Twentieth century Rajasthan is full of conflicts for status and power between the established and privileged sections and the deprived lower and middle castes and classes. Feudalism provided a socio-political frame for analysing the status and power dynamics. We have described briefly the emergence of Rajasthan as a social formation over the past one hundred years. Basic structural changes upsetting the traditional framework have been highlighted in this chapter.

**Demographic Composition of Rajasthan at the dawn of Twentieth Century**

Rajasthan was known as Rajputana till 1956. Rajputana included nineteen Rajput, two Jat, and one Muslim princely states. The district of Ajmer-Merwara was under the direct administration of the British. The states of Jaisalmer, Jodhpur or Marwar, and Bikaner formed a homogeneous group in the West-North part. Shekhawati, which was part of the state of Jaipur, was in the north-east. The eastern and south-eastern states comprised of Jaipur, Bharatpur, Dholpur, Kankali, Bundi, Kota and Jhalawar. The southern states also known as Mewar comprised of Pratapgarh, Banswara,
Dungarpur, and Udaipur. In the south-west was the state of Sirohi. In the centre of Rajputana were states like kisan-garh and the chiefships of Shahpura and Lawa, parts of Tonk and the district of Ajmer-Marwara. The Shekhawati area of the state of Jaipur and several big thikanas and jagirs including that of Sikar and Khetri were in the state of Jaipur.

The population of all the princely states of Rajputana was 10,100,542 in 1881; 12,220,343 in 1891; and 9,723,301, in 1901. There was a decrease in population since 1891 due to deficient rainfall. Thus, the main cause was the disastrous famine of 1899-1900. The famine resulted in lower birth rate and increased immigration. During this period a few epidemics also broke out, which also led to the decrease in population.

In 1901, at the beginning of the present century in Rajasthan, there were 128 towns, containing 2,88,696 occupied houses and 1410,192 inhabitants or nearly 5 persons per house. The urban population was thus 14.5 per cent of the total population, compared with 10 per cent for India as a whole. The principal towns of the state were Jaipur, Jodhpur, Alwar, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Tonk, Kota and Udaipur. Jaipur was the sixteen largest town in India with a population of 160,167. The rural population numbered 8,313,109, distributed in 29,901 villages having 54 houses per village.
and slightly more than 5 persons per house. The average population of a village was 278. The density of population was 76 persons per sq. mile, however, it was 35 in the sandy plains of the west. Bharatpur was the most densely populated state and Jaisalmer was the least densely populated state.³

In 1901 more than fifty per cent of the population comprised of males, and for every 1000 males there were 905 females, compared with 963 for the whole of India. Among the Jains females were slightly more than males. The principal language of the people was Rajasthani spoken by more than 72 per cent of the total population. There were 16 main dialects which formed four main groups, namely, Marwari, Jaipuri, Mewati and Malvi, and Marwari was spoken by more people than any other language. The various sub-dialects of the Marwari were known as Thali, Mewari, Bagri and Shekhawati.

**Caste and Community Structure**

Among the castes and tribes the most numerous were the Brahmmins, Jats, Mahajans, Chamars, Rajputs, Meenas, Gujars, Bhills, Malis and Balais. The Brahmmins were 10.4 per cent of the total population and were found in all parts of the state and they were very strong numerically in Jaipur, Karauli, Dholpur and Bikaner. In Jaipur they were 13 per
cent of the total population of the State. There were several sub-divisions of Brahamins, and they were mainly engaged in priestly calling, trade, state and private service and agriculture. Many of them held land rent-free. Jats were 8.7 per cent of the total population and they outnumbered every other caste in Bikaner, Jodhpur and Kisan-garh states. Jats were regarded as the best cultivators in the country. Widow re-marriage and child marriage were practised by the Jats of Rajputana. Bharatpur and Dholpur states were ruled by Jats. Mahajans were 7.8 per cent of the population and they were mainly engaged in trade and commerce. However, they were 12.2 per cent in Sirohi state and 11 per cent in Pratapgarh. The Chamars were 7 per cent of the population and were couriers, tanners, day labourers and village menials and several of them were also agriculturists. They were most numerous in the states of Bharat­pur, Dholpur, Kota and Tonk.

The Rajputs numbered 6.4 per cent of the total population of Rajputana. The most numerically preponderant clans were that of Rathore, Chauhan and Kacchawa. The clans of Jadon, Sisodia, Panwar, Solanki and Parihar followed them numerically in the descending order. They were mainly receivers of rent and some of them were cultivators also. The Rajputs felt very proud of their war-like reputation and were quite particular about points of etiquette. A Rajput
considered himself superior to any high official of the professional classes. They indulged in self-glorification and glorification of their past. Rajputs preferred no other occupation inferior than that of administration and governance. As cultivators Rajputs were lazy and indifferent. They were considered orthodox but Rajputs were the aristocracy of the country and a landed nobility. The Rajputs enjoyed very high social prestige and many a caste considered them as their reference group. They had war-like reputation. Even an ordinary Rajput held himself as a good gentleman and considered himself superior to any high official of the professional classes.

The Meenas were nearly 5 per cent of the population and were proportionately strongest in Karauli and Bundi states. The Gujjars who were mostly cattle breeders and dealers and agriculturists, were treated equal to Jats but having a slightly lower social position and were less than 5 per cent of the total population. The Bhils were about 3.5 per cent of the total population and were mainly found in the states of Mewar. Nearly 79 per cent of the Muslim population belonged to the Sunni sect. Jains and Christians were smaller than the Muslims in terms of population.
The Administrative and Judicial Organisation

The various states and chieftains of Rajputana Agency constituted eight political charges, three residencies and five agencies under the superintendence of the Governor General's agent. The Mewar residency comprised of the states of Udaipur, Pratapgarh, Banswara and Dungarpur. The Western Rajputana state Agency comprised of Jodhpur, Jaisalmer and Sirohi. The Jaipur residency comprised the states of Jaipur and Kisangarh, and the Chiefship of Lawa. The other five agencies were Haraoti and Tonk, (Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli), Kota, Jhalawar, Bikaner and Alwar. Average area of a political charge was about 16000 sq. miles and the average population was a million and a quarter.

The various districts and the sub-divisions of the state were called as haqumat, tehsil, nizamat, zilla or pargana, and all these were about 220 in number. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Rajputana, there were neither any written laws nor any permanent and regularly constituted courts of Justice. Offices combining important judicial and revenue functions were openly leased out at a fixed annual rental. The leasee reimbursed himself by fines and often by legal ejections.

Justice was tempered with mercy as Col. James Tod observed. Crimes of a grave nature were condoned by nominal
imprisonment and heavy fine. But offences against religion and caste were dealt with rigorously. Capital punishment was rarely inflicted. Even in the cases of murder, the common sentence would be fine, corporal punishment, imprisonment, confiscation of property or banishment. Many a criminal cases were dealt by the Panchayat. However, a person tried by Panchayat could appeal to the chief of the state who could reverse the decision.

Another form of trial was by Ordeal. For example, the accused was asked to put his arm into boiling water or oil or have a red hot iron placed in his hand. Thus, upto 1867 there was hardly any well defined system of law in the state. The head of the state was all-in-all. However, since the end of the last century many states had their own codes and acts based largely on that of British India. There were two kinds of courts: (1) the courts of vakils, and (2) the border courts. The former were five in number, four were lower courts at Deoli, Jaipur, Jodhpur and Udaipur and one was an upper court at Abu. These were established around 1844. However, these courts dealt with only those offences against persons and property which could not be dealt by any single state. The lower courts were simply courts of enquiry and were under the guidance of the political agent and the resident. The upper court was mainly an appellate authority and also had right to confirm some
awards for compensation and imprisonment. The border courts dealt with tribal quarrels, affairs in the jungle, the lifting of women and cattle, and the blood feuds and reprisals. Since these courts dealt with the borders of Rajputana and adjoining states, the British officials in political charge of the states presided over these courts. 8

The Land Revenue System and Social Structure

The main sources of revenue were the land tax and the transit and customs duties. Taxes were also imposed on the occasion of birth and marriages, on cattle, houses and ploughs, on the sale of spirit, opium and tobacco or for sacrificing a buffalo at the dussehra festival. Col. Tod has given a long list of cesses and taxes. 9 In 1867 the revenue of the states of Rajputana was estimated at about Rs. 235 lakhs and two-third of this amount came from land. In 1901 it was 321 lakhs. The income of those who held privileged tenures such as jagirdars and maufidars was quite large. The princes had an income of Rs. 185 lakh from land revenue and tributes from jagirdars, and Rs. 47 lakh from customs duties. There were some other sources of income too. The government spent on army, police, civil and judicial staff, public works, privy purse, palace and household etc. The states also spent a lot of money on cattle, camel and elephant and some money on education. 10
There were two systems of land tenures known as: (1) Khalsa, and (2), Jagir, inam, bhoom, maufi, sasan, dharmada, etc. The khalsa lands were under the direct management of the darbar, and its portion of the total land varied from state to state. In Jodhpur it was one-seventh, in Udaipur one-fourth, in Jaipur two-fifths, in Kotah three-fourths, and in Alwar and Bharatpur seven-eighths. The tenants had both pucca and Kuchcha tenures, signifying occupancy rights and tenancy-at-will, respectively.

The word Jagir was applied earlier only to estates held by Rajputs on conditions of military service. The jagirdar was the thakur or lord who held by grant putta of a chief and performed service with specified quota at home and abroad. The grant was for the life of the holder. However, it could be inherited by his offspring with the permission of the chief and it was resumable for crime and incapacity. However, at the end of the last century, land granted in recognition of service or given as favour to the people were called as jagirs and the grantees could be Kayasthas, Mahajans and others. Thus, the jagirdars were both Rajputs and non-Rajputs, but the non-Rajput jagirdars did not pay tribute or rent.

There was no uniform structure of jagirs. Depending upon the status of a jagir, tribute, obligation, relation vis-a-vis a darbar were decided. Jagir-estates could not be
sold, but they were mortgaged sometimes. The other tenure was *bhoom* which was granted to Rajputs, and some other tenures were given to Brahmins and Charans.

Till the middle of the last century the darbars took little or no interest in education.¹⁵ Even the thakurs and chiefs considered reading and writing below their dignity. They felt that learning and knowledge should be restricted to Brahmins and Mahajans. However, there were indigenous *pathshalas* and *maqtabs* in which simple reading, writing and arithmetic were taught.

The first public institutions were established at Alwar in 1842, at Jaipur in 1845, and at Bharatpur in 1858. By 1870 teaching of English became common in the capital towns of the states. The indigenous schools were maintained by private managements. By 1905, in all there were 647 schools of which 510 were maintained by the various darbars, 103 by private individuals, castes and communities, and 34 by missionary societies. Of these four were colleges, 86 secondary schools, 545 primary schools, including 53 for girls and 12 special schools. In all the educational institutions there were 37,670 students and the total expenditure incurred was 3.5 lakh annually by the darbars.¹⁶
The Jaipur State

The Jaipur Residency was one of the eight political charges, and included besides Jaipur, Kisangarh and Lawa. In 1901, in the Jaipur Residency, Hindus comprised nearly 91 per cent of the total population, Muslims 7 per cent and Christians numbered 956 persons. In all there were 5,959 villages, and 41 towns in the Jaipur State. The largest towns were Jaipur (1,60,167), Sikar (21,523), Fatehpur (16,393), Kisangarh (12,663), Nawalgarh (12,315), Jhunjhunu (12,279), Hindon (11,938) and Ramgarh (11,023).¹⁷

The state was divided into ten nizamats or districts. The chief towns were Sikar, Fatehpur, Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu, Laxmangarh and Ramgarh, all in the Shekhawati region in the north. The Brahmins numbered as mentioned earlier over 13 per cent of the total population in the state of Jaipur and they were mostly cultivators. Next were the Jats who were 10 per cent of the population and were agriculturists. The Meenas were third numerous category, and were divided in two categories, Zamindari and Chowkidari. The other notable castes were Chamars, Mahajans, Gujjars, Rajputs, Malis and Muslims. The Rajputs consisted mainly of Kacchawas, Rathores, Chauhans and Tanwars.¹⁸

Agricultural conditions varied in different parts of the state. In Shekhawati there were only Kharif crops such
as bajra, moong and moth. Camels were used for ploughing the land.\textsuperscript{19}

The administration of the state was carried on by the Maharaja with the help of a Council of ten members. There were three main departments: financial, judicial and foreign, military and miscellaneous. The state comprised of two main divisions or \textit{diwanis} called the eastern and the western. These diwanis were divided into ten \textit{nizamats}, each under a \textit{nazim}, and the \textit{nizamats} were divided into 31 \textit{tehsils}. The tehsildars of Shekhawati had special powers to deal with civil and criminal cases.\textsuperscript{20}

The three-fifths of the state's area had been alienated in grants to nobles, ministers, priests and courtiers. Thus, only two-fifths remained as Khalsa lands.\textsuperscript{21} The alienated lands were divided into those granted by chief to members of his own family and those which were acquired by the ancestors of the present holders such as that of Sikar and Khetri. The grantees paid varying tributes to the darbar from one-fourth to one-twentieth of their revenue. However, the \textit{inami} jagirs were held rent-free and without any obligations to render service. In the Khalsa area varied practices prevailed. Rents were also not uniform. The Brahmins paid the lowest and the Muslims and lower castes paid the highest.\textsuperscript{22}
In 1901, in the state of Jaipur only 2.52 per cent (4.7 per cent, males, and 0.1 females) were able to read and write. The famine of 1899-1900 had affected adversely the educational institutions in the state. However, in 1904, 10.9 per cent males and 0.4 per cent females were attending schools. In 1904, there were 753 educational institutions in the state of which 150 were public and 602 private. 77 institutions were maintained by the darbar, and 74 were under private management, 18 were maintained by jagirdars, 12 by the Jain community, 10 by united free church of Scotland mission, and 34 by bankers or private individuals. Of these 3 were colleges, 25 were secondary schools, 118 primary and 5 special schools. A good number of these private institutions were maqtabs and chatsals.

In 1904, 78 per cent were Hindus, 9 per cent Muslims, and 12 per cent Jains. In all there were 11 girl schools and 797 girl students. No fees were charged from the students, and the total expenditure on schools was 1.09 lakhs, of which the darbar contributed 69 per cent and the jagirdars 10 per cent.

The Shekhawati Region

Shekhawati, as mentioned earlier, was the largest nizamat or district in the state of Jaipur. In 1901 there were 12 towns and 953 villages in Shekhawati, having a total
population of 471,961, of which 87 per cent were Hindus and 11 per cent were Muslims. It has been mentioned earlier that the principal towns of Shekhawati were Sikar, Fathepur, Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu, Laxmangarh and Udaipur. 26

The name Shekhawati owes its origin to Shekhaji, the great grandson of Udaikaran, who was the Chief of Amber towards the end of the fourteenth century. 27 Udaikaran's fourth son Balaji wrested Shekhawati from the Kayamkhanis who were the converted Chauhan Rajputs and had been permitted by Delhi emperors to hold the reign, Balaji and his son Mokul used to pay tribute to the Chief of Amber, but Shekhaji enlarged his powers and claimed his independence from the state of Jaipur. The Shekhawat Rajputs are thus the descendants of Shekhaji or the Kacchawa clan. The important sub-districts of Shekhawati were such as Khandela, Rewasa, Udaipur and the Chieftains of Sikar, Manoharpur, Khetri, Bissau, Nawalgarh, Surajgarh, etc. 28

After remaining independent for a long time the Shekhawati confederacy started paying tribute to the state of Jaipur from the beginning of the 18th century. In 1836-37, the Shekhawati Brigade was formed to repulse the attack by the Marathas. However, the brigade was disbanded in 1842. A part of the brigade was transformed into the 13th Rajput Regiment of which Maharaja Madho Singh became honorary colonel in 1904. 29
James Tod refers to Shekhawati as Shekhawat Federation, thereby implying a union of the thikanas and jagirs of Shekhawati. Tod observes that Shekhawati attained a power and consideration almost equal to that of the present state. It had no written laws, neither a permanent confederation nor any visible head, nor a sense of common interest. There was no system of policy in the Shekhawati confederation. Thus, the jagirs and thikanas of Shekhawati were independent in practice in their territories. Tod and many other indigenous writes have showered praises on the Rajput rulers of Shekhawati and glamourised their rule. However, some recent studies have highlighted the excesses and atrocities committed by the thikanedars, jagirdars and bhomias on the people.

The foundation of Shekhawati was characterized by the gradation of thikanas and jagirs. Sikar, Khetri, Patan and Bissau were ranked as thikanas of the first category. In the second category were the thikanas of Nawalgarh, Dundlod, Mukundgarh, Alsisar, Malsisar, Mandawa, etc. The thikanas of Hikha, Dabri, Sultana, Chankari, Tani, Gongiasar, Balria and Ponkh were included in the third category. Thus, the thikanas varied in terms of their status and relations with the state of Jaipur. There were also differences in terms of their size, revenue, and power enjoyed by them.
Clearly, there was a three dimensional administrative setup: (1) the Thikanas, (2) the Jaipur Raj, and (3) the British Raj. There was conflict between the Jaipur Raj and the thikanas as the later claimed their autonomy, and the former claimed its sovereignty over them. The British always took advantage of this conflict by way of arbitration between the two.\textsuperscript{33}

The thikanedars of Shekhawati asserted that the Khiraj payed to the Jaipur darbar was based on their kin ties rather than sovereignty of the ruler. The Jaipur state, however, considered the jagirdars as ijaradars, hence denied hereditary rights to them over the thikanas. The famous C.W. Wills\textsuperscript{34} report also supported this view held by the Jaipur darbar.

The British had reserved for itself the right to arbitrate between the Jaipur state and the thikanas. In the matters of zakat and shariat the state of Jaipur was never allowed to interfere in the thikanas. The British generally favoured the stand taken by the thikanas. Yet, the British treated them as part of Jaipur. The thikanas were allowed to enjoy a great deal of autonomy. Due to such ambiguity and complexity of the situation the darbar and the thikanas could never form an united front against the Raj.\textsuperscript{35}
In 1931 the population of Shekhawati was 601,814, and it was 733,142 in 1941. After 1941 one does not find a mention of Shekhawati as a region in official records in 1951 and onwards. According to 1941 census the population of Sikar thikana was 261,356, and of khetri it was 175,260. Sikar consisted of 430 villages with an annual income of Rs. 7 lakh and khetri had 258 villages with an annual income of Rs. 5 lakhs.

Sikar, as it is evident from our discussion, was the second largest town in the state of Jaipur with a population of 21,523 in 1901, of which 60 per cent were Hindus and 35 per cent were Muslims. The Rao Raja of Sikar managed an anglo-vernacular school, which was attended in 1904 by 90 boys only. The Rao Raja also maintained a hospital with a provision for 16 in-patients. There were also seven indigenous schools in the town. The total population of Sikar chiefship was 1,73,485 in 1901, of which Hindus were 85 per cent and Muslims 13 per cent. The income of the chiefship was about Rs. 8 lakh and the tribute paid to the Jaipur darbar was Rs. 41,200.

Caste, Feudalism and Peasantry in Shekhawati

To understand the power structure of the region, it is necessary to understand the society and polity of the period preceding independence. The system of tenure--jagirs,
theoretically speaking, existed in the states of Rajputana. Samir Amin calls such a system - 'tributary feudalism'. Since the Jagirdars of Shekhawati belonged to the Kacchawa clan of Rajputs, they were also guided by patrimonial ties, but the hierarchy of jagirs undermined patrimonial brotherhood. Thus, equality and inequality, in other words, kinship and power were inbuilt aspects of the feudal system. Moreover, the tenurial grants turned to be hereditary in practice. There was also nexus between feudalism and caste. Besides differential land, revenue, corresponding with caste hierarchy, there was also differential involvement of castes and groups in the affairs of jagirs and thikanas.

The main castes, sub-castes and other social groups comprised of Brahmins, Rajputs, Mahajans, Kayasthas, Sikhs, Muslims, Jains, etc. All these groups were sub-divided into several sub-groups. The upper castes in the state of Jaipur, in general, were ahead of other castes in generating social and political awakening among people. The well-known leaders of this period were Chiranji Lal Mishra, Mal Chandra Sharma, Kapur Chand Patni, Hira Lal Shastri, Chiranji Lal Aggarwal, Hans Deb Roy, Arjun Lal Sethi, Harish Chandra Sharma, etc. In the 1930s and the 1940s these leaders, all coming from upper castes, dominated the affairs of the Praja Mandal. Jamunalal Bajaj, a well-known national Gandhi leader, belonged to a village in Sikar district and
gave a positive direction to the Praja Mandal. These leaders organised the masses against the cruel feudal system in the state of Jaipur.

Clearly, there was a nexus between caste, feudalism, and peasantry in the sense that all castes including peasantry were associated with feudalism, though differently. Feudalism was a social formation, a system of polity and administration and economy. Jats were a principal agricultural caste in Sikar district. Being the principal agricultural caste, they had to bear the maximum brunt of feudalism and were victims of unscientific and arbitrary system of collection of land revenue like batai, kunta, ijara, etc. and innumerable taxes and cesses. The functionary and some other castes were forced to render begar in the form of manual labour at the jagirdar's personal farms. As a result of all this the peasant castes, particularly, the Jats, mobilised themselves and demanded social equality with the upper castes.

Socio-political Awakening in Shekhawati

Due to above situation several peasant and caste organisations emerged in the Shekhawati region. The Jat leadership was conspicuously ahead of others in the peasant organisations and peasant movements. Leaders like Harlal Singh, Ladu Ram Kisari, Choudhary Ghasi Ram, Choudhary Desh Raj,
Netram Singh, Hardev Singh Pathsari, Bhairon Singh Togla, Beg Raj Singh Mandori, etc. led the Jat movement. Sir Chottu Ram, the greatest Jat leader of the period, also visited the Shekhawati region and blessed the peasant leadership. The Jat Sabha and the Jat peasant leadership were coterminous phenomena. The Jat Sabha and the Jat panchayat and the members of these organisations also dominated the Kisan Sabha and the Kisan Panchayat.

Brahmins, Mahajans and Kayasthas were involved in the administration of the Jaipur state and the jagirs and the thikanas of Sikar chiefship, hence they did not actively participate in the Kisan movement barring some notable cases. The non-Jat leaders, namely, Jamuna Lal Bajaj, Ladu Ram Joshi, Narottam Joshi, etc. were against the feudal system in general, but they were not actively involved as leaders of the kisan movement. The leadership coming from other castes was also discouraged by the hegemonic dominance of the Jats in the Kisan movement.

The Jats of Shekhawati, and in particular their religious saints, undertook tours of the region and organised fairs and festivals in the 1920s. All-India Jat Maha Sabha became active in the region. The first conference of Kisans in the region was organised at Khandela in 1925. In 1930, Shekhawati Jat Maha Sabha was formed on the pattern of
the All-India Jat Maha Sabha. Later on, the Jat Shiksha Samiti was formed to educate the Jat youth. A Jat Vidyarthi Parishad was also started during this period. In several thikanas and jagirs of Shekhawati Jat Panchayats and Jat Sabhas were formed.48

In 1932, a big conference of the All India Jat Maha Sabha was held at Jhunjhunu. In January 1935, a Jat Prajapatii Mahayagya was organised at Sikar. In 1938, at the Pushkar mela (fair) an organisation by the name of Jat Krishak Sudharak was formed. All these events were organised as social mobilizations of the Jats in the region. These efforts gave a definite shape and character to the Jat - peasant leadership to start a campaign of no taxes and no lag-bags and begar to the thikanedars. Literature glorifying the Jat Power began to appear by the late 1930s. The most popular book of this period was Jat Shakti Ka Itihas by Thakur Des Raj.49 Jat hysteria was at its peak. One could notice the emergence of Jat leaders, journalists, advocates, teachers during this period, and they participated in the Jat Mahayagya organised at Sikar in 1935. The leading lights of the Sikar event were Sir Chhotu Ram and Thakur Des Raj.50

The above organisational efforts and channelizing of Jat-kisan movement promoted the Jat leadership in the region to make their demands known to the administration of the
Jaipur state. They demanded that Jats be given social status and privileges equal to Rajputs. All the partisan orders and customs against the Jats must be abolished. The state of Jaipur accepted the Kisan Panchayat's legitimacy. So much so was the effect of this situation that Jats started using the Rajput style of nomenclature, suffixing Singh as surname along with the use of choudhary. The Jats of the region decided not to pay taxes and lag-bag to the jagirdars. They organised themselves through their caste panchayats and Sabhas.

The report of C.U. Wills pronouncing jagirdars of Sikar as ijaraadars of Jaipur darbar further boosted the morale of the Jat leadership, as they were not considered autonomous and semi-soverign entities. The Jat-Rajput conflict came out in the open. Jat leaders were arrested, their organisations were banned, schools run by Jat organisations demolished, their processions and demonstrations banned. Police firing and killing of Jats at Khuri and Kudan villages occurred during this period. It is interesting to note that leaders and activists of other castes were not arrested or tortured during this period. There were several killings and murders of the Jats in the 1930s, their womenfolk were tortured and raped. Despite all this suppression, Jat power had crystallized and it seriously threatened and shook the Rajput power.
From the above description we can identify four social components in Shekhawati. These were: (1) Rajputs; (Jagirdars and Bhomias); (2) Jats (peasants); (3) upper castes other than Rajputs (literati and economic dominants); and (4) lower castes (artisans and functionaries). This caste-class nexus could also be seen in unison with political power. Rajputs enjoyed political power as jagirdars and bhomias and Jats aspired for power equal to Rajputs, and the upper castes collaborated with the landed interests, and the Rajput rulers and the lower castes were mainly dependent on the feudal system. Such was the nature of nexus and alliance in the 1938 agitation in Sikar. The Rao Raja, the jagirdars, and the upper castes aligned and forged a front against the state of Jaipur. The Jats distanced themselves from the alliance and expressed their sympathy with the Jaipur darbar. The lower castes had hardly any say, there silence was, in fact, in favour of the Rao Raja and the jagirdars.

Shekhawati since Independence

The above description brings out clearly the crystallization of political power in terms of its community base, issues relating to nature of governance, economy, social organisation, and the very character of the social formation as a whole. It was obvious that after independence due to
land reforms the Rajput rulers would have a very difficult time and struggle hard to retain a part of their past dominance. It was also evident that the nationalist and the dominant regional leaders who fought against the British Raj and the feudal system would enjoy significant positions of power and influence in the new polity. Similarly the Jat leadership who had already crystallized the Jat Power would give a tough fight to the forces of status quo and try to occupy the centre-stage of power politics in the Shekhawati region.

All these hypothetical points viewed from the vantage point of the 1930s and the 1940s have been proved right and validated by the post-independence developments in the region. Immediately after independence the traditional forces particularly in 1952 and 1957 elections survived to some extent through the political parties like the Ram Rajya Parishad and the Jan Sangh. Both the organisations had considerable clout of ex-jagirdars and bhomias besides other upper castes. When the Ram Rajya Parishad in particular became defunct some Rajput leaders tried to enter the Congress Party, and it was overtly or covertly not liked by the Jat leadership who in fact dominated the Congress Party alongwith Brahmins. As a result of this, Jats, Brahmins and some Mahajans led the Congress Party in the region, and Rajputs and some other groups including Banias led the non-
Congress political parties. Thus, the Jat-Rajput conflict was reflected after independence in the affiliations of these two communities with the Congress and the opposition parties, respectively.52

The Congress Party was considered representing the forces of progress and development, whereas the other parties, namely, the Jan Sangh and the Swatantra were labelled as status quoist and conservative. For a while once again the Rajputs were swayed by the Swatantra Party. One of the architects of which was Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur. Since the Swatantra Party could not survive for long even after remaining the main opposition party in the Rajasthan assembly, the Rajputs reverted back to Jan Sangh. In Shekhawati, there were hardly any notable Rajput leaders in the Congress Party, and similarly there was hardly any notable Jat leader in the BJP. Until recently none from among Jats, except Harlal Singh Kharra, representing the Sri Madhopur assembly constituency of Sikar district, was in the BJP.

After independence the Rajputs have been relegated to the background in both Sikar and Jhunjhunu districts of Shekhawati. The Jat-Rajput conflict therefore has ceased more or less and this has given rise to intra-community and intra-party conflicts. As it has been stated earlier, the Jats dominated the Congress Party more than any other commu-
nity. The two clans of Jats, namely, Sunda and Meharia shared power in the Congress Party in Sikar district. Political rivalry between these two clans created frictions and factions within the Congress Party from the village level upt to the district level, and it had its echoes at the state level and some murmurs in the relevant quarters at the national level.

Ram Chandra Sunda and Ram Dev Singh Meharia, who hail from the same village - Kudan, represented these two factions. Meharia was close to M.L. Sukhadia, who was Chief Minister of Rajasthan for seventeen long years, and Sunda was close to Kumbha Ram Arya, an arch rival of Sukhadia in Rajasthan politics. Practically, every village was divided in these two factions so far as Congress Party was concerned and these leaders had their mentors at the state and national levels. When Kumbha Ram Arya left the Congress and formed the B.K.D., Sunda also resigned from the Congress Party. But this did not end the intra-party factions and frictions in the Congress Party. In the place of Sunda, another leader emerged as a rival of Meharia who was in fact already close to Sunda, hence with Kumbha Ram Arya as well in the B.K.D. Narain Singh substituted Sunda as Meharia's rival in the Congress Party. Factionalism dominated by these leaders persist even today in the congress Party. Narain Singh was patronised by S.C. Mathur who also appoint-
ed him as a cabinet minister in his ministry. Meharia was patronised by Sukhadia's successor in the Congress Party - Hari Dev Joshi, who appointed Meharia as minister twice in his government.

The question is: Frictions and factions for What? Obviously the answer is: For control of the institutions and organisations offering positions of power and authority. There are three distinct institutions which district political bosses would like to control: (1) the party organisation; (2) the cooperative institutions; and (3) the committee for selecting candidates. Now all this cannot be possible if the patronage of the state leadership is lacking. For quite sometime the Narain Singh faction has been dominating the district Congress Party because he enjoyed the patronage of S.C. Mathur earlier, and now he has the support and patronage of Bal Ram Jakhar, who has contested Lok Sabha elections thrice from Sikar, and who was Speaker of Lok Sabha and a cabinet minister at the Centre, and currently a member of the Congress Working Committee.

The opposition parties, particularly the former Jan Sangh and the present BJP, have not been able to make a dent into the cooperatives and the panchayats. This is the third time that the BJP is ruling the State led by the same leader B.S. Shekhawat who hails from Sikar district's village Khachariawas in Danta Ramgarh tehsil. Factions within the
BJP were not pronounced earlier. However, recently some serious differences have surfaced. These factions are represented by Ghan Shyam Tiwari and Pawan Mody. Mody is aligned with B.S. Shekhawat, whereas Tiwari is himself a state level leader and M.L.A. and Vice-President of the Party. Also very recently he led the dissident faction within the BJP.

Concluding Remarks

More details we will bring out about the power structure, and its rootedness in caste and class in the succeeding chapters. Here it may be concluded that the very formation of the state of Jaipur and the Shekhawati region and social composition of different castes and peasantry determined the nature of power and polity. Immediately after independence and at the time of the abolition of the Jagir-dari system, fight for political power and economic ascendancy was reflected in the efforts made by the peasant castes and communities. The privileged castes, particularly the Rajputs, made efforts in vain to retain their power and status. The situation has changed considerably. Intraparty frictions and alliances, mobilizations and strategies, linkages with regional and national leadership, and social and political awakening among the masses have led to a significant change in the nature and character of power politics in Sikar district.
Notes and References


(2) Cole, B.L., 1992 (originally published in 1932), Census of India, 1931, Delhi: Manohar Publications.


(6) Ibid., pp.140-145 (vol.I).

(7) Jain, M.S., op. cit., pp.144-145.

(8) Tod, op. cit.

(9) Ibid.

(10) Ibid.


(12) Ibid.


(14) Ibid.

(15) Jain, M.S., op. cit.
(16) Ibid.


(18) Jaipur Gazetteer, *op. cit.*

(19) Ibid., p.487.

(20) Ibid., pp.496-97.

(21) Ibid., p.546.

(22) Ibid., p.472.

(23) Ibid., pp.473-74.

(24) Ibid., pp.520-21.

(25) Ibid., p.546.

(26) Ibid.

(27) Tod, *op. cit.*


(29) See other works on Jaipur State such as Jadunath Sarkar, 1984, *A History of Jaipur* (Revised and edited by Raghubir Singh), New Delhi: Orient Longman.

(30) Tod, *op. cit.*


(35) Rubin, op. cit.

(36) Gazetteer of Jaipur, op. cit.

(37) Gazetteer of Sikar, op. cit.

(38) Amin, Samir, 1980, Class and Nation: Historically and in the Current Crisis, London: Heinemann, pp.60-64.

(39) See accounts of Sikar Agitation by Rubin, op. cit., and Rudolphs, op. cit.


(43) Ram, Ghasi, op. cit., Ram, Pema, op. cit.

(44) Ibid.

(45) Ibid.

(47) Raj, Desh, op. cit.

(48) Ibid.

(49) Ibid.

(50) Sir Chottu Ram and Desh Raj as Jat prophets.

(51) Ram, Ghasi, op. cit.