CHAPTER I

ANALYSING RURAL ELITE: PROBLEM AND PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Historically, the social context of the rise of Marxism as a dominant ideology of the majority population of modern industrial societies—the working class people, coincided with the development of the ideology of elitism during the closing decades of mid-nineteenth century Europe. Marxism appeared as an intellectual response to the issue of industrial capitalism. Elitism on the other hand, appeared as the logical extension of the cherished political value of liberalism and egalitarianism. Their theoretical positions in relation to each other reflect similarities as well as differences. Marxism and elitism, in addition to being the twin children of the same historical stage of the European Societies, have many similarities between them. In the logical construction of their

1. For an excellent discussion on the historical context of Marxism and elitism, see Grant Farry, Political Elite. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969, pp. 1 and 27-29.
theorizations, both are teleological in nature and both rely on historical data. Both emphasise on the necessary historical inevitabilities of dooms; Marxism, on the doom of bourgeois capitalism and, Elitism, of the political value of the democratic sharing of power in society.

Differences between the two are equally glaring. The heroes of the history in the Marxist construction of historical materialism are the majority population - the poor, the weak and the exploited - who make the proletariat class. Elitists, on the other hand, assign the same historical role to the dominant 'few' of society. The former declares the inevitable revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist social order, the latter tightens the ever present fist through the "iron law of oligarchy" to continue the firm grip on the social order so as to remain secure in power.

A good deal of contemporary social science thinking and research have been oscillating between these two conceptions: Marxism and Elitism. Extensive scrutiny and examination of them is still going on. After noting in passing these two conceptions in relation to each other in history, our concerns go to the study of elites.
How do elites though only small minorities play a crucial part in various aspects of social affairs is one of the central themes of study in sociology and political sciences. For some, elites are a powerful minority and make major decisions in society. Their influence and domination are beyond the checks and controls of ordinary men. For others, elites are the fountain-head of social values and are the source of social order. Elites are, therefore, essential part of an organized society and for a stable social order. Elites have also been regarded as a threat to democracy. They have access to most of the key positions of power and domination in disproportionately larger number in terms of their size in population. They are treated, to borrow Popper's phrase, as "enemies of open society". There are still others who find in elites the steel frame of democracy and treat them as the protector of participant societies against the dangers of totalitarianism.

It is nearly impossible to employ the concept of elite with a definite meaning. Therefore, one must trace the usage of the term in relation to the contexts of their use in varying social situations. Before we do so, let us briefly introduce the problems and context of the present study and identify some of the variables it attempts to take into account.
I. LAND, POWER AND RURAL ELITE

This study attempts an ethnographic presentation of historical and contemporary data on rural elites and agrarian power-structure. The data refer to Basti - a district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh - covering the period 1801 to 1970. Rural elites and agrarian power-structures are themes that are interrelated. Being mutually interdependent, their inter-locking is so close that the understanding of the one to the exclusion of the other remains one sided and partial. For, the nature and mode of their inter-connection express a cause-effect schema.

Historically, this schema of the causal interaction between rural elite and agrarian power structure has not been static. It shows a changing nexus of compliance and contradiction in the agrarian society. Such a nexus can, it is proposed, be empirically comprehended around three loci - the land, the power and the people of agrarian society. For us, land, power and people are not heuristic categories. They are grass-root empirical variables and offer clues to understand the dynamics of agrarian social structure in general and of rural elites and agrarian power structure in particular. Let us briefly discuss the relevance of these variables.
1. Land

In its sociological dimensions land is not merely a geographical and/or physical category. Around 85.3 per cent of rural population in India directly or indirectly live upon land and its produce. Being the main source of subsistence land is transformed into socio-economic reality. Among agrarian societies, especially in Basti, differential distribution of land and the prevalent norms which go to land legitimacy and accord sanction to such a distributive system determine a specific mode of relationship among the various segments of people. This mode of relationship tend to accentuate the superordination of those people and segments of agrarian social structure who have more access to the use and control of land over those who have less or none of it. The position of segments and strata, in fact, could be understood with a great deal of precision, by the acerage of land owned and controlled by its people who fall within them. Their hierarchical arrangement in the social structure by and large corresponds to the relative size of the chunk of land they own and control in the countryside. [Land is thus transformed into a socio-economic category in the countryside.]

The process that transforms land from a physical to a socio-economic category, to be sure, is the same which simultaneously politicizes it as well. It is a recognized fact, almost a truism, that those who own and control the land, use it more as an instrument of power and domination over those who have less of it or do not have it at all. Neale carries the theme to its actual base and calls it, "Land is to Rule". Admittedly, land has a power aspect particularly in the countryside where its importance is more clearly visible.

The relation between rural elite and agrarian power structure, seen in the above perspective appears generally to be crystalized and relatively static expression of a dynamic process involving land, power and people. In this context, it can be suggested that the interactive process among the three, i.e., land, power and people, tends to produce an agrarian situation giving rise to a specific pattern of power structure with a distinctive normative set


of rules and regulations for the promotion, emergence and eventually, the perpetuation of an elite population at the top of social structure pushing the rest of the segments and strata of the majority population below. Normative rules have a tendency to create built-in structural background for the emergence and legitimization of social inequalities in the countryside. Almost all rural elite studies in India, such as those of Sirsikar, Carter and of Iqbal Narain et-al suggest the trend of the social inequalities in the countryside and demonstrate the overlap between the system of land distribution with that of the distribution of power among people. The findings of these rural elite studies emphasize one crucial fact: Rural elites hold and control disproportionately larger areas of land and are wealthier than the peasantry - the common folk of villages. In terms of time depth, control and rural elites over vast areas of land has been brought to our notice by the data of historical studies of nineteenth century. Land,


therefore, in the agrarian setting, to repeat, is an instrument of power and domination. Those who have most of it dominate over those who have less or none of it.

2. Power

Power, in social sciences is essentially a relational concept. Almost all scholars agree that manifestation of power presupposes the existence of a social context or a milieu. Even those who treat power as a "property" or as a "potential" residing within an individual or a group to bring desired changes in the behaviour of other individuals and groups, becomes visible only in an interactive context of a social milieu or of a situation, involving a plurality of individuals. For us, situation is characterized by the changing matrix of agrarian community. What we intend to

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to bring into a sharp focus, following Weber, is the fact that power, even as an abstract category of "property" or "potential" assumes concrete empirical expression only when it is exercised (in the context of the present study) by a few over the many (of the agrarian population) even in the face of resistance by the latter. Power emerges in the countryside when one segment of minority rural population attempts to dominate over the rest of the majority population. The nexus of superordination and subordination between the minority and majority population reveals a peculiar imbalance of power that exists between the ruler and the ruled of the agrarian society.

What is the nature of power in the agrarian society of north India and how does it manifest in the form of superordination and subordination of people in the countryside, are some of the questions awaiting our explanation with the support of data. Power, like any other aspect of society tends to have a history. Corresponding to the disparities in the system of land distribution, the emergence of unequal distribution of power has to be examined in the

broad evolutionary perspective of history. For power, of necessity tends to draw upon society for its legitimacy and for the collective social approval and acceptance. A stable mode of agrarian power relations endure and persist, historically on a relatively enduring system of collective social sanctions and legitimacy.

We, therefore, propose to identify the bases of power legitimacy. Do they lie in the possession of large land holdings and general economic prosperity alone? What are, and, have been, the roles of culture and its normative foundations in the development of agrarian social structure in general and in the evolution of land and power distribution. The changes in the structure of land and power distribution and possessions brought about by the historical contributions of political changes against the broad background of relatively stable and persistent cultural values and social structure are to be studied and examined so as to get a clear perspective which may emerge after bringing history in the service of sociological analysis.

3. The People

By people, we mean, in the context of the study, the rural population - the teeming peasants, cultivators, landless labourers and petty village traders of various
castes and communities. Rural elite and the issue of land and power distribution are conceptualised in relation to these peasants and cultivators. The traditional native categories of raja vs. praja, malik vs. rivava, zamindar-talukdar vs. tenants and cultivators are used to telescope the polarization of the agrarian population between the lord of the land and the peasants and cultivators who lived on the lords' land in subservience. In fact the history of land and those who lived on it was the history of the landlords, elite and power situations which can best be analysed and examined against the broad background of the majority rural population who are the victims of elite power.

We propose, therefore, to place the study of rural elite in relation to the study of agrarian social and power structures. What was and is the nature of social hierarchy in the north Indian countryside? In what ways social hierarchy overlaps with the land and power hierarchies? What is the nature of or the normative basis of the agrarian social structure? These and many similar questions are to be answered before we identify the rural elite and study them in detail. Such an examination, we emphasise again, must have a historical perspective. In a study like the present one, the data of past are to be brought in the service of the data of the present. In the study of a
continuing reality, examination of its past nature enhances the validity of the conclusion about the same of the contemporary period.

In relation to the three variables of land, power and people of north Indian countryside introduced above, we assume that rural elites are generally those who stand out at a strategic point at the top of the triangular relationship among the said variables. It is their relative advantageous position at the top which tends to enable them to effectively exercise control over the people. We treat these variables as the very foundation of rural elite. They provide a social base for the emergence of elites who in turn utilise the base resources in their own favour. The phenomenon of rural elite is rooted in and arise from the agrarian social structure; our variables are the major integral parts of that structure. Further, any change in the structure of these variables mirrored the changes in the structure and outline of rural elites.

We have tried to clarify the general outline of the agrarian social setting in terms of various relevant variables. We propose to study rural elite in relation to those variables. Let us now go to examine the concept and definition of elite itself. We propose to examine various concepts of elite structure in the sequence of their
development in social science literature. In the light of such an examination of literature on elite, we propose to examine Indian studies on elite in general and rural elite in particular. Our aim is to evolve a working concept of elite which can be operationalised in a suitable definition for the study of rural elite in India.

CONCEPT OF ELITE: TOWARDS A WORKING DEFINITION

Attempt towards the formulation of a working definition of elite appropriate to Indian rural setting calls for a preliminary examination of the concept of elite and the way it has been used in social sciences. Such an examination requires an elementary typification of elite literature. A bird's-eye-view survey on the writing on elite literature reveals two major types of studies. The first refer to analytical and schematic studies of scholars, such as Bottomore, Parry, Bachrach and Putnam. The other type belongs to empirical studies. The cut-off point between the two is that, the former,

unlike the latter, scrutinises the essential features of elite as a category in society reflected in the writings of classical scholars ranging from Pareto, Mosca and Michels to neo-classical scholars, such as Burnham, Lasswell et-al. and Dahl, Meisel down to those of Mills and Keller.

Empirical studies branch off into two main currents. The first refers to those macro-elite studies which take up nation-state societies as the basic unit of inquiry. The second, on the contrary, confines itself to intensive study of an identifiable community such as a city, a town or a region of a society.

Examples of empirical macro-studies on elites of various societies are too numerous. These studies exist in the form of books, anthologies and in articles. We are citing below only the major studies such as those of


Stanworth and Giddens and Hennessay and Guttsmann which portray and analyse the nature of British elites. Lasswell and Sereno, Lemer Ithiel de-Sola Pool and Schueller, Struve and Baylis have studied German elites. The nature of French elites have been studied by such scholars as Aron and Clifford-Vanghan. In addition, we have studies on elites of Soviet Russia by scholars, such as Schueller and Armstrong. Besides European and Russian elite studies, there are publications on elite studies of various Asian


and African societies. Contemporary Chinese elites have been studied by North and de-Sola Pool and by Scalpino. Singer, Szycinowicz and Frey made study of Ceylonese and Turkish elites respectively. Elites of Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia are studied by scholars such as, Akavi, Zonis and Wenner respectively. Ide and Ishida have studied and analysed the nature of Japanese elite. There are a number of studies on African elites also. The work by Merve and others may be cited as an illustration.


there are cross-cultural comparative studies on elites as well.

The second current of empirical studies of elites, however, pertains to what has come to be known as "community power structure studies". Unlike the emphasis on portraying a general outline of elites, as is the case with the macro-elite studies, community power structure studies attend to the details of its power structure and pinpoint the exact nature of its elite within that structure. Studies, such as those by Lynd and Lynd, Warner et-al, Dahl, Hunter, Miller, Schulze etc. are examples of this type of study. These studies generally examine the power structure of American towns and cities. Recent techniques of identifying elites, such as positional approach, reputational approach, and decisional or social activity approach are the outcrop of these studies. S.K. Lal's study of the community power structure and elites of Jodhpur city is an Indian example of


this tradition. These approaches will be examined in detail in the next chapter. (Chapter II).

Attempts towards the typification of major currents in elite studies sketched above, albeit elementary, provides us with a general background in the light of which we can examine the nature of the concept of elite. The survey of the usage of the term elite and the context in which it has been used has been done to narrowing down its meaning in such a way as to become serviceable for the study of rural elites in the agrarian situation of India. Since community power structure studies are generally linked with the methodological issues of elite identification we propose to postpone their analysis here in favour of examining them along with the discussion on the method and technique of the present study.

The term 'elite' according to Bottomore was used to qualify excellence of commodities in the 17th century. The usage was later extended to refer to superior social

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24(a) Bottomore, Op cit.
social groups such as a crack military unit or nobility. According to Parry it was not widely diffused in social science writing until it was established as a part of political science in the late 19th and early 20th centuries largely as a result of the work of two Italian sociologists, Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941).

The usage of the term 'elite' to refer to specific social groups, in the writing of scholars started assuming notions. The dominant notions which Bachrach and Parry share are the assumptions that masses are inherently incompetent and that they are, at best pliable, inert stuff or, at worst, aroused, unruly creatures possessing an insatiable proclivity to undermine both, culture as well as liberty. Aximatically, therefore, there always is the indispensability of a dominant creative elite in every society. And finally, that this dominant, creative elite invariably, a minority population, takes the major decisions of society.

Weber's famous observation that, "According to all experience, history relentlessly gives rebirth to aristocracies and authorities.... (and) every sober reflection would

27. Parry, op.cit., p.11.
convince us that all economic weather cocks point in the direction of increasing servitude (of masses)" suggests the inevitability of the emergence of elites in societies.

Two facts are to be made explicit: One, that elite theories generally seem to be a reaction of some of the sociologists to the writings of Karl Marx. They, in fact, want in search of explanations of the then existing economic and power structures of society based on axioms and propositions radically different to Marxist position. Secondly, they initiated a tradition towards the formulation of methodology of social sciences. Parsons' monograph gives extensive account of Pareto's emphasis on logico-experimental methods and highlights Weber's concern for a value free, ethically neutral, interpretive science of society. Similarly, Mosca opens the discussion on the ruling class with an observation on science and its application to social sciences. Elite theory thus, seems to have appeared as an alternative to Marxist concept of society in which heroes of history are the proletariat - the numberous but the oppressed of the world.

30. Parsons, ibid, pp.579-601.
Pareto's thesis rests upon the following contentions:

1. That society is not a homogenous entity and that individuals are physically, morally and intellectually different.

2. Differences among individuals are the consequence of differential distribution of residues (disposition or propensities) which are of various classes and are relatively constant as opposed to their derivations.

3. On account of differential distribution of residues, two classes emerge in societies. Pareto refers to these classes as stratum. They are:
   
a) Upper stratum - the elite class; and
b) Lower stratum - the non-elite class.

4. The upper stratum, i.e., the elite class consists of two sub-classes: (i) The governing elites, and (ii) the non-governing elites. The upper stratum itself refers to certain social groups, such as the aristocracies of various societies.

33. Pareto, ibid., p.1185.
34. Pareto, ibid., p.1424.
For the identification of elites, Pareto propounds an objective criterion. He puts the capability of a man on ten-point scale and asserts, "The highest type of lawyer, for instance, will be given 10. The man who does not get a client will be given 1, reserving zero for a man who is out and out an idiot." According to Bottomore Pareto, in his other writings discussed a normal curve of wealth among people and pointed out the overlap of attributes, i.e., those who are intelligent are rich and rich people exercise political domination and influence as well. Pareto links the concept of elite with aristocracy and states that "history is a graveyard of aristocracies." Incidentally, Pareto's observations correspond to Weber's conclusion cited earlier.

The weakness of Pareto's explanation lies in the fact that he sets aside his logico-experimental method and takes a retreat into psychological categories of residues and derivations. Secondly, his elite class remains insular as all the reverberations of history is seen confined to the

35. Pareto, ibid., p.1422.
37. Pareto, ibid, p.1430.
dialectical relations between the two types of elites, which according to Pareto is circular. He remains immune to the revolutionary potentials of masses which could or can give a lethal blow to established elite if, as Bachrach points out, they are mobilised skilfully.

Mosca is more alive to the issue of elite and their relationship with the masses. While he affirms the inevitability of the rise of "a class that rules and a class that is ruled in every society" - a thesis parallel to that of Pareto, he goes a step ahead to think of the existence of a conjunctive class of sub-elite which connects and mediates between the two polar classes of rulers and the ruled. The class of ruler is always less numerous but performs "all the political functions, monopolises power and enjoys the advantages that power brings..." The factor, in Mosca's thesis of perpetuation of the class of rulers, unlike Pareto's psychological explanations in terms of categories of residues, is the internal organisation of this class. "Organised minority" writes Mosca, "rules on unorganised majority."

40. Mosca, op.cit., p.50.
41. Bottomore, ibid., p.11
42. Mosca, op.cit., pp.50-53.
43. Mosca, ibid., p.53; for detail on Mosca, see Meisel, op.cit.
What distinguishes the ruler from the class of the ruled is the attribute of superiority of organization of the former over the latter. Elites, in Mosca's thesis belong to political class. The latter is seen divided, according to Mosca, in political parties.

These classical elitist thinkers, as Parry suggests and at which we have hinted at earlier, attacked Marxism on a couple of major points. They had to expose Marxist theory as a time bound ideology - and for this, these elitists developed "a science of society" as opposed to the ideology of classes. Secondly, they wanted to expose the Marxist Utopia of a future egalitarian classless society as a myth. Their conception of power in society was monotheistic and they attempted to conceive society as a single social pyramid.

Indeed, Pareto remarks, "we need not linger on the fiction of popular representations - poppy cock grind no flour." Mosca indicts democracy as an institution capable of producing "the worst type of political organisation and anonymous tyranny of those who win the election and speak in the name of people." And in line with the above, Weber

44. Parry, op. cit., p. 23.
45. Cited by Bacharach, op. cit., p.11.
sees political history "as an intricate parade of rulers." Finally, the elitist scholars with the help of elaborate analysis of societies demonstrated that power rather than economy is the determining force in history of human societies.

Michels, who belong to the classical school of elitist thought, not only developed the concept of the "iron law of oligarchy" but went a step forward to announce that, "Historical evolution mocks all the prophylactic measures that have been adopted for the prevention of oligarchy. If laws are passed to control the domination of the leaders, it is the law which gradually weakens, and not the leaders."

Attempts have been made to bridge the theoretic chasm between Marxism and elitism about the nature of classes in societies. Burnham and Mills, according to Parry, tried to synthesise the Marxist and elitist perspective of classes. Burnham argues that "politics is always a matter of struggle between groups of power and status", and that in all societies "a small group will inevitably control ultimate decision making." But on the issue of sources of power

49. Parry, op.cit., p.50.
50. Burnham, 1942, op.cit., p.56.
he disagrees with the preceding thinkers in favour of Marxist explanation. He states, "... the easiest way to discover what the ruling group is in any society is usually to see what group gets the biggest income." According to him, control over the means of production by people gives rise to political power. In view of the increasing complexity in modern capitalistic mode of production, Burnham sees increasing distance between the owner of means of production with the actual process of production. The gap is filled up by a rising class of skilled professional - the managerial class, who exercise actual control over the means of production. This class, according to Burnham, is the real holder of power in modern society. The managerial class, he states, consists of people who are Machiavellians of decaying capitalistic society.

Mills shares with Burnham the view that status and composition of elite cannot be explained only in terms of superiority of organization (Mosca) or in terms of psychology of individuals as Pareto held. But he improves

51. Burnham, ibid., p.57.
52. Burnham, ibid., p.63.
over Bumham, who held that power resides in the control over means of production, by providing an institutional theory of elite. According to Mills:

The elite is the product of the institutional landscape of the society. Power in modern society is institutionalised. Certain institutions occupy pivotal positions in the society and the upper most ranks of the hierarchy in these institutions constitute the strategic command posts of social structure. 54

The elite, for Mills, is the one who holds the leading position in the strategic hierarchies.

Cohesiveness of elite is characterised by the institutional proximity. According to Mills, individuals' interchange commanding roles at the top of one dominant institutional order with those located in the other. Thus larger business directors get top positions in the United States Government and go back to the earlier post after the change of Presidents. This interchangability gives rise to national power elites who are recruited from the wealthier classes. Mills differentiates between potential power and actual power - a point which is crucial and shall be picked up later to highlight differences between the concept of elite and the leader.

54. Mills, op. cit., p. 4.
Masses (as opposed to the coherence of elites who by virtue of their location at commanding posts have a broader view of society), Mills goes to elaborate, are caught up in their own milieux. The perception of the masses is fragmented and it is unable to see the purpose of its own activities since they do not see what part they are playing in the total social structure. They have no project of their own. They simply fulfil the routine. 57

Lasswell, commended by Mosca himself carried the Italian tradition further. Studies like those of Singer, Frey, and other historical studies included in his anthology are the outcome of his influence on the macro-elite studies. Lasswell's writings are so numerous that, according to Bacharach, it is difficult to discern a clear meaning of the concept of elite. Unlike other elitists, in Lasswell's earlier writings, the elite was characterized by its ability to get the "most values" and by its capacity to manipulate the masses. The few who

57. Mills, ibid., pp.321-322.
59. Singer, op.cit.
60. Frey, op.cit.
get the most of any value are the elite; the rest rank, and file. A year later, he emphasized that "The fate of an elite is profoundly affected by the ways it manipulates the environment, that is to say, by the use of violence, goods, symbols and practices."

In his more recent work, Lasswell defines elite as "those with most power in a group is elite, those with less power, the mass" and, power for him is participation in making of decisions. In the Comparative Study of Elite, he had defined that elites are the power holders of body politic. The power holders include the leadership and the social formations from which the leaders come. The last definition severely restricts its application to sub-systems of body-politic, i.e., to trade unions and village communities, etc. - a point sharply brought to our attention by Dahl. Dahl defines political system as any "persistent pattern of human relationship that involves, to a significant extent, power, elite rule and authority."

63. Harold D. Lasswell, World Politics and Personal Insecurity, Chicago: McGraw Hill, 1935, p.30. Lasswell uses the term 'Value' to refer to desired event - 'a goal event' and goes to equate it with power. Power, according to him, is 'deference value'. See also Lasswell and Kaplan, op.cit., pp.16, 55-56.


66. Lasswell and Kaplan, 1bid., p.75.


In fact Dahl's well known study of New Haven Politics (U.S.A.), especially the first section, 'From Oligarchy to Pluralism', presented in his book, 'Who Governs?' has initiated a pluralist approach to the study of elite and power structure of industrially advanced societies. Keller is another proponent of this approach. According to them, with increasing social differentiation in and diversification of roles and social activities, social structure of modern societies are becoming more and more complex. The social structural complexities give rise to various types of 'interest' and 'pressure groups', each group having its own elites. Elites of one such group compete with the elites and of another similar group for power. Unlike the classical elitist scholars, the pluralist deny the existence of single elite and reject the former's conception of monoethic structure of power pyramid among modern societies. Instead, they conceive of the existence of a range of power pyramids.

Despite the attempts of Burnham and Mills, if not to stitch together, to at least narrow down the theoretic distance between the Marxist and the elitist. Conceptions

70. Keller, op. cit., p.20.
The basic difference between the two continues to remain unresolved. Pluralists' rejection of single elite social monolith among societies does not reject either the existence of social inequalities or of the formation of social classes. Miliband's intense discussion with Dahl on this issue reflect theoric differences between the two. Does Socialist Revolution bring about an equilitarian classless society? "The greatest illusion was that industrialisation and collectivisation in U.S.S.R. and destruction of capitalist ownership would result in a classless society, Djilas goes to furnish us with an answer and states, "...but a new class previously unknown in history had been formed". The new class, according to him, is made up of those "who have special privileges and economic preferences because of the administrative monopoly they hold." Thus, what we see is the fact that irrespective of the ideological make up of regimes and societies, there is perhaps a teleological compulsion which again and again

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The survey of the works of some of the founding fathers of elitist thought in sociology and political science, besides, rendering the well known conclusions that in human societies, power, influence and domination is generally exercised by a minority group over the majority population, provides following clues for empirical reference.

a) Firstly Mills' suggestion that elite can be described in terms of its potential power rather than by its actual exercise is a significant point which may bear upon Basti data. By making a distinction between the two types of rural influentials, we can draw a hypothetical line between the elites in whom the real power is vested and the leaders who occupy formal positions and manifest the power of their possible patrons - the elite. It may be recalled that Oommen used the concepts of power reservoirs and power exercisors to designate two types of leaders in rural Rajasthan. Categories of rural leaders referred to as power reservoirs and power exercisors by Oommen closely correspond to the sense in which the term elite and leaders are being used here.

b) Mills' institutional theory of elite can be extended to the study of not only the institutions of macro-power structures such as the case is with the American society, but to the analysis of values and normative aspect of a culture of societies. Cultural values and norms of societies, especially of traditional societies tend to generate classes of rulers and the ruled and legitimize the former's position by making other sources of power to accrue upon them. Traditional system of Hindu hierarchies of values and norms in relation to inequal social strata have dug deep institutional roots in the Indian society. Institutional aspects of these hierarchies and their linkages with the hierarchies of power need more extended inquiry.

c) As a corollary to (b), the concept of political class by Mosca or Lasswell's concept of social formations can be of use to explain the links between the elite and the non-elite in the agrarian context of the rich peasantry and the leaders of the community. Bottomore who also utilises these concepts, in fact, affirm the significance of such an inquiry. Political class in

Mosca's thesis is a conjunctive class which mediates between the polar types of elite and non-elite groups. In Indian setting, concepts such as dominant caste and entrenched caste tend to approximate the sense in which the concepts of political class and social formation have been used by Mosca and Lasswell respectively. In the case of north Indian rural situations which have been the cradle of zamindari-talukdari systems during the colonial period, it is worthwhile to examine the role of (lineages) instead of castes in giving rise to elites on the one hand and suppressing the other castes in favour of maintaining its elites on the other. The researches by Fox and Carter have already made a move in this direction.

d) Elite theorization calls for further probe with special reference to aristocracy that ex-Rajas and ex-Zamindars-Talukdars and Brahman priests have among the peasants of north India, countryside calls for examining rural elites


79. Anthony Carter, op. cit.
from this angle as well. In fact point (b) has a direct link with this approach.

e) And, finally one can attempt making a distinction between the concept of elite and that of the leader. Narain et-al have tried to draw a line between them. They, however, could not make a clear case either to highlight the overlap between the two or to differentiate one from the other. The confusion arose on account of lack of empirical data relevant to the study of rural elite they undertook. We shall attempt to examine the overlap and differentiation between the two concepts, elite and leadership, after offering an analysis of Indian studies on elite and leadership.

RURAL ELITES AND LEADERSHIP STUDIES IN INDIA

Discussion on Indian studies on rural elites, leadership and power structure ought to begin with some initial clarifications. Insights gained from the survey of studies on elite in the preceding pages convince us of this need. We have to recognize the fact that concepts such as aristocracy, political class, social formations and the institutional aspects of power, formulated

80. Iqbal Narain, op.cit., p.4.
respectively by Pareto, Mosca, Lasswell and Mills to highlight the social bases of elite recruitments, are essentially the yields of macro-studies. They took society as the unit (field) of study. It seems that the unit of study has some bearing on the nature of the yields of such an enterprise. Closely connected with the first, is the second point, namely, that the focus of their studies were holistic in nature. They did not confine themselves to the fetters of 'this' or 'that', singular or plural aspect(s) of society. They used data relating to the society as a whole. Their theoretic and methodological orientation was holistic. The implication of such an orientation in social sciences is that 'part' or whole aspects of society covered by data also bear upon the nature of conclusions arrived at and concept it generated.

In the light of the above methodological considerations, which we shall use at appropriate occasions, let us examine and evaluate rural leadership and elite studies in India. We exclude from our discussion few non-empirical but

reflective and sensitizing articles on the general theme of elites in India. Empirical studies on rural elite and leadership in the embryonic stage of their development as they are tend to be embedded in the general tradition of village studies. The village studies of 50's and 60's are rich in their ethnographic details of various aspects of social structure of a single village. These studies highlighted the role of leaders and elites in the countryside. Treating village as a microscopic unit of society, village studies, among numerous aspects of social life in rural India, brought us face to face to the facts of differential


distributions of power, economic resources and social statuses in the social structure of village society. Some of them, even recognized the role of rural as a distinct category of power holding, educated, politically connected people with urban contacts from the village leaders.

The holistic ethnographic approach to the study of a single village as a unit, in course of the development of the village study tradition underwent a 'crisis-situation'. The organic details of village life in all its totality presented by field researcher started giving way to the tradition of studying specific aspects of rural society with, not one but, multiple villages as unit of study.


The leap from single village to multiple village studies and a shift from the general ethnographic construction of village social life in its totality in favour of pre-identified, specific aspects of rural society was indeed a great leap. Power, rural social stratification, caste and economic aspects of rural social structure and similar other themes started being the main focus of village studies. In terms of methods, participant observation often got substituted with such quantifying techniques of social research as schedules, application of statistical tests and correlations. It was in the midst of these shift and changes in the tradition of village studies that studies of rural elites, leadership and power structure generally emerged in India. As it happens, evolution of village study traditions were not a neat process. Often we note overlaps and repetitions among them. Single village studies continued upto 1975 and multiple village study existed even in the forties of the

contd...

20th century. Despite these carry-over and the throw-back of traditions, the over-all trends generally have, however, been evolutionary in direction, i.e. from single village to multiple village studies.

Since the importance of rural dominants and influentials were generally recognized and brought to our notice by the traditions of village studies in India, changes in its traditions, to some extent, went to initiate changes in the theoretic and methodological perspective of the studies on rural influentials. We, therefore, propose to examine first, the studies on rural leaders and influentials which are embedded in the traditions of village studies. Second, keeping in view the theoretic and methodological tensions and strains in the traditions of village studies, we shall specifically examine the studies on rural elites. In India as we shall see, substantive distinctions between the concept of leader and the rural elite have not been attempted and consequently the study of one at the exclusion of the other has been often made possible.


88. S.C. Dube, however, is an exception and he maintained distinction between them some 25 years ago. See, Dube, 1958, op cit., pp. 57 and 125.
a) Leadership and power structure studies in village study tradition.

The distinguishing feature of this tradition as we indicated above lies in its emphasis on ethnographic approach and on the intensive use of field study methods. Monographs, generally of single villages micro in orientation tend to present the details of the village in one "whole". Among such studies, one finds spotlight references to caste and kin based traditional leaders, positional leaders and to rural elite. Alan Beals refers to village leader as big man and Edward and Louise Harper call them Brahman elites of villages in India. These references are to village leaders. Indeed, almost all contributors included in the anthology on leadership by Park and Tinker are the

89. For each type of leaders and elite, See, S.C. Dube, 1958, op. cit., pp. 58, 83, 124, 112 and 57, and 81-83 respectively.


92. Such as Henry Orenstein, "Leadership and Caste in a Bombay Village", and R. Bachenheimer, "Elements of Leadership in an Andhra Village", in Park and Tinker (eds.), Ibid.; This anthology includes a number of other village leadership studies.
fruitful products of the tradition of village studies in India. Hierarchy of power, corresponding to the hierarchy of castes seems to be the seed bed of leadership in rural India. Studies on faction leaders of Lewis, Dhillon and Singh with the exception of the last of these are also the product of single village studies. Singh's study belongs to the tradition of multiple village studies as we have already noted. The concept of dominant caste conceptualised by Srinivas likewise, emerged from the ethnographic data of Rampura village of Mysore State.

The very objective of describing the various aspects of village social life in its totality and as a "whole" determined the nature of social realities contained in the village monographs. The assumption that details of a village generally represent the details of rural society did yield rich data on various aspects of village societies, but in doing so, it could not address itself to the study of rural


94. M.N. Srinivas, op. cit.
leadership in depth. Its generalised commitments to the construction of village social structure held it back from focussing its attention to the specific issue of leadership and power structure. Exceptions to the above are too few to deserve independent mention from the general village studies tradition. Difficulties regarding leadership studies, in this tradition in which rural leader seems to be the consequence of serendipity-effect, therefore, flowed from its substantive commitment, i.e., description of village in its totality. Inadequate and/or inappropriate research design for the identification of leaders and for the study of his behaviour on the one hand and reliance of the researchers on the premise that each village has leaders ruled out the possibilities of not only the scientific study of leadership but also the need to locating the foci of leadership outside the village. Such difficulties arose out of the theoretic and methodological assumptions of village studies in general.

The assumptions that each village is an independent "whole" and, within it all the dimensions of community needs - including the need to be led, ruled and guided - are fulfilled held sway. It is this premise that each village

95. Such as Dhillon, op.cit.
is a 'little republic' and can at all the levels of sociological analysis yield fruitful insight that went to undermine the significance of inter-village linkages. Despite all these limitations, village studies are the pioneers of rural leadership and power structure studies. The village studies sensitized the need for the study of men of power in the village, and in doing so directed the attention of social scientists to treat village as a link between the chains of wider network of localities, regions and state. And it was this realisation that paved the way and created a theoretic context for the emergence of the next tradition: the tradition of multiple villages or regional studies.

b) Leadership and Power Structure Studies in Multiple Villages and Regional Study Tradition

Traditions in science are hardly disjunctive. Hence, delineation of one from the other is always a hazardous enterprise. While by and large they tend to exhibit sequences, these sequences remain a rolled up unity of both, the process of leap from one tradition to another, as well as the lingering carry-overs of the essentials of the antecedent tradition. The case of the latter can be broadly illustrated with the instances of two types of studies.
First, belongs to those studies that repeated the preceding tradition. The studies of Singh, Mathur and Chauhan are a few examples. We can single out Chauhan's contribution from the other two on the ground that unlike others, he competently attempts to demonstrate not only rural leadership structure but also examines it in the broad historical and legislative context of power-dynamics. This is essentially a lead from the general tradition of village level leadership studies.

The second is a sub-branch of the carry-over tradition of village studies in a new form. It can be seen in the attempts of few scholars who tried to mobilize and direct their monographic data of a village, hitherto-fore used in a generalized form, to a specific theme of the village life, i.e., to power conflicts or to the problem of power and authority, etc. Opler's comments on village monographs that, "...even if everything about something is not there (in the village monograph), something about almost everything..." 96


97. B.R. Chauhan's approach to leadership and power structure study is a combination of ethnography and history in a frame of reference which enlarges the scope of his analysis and inference. The historico-contextual approach used by him to the study of leadership in Rajasthan stands out as leading work in terms of method & theory.

98. Such as Orenstein, op.cit., and Chakravarty, op.cit.
is given", is cited by scholars of this tradition to
disentangle themselves from the earlier single village 99
study tradition.

However, while rest of the scholars of the above
traditions confined to descriptions of village in the sense
that they could not generate workable concepts, the concept
of dominant caste based on a single village data produced an
impact on social science studies on leadership and power
structure at a macro-level. It bridged the hiatus between
the concept of power as a political category and caste as
a sociological one. In fact, both were found to bear upon
the principles of social stratification.

The concept of dominant caste gained importance as
an analytical tool which could be used to explain the nature
of power and its dynamics in the context of rural India at
multiple village or at the regional level. It has been
used in the theme analysis of broader societal trends
pertaining to rural India. This concept has been

100. Srinivas, op.cit.
101. Philip Mason,(ed.), India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity,
London: Oxford University Press, 1967, p.13. See also,
Adrien C. Mayer, "The Dominant Caste in a Region of
Central India", South-Western Journal of Anthropology,
employed as an explanatory tool to highlight the interactions and overlaps between caste and power at a regional level, such as at the level of a district or a state. It did not, however, escape from academic controversies and scholars pointed out its inadequacies as a concept.

Some of the regional studies are to be identified in the researches of those scholars who, either took a number of districts, such being the case with Paul Brass to explain the dynamics of state power in terms of political factions and use and share of power alliances pertaining to those who concentrate on the data of a specific region. The latter have tried to trace the historical and contextual factors and forces that brought about rise and fall of castes and classes in terms of their hold over the sources of power over a period of time. Spodeck's study belongs to the latter type of regional studies.


Regional studies on political factions, alliance and leadership and on the changing patterns of power by castes and class culminated in the tradition of specific theme of leadership studies. Application of sampling method to the selection of villages and to the identification of leaders with a preconceived research plan and design came into existence. Rural leadership studies by Rangnath and S.N. Misra are good examples of researches essentially on rural leadership at the level of a region. Rangnath collects data on patterns of rural leadership from as much as fifty villages of two Community Development Programme Blocks of Gonda and Varanasi districts of Uttar Pradesh. His design of research is comparative. Misra, on the other hand, makes a study of leadership structure of village panchavats of a district (Patna) in Bihar.

The evolution of leadership and power structure studies, which were submerged first in the tradition of a single village study started becoming distinct as an independent field of rural study. Study of the various aspects of leadership behaviour and, its relation to the

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structure of power in the countryside, it was felt, required an unit of field study which was bigger than the confines of a village. The expansive nature of field as an unit of study, such as a Panchayat, Zila Parishad, region and state politics thus gained currency in leadership studies. Change from single village to multiple village or regional studies was a change that substantially affected the theoretic and methodological perspective of research and investigation on this subject. While monographic field studies employed intensive ethnographic qualitative data collection to reconstruct the basic features of a village social life as a "whole", the regional studies, in their concern on specific aspect of rural reality, i.e., leadership and power structure analysis went for extensive quantitative data collection. Such data, however, have not been able to present the empirical functioning leader as he existed in the village monographs.

The strength of monographic studies lies in their community approach, the weakness of regional studies generally lie in its emphasis in favour of category approach. With the exception of few scholars who have handled their inductive

108. Such as, Paul Brass, op.cit.; Spodek, op.cit.
data well, the Indian scholars on the whole leaned more towards *abstracted empiricism*. In the latter analysis leaders are isolated and are torn out of their context. This tendency is seen especially in relation to time dimension. In fact, and that is what we intend to demonstrate, with the loss of ethnographic approach to village studies, the category approach finds its fuller expression in and around the theme of rural leadership and elite studies in India.

*Authentic presentation of contemporary rural elite or leader is not possible unless the social scientist identifies them in their historical setting. By divorcing the elites and leaders from their social history and by neglecting the use of community approach through which qualitative observational data can be collected about them; social science researches have failed to depict the behaviour and style of elites and leaders in their natural milieu. Quantitative data through category approach ought to be brought in order to strengthen and validate the qualitative information. Need is to combine the two approaches to comprehend the nature and dynamics of elites and leaders.*
c) Studies on Rural Elites

Before we proceed to examine rural elite studies, a few basic points need to be underlined. Studies on rural leadership by Rangnath and Misra discussed above treated elected members to such statutory formal bodies as *Panchayat Samiti* (P.S.) or *Zila Parishad* (Z.P.) as rural leaders. Generally the tendency of treating elected members to statutory bodies as elite or leader dominates in the theoretic assumption of elite studies in India. Formal positions are accepted as an equivalent of power. These studies, therefore, do not use the modern techniques of identification of elite and leader. There is a link between their theoretical assumption that elective positions mirror the holders of power in the countryside and the methods of their identification and study. Success in elections identified the elite and, therefore, the only question that remained to be solved was that of the sample. Ethnographic description of the social background of the sample cases were generally ignored. Their approach have thus been essentially positional.


110. S.C. Dube, While identifying some of the causes of the relative failure of developmental project in rural India categorically states, "Persons elected to local offices by popular votes were regarded (by the administration) as village leaders". This was a wrong assumption. The first mistake was in assuming that these people were the leaders (italics original). The insightful observation of Dube is self-revealing. See Dube, 1958, op.cit., pp.134-135.
Majority of elite studies take either pre-Independence or post-Independence legislature of State Assemblies as the representative sample of elites for their studies. There are others who make comparative study of elected Municipal Corporators of two cities or focus their attention at the election politics of one district in relation to state politics. Urban elite study by Sheo Kumar Lal while corresponds to the Corporator's study of Rosenthal, it does not apply positional approach in a blanket way to the identification of elites.

In addition to the studies of positional elites of the above types, which did not take caste or creed as a variable for the selection of sample, there is a solitary case of ethnicity based elite study of Bihar by Sachchidanand. The study is of those Harijans who got elected as legislators. He calls these Harijan legislators as elites. In addition to


113. Sheo Kumar Lal, op. cit., p. 22.

legislators he also includes Harijan social workers in his sample of elites. It may be noted that Harijan candidates usually get to legislative position on seats which are reserved for them. Rural elite studies have, it appears, generally accepted positions such as membership of Legislative Assembly of States and city corporations as an index of power. Their range of field thus remained confined to the Halls of State Assemblies and City Corporations. Rural elite studies too have utilised positional approach and have consequently picked up their sample of study from among the members elected to positions in different types of elective formal bodies, such as Panchayat Samitis and Zila Prisheds and Legislative Assemblies. The sole justification, it appears, for these studies that treat election success as the criterion for the identification of the study of elite, is that doing research this way is quick, simple and yielding. But the background details pertaining to the social and cultural structures in relation to which elite status is attained or is lost remains neglected. Questions such as who are these successful members of elections and how have they come to the position of alleged power? Do they reflect their own popularity and influence or, are they reflections of some one else outside the visible range of researcher who pre-committed himself to the election success as the only criterion of elite status? These are questions begging for answers.
V.M. Srisikar throughout his study, designates the sample of *Panchat Samiti* and *Zila Prishad* members drawn from three districts of Maharashtra as 'leaders' in the text and 'elite' on the title of the book. This is a type of strain or ambivalence which surfaces when the contexts of the substance and the method of studying are not logically conjoined. The context of Rangnath and Misra's study of rural leadership is the same as that of Srisikar's. The ambiguities indicated above call for reconsideration of elite studies, both at methodological as well as at substantive level.

These methodological and substantive considerations have equally been over-looked by Narain and others. Unlike Sirsikar, Narain et-al take five districts of Rajasthan as representative of the entire state. Their sample of 164 'elites' include elected members of *Panchayat Samiti* and *Zila Prishad* and the members of Legislative Assembly (referred to MLA) who are ex-officio members of these bodies. They also included five reputational elites each from *Panchayats* nominated by sitting and retired *Panchas* and *Sarpanchas* of the concerned

117. Iqbal Narain et-al, op.cit.,
village Panchavats. Their attempt was to combine positional as well as reputational approach to the study of rural elite. Collection of data never exceeded a period of five weeks for each district. This was thus, a snap survey, almost on ad hoc basis as any opinion survey could be.

The elite study of Rajasthan - a state which had been the heart land of Rajasthan; Rabis and Maharajas and of Jagirdars and landed aristocracy - exalted in the Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan by Tod and whose continuing influence upon the peasantry is reported by a number of contemporary scholars of Rajasthan could not give a place in the sample of their study. Have these traditional influentials vanished from Rajasthan? Or else, have they suffered a total eclipse from the power scenario? Or, further, the approach of the said study of Narain and others could not net these influentials in their sample.

The evaluation of these studies suggest that the identification and study of rural elite cannot be fruitfully carried out only within the ambit of a body of elected


members. Holders of position do not necessarily correspond to the holders of power. The total correspondance between position and power, in the Indian context has yet to be established. We, however, do not deny that position often reflects the power of its occupier. What we doubt is the assumption that power is invariably embedded in the position of its holder; positions are often distributed by men, and power to men who do not have their own power. It is an open fact that, for example, in Rajasthan ex-maharajahs and maharanis did not seek elections to the positions of Panchayat Samitis and Zila Prishads. And when one makes a study of only Panchayat Samitis and Zila Prishads' members by first according to their elite status, it tends to give the impression that those who are not occupying such an office fall outside the social science concept of elite.

Testing of relationship between position and power in the light of the assertions of a number of studies cited earlier implicitly or explicitly assume an overlap between the two categories of social data. Such an assumption can be subject to either validation, modification or to rejection. In addition, one has to make distinction between native categories of rural elites with those of foreign categories.
Our reference here is to Anthony Carter's study. In his study of elite politics in rural India, Carter, like the theoretical approaches of Sirsikar and Narain et al., adopts the positional perspective and comes to conclude that the thirty officers (positions) in various formal bodies such as Panchayat, credit society, irrigation society, etc. of Girvi - a large village of Maharashtra - are being held by members of twenty-four joint-families who are preponderantly from Maratha castes. The hold of a few families have over the formal bodies and the control they exercise through these bodies over the material resources is an important focus of his study. But he goes one step ahead to find functional equivalent of Mills' concept of "power elite" - a macro-concept referring to the situation of power distribution in American society as a whole - to illuminate the elites of Girvi village. Carter writes:

It is apparent, then, that power in western rural Maharashtra is concentrated in the hands of relatively few persons and that of a large majority of those who hold power are members of one small section of population. To borrow terms from the study of political stratification in Occidental countries there is (in Girvi village) what C. Wright Mills calls "power elite" consisting of a relatively small number of persons who are in position to influence public decisions.123

121. Anthony Carter, Elite Politics in Rural India, op. cit.
122. Carter, ibid., p. 4.
123. Carter, ibid., p. 5.
Incidently we may point out that "power elite" for Mills refer to Corporation heads, political heads and military chiefs of a country which to quote Peter Townsend, "With only 6 per cent of its population accounts for nearly third of the world's Gross National Products in real terms. This is nearly twice as much as all the so-called developing countries put together, excluding China." Obviously the concept of power-elite in terms of its context and empirical referents is too powerful a tool to be applied to explain the power structure of a village. Carter is unnecessarily applying a kilometer scale to measure the width of a hair.

Besides, in the study of power and the pattern of its distribution in society, the use of explanatory models or definitional concepts which work appropriately in one type of social system can hardly be snapped off from their empirical context and transposed on another system - a system, radically different from the former. Girvi and its people constitute too small a sociological universe to invite a macro-concept evolved in the empirical settings of the richest and most powerful society of the world.

Sensitizing as these studies are, we are against their apriori assumptions. Indeed, we have a hunch that the most powerful in a rural society are generally but not always and necessarily those who do not have any formal position of the sort studied by Sirsikar and Narain et al. We are, therefore, feeling a need to examine as to whether there exists possible gaps between position and power; and, if we are able to locate this gap, we can reach at the very centre of pools of power from which domination and influence may be seen to flow and, which may determine who is to be sent to which position. Position necessarily does not always signify power.

Our hunch that there may be gap between power and position is logically conjoined with our explicit choice of (ethnographic) community approach to the study of rural elite. Confusions between position and power is, to a very large extent, a direct offshoot of category approach which relies upon an apriori assumption. Narain, et al.'s reliance on positional approach at Panchayat Samiti and Zila Prishad level and on the reputational approach in identifying rural elites committed the error of misplaced and misused techniques of elite identification. This technique (reputational) has generally
been used to identify elites from larger population of towns and cities rather than to locate an elite from a village. In fact reputational technique could have rendered useful insight had it been used at PS and ZP level rather than at the level of single village putting limits to nominators, and leaders from among the people of their village from each district. The fact that Narain et-al's research team could give no more than five weeks' time in each district was itself a serious constraint against the use of appropriate techniques of data collection especially in relation to the identification of elites.

The analysis and scrutiny of background literature on leadership and rural elite in India yield us some insights. Arrested as these studies have been in the limits imposed by the choice of their methods of leader and elite identification, they have been successful in suggesting the fact that there still lies a broad twilight zone of a relatively unchartered field of rural elite studies in India, provided the constraints of earlier methods of elite identification are recognized. In conclusion, we mark out the following areas in relation to the substance and method of rural elite

126. See for example, Floyd Hunter, op.cit., pp.26 and 70.
study: (1) Need for a specific identifiable field of study such as a district rather than a village or specific institution and organization of a village; (2) Need for ethnographic historico-contextual community approach which may offer an adequate time depth to trace the broad patterns of dynamics in the change and continuity of elites vis-a-vis agrarian power structure. The emphasis here is on examining the relationship between rural elite and agrarian power structure in the total setting of a specific identifiable agrarian society as a "whole" and not by a-priori breaking it up into preconceived categories; (3) Carollary to the above, the positional approach may offer clues to identify possible power-holders but the search for them need not have to stop at the level of position-holders; and (4) Finally, elite and leaders as categories of population need to be differentiated both conceptually and empirically. The overlap and disjunction between the two are to be identified with a body of data.

The premises that flow from the assumptions stated above cannot be put to stand on a firm footing to guide our study, unless we clarify the sense in which we use the term 'elite' itself. Such a clarification requires a brief attempt to tentatively separate the elite from the cognate concept of leader.
ELITE AND LEADER

Before we proceed towards differentiating leaders from elites, two types of information may be presented to prepare the background for such an attempt. The first type refers to the practice of applying positional approach to secure a sample of position holders and then to assign arbitrarily either elite status or of the leader. In this regard, Lal's study on urban elites reveals that more than 50 per cent elites come from a diffused social background in which roles of different types tend to overlap upon each other in such a way that attempt for making a sharp differentiation in terms of "office" or "position" was not possible. On the contrary, studies on rural elites in India with reference to the said approach to draw sample from the elected one to a particular office (for example, Membership of City Corporation or PS and ZP) have been used in a blanket way to accept that those who are position holders are also elites.

Secondly, different sets of social scientists have been using the terms, leaders, and 'elites' almost inter-

128. Such as, Carter, op.cit., p.4 and Iqbal Narain, et.al., op.cit., pp.6-8.
changeable. This persisting confusion calls for a preliminary terminological clarification between the two twin concepts of elite and leader.

With reference to the above observations, it is necessary to present some basic information from Basti itself. The most powerful (top persons) in Basti do not have offices in the PS and ZP nor do they generally fight elections for membership of Parliament (M.P.) or the Legislative Assembly of the State (M.L.A.). In fact, lower reputational scores are assigned to position holders as compared to higher scores to non-position holders. We shall present some data to support this point at the appropriate juncture in the next Chapter. However, these informations suggest the need to rethink the conventional positional approaches. We are presenting below a few points which will help in distinguishing the categories of people referred to as leaders and elite:

1. Elites, especially the rural elites, by and large, are undifferentiated category of top people in whom potential powers of various types are vested. The nature of these powers is generally fused and generalized. The

129. For example, categories of people who are referred to as leaders in studies like Rangnath's, Changing Patterns of Rural Leadership, op. cit., and S.N. Misra's, Patterns of Emerging Leadership, op. cit. are designated as rural elites by scholars, such as, V.M. Sirsikar, Rural Elite in a Developing Society, op. cit., Shashishekhar Jha, Political Elite in Bihar, op. cit. and Iqbal Narain, et al., Rural Elite in an Indian State, op. cit.
various types of power-roles tend to overlap in the case of rural elite. The leaders, on the other hand, have relatively specific and sharply differentiated office with defined power-roles. Here, Lasswell's reference to agglutination hypothesis and his suggestion to 'onion tower' of different type of power-overlap corroborates our contention. The relationship between the elite and the leader can be conceptualized in terms of the former being essentially a relatively stable collectivity which usually determines, shapes and often functions as a supply base of the leader.

2. The elite as a group is relatively autonomous and independent in terms of resources of power which tends to transcend from the immediate or local to outside wider social milieu. The dependence of the elite, if any, tends to be located on powers and resources of the elites existing outside his immediate milieu. The sheer fact is that the elite does not feel governed by the wishes of his native people. He tends to function in an autonomous manner.

The leader does not enjoy the same degree of independence. In cases where leader assumes to the position of power and is supported by the local elites, he is accountable to the elite. The situation other than this, as it seemed to have happened

in Basti, just after Independence, when local Mukhtars and Vakeels in defiance to the traditional elites claimed leadership positions as M.L.A., M.P., etc. although assumed elite status temporarily, fell down irredeemably to obscurity after their fall from such leadership positions.

3. Corollary to the above, elites tend to show a deeper root in the community and a longer history of their pervasive domination and influence over wider social milieu with relatively minor eclipses of their power fortune. As opposed to the relative continuity of power of elites, leader's rise to power positions is meteoric - they shine for a shortwhile and disappear abruptly. No doubt, as we shall demonstrate with the help of archieval data lineage and families that were rated high by the colonial officers since 1857 Mutiny as influential rajas and zamindars in Basti, continue to score high as elite on the scale of power and influence even after almost thirty years of Independence.

4. Logically it follows that the rural elites are potential leaders of agrarian society, the same cannot be said in relation to the elite who promotes the leader to the status of power. In rural India, the elite utilises the traditional institutions, such as, culture, social hierarchy,
land, history, etc., to maintain their power, influence and control over the leader.

Our tentative propositions are based partly on the insights drawn from the study of literature and partly on the basis of exposure to field situation of Basti. How far these hypothetical difference prove true shall be born out by the data.

CONCRETIZATION OF PROBLEMS

The discussion on the issues related to the substantive and methodological problems of rural elite and agrarian power structure studies in general and the conceptual analysis of some representative elite studies in particular we undertook in preceding sections provide a background to narrow down and concretize our problems.

Before we spell out the premises and the problems of our study, a working definition of rural elite may be formulated. We tentatively define rural elite as an enduring minority of rural population with relatively independent potential of power and domination and exercise of control over their actual use over people in the setting of agrarian social structure.

This definition emphasises more on the institutional and structural aspects of power and influence rather than on
its manifestations in positions and offices. Structural loci of power, viewed in the context of history impinges upon the need to know the "whole" before one tries to know its component "parts". It was this perspective which was generally missed by leadership and rural elite studies in India earlier. Concepts such as, aristocracy, political class, social formation and institutional bases of power brought to us by Pareto, Mosca, Lasswell and Mills respectively continue to hold promise to the study of rural elites.

The actual application of this definition to the study of rural elite has to be kept in abeyance till we use appropriate method for identification of elites. At present, this definition is only of suggestive value pointing to the general orientation of this study. But it does help in highlighting a set of premises and problems of the present study. Few operative statements are presented below:

1. Nature of rural elite is initially linked with the nature of tenurial systems of land in agrarian communities. The latter tends to give rise not only to a specific mode of agrarian relations in the countryside but is instrumental in shaping its power structure also. The first problem to which this study addresses itself is to examine the nature of land tenure, its distributive patterns, nature of rights and the type of control exercised by those who legally or
illegal to own and control most of it. Attempt will be made to relate elite with their capacity to exercise control over land and its resources - including ponds and rivers - in a historical perspective of colonial and post-colonial periods of the district.

2. In rural communities, ownership and control over land and its resources generally correspond to hierarchical locations of groups in segments and strata of social structure. Higher the prestige the social segment has in the hierarchy of social structure higher the chance for such a segment to have more extensive ownership of and control over land. In the context of the district, the above premise is to be operationalized at the level of the founding and settlement of some ruling lineages organized on the basis of the principle of kinship. Bottomore's dynastic elite, Fox and Carter's respectively lineage and caste elites, especially the latter two, offer meaningful directions to this study.

3. Changing tenurial system brings about changes in the nature of rural elite in the countryside. The agrarian

132. Fox, op. cit., p.47.
133. Carter, op. cit., p.77.
setting wherein land confers power, its shift from one segment such as a lineage or a caste to another segment paves the way for the process of "going down" from and "coming up" to elite status. It is of central importance to explore whether changes in the tenurial system opens up doors for some to climb up or others to go down and, for still others to remain where they are. Alternatively, it is necessary to examine whether or not tenurial changes materially affect the continuity of elites hold over the peasants. Rural elite status is directly related to the structure of ownership and control of land. One who has most of it, tends to be the axis for the accrual of other types of power, such as ritual status, education, information, political linkages, etc. And these provide a feedback to strengthen the capacity of elite to exercise effective control over land. This premise, and the statement of problem can always be qualified. To be cautious, we are not suggesting a mono-causal relationship between land and power. Instead, our attempt is to highlight the circular-effect generated by such a relationship which helps inaccumulation of power in some pockets and generating a capacity, tenaciously to hold it fast from slipping "out". For such an inquiry land is treated only as a starting point and not as a deterministic factor.
4. Character of rural elite and mode of their domination is adaptive in nature. The premise pre-supposes the historical reason for an absence of any revolutionary break-down in India, as is the case with China and other Socialist countries. In such a society, agrarian structure right from colonial to post-colonial periods, tends to show pattern-wise changes rather than a change of abrupt and sudden nature. We, therefore, try to find out the mechanisms by which the traditional elite idioms, symbols and styles of pre-Independence situation, continue to persist hand in hand with the idioms of modernity in India. And if there is any gap, it is worthwhile to identify and describe the way it is being filled up.

Finally, we assume that the hierarchical nature of the contemporary agrarian social structure of East Uttar Pradesh and the factors and forces of change operating upon it, introduce hierarchy and differentiation among rural elites. Elite is, therefore, not a homogeneous category and it can be conceptualised in two different analytical types, namely, the entrenched elite and the emerging elite. A brief qualitative description of their important distinguishing features is presented below:

**Entrenched Elite**

Entrenched elite generally refers to traditionally established rural influentials. The sense in which entrenched elite is hypothesised corresponds closely to the concept of dynastic elite propounded by Bottomore. The main sources of
power and domination of entrenched elite is anchored on such ascriptive social and cultural foundations as upper-caste status, tradition and history of rulership and domination, exercise of control over land resources, etc. But the most significant distinguishing feature of this type of elite is that he derives power from feudal-colonial forces of which he is the product and which, in varying degrees, still persist in Uttar Pradesh. Empirically, the entrenched elite symbolises the traditional princely and priestly categories of rural influentials who continue to exercise enormous power over people in Uttar Pradesh countryside.

**Emerging Elite**

Emerging elite, on the other hand, refers to the new enterants into the elite role rendered possible by measures of social, political and agrarian reforms introduced after independence. The electoral processes, open competition, emphasis on achievement rather than on ascription constitute some of the mechanism through which this category of elite come into being. An important sociological feature of the emerging elite is that it significantly out-crosses the exclusive upper-caste, aristocratic and priestly social origins characteristic of the entrenched elite. It indicates mobility of status, influence and power rather than its ascriptive entrenchment. The dynamics of rural power structure and its social and economic processes are to a considerable extent manifested by the interplay of the social forces that bring these two categories of elites into situations of interaction, conflict and competition. We shall make use of these two conceptual types of elites throughout our study for the analytical treatment of field data on contemporary elite and agrarian power structure. They are discussed in Chapters II and IV.