

## **Abstract PHD THESIS**

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### **Dalit and the Congress Politics in North India: The Case of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (1952-1989)**

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The study of “Dalit and the Congress Politics in North India: The Case of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (1952-1989)” to aims to know how the Congress party initiated various policies and plans to improve education, health and elevation of poverty and humiliation of Dalits in north India. The study attempts to demonstrate that North India lags behind in terms of inclusion of new caste groups in the political system, and explain why the Congress cared very little about representing lower castes. And how Congress party apparatus in the hand of upper castes made the ground for alienation of lower castes or Dalits in UP. This alienation is the root cause of the decline of the Congress party in North India, and more particularly in UP and emergence of BSP (as a Dalit party) and BKD and SP (as a Backward castes party). It also seeks to examine the ideological perspectives and attitude of the Congress Party leadership towards the Dalits. Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are particularly important for exploring the institutional development and political mobilization of Dalit/Low Castes because of its peculiar historical patterns, social organisation and caste-based traditional authority. This specific study of how the Congress and the Dalit politics, historically and thematically, became important in order to understand the contours of shaping Indian politics today. The present study, therefore, has the potential to shed new light on the issue of caste and politics in India. Indeed, over the years, redistributive politics has been reshaped by

changing political discourses by lower castes, when they realized their numerical and political strength, and their ability to mobilize themselves in order to benefit from the affirmative action policies envisaged by prominent Dalit leaders after Independence.

The Congress leadership after independence strongly felt that there was an urgent need to support the Dalits and Backward Castes by various means like reservations and implementing various welfare schemes for the amelioration of these social groups. This has been a paradigm shift of the post-independence welfare state, aimed at bringing the Dalits and oppressed castes at par with the caste Hindus. There are numerous Government measures for ensuring the welfare and well being of the Dalits in India. The upper-caste leadership of the Congress was unwilling to give them similar preferences and privileges. This was because they were numerically and politically strong in quite a few regions, and special concessions would encourage them to mobilize opposition to the Congress. The position of SCs and STs on the other hand was strengthened by the special treatment accorded to them.

This specific study shows that after six decades of independence, Dalits remain worse-off compared to almost all other social groups in terms of social and economic conditions. On most human development indices, the Dalits fall below the national average. But they would have been in an even worse situation had there been no mandatory reservation and affirmative action for them. As a consequence of affirmative action policies of the Congress government over the period, there has been some improvement in the status of SCs. The success lies in a discernible improvement in literacy, school and higher education enrolment, and placement in government jobs. Student enrolment has increased substantially. Although percentages of SCs are still low, they have been able to get access to the fields of engineering, medicine, teaching, law, and the civil services. Despite all the limitations of reservations, it has enabled the emergence of a new middle class among SCs, whose members have been able to join mainstream society and enter new professions and occupations.