

## Poetry, Politics and Dalit Imagination: Madan Veera and His Poetic Canvas

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### Abstract

The egalitarian principles of Sikhism create an illusion that the Sikhs do not believe in caste hierarchy. But Dalit personal narratives and caste-based gurdwaras in every village of Punjab are examples of how caste functions amongst the Sikhs. Dalits have been deprived of education since time immemorial. It was only after the British intervened that Dalits had access to education. A few Dalits got an opportunity to get educated towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Education made them conscious about their miserable condition and they began to reflect on social reality in the form of poetry or personal narratives. This study makes an effort to understand the rise of Dalit poets such as Gurdas Ram Alam, Sant Ram Udasi, Lal Singh Dil and the contemporary poet Madan Veera. My study investigates how Madan Veera reflects on current Dalit issues such as caste humiliation, socio-economic conditions, and exploitation. Thus, his poetry creates an alternative aesthetics to dominant aesthetics.

**Keywords:** Caste, Dalit, imagination, aesthetics, politics

### Introduction: Dalit Poetry from the Early Twentieth Century to the Naxalite Movement

Punjab is a Sikh dominant state. If we look at the origin of Sikhism we notice that Sikhism emerged as a protest against the dominant Hindu religion which did not recognize a large population as human beings. The lower castes largely remained subordinate to the dominant group (Webster, 2007). With the emergence of Sikhism this dehumanized group