PART II - SOURCES OF POWER AND DOMINATION

Actual and potential sources of the elites' power and domination, our data suggest, do not lie in isolated and exclusive categories of agrarian social structure. In addition, there is also historicity of power which is supported by cultural continuities. Thus, upper caste segments, on account of their high social ranks, possession of large land-holdings and on account of their correspondingly higher economic superiority, have historically been the only segment which was capable of providing the elites. Data on elites of the colonial period in the preceding chapters attest to this fact. The change from the colonial to the post-colonial period, however, tended to alter and expand the base of elite recruitments. Such an alteration reflects shift and change in the source of power and domination as well. The exclusive monopoly of a few social segments has started crumbling and several others of the same social structure have started surfacing on the scene of elite recruitment.

Our elite nomination data suggest that those who are nominated as elites are not necessarily or always upper caste people. They tend to come from other castes as well including ex-untouchable castes and other communities. All of them are not big landholders and some of them are economically poorer compared to many relatively rich who did not achieve
reputational score to be taken in the sample of elites. Furthermore, all those office holders of elective positions on statutory and semi-statutory bodies were also not necessarily elected to our elite pool. Against these observations, we may also place the fact that the top ten entrenched elites of the district, all ex-rains and zamindars of upper-caste segment, neither hold statutory positions nor are they holders of university degrees.

In addition, as we shall see, there is a fair number of elites whose family and close kin had been at the fore-front of power as Darbaris or Honorary Magistrates in the colonial period. These cases refer to the elites who are sons, brothers or cousins of ex-Darbari elites of the pre-independent period. However, there is a significant number of elites who emerged from the political transitions and hage, as we have mentioned earlier, for the last 40 years, been exercising parallel power and dominations on people as counter elites or new elites of the countryside.

In order to highlight the issue of identifying the sources of elite power, we have to address ourselves to the issue of the pre-requisites of power. By pre-requisite of power, we refer to those basic social conditions which, when favourable, accord power, prestige and domination to persons in proportion to the possession of the basic social conditions. And, when such conditions disappear, the capacity
to exercise power also disappears. Thus, there must be a certain set of basic conditions consistently present in case of those entrenched elites who or whose families have consistently been holding a continuing stable tenure of power and domination as opposed to the other especially the emerging elites who emerged from the basic conditions different from the former one. A number of respectable names of emerging elites, such as Raja Ram Sharma, Ram Kumar Shastri, Uda Shankar Dube, Ram Shankar, Kripa Shankar, Ram Lakhan Misra, etc. who went out of the office of, say MLA and MP, were seen abruptly undergoing a sharp and steep decline in not only their power and domination but also in their living conditions. For the emerging elites to be out of elective positions, meant being out of power. Their tenure of power being office-bound is short and transitory. But the same is not true with most of the traditional entrenched elites, such as *ex-raj*as and *zamindars*. They continue, despite political odds, to have large land-holdings, to own and manage educational institutions as their family property and retain enough influence to exercise command over the process of political decision making, right from the choice of a candidate to his election to the final process of casting and counting of votes. They have a long history of power behind them which help them in the exercise of the same today even when political context of society has changed.
If we are able to discern the **two foci** of the basic social conditions, one which accords longer tenure of power and the other a shorter tenure, we would be approaching with some certainty, the sources of power. We have to keep in our mind that the two foci of power holding belong to two sets of historical and political situations of society. In one situation, we find 'traditional' social conditions operating. Its continuing operation in the countryside accords continuing basic conditions of power to those who have been and are its beneficiaries. The contemporary situations, on the other hand, create 'modern' social conditions. Achievement oriented non-ascriptive sources of power are the product of modern social condition. In the modern political milieu, positions of power are to be achieved through success in election. The traditional situation in which control over hand, historicity of rule and domination and the hereditary upper caste status, etc. had been valued, was the product of feudal-colonial political structure. The change in the political structure has brought about the modern social conditions. The continuity and change of these two social conditions, one traditional from which continuing, longer and stable sources of power emanate, and the other, modern, giving rise to sources of power which are transitory and unstable, is to be explored and analysed in terms of the two foci.
The foci of these basic conditions are examined below in terms of such analytically separate but empirically overlapping dimensions of sources of power as its historicity, power and positional structure of elites, power and the structure of land control and finally, cultural and symbolic aspects of the bases of power. In addition, we also present data on the self-perception of elites about their sources of power. Our contention is that power is the result of the interplay between the factors which are embedded in these social bases of power. Contingent factors, such as ideologies, legal policies of the State and other related political factors, are important aspects of power acquisition, but these are to be examined against the broad historical, social and cultural background of the community. We shall also present and analyse data on the perception of elites about the perceived sources of their own power. Our aim is to supplement one type of data with the other.

Historicity of Power and Domination

In a society, like the Indian, which did not undergo any radical breakdown of its social and cultural traditions, the history of rulership of a few rajput lineages and families and of the priestly power of the Brahmans on the peasantry themselves in past became in itself a justification for their continuation in the present situation. The past weighs heavily on rural societies and
is one of the most important handles in the hands of the traditional elites to clutch and retain their control over people.

In the preceding chapters on pre-colonial and colonial phases, we surveyed the process of colonization by the conquering Rajputs and the emergence of lineage and clan principalities, the heads of which became rajas. We have also hinted at the proselytizing role of the Brahmans, who as the priests of Rajputs, converted the indigenous tribals into faithful Hindu subjects of the raja. Indeed, it is an irony of history that subjugation of one community or of one society by the other, has generally been carried out with the help of priestly powers.

These independent and semi-independent princely rajas and their brahmanic priests, barring those who rebelled against the company-raj of the British, emerged as the Title, Sanad and Certificate holding class of local rulers after 1857. This glittering class of Darbaris of the British courts often held magisterial powers and received concessions for the possession of arms, etc. The raja (ruler) and the praja (subject) division of the pre-colonial phase, even as it persisted later, also assumed a new division between landlords and the tenants. The nexus of the ruler and the ruled, the master and the subject, landlords and the peasants was the nexus essentially of power and domination.
The continuing bondage of generations of peasants to the upper caste ruling lineages and families of landlords - the Maliks (masters), Sarkar (authority), the Deo-Bhagwan (God incarnate) and Maj-Baap (parents) as they still are honorifically referred to by the peasantry continues to persist. Politically, culturally, socially and economically majority of the rural population is under the domination of upper caste elites. This total moral and emotional grip of the traditional elites on the peasant generated a rationality which conceptualised the concept of social order as an order of sharply differentiated segments of population - the tiny top segment holding the maximum power and dominating the majority population below.

Abolition of the class of rajas and zamindars during the post-colonial period abolished the legal nexus between the zamindars and the tenants. But like many headed hydra with the loss of the legal nexus of power - the rajas and the zamindars did not lose other nexuses of power. An erosion of their power over the peasantry is tangible and is felt. But they still have relatively more power than any other social segment or any other type of new elite. The historicity of their rulership, command and control over people continues to enable them to wield more power on people with less effort as opposed to the new elites who wield comparatively less power with more efforts.

38. For details, see my article, "Culture of Inequality", in Seminar No. 255, November 1980, pp.15-17.
Past Tenurial Status

In order to highlight the significance of the contribution made by history to the contemporary elites, let us first examine the past tenurial status of our elites presented in Table 36.

Table 36
The past tenurial status of elites by types (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Type of Elite</th>
<th>Ex-rajya-zamindar</th>
<th>Ex-tenant</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Entrenched elites</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Emerging elites</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=150</td>
<td>N=65</td>
<td>N=12</td>
<td>N=227</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of the total sample of 227 elites, 66.07 per cent of elites come from the families of erstwhile rajyas and zamindars. The persistence of the historically powerful segment of social structure even after the legal abolition of their special privileges reflect the continuity of their power from past to the present. Only 33.92 per cent of elites come from the ex-tenant tenurial background.

39. After the Z.A. Act of 1952 of the Government of Uttar Pradesh, the distinction between the Zamindar status and the tenant status disappeared.
Keeping in view the enormous disparity that existed between the population ratio of **ex-zamindars** and the ex-tenants (Chapter II), the representation of the elites from the latter, especially in the context of post-independence equalization policies of the State is only symptomatic. That the ruling segments of the colonial period continue to rule over the people in the post-independence Basti is an undisputed fact. But, feeble as it is, the tendency among the ex-tenants to rise from their historical phase of powerlessness, on the part of the peasant and the ex-subject classes, which could have been impossible in the past colonial context, is also an undisputed fact.

**Honorific Past**

In addition to the tradition of power being more favourable to the traditional elites, it is crucial to note that a good number of them, alive at the time of the field study such as **ex-raja** of Bansi, Mahson, Basti and Chandapar (Shohratgarh) and territorial **raiputs** and **brahman ex-zamindars** such as Thakur, Ramshwar Prasad Singh of Chawkhara, Baleshwari Prasad Singh of Rudhanli, Pandey of Jagdishpur and Babu Ram Charitra Pandey of Belbhana, etc., to cite only a few names have themselves been holders of seats in British **Darbars**, recipients of **Saras** and Certificates and held the Honourary position of Class II Magistrates during the colonial phase.
A good number of relatively younger elites are the sons or nephews of similar influentials who are dead.

While the Title holders generally belonged to the list of the Darbaris of the district, the number of the latter hardly exceeded 15 on any specific point of time. The recipients of certificates, Sanads and gifts, especially the position of Honorary Magistrates, used to be more in number than the number of regular Darbaris. The combined number of these regular Darbaris and Sanad and certificate recipients and the Honorary Magistrates in 1919 was 65.

Of these 65 colonial elites, 29 elites were alive at the time of our field study and are in our elite sample; and the sons or nephews of those who are dead are nominated to our sample. Both categories of elites are presented in Table 37.

40. Information on the Honorable background of elites are from the List of the Recipients of Rewards for War Services, at the occasion of District Darbar held by G.B. Muir, Esq., I.C.S., District Magistrate, Basti on 16th December, 1919, Political Department, M.S. File No. XVI-5 of 1919, E.R.O., Basti. This file contains list of district contributors to the War Fund.

41. A. Category 'A' includes those contemporary elites who, himself received Titles, Seats in British Darbars, Sanads, Certificates and held the position of Honorary Magistrates during pre-independent period.

B. This category includes those elites whose parents (now dead) belonged to A category.
Table - 37
The colonial honorific background of the elites by types (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Types of elites</th>
<th>Categories of honorific background</th>
<th>Elites with no honorific background</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Entrenched elites</td>
<td>62.0</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>69.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Emerging elites</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that generally all the families that were influential during the colonial period, with a few exceptions, continue to be equally influential during the post-independence period. The continuity of their power, prestige and domination has a historical dimension. A history of power become a source of power in the present. Sanctions, legitimacies and approvals of such powers become the cake of custom and suffer little from change and erosion.

Positional Structure and Source of Power

There has been a tendency among social scientists, first, to treat statutory positions as synonyms of actual power and then, to treat the holders of such positions as the holders of actual power. Such an assumption persists among
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scholars, who have conducted their research on leaders and elites in India. We have questioned it earlier (Chapters I and II) and we shall presently support our criticism with a body of empirical facts.

We intend to describe various types of positions of power and influence held by some of the elites and then we shall examine the issue of elective position and power. Positions generally belong to organizations. Organisations can broadly be divided into two major types: The first is governmental organisations such as the Parliament at the national level, Legislative Assembly at the State, Zila Parishad at the district and the Gram Sabhas at the village levels. It is generally assumed that positions at national and State level bodies yield more power to their occupiers as compared to those at the lower levels. It may also be pointed out that while acquisition of position to the district, state and national level organizations involve participation in elections on the lines of political parties, especially with reference to the membership in Parliament.

and State Assemblies, such politicality of positions thins down in the case of village elections. Village elections are generally more of the function of caste and land alliances within the village rather than of political parties and ideologies.

The second type of organisations are semi-governmental in the sense that they are registered bodies. Organisation such as Managing Committees of Government recognised Primary and Secondary Schools and Colleges, Pathshalas (traditional schools), District Cane Development Federation, Weavers' Cooperatives, etc., are chiefly of this type. While in principle, acquisition of positions in these bodies is through election, but actually allocations of positions are generally decided behind the scene. Competition for positions in these bodies does not involve political contest as in case of the elections to the Parliament and Assembly. Political parties do not involve themselves in the selection of position holders for these bodies. Key positions of such Registered Organisations, though essentially honorary in nature, often yields a good deal of economic power to its holders. State grants of money for the benefit of sugar-cane growing peasant, or for a lay cloth weaver, or for getting teaching job in a school, etc., are various types of power which yield to its holders enormous local influence.
We present data below on elites who hold elective statutory position and on elites who hold positions in semi-statutory, non-political and non-elective bodies. Such an information is crucial since generally, elite studies in India, as we have hinted earlier, have remained confined to the study of elective formal position holders alone.

The number of elected candidates in the district to the seats of Legislative Assembly have been fluctuating between 15 to 16. Two of these 16 seats are kept reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates. Three candidates go to Parliament from the district and one of the three is reserved for a Scheduled Caste candidate. Data contained in Table 38 show the case of elites who occupy statutory elective positions in organisations such as the Parliament, the State Assembly, Zila Parishad and as Pradhan in village Panchavats.

43. Such as Srisikar, op.cit.

44. Number of Legislative Assembly Constituencies and therefore seats have varied between 15 in 1952 to 16 in 1962 and subsequent General Elections.

45. Zila Parishad consists of 32 elected Block Pramukhs, 32 Chetra Samiti Members, 1 Chairman of the Municipality, Basti township and other ex-officio members such as all the members of Legislative Assembly and of the Parliament from Basti district, Director of Cooperative Society, Chairman, District Cooperative Federation, Chairman Cane Society, Basti, Government nominated member of Cooperative Society and two Government nominated members to Zila Parishad Basti.
Table - 38

Occupancy of statutory elective positions of elites by their types (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Types of elites</th>
<th>Elites not holding elective positions</th>
<th>Holding elective positions by categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Entrenched elites (109)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Emerging elites (118)</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=184</td>
<td>N=43</td>
<td>N=13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information contained in Table 38 suggests that of the usual total of 19 members (three of Parliament and 16 of State Assembly) in category X, only 13 have appeared on the reputational-pool of our sample of elites, 11 (84.6 per cent) in the entrenched and the two (15.4 per cent) in the lower elite groups. Similar pattern is noted in the case of members belonging to the Y category. Out of the total 32 Block Pramukhs as many as 25 belong to our elite sample. But there is one significant difference. The majority in the

* Categories of Elective Positions are:

1) X Consists of members elected to Parliament and Legislative Assembly.

2) Y Consists of members elected to Zila Parishad of the district.

3) Z Consists of village Pradhan, Panch and Sarpanch and junior Block Pramukhs who do not belong to Zila Parishad.
X category, 11 as opposed to two belong to the group of entrenched elites whereas the majority of the Y category elites, 20 (80.0 per cent) as opposed to five (20 per cent) belong to the lower category of the elites.

We note an abrupt decline of number of position holders of Z category in our sample. Out of 2,423 village Pradhans and more than one and a half of this figure consisting of village Panchas, Sarpanchas and Junior Block Pramukhs - in all, about more than 7,000 elected position holders, just five of them could make to the elite nomination pool of our sample.

Now, placing the total of 43 (33.5 per cent in the entrenched and 60.5 per cent in the emerging category) elites holding statutory positions in perspective, let us examine their comparative relation to the 184 elites (50.0 per cent of each category) who do not hold any such elective statutory except position, although they hold positions in semi-statutory or registered bodies, such as the schools, colleges, cooperatives, etc.

In the district, the positions of Manager and President, etc., in the Managing Committees of Government recognised schools and colleges are powerful positions.

46. See the Inventory of the Village Pradhans, Kisan Marg (Hindi), District Information Office, Basti, 1961.
Government sanctions financial grants to these institutions to subsidise the payment of teachers' salary, to meet the cost of building construction and repair and to purchase furniture, etc. Government also gives special grants for the support of Scheduled Caste students, who are supposed to get free books, clothing, scholarships, etc.

The holder of managerial position of such a school exercises influence upon both those who seek jobs in the school and those who seek admissions to study in such a school. The bleak employment situation in the country and the increasing number of villagers holding graduate degrees with a desire to seek employment near their own farm and family forces the educated rural youth to negotiate for employment. Generally, grounds other than the academic qualification of the candidate decide the selection of a teacher in the village schools. The selected candidate, it is an open practice, signs for a salary which is usually for more than what he actually receives. Besides, he has to do a lot of household chores for the manager to keep him happy and in good humour, which is crucial to keep the job secure. The legal concept of job confirmation, tenure of job and salary scales are fictions among such institutions and do not apply to them.

Similarly, the seekers of education, the students, his parents and often his relatives too, have to remain under the general over-lordship of the local educational potentate.
Grants of freeships and scholarships to the students and awards of examination marks are generally the reflection of the wish of the potentate who exercises command over the teachers. It is not a rare spectacle in the Basti countryside to find a group of college teachers, holding Master's Degree in various disciplines to stand at attendance to a semi-educated, uncouth and arrogant President or Manager of a college.

By controlling the resources of education, one not only controls the teachers, the students and their families but also controls the government sanctioned cash grants. Most of these managers get money from both sides - from the teachers and students and from government grants. In addition, the local status of a person is generally estimated in terms of the number of schools managed by him in the district. Based on our field observations, we propose to highlight the manner in which the local elites resort to gain power by capturing and monopolising the educated system of the district.

*Basti district has three Degree Colleges, one at the District headquarters, owned by an ex-MLA, Mr. Sheo Harakha Upadhaya and the remaining two, one at Bansi and the other at Chandapar are managed and owned by the ex-rajas of Bansi and Shohratgarha. According to the data provided by the office of the District Inspector of Schools, Basti, District has 24 Intermediate Colleges and 130 Junior Higher Secondary Schools. Number of such schools are on the increase.
The cases of elites occupying key positions* in the schools and other** registered bodies of the district by their types (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of elites</th>
<th>Types of Registered Bodies</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrenched elites (109)</td>
<td>68.14</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging elites (113)</td>
<td>31.85</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total :</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=135</td>
<td>N=6</td>
<td>N=141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the data contained in Table 17 with the data in Table 39 reveals that while some of the entrenched elites, 88.07 per cent out of their total of 109 of the district are members in the Parliament and State Assembly, they also, at the district level, tend to capture and retain their monopoly over the educational institutions. Lower elites, however, as compared to the higher ones, though stronger in numerical strength, have much fewer (only 30.3 per cent to their total of 113) similar positions under their control. The details about the relationship between various categories of position-holding elites who

*By "Key" position we mean to refer to the position of President, Manager or Secretary of the organisation.

**Other registered semi-statutory organisations six in all are Weavers' Cooperative at Maghar, Cane-Society and the Cooperative Federations of Basti town, etc. These organisations do not wield as far and wide influence on people as the educational institutions do.
occupy or do not occupy elective and non-elective positions are presented in Table 40.

Table - 40

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of elites</th>
<th>Electives occupying elective positions</th>
<th>Electives occupying non-elective positions</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Entrenched elites (109)</td>
<td>73.90</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Emerging elites (118)</td>
<td>26.08</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>52.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 40 highlight the general picture of the distribution of entrenched and emerging elites in various categories. Compared to the entrenched elites, the data suggest that a high percentage of emerging elites either occupy no position or occupy only elective position. Entrenched elites on the other hand occupy both categories of positions. Now if we compare the data of this table with those of the Table 38, we find that entrenched elites have captured almost all types of positional sources of power. Since high elective positions (X category) are limited and
since they could create positions for themselves they control the key positions of non-elective nature of semi-statutory bodies and organisations.

The general picture that emerges from the data is that, generally elites do not involve themselves with elective statutory positions such as village Pradhans, Panchas, Sarpanchas, etc. Instead, they prefer to occupy top district positions such as the chairmanship of the Zila Parishad or occupy Assembly or Parliamentary seats. The number of these positions, being limited (only 16 for Assembly and three for the Parliament) and also on account of their relative detachment from active politics, most of the top elites prefer to consolidate their power by monopolising the semi-statutory non-elective position. Such a detachment from the active politics may also be their strategic withdrawal from a situation in which they visualise little success. The ethos and the style of the elites are generally not in tune with the demands of modern politics. They, therefore, prefer to expand their own local resources of power at home in the district, rather than entering into the election fray. It may be noted here that the top most 15 elites who secured the maximum of reputational score - generally the *ex-rajahs* and the *zamindars* - do not hold any elective position. They, by and large, manage and preside over their own institutions and indirectly evolve a domain of power in which they have autonomy and independence. Such
men of independence and power are a force to reckon with by political parties for their local success in the elections. These men of power continue to patronise the politicians, educated intelligentsia, religious saints and priests in the countryside.

Our data cast doubt on the substantive nature of elite studies which confine themselves to elected positions to the Panchayats, Zila Parishads, Municipal Corporations, etc. The attempt to link power with only elective formal positions and to disdainfully leave out all other types of positions in the society is a futile attempt towards the construction and presentation of social reality. For, the Basti data reveal that the powerful and the influential men of the countryside are not so frequently found around office-bound formal elective position as in semi-formal setting.

Land Control as a Source of Power

In east Uttar Pradesh, there is a popular folk-saying among the upper castes, especially among the Rajputs, that "Land belong to brave and powerful". The saying perhaps faithfully reflects the archaic stage of the Rajput colonizations of the region in the past. In the contemporary scene the situation is reverse bravery and power come from possession and ownership over large landholdings.
Neale faithfully echoes this reversion of the older folk-saying sets its meaning in tune with the current land and power relationship in the countryside.

Field data from Basti indicative of the changing structure of relationship between land and power and has also provided information on the exploitative agrarian practices perpetrated by the land-owning castes on the peasants and landless labourers. We have shown how control over land helps its owners to exercise control over people. Here, after making a few general observations on land as the source of power, we shall present and examine the data on their relationship.

In an agrarian community where the majority of population lives on agriculture and agricultural products, land assumes a singular importance. It determines the chemistry of power and domination: one who has largest land holding and the consequent source of produce exercises control over people who live on that produce. And when a


large number of people, in dire need for basic goods and services need a part of that produce or need to share in its source, there is no other equation of relationship in society. The only permissible equation is to get that part or share in the produce from the monopoliser by accepting his monopology. By manipulating produce and the sources of the produce, thus the monopoliser manipulates the people. Land, in its distributive system imbalance generates inevitably an inequitarian power structure in which the exercise of power by a few over many becomes the characteristic of social conditions.

Before we present the data pertaining to land, it is worthwhile to briefly describe the agrarian scene in Basti district as it existed during the first decade of the 20th century. For, this would broaden the context in which the data on elite and land relationship assumes significance. In doing so, we make some passing references to the agrarian situation of the colonial period. It will be done to illuminate the significance of the contemporary data on the subject under discussion.

During the beginning of the 20th century, the upper caste rajas and zamindars with just 14.4 per cent of population held almost two-thirds of the agricultural land in Basti.

It was this anomalous land structure which gave birth to various types of exploitative practices resorted to by the zamindars against the tenants. The latter mutely tolerated the oppression without resentment. In addition to the threats of eviction from land, excommunication from the village, forced free labour known as begar, there used to be an unending series of exploitative usages such as an Gorahi (exaction from the tenants for the purchase of horse), Hathiahu (for elephant), Pujabi (exaction from the tenants for religious rituals), Biahu (exaction for financing marriage), Bhalmanahat (exaction for good conduct), etc.

These exactions used to drain out the last drop of agricultural surplus that the tenant could save after paying the regular rent to the zamindar. The tenants used to be under the total grip of the zamindars. It was during the 1930's that the local leaders of the Indian National Congress identified their common enemies - the zamindars - and explained to them the reasons for their miserable conditions. And it was these anti-raj, anti-zamindar-talukdar and anti-British forces which led the peasant upsurge which resulted in murders of the zamindars and the movement of the Nijai-Bol we mentioned earlier. The abolition of zamindari system in 1952 and the fixation of ceilings on land holding in 1954, epitomised the 'peasant-revolution' of the National Congress in Uttar Pradesh. But there hardly existed any surplus land and therefore the promise to give land to 'the man behind the plough' or 'land to the tiller of the land' could not be
fulfilled. The land situation obtaining in 1948, prior to the abolition of zamindari was such that only 3 per cent of big land holders could release some marginal land for the redistribution. The released land was 1,07,453 acres. Land required to convert uneconomic land holdings into economic one was 46,46,593 acres. There was, therefore, no logical relation between the avowed aims of the Abolition of zamindari and the Fixation of Ceiling on land-holding, especially if its aim was to release the surplus land in favour of the cultivating peasants and the landless from its monopolisers.

A glance at the data presented in Table 41 gives the comparative picture of the land holdings as they existed just before the implementation of Zamindari Abolition Act in 1952, Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding Act in 1954 and their impact on land distribution in 1961.

The census data of 1961 suggest a general decline in the number of cultivators with ten or more acres of land. What the census data does not reveal is the fact of the actual release of surplus land from the holders of excess


land in terms of the ceiling limit; or is that the decline in the size of land holdings as shown by the Census figures exist only on papers and documents? Large land-holdings exists under such categories as orchards, pasture land for dairies, cooperative farms or in the name of trusts and institutions but actually owned and controlled by individual landlords. Besides, there was large scale sale of excess land carried out by large land holders.

Table - 41

The changes in the number of cultivators having different sizes of land holdings between 1951 and 1961 in Basti Distt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of landholdings</th>
<th>No.of holdings</th>
<th>No.of cultivators</th>
<th>Changes in the number of cultivators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Above 100 acres</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 50 to 100 acres</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 25 to 50 acres</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 20 to 25 acres</td>
<td>10177</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>-9388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 15 to 20 acres</td>
<td>2447</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>-650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 10 to 15 acres</td>
<td>5741</td>
<td>4891</td>
<td>-850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 5 to 10 acres</td>
<td>12458</td>
<td>17039</td>
<td>+4581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 1 to 5 acres</td>
<td>45277</td>
<td>65690</td>
<td>+21393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Below 1 acre</td>
<td>64947</td>
<td>54258</td>
<td>-10689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

52. Often resort to legal partition among the members of Hindu joint family, donation of land in the name of schools, temples etc. legally reduces the size of holding. But actually, it does not. In case of donation to institutions, the donator appoints himself as the Chief of the institution. Methods used by the holders of large holdings to conceal their size are discussed in Rajendra Singh, 1974, op.cit., p.54.

53. Ibid, p.54.
But we also note a decline in the number of cultivators with one or less acre of land. The decline of this category of cultivators along with those with ten acres or more of land is generally related to the process of the rise of a conservative rich caste peasantry in the countryside. Castes such as Ahirs, Kurnis and Muraos, etc. who had obtained secure land tenure during the colonial period developed potential to purchase the excess land sold by large land holders under the threat of Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding Act of 1954. On ground of various cultural considerations, the upper caste ex-zamindars preferred these caste peasants to other groups and sold their land to them at even nominal price. The result was the general rise of the caste peasant as a novaux riches rural segment. These rich Ahirs and Kurnis are respectfully referred to as Chowdharys and Mahtons in the countryside.

These Kurnis and Ahirs who used to be exploited by the ex-zamindar upper zamindar castes during the colonial and pre-zamindari abolition period are now surpassing their erstwhile masters in the exploitation of landless and marginal cultivators, who have small land-holdings of an

54. About the purchasing potential of the caste peasant, see, Rajendra Singh, 1974, p. 55.

55. For these considerations, see Rajendra Singh, 1982, op.cit., pp. 76-77.
acre or less and live generally on wage earning. They belong more frequently to the category of ex-untouchable castes and are driven to sell their land to the chowdharys and mahtons by the sheer harshness of their continuing abject-life-situations. The decline of their number is, therefore, an index of the persistence of contradictions in the structure of the contemporary agrarian society.

In view of the persistence of agrarian contradictions in Uttar Pradesh, the Government of Uttar Pradesh appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Mangal Deo Visharad in 1972. The Committee members visited various districts of Uttar Pradesh, including Basti to secure on-the-spot information on the existence of large land holdings beyond the ceiling limits in Uttar Pradesh. The members spent just two days, i.e., 26th and 28th December, 1972 in the Basti township and sought information from the town informers about the existence of large land holders. It is no wonder that the members of the Committee could identify just names of two ex-rajbas as the holders of land beyond the ceiling limits. By pointing out the names of two ex-rajbas as the only holders of surplus land in the district, the Committee legitimised the concealment of large land holdings by other ex-zamindars.

57. Ibid, pp.105-113.
and ex-rajas of the district. Incidentally, the Chairman of the Committee was a scheduled caste member of the Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh.

Now coming to the sample elites, we find, without any exception, all of them own land either in the form of agricultural land or orchards or both. A majority of them have traditionally been landowners; others including the professionals such as medical practitioners, lawyers and full-time political workers, have acquired land in course of their ascendency to power in the district. In fact, acquisition of more and more land is the ultimate measure of stable economic prosperity of a person. Data on land about the types of elites and the size of their landholdings is shown in Table 42.

### Table - 42

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of elites</th>
<th>Large land holdings (in acres)</th>
<th>Small land holdings (in percentage)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entrenched elites (109)</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging elites (118)</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N=38</td>
<td>N=37</td>
<td>N=52</td>
<td>N=22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Field experiences suggest that there was a tendency among the respondents, for obvious reasons, to conceal the actual size of the landholdings. And it does not take much time to convert orchard into a farm and vice-versa. But these conversions materially affect the legal concept of the size of landholding and its tenure. Despite all the legal complications involved in the fixation of landholding size, the data contained in Table 21 suggest the existence of large land holdings in cases of entrenched elites and small landholdings in cases of the emerging elites.* The sub-division of the two major categories of holdings, namely, the large and small sized holdings by the two types of elites not only reveal the continuing territorial power of rural elites in the countryside but also reflect on the failure of government appointed land system inquiry committees such as Bhumi Yavostha Janch Samiti of 1972-74 of Uttar Pradesh which could not identify more than two "ex-rajias" as the holders of excess land beyond ceiling limits.

* In addition, at least 51 elites of Basti district own large areas of land in the territory of Nepal whose borders run contiguously in Basti district with India. Border between the two countries being open and culturally, socially and linguistically population of Basti and Tarai Nepal being homogeneous to the extent that there are cross country marriages, elites of Basti not only exercise influence on the Indian (Basti) peasantry, but also dominate over the Nepalese peasantry. Our data on land and elite, excludes land owned in Nepal by the elites of Basti.

The nexus between the caste status of elites and the sizes of their landholding yields crucial insight: that there exists an overlap of caste hierarchy with economic hierarchy as reflected in the size of landholdings is clear. The information contained in the Table 43 highlights the said overlap. While Rajputs and Brahmans continue to own large holdings, there are a few new-rich Kunji and Ahir Chowdharis who also have emerged as big farmers. Influential families of Muslims, some of them, are enjoying the offices of political officers and/or professionals to hold large farms. But none excels the Rajputs in the district with regard to landholding. However, the emergence of ex-tenant

Table 43

The nexus between caste status of the elites and the sizes of landholdings (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Caste status of elites</th>
<th>Large landholdings</th>
<th>Small landholdings</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rajputs</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

as a landowning influential category is indicative of changes in the economic structure of Basti. The data contained in the Table 44 suggests these changes.
Table - 44

The sizes of landholdings of elites by their past tenurial status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Tenurial status</th>
<th>Large land</th>
<th>Small land</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of the elite</td>
<td>holders</td>
<td>holders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ex-Zamindars</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>66.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ex-tenants</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>48.0**</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 100.0 100.0 100.0
N=127 N=100 N=227

The past tenurial status of the elite, as the data in Table 44 indicate by and large, corresponds to the caste status of the elites. With one exception, all the Rajputs and Brahmins landowners are also ex-zamindars. And all others belong to the ex-tenant positions. One of the elites in the extenant category also had zamindari tenure. But with a few exceptions, such as the case with Kazi Addil Abbasi from the Muslim community, all the non-upper caste usually belong to the ex-tenant category.

The relationship between landholding sizes with the caste status, and post tenurial positions highlight two major

* In some of the cases elites held land under both the tenencies, i.e. ex-zamindari as well as ex-tenantry. His tenurial status is here determined by the larger area held under the specific tenure.

** This category includes 12 cases of Sadhus and Mahants who own land under ex-tenant tenure.
points: first, upper-caste elites own and exercise control over larger landholdings. Conversely elites from lower caste including the Muslims, although owned land, usually had small landholdings. Thus, elite status and the ownership of land seems to have a direct correlation with each other. Second, land being the major source of subsistence, it enables its owner to dominate over those who have none or little of land.

CULTURAL AND SYMBOLIC SOURCES OF POWER AND DOMINATION

Possession, control and manipulation of information, like any other scarce commodity has always been a source of power in human society. In the modern rural setting of east Uttar Pradesh, like other parts of rural India, for the last three decades there has been drastic changes in the legal structure pertaining to property, especially land, to family and to the rules of inheritance. And of late there has been (and is) greater emphasis on the introduction of not only new agricultural technology, improved varieties of seeds, manures, machines and new markets for sale and purchase but also the innovation of votes and elections from below, for the positions of village Pradhans to Parliament. It is very clear that in this situation one who has the information exercises influences upon those who lack it.
While radios and transistors are used by the rural folk for entertainment, the same is used for information by the rural elites. Basti elites have a habit of cross-checking information by listening both, to the information given by the All India Radio (AIR) as well as by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). As much as 95 per cent of the elites subscribe to and read Hindi (75 per cent) and English (25 per cent) dailies. *Times of India, Hindustan Times, Statesman, National Herald* and *Pioneer* are the English dailies subscribed by the elites. *Aaj*, a Hindi daily from Banaras, is also read by the elites. Besides, they also subscribe to various Hindi periodicals.

Most of the entrenched elites (81 per cent) have knowledge about agrarian laws, such as, those pertaining to landholdings, ceilings, land transfers, sales, etc. They also know the methods and techniques of circumventing these laws. Emerging elites to a lesser degree (63 per cent) also have information about the said matters. Laws relating to inheritance of property, marriage, divorce, adoptions, etc., are generally known to all the elites.

Similarly, all of them know the laws and statutes pertaining to various levels of elections. As much as 91 per cent of the elites are aware of the *Fundamental Rights* of Indian citizens guaranteed by the Constitution. Their capacity to get more information, as compared to the layman,
is result of (a) their education, (b) high social and economic status, and (c) broad based social contacts.

It is not unusual to find Basti elite knowing not only the district officers by their names, caste, state of domicile, etc., but also their previous records. Visits by the elites to district headquarters were too frequent to be estimated. However, their visits to Lucknow, the capital city of the State of Uttar Pradesh and Delhi, the Union Capital, have varied by the types of elites. Entrenched elites visit Delhi at least once in a year. But their visit to Lucknow and Banaras, especially the former, is frequent. Emerging elites, at least 85 per cent of them, have visited Delhi twice in their lifetime and have frequently gone to Lucknow. Some of the entrenched elites have purchased flats at Delhi and Lucknow and their children study in these cities.

Being big land owners, and also on account of their being in touch with the urban centres, they keep on introducing improved techniques of farming. Most of these elites visited Delhi and Lucknow not only for domestic purposes such as buying modern gadgets for their household, but also to get political favours and to procure modern agricultural inputs from Agricultural Research Institutes located at Delhi and Lucknow.
These influencers being repositories of varieties of information attract large number of peasants who seek their advice and who obey their orders.

**Rural Culture and the Symbols of Elite Power**

Information drawn from the interview of the elites and from the close observation of the peasants and their inter-relations suggest the existence of a specific form of culture in the countryside of east Uttar Pradesh. We refer to it as *Agrarian culture*. By agrarian culture we mean an organised system of core and general values centring around the axis of land and agriculture. Historically, agrarian culture overlapped with the historicity of agrarian social structure and these two conceptual categories (of analysis) stand in determinate relationship with each other. We assume their historical existence and recognise their mutual overlap with each other. *Agrarian culture*, as conceptualized here, is used as east Uttar Pradesh region specific concept of the general pan-Indian culture. *Agrarian culture*, as a working concept, is used here as a specific tool to describe not so much the culture of the peasant as an autonomous category, instead, we intend to describe the culture of lords and hope that with the analysis of this culture we would be able to understand the culture of the peasants. The relation between the two reflect the nexus of power and domination.
Historically, during the pre-colonial period and to a great extent in the colonial period *rajas* and *zamindars* in Uttar Pradesh in general and in Basti district in particular used to be known and were generally referred to by the tracts of the land, locally known as *raja* (estate). The *raja* was raised above the *raja* and the subject population used to treat such a *raja* as an objective emotive category. The *raja* was anthropomorphised. Each one lived, worked, toiled, fought and suffered for the name of such *raja*, as Samet *raja*, Suraj Bansi *raja*, Gautam *raja* and Kalhansa *raja*. The sub-divisions in each *raja* tract divided the population into clearly demarcated pockets of distinctive usages, myths*, legends and cultural practices. This in turn not only strengthened the objective concept of various *rajas* as feudal domains by differentiating one *raja* from the other, but also fused the heterogeneous population into a single body-social of the *raja* of which the *raja* was the top watchdog and also the symbol of power, prestige, and honour.

*I am recording here for illustration, two myths, one pertaining to the loyalty of a lower caste- Kurmi towards the Samet Raja of Bansi and, the other of anger of a Brahman towards the Kalhansa raja of Khurasa in Gonda district, the fugitive family of which ruled over a tract of land in Basti district. Kalhansa lineage of Basti district belong to the main family of Khurasa.*

**Myth No.1**

Once upon a time the *raja* of Bansi, went out on his horse for a hunt in the summer month strayed into a dense jungle of Tarai region of his raj. He was thirsty and was in dire need of water. The raja started realising his imminent contd......
If the raja victimised, exploited, tortured and humiliated the peasants, he did so in the name of the raja. And if the peasant remained quiescent, passive, silent and unorganised and accepted the sufferings and exploitations at the hands of the raja, he did so to raise up the savak (countenance) of the raja. The raja thus was not just a tract

Myth No.1 contd. .

He felt that the search of water was futile and that he was going to die. He noticed a peasant sleeping in the open field under the summer sun at noon and a cobra standing with a spread hood providing a shadow on his face against the scorching sun. The raja witnessed the unusual spectacle and approached the sleeping peasant for help. The snake silently slithered away. The peasant woke up and took the raja to his nearby hut and served him with water, milk and bread. In turn the raja bestowed upon the peasant 60 villages as Birt (grant) and the recipient is the only Kurmi caste Zamindar - known as Chowdhary of Dekahari in Basti district.

Myth No.2

Achal Singh, the founder of Kalhansa raja of Khurasa in Gonda district, forcibly married the daughter of Ratan Pandey - a Brahmanpriest. The Brahman resisted the marriage and tried to get back the daughter. The Raja refused. The Brahman sat on dharma (passive resistance by refusing intake of food and water) and subsequently died. The night of his death was followed by the flooding by Sarju river leading to a deluge of the capital of the Raja. Khurasa sank into a lake from which only few could escape. A pregnant wife of the Raja escaped and gave birth to a son from whom the subsequent progeny, the Kalhansa raja emerged in Gonda and Basti districts. Ratan Pandey, since then has become a family deity of Kalhanas and is worshipped for fear of his wrath. An angry Brahman even today threatens a Kalhans by making reference to the name of Ratan Pandey.
of forest, fields and farms but a "being", a menacingly despotic "being", which played a partisan trick on the one hand favouring the rajas and zamindars and on the other hand disfavouring the cultivating peasants. In the name of honour of the rai, the rajas and zamindars drew themselves tremendous power to inflict various types of exploitative exactions upon the peasants. And the peasants, in the name of the same symbol and honour, suffered the power of the former. Such a concept of rai was the reservoir of power for the raja. The rai offered real, tangible and objective power to the landlord. But in the case of peasants, it offered only subjective justifications for and rationalization of concrete, real and objective bodily tribulations and sufferings. Marx hinted at the autonomy of land in the feudal system. What Marx could not visualise was the fact that the autonomous conception of land is linked with a simultaneous birth of corresponding pattern of culture, in our case, the rural culture, which not only provides a plank for this autonomy of land to stand on but also furnishes the constant of nourishments by producing usages, folklore, myths and symbol which reinforce the existence of land as "being".

60. Karl Marx writes, "The domination of land as an alien power over men is already inherent in the feudal landed property. The serf is the adjunct of the lord. Likewise, the lord of an entailed estate, the first born son belongs to the land. It inherits him." He further writes, "The estate is individualised with its lord; it has his rank, is baronial or ducal with him, has his privileges, his jurisdictions, his political positions, etc. It appears as the inorganic body of its lord." See, his Economic and Philosophic Manuscirpt of 1844, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, p.61.
The power which emerges from this agrarian culture, I have detailed elsewhere around the theme, *culture of inequality*. The culture of inequality, in our scheme of analysis, is a specific expression of the agrarian culture in general and it is embedded in its social structure. Before we try to show the way these two categories of social realities join each other in heaping power and authority on one, that is the minority section and, depriving the majority of the countryside, let us briefly describe the outline of this social structure.

**Agrarian Social Structure**

Traditionally, the agrarian social structure corresponded to the structure of land relationship. The allocation of individuals and groups into the status hierarchy of caste tended to overlap upon the economic aspects of class hierarchy. Being essentially based upon the concept of inherited inequalities, caste as an institution not only gave rise to great inequalities of power and privileges, purity and pollution, but went one step ahead in giving rise to a greater inequality in the distribution of material resources. Upper, middle, lower and exterior caste groups continue to parallel to high, middle, lower economic groups with almost no access to control over land and water resources.

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The overlap of status-based caste hierarchy upon the hierarchy of distribution of land continues to characterise the current agrarian social structure. Such a structure of relationship resulted in various types of agrarian exploitative practices in varying frequency and intensity which we discussed earlier in (Chapter II) which the contemporary rural elites continue to resort to in their interests. The basic sources of power of elites, thus tend to lie in their capacity to manoeuvre the traditional hierarchy and to keep inequalitarian structure intact effectively in their favour. It is their ability that even at the face of legal odds* and local sporadic peasant mobilizations and ressentments, they have been able to successfully retain their ownership and control over relatively larger chunks of land. Our data suggest that these larger landholdings belong to upper castes who are most numerous in our elite sample. Seemingly radical agrarian reforms and democratization of power by such institutional innovations as the institutions of statutory Panchayats and Zila Parishads, tend to stand annulled in their fundamental objectives: to establish and strengthen equalitarian social structure. Instead, these are becoming new weapons in the hands of the powerful to guard their traditional sources of power and pelf. There is a

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*My reference is to Abolition of Zamindari land and the fixations of ceiling on land holdings.

tragic coalescence between traditions of power arising out of caste hierarchy and the hierarchy of land distribution. The elite is the convergent point, manipulating the overlap of both the hierarchies to keep themselves up and above the lay rural peasant.

Elites' Self-Perceptions of the Sources of Their Power

Before we summarise the main points about our data on the nature and sources of elite power, let us analyse their own perception in this regard. The information presented in Table 45 suggest both, the continuities of the traditional foci of power as well as the emerging strains and tensions within the contemporary social structure. Traditionally, social and cultural structures have been yielding disproportionate benefits to the elite groups. Ascriptive determinants of power, such as the phenomenon of birth in upper caste and the consequent bestowal of privileges, such as the Savak (countenance) of a noble blood, ritual purity, alleged moral excellence, physical and intellectual prowess, etc. and above all, the land and the material prosperity, seem to persist tenaciously in the north Indian countryside.

The data suggest that elites of the three caste categories excluding Brahmans find possession of large landed property as the main source of their power. Exclusiveness, as the chief attribute of property which separates things "mine"
Table 45

The self-perception* of elites about the sources of their power by caste statuses in contemporary context (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Caste and groups</th>
<th>Upper caste status</th>
<th>Large landed property</th>
<th>Use of force and coercion</th>
<th>Total elites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Brahmins</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Rajputs</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Other castes and groups</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>63.2</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Single choice by single respondent.

from the things "thine" tends to assume the crudest type of utilitarian/material power, controlling the very source of the supply of subsistence to the dependent population. Particularly since land as the mean of subsistence in the countryside is scarce. And the one who commands this scarce commodity, commands the population living upon it. Brahmins rely for their source of power, the data indicate, more on their top ritual status and less on economic and other sources, Rajputs seek power more from their possession of land, and from the exercise of muscle power over others than from holding positions of power. It was indeed the Rajput's muscle power which had in past led
led to the colonization of this region, then only a forest clad swampy tract. Conquest over land and people, as we have noted earlier, used to constitute the cultural ethos of the Rajput castes. Their lust for land and power and use of coercion even in the contemporary phase of history reflects the tardy pace of social change in north India.

While social changes have not been radical, they have, however, been effective enough to initiate an opening in the agrarian social structure for the arrival of Hindu castes peasantry on the power scene of the countryside. A large number of them have now secured land almost at par with the upper castes and have started wielding power and coercion upon the majority of the poorer section of their own ex-tenant segments and strata. Next to the Rajputs, it is these people who matter in the possession of land and in the exercise of force. The traditionally powerful caste retain their land and power and the ascendent caste is gradually capturing power. Loci of power for both is land.

Data on the perceived sources of power by the types of elites reflect almost similar pattern of responses as those we described above. Possession of large landholding is the predominant source of power for entrenched as well as for the emerging elites. Information on the use of force and coercion as the source of power is only indicative of a tendency.
This tendency is only suggestive and not its affirmation at a large scale. What is being affirmed is the persistence of power in the hands of a few, who used to conserve and accumulate it in the name of upper caste status in the hierarchical structure of the traditional society, and are now doing the same with the help of material resources, such as large holding of land which provides means of subsistence for the majority of the rural population. This persistence as noted above, seems to be precariously maintained. The symptomatic tendency for the use of coercion and force is either to protect and insure the persistence of the past power or is used rarely for the purpose of chopping it down in the favour of a new social order in the countryside.

A couple of interesting conclusions can be summarised from the above analysis of our data which reveal the persistence and change of sources of power in the countryside. Some conceptual points are made below:

**Power and Permanence**

An enduring social and cultural structure of an agrarian society without a revolutionary past or without a breakdown of its continuing traditions, as is the case with East Uttar Pradesh countryside, tends to ensure the perpetuation of the sources of power. Relative permanence of social structure and the persistence of its cultural traditions accord similar
endurance and permanence to the traditional sources of power. The historicity of the monopolization of power and of the capacity to exercise influence and domination of one over the others, generally determine the contemporary sources of power.

In addition, the upper caste people were elevated to the top of the traditional Hindu social order by the religious sanctions of Hindu cultural traditions. This was primarily because they were the first to conquer these tracts of East Uttar Pradesh region and enslaved the primitive population to establish Rajput principalities and dominions of power. Furthermore, they were also the one who came to be celebrated as Darbars, occupied judicial positions, were raised up as a special class of people with special privileges by the British during the colonial period. The continuing historicity of the upper caste people as the local luminaries, influentials and dominants, indeed accorded them (differential) requisite opportunity to transform their power into the systems of authority. Thus, the power drawn from the historically generalised sources tends to have a longer tenure.

Conversely, power drawn from such exclusive modern democratic sources, such as from contemporary elective positions of the Membership to the Parliament, to State Assemblies and to other local bodies, on account of the very nature of the national-legal norms governing them, tend to be fluctuating, temporary and less enduring sources of power. They are, therefore, less
capable of instilling acceptability among the rural folk. Their temporality and unpredictability in the light of the fact that positions are subject to the mandate of the voters which are, again fluctuating and temporary, go a great length to reduce their possibility of being transformed into a system of stable authority. Constant fear of eclipse of power at the next election, of compulsions to humour up the voters to seek their mandates, reduce such power to dependent status of conditional nature. They lack autonomy and, there are instances wherein some of the holders of the positions of power are now mere shadows of traditional elites with independent source of power anchored on land and caste.

**Persistence of Land Control Structure and the Persistence of Power**

The fact of relative permanence of power is maintained by the persistence of land control structure. In Uttar Pradesh agrarian social structure, which has traditional continuity, the sources of power tend to lie more in the normative structure of society and in the structure of its system of land control. These two crucial foci of power, our preceding data suggest, have been, and still are, an extending chain and their historical nexus of overlaps are yet to be broken. Major agrarian reforms, democratic decentralization of power, etc. did bring about significant changes in the countryside. But for the few, the powerful traditional rural elites who already had
a long history of their rulership over the majority: the ex-subjects population of the rajas and zamindars, continue to exist, basically unaltered. The legal and political innovations of Independent India could not change radically the socio-cultural and land ownership structures of the countryside. The system of caste hierarchy and the corresponding and overlapping system of land ownership hierarchy continue to persist. And the past maliks of that system continue to master the system even at present.

Highlighting the importance of land ownership as one of the most dependable and enduring source of power in the countryside, one of the respondents said, "Like the transient youthful charm of a harlot who suffers a total erosion of her physical attraction at the hand of age, the MP's, the MLA's etc. have only seasonal power which fades out unrecognisably after the person concerned looses the election." He went on to state that the power of a politician and the power of a prostitute, everybody (hinting at the people sitting beside us) knows, is like a flood, it covers and jolts people for a few days and then disappears. Land on the other hand is immovable, unstealable and always yielding power to its owners.

And perhaps on account of these considerations, the politicians, professionals (Mukhtars, Vakeels, doctors and teachers) and even men of trade, as soon as they attain
positions of power or have an accumulation of economic capital, tend to purchase agricultural farms. In Basti, a number of MPs and MLAs who emerged as political leaders and who had no or little land during the colonial period, have after their political fall become farm holders which they purchased from the traditional zamindars through fair or foul means.

It is essentially a constant dread that they will suffer an erosion of power at the next election which prompt the politician to transform transient sources of power into relatively permanent one. This dread prompt them to use their political power to procure large agricultural farms. And when a politician who used to pour fire against the zamindars before the mid-fifties wind retires to his farm he becomes the closest ally of the ex-zamindars. And by this process these local politicians enhance the traditional prestige and power of the traditional zamindars. If the ownership of land in a society becomes the ultimate mainstay for a respectful living, then those who have most of it secure maximum of respect from the peasants and people. And this is the present situation in Basti. People like Vakeels, Mukhtars and other committed Congress Party workers who rose to become MPs and MLAs and who had initiated the process leading to the Abolition of Zamindari system in Uttar Pradesh in 1952, instead of becoming the vanguard of a new agrarian society, fell down as second class zamindars of the
locality. Thus a force which could have been a formidable agent of agrarian change went to lend a formidable support to the age-old traditional agrarian practices of the East Uttar Pradesh countryside.

The data on the social profile of elites and on the sources of their power suggest that the foci of the traditional sources of power were located around large landholdings, upper caste status, historicity of rulership and domination. These were products of the basic social conditions of feudal-colonial situations of north Indian countryside. A considerable number of contemporary entrenched elites, as our data reveal, still draw their status, power and prestige from the above feudal-colonial sources. Whereas the emerging elites generally lacking in one or another traditional attributes of power perceive their power as transitory and ephemeral, derived as it is through electoral and competitive process. Consequently, they seek to transform their transient power positions into stable and enduring ones by attempts to acquire traditional sources of power in the form of wealth, land and prestige. There is a tendency among most emerging elites to purchase large farms and properties in order to identify themselves with entrenched elites and also in order to consolidate their positions.

At a conceptual level, this clearly reflects that traditional, particularised and ascriptive sources of power
such as upper-caste status, historicity of rulership, economic prosperity and large land-holdings persist to constitute significant sources of power for the contemporary elites. This foci, as we have suggested earlier, emanated from the feudal-colonial social situations of the past.

On the other hand, a large number of emerging contemporary elites derive their power from such modern foci of the sources of power, as electoral successes and holding of powerful positions or offices. These are achievement-oriented nonascriptive sources of accrual of statuses. The emerging elite category, it may be recalled, is constituted of significant number of non-upper caste rural influentials who arrived on the power scene especially during the post-independence period. The analysis of Basti data suggests that the traditional foci of power still persists as a long-term, stable and enduring sources of power. Entrenched elites being anchored on the traditional sources of power are, therefore, more stable and are historically perpetuative category of rural power holders.

The emerging elites, instead of attacking at the traditional foci of the sources of power favourable to shaping an equalitarian society, suffer miserably from an urge to convert their power derived from modern sources with secure traditional forms. At a social structural level, what we find is that modern bases of power, instead of eroding and displacing
the traditional structures are in essence and in practice re-inforcing them. But the worst outcome of this atavistic social process is that the basic feudal-colonial set of social situation continues to persist. Its persistence in the contemporary rural context of East Uttar Pradesh is being vigorously and energised by the forces of Indian modernity.

It is irony of the history that the British who tried initially in 1840 to create a class of peasant proprietors at the cost of the age-old ruling chiefs, ultimately after the revolt of 1857 became themselves the protectors of the chiefs. And similarly the National Congress leaders, who mobilised the peasants against the British and the rajas and zamindars, have ultimately become an appendage of the local zamindar chiefs and are seen emulating their style.