

**CASTE DOMINANCE AND NEW SOCIAL MOBILITY IN URBAN GUJARAT:
THE SAURASHTRA PATIDAR COMMUNITY AND ITS QUEST FOR THE
REPRODUCTION OF POWER**

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REPRODUCTION OF POWER**

By

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Submitted
in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
to the



Indian Institute of Technology Delhi

April, 2025

Declaration

This is to declare that this thesis titled ‘Caste dominance and New Social Mobility in Urban Gujarat: the Saurashtra Patidar Community and its Quest for the Reproduction of Power’, being submitted by me to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafide work carried by me under the supervision of Prof. Farhana Ibrahim.

The contents of the thesis have not been submitted in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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Certificate

This is to certify that this thesis titled ‘Caste dominance and New Social Mobility in Urban Gujarat: the Saurashtra Patidar Community and its Quest for the Reproduction of Power’, being submitted by Joshi Priyank Shaileshkumar to the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of bonafied work carried by him under my supervision. In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standards of fulfilling the requirements for submission relating to the degree.

The contents of the thesis have not been submitted in part or full, to any other university or institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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Abstract

This thesis shows how a dominant caste with a substantial urban presence negotiates with new meanings of caste power and social mobility in urban Gujarat. These negotiations occur within and outside the community boundaries as the changing conditions of external power also reshape the intra-community perceptions of prestige, mobility aspirations, and institutional practices like marriage. By highlighting the ever-changing nature of caste dominance, the thesis underscores that the reproduction of power according to its new parameters results in several insecurities and anxieties among members of the dominant community.

Such insecurities intensify with various external challenges, such as the urban interests of other caste groups that are traditionally not dominant. The thesis discusses how various community-wide entities, such as caste associations and community leaders, help reproduce dominance through collective resource mobilisation while tackling to internal anxieties of reproduction. This is to underline that the internal and external challenges do not translate to an end of caste dominance; it is a process that demands persistent reproduction amid challenges and insecurities. Additionally, this persistence also forms social, economic, and spatial exclusions.

This sociological thesis is based on qualitative fieldwork with the Saurashtra Patidar community in various parts of Gujarat from July 2021 to June 2022. The Saurashtra Patidars are a Patidar sub-caste with social, political, and financial dominance in urban Gujarat. The thesis chapters range across phenomena like new occupational mobility, capitalist hold, urban spatial exclusion, agriculture, hypergamy and ecology. With it, the thesis aims to comprehend the link between the external power an urban dominant community maintains and the internal mobility changes it simultaneously deals with.

सार

यह थीसिस दिखाती है कि कैसे शहरी गुजरात में पर्याप्त शहरी उपस्थिति वाली एक प्रमुख जाति जाति-प्रभुत्व और सामाजिक गतिशीलता के नए अर्थों के साथ संकलन करती है। ये संकलन समुदाय की सीमाओं के भीतर और बाहर होती है क्योंकि बाहरी शक्ति की बदलती स्थितियाँ भी प्रतिष्ठा, गतिशीलता आकांक्षाओं और विवाह जैसी संस्थागत प्रथाओं की अंतर-सामुदायिक धारणाओं को नया आकार देती हैं। जाति प्रभुत्व की लगातार बदलती प्रकृति पर प्रकाश डालते हुए, थीसिस इस बात पर जोर देती है कि अपने नए मापदंडों के अनुसार शक्ति के पुनरुत्पादन के परिणामस्वरूप प्रमुख समुदाय के सदस्यों के बीच कई असुरक्षाएं और चिंताएं पैदा होती हैं।

ऐसी असुरक्षाएँ विभिन्न बाहरी चुनौतियों के साथ तीव्र होती हैं, जैसे कि अन्य जाति समूहों के उभरते शहरी हित जो परंपरागत रूप से प्रभावशाली नहीं हैं। थीसिस इस बात पर चर्चा करती है कि विभिन्न समुदाय-व्यापी संस्थाएं, जैसे कि जाति संघ और समुदाय के नेता, पुनरुत्पादन की आंतरिक चिंताओं से निपटने के दौरान सामूहिक संसाधन जुटाने के माध्यम से प्रभुत्व को पुनः उत्पन्न करने में कैसे मदद करते हैं। यह रेखांकित करना है कि आंतरिक और बाहरी चुनौतियाँ जाति प्रभुत्व के अंत में तब्दील नहीं होती हैं; यह एक ऐसी प्रक्रिया है जो चुनौतियों और असुरक्षाओं के बीच लगातार पुनरुत्पादन की मांग करती है। इसके अतिरिक्त, यह दृढ़ता सामाजिक, आर्थिक और स्थानिक बहिष्करण भी बनाती है।

यह समाजशास्त्रीय थीसिस जुलाई 2021 से जून 2022 तक गुजरात के विभिन्न हिस्सों में सौराष्ट्र पार्टीदार समुदाय के साथ गुणात्मक क्षेत्रीय कार्य पर आधारित है। सौराष्ट्र पार्टीदार शहरी गुजरात में सामाजिक, राजनीतिक और वित्तीय प्रभुत्व वाली एक पार्टीदार उपजाति है। थीसिस अध्याय नई व्यावसायिक गतिशीलता, पूंजीवादी पकड़, शहरी स्थानिक बहिष्कार, कृषि, 'हाइपरगैमी' और पारिस्थितिकी जैसी घटनाओं पर आधारित हैं। इसके साथ, थीसिस का उद्देश्य शहरी प्रभुत्वशाली समुदाय द्वारा बनाए रखी जाने वाली बाहरी शक्ति और साथ ही साथ आंतरिक गतिशीलता में होने वाले बदलावों के बीच संबंध को समझना है।

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