Chapter VIII

RURAL SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THE DISTRICT LEADERS AND POWER ELITE: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPROACH

This is a chapter with a difference. We have provided forty biographical sketches of power elite drawing from upper, middle and lower castes, Muslims and Women. With an exception of a few municipal leaders, all the leaders have their social origins in the villages of the district. Despite their permanent shift to towns such as Sikar and Jaipur, they continue to maintain their relationship with the village people for electoral purpose. The biographical narratives clearly bring out that more than money, education and caste rank, particular socio-political configurations are decisive in power politics. Upper caste dominance has declined. Caste-based mobilization matters a lot, but this alone cannot account for political gains as most of the numerically viable castes are fragmented and factionalised. We have discussed how politics gets fragmented, and dominance and dominance mobility are patterned in such a fluid situation.

There are just seven towns in Sikar district, the total population of which is less than 20 per cent of the population of the district. The rural people depend mainly upon
agriculture and some allied occupations including arts, crafts, artisanship etc. Three most important aspects of rural society in the district are: caste hierarchy, control over land and other economic resources and assets, and access to positions of power and authority. The permutations and combinations of these aspects in rural society largely influence shaping of the elite structure and its functioning. Rural elite are not just political leaders; there are elites without being political leaders, and their are political leaders without being elites particularly in the present-day situation.

The 73rd Constitutional amendment relating to Panchayati Raj institutions has facilitated election of weaker sections and women. The newly elected members from these two strata would not qualify for elite-status at the present juncture. Elites are those who possess and preserve such cultural values which the community at large acknowledges as virtuous possession. But in a new situation like this some of the persisting elites would be relegated to the background. Hence, a reconceptualization of the concepts of both 'elite' and 'leader' becomes inescapable. It is also necessary to clearly work out the hiatus between the apparent and the real or between the appearance and the essence. Due to recent incongruence between caste, class, and power or due to new forms of congruence between the three, rein-
terpretation of their meanings and interconnections becomes unavoidable.

The nature of caste-based mobilization has undergone tremendous change as cultural and social issues are no more so important for caste associations as it is for electoral and political gains. The concept of 'dominant caste' signifying ritual, political and economic superiority of one caste over others¹ seems to have lost its appeal as a result of segmentation of caste hierarchy on the one hand, and increasing emphasis on family and individual as the units of status and honour on the other.²

Ramifications of Power Elite

A Complex set of criteria of dominance or power at different levels and layers has been suggested as an alternative to the concept of dominant caste. The question is: Who is dominant - a caste or community, a family or an individual? How dominance at one level enters in the domain of other two aspects? How to discern dominance and power when they are interrelated and intertwined phenomena? How much is the class element in the concept of dominant caste? Is caste also not a class in some sense? How power provides a basis for economic gains and horizontal mobility in relation to caste?
All these questions indicate that the paradigm of caste as it was used in the 1950s and the 1960s has lost much of its significance. Changes in the societal issues, developmental strategies, new styles of politics and mobilization, and a conspicuous decline in the status of upper castes and communities and the emergence of middle castes/classes as economically and politically dominant groups have altered considerably the nature of nexus between caste, class, and power-politics. Today the rural elite are not an exclusive entity; they are a sort of diverse and mixed composition. An elite is someone who is educated, economically well off, well-behaved, and belongs to one of the upper or the upper middle castes in the village community. An elite must represent interests and welfare of major sections of society such as agriculturists, the SCs, the STs and the OBCs, entrepreneurs, artisans, etc. He must know the art of the articulation of the interests of his followers, well-wishers and favourites.

One more point may be noted here, namely, that a caste has an ingredient of a class and yet it remains a caste and vice-a-versa. The two are not reducible to each other and yet they are inseparable. Hence, a certain mix of the two would imply control over economic resources or lack of it, but this mix would largely determine the game of power-politics in rural India. To us both caste and class are re-
sources/liabilities with regard to access to political power. Once power is achieved it turns to be a resource for consolidation of higher status and higher class positions. Therefore, rural power elite cannot be thought of without incorporation of caste and class in its formation and functioning. Rural power elite are not necessarily those persons who are at the top of caste/class hierarchies. Certainty, the rural power elite have viable economic strength, and generally they belong to high or upper middle castes and communities. Being power elite they aspire for offices and positions of power and authority and have a reasonably fair degree of understanding of and interest in the village level polity, and some interest in block and district level political activities. As we will see that most of the rural power elite are not highly educated, but they have appropriate political resources and contacts with leaders and elites at the higher levels.

In most cases in our study the distinction between the established and the emerging elites or between the traditional and the modern leaders it is not found quite appropriate as the power elite today are mainly a product of the ongoing political activities at the district, block, and village levels. The concept of 'dominant caste' or 'group dominance' does not seem to be quite valid as group dominance seems to be more of a myth than a reality. Caste
hierarchy and elite hierarchy do not coincide nor there is group dominance as perceived by Srinivas. Elites are more of an aggregation than an active functioning primordial/ascriptive group. Elites lack group homogeneity, equality of status and rank, and equal distribution of power and privilege. Elites have never been unified. A man of power has had always asymmetrical relations.

Thus, it is more important to know the social background of the elites and the nature of dominance mobility with regard to power elite. The question is: How is dominance legitimised? What basic resources contribute to political dominance? How is group and individual dominance separate and distinct? What is the direction of dominance mobility? What factors affect the nature and direction of dominance mobility? How the traditional notions of dominance, namely, priestly status, martial or supreme character, wealth etc. are relevant today? Studies by several scholars have not adequately responded to these questions. Answers to some of these questions would follow from the biographical sketches of power elites and leaders which we have collected from our field study.

**Brahmin and Power Elite**

*Ghanshyam Tiwari:* Tiwari is Brahmin, a law graduate, married, and started his political career from Sikar town.
His father was not formally educated, and he hardly had any assets. Thus, Tiwari is a self-made politician, who started his political career as a member of RSS, and later on joined Jan Sangh/BJP. Recently his depleted house at Sikar was renovated. He owns a house at Jaipur which by conservative estimates is not less than worth rupees thirty lacs. He owns a large farm-house on Sikar-Jaipur highway. Other members of Tiwari's family are not highly educated. However, one of his relatives is a member of the assembly from Fatehpur constituency of the district.

Rise of Tiwari has been meteoric in the BJP power hierarchy. He started as an ordinary member of RSS/ABVP, and soon he became general secretary of the Students Union at Government College, Sikar. Later on Tiwari became Vice-President and the President of the District BJP. Subsequently, he became general secretary and vice-president of the State BJP. Thrice Tiwari has been a member of the assembly, namely, during 1980-85, 1985-90, 1993 onwards. He also lost two elections, once for the Lok Sabha from Sikar in 1984, and again in 1990 the assembly election from Sikar against Raju Pareek. People believe that Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, thrice CM of Rajasthan, was his political mentor, but today Tiwari is considered as a leader of disssidents in the state BJP. In some of his recent interviews to the press he has come out against the functioning of the B.S.
Shekhawat government.

Tiwari is of the view that Muslims have not voted for him and only a few of the Jats support BJP as a political party. However, the Meharia faction of the Congress supported him, though the Meharias did not support him in the 1990 elections, and this is why he lost the elections. He feels that after Jakhar's entry into parliamentary elections in the district both money and caste have entered in a vulgar manner in the district politics. Presently, Tiwari represents Chomu assembly constituency of Jaipur district.

At the state level Tiwari is politically close to the Lalit Kishore Chaturvedi faction. At the district level he is opposed to the faction led by Pawan Mody. In Sikar town, Tiwari is known as an articulate and vociferous speaker without having a challenger in his own party and perhaps in other political parties as well. He started his political career without any economic resources, but today he is considered as a substantially resourceful politician. His brother is one of the known property dealers. In case of Tiwari, it is not his caste that matters much, but more than caste are the factors such as his leadership qualities, oratory skills, and activism, which have contributed to his rise in politics. At the beginning of his political career perhaps there was no rival to him in the Sikar town, nor in
his own party and other political parties. The second important factor in the making of Tiwari as a power elite was his position as an opponent of the ruling Congress Party in the district. He could throw up as an upcoming leader cases of maladministration, corruption, and casteism against the Congress leaders and the district administration. The third factor was the patronage bestowed upon him by the all-powerful BJP stalwart B.S. Shekhawat, which helped him in having access to party positions at the district and state levels. Brahmins in particular, and others such as Banias and Kayasthas also, extended support to Tiwari in the elections which he fought from time to time.

Banwarilal Bhinda

Banwari Lal Bhinda belongs to the BJP and comes from Fatehpur town, and represents the assembly constituency of Sikar district by this name. A Brahmin and relative of Ghanshyam Tiwari, Bhinda is not highly educated, he is engaged in transport business. His sons are graduates, and are engaged in family business. Bhinda was Chairman of Fatehpur Municipal Committee. He was elected to the assembly in 1993, and in the same year became the district BJP President. Like Tiwari, Bhinda was also involved in the activities of RSS. Twice, in 1972 and 1990, he lost elections for the state legislature. Once he also lost election of the district BJP presidentship. He realises that the BJP is not
popular in the rural areas, its support mainly comes from towns, and there too the upper castes support partly. Bhinda is not a district-level leader. His support-base is mainly confined to Fatehpur town. Since his son is married to younger sister of Tiwari, the latter has always been a source of political strength for Bhinda. It is obvious that he could win the Presidentship of the district BJP and get nominated to contest elections for state legislature with the support of Tiwari.

We can work out clearly the levels of dominance and dominance mobility with regard to these two leaders. Bhinda has remained confined mainly to his constituency, he has slightly moved to the district level party organisation. Tiwari's chart of political career is far more different. From student leadership he became a constituency level leader, and then became a popular district level leader by the mid-1980's, though he is only an MLA today, but he is known as a state level BJP leader in the party, and a state level legislator in Rajasthan. He operates his political activities from Jaipur. His visits to Sikar have become minimal. His contacts with national level leadership are quite known in the BJP circles.
Jagdish Prasad Sharma

J.P. Sharma is a Brahmin and he belongs to Danta. He is one of the very senior leaders in Danta-Ramgarh assembly constituency. Besides being an ayurvedic practioner, he has been actively involved in the constituency politics. He has twenty acres of irrigated land as a subsidiary source of income. His two sons and daughters are moderately educated and both the sons are engaged in salaried jobs. Danta, a small qasba, had earlier a Municipal Committee, J.P. Sharma was its chairman in 1958. When Municipal Committee was abolished and Danta became a panchayat, he was its sarpanch as well. From 1965 to 1977 he was Pradhan of the Panchayat Samiti. During all these years he was a member of Congress party. Sharma lost several elections. In 1955, he lost election for Chairmanship of the municipality. In 1977 he lost election for the office of sarpanch, and in 1985 for state legislature as a BJP candidate. Most of his reference groups include Brahmins and Rajputs. He has acquaintance with Shekhawat and Tiwari and other BJP leaders. He is well aware that top leaders of Sikar were Laduram Joshi, B.N. Sodani. Influence of Sharma does not go beyond Danta, though he has been politically active despite his chequered career. His family is generally rated as one of the elite families in the tehsil in terms of style of life, competence in ayurveda profession, and cultural heritage.
Besides these three BJP elites from among Brahmins, we have also collected biographical details about three Brahmins who have been active in the Congress Party at the local level. Damodar Prasad Sharma, Gajadharp Prasad Pujari, and Gajanand Sharma may be mentioned along with Hazarilal Sharma, a CPI activist.

**Damodar Prasad Sharma**

Damodar Prasad Sharma belongs to Ramgarh, an adjoining village to Danta, which houses the headquarters of tehsil, panchayat samiti, police station etc. He is educated upto high school, his father was an ordinary worker. Other members in his family are not highly educated. He became Pradhan of Danta-Ramgarh Panchayat Samiti in 1981, and remained in office till 1993. People thought of him as a dark horse. Before 1961 he was also a member of the Nayay Panchayat. In 1995, he became Zila Pramukh as a nominee of the Congress Party. Throughout he has remained in the Congress Party, and aligned with the Narain Singh faction. People generally consider him as a puppet of Narain Singh who is the unquestioned boss of Congress party. Only once in 1978 he lost the election of Sarpanch.

Damodar Prasad Sharma observes that he has received support from all sections of people because of the social work he has done particularly in Danta-Ramgarh tehsil and
the district as a whole. However, he also feels that he has received more support from Jats, Brahmins, the SCs and Muslims. His reference groups include the same political leaders with whom his patron Narain Singh has been associated for a long time. These include Balram Jakhar, Paras Ram Maderna, S.C. Mathur, and Heeralal Deopura. Narain Singh was a Cabinet Minister in Mathur's government. When we wanted to know from Sharma about some individual referents in the district Congress, no one was mentioned by him from the Meharia faction, including its leader Ramdev Singh Meharia. Certainly Narain Singh was at the top of the list followed by other leaders, namely, Mohan Modi (Bania), Dipendra Singh Shekhawat (Rajput), Mahadev Singh (Jat), Paras Ram Mordia (SC), Hanif Khatri (Muslim), Prahlad Jhuria (Bania), Jai Prakash Sharma (Brahmin), Hanuman Singh Arya (Jat), and Chunni Lal (Khati).

Damodar Prasad Sharma is familiar with the state-level leadership of the Party. He mentioned most of the well-known leaders like Jai Narayan Vyas and Harideo Joshi, but he did not mention Mohan Lal Sukhadia's name. B.N. Sodani, Laduram Joshi, J.L. Bajaj figure in his reckoning as the top leaders of the district. He admits that factionalism is basically a struggle for power. Ramdeo Singh Meharia was DCC President for a long time, and during this period he never allowed leaders of the rival faction led by Narain
Singh to have access to positions of power in the party or in the cooperative bank or at the state-level. However, the Narain Singh faction kept the struggle for power alive. Narain Singh once defeated Ramdev Singh Meharia for the post of Zila Pramukh. Ram Deo Singh was a protege of Hardeo Joshi who appointed him as a Cabinet Minister. Shiv Charan Mathur avenged this by appointing Narain Singh in his cabinet. All these facts about these two factions, according to Sharma, have become enduring features of politics within the Congress Party in the district. There have been defections from one faction to another, but the basic character of the factions has remained unaltered. Damodar Sharma feels with satisfaction that his loyalty to Narain Singh has paid him political dividends. He is happy that he has remained loyal to Narain Singh.

**Gujadhar Prasad Pujari:** Pujari, a former Chairman of Laxmangarh Munipality, is a Brahmin and a member of the Congress Party. He is literate, and owns a medical store in Laxmangarh. Other members of his family are not highly educated except one daughter who is a commerce graduate. Economically, he is quite well off. He is aligned with the Meharia faction. His political activities are confined mainly to Laxmangarh municipality of which he was the Chairman. Since Meharias controlled the cooperative sector, Pujari was appointed Chairman of the Sikar Cooperative
Consumer Society. All through he has been with the Congress Party and with the Meharia faction.

In his assessment Ram Deo Singh Meharia is the most prominent leader of the district. The other leaders mentioned by him, except Meharia, are from Laxmangarh constituency. He knows about the state leaders and their caste affiliations. However, Pujari is not aware of the social and political movements launched in the pre-independence era. He feels that factionalism within the Congress Party has become an established fact, and it has been revived from 1984 with the entry of Jakhar in the district Congress Party. Jakhar's entry has weakened the political base of the Meharia faction, and has strengthened that of the Narain Singh faction. Ram Dev Singh Meharia was questioned even about his loyalty with the Congress Party. Many people feel that Ram Dev Singh Meharia has come closer to Shekhawat after Jakhar was elected to Lok Sabha from Sikar in 1984. Pujari considers all this as a part of political life in the district, particularly in the Congress Party.

Gajanand Sharma: Gajanand Sharma, a former Sarpanch of Danta and a member of Congress, is a rival of Jagdish Prasad Sharma in the Danta-Ramgarh assembly constituency. Gajanand Sharma is also an ayurvedic practitioner. Like his rival he has also agriculture as a subsidiary source of
income. His sons are highly educated, and one of them is working in a bank, another one owns a medical store, and a third one is a law graduate and practices ayurveda. Twice Gajanand Sharma was elected Sarpanch of Danta Gram Panchayat. Earlier he was also a panch. Currently, he is a member of the DCC executive. He belongs to Narain Singh faction within the Congress. He won all the elections he fought. The followers of Narain Singh are his reference individuals. He is familiar with the names of the state level leadership. Since Gajanand Sharma is a village-level political elite, he has hardly any political voice outside his village. He considers himself as a sincere worker and a trustworthy follower of Narain Singh.

Makhan Lal Sharma: Makhan Lal Sharma, a Brahmin, was born at Srimadhopur. After graduating in commerce, he entered actively into local politics. Today, at the age of 29, he is Pradhan of Panchyat Samiti as a BJP nominee. He owns about 20 acres of irrigated land. Besides agriculture, transport business is his main source of earning. He is also Secretary of the BJP rural unit of Srimadhopur tehsil, and a member of the executive committee of the district unit. His father was also active in local politics as he was sarpanch of his village for twentyseven long years. He openly admits that he was elected to the office of Pradhan with the tacit support of the dissidents of the Congress.
Party. His vote-bank comprises of Brahmins, Rajputs, Banias, and Gujars. However, because of some influence of the Jat leader - Harlal Singh, who was also a minister, he could get support of some Jats as well.

Makhan Lal Sharma, a promising leader, has support of several district and state level BJP leaders including Harlal Singh, Ghanshyam Tiwari, Banwari Lal Bhinda, and some other leaders. His ability to manoeuvre could be seen in the 1995 elections. Despite ten seats won by the BJP, and 13 by the Congress, 2 by independents, he was elected to the office of Pradhan. The Congress had a clear majority in the Samiti, but it lost election for the chief executive office of the Samiti. His father's credibility as a local leader has certainly added to his credentials and claims to some of the offices he has been occupying since 1995.

Hari Prasad Pujari: Hari Prasad Pujari, Chairman of Laxmangarh Municipal Council, is also a relatively young leader, who is educated upto graduation. From 1967 onwards, he has been a member of the Jan Sangh/BJP. Pujari was General Secretary of the Laxmangarh unit of the BJP from 1971 to 1977, and Secretary from 1978 onwards. He was a member of the Muncipality, and later on became its Chairman in 1992. Leaders like Ghanshyam Tiwari, Pawan Modi, Harlal Singh, Banwari Lal Bhinda, and Tej Prakash Saini are his mentors. The various names mentioned by him as leaders of
the BJP include Brahmins, Banias, and Rajputs, with the exception of Harlal Singh and Tej Prakash Saini. Political activities of Pujari are restricted to Laxmangarh town only. It seems that he has hardly any influence in the constituency as a whole.

**Hajari Lal Sharma:** Hajarilal Sharma educated upto graduation belongs to a village in Srimadhopur tehsil. Other members of his family are moderately educated. His son is doing his Masters at Jaipur. Sharma has been associated with the CPI(M). He is a member of the CITU State Commitee, and Secretary of the district CPI(M). Sharma thinks that his own economic background, landlessness, and experiences of the surroundings have led him to join the left-politics. He knows fully well that there is not much support for his party in the district. He contested for Sarpanch in 1980 and in 1990, and for state assembly as well, but lost all the elections.

Three main segments of the rural people are supporting the CPI(M) as reported by Hajari Lal Sharma. These are Kisans, labourers and youth. He talks more about the class base of his party rather than caste. He is familiar with leaders in the district who are affiliated with the left-politics. The new generation of the Jat youth are supporting the CPI(M). Most of them are students of the Government.
College, Sikar. A good number of them reside in the Jat Hostel. In attracting the Jats toward the CPI(M), a major role was played by Trilok Singh, who even lived with the students for a long time in the Jat Hostel. Recently some youth from among the SCs have also joined the CPI(M), and its student wing the SFI.

Rajputs and Power Elite

Not many from among Rajputs are active in power politics in the district. This may be due to several factors such as overwhelming presence of Jats and their activism in politics, lack of mobilization among Rajputs, their lesser numerical strength, and stigma of being exploiter and oppressor of the rural people, particularly peasants and workers. Jats are on ascendency, whereas Rajputs are on decline politically, socially, and economically. However, some Rajputs have made a mark in politics after independence despite these weak points. Let us provide biographical sketches of some Rajput leaders.

Madan Singh Danta: Thakur Madan Singh Danta was jagirdar of Danta, the second largest jagir in Sikar district. Madan Singh, an octogenerian, is educated upto matriculation from Mayo college, Ajmer. He was thrice member of state assembly, once he won as an independent candidate, and twice as nominee of Jan Sangh and Ram Rajya Parishad. Twice he
lost elections. Madan Singh has been known as an admirer of traditional values of chivalry, honesty and caste hierarchy. He owned a fort and two palaces at Danta. His jagir had 55 revenue villages under its jurisdiction. He also owned a haveli at Jaipur, alongwith a lot of vacant land. Being indulgent in conspicous consumption, he sold out his house and land at Jaipur long ago. He also sold out land and other properties at Danta and other places. Presently he owns about 30 acres in land at Danta.

Four of his sons are moderately educated, and the fifth son is an architect working at Bombay. However, two of his sons are working in foreign countries. The youngest son has joined local politics and was once elected as Sarpanch of Danta Village Panchayat.

Thakur Madan Singh Danta was influenced by Swami Karpatri who was founder of Ram Rajya Parishad. Madan Singh was President of Ram Rajya Parishad. Later on in the 1960s, he was also President of Jan Sangh. With Swami Karpatri he led the anti-cow slaughter movement. After independence he founded the Bhooswami Sangh to protect the interests of the jagirdars. In the early 1960s he came under the influence of Maharani Gayatri Devi, and fought 1972 assembly election as a nominee of Swatantra Party. Gayatri Devi was the unquestioned leader of the Swatrantra Party alongwith Maharawal Laxman Singh and other noted jagirdars and princes of
Rajasthan.

As a leader of Rajputs and a champion of the interests of former Jagirdars Thakur Madan Singh carved out a place for himself in the early 1950s. He met Jawaharlal Nehru to discuss the problem of rehabilitation of Jagirdars and Zamindars. He was firmly of the view that Jagirdhari was a system of administration/governance rather than a caste-based system for exploitation of the people. A number of Jats were appointed as Mukhias and Choudharies and were granted adequate compensation on land revenue in lieu of their services to the rulers. People from lower and untouchable castes were also appointed as messangers, revenue officials, and security guards etc. The people engaged in literary and priestly activities were honoured and gifted with free land-grants.

Thakur Madan Singh Danta was a soldier who fought in the second world war. Despite his traditional outlook, he was a staunch nationalist. At the time of India's war against China in 1962, impulsively he declared in a public meeting at Jaipur which was addressed by Krishna Menon, the then defence minister of India that he would donate all his properties for the war fund along with a sum of one lakh rupees in cash and the services of one of his sons for the Indian army. This move on his part made him a great nation-
al hero and a great patriot.

Thakur Madan Singh mixed with people freely. He heard them with patience and concern. He always put on the traditional Rajput dress i.e. turban, dhoti, shirt. He spoke English language eloquently. Thakur Danta was a vociferous speaker in the assembly. He was always seen with reverence in the assembly. Today he spends the life of a pauper. He has no assets. He survives on the meagre pension as a former member of the assembly.

**Deependra Singh Shekhawat:** Deependra Singh Shekhawat is emerging as one of the effective Rajput leaders in the district. He was born at a village in Srimadhopur tehsil. Dependra Singh, son of a forest ranger, after graduation entered into politics. He has developed, over the years, contacts with Congress leaders of high standing. Shekhawat has always been associated with the Congress in the State. He was a student leader, president of College Union, and an active member of the NSUI. Twice he has been a member of the state legislature. He was also Chairman of the State Farms Cooperative Union of India. Currently, he is general secretary of the Congress Party in Rajasthan. He is with the Narain Singh faction of the Congress in the district. He was closely associated with Balram Jakhar.
Deependra Singh, though a staunch Congress activist, feels that overwhelming preference for Jats in the Congress Party has blocked the entry of young men and women from a cross-section of society. The established Jat leaders in Congress have promoted their kith and kin including wives and offsprings. In the 1993 assembly elections a good number of the relatives of Congress leaders who were nominated for the assembly elections, lost including a son of Buta Singh, wife of Rajesh Pilot, a son of Haridev Joshi and some others.

Deependra Singh feels that the ambivalence between Jats and Rajputs has always been a matter of great concern for the thinking people in the state. Before independence the two communities were unevenly placed, Rajputs as landlords and Jats as their tenants. After independence, since the situation has changed, the two keep a marked distance from each other in social and political spheres. Consequently, even if both Jats and Rajputs are together in the party, they hesitate to come closer to each other in the party. Jats who have had a longer stay in the Congress, have always tried to prevent Rajputs from occupying important positions in the organisation. Hence, Rajputs have tried to find a place for themselves outside the Congress Party, particularly in the Swantantra and the Jan Sangh/BJP.
The Jats have often been in and out of the Congress Party from time to time. Not because of a visible presence of Rajputs and other castes and communities in the Congress party, but mainly because of social and cultural considerations. When the late Chaudhary Charan Singh left the Congress Party there was an exodus of the Jats from the Congress Party in the states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan etc. Similarly, Jats have been swayed by the stands taken by the leaders like Devilal, Kumbha Ram Arya, Nathu Ram Mirdha etc. Deependra Singh Shekhawat is an active leader in the district Congress party, knowing fully well the pre-eminence of Jats in the functioning of the organisation in the district.

Thakur Govardhan Singh: Thakur Govardhan Singh, a Rajput, educated up to intermediate, is in his late sixties. Singh controlled a jagir comprising of 25 revenue villages. Besides ancestral property at Sihot, he owns property at Sikar. He was Sarpanch of the Sihot village Panchayat. He was also Pradhan of Dhod Panchayat Samiti. Goverdhan Singh also held the office of up-zila pramukh from 1972 to 1977. He was an independent member of the state legislature supported by Swatantra Party. Some of his relatives are also involved in local politics. His son-in-law has been a member of the UP state assembly.
Thakur Goverdhan Singh was always either an unattached leader or was in close association with Swatantra Party and its leader Maharani Gayatri Devi. He also had support from the BJP leaders like Shekhawat and Thakur Madan Singh Danta. Thakur Goverdhan Singh is somewhat caste-oriented person. A good member of his references are thakurs i.e. Gayatri Devi, B.S. Shekhawat, Madan Singh Danta, etc. However, Goverdhan Singh is a knowledgeable political leader. He has been able to mobilize support from Rajputs, Muslims and other sections of society to make a dent in Meharia's bastion, namely, the Dhod assembly segment. He has always worked against the Meharia faction. According to Singh Jats are having ill-feeling towards the Rajputs, whereas Rajputs do not nourish such political and social ill-will against the Jats. Jats are in a majority and they exploit it to suppress politically other castes/communities. After Shekhawat has become Chief Minister of State, Rajputs have now a feeling that they could also reemerge politically as a viable force in Rajasthan. Goverdhan Singh is against reservation particularly for the OBCs. He is also against the outsiders contesting the Lok Sabha elections.

Prem Singh Bajor: Prem Singh Bajor is a new leader, who is simply literate, and he is engaged in business. Bajor belongs to a village in Sikar tehsil. He owns a house at Jaipur, and agricultural land in his village. After being a
Panch and Sarpanch, he was elected Pradhan of Piprali Panchayat Samiti as a nominee of the BJP. He is also a member of the executive committee of the District BJP. His wife is a member of Panchayat Samiti. Bajor is a resourceful leader. His supporters are mainly Rajputs, Banias and Brahmins. Because of his business connections, he is able to raise funds for the BJP. His mentors are both Tiwari and Shekhawat. His economic standing as a result of his being in liquor trade has facilitated his entry into politics.

**Bania and Power-Politics**

It seems that from among the upper castes more than Brahmins and Rajputs, the Banias have played a bigger role in political affairs of the district. They are present both in the Congress and the BJP. A general perception about the Banias is that they are very rich, and with money power they can have access to political power. However, none of the Banias in Sikar district have been formally associated with active left-politics.

**Srikrishna Modi:** Modi is a Congress leader, and a prosperous businessman. He belongs to Neem Ka Thana, and is educated only matriculation. Modi entered into politics in 1971 when he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Sikar constituency. Subsequently, he lost elections in 1977 and 1980 for the Lok Sabha. His father was illiterate and poor. Today,
Modi owns an excellent house at Neem Ka Thana and houses at Jaipur and other places. He owns several mines in Rajasthan. Modi has a fleet of cars and jeeps. He is considered as the richest person in Sikar district. His son Vishnu Modi, who is a commerce graduate, has also entered into politics successfully as a member of parliament and also as a member of state legislature. His other son is engaged in business. Other members of his family have also been members of the state assembly.

S.K. Modi, who was once very close to Mrs. Indira Gandhi, was also closely associated with M.L. Sukhadia, Harideo Joshi, and Nawal Kishore Sharma. He acknowledges that today some of the eminent leaders such as Jai Narayna Vyas, Sodani, and Ladu Ram Joshi have been forgotten, and the district is infested with factionalism. But Modi observes that he is not aligned with either of the two factions. He thinks that he is above these factional alliances. Modi admits with a sense of self-satisfaction that he has kept bad politics under check in Sikar district, and a man, namely, Sanwar Mal More, who lost as Sarpanch was elected for the office of Zila Pramukh. Sanwar Mal More is no doubt also a distinguished political leader in his own right, but Modi says that he was elected with his support as Zila Pramukh. It implies thus that both money-power and caste played a crucial role in deciding the electoral for-
tune of the contestants.

Neem Ka Thana is the second largest town in the district. It is different from the rest of the assembly segments as Banias, Ahirs, and Gujars, instead of Brahmins, Rajputs, and Jats, dominate the political scene. Sri Krishan Modi, his son Vishnu Modi, Mohan Modi, Mukti Modi, Pawan Modi and some others from this 'tribe' have been active in politics, and all of them have been economically very well off.

Mohan Modi: Mohan Modi is educated upto matriculation, owns a couple of mines, and about sixtyfive acres of irrigated land, along with a fleet of vehicles and several houses at Neem Ka Thana and Jaipur. He is a multimillionaire. Most of his family members are highly educated including female members. All of his sons (four) though engaged in business had professional education, such as medicine, law, chartered accountancy, and applied science.

Mohan Modi has been active as a Congress member from 1963 onwards. Since 1967, he has been thrice member of Rajasthan assembly. In the Congress organisation, he has been district Congress vice-president, member of the DCC and the AICC. Two of his uncles were assembly members, his elder brother is a former M.P., his nephew is an MLA. He proudly feels that in Neem Ka Thana Congress and Modi clan
are synonymous. He also lost two elections in 1972 and 1990, for the state legislature. He lost elections when Gujars supported the BJP in these elections. Modi feels that factionalism is incurable, it is an enduring contagious disease because it is basically a struggle for leadership and power. Congress lost elections in the district because Gujars and Rajputs did not support the party and the dissident Congress leaders aligned with the BJP.

Sanvar Mal More: Another important political leader in Sikar district is Sanvar Mal More, a Bania from Laxmangarh Tehsil. Sanvar Mal More is not formally educated, he is known more as a social worker. His main source of income is business. He has a house and agricultural land at Laxmangarh, and owns a house at Sikar, and runs a factory. One of his sons is a law graduate and a practicing lawyer. Another son is a graduate and runs a factory. More has been associated with the Congress since the pre-independence days, he was a member of the Praja Mandal in Jaipur state. He was President of Laxmangarh Block Congress, and subsequently he became president of the DCC. He was thrice Pradhan and later on became Zila Pramukh. He was a member of Rajasthan assembly from 1972 to 1977. His father was a Gandhian. Ladu Ram Joshi, Badri Narayan Sodani and Jamuna Lal Bajaj were the most respected leaders of the district before and after independence. As a Congressman More observes that he
received support from all sections of society. More is considered as a knowledgeable and shrewd politician in the district. He has been able to get support from Banias and some other castes which normally would not support the leaders of other castes. Despite his political cleverness, More is a highly respected leader of the district because of his involvement in social work.

There are some other leaders who have been active members of the ABVP, the RSS and the BJP in the towns of Sikar district. Jhajuka who belongs to Sikar town has been a cloth merchant and educated up to graduation, is associated with the ABVP, the Jan Sangh, in various capacities. In 1995, he was elected to Sikar Nagar Parishad. Similarly, Satya Narain Pansari, an ABVP member, is Chairman of the Neem Ka Thana Municipal Committee. Pansari is a graduate, and he is engaged in business. He is associated with the BJP and the RSS for a long time. He has also been an elected member of the Neemka Thana Municipal Committee. Pawan Modi from Sikar is a commerce graduate engaged in business. He started his political career as a member of Janta Party in 1977, and became active in the BJP since 1980. He has been general secretary and president of the district unit. However, he is opposed to Ghanshyam Tiwari in local politics. He has not contested any election so far. Since he is opposed to Tiwari, he enjoys patronage of
B.S. Shekhawat. It is said that Tiwari lost 1990 election from Sikar because Modi alongwith his other community leaders did not extend support to Tiwari. Modi feels that caste does not play an important role in Politics. Rajputs are in the BJP, Jats are in the Congress, and Brahamins and Banias are a divided lot. Jats have made a dent in politics because they are numerically strong and economically prosperous. He contests the observation that BJP is a Bania party. According to Modi this was true of the Jan Sangh, but not of the BJP, because the latter has a much enlarged social base. Pawan Modi seems to have potential for making an important place for himself in the district BJP.

Prahald Jhuria, a commerce and law graduate and a Chartered Accountant and a Bania by caste, is a staunch supporter of the Narain Singh faction of the Congress Party. Besides owning a house at Sikar, and business at Jaipur, Jhuria also owns about 50 acres of land in Sikar. Being a favourite of Narain Singh, Jhuria became a member of the DCC in 1981, the city Congress President during 1991-94, and presently he is general secretary of the DCC. Jhuria has hardly any independent standing in the party. All the references made by him are of the members of the Narain Singh faction.
Women, Numerically Small Groups, and Power Elite

Women power elite are still a rare phenomenon in district politics. After one-third reservation in the civic bodies and Panchayati raj institutions under the 73rd constitutional amendment women leaders may spring up as a recognisable segment in the elite structure. They may also emerge as a force to reckon within state legislature and parliament if the proposed bill for reservation in these bodies becomes a law. Let us present a few illustrative cases of women elite.

Meenakshi Khaitan: Meenakshi Khaitan is a Bania by caste, educated upto high school, she belongs to a business family in Ramgarh village. She is currently Sarpanch of the Village panchayat. Her family has been associated with the BJP. Earlier she was never active in politics. Reservation has come as an easy way for her family to motivate her for contesting the panchayat elections. Before entering into village politics, she was a housewife observing purdah which she discarded after becoming the Sarpanch. Initially some of her family members opposed the idea that how a daughter-in-law could contest elections. Even they threatened the family with social boycott. But after her election all those opponents extended their support to her, because they thought that it was a good decision as it had enhanced
A very few persons have made a mark from among the numerically small castes and communities. However, some people like Madan Soni, an advocate by profession, has made a place for himself in the BJP politics. A resident of Sikar, Soni is an established lawyer, who started his career as a member of the Sikar municipality in 1962. He became President of Jan Sangh as early as in 1955. He is a committed RSS worker. His son and daughter are graduates. His son is engaged in business in Sikar town. After remaining active in Nagar Palika politics for about twenty years, he contested twice assembly election as Jan Sangh/BJP nominee and lost both the elections against Congress candidates. Soni opines that dissidence within his party, booth capturing, and partisan attitude adopted by the district administration in favour of the Congress candidates were the main reasons for his defeat. Both in 1977 and 1993, he lost elections by a narrow margin.

Madan Soni is a name on everyone's tongue in local politics. He is known because of legal acumen and commitment to the BJP. He confesses that today the BJP is also plagued with factionalism like the Congress Party in the district. The two factions in the district BJP are led by Pawan Modi and Ghanshyam Tiwari, respectively. The Meharia
faction of Congress supported Ghanshyam Tiwari in 1980 assembly elections, and worked against Som Nath Trehan of the Congress, because the latter had worked earlier in 1971 municipal elections against the Meharias. Since the Narain Singh faction in the Congress Party has been domineering for last few years due to decline of the Hari Deo Joshi faction at the state level and emergence of Paras Ram Maderna as a dominant leader of the party. This has led to the weakening of the Meharia faction in the district, hence Meharias have tilted towards the BJP, though formally remaining with the Congress Party.

In the recently held Lok Sabha elections in 1996 a nephew of Ram Dev Singh Meharia was nominated by the BJP to fight elections against Dr. Hari Singh of the Congress. Today the BJP and the Meharia faction of the Congress are politically aligned more with each other than the different factions within the Congress or the BJP. Madan Soni has a fair amount of understanding of all these intricate issues such as factionalism, inter-party alliances, interest groups, and political linkages.

We have another case of a female member of the Congress party who has been actively associated with its various political activities. Taravati Mathur is educated upto matriculation and her father was a graduate. In village Ramgarh she has been a recognised social worker, particular-
ly in the field of family welfare and settlement of family disputes. She also teaches Harijan children. At the age of 45, she got interested in the recently held Panchayati Raj elections, but she was denied nomination to contest by the Congress Party. She blames the institution of patriarchy even for selection/rejection of women candidates for the reserved seats. Certainly Taravati Mathur has been aspiring for a political space for herself, but she has hardly any community/ caste support-base, as women of other castes such as Banias and Brahmins have in a large-sized village like Ramgarh.

Somnath Trehan is an old name in the district Congress politics, particularly in the civic politics of Sikar town. He is a Punjabi Khatri, settled in Sikar, his father was a doctor, who owned a house and a few shops in the town. Rental income is a major source of livelihood for Trehan. All his family members including himself and his wife are highly educated. Somnath Trehan is one leader who has been associated for a long time with the Congress Party. Right from his student days he started participating in political activities. He was President of the College Union. At a young age, he became an unopposed member of the municipal committee. Later on in 1959, he became its chairman. Subsequently, he held various offices in the district Congress committee, and also became a member of the PCC. In
1980, he lost elections for state legislature as a Congress nominee. His main support-base is among the Scheduled Castes, Jats, and Muslims. Trehan, who has been in politics for more than 40 years, is a very familiar name in the municipal/district politics. Though a Punjabi, he has assimilated himself in the local ambience. His knowledge of factionalism, of history and culture of the Shekhawati region, and the state as a whole, is very deep. He is aligned with the Narain Singh faction of the Congress. In 1993, he was expelled from the Congress Party for his alleged anti-party activities. However, after the capturing of power by the Narain Singh faction he was taken back in the party.

These case studies clearly bring out that leaders like Somnath Trehan, Taravati Mathur, and Madan Soni can carve out political space for themselves even without primordial support. Soni could simply do it because of his professional competence as a lawyer and his commitment to Jan Sangh/BJP via RSS. Somnath Trehan could achieve political heights not because of the backing of Punjabis who are a small minority group, but mainly because of his hard work as a political and social activist and due his commitment to the Congress Party. Political and social activities of Taravati Mathur are restricted to Ramgarh village, and she has not contested elections even ones, but her commitment to
social work inspired her to carve out a political space for herself in the present situation. Her work among the Scheduled Castes and women has helped in establishing her as a leader.

**Jats and Power Politics**

We interviewed 12 Jat political leaders who have been active in politics for a long period of time. These Jat leaders represent four political parties, namely, the Congress, the BJP, the Lok Dal, and the CPI(M). The Narain Singh faction of the Congress seems to be occupying top slot among the Jats in the power structure of the district. As we have observed earlier that the influence of Meharia faction in the district as a whole and in the Congress Party in particular is on decline. The Lok Dal has a nominal presence in the power struggle. However, the CPI(M) has always been a politically vibrant entity under the leadership of Trilok Singh. New leadership has emerged in the CPI(M). We have interviewed its sole representative in Rajasthan assembly - Amra Ram, who represents the Dhod assembly segment in the district.

**Narain Singh**: Narain Singh, a Jat leader, who started his political career as a Panch of an insignificant village panchayat in early 1950s, rose to the position of a Cabinet Minister in Rajasthan. From the mid-60s he has been at the
helm of political activities as a Congress leader in Sikar district. Narain Singh comes from an agriculturist family with modest education. Members of his extended family are still in the village, depending mainly on agriculture and allied economic pursuits. However, his father was a patel, he raised a voice against the jagirdars to seek concessions for the peasants. His father was involved in the activities of the Praja Mandal. Two of his brothers have been Sarpanch of the same Panchayat. His daughter-in-law, who is a graduate, is currently a member of Danta-Ramgarh Panchayat Samiti. She contested for the office of Pradhan of Danta-Ramgarh Panchayat Samiti, but lost to another woman candidate whose husband is a former sarpanch and a volatile young Jat leader.

Narain Singh and his son are engaged in business, he owns houses at Sikar and Jaipur. The sources of his income are mainly from land deals, mining, ownership of factories and rent. He owns several cars and jeeps. Narain Singh is considered to be a rich politician, a crorepati (multimillionaire). However, people believe that he is a honest politician, he does not accept money from people of his own constituency.

Besides these personal anecdotes, more important is his political biography for us. In 1954, he became a panch for
the first time as a follower of the Congress Party, he was then a young man in his mid-20's. He became Sarpanch of Duka Panchayat in 1957, and subsequently, successfully contested election for the office of Pradhan of Danta-Ramgarh Panchayat Samiti. In 1962, he became Pramukh of Sikar Zila Parishad. During this period of one decade, his rise in politics was meteoric as everyone talked about his rise more than his leadership. Vaidya Rameshwar Prasad Sharma was his political guru during this period. In fact, he introduced him to politics. He started his career in this way just from the time of the abolition of jagirdari system in the State. He had no rival from his community in his own village and in Danta-Ramgarh tehsil. Compared to other Jat leaders of the time he was slightly more educated as he had education up to intermediate. During this period he was associated with the Ram Chandra Sunda faction in the Congress Party. It may be restated that Meharia and Sunda belonged to the same village in Sikar district.

A shift can be noted in the political career of Narain Singh when the Sunda faction separated from the Congress Party to join the Bhartiya Kranti Dal (BKD). It may be recalled that the late Choudhary Charan Singh, because of his differences with the Congress leadership in Uttar Pradesh, formed a new party known as the BKD. In Rajasthan Kumbha Ram Arya had acute differences and rivalry with the
Chief Minister Mohan Lal Sukhadia. Since Arya toed the political line of Charan Singh, he separated from the Congress to join the BKD, and the Sunda faction of Congress in Sikar district which was aligned with Arya also deserted the Congress Party. Most Jat leaders and their followers joined the BKD in the district in 1965.

Narain Singh again became Pramukh of Sikar Zila Pari-shad as a nominee of the BKD and continued in this position upto 1978. However, he joined the Congress Party in 1972 along with most of his followers. By this time the BKD had become a defunct political party in the state. After rejoining Congress in 1972, Narain Singh became a member of the Rajasthan assembly as a Congress nominee. Subsequently, he again became an MLA in 1980, 1985, and 1993. He lost elections for the office of Pradhan of Danta-Ramgarh Panchayat Samiti when he contested it for the second time, and he also lost elections for the state legislature in 1977 and 1990. Besides being a panch, a sarpanch, a pradhan, a zila pramukh, and an MLA for four times, Narain Singh is also a member of the PCC and President of the Sikar DCC. He was also a Cabinet Minister during from 1988 to 1990 in the government headed by S.C. Mathur.

The vote-bank of Narain Singh includes Jats, SCs and Muslims. Some Brahmins have also supported him particularly because of the early influence of Vaidya Rameshwar Prasad
Sharma. His present protege Damodar Prasad Sharma who was Sarpanch of Ramgarh Panchayat, Pradhan of Danta-Ramgarh Panchayat Samiti, is now Zila Pramukh of Sikar Zila Parishad. Rameshwar Prasad Sharma, a practising Vaidya, never expected political benefits from Narain Singh, who was his disciple in early phase of his political ascendency.

Narain Singh considers Maderna, Jakhar, and Mirdha as his mentors. The main leaders close to him are Rajendra Pareek, Mohan Modi, Hanif Khatri, Deependra Singh Shekhawat, Somnath Trehan and Damodar Prasad Sharma. Singh has not mentioned even one person from the Meharia faction as a leader of stature in his reckoning in the district. He proudly feels that today political field in the district is open for him. There is no challenge to his leadership. In the Congress party, he says: 'I am the leader, who else is there'. From the references made by him the state leadership consists of members from various castes/communities, namely, Jats, Brahmins, Rajputs, Banias, Kayasthas, Malis, and SCs.

Narain Singh is very anguished about Ram Dev Meharia as a political leader. He considers Meharia as a selfish leader who is aligned with the BJP in the district, and has always tried to damage the Congress Party. When Meharia was Cabinet Minister in the Joshi government he took control of all
the cooperative institutions and the apex cooperative bank in the district. As a minister he extended benefits to the members of his family, clan, and supporters. For a pretty long period he was president of the DCC, but never more than two members were elected to the assembly on the Congress ticket from the district under his stewardship. Meharia never wanted any other leader to carve out a space in politics.

Narain Singh has fresh in his memory the atrocities and indignities committed on the peasantry by the jagirdars and zamindars. Relations between Jats and Rajputs, therefore, had also been strained right from the pre-independence days. Since land reforms, adult franchise, and panchayati raj have provided an opportunity to the backward sections of rural populace, caste-based mobilization among Jats emerged as a logical corollary in the post-independence era. The formerly oppressed sections started asserting their identity and autonomy vis-a-vis their former exploiters and oppressors. This is why Jats have opposed the entry of Rajputs in the Congress Party at the state level. The Rajputs have been hesitant to join the Congress Party which has numerical preponderance and pre-eminence of Jat leaders.

Harlal Singh Kharra: Harlal Singh Kharra (Jat), a BJP leader, is a class by himself in Rajasthan politics because for a long time he was the only Jat leader and MLA in the
Jan Sangh/BJP. He owns a house at Jaipur. He is educated only up to 8th standard, other members of his family are not highly educated. One of his sons is a lower division clerk, another one is a school teacher, and the third one is engaged in agriculture. From 1955 to 1967, Kharra was a member of the Congress Party. He was Sarpanch from 1955 to 1961, and also Pradhan of Sri Madhopur Panchayat Samiti from 1965 to 1967. Kharra joined Jan Sangh in 1967 when he was elected to the state legislature. At that point of time he was the only Jat Jan Sangh MLA. He was again elected as MLA in 1977 as a candidate of the Janta Party. Subsequently, he was elected to the assembly in 1985 and 1990.

A four time MLA Kharra also lost several elections during his long political career spread over nearly 40 years. He lost elections for the office of Sarpanch, and thrice lost the assembly elections. He was also Cabinet Minister in the Shekhawat government. His main supporters, besides Jats, are Brahmins, Banias and Rajputs. All the three upper castes normally would not support a Jat in electoral game unless they are committed members of the BJP. There are few Jat references given by him in Sikar district. Most of the names mentioned by him are of Brahmins, Rajputs, Banias, and Gujars. He considers Shekhawat as his political mentor because he joined Jan Sangh in 1967 on his persuasion. People generally believe that Kharra joined Jan Sangh
because he was denied Congress ticket for contesting assembly elections in 1967. Kharra's popularity as a leader in the district is much less than that of Narain Singh and Ram Dev Singh Meharia.

**Ridmal Singh:** Ridmal Singh, a Jat, belongs to Katrathal village of the district. He comes from a poor agriculturist's family. Most of his family members are moderately educated, except one of his sons who is a graduate and teaches in a school. Ridmal Singh, a septuagenarian leader, entered politics in the mid-1950s. Singh remained in the Congress upto 1965. He was associated with the village panchayat, panchayat samiti and the cooperative bank. He joined the BKD in 1965 along with the Sunda faction of the Congress. During 1965-77 period, he was also Pradhan of Piprali Panchayat Samiti. Ridmal Singh returned to the Congress Party in 1977, and he was nominated as a Congress candidate from Sikar assembly constituency, and also won the election. He also contested the assembly elections of 1980 as a Congress (Urs) nominee, but did not succeed. His political career chart shows that he lost elections even for the office of Sarpanch. However, he has been closely associated with the cooperative institutions in the district. His main supporters are Jats, Muslims, and the SCs. His close associates include Jats, Brahmins, and the SCs. Most of the leaders of the district including Ridmal Singh have
mentioned about Ashok Gehlot, S.C. Mathur, Paras Ram Maderna as their leaders because Narain Singh has been closely associated with them.

Ridmal Singh has a fair knowledge of the peasant movements and the role played by the Kisan Sabha and the Praja Mandal. He is also familiar with the intricacies of the Jat-Rajput conflict during the pre and post-independence periods. It is also clear from his observation that Jats are gregarious in politics. When Kumbha Ram Arya and Daulat Ram Saran joined the BKD, most of the Jat leaders in the district, namely, Narain Singh, Jhabar Mal Sunda, Ridmal Singh, Ram Chandra Sunda (all Jats) joined the BKD. The Kisan Sabha was nothing but a Jat Sabha since all the main leaders such as Ishwar Singh Bhamu, Prithvi Singh Bhukar were Jats. However, the composition of the Praja Mandal was different from that of Kisan Sabha.

**Jhabar Mal Sunda:** Jhabal Mal Munda, another Jat leader from Kudan village, after graduation entered into local politics. He started his political career by joining the Congress Party. Sunda was President of the Sikar Central Cooperative Bank in the 60s and was elected as a member of assembly as Congress (O) candidate in 1972. He was the lone Congress (O) candidate in Rajasthan assembly. However, Jhabarmal Sunda lost election for the office of Sarpanch in
1978. He considers himself as an opponent of Ram Dev Singh Meharia. But he thinks that leaders like Meharia and Jakhar are not true Jats as they have not sincerely helped the community.

Like other Jat leaders Sunda has also reflected upon the Jat-Rajput antagonism in the Shekhawati region. He is personally involved in the Sunda-Meharia conflict. One important fact mentioned by Sunda is that the conflict between the Meharia and the Sunda clans began in 1931 when the Sundas could not pay the land revenue, and the Meharias paid the revenue for the entire village. The Sundas felt hurt and nurtured hatredness for the Meharias. After independence the Sundas started opposing the hegemonic supremacy of the Meharias in the Congress politics in the district. Meharias came closer to M.L. Sukhadia, and the Sunda's associated themselves with Kumbha Ram Arya. One can say that after independence the conflict between Sukhadia and Arya divided the Congress in Sikar district in terms of Sunda and Meharia factions, respectively. Meharias were generally pro-jagirdars and anti-peasants, whereas Sundas were anti-jagirdars but pro-peasants. Today Jhabar Mal Sunda is an inconsequential person in the district politics. His alienation from power-politics has become an acknowledged fact.
Gopal Singh Khandela: Gopal Singh Khandela, a Jat from Sri Madhopur tehsil, is a law graduate and was thrice member of the legislative assembly. He also lost three assembly elections from 1952 onwards. Khandela has always contested assembly elections. Before he became an MLA, twice Singh was Pradhan. Besides owning irrigated land in his village, he owns a house at Khandela and another at Jaipur. Two of his brothers are educated and working as teachers. However, his graduate son is engaged in agriculture. Khandela started his career as a member of the Congress Party. Later on he joined the BKD along with several other Jat leaders. From 1972 to 1977, he was an independent member of the assembly. In 1977, he was elected MLA as a Janta Party candidate. In 1990, he won as a Janta Dal member. Gopal Singh Khandela was expelled from the Congress Party in 1995 for indulging in anti-party activities. From the mid-1960s till 1993 he opposed the Congress. However, in 1993 he joined the Congress Party along with leaders like the late Nathu Ram Mirdha. Khandela has been associated with the Meharia faction of the Congress Party. When recently Meharia was expelled from the Congress, Gopal Singh Khandela was also expelled.

Mahadev Singh: Another important and active leader is Mahadev Singh (Jat) who entered into politics as a Congress member in the early 1970s. As we have seen in most cases the rural leaders started their career from village panchay-
at, and then subsequently graduated to panchayat samiti/state legislature. Mahadev Singh became sarpanch of his village - Dulapura in 1978, and was elected as Congress member of state legislature in 1980 and 1985. He lost the 1990 elections, but again won the assembly elections in 1993, but this time as an independent candidate. He has land in the village, owns a jeep and has also built a house at Jaipur. Mahadev Singh is highly educated as he holds masters degree in economics. He says that he tried for a job, but when did not succeed in getting one, he contested the elections for the office of sarpanch, and this is how he entered into politics. His main supporters today are Jats and Muslims. He fought as an independent candidate yet he made a dent in the Congress votes. When he contested elections as an independent candidate against Congress, the BJP also offered him its nomination which he declined. He admits that factionalism in the congress is a hard political reality, and understands this as a struggle for dominance and power between the two sets of people led by Narain Singh and Ramdev Singh Meharia. Jats have not supported the BJP with the sole exception of Harlal Singh Kharra. Whenever Jats opposed the Congress, they voted for the Janta Dal, the BKD, and the Lok Dal. But, after the decline of Janta Dal some of the unhappy Jats in the Congress Party have tilted towards the BJP mainly because of absence of any other
viable alternative to the Congress. However, the Jats do not find themselves comfortable in the BJP because of the pre-eminence of the Rajputs in its orbit.

**Amra Ram**: Amra Ram, a Jat, belongs to village Mundawada of Sikar district, he is highly educated, having masters in commerce, along with bachelor of education degree, he is young, and was a school teacher before plunging into politics. Members of his family are moderately educated. From his student days he was affiliated with the SFI and was the President of the Students Union, and was Sarpanch of his village Panchayat. Ram got elected as an MLA for the first time in 1993 as a CPI(M) nominee. Before winning the elections in 1993, he had made unsuccessful attempts in 1985 and 1990. There is no other leader for him in the state whom he considers as his mentor except Trilok Singh. His main supporters are Jats and the Scheduled Castes whom he signifies as peasants and agricultural workers.

Amra Ram came to fame in 1985 when on behalf of the CPI(M) he organised a series of agitations against increase in power tariff and large scale corruption in the allocation of power connections in the district. Under his leadership people also protested against the corrupt electricity officials and forced them to refund the bribes they had extracted from the peasants.
Amra Ram is quite bitter about the Rajput dominance in the pre-independence era. He speaks of restrictions and sanctions imposed on men, women and children regarding wearing of clothes, use of utensils, performance of marriage etc. Jat-Rajput conflict is persisting even today, though it is no more manifested in political domain. The Jat Hostel is not simply a building or a place where students reside for their studies, it is an institution to train the youth to work for the poor and downtrodden. It is in existence from 1930s, and since then many agitations, protests, and movements have been launched from there against the exploiters of the poor including the state.

Contingency of the political situation prevailing at the time of elections in 1993 helped Amra Ram to win the assembly elections. He knows very well that he did not win because he was a CPI(M) candidate, because the party has neither a base of its own nor a cadre. He could win this election because of the endemic factionalism between the dominant factions led by the two well-known Jats, Narain Singh and Ram Dev Singh Meharia. The Dhod segment was traditionally a strong bastion of the Maharias, but this time a sort of anti-Meharia wave among the Jats aggravated. Amra Ram known for his vibrant and vociferous articulation, having an element of militancy in his political activities, exploited the situation to his advantage. Most Jats voted
for him as they did not like the Meharias, and they were also hesitant to accept the Narain Singh faction as an alternative. Amra Ram's victory might have been episodic, but it is remarkable, because he has carried forward the legacy of his master - Trilok Singh, and today he is the sole member of his party in the state legislature.

Santosh Meharia: Santosh Meharia, son of the domineering political leader Ram Dev Singh Meharia, has not contested any elections. Members of Meharia family are highly educated. One of his brothers is an engineer. His father is a law graduate. Most of the adult male members are engaged in various kinds of trade and commerce. Santosh Meharia was member of the DCC, and he was also its Vice-president. He is Chairman of the Primary Land Development Bank. Santosh Meharia admits that he is in politics in order to extend support to his father. Supporters of his clan are Muslims, Banias, Brahmins, and Jats. At the state level, Mohan Lal Sukhadia and Haridev Joshi, the two mentors of his father, were also prominent Congress leaders according to his own judgement. Among the district leaders he mentions about ten names, but Narain Singh's name is excluded from the list, though some of the followers of Narain Singh such as Deependra Singh Shekhawat, Damodar Sharma have been mentioned as district leaders. He brackets both Balram Jakhar and Kumbha Ram Arya in the same category. Narain
Singh is nothing but a shadow of these leaders. Santosh Meharia is proud of the glorious past of his family, they were so rich that they paid land revenue for the entire Kudan village in 1936. Some of their family members were patels of Kudan, they were in touch with the city elite even during the pre-independence period. The family was also close to the Rao Raja Kalyan Singh of Sikar. Since the 1950s the family has dominated the power-politics in the Dhod assembly segment. However, a meek challenge was thrown to their hegemony in the 1960s by the members of another Jat (Sunda) clan of the same village. But the rival Sunda clan was not successful in its political game plan. In the 1980s and the 1990s a challenge from Narain Singh faction, which by then had replaced the Sunda faction in the district, was quite serious as it initiated the beginning of the downfall of the Meharias. Today, the Narain Singh faction has taken over the top position in the district Congress which was enjoyed by the Meharia faction in the 1950s and the 1960s. Now some of the Meharias have been expelled from the Congress Party for their alleged indulgence in anti-party activities, and some of them have subsequently aligned with the BJP.

Ram Chandra Chaudhary: Ram Chandra Chaudhary (Jat), a Congress leader, a former Pradhan of Piprali Panchayat Samiti, belongs to the Narain Singh faction within the
Congress. He is a graduate, and was a student leader. Chaudhary became Sarpanch in 1965 and remained in the office upto 1987. In 1987, he became Pradhan of the Panchayat Samiti, and currently he is a member of the Panchayat Samiti. He lost elections twice, once for the office of Sarpanch in 1987, and secondly, for the Pradhan. Most of his supporters are Brahmins, Jats, and the Scheduled Castes.

After completing his studies upto graduation he took to village-politics. He is unhappy with the leadership of the Meharias because of the way they brought in money in politics in the district. He thinks that Ram Dev Singh Meharia is a politician who had indulged in many corrupt practices. On the contrary, Narain Singh never allowed money to be a deciding factor in elections.

Dilsukh Rai Chaudhary: Dilsukh Rai Chaudhary (Jat) is an old hand in politics, who depends on business and agriculture for his livelihood. He owns a petrol pump. Members of his family are moderately educated. He is a late starter in politics. After remaining Sarpanch for 12 years as a Lok Dal member, he successfully contested the 1990 assembly election as a nominee of the Janta Dal. Chaudhary has also held several offices in the rural banking sector and in the party organisation. He contested for the Lok Sabha as a Janta Dal nominee, but did not succeed. He joined the Congress Party along with Ajit Singh, son of the late Chaud-
hary Charan Singh, a former Prime Minister of India. He considers Daulat Ram Saran, Ajit Singh, Charan Singh, and Kumbha Ram Arya as the important state and national leaders. Dilsukh Rai has mentioned some Jat and socialist leaders as those who influenced him in politics. Most other names mentioned by Dilsukh Rai are mainly of Jats. One gets the impression that Dilsukh Rai is a strong advocate of the welfare of Jats. He considers Jats as a distinct entity historically and culturally, though he has joined the Congress Party recently, he is likely to remain attached to Jat leaders in the Party.

Sushila Jakhar: We have two Jat women in our study who have taken serious interest in politics in the district. Sushila Jakhar, who is a law graduate, is interested in the welfare of women in particular. She is general secretary of Rajasthan Mahila Congress. Her father was also an MLA and one of the prominent leaders of the Kisan Sabha in the state. During her student days she was also affiliated with the SFI, Sushila Jakhar has reflected upon several issues including factionalism in the Congress patriarchy, and Jat-Rajput relationship. Sushila Jakhar has reflected on some crucial issues. The status of Jat women is superior because they work on their fields and they are less subjected to restrictions compared to the Rajput women. One-third reservation for women in Panchayati Raj institutions, despite
several hurdles in its implementation, will go a long way in elevating social status of women, such a step would definitely attack the institution of patriarchy both in theory and practice. The SFI, though dominated by Jats, is not a Jat-organisation. Jats are a numerically preponderant group, hence more in this organisation. Jats were exploited, they were subjected to several restrictions, hence Jat youth and students are more attracted by the radical parties and organisations. No more clashes between the Jat and the Rajput students occur in the Government college, Sikar. Perhaps democratic values and practices such as debates, discussions and discourses have become an accepted mode of communication and dialogue.

Har Devi Gadwal: Har Devi Gadwal is a Congress member of Zila Parishad. She is educated. She recently retired as a school teacher. She comes from Kathrathal village in the district. She owns a good house at Sikar. Other members in her family are highly educated. Most of the references made by her includes the names of Jats. It seems that she desired to spend most of her time by involving herself in politics. In particular, she wants to take up women's issues. She is not in favour of men raising women's issues. She would like women to discard purdah. Gadwal also desires that dummy women must not be elected if capable women are available.
The Scheduled Castes and Power Elite

There are not many important leaders from among the Scheduled Castes in the district. Balais are numerically the most preponderant caste in this category in the district.

Paras Ram Mordia: Paras Ram Mordia, who is educated upto high school, has represented the Laxmangarh constituency in the state legislature from 1977 onwards. He lost only once in 1985. His main supporters are Harijans, Muslims, and Jats. Since Laxmangarh is a reserved constituency, the upper caste Congress members and Jats voted for Paras Ram Mordia, because they would not like to vote for the BJP.

Paras Ram Mordia is referred as one of the prominent leaders of the district. He mentions Jagnath Pahadia, who belongs to the SC category, and was formerly Chief Minister of Rajasthan, and a Union Minister, as one of his mentors. Other names mentioned by Mordia are of Jakhar and Maderna. The most popular names in the district politics, according to Mordia, are that of Narain Singh and Ram Dev Singh Meharia. Other district leaders mentioned by him such as Deependra Singh Shekhawat and Moham Modi do not enjoy the same status. Mordia is now considered as an undisputed scheduled caste leader of the district. Since Mordia decided to
oppose Meharia in the 1993 elections, his appeal to the fellow castemen against to vote Meharia was sufficient for Mehria's defeat. Mordia personally did not campaign against Meharia.

*Kesar Dev*: Another Scheduled Caste leader - Kesar Dev (Balai), who is an opponent of Paras Ram Mordia, was twice MLA (1972-77 and 1985-90) as a nominee of Swatantra Party and Janta Dal, respectively. He has contested most of the elections against his arch rival Mordia, but lost everytime except once. Being in the opposition to the Congress Party, he draws his supporters from some Scheduled Castes, Brahmins, Banias, and Rajputs. He lost in 1993 because Harijans did not vote for him. He won the 1985 elections because Jats along with the upper castes voted for him. His main political gurus include Maharani Gayatri Devi, Madan Singh Danta, Thakur Kalyan Singh Kalvi etc. Despite remaining MLA for two terms, Kesar Dev is considered a very honest person man of high integrity and commitment.

**Muslims and Power Elite**

Finally, we have information about three Muslim leaders of the district. They are as follows:

*Mohammad Osman Farooq*: Farooq is a Congress leader, and educated upto High School. He owns a house at Fatehpur, and also owns about 15 acres of land. He has been a member of
the Congress Party since 1961. Most of his political activities have remained confined to municipality of Fatehpur. He remained DCC General Secretary from 1985 to 1993. No doubt, Muslims have supported him along with Jats. He is aligned with the Meharia faction. Not even once he mentioned the name of Narain Singh as a leader of some political standing. He is particularly worried about the poor socio-economic conditions and educational status of the Muslims. Muslims do not have much agricultural land. He expresses his concern for the upliftment of Muslims.

**Mrs. Salma Sheikh:** Sheikh is a new entrant in district politics, is a member of the Congress Party. She is matriculate, and her family owns a house at Sikar. She does not have a political background. She recently became the Chairperson of the Nagar Parishad after the implementation of the 73rd Constitutional amendment, and she is aligned with the Narain Singh faction of the Congress. She is guided by her father-in-law and Narain Singh, the leader of her faction.

Reservation for women has proved to be a blessing for her. It was her father-in-law who decided to push her into politics. He exploited his close contacts with Narain Singh to get his daughter-in-law elected for this office. She used to observe purdah before she became chairperson, but now no more cares for purdah.
Maulavi Abdul Haq: Haq belongs to Khandela town, he is engaged in business. He is actively involved in civic politics in the town. He was vice-president of Nagar Palika from 1952 to 1960. From 1960 till today he is Chairman of the Nagar Palika. Haq is aligned with Narain Singh faction. About 60 per cent of his vote-bank comprises of Muslims. Khandela assembly segment is dominated by Jats, but in Khandela town Muslims are very strong. Though in the constituency factionalism is rampant within the Congress Party, headed by Gopal Singh and Mahadev Singh, but it has not affected his political fortune in the town. He also informs that Mahadev Singh has an ill-reputation, but he gets the support of the people because he works for them and helps them in transfers in particular.

Discussion

The above biographical sketches of forty political leaders belonging to nine castes and communities provide us an understanding of their socio-economic status, education, political linkages, factionalism etc. We may say here that the concept of 'power-elite' is not a fuzzy one. All these leaders drawn from different castes and communities and different parts of the district have been aspiring for political power over the years as shown through their career from village-level politics to the district, the state and
the national politics. These leaders also made efforts to have positions of power and authority in their respective political parties and party organisations. Another arena of political power and authority is the cooperative sector. Right from village cooperative societies up to the district cooperative bank, many of these leaders have contested elections. All these leaders are distinctly power elite as they mobilised whatever was possible within their reach to occupy positions of power. Caste-support, family background and parentage, money, social work etc. were used as inputs in their making as political leaders. None of these leaders could be considered as businessmen/traders/agriculturists or whole-time social workers, though all of them, with the exception of one or two, were economically very well off and had substantial economic assets such as houses, land, factories, vehicles etc. Let us go little deep into specific details or these leaders.

Most of the forty leaders are not educated beyond matriculation, some of them are law graduates, but have hardly practised law, some are graduates and post-graduates, but these degrees have not made any difference to their political advancement.

Narain Singh, who is the top political leader today in the district and the unquestioned boss of the Congress Party, is not even a graduate. He is also not articulate,
he has rarely spoken and participated in the debates in the Rajasthan assembly. When he was Cabinet Minister, he was shy of talking to bureaucrats who often preferred to speak English. In fact, Singh has been successful as a district level leader mainly because of the political contingencies within the Congress Party and in the district as a whole. Due to disenchantment with Meharia and his faction within the Congress Party, and an effective mobilization of Jats as a community, and proximity with Congress friendly members from other castes and communities were the main factors in the emergence of Narain Singh as a district political leader. It is not caste alone that matters, because caste has never been a unified and undifferentiated source of strength for political leadership. If such would have been the situation, the Meharias and the Sundas would have never fought against each other. Narain Singh would not have formed his own faction against the Meharias in the Congress Party. Such divides are not confined to Jats alone. Wherever numerical strength of a caste is of a politically viable nature, divides and factions for sharing power have inevitably been formed. This is true about all castes and communities including Brahmins, Jats, Muslims or Balais. In Laxmangarh tehsil Parasram Mordia is pitted against Kesar Dev. Both are Balais (SC). Some Bania are with the Meharias, and some are with the Narain Singh faction. The same
is true about Brahmins.

Though education is not a very important factor in the shaping of political fortunes, but family background is a quite decisive determinant. In the 1930s, the Meharias were economically well off, they were Patels in their native village. Narain Singh's father, Pana Ram Burdak, though illiterate, but was an influential Kisan leader, and was actively involved in the Praja Mandal activities. He was also a Patel. This is true about some other leaders as well. Out of the forty narratives we have reported here, nine are (Jat)men and two are women, and there are many more in the district who could have also very well been taken into consideration. This implies that Jats are numerically more preponderant than other castes. Caste-based mobilization is therefore a numerical reality also, besides being an ideological fact. Most of the Jat leaders have been beneficiaries of land reforms, green revolution, panchayati raj institutions, cooperative institutions, and developmental programmes, more than members of other castes and communities, being a principal agricultural caste in the district. Their economic betterment has become an asset for translating the political aspirations into a social reality.

In most cases, wives of the political leaders are illiterate. Only daughters and in some cases daughters-in-law are literate or educated upto 8th or 10th standards.
Most of the sons of these leaders are educated upto matriculation, and some are graduates and post-graduates. These educated male members are generally school teachers or in the equivalent jobs, and none of the wards of these leaders are in professions and lucrative jobs. But a good number of these leaders have raised assets and in some cases their rental incomes are quite substantial. Some of the drop-outs or the less educated sons of these leaders have taken up business, contractorship, agencies, and have started factories. Most of the leaders have mobilized such assets and acquired sources of income after establishing themselves as leaders.

The power elites in the district do not have uniform social origins due to caste differentiation, approximity to towns and cities, development of their respective villages, and level of socio-political awakening. All the leaders have their roots therefore into their respective villages and within the villages in the specific social segments. None of these leaders have been able to come out of their respective village and caste affinities and moorings.

The village idiom continues to be the main feature of their worldview. Their initial linkages with the block and the district leaders when they were panches, sarpanches and members of municipal committees are largely influenced by
their local roots. These leaders therefore can be distinguished easily from the state and the national leaders. Leaders like Karpatriji, Rameshwar Tantia, Gopal Saboo, S.K. Tapadia, Balram Jakhar, Kumbha Ram Arya, Devi Lal, and Dr. Hari Singh could never reach to the village structure, and could never use the village idiom as they did not belong to the soil. They were in a way impositions from outside, and after the elections, they generally disappeared from the scene. From among the local leaders, however, there are some who were able to elevate themselves as state-level leaders, but some were not so lucky. Ghanshyam Tiwari of the BJP, for example, is an acknowledged leader of his party at the state-level. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, besides being a top ranking state leader, has also made a place for himself at the national level in his party. Leaders like Ram Dev Singh, Narain Singh, Harlal Singh Kharra, even after remaining Cabinet Minister, could not achieve political stature at the state level. Ultimately they have slid down as district-level leaders of their respective parties and factions.

Most of the district and block leaders have taken up factionalism as a vocation and as an instrument of power struggle. At the local level they are engaged in day-to-day political activities. At times even the non-political activities are turned into political ones. The leaders are
found busy in distribution and manipulation of offices/positions, loans and subsidies. All their efforts for initiating developmental projects aims at their political fortunes, whether it is a question of construction of roads, upgradation of schools, or commissioning of a railway track. A direct train between Delhi and Sikar formally known as Shekhawati Express was started a couple of years ago with the efforts of Balram Jakhar after he successfully contested Lok Sabha elections from Sikar. Examples of such politically motivated activities are numerous in the district. A good number of these leaders are found busy in managing jobs for their favourites and supporters who may be generally less competent than others.

Another important activity is the management and manipulation of transfers of the government servants to the places of their convenience, so that they could effectively contribute in their next elections. Commitments for jobs and transfers at the time of elections are a common practice indulged in by the contestants. After each Panchayati raj, Assembly, and Lok Sabha elections, there is a spate of transfers and a mad race for getting jobs for their supporters. At times when the local leaders are unsuccessful in fulfilling the commitments made by them at the time of elections, they rush to the state and national leaders for help using their political linkages.
Concluding Remarks

The above description and analysis of the power elite in the district clearly show that the leaders who have their roots in villages are dominating power-politics in the district. There is hardly anyone from towns and cities who could be rated as a district-level leader. Some of the leaders like Ghanshyam Tiwari, J.P. Mathur, and S.K. Modi have not assimilated the village ethos in their political socialization. Everyone talks of the leaders who are concerned with peoples' welfare relating to employment, health-care, postings and transfers, and developmental works such as electrification and construction of roads. Since these activities are politicised and factionalised, people think of those leaders who are able to fulfil such expectations. Today, most of these leaders with rural origin do not live in their respective villages. They have settled down at Sikar and Jaipur, and have constructed houses in these towns and have acquired enormous sources of income. But most of the leaders have kept their contacts alive with their respective constituencies keeping their eyes set on the next elections.

Finally, to restrict a leader to his/her Ward/Village/ Panchayat Samiti/Zila Parishad/Assembly/Lok Sabha is not feasible because of extensions of leadership beyond these
arenas of operations. A Sarpanch by virtue of his office also becomes in some way a leader at the panchayat samiti level. Similarly, a Pradhan becomes related to the Zila Parishad. In fact, extensions and linkages coincide and coexist. This is also true about family and caste backgrounds of the leaders. For example, a Jat who has been elected for a position cannot restrict his/her role and functioning to the Jats alone. Social and cultural extensions of leadership are inevitable in a democratic set-up. Extensions of this kind do not undermine the role of caste or cultural heritage and other primordial factors. Therefore, formation of power elite is a complex process.
Notes and References


(8) The biographical sketches of the leaders are based on an interview schedule. The selection of the leaders was done keeping in consideration the caste community, geographical and political profile of the district. All the tehsils, political parties, castes and communities are represented in these descriptive notes on the leadership of the district.