christian missionaries who accompanied them. He explains Christian missionaries and the challenge of conversion in India during the colonial period. He also argues about the disputes that occurred over Gandhi's and other people's conversion to other religions. Other arguments, such as religious freedom and the secular state, took place as well. He also discusses missionary activity and religious freedom in independent India throughout the 1950s. He also addresses the subject of conversion that happened during the colonial period.

Douglas E. Goodfriend (b.1963) is a New York Public Finance partner as he specializes in municipal law and advocates for minority rights. Goodfriend, in his work *Changing Concepts of Caste and Status among Old Delhi Muslims*, which is published in Imtiaz Ahmad's *Modernization and Social Change among Muslims in India*, says

that zat or biraderi²³ are the same as the stratification that occurred among Indian Muslims. According to him, the vast majority of Muslims in India claim to be of foreign ancestry. Thus, participation in biraderi determines one's standing in this stratification. A good education, a solid profession, and money are important to many upper-caste Muslims.

The Marina Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion is directed by Joshua Iyadurai (b.1968), Ph.D., a theologically trained social scientist. He teaches Christian Studies at the University of Madras in Chennai, as well as Science Research Methodology at other prestigious Indian schools. Iyadurai, in his work *Religious Conversion*, primarily discusses how spirituality had a significant part in conversion in India. His paper claims that religious conversion is more than a psychological phenomenon; it also has a spiritual aspect, which is more important from an experiential standpoint. Analyzing a single conversion scenario in the context of the other research, the author proposes an integrative, psycho-spiritual strategy, emphasizing the importance of religious awareness in conversion. He says that conversion causes alteration in a variety of areas of the convert's lifestyle.

Charu Gupta (b.1969) is a history professor at the University of Delhi. She has multiple studies published in national and international publications on the topics of sexuality, caste, and religious identities. Gupta, in her work *Intimate Desires*, focuses on the conversions of Dalit women that occurred in India during British rule. Dalit religious conversions during British Rule in India were predominantly conversions to Christianity, with an underlying concentration on men. But the question of why Dalit women convert was not usually asked. They just converted because their men, families, and communities converted, or any other factor is also in play? This study investigates the interplay of caste and women in Dalit conversion. The popular newspaper media, linguistic missionary writing, works of Hindu journalists and caste ideologues, caricatures, and police records from colonial India are all used in the research. It focuses on the two themes of dress and romance to represent widespread and personal conversions to Christianity and Islam.

²³ Community

Laura Dudley Jenkins (b.1971) is a Political Science Professor. She is mostly involved with Asian Studies. Her study focuses on social justice policies in culturally diverse democracies, particularly in India. Jenkins, in her book *Identity and Identification in India*, primarily discusses the period preceding Indian independence, when large conversions took place. In this paper, she talks about Backward Muslims and Scheduled Caste Christians, who are not considered Dalits. The government refers to disadvantaged Hindus as Dalits, while backward Muslims and Christians are not. Then she explains Hindu nationalism and how selective inclusion is occurring in India. Finally, she discusses women's reservations and equality from the perspective of the Indian government.

Ronki Ram Shaheed Bhagat Singh (b.1971) is a political science professor at Panjab University in Chandigarh, India. He specializes in matters concerning Punjab's minorities, such as Dalits, identity politics, and political sociology. Ram, in his work *Beyond Conversion and Sanskritization*, claims that despite Dalit conversion to Buddhism and the Sanskritization effort, the Dalits of east Punjab have not been able to escape their unjust condition. This is due to unequal socioeconomic frameworks and Dalit landlessness. This research seeks to sketch the features of a developing alternative Dalit discourse in Punjab. This is notable of its lack of current Dalit studies. In this work, he mostly addresses Dalit conversions to Buddhism that occurred in Punjab²⁴ state previous to Indian independence. He says that Conversion and Sanskritization failed to bring social justice to the Dalits living in Punjab.

Amit Thorat (b.1972) is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Jawaharlal Nehru University. His other works are *Ethnicity, caste and Religion: Implications for poverty outcomes and social inequalities in Education*. Omkar Joshi (b.1983) works in the National Council of Applied Economic Research as a professor and mainly focuses on social inequalities in India. Thorat and Joshi, in *The Continuing Practice of Untouchability in India: Patterns and Mitigating Influences*, primarily examine the origins of caste and jati. Then, concentrate on Dalits and their history. Following that, they discuss the labor division. The influence of the division of labor on Indian society. The caste system practice of untouchability in India is explored by pinpointing and

²⁴ A state in northern India.

dividing the groups that persist in practicing untouchability. The batch of the India Human Development Survey results has been utilized to produce a social and economic description of those who exercise untouchability in India. It is also used to test the theory that houses with a larger network outside the society than one within the society are less likely to practice untouchability.

Sarah Claerhout (b.1977) is a freelance researcher who works in the Comparative Science of Cultures study program. Many of her works deal with religious violence and religious conversions. Claerhout, in her work *Gandhi, Conversion, and the Equality of Religions*, claims that Gandhi's views on religious conversions have not been adequately examined. She claims that this occurred due to the fact that Gandhi's works contain a wide range of materials. She attempts to express Gandhi's religious beliefs as well as his opinions on conversion. She argues that Gandhi believed that conversion to another faith was not a smart strategy for Indian independence at the time, which is why he was opposed to it. So, she talks about the conversions that have occurred in India and then concentrates on Gandhi's perspective on conversion.

Dennis Walker (b.1981) is a researcher at the University of Melbourne in Australia. Walker, in his work *The Untouchable Counter-Elite of West Bengal*, talks about the Dalits who converted to Islam and were referred to as Matuas. They were from India's West Bengal area. They were untouchables who became Muslims. He tells a narrative of how this community came to be. How they existed in the contemporary age, as well as their evolution. They modernized themselves, yet the battle with the upper-caste Hindus persisted. He describes how Dalits converted to Islam and other religions, such as Christianity, in India's Bengal area in the nineteenth century.

Mysore Narasimha Char Srinivas (d.1999) was a sociologist and a social anthropologist. He is most renowned for his research on caste and caste systems, as well as social stratification. His famous works are *Village, Caste, Gender and Method* and *Social Change in Modern India*. Srinivas, in his work *Caste: Its Twentieth Century Avatar*, focuses on women's experiences with the caste system. He claims that because the caste system includes purity-pollution, women are more likely to be polluted because they work in kitchens. Women are penalized more harshly for violating caste

restrictions than males, according to caste rules. Women are subjected to stricter food and dining regulations than males.

Fazlur Rahman Faridi (d.2011) was a writer who focused on Islam and contemporary issues. He wrote various books and articles about Indian Muslims in Hindi, Urdu, and English. His famous works are *Daur-e-Hazir ka Karb aur Islam ka Nizam-e-Rahmat*, and *Adl ki Talash*. Faridi, in his book *The Social Structure of Indian Muslims*, discusses aspects that Islam does not acknowledge, such as endogamy, birth-based status, hereditary vocation, and stratification. However, they conclude that, as a result of their long history with Hindus, Indian Muslims have stratified themselves in the same way as Hindus and share the same caste system traits and characteristics. This is mostly due to the fact that those who converted to Islam from Hinduism brought their previous rituals with them.

CHAPTER IV

DALITS (UNTOUCHABLES) AND CONVERSION

There are various conceptions closely related to the Indian caste system. These are often viewed as well-established features of the caste system, such as the issue of endogamy, hierarchy, and hereditary labor division. Many people are not able to change their caste status or their occupations. Once a person is born into a caste, he cannot move up or down in the system. So, if a person wants to be acknowledged by his society, then he has to follow the caste rules and regulations. Otherwise, he will be stigmatized and shunned by society. Endogamy and hereditary occupation are the most important aspects of the caste system. In order to follow the rules dictated by the caste system, one has to marry within the same caste. Also, one must follow the occupation given to him by the caste (Velassery, 2005: 2.) As noted above, if people follow the rules of the caste system, and do their jobs according to the caste rules; then they will be born as an upper caste person in their next life. On the other hand, if they fail to follow the rules and do not do their jobs according to the caste system, then they will have a bad life in the next incarnation. Professions of Brahmins are priests and teachers of Vedas. The Kshatriyas are rulers and warriors. Vaishyas are farmers and merchants. Shudra's occupation is to serve the upper caste (Gupta, 2014: 665).

Another important aspect of the caste system is the dichotomy of purity in contradistinction to pollution. For example, some occupations are considered pure, and some are considered impure. Cleaning the toilets, barbering, and sweeping the houses and streets are polluting jobs. Many of the common events, such as birth and death, are regarded as impure and polluting by the caste system. Most of the time, a person is polluted by bodily substances such as saliva or excretion. Other things that are considered polluting are touching people from the lower caste, and even their shadows are regarded as impure by the caste system. Other than that, sometimes a person is defiled by interacting with lower caste people. This is because, according to the caste system, the upper caste people were the purest, and the lowest caste people were the dirtiest in the Hindu society (Velassery, 2005: 8). Thus, the Indian caste system reinforces this dichotomy repeatedly in the sacred texts leaving the "impure" people

as untouchables. After briefly explaining the purity-pollution issue in relation to Dalits, I will delve into the issue of conversion among them. Finally, I will focus on Dalits Muslims and question whether their status has changed upon conversion from Hinduism to a different religion.

4.1. Dalits, Purity, and Pollution

After getting labeled as “impure” and “untouchable” by sacred texts, the untouchable status of Dalits is reinforced by society by forcing them to work in jobs that are physically unclean, dangerous, and poorly paid. Caste untouchability is also regarded as a physical characteristic by the society and is thought to be everlasting until their death. Hence, untouchability, which is a physical trait, is unchangeable even if Dalits work in jobs that are considered clean by the caste system (Flood & Flood, 1996: 219). This is not only a religious but also a psychological as well as a social distinction. In order to comprehend how it influenced the behavior of the South Asian people, we need to understand the dichotomy of purity-pollution and the discrimination it causes. Even if Dalits improve their life conditions via different methods, they will still be stigmatized by the people of the Indian subcontinent. It means that no matter what jobs they do, their status will not change in the social hierarchy of society according to the caste system (Jaspal, 2011: 28-33). As a result, a very large number of people are isolated by the upper caste people in social, religious, and economic areas (Guru, 2009: 53-56). Such isolation appears in many forms. For example, inter-caste dining is restricted. Other isolation methods are segregating houses of untouchables and not using the roads, shops, and restaurants used by untouchables. Other isolation methods include avoiding the public transportation used by untouchables and determining what clothing an untouchable can wear. Certainly, a limited number of occupational options and endogamy also come under the isolation methods (Shah, et al. 2006: 108-114). Since Dalits are deemed impure, everyone who comes into contact with them is considered to become impure. This is the reason why they were forced to reside in the city's outskirts and suburbs, and they were never entirely incorporated into the Indian society. On the other hand, because the upper-castes required their services, Dalits were allowed to enter the city and the homes of other upper caste people. Otherwise, as Velassery notes, they are not permitted in the upper-class neighborhood (Velassery, 2005: 7-8).

4.2. Dalits and Religious Conversion

Dalits tried various methods in order to escape this class stratification. One of the popular methods was Sanskritization.²⁵ Accordingly, they sought upward mobility by adopting the traditions of the upper-class. Other methods used by them to have an improved lifestyle were changing occupations, schooling, and getting financial help. However, at the end of the day, it was not very helpful for the Dalits. Therefore, they tried other methods, such as getting political rights and converting to other religions. Thus, over the years, they converted to many different religions, such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and others (John, 2001: 677). As a result, the majority of Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, and Sikhs in India today are descendants of converted Dalits and Shudras (Sikand, 2001: 287).

4.3. Dalit Christians

Hindu Dalits have adopted four different ways to get freedom and liberation from the caste system first, by getting political power; second, to gain economic independence from the upper caste, third, to get an education in order to get respectful jobs; and by getting rid of social prejudices. Lastly, accepting new religions and their ideologies and getting a new religious identity. Religious conversions have been one of the best ways to get rid of cast-based practices for Hindu Dalits. Therefore, while converting to a new religion, Dalits moved in three different directions; first one was conversion into a non-Brahminic religion of the Indian subcontinent. The second one was conversion to a non-Indian religion from across the world. The last one was the reshaping of the Brahminic traditions. During conversions, South Indian Dalits choose different religions compared to North Indian Dalits. Also, the method of changing religion in order to escape the caste system created many new religious traditions in modern India (Ashok & Boopalan, 2015: 308-309).

The Modern Dalit Christian movement was created by Christian missionaries, who then later renamed it a mass movement. During these mass movements, Hindu Dalits converted to Christianity in groups. Because the leaders of the caste groups decided to

²⁵ This term was made popular by Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas in the 1950s.

convert, common people were also convinced to convert to Christianity. However, when they accepted Christianity, they did not cut social ties with their old communities. Another main reason for conversions to Christianity other than escaping the caste system was the expectation to raise their social status. This was because, at that time, the British, who were Christians, ruled the Indian sub-continent. Therefore, not only Dalits but also upper-caste Hindus converted to Christianity in order to get high positions and higher status as Christians. During that time caste system was very powerful as a social organization; hence Christianity was yet another religious platform for upper-caste converts to show their superiority to Dalit converts. It means that caste-related discrimination continued even though it did not have any religious sanction in Christianity. They were discriminated against both inside and outside the Church by upper-caste Hindus and Christians, respectively.

In modern times, caste-related practices took many different forms in India. Thus, Dalit converts to Christianity, created a new identity called Dalit Christians in order to get reservations and benefits from the government (Ashok & Boopalan, 2015: 310-311). However, Indian law did not give any reservations and benefits to Dalit Christians. This is because, according to Indian law, Christianity is a religion that preaches equality; also, its sacred texts do not support caste-based inequality. At the same time, there are some Christians who do not recognize the caste system as a Christian-related problem. Hence according to them, there is no need for a special legal law for Dalit Christians. In addition, some Hindus think that if special laws and privileges were given to Dalit Christians, then all the lowest caste people would accept Christianity, and this would become a big threat to Hinduism in India. Therefore, according to them, there is no need for the government to give some special reservations to Dalit Christians. However, according to Dalit Christians, both Church and the state overlook caste-based discrimination; hence it is necessary for them to get reservations and benefits from the government under separate law. They argue that if they don't get their rights from the government, then they will continue to face discrimination which will only end after their deaths since there are many incidents where Dalit Christians were killed unjustly by upper-caste people. Therefore, reservations are a must for Dalit Christians because religion plays a big role in the Dalit struggle against caste discrimination in India (Ashok & Boopalan, 2015: 312-315).

4.4. Dalit Muslims: Did Their Life Change upon Conversion, and Why?

According to Ansari, Muslims in India follow a slightly different form of the Hindu caste system. The dynamics of cultural interaction, as well as the manner in which it was conducted, shaped this. When Islam arrived in Arabia, there was already a tribal type of government in place, and blood links were favored. So, according to Ansari, the earliest Islam declared each Muslim to be a brother in both theory and practice. It also prioritized equality. That was valid when Islam remained in Arabia when it began to spread outside of its borders, and once it came into touch with societies that already had formed systems connected with monarchy and whose society was also split into rankings, categories, and social groups, the concrete features of Islam were significantly altered (Ansari, 1960: 6-9).

Following this interaction, democratic Islam was transformed into a monarchy, and the concept of Muslim brotherhood was destroyed to be substituted by the classes of society. The Persian and Central Asian cultures were the primary causes of the social divide in Islam. Their society was already separated into distinct social classes, which had a negative impact on Islam. As a result, Islam was split into three major classes. The clergy is first, followed by the governing elite, and last by the commoner class. When Islam arrived in India, it was gradually molded into additional rankings and classifications that took the appearance of the caste system that currently prevailed throughout India (Ansari, 1960: 9-11).

As per Ansari, the period of expansion affected the entire vast Islamic culture. When Islamic civilization encountered Indian culture, Islam embraced and absorbed a great deal from the Indian manner of living. However, both Islamic and Hindu cultures were quite big, and they both had equal cultural potential. Both were equal since they had very developed religious ideologies, literary accomplishments, political organizations, and so on. Both cultures borrowed certain cultural aspects and habits from one another. Owing to the differences, both opposed one another at first, resulting in a culture clash, but over time, considering the dynamic character, it established a new route for acculturation. When two great civilizations collide, it is conceivable for them to combine and generate a new third civilization. This third culture and civilization will incorporate elements from both cultures (Ansari, 1960: 10-13).

However, prior to the collision, we can see that Sufism was the primary means by which Islam spread among non-Muslims. Sufis were the ones who popularized Islam in India. Many Dalits were drawn to Islam by the teachings of Sufis, who preached love, equality, and brotherhood, among other things. Sufis provided a new way of life for Dalits when they were subjugated by higher-caste Hindus. When Hindu Dalits witnessed Muslims eating from the same plates and worshiping in the same mosques, they were immediately drawn to Islam. As a result, a large number of Hindu Dalits adopted Islam in groups. Individual Muslim conversions were uncommon in medieval times. Typically, whole local caste groups or large portions of them gradually accepted Islam. Aspects of the Islamic religion were progressively absorbed into local belief structures and ritual practices during this phase. All of this was accomplished while gradually removing or replacing the aspects of Hinduism (Sikand, 2004: 110-113).

The equal treatment of underprivileged people and the peaceful life of the converts, however, was short-lived. Hierarchical forms penetrated Indian Muslims through a variety of channels. First, the establishment of Muslim political forces cleared the door for religious hierarchy. Second, when upper-caste Hindus adopted Islam in order to gain greater positions in Muslim-ruled areas, they carried the notion of caste supremacy with them. Because converting to another religion was both a social and a progressive process, the notion of endogamy which existed previous to conversion, was kept even after the conversion. Therefore, although people converted to Islam, marriage within the same caste remained the same. This is how caste-like endogamous groupings became popular in Indian Muslim society. As a result of the converts' continuing observance of their previous rites and rituals, caste-related culture and customs among Indian Muslims were preserved and sustained (Sikand, 2009).

But the issue is, why did Indian culture have the greatest influence on Islamic culture and not the other way around? Ansari responds by stating that when two civilizations collide, the native culture typically triumphs over the alien culture. In India, it was the same. In practice, persons from one culture will not readily embrace the characteristics of another. However, while Muslims who migrated to India, in theory shunned Indian cultural qualities, in practice, they adopted the social division structure that already existed in Indian society. For example, the individuals who migrated to India named themselves *Ashraf* and proclaimed supremacy; they disputed this in principle, but in

practice they had the same characteristics as the Hindu caste system. This new culture that Indian Muslims had developed was neither entirely Indian nor entirely Islamic; it was a hybrid of the two (Ansari, 1960: 15-18).

Bhattacharya similarly contends that Hindu power and influence led to the spread of caste-like features among Indian Muslims (Bhattacharya, 1978: 270-71). Misra believes that caste-like features infiltrated Islam as a result of a significant Hindu impact (Misra 1964: 21-23). According to another historian, Srinivas, the caste system penetrated Islam or among Indian Muslims when Hindus converted to Islam. They persisted in referring to themselves as castes, while other invaders, such as Arabs and Pathans Muslims, affirmed the superior classes (Srinivas 1959: 137-140).

According to one hypothesis, non-Muslims in India initially adopted Islam about 1200 A.D.; when Arab forces conquered India. People of lower castes are said to be the ones who embraced Islam. However, according to MacLein, this notion is unfounded and wrong. There is no evidence to support this notion, and no lower caste Hindus have converted to Islam as a result of caste oppression. He goes on to say that there have only been a few situations in history in which conversion did happen, and these converts were all from the upper caste. He claims that beliefs concerning Indian civilization during the Islamic period are founded only on Muslim academics' opinions and lack genuine proof (Maclein, 1997: 32-35).

Another historian, Eaton, believes that caste discrimination as a motive for conversion to Islam during the medieval period is not supported by data and is even nonsensical (Richard, 1993). Jackson agrees with the preceding hypotheses that there was no mass conversion to Islam due to caste prejudice (Jackson, 2003: 40-42). According to Chaudhary, high-caste Hindus converted to Islam during the Mughal Empire and gained upper-class status in the Muslim community (Chaudhary, 2013: 19-22).

However, Dumont believes that the caste system infiltrated Islam because Muslims in India actively and intentionally embraced it. He claims that it was executed as a compromise and that Muslims made this deal in order to exist in a majority of Hindu society. He goes on to say that, although Muslims welcomed the caste system as a

result of their closeness to the Hindu society, Hindus adapted to their new political overlords (Dumont, 1970: 63-67).

According to Ahmad, caste entered Islam as a consequence of Hindu converts who transferred their social structure with them. According to him, persons from the middle and lower classes of Hindu society were the ones who converted to Islam the most in India. These individuals come from a civilization that was rigorously determined by birth, and these communities were preserved by very harsh social limitations. Ahmad proposes many explanations for the conversions. There were five methods of Hindu conversion to Islam, the first by peaceful appeals, the second via threatening of force, the third to receive pecuniary benefits granted by Muslim authorities, the fourth to profit politically, and the fifth to achieve social mobility or ascend to the top class. He continues his point by stating that individuals converted to Islam in clusters, which is why Hinduism's acculturative impact was unavoidable (Ahmad, 1978: 6-9).

However, he goes on to argue if the caste system emerged amongst Muslims in India entirely due to Hindu impact, then the Islamization of Muslim communities through the ages should have progressively and slowly terminated the caste ideas and philosophy. But this was not the case, according to him, and there is proof that Islamization works to entrench rather than decrease or erase caste divisions (Ahmad, 1978: 10-11).

Hence, in today's India, the majority of Indian Muslims are descendants of Hindu untouchables or low castes who converted to Islam in search of a more peaceful life. Despite the fact that Islam opposes caste-based categorization, India's Muslim community features various caste-like divisions such as jati or biradari. Indian Muslims who claim to have ancestors of foreign origin, such as Arabs, Mughals, and others, call themselves *Ashraf*, hence a superior position (Sikand, 2004: 112-115). During Muslim rule in medieval India, the *Ashraf* held the highest status. Ministers, governors, army officers, and other high-ranking positions were bestowed upon them. When the untouchables converted to Islam, they were unable to compete with the *Ashraf* and hence were unable to climb the social ladder. As a result, they continued to engage in low-wage occupations. This is mostly due to their inability to outperform *Ashraf* both economically and socially. As a result, even after the conversions, when

they were unable to exceed the *Ashraf*, they attempted to preserve a strong sense of jati identity (Sikand, 2004: 115).

The *Ashraf* even mimicked the upper caste Hindus and attempted to maintain their superiority status by legitimizing caste discrimination by seeking authorization and backing from Quranic verses. To justify their ideas of social supremacy, medieval Indian *Ashraf* scholars published a plethora of writings in which they attempted to interpret the Qur'an to match their interests. By doing so, they rejected the Qur'an's message of fundamental social equality. In addition, some Indian scholars attempted to grant 'Islamic' legitimacy through complex Fiqh norms linked with the concept of equivalence (*kafa'a*).

Based on a prophetic hadith that suggests *kafa'a* (suitable match in marriage), some Indian scholars interpreted it as equality in caste or class. This was done in order to justify social inequity based on ethnicity and occupation. In the Indian context, several influential Islamic scholars, virtually all of whom are from the 'upper' castes, have utilized similar explanations to justify caste and caste-based disparities, notably in marriage (Sikand, 2009). Therefore, caste-like characteristics amongst Muslim groups in India are widely regarded as a product of the social and cultural impact of their Hindu neighbors. However, many people overlook the role of Indian Islamic scholars in lending theological validity to caste through the idea of *kafa'a*.

As previously stated, according to Dumont (1970), Srinivas (1959), Misra (1964), and Bhattacharya (1978), Islam did not contain any components of caste; caste was introduced amongst Muslims in India only via Hindu impact. However, according to Ansari, Islam did not have any social class distinctions during the time of the prophet and the four caliphs, but following its spread to other cultures, particularly the East, and even before coming to India, Islam had been already split into social categories (Ansari, 1960: 23-25).

As we all know, the Quran and Hadiths both advocate equality and egalitarianism. But, according to Ahmad, Islam's declared equality is just in theory, and it usually stays ideal (Ahmad, 1978: 13-15). The value of origin and blood purity, which was a

recognized tradition in Arabia prior to Islam, was maintained even after Islam's arrival. In his daily existence, a Muslim did not observe Egalitarianism (Ansari, 1960: 27-29).

According to Levy, Muslims assert that Islam is an egalitarian faith in which there are no disparities based on birth or pride of lineage. According to Levy, Muhammad (PBUH) abolished all birth-based pride and differences, but strangely, he himself became the cornerstone of a status structure. People who claimed a connection with him considered themselves to be nobles (Levy, 1962: 55-59).

According to Levy, the value of birth and lineage was recognized by Islamic law throughout history. He also claims that while Muhammad (PBUH) asserted that there are no lineages in Islam and that Islam promotes equality, he himself indicated that when marrying, one should choose equals, reinforcing that birth factors should deserve special priority in the case of marriage. Then he quotes the Hadith from Bukhari, "Take ye care, that none contract in marriage but their proper guardians, and that they be not so contracted except with equals." He also claims that Muslim scholars devised an extensive system of social categories based on birth and ancestry. According to him, six components must be present in both a boy and a female for them to be regarded as equal. The first is ancestry, followed by Muslim status, third freedom, fourth occupation, fifth dedication, and the sixth financial status (Levy, 1962: 62-65).

Dube also mentions the relevance of birth according to the Shafiites, who followed the Hanafiites and declared the value of birth as social class criterion (Dube, 1978: 58-59). According to Levy, only Malikites ignored the value of birth as a measure of social precedence and remained egalitarian. He claims this was due to the fact that they were largely Africans who were already socially inferior to Arabs. He claims that this is the principal cause they proceeded to teach Islam's egalitarian message (Levy, 1962: 66-67).

Upper-class Muslims attempted to legitimize social stratification in Indian Muslim culture by using Hadith and Islamic law supplied by the Hanifiites and Shafiites. Nizami agrees with this view and claims that Islamic law in India supports caste differences based on birth and ancestry (Nizami, 1961: 22-24). But Khan goes further, claiming that even if the Hindu caste system had no impact on the Muslim peasantry

in both India and Pakistan, caste and social divides would persist among Muslims owing to Islamic society's recognized practices and Islamic law (Khan, 1968: 140-142). According to Ahmad, Hindu culture brought caste to Muslims in India, but social stratification was further entrenched by Islamic law, which attempted to explain the notion of birth and ancestry as criteria of prestige (Ahmad, 1978: 15-17).

Is caste a type of social stratification among Muslims in India, or can it also be considered a kind of social identification?

Almost everyone who has studied caste among Muslims in India sees it as a type of social stratification. Caste, on the other hand, is viewed as a social identification principle by Masselos. He uses the example of the Khojas, who was formerly a caste but have since then become an Islamic sect (Masselos, 1978: 99-102). According to Ahmad, affinities include caste, sects, and religious identities. This may change based on the occasion; each Muslim may behave differently depending on the circumstances (Ahmad, 1978: 173-175).

Ahmad further attacks Ansari for relying on data supplied by the British administration, claiming that the information was shallow, leading him to regard castes as distinct entities. In this statement, Ahmad claims that caste is a much-localized phenomenon and that Ansari treated it as distinct entity, whereas it should be analyzed within the framework of a local society. Ahmad contends that caste is a complicated social organization that requires a bigger number of individual studies of specific groups in various areas of India to fully appreciate the caste system. (Ahmad, 1978: 177-180)

Now consider this: can we apply the word "caste" to the system of social stratification seen in faiths other than Hinduism? Because caste was initially established as a basis of social stratification among Hindus, this is why this subject becomes increasingly essential and relevant. This is the fundamental reason why some scholars are hesitant to use the term "caste" to describe social inequalities in other faiths. Leach wonders if we should think of caste as a cultural or structural reality. Scholars have split into two factions. According to Weber, caste is a basic institution of Hinduism and should be limited to Hindus or socioeconomic groupings who reside near the Hindu society

(Weber, 1947: 23-25). Other scholars, like Dumont, Leach, and Srinivas, support this viewpoint (Leach, 1960: 127-129, Srinivas, 1959: 144-147, Dumont, 1970: 104-07). Sociologists and social anthropologists, on the other hand, perceive caste as a structural phenomenon, and the word "caste" may be used to describe two or more groups in other faiths and communities as well (Bailey, 1963: 110-112, Berreman, 1960: 12-14, and Harper, 1968: 54-57).

Scholars prefer to stick to the notion of caste and base their decisions on the Hindu caste system, even when studying social divides in other religions and civilizations. Then, it is critical to remember that we should evaluate caste among Indian Muslims not only as a structural criterion but also as a system that reflects principles and characteristics connected with caste among Hindus. However, according to Mines, the system of social stratification among Muslims in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu cannot be linked to caste among Hindus in any way. Because in his opinion, Tamil Muslims in Tamil Nadu are not classified hierarchically, and every one of them has equal standing. And, if there is a ranking, it must be based on age, money, or religiosity (Mines, 1978: 161-163).

He further claims that endogamy, the most significant element of caste, is not the same in Tamil Muslims as it is in Hindus because they have endogamous marriages to protect blood purity. However, he claims that Tamil Muslims conduct endogamous marriages not to protect blood purity but rather to match partners with similar economic backgrounds, and cultural and religious traditions. In summary, he claims that social divides among Tamil Muslims are not comparable to the Hindu caste system. However, most researchers on this subject believe that social differences among Muslims in India are analogous to the Hindu caste system, albeit they are not identical. Bhattacharya, for example, sees social separation among Muslims in West Bengal as an inter-ethnic stratification system rather than a caste structure. Because according to him, it shares certain characteristics with the Hindu caste system, but they are not the same (Bhattacharya, 1978: 275-277).

Dube also compares the social distinctions among Muslims in the Laccadive Islands of India's southwest coast to caste among Hindus but claims that they do not correlate in every detail (Dube, 1978: 61-64). Because some of the criteria of caste are lacking

in each case, some experts do not identify social differences among Muslims in India as a Hindu caste system. Every Scholar has defined the term "caste" in a different way. However, while defining caste, the majority of them have used the same main characteristics. Such as endogamous, is occupationally specialized, organized in a hierarchical manner, and ideologically and religiously motivated. Since it contains prohibitions and limitations on social contact. Let us now investigate if these main characteristics of caste are existent among Muslims in India.

4.5. Endogamy

According to Ahmad, most Muslim communities are endogamous. Marriages between two social groups are also severely limited. And, if it occurs, it happens amongst groupings of similar status (Ahmad, 1978: 12-13). Endogamous weddings exist among Muslims in West Bengal, according to Bhattacharya, but there are no written regulations restricting inter-group weddings; all rules are theoretical (Bhattacharya, 1978: 270-272).

Endogamy among castes, according to Siddiqui, exists even in metropolitan regions since individuals who travel to metropolitan cities for work and other reasons return to their place of origin for significant life cycle rites such as marriage and other ceremonies. That's why endogamy persists in urban areas. Inter-ethnic marriages are severely outlawed, even if the classes are of equal social standing (Siddiqui, 1978: 245-246).

Scholars, on the other hand, such as Mines, suggest many causes for endogamy. According to Mines, endogamy amongst Tamil Muslims occurs in order to locate a matched mate on economic grounds and religious traditions, as previously stated (Mines, 1978: 164-167). And this endogamy differs greatly from the Hindu, which is based entirely on blood purity. Experts such as Siddiqui and Ahmad, on the other hand, argue that endogamy occurs among Indian Muslims on the grounds of blood purity rather than economic matching. As per Siddiqui, there is a sanctity associated with the purity of ancestry, as we can plainly see phrases like some used to represent pure descent while others used to indicate dirty or hybrid descent (Siddiqui, 1978: 250-252).

The major cause for the schism between the two marital groups, according to Ahmad, is the concept of ceremonial purity. Because family lineage is widely employed to maintain blood purity, every family has a highly thorough history of its lineage and marriages as proof of blood purity. Marriage into a different social group is regarded as a form of contamination (Ahmad, 1978: 17-18).

However, according to Ahmad, there are several cases of hypergamous marriages, indicating that individuals employ this as a way of social advancement. Bhattacharya demonstrates how Sayyad men are permitted to marry women from lower social classes, while Sayyad women are not permitted to marry men from lower social classes (Bhattacharya, 1978: 279-280). Both Dube and D'Souza describe comparable circumstances in which upper-class men can marry lower-class women, while marriage between upper-class women and lower-class men is strongly discouraged (Dube, 1978: 59-61).

4.6. Occupationally Specialized

Caste and Hereditary vocational specialization are inextricably linked. According to Bhatta, who examined the Kasauli area in Uttar Pradesh, and Aggarwal, who investigated Meo village in Rajasthan, these villages have a full-fledged *Jajmani* system (Aggarwal, 1978: 143-146). Lower castes, according to this system, perform different services for upper castes in exchange for grain or other things. It's a type of occupational division of labor. Bhattacharya demonstrates that each major group in West Bengal is commonly connected with a certain vocation. This employment is conveyed by its name, and it is intimately associated with the *Jajmani* system (Bhattacharya, 1978: 280-282).

Dube also provides us with some examples of how people from lower castes have distinct jobs. People will criticize and discourage them if they try to split off from this conventional work and urge another occupation, resulting in social difficulties. The relationship between the ancestral profession and caste changes at different levels. For example, the relationship is stronger at the lower levels of social order than at the higher levels (Dube, 1978: 63-67). Both Ahmad and Bhattacharya emphasize that the

upper classes do not have conventional employment. Some were land record clerks, while others were farmers (Ahmad, 1978: 177-179).

Similar characteristics can be found in the Hindu caste system; they have very powerful caste profession linkages at lower levels, and higher Hindu castes pursue various types of occupational specialization. According to Mines, it makes little difference that is in which occupation, but because occupations are hierarchically ranked, it impacts the status of those who belong to the group historically associated with it (Mines, 1978: 160-162).

4.7. Organized in a Hierarchical Manner

There is certainly a hierarchical order among Indian Muslims, but the question is how close it is to the Hindu caste system. In Hinduism, social standing is determined by the concepts of purity and contamination. Scholars vary on the extent to which the concept of ritual cleanliness and contamination may be claimed to exist among Muslims in India. According to scholars like D'Souza and Dube, the standing among Indian Muslims is not dependent on the ritual of cleanliness and contamination (Dube, 1978: 67-69).

According to D'Souza, Muslim social distinctions in Karnataka and Kerala are hierarchical but not on the basis of cleanliness and filth. He claims that because ritual criteria do not exist among Muslims, they are graded based on non-ritual factors. Hypergamy, the amount of dowry due by the husband to his wife in the case of divorce, and segregation and limits on social interaction are examples (D'Souza, 1978: 44-46). According to Bhattacharya, the hierarchy is based on women's seclusion (purdah), ablution after urinating, and five-time prayer adherence (Bhattacharya, 1978: 280-281).

According to Ahmad, the ranking among Muslims is determined by the extent of Islamization and the closeness to the lineage of Muhammed (PBUH) (Ahmad, 1978: 14-15). Similarly, Dube claims that social disadvantages associated with the lower castes in the Laccadive Islands are founded on a deferential system and that the concept of pollution doesn't exist in the manner of touch or food. He also claims that social

standing is based on hypergamy, profession, and caste position in political and economic structures (Dube, 1978: 59-61). Siddiqui and Bhattacharya, on the other hand, suggest that ritual cleanliness and contamination are prevalent amongst Indian Muslims (Bhattacharya, 1978: 270-271).

Inter-dining is confined to one's family group, as Siddiqui demonstrates. Even India's most famous leader, Mahatma Gandhi, officially said in 1920 that he never quarreled with a Muslim or a Christian but that he ate only fruits from individuals of these religions. He explicitly forbade intermarriage and inter-dining between various tribes. However, in 1942, he retracted his views, claiming that these prohibitions were not a component of the Hindu faith. According to Siddiqui, among Indian Muslims, people of higher castes do not dine or drink with Lal Begis, a caste of Muslim scavengers. People who work as Lal Begis priests refuse to receive food or drink from Lal Begis (Siddiqui, 1978: 247-249).

According to Bhattacharya, when Muslims of higher castes emphasize cleanliness and avoid associating with Muslims of lower castes, they prefer to follow ceremonial concerns, which in actuality, is a notion of ritual purity and pollution. However, according to both Siddiqui and Bhattacharya, the concept of ceremonial cleanliness and contamination among Muslims is not as developed as it is among Hindus (Bhattacharya, 1978: 281-283).

4.8. Religious Sanctions

Caste in Hinduism is founded on religious philosophy, which promotes social divisions known as Varna. According to Dumont, many other theological conceptions work to support them (Dumont, 1970). These are the concepts of Karma and Dharma. The concept of hierarchy, according to Srinivas, Karma and Dharma, strengthens. According to Karma; if a person is born into a specific caste, he earned to be born into that caste. This is due to his deeds in his previous existence; if he lived according to caste laws, he spent a life as per Dharma. That is, he will be born in a higher caste in his next life if he accepts his caste and follows the norms, but if he does not, he will be born in a lower caste in his future life (Srinivas, 1959: 170-172).

As a result, the caste system should be seen as a religious institution. However, as we all know, there is nothing in Islam that promotes caste differences. The Quran and Hadith, on the other hand, advocate equality and fraternity. As a result, the concept of theological philosophy that supports caste is missing in Islam. However, the data plainly indicates that, whereas religion explicitly denies all social divisions and hierarchical ordering, another ideology admits such social distinctions. According to Bhattacharya, the disparity between their theoretical understandings of equality as preached by religion and the practical pattern of inequality against their religion causes them mental insecurity, which they attempt to conquer by rethinking the undeniable social fact of status inequality in terms of suitable idioms that can be successfully related to their traditions. However, he believes that these idioms are insufficient and that there are no clear explanations for the complicated character of the Muslim social hierarchy (Bhattacharya, 1978: 291-293).

This demonstrates that Indian Muslims not only practice the caste system but also strive to defend it religiously. According to Siddiqui, this reasoning ensures that the caste system will continue to exist among Muslims indefinitely, despite the lack of evidence of internal struggle (Siddiqui, 1978: 261-264). As we complete this topic, we can state unequivocally that a caste system remains among Indian Muslims but in a different and modified form than the Hindu caste system. The Hindu caste system is exceedingly extensive and thorough, but the caste structure amongst Indian Muslims is not as elaborate or detailed. There are three distinctions between the Hindu and Muslim caste systems. First and foremost, the Hindu religion promotes and defends its caste structure, whereas Islam does not. Second, while both Hindus and Muslims have a hierarchical ranking and endogamy, Hindus have a strong feeling of pride in their birth and ancestry, whilst Muslims have not acquired the same level of specifics and details. Third, Hindus have a very different idea of purity and pollution; while Muslims share certain similarities, it is not the only foundation of social hierarchy, and caste among Muslims is not based on the concept of purity and pollution as well.

Both Ali Anwar and Nadeem Hasnain discuss the rights of Indian Muslims from lower socioeconomic classes. Because Islam does not sanction the caste structure, the Indian constitution does not recognize Indian Muslims as a backward caste at all. As a result, according to the Indian constitution, only Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists have a caste

structure, and the lower classes in these religions are recognized as backward castes. These backward classes are known as other backward classes, or OBC (Anwar, 2001: 27-28).

As a result, the government grants them particular privileges in the education and job sectors. Both Anwar and Hasnain make a solid argument for the constitutional acceptance of non-*Ashraf* reservations (lower-ranking Muslims). They refute the primary arguments advanced by the upper class. The upper class wants the government to provide a "total Muslim reservation" (Hasnain, 2007: 87-89). However, both academics believe that this is unlawful and impractical because they believe that only downtrodden (Dalit) Muslims should get government reservations, rather than the whole Muslim population. This is because upper-class Muslims are politically and economically privileged, whereas disadvantaged Muslims lack both of these advantages (Anwar, 2001: 45-48).

Both thinkers then attempt to illustrate their position by demonstrating the circumstances, prejudice, and sufferings endured by low-caste Muslims. Even after death, low-caste Muslims endure prejudice since they are not permitted to bury their dead in upper-class cemeteries. (Hasnain, 2007: 91-93).

The suffering of Dalit Muslims is not much publicized because Muslim leaders attempt to legitimate caste-based inequalities or refuse to admit that caste discrimination occurs among Muslims as well. Following India's freedom in 1947, untouchables swiftly converted to numerous religions. They attempted to build a new identity for themselves while denying the persecution. Ambedkar was one of the first people to change to another faith, making conversion a common option for Dalits. As a result, turning to Islam was an appealing alternative for Dalits before 1947. However, the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 left Indian Muslims as a minority in India. Following that, riots against Muslims and anti-Muslim protests in India prompted Dalits to pick a faith other than Islam in order to escape Hinduism. Although there have been reports of certain Muslims converting to Islam, there have been no mass conversions (Sikand, 2004: 120-121). However, in 1981, at Meenakshipiram, in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, a large number of educated Dalits converted to Islam. This was done in order to protest the tyranny of higher caste Hindus. Following

this, a large number of individuals from adjacent villages, as well as people from various places and states across India, converted to Islam. However, following the conversions, Dalits who had previously benefited from government reservations were denied special advantages (Sikand, 2004: 121).

Convert descendants make up the vast bulk of today's Indian Muslim population, with around 75 percent. In today's India, around 100 million Dalit Muslims are present. Today, Dalits are referred to as SCs (scheduled castes) in India. This Dalit awareness and consciousness, as well as the fight for human rights, are not confined to those classified as SC by the government but also to those referred to as OBC (other backward classes). OBC is a broad category of castes that includes Christians and Muslims who have the same social and economic backgrounds as Hindu Dalits (Trivedi et al., 2016: 32-33). Accordingly, "Dalit Muslims" is the identification given to OBC Muslims by the AIBMM (All India Backward Muslim Morcha), an organization that seeks political and other rights on behalf of India's Muslim minority. The AIBMM was founded in 1994 by a doctor named Ejaz Ali, who belonged to the Muslim caste of vegetable sellers. After being repressed by both upper Hindu and Muslim groups, he founded AIBMM. One of the primary motivations for establishing AIBMM was the suffering of Muslims and the lack of awareness among Muslim leaders. The way traditional Muslim leaders treat oppressed Muslims has led Ejaz Ali to believe that Dalit leaders need to address the Dalit Muslim issue in the Muslim community (Sikand, 2004: 112-113).

The AIBMM formed a new Dalit Muslim identity because Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Buddhists were successful in obtaining SC status after a lengthy struggle with the government. At first, only Hindu Dalits were eligible for SC status under the 1950 constitution. However, after widespread protests by Dalit Sikhs and Dalit Buddhists, they were granted SC status in 1956 and 1990, respectively. However, Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians are still unable to get their rights and be classified as SC. The AIBMM, on the other hand, regards this as a breach of the Indian constitution, which states that the nation should be equal to all people and provide them with equal opportunities in issues of employment. Dalit Muslims want the Indian government to acknowledge them as SC because Indian law only recognizes Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist Dalits as SCs (Sikand, 2004: 112-113).

Granting SC status solely to Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists is considered religious discrimination by AIBMM; hence they aim to modify the legislation to get rights for Dalit Muslims according to the Indian constitution. Thus, the AIBMM's top aim is to convince the Indian government to recognize nearly 100 million Dalit Muslims as scheduled castes (SC) and avail the reservations enjoyed by the Hindu and other SCs. Only until the Indian government acknowledges Dalit Muslims as Scheduled Castes (SCs) will they be able to enjoy the same privileges as Hindu SCs. These privileges include reserved government jobs, reservations in educational sectors, reserved seats in India's parliament, special courts to address prejudice against them, and all social and economic development initiatives designed particularly for the SCs (Sikand, 2004: 114-116).

Just like AIBMM, many different activists and social scientists say that reservations, just like for SC, should be given to Dalit Muslims. The main reason that Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians are not considered SC is that, according to Indian law, the caste system draws validity from Hindu religious texts, which are not found in other religions. If one wants to be included on the SC list, one must be untouchable and face inequality and discrimination. The Indian government believes that Islam is an egalitarian faith with no caste inequalities. However, lived reality is not the same as textual Islam. The Dalit Muslims in India endure similar forms of discrimination and caste-related issues as Hindus, and despite this fact, these issues are rarely discussed. Also, Dalit Muslims are not identifiable due to a lack of data on individual castes, which are included in the census list among other backward classes (OBC) (Trivedi et al., 2016: 33-35).

Between October 2014 and April 2015, four scholars surveyed over 7,000 families in 14 districts in northern India. According to this survey, Dalit Muslims were not permitted to bury their family members in upper-caste graveyards. Likewise, several Dalit Muslims are barred from attending non-Dalit marriages owing to the history of social segregation. During non-Dalit Muslim gatherings, Dalit Muslims are seated apart and far away from non-Dalit Muslims; also, they must dine later than others from upper castes. Many people claim that they are served meals on different plates. Within classes and at lunch hour, Dalit Muslim students are placed separately (Biswas, 2016). As reported, Dalit Muslims are given unpleasant and menial jobs. They do not drink

from the same glass as Dalit Muslims, nor do they come into contact with the same water source. They compel them to consume the leftovers and live in segregated regions. Dalit Muslims pray in the last row of mosques or in a different mosque (Trivedi et al., 2016: 33-35).

According to Sachar's report of 2006, Muslim employees had the lowest chance of finding a regular job among both male and female workers, whereas SC workers from different religions have the greatest (Sachar et al., 2006: 105-107). The only difference between Hindu Dalits and Dalit Muslims is that Hindus have Hindu job names and Muslims have Muslim job names. Still, the job remains the same. However, even though Dalit Muslims suffer the same type of inequality as Dalit Hindus, discrimination against Dalit Muslims is less rigorous and harsh in comparison to Dalit Hindus (Millions, 2016).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In India, according to the varna system based on sacred scriptures, the Hindu community is divided into four groups. Brahmins are at the top of this hierarchical system, followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Accordingly, it is stated that they were all created from the Supreme Being's body. Dalits are not considered among them since they were not created from the Supreme Being, and hence they were labeled impure and named as untouchables. In India, upper castes utilized this system to subjugate lower castes. In the caste system, there is a hereditary occupational structure on a hierarchical basis, which is characterized as jati. Biradari is a term that is similar to the term jati, which is used in the caste system which is characterized by endogamy and hierarchy.

Caste has existed in India since 1700 BCE. It has been applied in a variety of ways throughout history. It was, nevertheless, strictly enforced in India only over the last few centuries. Hinduism's sacred scriptures, such as the Vedas, Manu Smriti, Dharma Shastra, etc., decide a person's roles, duties, occupations, punishment, and status in the caste society.

Modern and contemporary scholars have varying perspectives and approaches to the caste system and Dalits. According to Max Weber, the caste system did not emerge as a consequence of economic conditions but rather as a result of rational thinking of Brahminical theodicy, which combined the concept of karma and the Hindu Caste system as a legal institution. According to Susan Bayly, the caste system evolved as a sociological idea under colonial administration, when colonial scholars attempted to explain, comprehend, and theorize the caste system. Louis Dumont used the Purity-Pollution theory to describe the caste system, claiming that the opposition to Purity-Pollution encompasses all of the significant and evident elements of caste such as hierarchy, isolation, and division of labor.

According to Marvin Davis, all entities in the cosmos are formed of materials (*gunas*). *Sattva gun* is the most prominent material, followed by *Rajagun* and *Tamogun*. Everyone has a material that is more dominating than others. As a result, he claims that a being in the cosmos is ranked hierarchically based on his dominating substance. According to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, caste is unnatural and antisocial. He says that Hindu sacred books are illogical and upper castes exploit them to subjugate lower-caste people. He is an activist who is an advocate of the Dalit case. Furthermore, he condemns upper-caste oppression and caste inequality. People who follow the caste system, according to him, are not wicked in and of themselves, but they become evil by imposing the caste system on their everyday lives. Therefore, according to him, the only way to escape this evilness is by converting to other religions. Therefore, in order to end caste injustice, he converted to Buddhism and tried to achieve political rights for Dalits. Because according to him, attaining political rights was the only way for Dalits to be free of upper-caste persecution.

Dalits were deemed impure and untouchable, and as a result, they were unable to get satisfactory jobs or life. As a result, many Hindu Dalits and lower caste people converted to several religions, one of which is Islam. After witnessing Islam's brotherhood, equity, and righteousness, they converted to Islam. However, many distinct types of stratification began to permeate Muslim communities over time. Many of them were similar to the caste system. Muslims of foreign ancestry, such as Sheikh and Sayyad, discriminated against converted Muslims. In order to combat prejudice, these people formed a new identity known as Dalit Muslims. They have been attempting to gain political, economic, and employment rights from the government by using this identity.

Not only Dalit Muslims but also Dalit Christians attempted to get rights from the government. Many forms of discrimination have occurred among Indian Dalit Muslims and Christians, ranging from segregation to untouchability. As a result, various groups, including the AIBMM, attempted to get reservations and incentives from the government under a separate statute for Dalit Muslims. The Indian government, however, has failed to grant Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians recognition. As a result, they continue to be denied reservations and rights in political,

economic, and employment services. Dalit Muslims and Christians continue to fight for their rights from the government to this day.



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