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**ASPECTS OF DALIT POLITICAL CULTURE: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH**

The present study "Aspects of *Dalit* Political Culture: A study with Reference to Western Uttar Pradesh" is a humble initiative towards understanding the nature and dynamics of various socio-cultural factors in shaping power politics for *dalits* in Uttar Pradesh. The study attempts to analyze the role of the *dalit* movements and popular *dalit* literature and culture in democratization of the hegemonic and exclusionary Hindu power structures.

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter, "Introduction" offers a succinct overview of the *Dalit* movements during colonial India, and explores the factors responsible for developing Western Uttar Pradesh as the site of negotiating issues concerning *dalit* interests right since the 1920s till independence. The introductory framework also makes an attempt towards comprehending the political strategies of Ambedkar and Gandhi for the emancipation and empowerment of *dalits* under the colonial contingent.

The second chapter "Uses of History in Contemporary *Dalit* Movement" unravels the imbrications of the *dalit bahujan* political landscape in Uttar Pradesh, and the range of factors which contributed in extending frontiers of *dalit* political agenda from the provincial to the national to the global. This chapter also maps out some of the major factors responsible for

the rise of the BSP as a formidable political force and Mayawati as a new *dalit* icon. It also looks at Hindi literary *dalit* revolution in the Western Uttar Pradesh, *dalit* interests articulated by the Durban and Bhopal conference, strategic uses of history for consolidation of *dalit* consciousness, and post *bahujan* plank of Mayawati.

Chapter three "*Dalit* Political Culture and Democratization of Politics with Reference to Western Uttar Pradesh" examines the nature and magnitude of role played by the constitutive aspects of *dalit* political culture, expressed through popular *dalit* literature, *dalit* melas, *dalit* myths, *dalit* symbols and other cultural artifacts, in consolidation of the political base of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh in particular, and North India in general. The chapter analyzes the patterns of *dalit* political culture beginning from western Uttar Pradesh and the ways in which they spread to other parts of India with the help of the 'Mission Literature', 'Chetna Mandaps', celebration of anniversaries of *dalit* icons, and through *dalit* melas. This chapter also analyses the electoral trends of the BSP in the last couple of Legislative and Parliamentary elections. The chapter underlines the political dilemma and limitations of the BSP in using the resources of *dalit* political culture creatively and suggests the challenges ahead.

Chapter four "Discourses on Reservations and *Dalit* Visions for social Transformation" seeks to examine the agreements for and against quota based reservations for the excluded segments in the Indian society. The chapter also offers some alternative proposals of affirmative actions in higher education for all those who rank high on deprivation index, and therefore, to all those who are disadvantaged. A case is made out here for a more comprehensive and inclusive policy of reservation and affirmative action for the Muslim minority and the *dalit* Christians. The chapter argues that any agenda of social transformation and social justice should look beyond the trivialities of electoral gains and should be visionary in outlook and egalitarian in content.

The Conclusion offers explanations as to why the growth of the BSP as a political power is not only a function of 'social engineering', or, for that matter 'community based ticket distribution tactics', rather, the phenomenal rise of the party is a political expression of a variety of historical and socio-cultural factors that sculptured and shaped political consciousness of *dalits* in Uttar Pradesh. The conclusion brings to core the agreement that the historicity of *dalit* struggles, their intellectual efforts, and the constructive role of the aspects of *dalit* political culture in consolidation of *dalit* political power could not be generalized in terms of some of the ostensibly-proximate explanatory factors. The roots of the *dalit* consciousness and its consolidation in the struggle of electoral democracy are far more deeper and therefore, could be explained and understood largely in terms of the aspects of *dalit* political culture with their socio-cultural and political strands emanating from Western Uttar Pradesh. The concluding chapter also hints at some of the dilemmas and challenges ahead to a more egalitarian and inclusive politics for social justice in India.

By

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