

## Towards Jat Empowerment in Rajasthan

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In contrast to Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan's politics appears to be more elitist because of the persisting subaltern position of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) from 1952 to 2003. Indeed, the proportion of the OBC MLAs in the Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha increased from 3.2 to 8.5 per cent only.

This state of things can be explained by the caste composition of the state which is characterised by a high degree of fragmentation and demographic weight of the upper castes as well as the dominant castes. In contrast to what happened in western and southern India, the political trajectory of the princely states, in spite of the *Praja Mandals* and the *Kisan Sabhas*, have also played a part in the making of a conservative political elite after independence, on the side of the Congress as well as that of the Opposition. Certainly, the caste composition of the state Assembly has changed a lot between the first state election of 1952 and that of 2003, as evident from the social profile of their MLAs. But the real winners are the Jats, who were regarded as a dominant caste till their 'reclassification' as OBC in 1999. Changes are much more limited, however, so far as the caste composition of the state government and the party apparatus of the BJP and Congress are concerned.

### **The Upper Caste Domination: Fragmentation, Numbers and Land-ownership**

According to the Census, the population of Rajasthan was divided between 393 castes and tribes in 1931 and only nine of these castes and tribes were constituted by more than 300,000 persons, a good indication of a very important fragmentation.

The upper castes and the Jats were represented in the largest number of regions in the state and constituted 30 per cent of the population whereas the two most important OBC castes, the Gujjars and Malis,

**Table 5.1**  
**Size of the Castes in the Rajputana States, 1931**

<i>Size</i>	<i>Number of Castes</i>
300, 000 and more	9
100, 000 – 299, 999	13
50, 000 – 99, 999	20
10, 000 – 49, 999	54
Less than 10, 000	297
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>393</b>

*Source: Census of India, 1931.*

constituted only 8 per cent of the total. The majority of the 85 OBC castes were made up of very small entities spread all over the state (mainly artisan castes or castes engaged in agriculture or animal husbandry). This heterogeneity has prevented the OBC from developing a sense of solidarity.

At the state level, the upper castes represented 20.6 per cent of the population (7.6 per cent Brahmins, 7.4 per cent Mahajans and 5.6 per cent Rajputs) while the Jats represented the single largest group with 9.2 per cent of the population. The Chamars, the largest caste in U.P., formed the fourth largest caste in Rajasthan with 6 per cent only. According to Census 2001, the Scheduled Castes formed 17.2 per cent of Rajasthan's population. The Scheduled Tribes (12.6 per cent of Rajasthan's population in the year 2001) principally comprised

**Table 5.2**  
**The Principal Castes of Rajputana (by regions)**

<i>Castes</i>	<i>Population (%)</i>	<i>Regions</i>
Jat	9	Bikaner, Jodhpur, Shekhawati, Jaipur, Matsya
Brahmin	8	Matsya, Jaipur, Bikaner, Kota, Udaipur
Mahajan	7	Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner
Rajput	6	Jodhpur, Bikaner, Udaipur
Chamar (SC)	6	Matsya, Jaipur, Kota, Bikaner
Bhil (ST)	6	Udaipur, Banswara
Meena (ST)	5	Matsya, Jaipur, Kota, Udaipur
Gujjar (OBC)	5	Jaipur, Matsya, Kota
Mali (OBC)	3	Matsya, Jaipur, Kota, Jodhpur
Kumhar	3	Matsya, Jaipur, Udaipur, Bikaner

*Source: Census of India, 1931.*

two important groups — the Bhils and the Meenas. The Bhils constituted a significant share of the population of the Banswara and Dungarpur districts, the Meenas were present in large numbers in Alwar, Jaipur, Kota and Udaipur districts.

Regarding land, the central feature of the land tenure system of princely states in Rajasthan was a hierarchical system of ownership. In the state, two main types of land tenure prevailed: *khalsa*, crown lands under the direct rule and control of the central *darbar* (eminent owner of the lands in the state), and *jagir*, estates of varying value and size controlled by the Maharaja's subordinate *sardars* (Sisson 1979: 24). The landlords were mainly Rajputs, and due to lack of formal right of occupancy in *jagir* areas, non-Rajputs tenants (mostly from the Jat community) were subordinated to the Rajput rulers (Saxena 1996: 127) and did not have independent access to land. Moreover, the other feature of land-ownership was the right to political-juridical administration.

In the early 20th century, after several centuries of unquestioned Rajput hegemony, Jats-led peasant uprisings against *jagirdari* system surfaced (Narain and Mathur 1990: 20).

## The Over-representation of Upper Castes in the Congress Party

### *The Impact of the Conservative Princely States*

Before its integration in the Indian Union, most of the territory of Rajputana — except for the Ajmer area — was made of princely states which were not under the direct administrative control of the British. As a consequence, their population largely remained insulated from the mainstream of social and politico-economic changes emanating from British India. In fact, by maintaining the political identity of the Rajput rulers, the special relationship between the British and these princely states strengthened their political power.<sup>1</sup> Besides, as the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress declared that 'the responsibility and burden of carrying on the struggle within the

<sup>1</sup> Prior to 1949, Rajasthan had not been under a common administration.

States must necessarily fall on the States' people themselves' (quoted in Sharma 1962: 1291), the Congress did not want directly to undertake political activity in the Princely States. As a result, organisations like Praja Mandals and Lok Parishads were set up only in the late 1930s. This is one of the reasons why, in spite of the abolition of the princely states, after 1947, the former maharajas continued to play a major role in state politics. As a result, some dethroned rulers successfully entered the election arena in 1951–52. For instance, Hanuwant Singh of Jodhpur, Karni Singh of Bikaner and Brajendra Pal Singh, eldest son of the ruler of Karauli, defeated Congress candidates (Mathur 1967). The results of the elections, therefore, spurred the Congress leaders to co-opt many ex-rulers and to give them tickets in spite of ideological differences, so that their influence could electorally benefit them. Subsequently, the Congress leaders persuaded Maharaja Harish Chandra of Jhalawar to join them and contest the Assembly elections on a party ticket from Jhalawar. Maharaja Harish Chandra won the election and was inducted in the state government in 1960. Other members of royal family supported the Congress; this includes the Maharaja of Kota, Maharaja Brajendra Pal Singh of Karauli, Narain Singh of Masuda Thikana and Bhim Singh of Mandawa Thikana.

### *The Caste Structure of the Political Protest Movements*

In this part of the country, the Congress party found its origin in movements of social and political protest that developed in the Rajputana states prior to independence, as the Praja Mandals and the Kisan Sabhas, which were not systematically elite-oriented. Certainly, the Praja Mandals were elite-dominated. Their protest movements started in the 1920s and were principally concerned with demands regarding public policy, the establishment of accountable governments and civil liberties. Almost all these movements originated and focused their activities in the capital cities, which were the major centres of communication and also the primary centres of higher education. As a result, the leaders of these movements belonged almost exclusively to urban areas and came from the social elite, as it is evident from the Table 5.3.

Besides, most of the leaders were recruited from the upper castes — Brahmins, Mahajans and Kayasthas — who had received some education

**Table 5.3**  
**Recruitment of Praja Mandal Cadres in Rajputana (%)**

<i>Places of Recruitment</i>	<i>1919–30</i>	<i>1931–36</i>	<i>1937–41</i>	<i>1942–46</i>
Capital City	62	50	45	44
District Town	38	36	40	44
Village	–	14	15	12
TOTAL	(N=13)	(N=14)	(N=42)	(N=18)

*Source:* Sisson (1972: 62).

in English-medium schools, had long traditions of participation in state affairs and had become associated with the movements of social reform and the nationalist movement in British India.

As it emerges from Table 5.4, the lower castes and Muslims were absent from the leadership of these movements. Even though the recruitment varied over time, the upper castes always over-dominated the Praja Mandals: Brahmins and Mahajans represented more than 60 per cent of the leadership of this organisation between 1919 and 1946.

Unlike these two castes, there was limited recruitment from the Rajputs. Indeed, ‘with few exceptions Rajputs rejected the aims and political style of the Praja Mandals, although some young Rajputs educated in the British Provinces were attracted to these movements as nationalist organizations’. Moreover, the presence of Rajputs in the Praja Mandals was in areas ‘which did not have a long tradition of conflict between Rajput lord and peasant caste tenant’ (Sisson 1972: 64).

Yet, political mobilisation was not exclusively an urban phenomenon in the Rajputana states. Important peasant movements developed

**Table 5.4**  
**Political Generation and Caste Mobilisation in Rajasthan (%)**

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	<i>1919–30</i>	<i>1931–36</i>	<i>1937–41</i>	<i>1942–46</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Brahmin	85	62	46	26	47
Rajput	–	–	4	6	4
Mahajan	8	23	38	35	32
Kayastha	8	8	6	3	6
Jat	–	8	6	23	10
Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes	–	–	–	3	1
Muslims	–	–	–	3	1
TOTAL	(N=13)	(N=13)	(N=52)	(N=31)	(N=109)

*Source:* Sisson (1972: 62).

in these areas and were concerned with changes in rural society. The Kisan Sabhas, which did not start as a political organisation but were the outgrowth of a social reform movement within the Jat community, originated in the 1920s, and developed specifically in those areas of Rajputana where Jats constituted the predominant rural caste and where the Rajputs, the landed aristocracy, were also found in large numbers (Sisson 1972: 74). Indeed, this organisation moved towards struggles against the Rajput-dominated *jagirdari* system (*ibid.*: 71) and the feudal order that regulated the land relations between the different peasant groups in the countryside of the Rajputana states.

The association of the Praja Mandals and Kisan Sabha leaders resulted from the Congress' effort to develop a wider base of political support even before 1947. The sense of group identity of those two milieus continued and was transferred to the Congress before and after independence as many Praja Mandal and Kisan Sabha leaders became active in Congress affairs in several princely states of the Rajputana. As a result, though the Praja Mandals and the Kisan Sabha in the Rajputana had limited success in achieving their aim and were not mass organisations, they represented new organisations in the conservative princely states, and the different castes that constituted the leadership of these movements, i.e., the upper castes and the Jats, dominated the sociology of the Rajasthan Congress after its formation in 1946. These two categories constituted 58.7 per cent of all the Congress MLAs between 1952 and 2003: the Jats represented the single largest group with 20.2 per cent; the Brahmins formed 14.9 per cent of the total and the Rajputs, 11.6 per cent. This over-representation of the Jats is a specific feature of the Rajasthan Congress in comparison with the subordinated position of the Jats in the structure of the Congress in other states of the Hindi belt. Correlatively, the OBC only represent 5.7 per cent of the Congress MLAs, a strong indication of the significant degree of conservatism of the caste structure of the party. The Congress system, and its clientelistic 'vote-bank' politics, has thus played a very significant role in the over-representation of the upper castes in Rajasthan's politics.

### **The Jana Sangh and the Swatantra Party: A Savarna-dominated Opposition**

Whether it is the Jana Sangh or the Swatantra Party, all the most important opposition parties until 1980 were characterised by a caste

composition over-dominated by the upper castes. In each of these parties, the upper castes represented more than 40 per cent of the MLAs over the period 1952–72.

From 1952 to 1962 elections, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), the political arm of the RSS, never won more than 8.5 per cent of the state Assembly seats. In the 1967 elections, among the 22 seats captured by the BJS, the Rajputs and the Baniyas respectively represented 31.8 and 22.7 per cent of the party MLAs. Therefore, with 63.6 per cent of upper caste MLAs, the BJS was much more conservative than the Congress party in which the upper castes ‘only’ represented 45.6 per cent. As a result, the members of the lower castes constituted less than 10 per cent if we put the Jats and other OBC together, only 4.5 per cent for the main OBC.

The Swatantra Party, which was founded in 1959 and was the most important opposition party in the 1960s, was also over-dominated by upper castes. This party developed an ideology opposed to Nehru’s socialism and stood for ‘protection of democracy and individual freedom, which, it alleged, were threatened by Congress’ (Kamal 1967: 506). Such ideas were bound to have an impact upon those who were disgruntled with the Congress rule, wooing at the same time elements of conservatism, traditionalism, feudalism and capitalism. Thus, the Swatantra Party was dominated by industrialists and former members of the princely class like Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur, Maharajkumar Jai Singh of Jaipur, Maharawal Lakshman Singh of Dungarpur or Raja Man Singh of Bharatpur. Some Rajput jagirdars, who had at some time shifted from the Congress party, had also joined the Swatantra, for e.g., Man Singh of Mahar Thikana, Man Dhata Singh of Geejgarh Thikana or Devi Singh of Mandawa Thikana.

As a result of this mobilisation, the Swatantra Party emerged as the second largest party after the 1962 and the 1967 elections. Successfully exploiting the mass appeal of the ruling princes, the party won 36 seats out of 176 in 1962 and 50 seats in a house of 184 in 1967, posing serious challenge to the Congress party. Owing to the support of the Rajput princes and jagirdars, the upper castes were over-represented in the Swatantra Party, especially the Rajputs who represented 24.7 per cent of the party’s MLAs.

The second largest single group in the Swatantra Party was the Scheduled Castes, with 30.9 per cent of the MLAs, which suggests that this party adhered to the conservative ‘coalition of extremes’

**Table 5.5**  
**Castes and Communities of Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) and**  
**Swatantra Party MLAs in Rajasthan, 1952–72 (%)**

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	<i>BJS</i>	<i>Swatantra Party</i>
<b>Upper Caste</b>	<b>62.7</b>	<b>43.2</b>
Brahmin	10.2	8.2
Rajput	28.8	24.7
Baniya/Jain	22.0	8.2
Kayastha	1.7	2.1
<b>Intermediate Castes</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Jat	5.1	5.2
<b>OBC</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>7.2</b>
Gujjar	6.8	6.2
Yadav	–	1.0
Mali	1.7	–
<b>Scheduled Castes</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>30.9</b>
<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>11.3</b>
Meena	–	1.0
Other	–	10.3
<b>Religious Minorities</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Muslim	1.7	1.0
<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>1.0</b>
TOTAL	100.1	99.8
	(N=59)	(N=97)

*Source:* Survey by authors.

pattern, which tended to marginalise the backward castes. As a whole, the opposition parties never constituted an electoral alternative for the lower castes.

## **The Unachieved Democratisation: A Conservative Two-party System**

While Rajasthan's politics has developed along the bipartisan pattern with the Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party dominating the state political scene, these parties rely mainly on the upper castes. However, they have gradually become more open to the non-'twice born' castes in the 1990s.

### *The Congress: A More and More Jat-oriented Party*

Three caste groups have traditionally constituted the mainstays of the Congress MLAs: the upper castes, the Scheduled Castes and the Jats.

Table 5.6  
Evolution of Caste and Community of the Congress MLAs in Rajasthan, 1952-2003 (%)

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003
<i>Castes and Communities</i>												
<b>Upper Castes</b>	<b>51.3</b>	<b>47.0</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>45.5</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>22.0</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>32.1</b>
Brahmin	22.0	24.4	20.0	17.8	13.8	5.0	11.9	16.1	6.0	10.4	9.9	14.3
Rajput	6.1	12.6	14.4	14.4	14.5	12.5	11.1	12.5	2.0	11.7	11.9	7.1
Baniya/Jain	19.5	9.2	7.8	11.1	11.7	12.5	8.2	4.5	8.0	9.1	8.0	8.9
Kayastha	3.7	0.8	2.2	2.2	1.4	2.5	0.7	1.8	2.0	-	0.7	1.8
Khatri	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.0	-	0.2	-
Sindhi	-	-	1.1	-	0.7	-	-	0.9	-	1.3	0.7	-
<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>17.2</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>26.0</b>	<b>29.9</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>28.6</b>
<b>Castes</b>												
Jat	15.9	17.7	22.2	16.7	17.2	40.0	20.7	14.3	26.0	29.9	17.2	28.6
Bishnoi	-	-	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.3	-
<b>OBC</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>9.0</b>
Gujjar	-	-	-	1.1	2.1	2.5	3.0	2.7	4.0	1.3	2.0	3.6
Yadav	2.4	0.8	1.1	-	1.4	-	2.2	0.9	2.0	1.3	2.0	3.6
Mali	-	0.8	1.1	-	1.4	-	2.2	3.6	4.0	1.3	0.7	1.8
Kumhar	-	-	-	1.1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mirwa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.9	-	-	-	-
Other	1.2	0.8	2.2	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	1.3	2.0	-

<b>Scheduled Castes</b>	19.5	21.0	14.4	13.3	17.9	12.5	16.3	17.9	14.0	7.8	20.5	8.9
<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>	4.9	7.6	10.0	15.5	11.7	2.5	12.6	18.8	16.0	16.9	13.3	8.9
Meena	-	-	1.1	2.2	-	-	5.2	-	2.0	1.3	6.0	1.8
Other	4.9	7.6	8.9	13.3	11.7	2.5	7.4	18.8	14.0	15.6	7.3	7.1
<b>Religious</b>	4.9	4.2	2.2	6.6	4.2	10.0	7.4	5.4	8.0	7.8	8.6	8.9
<b>Minorities</b>												
Muslim	3.7	3.4	2.2	4.4	3.5	5.0	6.7	4.5	6.0	5.2	7.3	7.1
Sikh	1.2	0.8	-	2.2	0.7	5.0	0.7	0.9	2.0	2.6	1.3	1.8
<b>Unidentified</b>	-	-	-	-	1.4	-	3.7	-	2.0	-	1.3	3.6
TOTAL	100.1	99.9	99.8	99.8	100.1	100.0	100.0	100.3	100.0	100.1	100.3	100.0
		(N=82)	(N=119)	(N=90)	(N=90)	(N=145)	(N=40)	(N=135)	(N=112)	(N=50)	(N=77)	(N=56)

Source: Survey by authors.

Among the upper castes, the Brahmins represent 14.9 per cent and the Rajputs 11.6 per cent of the Congress MLAs from 1952 to 2003.

After the 1952 elections, the leaders of the Congress party increasingly wooed the Rajput community. The co-option of Rajputs contradicted the ideology of the party, but played a pivotal role in establishing its domination over the state. Symmetrically, the Congress party played into the Rajputs' hands thus allowing them to keep and reinforce their social and political power.

The second largest social category among the Congress MLAs is the Scheduled Castes, which suggests that the Congress followed in Rajasthan the same 'coalition of extremes' pattern as in Uttar Pradesh. Indeed, the Scheduled Castes represented 16.4 per cent of the Congress MLAs between 1952 and 2003 and had reached 20.5 per cent in the state elections of 1998. However, these large proportions are largely due to the reservation system and the Congress has clearly not tried to promote Dalit leaders in Rajasthan.

The Jat group is really the element of singularity of the Congress in Rajasthan. Whereas in all the other states of the Hindi belt the party obliterated this group, the Jat MLAs represented 22.2 per cent of the Congress MLAs in 1962; 40 per cent in 1977 — a very atypical year — and 30 per cent in 1993. The over-representation of Jats in the Congress party can be explained by their role in the freedom movement and by the fact that the leaders of the Congress party encouraged the presence of Jats in its organisation in order to enlarge its support base in the rural areas. Therefore, those elected from the Jat community numerically constitute the first caste in the Congress party, ahead of the Brahmins and the Rajputs since the 1970s.

### *The Bharatiya Janata Party: The Upper Caste Hegemony*

The caste structure of the BJP MLAs has always been dominated by the upper caste members. Their share has decreased after 1980 but it has remained higher than that of the Congress party. Until 1985, they constituted more than 50 per cent of the MLAs. In 2003, they were still 36.7 per cent, as against 32.1 per cent on the side of the Congress.

Within the category of the upper castes, we can observe some significant differences. During the first four elections, the Rajput and Baniya MLAs were the two leading groups. The significant weight of the

Rajputs reflected their effort to maintain an important public role as well as the strategy of the Jana Sangh which was keen to co-opt members of a community likely to challenge the Congress supremacy. Nevertheless, from 1972 onwards, the presence of the Brahmins increased till the 1980 elections, when they constituted 31.3 per cent of the Hindu nationalist MLAs and 50 per cent of the elected upper castes.

**Table 5.7**  
**Caste and Community of the Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs**  
**in Rajasthan, 1980–2003 (%)**

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1985</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1993</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2003</i>
<b>Upper Castes</b>	<b>62.6</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>36.5</b>
Brahmin	31.3	23.7	16.3	13.3	3.1	8.3
Rajput	9.4	7.9	8.1	16.3	18.8	15.8
Baniya/Jain	18.8	21.1	17.4	13.3	9.4	10.8
Khatri	–	–	–	–	3.1	–
Arora	3.1	2.6	1.2	1.0	–	0.8
Sindhi	–	–	2.3	–	3.1	0.8
<b>Intermediate Castes</b>	–	<b>7.9</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Jat	–	5.3	4.7	11.2	18.8	12.5
Maratha	–	2.6	–	–	–	–
Bishnoi	–	–	–	–	3.1	–
<b>OBC</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>8.3</b>
Gujjar	6.3	10.5	3.5	4.1	3.1	6.7
Yadav	–	–	–	–	3.1	–
Mali	–	–	4.7	1.0	–	0.8
Kumhar	–	2.6	1.2	–	3.1	–
Nai	–	–	1.2	1.0	–	–
Other	–	2.6	1.2	–	9.4	0.8
<b>Scheduled Castes</b>	<b>18.8</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>19.8</b>	<b>26.5</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>22.5</b>
<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>15.0</b>
Meena	12.5	2.6	8.1	9.2	6.3	8.3
Other	–	2.6	7.0	3.1	6.3	6.7
<b>Religious Minorities</b>	–	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	–	–	<b>0.8</b>
Muslim	–	2.6	1.2	–	–	0.8
Sikh	–	–	1.2	–	–	–
<b>Unidentified</b>	–	<b>2.6</b>	<b>1.2</b>	–	–	<b>4.2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.2</b>	<b>99.8</b>	<b>100.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.1</b>	<b>99.8</b>
	(N=32)	(N=38)	(N=86)	(N=98)	(N=32)	(N=120)

Source: Survey by authors.

The 1993 elections show a significant resurgence of the Rajput MLAs and a decline of the Brahmin representation. Moreover, we can observe that the increased presence of those returned from the Rajput community was linked to a rise in the number of BJP MLAs in the Legislative Assembly. Another explanation for the lion's share of the Rajput's representation is the development, since the beginning of the 1990s, of a new mobilising strategy of the 'Sangh Parivar' at large in terms of a 'Rajputisation' of Hindutva (see Jenkins 1998).

### *The Non-empowerment of the Other Backward Classes*

The decrease of the percentage of the upper caste MLAs — from 60 per cent to 33 per cent — in Rajasthan from 1952 to 2003 occurred in four stages: the elections of 1957, 1972, 1980 and 1990, in each of which the upper caste MLAs experienced more or less a significant fall in their representation. The trend has not been linear since the year 1990, for in 1993, the upper castes regained their level of 1980 but this was a short-lived comeback due to the electoral success of an upper caste-dominated BJP.

However, the decline of the upper caste MLAs did not benefit the OBC. Whereas the share of the upper castes decreased by 27 percentage points, the proportion of the OBC only increased by 5.3 percentage points from 3.2 to 8.5 per cent from 1952 to 2003. The position of the OBC MLAs was marginalised by the leaders of the main political parties in comparison with the share of the OBC in the population of Rajasthan.

In fact, the category of MLAs that principally benefited from the erosion of the upper castes is that of the Scheduled Tribes. While they represented the smallest share of MLAs (along with the OBC) in 1952, the percentage of the ST MLAs increased by 11.9 percentage points from 3.1 to 15 per cent between the years 1952 and 2003. Within this category, the Meenas, who represent the single largest group in the districts of Alwar, Jaipur, Sawai Madhopur and Kota, increased their share of MLAs from 0.5 to 7 per cent from 1952 to 2003. Two main reasons explain the increasing presence of ST in the Assembly: (i) the growing number of ST constituencies from one in 1951, 15 in 1957, 17 in 1962, 21 in 1967 to 24 from 1977 onwards; and (ii) the increasing number of election of ST candidates in general constituencies with a maximum of six in 2003.

**Table 5.8**  
**Evolution of the Distribution of the Caste and Community of the MLAs in Rajasthan, 1952-2003 (%)**

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003	TOTAL
<b>Upper Castes</b>	<b>61.0</b>	<b>46.6</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>46.8</b>	<b>41.8</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>38.0</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>41.1</b>
Brahmin	16.8	18.2	14.2	15.8	13.6	11.5	13.5	16.5	10.6	11.5	9.1	10.0	13.4
Rajput	30.5	17.0	19.3	15.8	14.1	12.5	11.5	11.5	8.1	14.0	12.2	12.5	15.0
Baniya/Jain	12.1	9.7	11.4	13.6	12.5	14.5	10.0	8.0	10.1	10.0	7.6	9.0	10.7
Kayastha	1.6	1.1	1.7	1.6	1.1	1.0	0.5	1.0	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	1.0
Khatri	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	-	1.0	-	0.5	-	0.2
Arora	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	-	0.5	0.3
Sindhi	-	0.6	0.6	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5	1.0	0.5	1.0	0.5	0.5
<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>14.5</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>21.0</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>17.3</b>
<b>Castes</b>													
Jat	15.8	16.5	15.9	13.6	15.8	14.5	19.0	16.0	18.7	21.0	18.8	18.5	17.1
Maratha	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	-	-	-	-
Bishnoi	-	-	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.5	-	0.2
<b>OBC</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>6.11</b>
Gujjar	1.6	1.1	3.4	2.2	3.3	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.0	5.0	2.9
Yadav	1.6	1.1	1.1	0.5	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.0	1.0	2.5	1.0	1.4
Mali	-	0.6	0.6	-	1.6	-	1.5	2.0	3.0	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0
Kumhar	-	-	-	0.5	0.5	-	-	0.5	0.5	-	0.5	-	0.2
Nai	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	0.5	-	-	0.1
Mirwa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	-	-	-	-
Latar	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*(Table 5.8 continued)*

(Table 5.8 continued)

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003	Total
Charan	-	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bujac	-	-	-	-	-	0.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	-	0.6	1.1	-	-	0.5	-	0.5	1.0	0.5	3.0	1.5	0.7
<b>Scheduled</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>16.8</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>16.5</b>	<b>16.9</b>
<b>Castes</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>15.0</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>Tribes</b>													
Meena	0.5	0.6	0.6	2.7	1.1	5.0	6.5	7.0	7.1	7.5	7.1	7.0	4.5
Other	2.6	8.0	9.1	8.7	10.3	7.0	6.5	6.5	7.1	6.0	7.1	8.0	7.3
<b>Religious</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>4.6</b>
<b>Minorities</b>													
Muslim	3.2	2.3	1.7	3.3	3.3	4.5	5.0	4.0	4.0	2.5	6.1	2.5	3.6
Sikh	1.1	0.6	-	1.1	1.1	2.0	0.5	1.0	2.0	1.5	1.0	0.5	1.0
<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>2.2</b>
TOTAL	99.6 (N=190)	100.2 (N=176)	100.0 (N=184)	100.0 (N=184)	98.3 (N=184)	100.0 (N=200)	100.0 (N=200)	99.0 (N=198)	99.9 (N=198)	100.0 (N=200)	99.8 (n=197)	100.0 (N=200)	100.01 (N=2303)

Source: Survey by authors.

## The Jats as OBC?

In addition to the Meenas, the other real beneficiaries from the decline of the upper castes were the Jats who had always been prominent in the post-independence Congress party because of their leading role in the Kisan Sabhas. After independence, with the introduction of popular elections and the development of a party system, the Kisan Sabhas receded in the background as a socio-political movement and their members were largely absorbed in the Congress system. From this time, the Jats rapidly expanded their scope of participation in the Congress party. They were especially successful in the areas where Jat political activity before independence had been intense, particularly, in the districts of Jhunjhunun, Sikar, Nagaur, Barmer, Ganganagar and Churu.

In the first state elections of 1952, the Jat MLAs represented the third largest single group in the Vidhan Sabha with 15.8 per cent of the total, after the Rajputs (30.5 per cent) and the Brahmins (16.8 per cent). Then, the political weight of the Jats steadily increased. From the 1962 elections onwards, they constituted the second largest single group of MLAs with 15.9 per cent after the Rajputs (19.3 per cent) in 1962. They became the first from 1972 (15.8 per cent) onwards. However, till 1977, the share of the Jat MLAs did not significantly increase: they profited by the decline of the upper caste share, especially that of the Rajputs which decreased by 18 percentage points.

In the late 1980s, with the increasing importance of reservations in favour of the 'backwards', the Jat leaders perceived the benefits of playing the game of quota politics too. They put pressure on the state governments for having the Jats recognised as part of the OBC. In Rajasthan, the Congress party supported their demand. But after the election of Ashok Gehlot, a Gujjar, as Chief Minister in 1998, the Congress government contented itself with appointing a commission to examine the claim of the Jats. The leaders of the Jat community immediately accused the Congress of buying time. During the Lok Sabha election campaign of 1999, the BJP wooed them by assuring that the party would integrate the Jats into the OBC category if the party was voted to power. As a result, 65 per cent of the Jats voted for the BJP, which won 16 out of the 25 seats.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Source: Centre for the Studies of Developing Society Data Unit.

**Table 5.9**  
**Evolution of Jat MLAs in the Vidhan Sabha, the Indian National Congress and the**  
**BJS/BJP in Rajasthan (%)**

<i>Year</i>	1952	1957	1962	1967	1972	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003
Vidhan Sabha	15.8	16.5	15.9	13.6	15.8	14.5	19.0	16.0	18.7	21.0	18.8	18.5
Congress	15.9	17.7	22.2	16.7	17.2	40.0	20.7	14.3	26.0	29.9	17.2	28.6
BJS/BJP	12.5	0	0	4.6	12.5	0	0	5.3	4.7	11.2	18.8	12.5

*Source:* Survey by authors.

Since October 1999, the Jats of Rajasthan have been classified in the OBC category, whereas they are a more dominant caste than OBC; the inclusion of Jats was nothing else but a symptom of vote bank politics. Since the castes which comprise the OBC are economically, educationally and numerically weaker than the Jats, the share of the OBC has artificially increased in the realm of political representation without castes like Gujjars or Yadavs being able to rise to power. While there are 269 OBC castes across Rajasthan, the benefits of reservations mainly go to the Jats simply because of their number and socio-economic status. For instance, in a recruitment drive for the Rajasthan Administrative Service in the year 2001, 85 seats were reserved for OBC and 79 of these were bagged by the Jats (Diwanji 2003). Thus, the Jats have well cornered most of the quotas reserved for the OBC, even though many of them may be part of the elite groups.

## **The Upper Caste Domination over the Party Apparatus and the Government**

### *The Party Apparatus: A Position of Influence for the Upper Castes*

While the upper castes lost ground in the Legislative Assembly, they remain in control of the party apparatus in the Congress as well as in the Bharatiya Janata Party. As evident from Table 5.11, the upper castes are much more well-represented in the Pradesh Congress Committee and in the BJP State Executive in the year 2005 with 44 and 53.2 per cent of the members than in the state Assembly. In addition, among the upper caste in the Congress and in the BJP, the Brahmins represent the largest group respectively with 21.4 and 22 per cent whereas they only constitute the third largest group in the Legislative Assembly with 10 per cent.

On the Congress' side, the expected over-representation of the upper caste seems to be the specific feature within the party apparatus. Indeed, the 'pre-independence patterns of social representation have persisted in state-level party institutions. Caste Hindus ... have constituted the vast proportion of representatives elected to the Pradesh Congress Committee since its founding in 1946' (Sisson 1972: 131). Thus, with 9.8 and 4.3 per cent respectively, both the Scheduled Castes

and the Scheduled Tribes are under-represented in the state level Congress organisation. Moreover, the other noteworthy point is still the large under-representation of the OBC with 5.8 per cent of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC).

Unlike the Congress, the BJP is characterised by the significant presence of OBC in the party apparatus. With 13.4 per cent, this category represents the second largest group in the BJP state executive.

One even finds in the BJP state apparatus, one Gujjar as vice-president and two Malis as state secretaries. However, the fragmentation of the OBC category weakens its political position within the party apparatus

**Table 5.10**  
**Major Castes and Communities of the Pradesh Congress Committee**  
**Members, the BJP State Executive Members and the MLAs**  
**in Rajasthan, 2005 (%)**

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	<i>BJP</i>	<i>INC</i>	<i>Vidhan Sabha</i>
<b>Upper Castes</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>44.1</b>	<b>33.0</b>
Brahmin	22.0	21.4	10.0
Rajput	11.3	9.2	12.5
Baniya/Jain	13.4	6.1	9.0
Kayastha	2.7	1.2	0.5
Mahajan	1.1	3.4	–
Other	2.7	2.8	1.0
<b>Intermediate Castes</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>18.5</b>
Jat	11.8	17.7	18.5
<b>OBC</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>8.5</b>
Gujjar	4.8	0.3	5.0
Mali	1.6	1.5	1.0
Yadav	0.5	0.9	1.0
Other	6.5	3.1	1.5
<b>Scheduled Castes</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>16.5</b>
<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>15.0</b>
Meena	2.7	3.7	7.0
Bhil	1.1	–	–
Other	2.2	0.6	8.0
<b>Religious Minorities</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Muslim	0.5	10.4	2.5
Sikh	1.1	1.5	0.5
<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.5</b>
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0
	(N=186)	(N=327)	(N=200)

Source: Survey by authors.

as in the Legislative Assembly. Moreover, with the Jats being classified as OBC, the other castes of this group — Gujjar, Mali, Yadav, etc. — could be excluded from the heart of the decision-making process.

So far as the Congress apparatus is concerned, the proportion of Jats as office bearers reaches as high as 22.5 per cent! This strong representation seems to prove that this community is a political force to be reckoned with. Nevertheless, the decision of Sonia Gandhi to remove Narayan Singh (a Jat) from his position as PCC chief in April 2005 and to appoint B. D. Kalla (a Brahmin and former leader of Congress Legislative Party) has confused the policy of wooing the Jat community. Within the Congress party, there are many Jat leaders who do not understand the party's policy towards the Jat community.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 5.11**  
**Caste and Community of the Rajasthan Pradesh Congress Committee**  
**and BJP State Executive, 2005 (%)**

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	<i>INC</i>	<i>BJP</i>
<b>Upper Castes</b>	<b>37.5</b>	<b>38.9</b>
Brahmin	15.0	16.7
Rajput	5.0	11.1
Baniya/Jain	2.5	11.1
Kayastha	2.5	—
Mahajan	10.0	—
Punjabi	2.5	—
<b>Intermediate Castes</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>16.7</b>
Jat	22.5	16.7
<b>OBC</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>16.7</b>
Gujjar	2.5	5.6
Mali	2.5	11.1
Other	2.5	—
<b>Scheduled Castes</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>11.1</b>
<b>Scheduled Tribes</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>11.1</b>
Meena	5.0	11.1
<b>Religious Minorities</b>	<b>12.5</b>	—
Muslim	10.0	—
Sikh	2.5	—
<b>Unidentified</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.6</b>
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
	(N=40)	(N=18)

Source: Survey by authors.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Veevend Poonia, Secretary, Rajasthan PCC, 17 April 2005, Jaipur.

### *Governments: Still in the Hands of Upper Castes*

The state government has always been dominated by the upper castes: between the years 1952 and 2003, they represented 46.7 per cent of the total and the Jats, 17.8 per cent.

If the upper castes' representation has steadily decreased (they represented about one-third of the governments' members in 1998), the share of the OBC has not significantly increased (from 9.1 per cent in 1952 to 11.1 per cent in 2003). Once again, the principal beneficiaries have been the Jats whose share increased by 13.1 percentage points after 1952 to reach 22.2 per cent in 2003.

However, from 1993 onwards, the formation of a BJP government coincided with a diminution of the proportion of ministers belonging to the Jat community as well as with an increase of the upper caste proportion whereas the constitution of a Congress ministry led to the opposite (see Table 5.12), a reconfirmation of the influence of the Jats within the Indian National Congress and of the upper castes, mainly Rajputs, within the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Thus, the hegemony of the upper castes and Jats is still significant at the level of the apparatus of the parties and the governments in comparison with their representation in the Vidhan Sabha. Now, the control of the party organisation remains most important, and the exercise of power, through the control of the position of the chief minister and the allocation of ministerial portfolios, are the ultimate focus of conflict within parties.

### **Conclusion**

While we can notice a certain erosion of the upper castes' representation in the Rajasthan Assembly between the years 1952 and 2003, the share of the lower OBC among the MLAs remains very small whereas the Jats — so called OBC — literally surged. In 2003, the Jats represented the most important group in the state Assembly. The Scheduled Tribes, because of the Meenas, were the other group which experienced a significant rise too though to a much lesser extent.

The limitations of the political empowerment of the lower castes in Rajasthan — so far as the social profile of the political class is concerned — are even more pronounced when one considers other institutions

**Table 5.12**  
**Evolution of the Castes and Communities Representation in Successive Governments in Rajasthan, 1952-2003 (%)**

	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003
<i>Castes and Communities</i>												
<b>Upper Castes</b>	<b>81.8</b>	<b>50.0</b>	<b>56.5</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>62.5</b>	<b>43.2</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>40.7</b>
Brahmin	36.4	21.4	34.8	20.5	13.3	31.3	15.9	20.0	14.9	13.3	13.3	11.1
Rajput	9.1	7.1	4.3	10.3	13.3	12.5	6.8	6.7	10.6	20.0	10.0	18.5
Baniya	27.3	21.4	13.0	15.4	6.7	18.8	20.5	6.7	8.5	10.0	10.0	7.4
Kayastha	9.1	-	4.3	7.7	6.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sindhi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3.7
Khatri	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.1	-	-	-
<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>28.6</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>27.7</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>22.2</b>
<b>Castes</b>												
Jat	9.1	21.4	26.1	17.9	20.0	12.5	9.1	13.3	23.4	16.7	23.3	22.2
Bishnoi	-	7.1	-	-	6.7	-	-	-	2.1	-	3.3	-
Sirvi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.1	-	-	-
<b>OBC</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>11.1</b>
Gujjar	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	-	2.1	3.3	-	7.4
Mali	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	-	-	-	3.3	3.7
Yadav	9.1	-	4.3	2.6	-	-	4.5	6.7	4.3	3.3	-	-
Kumhar	-	-	-	2.6	6.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

*(Table 5.12 continued)*

(Table 5.12 continued)

<i>Castes and Communities</i>	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980	1985	1990	1993	1998	2003
<b>SC</b>	-	7.1	4.3	12.8	13.3	18.8	22.7	20.0	14.9	20.0	16.7	11.1
<b>ST</b>	-	7.1	4.3	5.1	13.3	-	9.1	20.0	8.5	6.7	10.0	11.1
Meena	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	6.7	4.3	3.3	-	11.1
Bhil	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.3	6.7	-	-	-	-
Other	-	7.1	4.3	5.1	13.3	-	4.5	6.7	4.3	3.3	10.0	-
<b>Religious Minorities</b>	-	7.1	4.3	7.7	6.7	6.3	6.8	6.7	6.4	6.7	10.0	3.7
Muslim	-	7.1	4.3	5.1	6.7	6.3	4.5	6.7	4.3	3.3	10.0	3.7
Sikh	-	-	-	2.6	-	-	2.3	-	2.1	3.3	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	100.0 (N=11)	100.0 (N=14)	100.0 (N=23)	100.0 (N=39)	100.0 (N=15)	100.0 (N=16)	100.0 (N=44)	100.0 (N=15)	100.0 (N=47)	100.0 (N=30)	100.0 (N=30)	100.0 (N=27)

Source: Survey by authors.

such as the composition of the government and the apparatus of the political parties. Consequently, the evolution of the political class of Rajasthan can be characterised by a transition from one conservative situation where the upper castes dominate to another which is defined by the over-representation of the dominant Jat caste.



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