

ROLE OF SIR CHHOTU RAM IN PUNJAB POLITICS

A CASE STUDY OF ROHTAK DISTRICT

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ABBREVIATIONS

AICC	All India Congress Committee (NMML)
CAB	Cabinet Papers (PRO)
CF Comm	Confidential Files from the Commissioner's Office
CFDC	Confidential Files from the Deputy Commissioner's Office
CFSO	Confidential Files from the Superintendent's Office
CFRR	Confidential Files from the Record Room
C & MG	Civil and Military Gazette
Coll	Collection
dist.	District
Div.	Division
GI	Government of India
Govt.	Government
HO Notes	Handing over notes
HT	Haryana Tilak
IOR	India Office Records, London
IOL	India Office Library, London
JG	Jat Gazette
PAR	Annual Reports of Administration in Punjab
PLAD	Punjab Legislative Assembly Debates
PLCD	Punjab Legislative Council Debates
PLRA	Annual Report of the Land Revenue Administration in Punjab
PRO	Public Record Office, London

Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt. Report of the Punjab Provincial Banking
Inquiry Committee

NAI National Archives of India, New Delhi

NMML Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

Official Positions

ADM Additional District Magistrate

Comm. Commissioner

DC Deputy Commissioner

DIG Deputy Inspector General

DM District Magistrate

Lt. Col. Lieutenant Colonel

SDO Sub Divisional Officer

SP Superintendent of Police

Official Proceedings

edu. health & lands Proceedings of the education, health,
agriculture and lands department

Home ests Proceedings of the Home establishments
department

Home Judll Proceedings of the Home Judicial department

Home Poll Proceedings of the Home Political department

Home Pub Proceedings of the Home Public department

KW Keep with to proceedings

L/F Proceedings dealing with Financial matters

L/E Proceedings dealing with Economic matters

L/P & J. Proceedings dealing with Public and Judicial
matters

L/PO Proceedings of the Private Office of the
Secretary of State

P. Proceedings of the Punjab Government

INTRODUCTION

Chhotu Ram forged with the predominant Unionist Muslims of Punjab an enduring political alliance which was instrumental in forming one of the most successful non-Congress ministries under the Provincial Autonomy. The alliance also ensured for the British in India a politically safe province, which could otherwise have been both politically and economically one of the most vulnerable provinces in their Indian empire. Chhotu Ram's value to the colonial rulers was freely acknowledged by Linlithgow and Wavell, the last two Viceroy's of India, who paid Chhotu Ram the fulsome tributes paid to no other politician of Punjab. This very Chhotu Ram had been earlier contemptuously dismissed by the British officials as coming from 'low parentage' and as a troublesome politician. Later he was because of his steadfast loyalty and services rendered to the British empire knighted and gifted hundreds of acres of land. With enormous political backing from his constituents and plenty of financial resources at his command, Chhotu Ram emerged first as the leader of the 'Jats of Rohtak' and then gained recognition and acceptance by the officials and others as the leader of the 'Hindu agriculturists' of Punjab. With such formidable backing he became a force to be reckoned with in the province.

Chhotu Ram was born in November 1881. His real name was Ram Richpal; but being the youngest in the family the name Chhotu stuck for life. His father, Sukhi Ram, belonging to the 'Ohlan' Got (sub-caste) of Jats, was a small landowner in village Garhi-Sampla of Rohtak district. After his schooling in Rohtak, Chhotu Ram joined St. Stephen's Mission School and College on a free studentship. Having passed his intermediate examination from there he joined the D.A.V. College,

Lahore, for his B.A. After graduation, he took over in 1906 as the Assistant Private Secretary to Rampal Singh, the Talukdar of Kalankankar and a political leader in the United Provinces. Chhotu Ram remained there for nearly three years. In 1910, he came to Agra to teach at St. John's Mission High School and also joined law studies. By late 1911 he had started his law practice in Agra and within a year changed over to legal practice at Rohtak in partnership with Lal Chand. It was during these years that he became both an Arya Samajist and a Congressite. In the wake of World War I he cooperated with the British in the war efforts and helped provide recruits and money. In 1916, he had also ably launched his weekly newspaper, the 'Jat Gazette', with the help of the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak. In 1920, he broke-off with the Congress when the party changed its tactics in relation to the British rulers and adopted non-violent non-cooperation as its fighting creed. His first attempt in 1921 at fighting elections to the Punjab Council was a failure, but he succeeded in his second attempt in December 1923 and joined the Rural Party of Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand which had by now been established as the National Unionist Party of Punjab. From then onwards there was no turning back for Chhotu Ram, and he stood unbeaten in all the subsequent elections. He died in harness on the 10th of January 1945. He was first the Minister of Agriculture from 1924 to 1925 and then the Minister of Education from 1925 to 1926. In 1927, he was elected the leader of the Unionist Party in the Punjab Legislative Council, a position he retained till 1936. In 1936, he was elected as the President of the Punjab Council and, with the death of Fazl-i-Hussain in the same year, he emerged as the most important leader of the Unionist Party along with Sikander Hayat Khan. He was the chief organiser of his party's election machinery

during the first elections to the Punjab Assembly held in 1937. The Unionists won the elections with a big majority and formed the ministry under Sikandar Hayat Khan. Chhotu Ram took over as the Minister of Development from 1937 to 1941. He was the Minister for Revenue from 1941 to 1945.

This work on Chhotu Ram seeks to analyse the role of Chhotu Ram from his base in Rohtak district to his emergence in the provincial politics of Punjab. It is not the intention of this work to provide a study of the politics of Punjab as such. Here, the politics of Punjab is seen in relation to the socio-economic factors in the agrarian society of Punjab which made for the success of Chhotu Ram in becoming an indispensable force to the Unionist Party. While doing so, the work seeks to analyse how and why Chhotu Ram became such a force not only at the provincial level but also first and foremost at the local level of his constituency in Rohtak district. It deals with the social forces he mobilised and the nature of programme, ideology and propaganda he evolved and utilised during his rise from the status of a local leader with limited support to that of a leader of provincial status. The work investigates the reasons which enabled Chhotu Ram to successfully mobilise the economically and numerically predominant Jats of Rohtak district around the slogan of caste and to turn them into a political force of considerable magnitude. In this connection Jat relations with the other castes and communities have also been studied in order to explore the deeper socio-economic reasons which made for the success of populist slogans such as that of 'Jatism' in Rohtak district, specially when Chhotu Ram's supporters were to be found chiefly among the landowning classes.

How and why did this 'casteism' of Chhotu Ram, which included in itself highly stratified classes, receive the support it did in the Haryana region, and how did 'Jatism' of Chhotu Ram operate in reality not only among different socio-economic strata of his own castemen, but also in relation to other castes and religious minorities like that of the Muslim? The operation of 'casteism' in relation to his constituency and its modification by Chhotu Ram later to suit the whole of Punjab has also been dealt with. The working of 'casteism' has also been studied in relation to the two momentous movements of the time in the socio-religious and political spheres of Rohtak and Punjab, i.e., the Arya Samaj and the Congress. The reasons for the success of Chhotu Ram's politics in face of, and in relation to, these two anti-British movements, one supposedly opposed to casteism and the other nationalist and secular, are examined.

The programme, ideology and propaganda of Chhotu Ram, projected and articulated differently at the two levels, i.e., the local and the provincial, have been analysed with a view to establish their relationship with the changing socio-economic and political climate of both the district and the province. The reasons behind the projection and even wide acceptance of a 'radical and revolutionary' image of Chhotu Ram, while all the time he was an out and out loyalist, have been studied. Some light has also been thrown on the relative appeal of the two political parties, the Unionist and the Congress, and on the following they commanded among the different strata of society, specially among the Jats in Rohtak district. The real class basis of Chhotu Ram's adoption and propagation of caste ideology and populist slogans through press and platform is also examined through study of the

comprehensive agrarian policies that Chhotu Ram followed during the late thirties. These policies clearly stood to benefit the richer sections of Punjab's landowning class, the supporters of Chhotu Ram and his fellow Unionists. The effects of the agrarian legislation of the late thirties and early forties on the different strata of agriculturists and non-agriculturists as well as on the Congress have been co-related with the direct benefits which accrued to the landed interests and their representatives as also to the promoters of these interests, i.e., the colonial government. Policies adopted in the agrarian field bring out the basis of the alliance between the colonial rulers and the overwhelmingly Unionist Muslims, landlords and landowners and the Hindu ruralites of the Haryana region united in the ministerial Party.

This interpretation of Chhotu Ram's role in Punjab politics also traces the explicit involvement of the colonial rulers in the successful emergence of casteism as a viable force in the Provincial politics and their hand in the eventual and successful rise of 'caste leaders' like Chhotu Ram. This work analyses the tools and agencies utilised by the British in promoting casteism and also seeks to explain how and why casteism as an instrument to divide the Indian society was given such importance in this region as compared with the utilisation of other divisive issues favoured elsewhere by the British administrators for achieving the same purpose.

The major analysis of this dissertation relating to Chhotu Ram's role in Punjab politics centres around Rohtak district. Rohtak district has been made a case study in this respect not only because of the strength and hold of Chhotu Ram in this region, which alone made it possible for him to play a role in the politics of Punjab

for twenty long years, but also because this district was the acknowledged 'centre' of the Haryana region in all political matters. This case study of Rohtak district throws light on the structure of socio-economic relations prevailing in the district which made for the success of Chhotu Ram's politics and may, therefore, be taken as a prototype of the entire Haryana region nearly all of which came to be so effectively consolidated and led by Chhotu Ram. However, Rohtak district has not been treated in isolation from the rest of Punjab but as very much a part of it; and similarities as well as differences between the south-east region and the rest of Punjab have been highlighted wherever necessary. This study also seeks to bring out the how and why of this small region's ability to play such an important role under the leadership of Chhotu Ram in the politics of Punjab and within the Unionist Party.

Chapter I

SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPOSITION OF ROHTAK DISTRICT

Rohtak district served as the base of political action for Chhotu Ram for over 20 years. Rohtak was popularly acknowledged and treated as the 'centre of Haryana region' not only by Chhotu Ram but also the British officials and the National Congress Party¹. Both, Chhotu Ram and the district Congress claimed their largest number of supporters and recruits from this district. Despite its close physical proximity to Delhi, the centre of national politics, Rohtak district did not waver in its overwhelming support to Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram succeeded in retaining his pro-British hold over the district in face of the rising nationalist sentiment elsewhere in the country.

Chhotu Ram was elected to the Punjab Legislative Council from the Rohtak constituency in 1924. He had lost the earlier election of 1921, the first elections held under the Montagu -Chelmsford Reforms Act of 1919, to Rai Bahadur Sarup Singh². From the time of his second successful election till his death in January 1945, Chhotu Ram's hold over his constituency was unshakable and unchallengeable. This hold was created through successful exploitation of the socio-economic factors prevailing in the district, and by creation of a solid support structure which ensured his electoral success in all the subsequent elections. This support structure was built-up within the dominant Jat caste of Rohtak to which he belonged. Rohtak district was indeed

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- 1 HT, 23 Oct. 1928, p.3; 28 Oct. 1931, pp.4-5,8; 26 June 1934, p.1; 17 Jan. 1935, p.3; 15 Oct. 1935, p.6; 12 Oct. 1937, p.1; 24 May 1938, p.3; 25 Oct. 1938, p.5; 22 Sept. 1939, p.4. Also see below chapter VI, p.196.
- 2 CFDC Rohtak, F.No.8, "Men to be known", see under heading 'C' (for Chhotu Ram). -Regarding his failure to win his first election to the Punjab Council, see below chapter V, pp.165-6, chapter VII, pp.220-I.

unique in having a caste which had the triple monopoly of economic, social and numerical strength. The upper stratum of the Jat peasantry, already in control of a majority of landholdings in the district, was further helped by the British rulers in its control of the entire socio-economic fabric of the agrarian society of Rohtak. This upper stratum of Jat peasantry alone, through its socio-economic dominance of the district, could get access to the seats of political influence and gain. Chhotu Ram's success lay in successfully manoeuvring the interests of this stratum, same as the British administrators had done and were continuing to do, to enable him to achieve political influence not only at the district level as a local leader but also as a provincial leader of great repute. In fact, by 1937 Chhotu Ram had become a major political force in the province.

A clarification of what was meant by 'Jat domination' in the district of Rohtak will explain the highly successful attempt of Chhotu Ram to found a political base among the upper stratum of Jat peasantry on the slogan of 'Jatism'. The three districts of Rohtak, Hissar and Karnal were numerically dominated by Jats though in the latter two districts the numerical strength of Jats was much less than in Rohtak. These three districts of Punjab formed the "home land of Hindu Jats".³ According to the Census of 1921, the population of Rohtak district was 772,272;⁴ and Jats, as the single largest caste of tribe in the district, accounted for 262,195 people or one third of the total⁵

3 Census of India 1931, Punjab, XVII, Prt. I, Report, pp. 339-40.

4 Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, Prt. II, p. 2.

5 The other castes in relation to Jats were much smaller in numbers. The Jats therefore emerge as the single largest caste in Rohtak district. The caste complexion of Rohtak district in 1921 was as follows:

population of the district. The Jats also held the bulk of agricultural land as proprietors. With their 12 main Gots (sub-castes) and 137 minor ones, they controlled, in 1910, 385 estates in the district out of a total of 530. They were rightly considered to be the foremost in the tribal division of the landowning castes in any district of

Jat: 262,195; Brahmin (known as 'Gaud-Brahamin'): 71,917; Chamar: 65,804; Bania: 46,814; Rajput: 46,468; Dhanak: 24,044; Chuhra: 23,514; Ahir: 17,064; Kumhar: 13,954; Tarkhan: 13,390; Nai: 13,070; Mali: 12,106; Faquir: 9,383; Teli: 9,254; Jhimar: 8,972; Qassab: 8,528; Gujjar: 7,789; Pathan: 7,019; Machchi: 6,371; Taga: 6,019; Jogi: 5,872; Chimba: 5,406; Dhobi: 4,063; Sunar: 3,295; Saini: 2,922; Mirasi: 2,698; Biloch: 2,386; Lilar or Rangrez: 2,293; Julaha: 1,945; Changar: 1,217; Kayastha: 1,209; Mughal: 1,151; Khatri: 1,138; Maniar: 1,132; Bharbhunja: 1,111; Gadaria: 1,128; Kunjra: 1,009; Od: 985; Sayyed: 945; Lodha: 663; Rahbari: 511; Bhatiara: 298; Aheri (Heri): 277; Darzi: 245.

Ibid., XV, Prt. I, p.220. Also Punjab Dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1936, II, prt. B, Statistical tables (Lahore 1936).

6 Classification of 530 estates in Rohtak district according to the tribe of the majority of the proprietors:

Name of Tribe	No. of villages held in			Total
	Gohana	Rohtak	Jhajjar	
1. Jat	97	99	189	385
2. Rajput Hindu	1	6	20	27
3. Brahmin	7	8	12	27
4. Ahir	-	-	25	25
5. Rajput Mohamman	12	13	-	25
6. Afghan	3	-	12	15
7. Gujar	-	1	6	7
8. Biloch	-	-	4	4
9. Kayastha	-	2	2	4
10. Mahajan	2	1	-	3
11. Sheikh	-	1	2	3
12. Sayyed	-	2	1	3
13. Fakir	-	-	1	1
14. Ror	1	-	-	1
Total:	123	133	275	530

Punjab Dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, III A (Lahore 1911), p.68.

7 The definition of an 'estate' in Punjab was identical with that of a 'village' given in the census instructions. Definition of an 'estate' under section III-1 of the Punjab Land Revenue Act was based upon the techniques of the land revenue system. 'Estate', therefore, meant an area (a) for which separate Record of Rights had been made, or (b) which had been separately assessed to land revenue, or would have been assessed if the land revenue had not been released, compound for, or redeemed, or (c) which the local govt. may have had by general rule or special order declared to be an 'estate'. It should be noted that the definition applied to a demarcated area of land and not to a group of residential sites. Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, Prt. 1, Report, p.20.

Punjab let alone the district of Rohtak.⁸ At a time when agriculture was more or less the solitary prop of the provincial economy, the ownership of agricultural land inevitably established the dominance of the Jats in the area. The settlement report of Rohtak district of 1910, which includes the last consolidated list of the caste divisions, throws the social and economic patterns into bold relief.⁹ The Hindu Jats emerge as the owners of 60 per cent of cultivated land in the district; there were also 5 or 6 revenue estates which were owned by the Jats converted to Islam. In comparison, Muslim Rajputs owned 7 per cent, Hindu Rajputs about 4½ per cent, Brahmins 6½ per cent, Ahirs 2½ per cent, Baniyas and Pathans about 2 per cent each, of the total cultivated land. The remaining 15½ per cent of land was owned by miscellaneous tribes and government boards.

Certain administrative changes took place in 1912 when Delhi territory was separated from Punjab and its Sonepat tehsil, with an area of 449 square miles and 241 villages, was merged in Rohtak district.¹⁰ Although there are no official figures relating to the additional cultivated land which this change brought to Rohtak district, the unmistakable similarity between the economic and social patterns of village communities of the newly merged territory on the one hand, and of the village communities of the old Rohtak district on the other, would certainly point to the continued Jat dominance as the single largest caste or tribe in the enlarged district both in economic and numerical terms. Certain available figures would support this

8 PAR, 1921-22, p. 324.

9 See above f.n. no. 6. Percentage of land under different caste groups is also given in the Final Report of the Third Regular Settlement (1905-1910), Rohtak dist. (Lahore 1910), p. 10. Note that the last Rohtak Gazetteer under the British Raj was compiled in 1910. The next one followed in 1970 only. See Haryana Dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1970 (Chandigarh 1970), p. 11.

10 Punjab Dist. Gazetteer, Delhi, 1912, V A (Lahore 1913), p. 1.

conclusion. Sonepat area had a Jat population of 49,319, while its total population was 173,345.¹¹ This gives to the Jats the same numerical ratio in the population as that of the old Rohtak district of pre-1912. The Jats in Delhi district comprising of three tehsils, prior to the administrative rearrangement of 1912, owned 48 per cent of land. It is to be noted that the Hindu Jats were numerically strongest in Sonepat tehsil. In terms of percentage the Jats in Sonepat tehsil were 30 per cent higher than in Delhi tehsil and 70 per cent higher than in Ballabgarh tehsil.¹² 50 per cent of the revenue estates (villages) of Sonepat tehsil were controlled by Jats. As to the rest, 30 per cent of villages were dominated jointly by Jats and Sayyeds or Brahmins. The proprietary body in the Sonepat tehsil consisted exclusively of Jats in 123 villages, of Jats and Brahmins in 47, of Jats and Sayyeds in 21, of Chauhans in 26, and of Tagas (also known as Tyagis - a sect of Brahmins) in 26 villages.¹³ Rohtak district enlarged after the inclusion of Sonepat tehsil should therefore show the continued domination of Jats in both spheres, i.e., economic and numerical.

The social status of Jats in Rohtak district is somewhat difficult to define in the ritualistic framework of the cast hierarchies. The census authorities of 1901 confessed that Punjab defied a systematic classification of castes.¹⁴ For example, the social

11 Ibid., statistical tables, p. XXXI.

12 Ibid., Jat population: Sonepat, 49,319; Delhi, 38,999; Ballabgarh, 16,380. Sonepat had a majority of Hindu Jats; out of 49,319, they were 47,365 in numbers with only 29 Sikh Jats and 1,655 Muslim Jats.

13 Ibid.

14 Census of India 1901, Punjab, XVII, Prt. 1, Report, p. 337. The Report in this connection gives the example of Janeo (the sacred thread) which was donned by the twice born, i.e., the Brahmins nearly all over India. In Punjab also the Brahmins wore the Janeo but apart from them the Janeo wearers could be found among other castes as well, for example, the Nai who ministered to the castes who wore the Janeo. Among Jats also, Janeo was worn in

superiority of the Brahmin did not exist in Punjab, and though Brahmin could be sacredocally superior yet socially he was described as "lowest of the low"¹⁵. On the other hand, regarding Jats who were in the ritual hierarchy a peasant caste all over India and were ritually ranked in Punjab after the Brahmin, Rajput and Khatri, the Punjab census of 1901 laid down: "there is no caste above the Jat"¹⁶. The social status of Jat was further complicated by their differing social status in the different regions of Punjab.¹⁷ In Central Punjab, for example, a Sikh Jat did not consider any one his social superior, not even a Rajput. Elsewhere in Punjab the Jats, by and large, claimed Rajput origin. The Jats of south-east Punjab, who were declared to be of the same stock and type as that of central Punjab, also claimed the Rajput origin.¹⁸ However, following the model of the

certain villages but this did not have the effect of raising the Janeo wearing Jat above the level of non-wearing Jat. Ibid., p. 324.

- 15 Ibid., p. 338. In this connection the remark of P. Tandon that he discovered the privileged position of the Brahmins only when he went to live outside Punjab is interestingly relevant. See P. Tandon, Punjabi Century, 1857-1947 (London 1963), p. 76.
- 16 Ibid., p. 324; D. Ibbetson, The Punjab Castes (Lahore 1916), pp. 102-3.
- 17 Ibid., p. 324; D. Ibbetson, op.cit., pp. 100-5.
- 18 D. Ibbetson, op.cit., p. 103. The Hindu Rajputs of Rohtak were in possession of merely 4½ per cent of land as compared to 60 per cent under the Hindu Jats. However, there is no mention of any evidence regarding the socially higher status of the Rajputs. The fact of Jats claiming the Rajput origin may be explained by the ritualistic and traditional norms which held a Rajput to be a Kshatriya and as the ideal. In any case claiming a higher origin did not detract from the fact of a particular caste being the 'dominant caste'. The 'dominant caste' in a given region were frequently given to claiming a higher origin. In fact M.N. Srinivas specifically mentions Jats as the 'dominant caste' in Punjab. See Caste and Modern India and Other Essays (Bombay 1962), p. 90.

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dominant caste in a given region described by M.N. Srinivas, the status of Jats as a 'dominant' caste can be easily established in Rohtak district. Economically and numerically stronger than any other caste in Rohtak district, the Jats satisfied yet another norm of the 'dominant caste', i.e., in the ritual hierarchy also they did not occupy 'a low ritual status'. In the agrarian society of Punjab the norms, as seen to be operating and also as encouraged by the British, did not conform to the ritualistic concepts and were necessarily in relation to the amount of land that was held in possession by a particular caste.²⁰ Seen as such, the Jats clearly emerge in Rohtak district as the 'dominant caste'. In the agrarian set up of the district, most of the other castes were in relation of servitude to the landowning Jats who stood as the single largest receivers of services from the other castes. Whatever superiority the Brahmins may have enjoyed declined severely by the early twenties with the propagation and acceptance of Arya Samaj, specially among the landowning Jats of Rohtak.²¹

The Jats were however economically and socially not a homogeneous caste or community. In the total population of 145,435 landowning or revenue paying families in Rohtak district under the

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- 19 For the concept and features of 'dominant caste', see M.N. Srinivas, "The Dominant Caste in Rampura", American Anthropologist (Feb. 1959), pp. 1-16.
- 20 For details see Census of India 1901, Punjab, XVII, Prt. I, Report, pp. 324-5.
- 21 For the popularity of Arya Samaj among Jats, see below chapter V.

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Provincial Autonomy, Jats who constituted 60 per cent of the land-owners came to about 87,261. In the total Jat population of 266,840 in the district in 1931, this left 179,579 Jats as belonging to the families of either tenants of all kinds or landless agricultural labourers. It is impossible to further break the figures into actual numbers of tenants and agricultural labourers among Jats of Rohtak. However, Jats were officially proclaimed to be 'dominating' among the tenants as well.²³ That they were found among the agricultural labourers also is clear from the percentage of agricultural labourers for the Hindu Jats, given in the census of 1931, as 19 males per 1,000 and 5 females per 100 males in the whole of Punjab.²⁴ But again, there are no separate figures for Jats employed as agricultural labourers in Rohtak district. The number of Hindu Jats among the agricultural labourers in Rohtak district was not as large as given for the whole

22 Figures showing number of land revenue payers in different groups in Rohtak district:

Total number of land revenue payers - 145,435

		Rs.	
Land revenue payers who pay	Rs. 5 or less	= 63000	-amount 140898
" " " " "	between Rs.5 and 10	=33388	" 233585
" " " " "	" 10 and 20	=28048	" 340372
" " " " "	" 20 and 50	=17174	" 499641
" " " " "	" 50 and 100	= 1107	" 73294
" " " " "	" 100 and 250	= 274	" 38041
" " " " "	" 250 and 500	= 62	" 7567
" " " " "	" 500 and 1000	= 18	" 12423
" " " " "	" 1000 and 5000	= 4	" 6104
" " " " "	" 5000 and 10000	= -	" -

Source: Report of the Land Revenue Committee 1938 (Lahore 1938), Appendix I.

23 H.C. Fanshaw and W.E. Purser, Revised Land Revenue Settlement of the Rohtak District, 1878-79 (Lahore 1880), p. 50.

24 The ratio of Sikh Jats among agricultural labourers was 14 males per 1,000 and 2 females per 100 males. The Muslim Jats as agricultural labourers however showed nearly 4 times the number of Hindu and Sikh Jats, i.e., 48 males for every 1,000 males and 4 males for every 100 males. Census of India 1931, Punjab, XVII, Part. 1, sub-table V, pp. 244-5.

of Punjab as the agricultural labourers in Rohtak district were deemed to be drawn mainly from among the untouchable castes of Rohtak.²⁵ Even the landowning Jats were internally differentiated. The 1924-25 figures of the size and distribution of agricultural land in Rohtak shows varied landholdings.²⁶ 45.9 per cent of the peasant proprietors were petty owners with holdings of area between 1(one) acre and 5 acres only; 25.2 per cent with holdings measuring between 5 and 10; and 28.9 per cent alone with sizeable holdings of 10 acres and over. Some holdings went beyond 50 and beyond. As the average holding came to 5.7 acres only, nearly half of the total holdings in Rohtak fell well below this average.²⁷ Apart from this, Rohtak district was notorious for its limited irrigation, precarious rainfall,²⁸

25 See below chapter III, pp.75-76.

26 Statement showing the size and distribution of 15,379 agricultural holdings in Rohtak district:

<u>District</u>	<u>Landholdings</u>	<u>Total number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Rohtak	Under 1 (one) acre	1,097	7.1
	1(one) and under 3 acres	3,370	21.9
	3 and under 5 acres	2,594	16.9
	5 and under 10 acres	3,872	25.2
	10 and under 15 acres	1,776	11.5
	15 and under 20 acres	1,173	7.6
	20 and under 25 acres	582	3.8
	25 and under 50 acres	721	4.7
	50 acres and over	194	1.3

Source: Board of Eco. Inq. The Size and Distribution of Agricultural Holdings in the Punjab (Lahore 1925), p. 16.

27 Ibid. Also see Board of Eco. Inq. The Size and the Distribution of Cultivators Holdings in the Punjab (Lahore 1928), p.17.

28 For disastrous effects of "ill distributed and scanty" rainfall in Rohtak district see a note prepared by H. Dobbson, an official of the irrigation dept., on the districts of Hissar, Rohtak and Gurgaon, 26 July 1939, S.S. Majithia Papers, F. No. 93, p.1.

and frequent Akals (famines).²⁹ Irrigation through wells was extremely limited.³⁰ In most parts of the district the water level was generally very low and in most places the sub-soil water was brackish, not useful for agricultural purposes.³¹ Labour and cost of sinking an agricultural well and working it was enormous and the income comparatively small, specially as Abiana (water rates) had to be paid on the Pacca (masonry) well.³² Well sinking was considered something of a "gamble" as within 3 to 4 years a well produced nothing but liquid mud.³³ In the estimate of F.H. Burton, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak in 1906, the working of a well even all day in Rohtak tehsil did not result in the irrigation of more than one Kachcha bigha, i.e., 1/5th of an acre.³⁴ The irrigated land in Rohtak was therefore only 28.4 per cent in 1921 and 33.1 per cent

29 In the present century Rohtak district experienced famines in the following years: 1905-6, 1909-10, 1913-14, 1918-19, 1928-30, and 1938-40. The famines of 1928 and 1938 lasted for 3 years each. Haryana Dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1970, pp.100-1. The famine of 1938 in the south-eastern districts of Punjab was so severe that apart from the menials a considerable number of peasant proprietors became daily labourers at the Government Relief Works which gave wages at a nominal rate of 2 annas a day per man, one anna a day per woman, and half anna or 6 pies a day per child only. Linlithgow Coll (MSS Eur F.125), 87: Craik to Linlithgow, 26/27 Jan. 1939.

30 Condition of agricultural wells in Rohtak district:
 Wells in actual use - 1909-10 1927-28 1930-31 1931-32
 5,539 6,137 8,151 7,971
 1932-33 1933-34
 8,190 6,720

Source: IOR:P/7841/1908, F. No.22.

31 Ibid. The average depth of water was about 25 feet.

32 Final Report of the Third Regular Settlement of Rohtak Dist. 1905-10 (Lahore 1910), p.42.

33 IOR:P/7841/1908, F. No.22, Report, 22 Sept. 1906.

34 Ibid., 6 Sept. 1906.

35

in 1931 of the total cultivated land. This further reduced the economic viability of the numerous holdings in the district. The average holding of 5.7 acres in Rohtak was too low a figure for a district where nearly 70 per cent of the cultivated area was Barani (dependent on rainfall). Therefore, if a holding of 12 acres is taken as an economic one, as suggested by the district gazetteer of 1910 and as tacitly acknowledged even by Chhotu Ram,³⁶ then even less than 28 per cent population had their 'neck above water'. Thus a vast multitude of petty and more or less impoverished owners greatly out-numbered the comparatively affluent and big landowners, though both continued to be grouped under the title of "zamindars".³⁷

35 <u>Irrigation in Rohtak district:</u>	<u>Year 1921</u> (Average of 1918-19 to 1922-23)	<u>Year 1931</u> (Average of 1928-29 to 1932-33)
Total cultivated area:	925,053 acres	1,076,211 acres
Total irrigated area:	262,942 acres	356,359 acres
Percentage of irrigated area to the cultivated area:	28.4	33.1
 Break up of irrigation	 <u>Year 1921</u> Acres	 <u>Year 1931</u> Acres
Area irrigated by Govt. canals	195,047	271,967
" " " " tanks	204	310
" " " " wells	66,485	83,660
" " by other sources	1,206	422
Source:	<u>Punjab Dist. Census Hand Book, Rohtak, 1951, II</u> (Chandigarh 1965), p.42.	

36 Punjab Dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, III A(Lahore 1911), p. 10. For Chhotu Ram's estimate see Appendix III.

37 In Punjab the word "zamindar", unlike in most other provinces of India where it was generally used for very big owners of land, was applied to anyone who owned land, however little. See Report of the Land Revenue Committee 1938, p.45. Also Pu. Pro. Bkg. Inq. Rpt. 1929-30, I (Lahore 1930), p.386. Also HT, 19 Sept. 1933, p.3. Since the enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900, when certain 'agricultural castes' were created for the first time, the word 'zamindar' also came to stand for a member of any 'statutory agricultural tribe'. 'Zamindar', therefore, became a synonym for an 'agriculturist'. For details see

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Right from the beginning, the British officials showed favour to this 28 per cent or so of landowners at the expense of the other petty owners of land in Rohtak district. This was nothing new, for the British had always favoured the upper stratum of landowners from among the rest of the landowners or even at their expense and that of the other categories of agriculturists. In Punjab, the open official favour to this class started with the enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900. So far as Rohtak district was concerned this act was specially favourable to the rich Jat peasantry. Officially, the object of this measure was to place restrictions on the transfer of agricultural land in Punjab with a view to checking its alienation from the agricultural to non-agricultural classes. The 'hereditary agricultural castes' were therefore defined for the first time in Punjab. The listing of castes and tribes of Punjab as agriculturists was left to the broad definition of the term in which certain conditions had to be

Punjab Govt. Resolution No. 4572-S, 30 Oct. 1919, when reservation of seats in government services was created for the 'zamindars', i.e., those belonging to the statutory agricultural tribes. PLCD, XIII, 12 Mar. 1925, pp.408-15; X, 11 Mar. 1927, pp.3-4: For a comprehensive explanation of the term 'zamindars' as used in Punjab, see below chapter VIII, pp.258-9.

38 For the statement of objects and reasons for the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900 see CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-IV, v.p.12. Also, Alienation of Land Bill of 1900, in Gazetteer of India 1899, Part.V, p.135.

Briefly, the provisions of the act stated: The land of an agriculturist could not be sold to a non-agriculturist without the sanction of the Deputy Commissioner which was almost never given. Regarding mortgages, the land of an agriculturist could only be mortgaged to a non-agriculturist for 20 years. The difference arose regarding the interpretation of mortgage to the non-agriculturists for 20 years. See below chapter IX, pp.326-7.

fulfilled.³⁹ A.H. Diack, the Revenue and Finance Secretary to the Government of Punjab, laid down certain instructions regarding tribes which should or should not be classed as agricultural tribes in any district or group of districts. These instructions clearly favoured the richer tribes among the rest. The tribes which were represented by "insignificant numbers" and held a "trifling amount of land" were not to be "ordinarily" placed in the Deputy Commissioner's list even though they were in fact agricultural and were so enumerated in other districts.⁴⁰ The British officials visualised "no great harm" if they were left to alienate the "trifling" area in their possession to the moneylenders.⁴¹ Another "very important matter to be kept in view", according to the instructions, was the fact that "agricultural tribes may include professional moneylenders among its' members".⁴² The purpose of the act, as revealed through these instructions, therefore, was to enable the persons among favoured agricultural tribes "possessing of sufficient capital"⁴³ to invest in land. The monied classes from

39 For any person wishing to acquire 'agricultural status' the requisite conditions were:
 A. He should either hold land or ordinarily reside in a district of Punjab mentioned in column 1 of the schedule.
 B. He must belong to one of the tribes mentioned in column 2 opposite the name of that particular district with respect to which the first condition is satisfied. If both these conditions are satisfied, a person was declared a member of agricultural tribe.

Note: Holding of land meant either 'owning land' or occupying it as hereditary or occupancy tenant; and possessing land in any other capacity would not do. See notification 18 April 1904 in CFSO Rohtak, F.No. I-IV, v.

40 Ibid., see instructions contained in letter No.117, 12 Nov.1900, pp.71-74.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

among the non-agriculturists however were completely excluded. The "questionable" nature of the policy of giving free access to such persons among agricultural tribes to acquire land from their fellow tribesmen had been recognized but ignored.⁴⁴ Consequently, the swallowing up of petty owners by their caste-men or members of other agricultural tribes was accepted and encouraged by the British administrators.

In keeping with the instructions, ten castes or tribes were notified in Rohtak district as 'statutory agricultural tribes' in notification No. 21.S. dated 22 January 1901.⁴⁵ This list was enlarged by inclusion of a few more castes in 1907, 1910, 1925, and 1936.⁴⁶ Among these notified agricultural tribes, so far as the existence of 'capitalists' and 'moneylenders' was concerned, the Jats were deemed by the British administrators to form a "class" by themselves.⁴⁷ In December 1900, H.J. Maynard, Deputy Commissioner of Ambala, commenting on the grouping of agricultural tribes, had suggested that the Jats should be placed in a "separate category" on the ground that "capitalists and moneylenders were specially common in this tribe".⁴⁸

Restriction on land market imposed by this act, leading to the near elimination of what the British called the "professional

44 Ibid. Also see below chapter IX, pp.315-6,319.

45 The tribes designated as 'agricultural tribes' in Rohtak district were: Jat, Rajput, Pathan, Sayyed, Gujar, Ahir, Biloch, Ror, Moghal, and Mali. See notification No. 21.S. 22 Jan. 1901, and notification 18 April 1904, Ibid., pp.143-4.

46 By notifications issued in 1907, 1910, 1925 and 1936, the following were declared 'agricultural tribes': Taga, Saini, Chauhan, Arain, Gaud-Brahmin (included in Group B) and Qoreshi. Ibid., pp.155, 174-5.

47 Ibid., H.J. Maynard, DC Ambala, 16 Dec. 1900, pp.93-95.

48 Ibid.

moneylender", i.e., Bania, Mahajan and Khatri, naturally proved very beneficial to the rich agricultural tribesmen. The smaller land-owners having lost the necessary 'help' of the 'sahukar' (Bania moneylender), who was increasingly withdrawing from the market, were left more and more exposed to the agricultural moneylenders. Not satisfied with this limitation on the non-agriculturist moneylender, which left the field fairly free for his counterpart among agriculturists, the British officials sought to further restrict the land market for the benefit of the buying rich agriculturists. Instructions regarding the implementation of the act to the Deputy Commissioner of this district laid down:⁵⁰

The field of sale must not be unnecessarily wide, but must be wide enough to give the agricultural tribesman a fair market for his land.

This necessitated grouping of agricultural tribes. Land alienations brought about with the permission of the Deputy Commissioner were restricted within these groups. This was considered a "serious evil" by the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak.⁵¹ Grouping of agricultural tribes meant narrowing of the market to such an extent that each tribe or group would be restricted to the exploitation of its own tribe or group.⁵² For the rich Jats of Rohtak district this further limitation of the land market proved a boon as they could easily exploit their caste fellows by furnishing the necessary capital. This provided the rich Jats of Rohtak with a semi-monopoly condition

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- 49 For details of withdrawal of 'sahukars' (non-agriculturist moneylenders) from the villages to the towns and mandis see below chapter IX, pp. 335-364. instruction no. II7,
 50 CFSO Rohtak, F.NO.I-IV.v, see / 12 Nov. 1900, pp. 71-74.
 51 Ibid. Handwritten letter from P.S.M. Burlton to Comm. Delhi Div., 26 Dec. 1900, pp. 109-21.
 52 Ibid. Thesis

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in buying land cheaply. Even with the rising prices of land, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak observed in 1934 that, the rich Jats could dictate their terms and get the land of the smaller landowners at a price far below the one it would have fetched in an open market. In the nature of things, the richer Jat landowners emerged as money-lenders. Compared to the rest of Punjab, Rohtak district became very conspicuous in this connection. By 1927-28, the number of agriculturist moneylenders in the district had risen to 562, the highest compared to any other district of Punjab. The total amount

53 Ibid. Also see below chapter IX, p.316

54 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt. 1929-30, I(Lahore 1930), p.138.

55 Return of capital employed and interest earned in 1927-28 by rural moneylenders assessed to income-tax in Punjab in 1928-29:

<u>District</u>	<u>No. of Money-lenders</u>	<u>Total capital employed</u>	<u>Income from moneylenders actually taxed</u>
1. Gujranwala	125	37 lakhs	5.23 lakhs
2. Sheikhpura	97	28 lakhs	3.94 lakhs
3. Sialkot	297	106 lakhs	7.04 lakhs
4. Lyallpur	285	37 lakhs	5.60 lakhs
5. Multan	81	50 lakhs	5.70 lakhs
6. Muzaffargarh	88	21 lakhs	2.56 lakhs
7. Dera Ghazi Khan	39	11 lakhs	1.28 lakhs
8. Montgomery	330	85 lakhs	9.80 lakhs
9. Gurdaspur	144	33 lakhs	5.62 lakhs
10. Kangra	67	10 lakhs	1.75 lakhs
11. Ferozepore	430	90 lakhs	13.44 lakhs
12. Amritsar	159	39 lakhs	6.13 lakhs
13. Jullundur	324	23 lakhs	2.98 lakhs
14. Hoshiyarpur	114	10 lakhs	1.55 lakhs
15. Ludhiana	155	25 lakhs	3.69 lakhs
16. Simla	2	1/3 lakhs	0.02 lakhs
17. Ambala	85	23 lakhs	2.97 lakhs
18. Karnal	507	120 lakhs	17.64 lakhs
19. Hissar	347	71 lakhs	11.70 lakhs
*20. Rohtak	562	147 lakhs	13.25 lakhs
21. Gurgaon	458	73 lakhs	7.25 lakhs
22. Gujrat	178	34 lakhs	5.05 lakhs
23. Jhelum	88	18 lakhs	2.65 lakhs
24. Sargodha	338	68 lakhs	10.71 lakhs
25. Jhang	197	41 lakhs	5.03 lakhs
26. Rawalpindi	68	13 lakhs	1.90 lakhs
27. Attock	85	14 lakhs	1.86 lakhs
28. Mianwali	185	38 lakhs	5.41 lakhs
29. Lahore	163	41 lakhs	7.35 lakhs
	<u>3,998</u>	<u>1306 1/3 lakhs</u>	<u>169.70 lakhs</u>

Percentage of income taxed to the total capital employed:
13 per cent, Pu.Bkg.Inq.Rpt. I, statement no. 6, p.332.

invested by them in moneylending was estimated at Rs. 147 lakhs as compared to Rs. 82 lakhs invested by 123 'Banias moneylenders' of the district. The income-tax assessed on this amount came to Rs. 13.25 lakhs. On an average, the outlay of capital per moneylender came to Rs. 12,000.⁵⁶ A survey of 338 of the 562 assesseees made by the income-tax officer revealed that 103 assesseees had an investment of over Rs. 20,000 each. These substantial agriculturist moneylenders had lent out money not only in rural areas, where the rates of interest were very high, but also in mandis (grain markets) and towns.⁵⁷ The smaller moneylenders among the new class of moneylenders however confined themselves to the countryside. 131 of these moneylenders with individual investment between Rs. 10,000 to 20,000 and 104 with investments below Rs. 10,000 each, had dealings purely with their fellow agriculturists. There were, besides, hundreds indeed thousands of agriculturists who became moneylenders on a small scale and whose interest collection, being below Rs. 2,000/- per annum, did not attract the notice of income tax authorities.⁵⁸

It was mostly Hindu Jats who were the new moneylenders in Rohtak district. In his evidence before the Punjab Banking Inquiry

56 Royal Commission on Agriculture, Punjab, VIII, Evidence, Appendix III, p. 594. See evidence of M.L. Darling.

57 Sardar Chanda Singh's (Income tax officer, Hissar) inquiry in Rohtak revealed the following:

<u>Range of investment Rupees:</u>	<u>No. of money-lenders</u>	<u>Total invest-ment</u>	<u>Total inter-est</u>	<u>Average rate of interest</u>
1. 20,000 & over	103	33,71,690	4,24,691	12.6%
2. 10,000 to 20,000	131	21,84,330	19,02,155	15%
3. Below 10,000	104	7,19,562	1,19,379	16%

Table prepared from Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt, I, p.22, note k, p.224.

58 Royal Commission on Agriculture, Punjab, VIII, Evidence, Appendix III, p.594.

Committee, Rao Bahadur Lal Chand of Rohtak correctly explained the position regarding the caste of moneylenders:

The number of increasing agriculturist moneylenders are drawn from the rich landowners of the village. For example, in a Rajput village there are Rajput moneylenders, and in a Jat village there would be Jat moneylenders.

There was an interesting inquiry made in 1924-25 in relation to a village Gijhi situated 15 miles south-east of Rohtak. The position revealed by the inquiry was characteristic of the country-side in Rohtak and the neighbouring districts. The inquiry showed:

20 years ago there were only 2 Jat moneylenders while there were 3 Mahajan and 2 Chippi (cloth-printers) who worked on a large scale. The number of moneylenders who do a fair amount of business is now: Jats 13, Mahajans 4, Bairagi 1, and Chippi 1; in addition to about 6 other Jats who also lend out small sums for short periods.... The number of agriculturist moneylenders is more than double that of all other classes of moneylenders put together. As regards non-agriculturists, almost all the money is lent by Mahajans.... It must not be overlooked, however, that the monied zamindar does not care so much for lending money for the sake of interest as for securing a mortgage with the hope of getting possession of the mortgaged land in the future. Each of the 13 Jat moneylenders has several mortgages to his credit.... Land hunger on the part of the zamindar is the chief motive in his loan transactions.... The Mahajans of the village are fairly well to do without being prosperous, but the agriculturist moneylenders are certainly well off. Some of them have pacca homes built recently; three of these houses cost Rs. 20,000/- and Rs. 10,000/- and Rs. 8,000/- respectively. These people are ever ready to take on mortgages, but their prosperity is not to be wholly ascribed to moneylending as they are also big zamindars on their own account.

The position about land mortgages in the above report confirmed the conclusion that 'Jats' had taken the place of the

59 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., II, evidence, p. 978.

60 Ibid., I, p. 136. Also Punjab Village Surveys: Gijhi, a Village in Rohtak dist. (Lahore 1932), pp. 102-3.

Bania moneylenders. It said that "of 170 acres mortgaged, 162 were mortgaged with Jats".⁶¹

In fact the whole of Rohtak district showed similar figures regarding land mortgages. The statutory agriculturists of Rohtak district were calculated to be holding 90 per cent or more of the total area under mortgage.⁶² In Rohtak district, as in other districts of Punjab, there were rapid alienations of land in the form of mortgages and sales. In 30 years, i.e., between 1901-1931, the cases of both mortgage and sale of land in the district rose by a hundred per cent.⁶³ Similarly the number of usufructuary mortgages, by far the most popular in Rohtak district, doubled itself in less than twenty years, i.e., between 1921-1929 to 1939-1940; with an increase of 80 per cent in the acreage of land under usufructuary mortgage.⁶⁴ All these land transactions were between agricultural tribes only. The caste-wise figures given for the period 1926-27 to 1939-40 show that among the agricultural

61 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., I, p. 139. Also see oral evidence given by the zaildars and co-operators of Rohtak dist. The evidence disclosed: "Bigger landlords who do want to swallow up small landlords are willing to lend. A zamindar moneylender will lend more money to bad deals than a sahuakar as the latter cannot get his land in return for a loan."
Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., II evidence, pp. 872-4.

62 Ibid.

63 For detailed figures of mortgage and sale of land in Rohtak district (1901-1931) see below chapter IX, pp. 317-8.

64 For detailed figures of usufructuary mortgages in Rohtak district (1921-1940) between agricultural tribes only see below chapter IX, pp. 315-6

65

tribes also the major beneficiaries were 'Jats'. The benefits

65 Detailed caste-wise figures (1926-27 to 1939-40) of the total gains (+) or losses (-) in land transactions (mortgages and sales) of Rohtak district between the members of agricultural tribes only:

	<u>1926-27</u>		<u>1927-28</u>		<u>1928-29</u>		<u>1929-30</u>	
	<u>Mort.</u>	<u>Sales</u>	<u>Mort.</u>	<u>Sales</u>	<u>Mort.</u>	<u>Sales</u>	<u>Mort.</u>	<u>Sales</u>
1. Ahir	+175	-351	+144	+77	+197	+118	+202	+132
2. Arain	-	+5	-	+4	-	+3	+3	+2
3. Bairagi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Biloch	-39	-11	-4	+1	-19	-20	-14	-17
5. Gaud-Brahmin	+23	+3	+17	-7	-43	-29	+34	-5
6. Gujar	-22	-12	-	-15	-20	-12	-40	-4
7. Jat*	+362	+536	+364	+50	+389	+179	+323	-5
8. Koroshi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9. Mali	+14	-1	-	+20	+2	-2	+244	+1
10. Moghal	-	-1	+19	-14	-3	+14	+1	-6
11. Pathan	-58	-81	-72	-178	-17	-22	-65	-7
12. Rajput	-377	-62	-420	+62	-413	-33	-624	-59
13. Ror	-14	+1	-6	-	-6	-	-9	-
14. Sayyed	-43	-27	-36	-10	-35	-94	-19	-32
15. Taga	-21	-2	-16	+2	-32	-2	-36	-
16. Chauhan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	<u>1930-31</u>		<u>1931-32</u>		<u>1932-33</u>		<u>1933-34</u>		<u>1934-35</u>	
	<u>Mort.</u>	<u>Sales</u>								
1.	+304	+80	+227	+45	+200	+25	+55	+14	+93	+76
2.	-	-2	-	-	-	-	-	+5	-	-
3.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4.	-10	-7	-5	-3	+5	-12	+3	-	-7	+6
5.	+24	-2	+38	+15	-4	-10	+60	-1	+106	+4
6.	-	-	-47	-10	-5	-4	-4	+11	-1	+11
*7.	+76	+145	+481	+25	-14	+99	+74	+43	-40	+76
8.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.	-6	+5	+8	+15	+3	-13	+10	-7	-1	+4
10.	-	-3	-15	-3	+1	-11	-	-	-9	-11
11.	-11	+1	-36	-12	+89	+42	+8	-10	+85	-61
12.	-390	-224	-654	-63	-274	-11	-55	-1	-171	-80
13.	-	-	-1	-9	+2	-	-	-	-7	-
14.	-3	-3	+10	-	-2	-99	-7	-48	-19	-17
15.	+12	-	-6	-	-3	+6	-32	-6	-5	-3
16.	-	-	-	-	-4	-12	-	-	-	-

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of land transactions as shown accruing to the 'Jat tribe' were however a net gain after subtraction of the losses suffered by the others in the same caste or tribe. Those who lost in these land transactions were mostly petty landowners. The Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee Report pointed out that in 73 per cent of mortgages in Rohtak district, the mortgagors were owners of not more than 5 acres of land. ⁶⁶ For the other land transactions of the district it can be similarly maintained with certainty that the major beneficiaries were the richer stratum of Jats in the district as a whole, and Jats and Ahirs together in the Jhajjar tehsil of the district who between them dominated the agricultural scene of Rohtak district and acquired through mortgage or sale appreciable amount of land from the small peasant proprietors whatever their caste. All these land transactions brought about a startling change in the economic status of the agriculturists of Rohtak district. The petty

	1935-36		1936-37		1937-38		1938-39		1939-40	
	Mort.	Sales								
1.	+87	+55	+218	+7	+104	+105	+116	+54	+172	+33
2.	-	-1	-	-	+1	+1	-5	-	-	+2
3.	-	-	-	-	-5	-	-4	-	-7	-
4.	-	-6	+2	-12	-12	+16	+10	-30	-3	+11
5.	-12	-15	-28	-	-20	+19	-3	+5	-28	+3
6.	-19	+40	-4	+20	-26	+18	-5	-15	-6	+9
*7.	+348	+83	+328	+205	+310	+369	+376	+225	+181	+37
8.	-1	-	-20	-25	-30	-15	-18	-27	-19	-8
9.	-2	+6	-2	+6	+36	+18	-	+21	+4	+10
10.	-2	-10	+2	-	-11	-23	-5	-5	+2	-8
11.	-30	-14	+52	-45	+27	-188	-31	-41	-54	-98
12.	-203	-60	-401	-37	-334	-152	-389	-93	-228	-12
13.	-	-	+2	-	-5	-	-	-	-	-
14.	-36	-80	-29	-101	-6	-122	-13	-112	-9	-48
15.	-16	-1	-16	-	-28	-46	-26	-8	-14	+42
16.	-5	-1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table prepared from statement XXIV appended to the PLRA, for the relevant years.

landowners specially lost to the bigger landowners. The resultant deterioration in the condition of the petty landowners can be seen in the enormous increase in the numbers of tenants of all kinds and agricultural labourers not only between 1921 to 1931, but also during a longer stretch of period covering 1911 to 1951.⁶⁷

The richer landowners were not the only ones in Rohtak district who benefited from these land transactions which were mostly the outcome of their moneylending activities. Ex-army men who returned to their homes on pension and took to moneylending also gained.⁶⁸ Significantly, Jats had provided the bulk of recruits to the army during the World War I. Rohtak district had shared with seven other districts of Punjab the distinction of being treated as a special place for supplying recruits to the army.⁶⁹ Only two tribes were given the 'martial race' status in Rohtak: the Hindu Jats and the Muslim Rajputs. The latter were numerically only 1/9th of the total Jat population in Rohtak.⁷⁰ The British officials openly acknowledged the contribution of Hindu Jats of Rohtak district to the war effort.⁷¹ It is on record that Rohtak occupied third place among the districts of Punjab in supplying recruits to the British

67 For details of the figures regarding changes in the economic category of different agriculturists in Rohtak district between 1911 to 1951 and the controversy regarding the census figures of 1921 and 1931, see below chapter IX, pp.319-21

68 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., I, p. 138.

69 M.S. Leigh, The Punjab and the War (Lahore 1922), pp. 46-47. Although no battalions had been raised entirely from Rohtak several had intimate connection with the district, for example, "The Seventh Haryana Lancers" was mainly recruited from the Haryana region and a large number of the native officers also belonged to Rohtak dist. See JG, 19 Sept. 1923, p.9.

70 The population of Muslim Rajputs was only 33,971 to the Jat population of 262,195. Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, Prt II, p. 244.

71 M.S. Leigh, op.cit., p. 49.

Indian Army.⁷² By 30th November 1918, 23.9 per cent of its total male population had enlisted itself in the army.⁷³ This greatly added to the total income of the peasantry of the district. Sepoys and officers returned from the army not only with money accumulated over the war years but also in most cases with claims to monthly pensions.⁷⁴ As early as 1909, the annual income of Rohtak district made up of the pay and pension of government servants, most of whom had served and were serving in the army, was estimated at Rs. 16.5 lakhs.⁷⁵ In 1927-28, army pension alone amounted to Rs. 7.67 lakhs. On a rough estimate, 50 per cent of ex-army men turned into money-lenders, petty or big, after their return from the army.⁷⁷

The franchise system granted by the Act of 1919 greatly favoured the classes of people mentioned above. The act granted voting right on the basis of landed property such as payment of

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid. JG gives the figures of recruits from Rohtak till 30 July 1917, as 10,200, JG, 18 Sept. 1917, pp. 10-11.

74 H.K. Trevaskis, The Punjab of Today, II (Lahore 1932), p. 42.

75 Punjab Dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, p. 168.

76 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., I, p. 362.

77 Ibid., II, evidence, p. 872.

78 Franchise qualification under the Reforms Act of 1919: For Rural areas every person was entered in the electoral roll of the country who had a place of residence in the area and (a) was a lambardar, zaildar, inamdar or safedposh, (b) was an owner of land whose holding or share in a holding was assessed to land revenue of not less than Rs. 50 p.a., (c) was a crown tenant holding land under the Punjab Colonization of Land Act (Punjab Act V of 1912), or was a lessee for a term of not less than 10 years under the waste land rules, such land being in either case assessed to land revenue of not less than Rs. 50 p.a., or (d) was an assignee of land revenue of not less than Rs. 50 p.a., (e) paid income-tax, (f) was retired and pensioned officer (commissioned or non-commissioned) of the Indian Army. Females and persons under 21 years of age were however disqualified. See "Southborough Franchise Committee Report" in W.A.J. Archbold, Outlines of Indian Constitutional History (London 1926), pp. 181-9. On this basis, the total number of voters in Rohtak was estimated to be 15,000 only. Actually it turned out to be 21,263.

certain amount of land revenue or local rates and of army service. All retired and pensioned officers of the Indian Army, commissioned or non-commissioned, were enfranchised. Chhotu Ram's demand to the Indian Statutory Commission in 1927, on behalf of the martial classes, for separate electorate for all those enjoying soldiers' franchise and for special constituencies for the officers certainly spoke volumes of the support of army personnel to him.⁷⁹ This restricted franchise system based on property qualification and army service was highly favourable to the rich Jats, whether landlords, rich peasants or agriculturist moneylenders. Their dominance in political life was further assured by the creation of 'rural seats' in the Punjab Council in 1919 which greatly outnumbered the 'urban seats'.⁸⁰

Offices like those of zaildars, safedposh and lambardars, which formed the "non-official" part of the revenue agency in a district, were manned by the chief landowning families.⁸¹ Many of the zaildars were also the leading moneylenders of the district.⁸² These three set of officials were also voters in the rural constituencies. In fact, these three officials were held responsible for

79 Indian Statutory Commission, Written Evidence, I, Punjab.

See Memorandum submitted by the Punjab Govt.

80 See "Government of India Act 1919" in W.A.J. Archbold, op.cit., pp. 213-45. The 'Rural' seats in Punjab were 36 as compared to 10 urban seats.

81 JG, 19 Sept. 1923, p. 9. The term 'non-official' was freely used for these officials of the lower revenue agency. See oral evidence of Beazley, I.C.S., Secretary to the Govt. of Punjab, Indian Statutory Commission, Oral Evidence, I, Punjab, 2 Oct. 1928. F.L. Brayne also described them as "un-official agency", Brayne Coll. (MSS Eur F.125), 29L p. F1.

82 HO Notes, DC Gurgaon, 2 Oct. 1929, CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(b).

83 HT, 30 Oct. 1924, p. 10; 30 Mar. 1925, p. 12; 20 April 1925, p. 1.

the strength of Chhotu Ram's "Jee Huzoor" (Yes Sir) party as it was termed by the Haryana Tilak, leading Congress paper of Rohtak, which accused the administration of favouring the Jats for these jobs in the district.⁸⁴ The charge of Haryana Tilak that the influence of these officials was used to strengthen the roots of the Unionist Party seems to be correct. The election commission set aside the election of Lal Chand to the Punjab Council on account of a variety⁸⁵ of reasons; one being the pressurising and terrorising tactics practised by these 'non-officials' on the voters in favour of Lal Chand.⁸⁶ A move made in 1926 and again in 1937-38 by the Congress members to get these posts of 'non-official' revenue agency filled by election instead of nomination was staunchly opposed by the Unionists.⁸⁷ It was clear wherein lay the loyalty and support of these so-called "natural leaders of society".⁸⁸

Similarly, the village panchayats, given legal status and some limited power by the acts of 1912 and 1922, were also in most cases controlled by the Jat landowners. The Chief Panch was to be elected by the proprietary body of a village subsequent to the

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- 84 HT, 25 Feb. 1924, pp. 2-3; 30 June 1924, p. 9; 3 May 1926, p. 6; 20 Dec. 1927, p. 9; 21 June 1928, p. 8.
- 85 HT, 26 May 1924, p. 3; 2 June 1924, p. 7; 30 June 1924, p. 5; 21 July 1924, p. 1; 28 July 1924, p. 1; 4 Aug. 1924, pp. 2, 9; 11 Aug. 1924, pp. 13-4; 1 Sept. 1924, p. 8; 8 Sept. 1924, p. 11; 15 Sept. 1924, p. 5.
- 86 A series of articles were published in the Haryana Tilak by Prabhu Dyal Sharma titled, "Naukar Shahi Ki Alief-Be-Pe" which exposed the pressure exercised by landowners of the district through the offices of zaildar, safedposh and lambardar. See HT, 29 Oct. 1923, p. 12; 19 Nov. 1923, p. 5; 26 Nov. 1923, p. 5; 10 Dec. 1923, p. 6; 24 Dec. 1923, p. 5; 31 Dec. 1923, p. 9.
- 87 HT, 18 Jan. 1926, p. 9; 25 Jan. 1926, p. 5. Also AICC Papers, F. No. P. 10, 1937-39, pp. 102-3.
- 88 F.L. Brayne, Better Villages (Bombay 1946), pp. 11-13.

sanction of the Deputy Commissioner.⁸⁹ In its working the members of the statutory panchayats showed themselves to be generally under "local or tribal" influence.⁹⁰ Later on, in the reorganised panchayats also, the district panchayat officer and one assistant panchayat officer for each tehsil were all Jat by caste in Rohtak district.⁹¹ These Jat officials were all declared to be furthering the activities of the party in power.⁹² Malcolm Lyall Darling in the notes on his tours also noted that the Unionist Party had used the panchayats to get votes.⁹³ Interestingly, despite the great multiplication in the numbers of official panchayats, Salusbury, the Commissioner of Ambala division, had the following remark to make in 1943:⁹⁴

Statutory Panchayats are numerous but shadow. The real business in Jat villages at any rate is done by zamindar Panchayat, a quasi-political organisation.

All in all, in Rohtak district of Chhotu Ram's days Jat landowners not only dominated the socio-economic field but were also in full control of the emerging political machinery as well.

In the triennial elections to the Punjab Legislative Council held in 1921, 1924, 1927 and 1931, under the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms Act of 1919, and in the first elections to the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1937, only Jat landowners were returned

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- 89 H.K. Trevaskis, The Punjab of Today, II (Lahore 1932), p. 267.
 90 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, DC Rohtak, 4 Nov. 1931, CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 2, Prt. 1.
 91 Ibid., HO Notes, Sultan Lal Hussain, DC Rohtak, 11 Jan. 1944.
 92 HO Notes, Shrinagesh, Comm. Ambala Div., 8 Sept. 1941, CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. 4.
 93 Darling Papers, Box No. 5/1, Diary (n.d.).
 94 HO Notes, Salusbury, CF Ambala Div., F. No. A/28, p. 13.

from the general rural constituencies of Rohtak district. The explanation is not far to seek. Out of a total population of 772,272 of Rohtak district in 1921, persons with voting right under the 1919 Reforms Act numbered only 21,263. Under the India Act of 1935 with a more 'liberalised' franchise, the total number of voters

95	<u>Constituency</u>	Names of all the successful candidates from Rohtak Constituency to the Punjab Legislative Council elections Between 1921-1931	Religion & Caste	<u>Year</u>
	1. North-West Rohtak (Non-Muhammadan Rural)	Lal Chand, Rao Bahadur, OBE	Hindu Jat	1921 & 1924
	2. South-East Rohtak (Non-Muhammadan Rural)	Sarup Singh, Rai Bahadur, Risaldar	Hindu Jat	1921
	"	Chhotu Ram, Rai Sahib	Hindu Jat	1924, 1927 & 1931.
	1. North West Rohtak (Non-Muhammadan Rural)	Tek Ram	Hindu Jat	1924
	North-West Rohtak (Non-Muhammadan Rural)	Baldev Singh	Hindu Jat	1927
	"	Ram Sarup	Hindu Jat	1931
	First election to the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1937:			
	1. Chhotu Ram, Hindu Jat, Jhajjar, General Rural, Rohtak district.			
	2. Ram Sarup, Hindu Jat, Central, General Rural, Rohtak district.			
	3. Muhamad Shafi Ali Khan, Khan Sahib, Chowdhri, Muslim Rajput, Mohammadan Rural, Rohtak district.			
	4. Tika Ram Chowdhri, Hindu Jat, North, General Rural, Rohtak district.			
	Information collected from <u>PLCD</u> , I, 8 Jan. 1921, p. 1; VII, 2 Jan. 1924, p. 1; X, 3 Jan. 1927, p. 1; XVIII, 25 Jan. 1931, p. 1. Also <u>PLAD</u> , I, 5 April 1937, p. 1.			
96	<u>PLCD</u> , VII, 21 Nov. 1924, p. 363.			
97	Qualifications dependent on property in the Rural constituencies of Punjab under the Government of India Act 1935: A person was included in the electoral roll for any territorial constituency, if (a) he was either the owner of land in the province assessed to land revenue of not less than Rs. 5 p.a., or (b) was a tenant with a right of occupying as defined in Chapter II of the Punjab Tenancy Act 1887, in respect of land in the province assessed to land revenue of not less than Rs. 5 p.a. or (c) was an assignee of land revenue in the province amounting to not less than Rs. 10 p.a. or (d) was a tenant of not less than 6 acres of irrigated land in the constituency,			

....contd. on next page

in the district increased to 127,290 out of a population of 805,621.⁹⁸ Clearly, despite the 'liberalised franchise' the number of those enfranchised in Rohtak continued to remain severely limited. It is difficult to know the percentage of Jats among the enfranchised people. That it must have been high is evident not only from the landholding structure available in Rohtak district and the fact that the Jats formed the majority of the retired and serving army personnel and nearly monopolised the 'non-official revenue' agency, etc., but also from the fact that only Jat candidates were successful from the Rohtak constituency. This voting behaviour of the Jat electorate stands confirmed by the observation of Darling on 20 years working of the Reforms Act of 1919 that the votes were cast on personal and tribal grounds without reference to political questions.⁹⁹ Chhotu Ram openly and frankly appealed for votes on the slogan of caste.¹⁰⁰ Among Jats the emphasis was further laid on their Gots

or of not less than 12 acres of unirrigated land in the constituency, or (e) was the tenant of both irrigated and unirrigated land in the constituency if the sum of the area of that irrigated land and half the area of that unirrigated land was not less than six acres, or (f) had throughout the twelve months preceding the prescribed date occupied as tenant in the constituency immovable property in the province of the value of not less than Rs. 2,000/- or of an annual rental value of not less than Rs. 60/- not being land assessed to land revenue, or (h) was a zaildar, inamdar, safedposh or lambardar in the constituency. Source: The Government of India Act 1935 (New Delhi 1937), Sixth Schedule, Part VI, pp. 269-70. For other qualifications regarding Franchise introduced under this act, i.e., qualifications dependent on taxation, education, reason of service in His Majesty's forces, additional qualification for women, and special qualification for scheduled castes, see Ibid., pp. 269-72.

- 98 Indian Statutory Commission, II, Punjab, written evidence (Memorandum), see statement of the Punjab Government showing number of voters in different districts, evidence no. E-349.
- 99 M.L. Darling, Wisdom and Waste in a Punjab Village (London 1934), p. 334.
- 100 JG, 19 Sept. 1923, p. 3; 13 May 1925, p. 8; 7 July 1925, p. 7; 15 July 1925, p. 8.

101
 (sub-castes). Chhotu Ram claimed that recruitment of certain important men belonging to the predominant Got of a village could result in a complete and successful control of other Jats. 102

The Haryana Tilak accused Chhotu Ram of winning his election by introducing the differences of Jat and non-Jat. 103 But the Congress in Rohtak district also recognised the importance of the caste factor. This is evident from their choice of candidates from that caste which was 'dominant' in a particular constituency. The choice of Garib Singh as a candidate, who was Jat by caste, to contest against Chhotu Ram in the election of 1937 was a recognition of the reality of caste factor in Rohtak district. 104 And although the Jat candidate of the Congress withdrew from election, and a Brahmin, Mange Ram Vats of village Mandothi of Rohtak district who belonged to the Punjab Socialist Party had to be accepted as the Congress candidate at a very late stage, the pro-Congress Haryana Tilak revealed its caste consciousness in the comment it made on the resultant defeat of the Congress candidate. 105 It wrote:

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- 101 The importance of some of the economically and numerically strong Gots among Jats is reflected in the columns of both JG and HT. See JG, 25 April 1923, p. 15; 2 May 1923, p. 2; 28 Aug. 1923, p. 14; 26 Sept. 1923, p. 9. HT, 19 Jan. 1925, p. 6, 22 May 1934, p. 2; 16 April 1935, p. 3; 14 May 1935, p. 3; 17 Sept. 1935, p. 4.
- 102 See handwritten letter of Chhotu Ram to the DC Rohtak (n.d.), CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, p. 171.
- 103 HT, 16 Feb. 1925, pp. 5-6. Also see C & MG, 2 July 1936, p. 2.
- 104 JG, 19 May 1937, p. 4. Garib Singh, a Hindu Jat, was selected as the Congress candidate to contest the Rohtak south-eastern rural seat against Chhotu Ram. He withdrew from the contest and was consequently expelled from the Congress Party for 5 years. The Congress was accused by Chhotu Ram of setting up one Jat candidate against the other thereby splitting the Jat votes in various constituencies. JG, 26 Jan. 1938, p. 4. For the opinion of HT, see 5 Jan. 1937, p. 7; 26 Feb. 1937, p. 3.
- 105 HT, 9 Mar. 1937, p. 4.

Chhotu Ram has won due to overwhelming Jat votes in this constituency. After all we must remember that there are hardly any people in this constituency who belong to the Biradari (caste/brotherhood) of comrade Mange Ram.

The Congress leadership of Rohtak repeatedly commented that in south-east Punjab voting was purely on caste basis and while so commenting it also disclosed its own weakness and the fact that it suffered from the very same defect as the other party in Rohtak.¹⁰⁶ The Congress despite being the oldest organization and political body could not offer to the voters of Rohtak district any 'election programme' even as late as 1937, i.e., first elections to the Punjab Assembly.¹⁰⁷ It therefore projected local caste issues just like others.

Another feature which helped the representatives of rich Jats of Rohtak in occupying the political echelons of the district and the province was the role which money played during elections. In Darling's estimate a seat in the legislative Council in the 30s would often cost Rs. 10,000 or even Rs. 20,000.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, he observed, the candidate must be rich.¹⁰⁹ Even the Jat Gazette remarked that it was common knowledge that heavy amounts were spent on elections.¹¹⁰ It also mentioned in 1937 a newspaper report where three candidates were said to have spent Rs. 5 lakhs and one candidate out of these was credited with an expenditure of Rs. 2

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- 106 HT, 8 May 1934, pp. 3-4; 16 May 1934, p. 4; 15 April 1934, p. 3; 17 July 1934, p. 8; 23 July 1935, p. 3; 6 Aug. 1935, p. 4; 15 April 1936, pp. 3-4; 6 April 1937, p. 3; 8 Sept. 1937, p. 3.
 107 GI: Home Poll. F. No. 18/11/36, Nov. 1936.
 108 M.L. Darling, op. cit., p. 334.
 109 Ibid.
 110 JG, 3 Mar. 1937, p. 1.

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 lakhs. The restricted franchise, before and after the 1935 Act, and the high cost of fighting elections were major factors in making the rich Jats of Rohtak also politically dominant. This was recognised by Chhotu Ram. At the time of the first and second elections to the Punjab Council in 1921 and 1924, Chhotu Ram emphasised that the leadership of Jat community should be reserved for the rich among the Jats, with enough income from land, who were intelligent, educated, who knew the English language well, and who had sufficient experience in the running of caste and religious sabhas of their own caste/community.¹¹² Chhotu Ram's emphasis on certain Gots among the Jats and recruitment of important men from those Gots also indicates that these 'social superiors' were in a position and in fact able to control the rest of their Got-men. This phenomenon was also recognized by the British officials who had recorded in the census of 1901 that certain tribes and families among the jats could claim the status of "social superiors" to the mass of the tribe depending on the amount of land they held.¹¹³ In fact, just before the elections to the second Reform Council of Punjab, Lal Chand, one of the earliest protagonists of the Unionist Party, proposed the compilation of a "Jat Directory" including the names and addresses of all important jagirdars (landlords), zamindars (landowners), professionals and businessmen among the Jats, who could be asked to lead the election campaign and render help by making direct financial contributions.¹¹⁴ Chhotu Ram and his

111 Ibid.

112 'Editorial' by Chhotu Ram, in JG, 1 June 1921, pp. 3-5. Also see 14 Nov. 1923, p. 15; 5 Dec. 1923, p. 3.

113 Census of India 1901, Punjab, XVII, Part. 1, Report, pp. 324-5.

114 JG, 28 Nov. 1923, p. 14.

associates did not attempt to camouflage, in the early stage of their career, the attempts of the richer stratum of Jats, with socio-economic power behind them, to gain access to political influence as well.

So far as the caste basis and heavy expenditure in the elections was concerned the position remained the same even after the 1935 India Act. In 1936 the Governor of Punjab observed in a letter to Linlithgow, the Viceroy of India, that the elections under the Provincial Autonomy would be fought on "personal and tribal lines rather than on party creed"¹¹⁵. The results of 1937 elections were declared by the Governor to be "very satisfactory" for the south-east region of Punjab as the electorate had shown preference for their "own tribal leaders" against the Congressmen.¹¹⁶ The continued "heavy expenditure" during the elections was also mentioned by the Governor of Punjab.¹¹⁷ Chhotu Ram had very seriously speculated upon fighting the election of 1937 from the landholders constituency.¹¹⁸ For this purpose Chhotu Ram had acquired substantial gifts of land in Rohtak district from certain other big Jat landowners which approximated to a revenue assessment of just over Rs. 500.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹⁵ Linlithgow Coll., 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 16 Oct. 1936.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Also Linlithgow Coll., 87: Craik to Linlithgow, 27 Jan. 1939.

¹¹⁸ CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 10/38, DC Rohtak to P. Marsden, Comm. Ambala Div. 8 Feb. 1936. Also HT, 6 Oct. 1936, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁹ Extract of land gifted in the name of R.B. Ch. Chhotu Ram, Advocate, Rohtak.

<u>Name of the Village</u>	<u>Mutation No.</u>	<u>Donor</u>	<u>Land in Bighas</u>	<u>Land Revenue</u>		
				<u>Rs.</u>	<u>As.</u>	<u>P</u>
1. Kotana, tehsil Rohtak	273	Rajmal s/o Ram Singh, Jat, of Bohar	435	330	9	9
2. Jalalpur, tehsil Rohtak	34	"	79	53	7	11
3. Singh-pura, tehsil Rohtak	283	Herke s/o Udmi, Jat, of Singh-pura	204	128	7	1
		<u>Total</u>	<u>718</u>	<u>512</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>

Source: CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 10/38.

reason behind the desire of Chhotu Ram to fight from a landholders constituency, according to the Deputy Commissioner, was that he was not expecting "an easy time" from his own constituency on account of the Jat votes being split and the strong opposition from Sri Ram Sharma, a local Congressman.¹²⁰ This idea was however dropped by Chhotu Ram possibly because the East Punjab Landholders Constituency, though possessing only 349 voters,¹²¹ consisted largely of the Hindu landholders; majority of these landholders could not even be considered as 'agriculturists' in the technical sense, as they did not belong to the statutory agricultural tribes.¹²² Their future investment in land was terminated so drastically under the Alienation of Land Act of 1900; that they could not be expected to side with Chhotu Ram, the champion of this act.¹²³ Raja Narendra Nath was therefore elected uncontested from this seat in 1937 as he had been elected ever since 1921.¹²⁴ The 'unsafe position' of Chhotu Ram in relation to his constituency in^{the} 1937 election must

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- 120 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 10/38. For details see below chapter VIII, pp. 282-3.
- 121 Calculated from the list of land revenue payers of different groups in Punjab by the Director of Land Records, Punjab, Majitha Papers, F. No. 181, pp. 1-2.
- 122 Indian Statutory Commission, Punjab, I. Oral evidence, 3rd meeting, 2 Nov. 1928, 11 A.M., p. 9(a).
- 123 GI: Reform Office, F. No. KW 83/33R, -1933, see note by Chhotu Ram on the "Distribution of Hindu Seats between Urban and Rural Areas", Annexure B, p. 57.
- 124 Ibid. The Haryana Tilak gave an interesting explanation for Chhotu Ram's change of attitude. Chhotu Ram, according to the paper, had expressed his candidature from the Landholders Constituency of east-Punjab to force Raja Narendra Nath into a compromise.^{The} Hindu Sabha agreed thereby not to oppose Chhotu Ram in the rural constituency of Rohtak and Jhajjar, and Raja Narendra Nath was allowed to be returned uncontested as before. HT, 6 Oct. 1936, pp. 3-4.

have been partially caused by the enlarged franchise under the Provincial Autonomy which added to the rural electorate a number of voters coming from tenants of all kinds and also the depressed classes. Significantly, although Chhotu Ram recommended to the Indian Statutory Commission "as broad a franchise as possible", this franchise included rural tenants and urban labourers only, and not the agriculture labourers.

125

It is clear that in Rohtak district the rich stratum of Jat-cum-moneylenders, who constituted an overwhelming majority among the landowners and controlled the socio-economic fabric of the agrarian society, could under a limited franchise, high cost of fighting elections, and dominance of caste factor, be knit together to form a powerful political unit. The slogan of 'Jatism' as raised by Chhotu Ram and exploited for the benefit of the economically dominant classes among the Jats could and did prove successful in this given situation.

125 Indian Statutory Commission, III, Report of Provincial Committee appointed to confer with the Indian Statutory Committee, pp. 400-3.

Chapter II

MOBILISATION OF JATS

Chhotu Ram realised that in the existing socio-economic structure of Rohtak district and the requirements of the franchise system as introduced by the British the Jats could be readily knit into a powerful political unit. However, for turning them into "a powerful political unit" extensive mobilisation of Jats at the social and political levels was needed.¹ Therefore, like the other castes which were being mobilised extensively all over India in the first two decades of 20th century but with differing results, the Jats were successfully mobilised by Chhotu Ram first in Rohtak district then in the whole of Haryana region. In this connection, Chhotu Ram used all the tools available and fashionable at the time, for example, caste associations, press, education, emphasis on separate identity of Jats, and the demand for the reservation of seats in government services. In these attempts, Chhotu Ram was greatly helped by the British administrators. This help extended from direct monetary assistance and translating into reality the Jat claims to appointments in different government departments to indirect help through participation in the various Jat functions. So much so that Linlithgow could boastfully assert in 1943 that Hindu Jats were a community which "owed everything" to the British.²

In his attempts at mobilisation of Jats Chhotu Ram claimed to speak on behalf of the entire 'Jat' caste, regardless of any

1 Speech of Chhotu Ram, 1 Mar. 1942, The Punjab Past and Present, VIII, Part. 1 (April 1974), pp. 219-25.

2 Linlithgow Coll., 92 : Telegram to B.J. Glancy, 17 May 1943.

economic-class division within it. Even though his appeal and base remained confined to the upper stratum of the rich Jat peasantry, 'Jatism' became the basis of Chhotu Ram's actions, both social and political. In fact in a public speech delivered in 1942, on the occasion of his birthday celebrations at Rohtak, Chhotu Ram recalled his earlier activities in organising Jats and in conducting "vigorous campaign" to awaken them from lethargy.³ "Our initial efforts" he said, "were directed mostly towards the social, economic and educational amelioration of our caste. But we did not conceal our desire to awaken it to a sense of its political rights and duly emphasised its local and political importance."⁴ In fact, there was no attempt at concealing the caste basis of Chhotu Ram's political activities.⁵

A great emphasis was laid on bringing the Jats together on the common platform of caste.⁶ Chhotu Ram chalked out a detailed programme of organising Jats at the tehsil, district and the provincial level.⁷ As early as 1917, Jat sabhas were organised at Rohtak, Sonapat, Ambala, Naraingarh, Aligarh, Bulandshaher, Agra, Muradabad, Bijnaur, and Gujranwala; all places with sizable Jat population.⁸ In all this Chhotu Ram was directly encouraged by the

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5. In 1928 Chhotu Ram spoke with obvious pride in a zamindar conference at Lyallpur, of having awakened the "Jat quam" to a consciousness of their political rights. This was quoted by Lajpat Rai in his Presidential speech delivered at the Provincial Hindu Conference, Agra, on 27-28 Oct. 1928. See Lala Lajpat Rai, Writings and Speeches, ed. by V.C. Joshi, II (Jullundur 1966), pp. 452-3.

6 JG, 1 Jan. 1923, p. 3; 28 Oct. 1925, p. 3.

7 JG, 6 June 1926, p. 3; 3 Feb. 1941, p. 1; 3 Mar. 1941, p. 1; 26 Nov. 1941, p. 1; 29 Sept. 1943, p. 5. Also see C & MG, 30 Mar. 1943, p. 6.

8 JG, 20 Feb. 1917, p. 9.

British officials. They were very frequently invited to these
 "Jat meetings"⁹ and many personally participated in the Jat sabhas.¹⁰
 Various instances can be cited where Jat Dharamshalas (rest-houses)
 were inaugurated by the British officials.¹¹ In 1910, they went to
 the extent of according recognition to the dedication of a
Dharamshala in Delhi to the "Jat nation".¹² The British army
 officers were given to extensive and frequent touring of the Jat
 villages of the Haryana region,¹³ and although these tours were
 undertaken strictly for military purposes they had the effect of
 encouraging the much desired feeling of separate 'Jat-hood' which
 was in close touch with the British Sarkar (Government).

For such 'Separate Jat nation', Jat Mahasabha was visualised
 by Chhotu Ram to be the highest instrument of Jat unity. Chhotu
 Ram had been an active member of the Jat Mahasabha since its
 inception in 1905. He attended all the annual conferences of this
 organisation from 1905-1944, and was its Secretary in 1913.¹⁴
 According to him this organisation was not merely for furthering
 the social, educational and economic interests of Jats, but also
 for an active participation in the political life of the province;
 for establishing, as Chhotu Ram maintained, "our power and
 influence".¹⁵ In fact the Jat Mahasabha appears to have been the

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- 9 H. Gill, interview, 31 Jan. 1979, H. Gill, ex-Punjab civilian, described the conference of Jats as being essentially "political".
 10 JG, 2 May 1923, p. 3; 23 Dec. 1925, p. 6.
 11 Hailes Papers, II (1926-35), 14 Feb. 1926, p. 5.
 12 IOR: P/8121/1910, F. No. 85.
 13 For a detailed account of the tour of 'Jat villages' by Major W.I. Hailes, see Hailes Papers, II (1926-35), pp. 1-24.
 14 PLAD, XXVII, 10 Mar. 1944, p. 492.
 15 Chhotu Ram's speech in a Jat conference in Rohtak, JG, 28 Oct. 1925, p. 3.

forerunner of the Unionist Party and it certainly continued to propagate the aims and policies of this Party though as an independent body.¹⁶ Chhotu Ram declared in 1944 that the Jat Mahasabha was serving as a "bulwark of strength of the Unionist Party" and it was not going to "deviate an inch" from the policies of that party.¹⁷ He even claimed that in Rohtak district the Zamindar League was known as the "Jat League".¹⁸ He also cited the charges made by his critics, without offering any explanation or contradiction, that Jats alone had gained from the 'zamindar organisation' and the 'zamindar government' was in actuality the "Jat government".¹⁹

From the beginning, Chhotu Ram looked upon the press as the most potent medium for mobilising the community.²⁰ He wanted to start a newspaper in every district in order to safeguard the interest of the community and to make effective demands for its rights.²¹ In 1916 Chhotu Ram had started the Urdu Weekly, the Jat Gazette, with the help of his friend Rai Sahib Kanhaiya Lal, a wealthy Jat landowner-cum-moneylender from village Matan-Hail of Rohtak.²² Chhotu Ram himself edited the paper up to 1924. The

16 PLAD, XXII, 10 Mar. 1944, p. 43.

17 Ibid.

18 JG, 27 Sept. 1939, p. 6. The same view was also expressed in JG, 4 Feb. 1931, p. 1. Indeed, there could not be any difference between the two, because in Rohtak district the Zamindar League was mainly financed by contribution of one paisa per rupee of the land revenue paid by the landowners. It was therefore obviously controlled by the Jat landowners. The control of its organisation would naturally depend on the amount of contribution made by the concerned landowners. JG, 14 Jan. 1931, p. 4. Also, see below chapter VIII, p.281.

19 JG, 27 Sept. 1936, p. 6.

20 JG, 9 Jan. 1917, p. 4.

21 JG, 8 June 1921, p. 3.

22 JG, 10 Dec. 1931, p. 5.

Jat Gazette, as its name indicates, openly professed to be the mouthpiece of Jats where ever they lived.²³ The need for this weekly and its aim and policies were explained by Chhotu Ram in one of his articles, written on 10 December 1916, titled "The Birth of Jat Gazette".²⁴

The government took notice of the fact that the Jats of Haryana region wanted their own paper. The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Harcourt, therefore, greatly helped us in launching the paper. We assure him and the government that they will receive no cause of complaint from our side. Since a large number of Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh zamindars belong to the Jat community we propose to make the paper a vehicle for drawing the attention of the government to the social, economic, and educational plight of our community and for demanding our political rights. As regards our policy in matters other than the interests of the Jat community, we shall be loyal to the government. We shall observe the constitutional limits and shall try to bring about mutual and happy understanding between the government and the public. We shall cooperate with the government and shall be ever ready to help them. We hope that the government will continue to be favourably disposed towards the paper even as it had been at the time of its birth.

In keeping with the policy of the weekly Chhotu Ram claimed that its language was moderate.²⁵ At at more private and secret level, in 1932, he placed the entire resources of the Jat Gazette as also that of the party and the district Zamindar League at the disposal of the British administration for combating any movement of civil disobedience or non-payment of taxes in the Rohtak district.²⁶

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- 23 JG, 29 Dec. 1920, pp. 3-4; 2 Sept. 1925, p. 8. Chhotu Ram had considered adopting the name of "Haryana Gazette" for his paper but he dropped it as the name signified a particular region only and his object was to project the paper for 'Jats' of all provinces, districts, and religions. Therefore, the name "Jat Gazette" was adopted. See JG, 10 Dec. 1916, pp. 2-3.
- 24 JG, 10 Dec. 1916, pp. 2-3.
- 25 JG, 5 Jan. 1921, see "Chhotu Ram and the Policy of Jat Gazette", leading article, p. 4.
- 26 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, see handwritten letter of Chhotu Ram to DC Rohtak, 8 Jan. 1932.

A sum of Rs. 250 was made over to Chhotu Ram and his paper for his anti-Congress propaganda and for combating "the pernicious activities of the political extremists"²⁷. Not satisfied with this, Chhotu Ram wanted the Jat Gazette to be given a subsidy for bringing out a series of "very useful and very effective articles" against the civil disobedience movement²⁸.

In Chhotu Ram's specific words the Jat Gazette was a "semi-government paper"²⁹. However, the circulation of the paper was very restricted. Chhotu Ram's constant complaint was that the paper had a circulation of barely 1,000 even though the Jat population in the province in his opinion amounted to 90 lakhs³⁰ and the Jat Gazette was the solitary paper of Jats.³¹ Also, the circulation was limited to the Hindu Jats. The number of subscribers from among the Muslims and Sikh Jats was insignificant; Chhotu Ram admitted that they were prejudiced against it.³² While the Jat readership of the weekly was strictly limited the support from the general public was utterly lacking.³³ Between 1917 and 1923, through the efforts of the District

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- 27 An offer of Rs. 250 had been made to the DC Rohtak by Googan Singh, a Jat Risaldar of village Sunari-kalan, for such a purpose. The DC diverted this fund to the JG. See handwritten remark of DC Rohtak, 8 April 1930 in CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-17.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 JG, 28 Oct. 1925, "Policy of the Jat Gazette and the Government", article by Chhotu Ram, p. 2.
- 30 For Chhotu Ram's appeal for help see JG, 29 June 1925, p. 1; 16 Dec. 1925, p. 8, circulation of the JG was officially estimated to be between 500 to 1,000 in 1920-21. PAR, 1920-21, p. 143.
- 31 JG, 29 June 1927, p. 1. Other Jat newspapers from outside Punjab were: the Risale Chatri (Hindi fortnightly) from Merath, published by Master Shadilal (a Hindu Jat) from the United Provinces; The Jat Sipahi (a Hindi monthly) was started in Rohtak in June 1920 by Shrimati Kesara Devi but it had to be closed down after 1½ years (reason not given), JG, 7 Mar. 1923, pp. 3, 8.
- 32 JG, 18 Sept. 1917, p. 14.
- 33 JG, 29 Dec. 1920, pp. 3-4.

Board of Rohtak, controlled by the nominated British Chairman and the dominant majority of Hindu Jats favouring Chhotu Ram, the Jat Gazette was being supplied at the cost of the Board to all the vernacular, middle and primary schools under its jurisdiction.³⁴ In May 1923, with the mounting antagonism of the district officials against Chhotu Ram, and the split in the dominant Hindu Jat party controlling the Rohtak District Board, a proposal for the continuation of this privilege to the Jat Gazette was outvoted.³⁵ The small circulation and consequent financial difficulties led Chhotu Ram to send in 1932 signed appeals, somewhat threatening in nature, to a large number of his Jat supporters and friends. The concluding paragraph of the appeal read:³⁶

I shall keep a list of all those whom I am addressing now and those who fail to respond will lose all title to my help either for themselves or for their friends and relations. The gravity of the need should be regarded as a sufficient excuse for this expression of my future attitude.... I will sternly refuse to help all who refuse to help the Jat Gazette now.

The financial position of the Jat Gazette did not improve till direct government patronage in the form of government advertisements was made available to the paper. Although it was listed as deserving of government advertisement as early as in 1925³⁷ it was placed on the white list only in 1930.³⁸ It was

34 JG, 23 May 1923, p. 13. Also HT, 14 May 1923, p. 4; 28 May 1923, p. 4.

35 Ibid. For the antagonism of the dist. officials towards Chhotu Ram, see below chapter VII, pp. 217-9, VIII, 292-1.

36 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39. The lines quoted above were underlined by the DC with the remark "danger to Jats working in that area", 11 Nov. 1932.

37 John Maynard, the Finance Member, cited in JG, 8 April 1925, p. 7.

38 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 53/1/35, pp. 625-6.

removed from the list in 1931 but was again placed there in 1932.³⁹
 By 1940, it was estimated that the paper was making a sum of
 Rs. 3,000/- per annum from advertisements issued by the Debt
 Conciliation Boards.⁴⁰ The Jat Gazette alone received this patronage
 in this region; other urdu newspapers with greater circulation like
 the Pratap and the Milap were not even considered for this privilege.
 The British officials of Punjab had started to deprive newspapers
 of governmental advertisements as were guilty of criticising the
 government.⁴¹ Having gained financial stability for the Jat
Gazette,⁴² Chhotu Ram proposed in March 1943 to start a newspaper
 for the "Jats of Punjab" known as the "Punjab Jat".⁴³ This proposal
 did not however materialise. So, in early 1944, he proposed to
 turn the weekly Jat Gazette into a daily paper.⁴⁴ However, even in
 1941 the circulation of Jat Gazette could not exceed 1,000 copies,
 two thirds out of which were being distributed free or as compli-
 mentary copies.⁴⁵ The sale of Jat Gazette was openly canvassed by
 government servants such as tehsildars, inspectors, headclerks and
 army personnel, who personally enrolled readers from the public.⁴⁶

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- 39 Ibid. For reasons of its removal see below chapter VIII, pp. 269-70, 276-9
- 40 PLAD, XII, 14 Mar. 1940, pp. 535-6. As many as 170 advertisements of the Debt Conciliation Boards were given in one issue of the JG. See JG, 5 April 1939, pp. A to J (inserted between pp. 4 and 5).
- 41 JG, 28 Sept. 1927, p. 2.
- 42 Sri Ram Sharma charged that the JG was making Rs. 3,000/- a year out of government advertisements when its monthly expenditure was calculated to be Rs. 200/- only. Chhotu Ram, the then Minister of Revenue, neither offered any explanation nor a contradiction of this accusation. PLAD, XII, 14 Mar. 1940, pp. 535-6.
- 43 Linlithgow Coll, 92; see enclosure no. I in Linlithgow's letter to Glancy, 11 June 1943. Also see Tribune, 9 June 1943, p. 6.
- 44 Brayne Coll, 69; Chhotu Ram to Col. F.L. Brayne, 2 Jan. 1944.
- 45 PLAD, XII, 14 Mar. 1940, pp. 535-6.
- 46 The names of the subscribers enrolled by these officials were published in the JG from time to time. Significantly, these officials were all Jat by caste. JG, 10 Aug. 1938, p. 5; 17 Aug. 1938, p. 5; 14 Dec. 1938, p. 4.

All this was done to meet the "challenge" and the "menace" of the nationalist press branded by the Gazette as the "Bania press" which continued to flourish with every passing year.⁴⁷

Education of Jats was considered by Chhotu Ram as basic to their unity.⁴⁸ He, therefore, helped in the establishment of a number of Jat educational institutions. The Anglo-Sanskrit Jat High School was started at Rohtak in March 1913. The school catered specially for the children of Jats serving in the army.⁴⁹ When this school was de-recognised by the government during the non-cooperation movement, Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand started the Jat Hero's Memorial School at Rohtak in 1921. A few years later, in 1925, both these institutions were merged into one with the help from the British officials.⁵⁰ This help was openly acknowledged by the Managing Committee of the Jat Hero's Memorial High School headed by Chhotu Ram who at once instituted the 'Maclagan Jat Scholarship' of Rs. 20/- per month for higher studies.⁵¹ The British officials on tour were very frequently the chief guests of this school.⁵² Apart from this, the Gurukuls at village Matindo and village Bhainswal, controlled and financed by men belonging to the Jat caste, were also helping the movement of spreading education among the 'Jat community'.⁵³ During 1918, Chhotu Ram himself toured extensively to collect funds for the education of 'Jats'. He had earlier tried to enthuse the Jats of other states like Jodhpur to start separate Jat educational

47 JG, 29 June 1927, p. 1.

48 JG, 1 June 1927, p. 5.

49 JG, 9 Dec. 1916, p. 7.

50 JG, 16 Dec. 1925, p. 6.

51 IOR:P/11879/1930, F. No. 718/4112/2 B.

52 Hailes Papers, II, 14 Feb. 1926, p. 5.

53 JG, 28 Mar. 1923, p. 10; 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12.

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institutions.

By 1930 the Jat High School at Rohtak stood at the top of the list of schools receiving grant-in-aid from the government.⁵⁵ It received Rs. 11,304/- for the year 1928-29, whereas the Jat High School at Hissar received Rs. 4,920/-, Gaud-Brahmin School at Rohtak received Rs. 3,984/-, and Muslim Rajput School at village Kalanaur received Rs. 4,968/- only.⁵⁶ There was, thus, no mistaking the patronage of the government for the Jat High School at Rohtak. Moreover, in 1927 it was the sole recipient of a liberal grant of Rs. 50,000 from the government for the acquisition of land and construction of the school building.⁵⁷

These educational institutions were expected to promote solidarity among Jats. They possessed, in Chhotu Ram's view, certain special qualities which were calculated to arouse "caste spirit" and to foster "caste unity".⁵⁸ He thought that the government institutions did not possess these qualities.⁵⁹ But he insisted on Jats and their schools keeping on the right side of the government for that alone would open the avenues of government service and other professions to the Jat youths.⁶⁰ In 1923, he condemned as 'futile' the education received in the so-called national institutions.⁶¹

54 JG, 23 April 1918, p. 6.

55 PLCD, XV, 24 Feb. 1930, p. 15.

56 Ibid.

57 PLCD, XII, 26 Feb. 1929. See answer to the question no. 1744 of Chhotu Ram.

58 JG, 1 June 1927, p. 5. Also see "Jat Education and Non-Cooperation", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12.

59 JG, 1 June 1927, p. 5.

60 Ibid. Also see "Our Community and Non-Cooperation", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12.

61 "Education and Non-Cooperation", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 17 Jan. 1923, pp. 13 - 16.

So opposed was he to non-cooperation in education that for those who wanted to go to institutions free from governmental control he recommended the two Gurukuls in Rohtak district which were privately managed but had not incurred the disapproval of the government.⁶² Obviously, Chhotu Ram did not want to incur displeasure of the government and to cause a reversal of their general benevolent attitude towards 'Jats' and to invite discontinuance of governmental financial-aid to the Jat institutions.⁶³ In decrying the 'national education', Chhotu Ram employed all kinds of arguments calculated to appeal to the obscurantist and traditional side of the Jats. He said that national institutions would allow Bhangis, Chamars, Isais (Christians) and others to sit with Brahmins, Khattris, and "us", i.e., the Jats.⁶⁴ The government educational institutions on the other hand would help maintain the caste exclusiveness of various higher castes.⁶⁵ Many Jats of Rohtak, who were proud of their superior economic position and were eager to maintain social exclusiveness and distinction, easily fell in line with this reasoning.

Chhotu Ram also voiced the demand for the greater employment of Jats in government services. Through the columns of Jat Gazette, he demanded a 'special position' for Jats in Rohtak district. "Justice demands", Chhotu Ram wrote in 1932, that in Rohtak district "the zamindars should rule and among them the majority should be of Jats".⁶⁶ Consequently, "special share" for Jats was claimed in all

63 JG, 12 Jan. 1921, pp. 8-10.

64 JG, 5 Jan. 1921, p. 11. Also see leading article in JG, 16 Feb. 1921, p. 7.

65 JG, 5 Jan. 1921, p. 11.

66 JG, 9 Sept. 1932, p. 2.

branches of administrative services, government patronage, and even
in the awards of land.⁶⁷ He justified this claim on grounds of their
numerical strength,⁶⁸ their loyalty to the government,⁶⁹ and the
"services" rendered by Jats to the government which over-shadowed
the services of all other castes combined together in the entire
region of Haryana.⁷⁰ These 'services' were sought to be traced by
references to the help rendered by Jats to the government during its
moments of crisis, i.e., during the 1857 uprising,⁷¹ during the
controversy regarding the martial law in Punjab,⁷² and during the
movements like those of non-payment of land revenue and civil
disobedience.⁷³ Recruitment figures of the World War I were often cited
in support of the thesis that Jats were loyal to the Government.
Even in private correspondence Chhotu Ram advised Jat boys to
secure "pedigree tables" of their ancestors in order to show which
of their ancestors had fought during the World War I.⁷⁴ The special
contribution of Jats to the provincial exchequer in the shape of
land revenue, as owners of the bulk of agricultural land, was also
cited for establishing their political importance.⁷⁵ After mentioning
the contributions of Jats in various fields of activity Chhotu Ram

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- 67 Ibid. Also see 20 May 1925, p. 8; 28 Jan. 1931, p. 3;
4 Mar. 1931, p. 5. Also, PLCD, VI, 6 Mar. 1924, p. 396.
- 68 JG, 20 Mar. 1917, pp. 2-3.
- 69 JG, 24 July 1917, p. 3.
- 70 JG, 20 April 1927, pp. 3-5; 23 Nov. 1927, p. 3.
- 71 JG, 24 July 1917, p. 5.
- 72 JG, 28 Oct. 1925,, see "Policy of the Jat Gazette and the
Government", an article by Chhotu Ram, p. 2.
- 73 GI: Home-ests, F. No. 21/6/30, pp. 1-27.
- 74 Letter to Hardwari Lal, 19 Dec. 1934, see Appendix IV.
- 75 GI: Home-ests, F. No. 21/6/30/, pp. 12-15. Also, JG,
28 Jan. 1931, p. 3; 15 July 1931, p. 1; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 3;
16 Sept. 1931, pp. 4-5; 17 Feb. 1937, p. 3.

posed the question: "Do we still need to show our political importance?".

The steady rise of desire among the well-to-do Jats to have their sons educated led to a corresponding demand for jobs for them. This was inevitable, for in Rohtak as elsewhere in Punjab the educated young men had little intention of following their father's calling of cultivating the soil.⁷⁶ Moreover, in a region like Rohtak where the agriculture was so uncertain there was bound to be a rising demand from interested quarters for assured income as well as security of tenure of a government post. To assure them government jobs, Chhotu Ram opposed competitive examination and instead demanded reservation of seats for them.⁷⁷ Here again, Chhotu Ram was voicing the demands of the emerging rich Jat peasantry of Rohtak district as also the army personnel, who because of the colonial underdevelopment of Indian economy, society and culture were experiencing difficulty in finding employment for their sons suitable to their educational attainment. The British administrators were conscious of this economic disaffection among the richer peasantry,⁷⁸ as also of the ex-servicemen desire for civil employment for themselves and their sons.⁷⁹

A counterpart of this demand was the 'exposure' of the under-privileged position of Jats in the administration. The existing

76 The Board of Eco. Inq., Punjab Village Surveys: an economic inquiry of Naggal, a village in Ambala dist. of Punjab (Lahore 1933), p. 72.

77 Letter to Hardwari Lal, 19 Feb. 1935, Appendix V.

78 The difficulty which the rich zamindars faced in procuring jobs for their sons was fully realised by the British rulers. See GI: Home Poll, F. No. 112/1931. Also, Linlithgow Coll, 87: H Craik to Viceroy, 25 Nov. 1938.

79 GI: Home Police, F. No. 8/1/29.

share of Jats in government services was described by Chhotu Ram as "indifferent", "unsatisfactory" and "inadequate" as compared even to the other agricultural castes.⁸⁰ He maintained:⁸¹

If there are certain zamindars to be found in certain government departments, they come either from the Gaud-Brahmin community or from the Punjabi Muslim. Although the Jats form two thirds of the population of agriculturists in Rohtak district they do not occupy two thirds of the government posts. The Jat representation in different departments should conform to their ratio in the population of agriculturists.

Among the agriculturists, Jats were held to be a separate group and, among the Jats, Hindu Jats were again treated as a separate category by Chhotu Ram. It is true that he made a general appeal for due representation of Jats in government services regardless of religion.⁸² But he was predominantly interested in the Hindu Jats of the Haryana region, so much so that he took keen personal interest in promoting the careers of individual Hindu Jat boys.⁸³

Detailed figures were collected and published regarding the representation of Hindu Jats in administration as compared to the strength of non-agriculturist Hindus and other Hindu or Muslim agriculturists, not only concerning the district of Rohtak but

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- 80 JG, 16 Sept. 1931, pp. 4-5. Also see letters to Hardwari Lal, 1 April 1937 and 2 Mar. 1941. . . . Appendix VI, VII.
- 81 JG, 16 Sept. 1931, pp. 4, 5.
- 82 JG, 8 July 1925, p. 5.
- 83 Letters to Hardwari Lal, 19 Dec. 1934; 1 April 1937; 2 Mar. 1941. . . . Appendix IV, VI, VII.

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the whole of Punjab.

This subject came up in the Legislative Council through innumerable questions raised by Chhotu Ram. Most of them related to the inadequate representation for Hindu Jats in government services. However, finding the scope of his 'Jatism' too narrow

84 The following figures were given to show the 'injustice' done to the zamindars generally and Jats specially in the subordinate posts of the department of education on 1 April 1931.

Grade	No. of posts	HINDU POPULATION		HINDU ZAMINDARS				
		Non-Zamin-dars (1)	Zamin-dars (2)	Brah-min (1)	Raj-put (2)	Jat (3)	Ahir (4)	Other castes (5)
Rs.222-500	92	41	1	1	-	-	-	-
Rs.140-190	224	58	4	1	3	-	-	-
Rs.110-135	320	141	8	3	3	1	1	-
Rs.80-100	264	98	22	14	1	5	-	2
Total	900	338	35	19	7	6	1	2

Source: JG, 14 July 1937, p. 2. For similar complaints made by Chhotu Ram see JG, 14 Mar. 1923, p. 3; 17 Aug. 1927, p. 3; 9 Sept. 1931, p. 4; 12 Jan. 1938, p. 6; 2 Mar. 1938, p. 4; 9 Mar. 1938, p. 1; 30 Mar. 1938, p. 1; 13 July 1938, pp. 1, 8; 8 Dec. 1938, p. 4.

85 For details of questions regarding the Hindu Jats raised by Chhotu Ram in the Punjab Council and Assembly, see PLCD, VI, between 2 Jan. 1924 to 24 Mar. 1924, a total of 24 questions were raised by Chhotu Ram, pp. 396-8; VIII, 19 Jan. 1925, p. 10; 12 Mar. 1925, pp. 407-8; VIII B, 3 Dec. 1925, p. 1388; XB, 19 July 1927, pp. 870-1; 22 Nov. 1927, pp. 739, 1204; XII, 25 Feb. 1929, pp. 338-9; 26 Feb. 1929, p. 345; XIV, 3 Dec. 1929, pp. 606-7, 610; XV, 24 Feb. 1930, p. 14; 21 Mar. 1930, pp. 389-90; XXV, 26 June 1934, p. 229; 28 June 1934, p. 274. Also, PLAD, XXII, 10 Mar. 1944, pp. 492-3. All these questions which pertained to Rohtak dist. and specially to the Hindu Jats, were unfailingly cited in the JG within days of their being raised in the Council or the Assembly. The dates of the JG, therefore, correspond roughly to the dates given for PLCD and PLAD, for example, see JG, 20 April 1927, pp. 3, 5; 28 Jan. 1931, pp. 1-3; 20 May 1931, pp. 6-7; 27 May 1931, p. 1. For other demands made by Chhotu Ram on behalf of the Hindu Jats see JG, 24 July 1917, p. 3; 4 Mar. 1923, p. 8; 1 July 1925, p. 2; 8 July 1925, p. 7; 15 July 1925, p. 8; 26 Jan. 1927, p. 3; 23 Nov. 1927, p. 3; 6 Feb. 1929, p. 3; 20 Feb. 1929, p. 5; 21 Jan. 1931, p. 1;

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in relation to the whole of Punjab, Chhotu Ram often changed his emphasis to include not only the Hindu Jats but also the 'Hindu agriculturists' in general; and made similar demands on behalf of the 'Hindu agriculturists'.⁸⁶ But his weekly, the Jat Gazette, continued to speak almost exclusively for the Hindu Jats.

Over the years, a series of articles titled "Chirag Tale Andhera"⁸⁷ appeared in the Jat Gazette under Chhotu Ram's name in order to bring the "sorry plight of Jats", especially those from Rohtak district, to the attention of the government. The departments specially mentioned in these articles were: general administration, judiciary, excise, agriculture, cooperation, police, education, public works, revenue, income-tax, railways, medical, post and telegraph, and provincial and subordinate branches of the civil and military secretariat. Since jobs in these departments required certain educational qualifications, he made a demand for admission facilities through reservations of seats in educational institution so that Jat boys could equip themselves for entrance⁸⁸ into government services.

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- 28 Jan. 1931, p. 3; 4 Mar. 1931, p. 5; 15 July 1931, p. 1; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 3; 9 Sept. 1931, p. 4; 16 Sept. 1931, p. 4; 23 Sept. 1931, p. 2; 18 Nov. 1931, p. 4; 2 Dec. 1931, p. 3; 17 Feb. 1937, p. 3; 23 Feb. 1937, p. 4; 16 June 1937, p. 4; 7 July 1937, p. 3; 14 July 1937, p. 2; 29 Sept. 1937, p. 3; 8 Dec. 1937, p. 4; 12 Jan. 1938, p. 6; 2 Mar. 1938, p. 6; 9 Mar. 1938, p. 1; 28 Mar. 1938, p. 1; 6 April 1938, p. 4; 25 May 1938, pp. 3-4; 17 Aug. 1938, p. 3. For objections by the dist. officials regarding such questions and Chhotu Ram's motive in raising them see below chapter VIII, pp. 292-7.
- 86 For Chhotu Ram's advocacy of 'Hindu agriculturists' see below chapter VIII, pp. 258-61.
- 87 See JG, 14 Mar. 1923, p. 4; 20 May 1925, p. 7; 1 Dec. 1925, p. 6; 16 Sept. 1931, pp. 4-5; 23 Sept. 1931, p. 2; 19 Nov. 1931, p. 4; 2 Dec. 1931, pp. 3-4; 29 Sept. 1937, p. 3.
- 88 PLCD, VI, 6 Mar. 1924, pp. 396-7.

In justification of his overall demand, Chhotu Ram recalled Michael Edward's circular issued to regulate the Punjab Public Services based on resolution no. 4572-S of the Executive Council of Punjab dated, Simla, 3rd October 1919.⁸⁹ The circular laid down that 66 percent of government services must be enjoyed by the zamindars, i.e., statutory agriculturists of the province. In certain departments the reservation was to be even higher than 66 percent. This ratio was declared to be in keeping with the percentage of the statutory agriculturists in the population of Punjab. But as far as the spokesmen of 'Jat rights' like Chhotu Ram were concerned, this executive resolution was interpreted as "preserving the rights of zamindars generally but of Jats specially".⁹⁰ The government was repeatedly attacked for not acting upon the resolution in relation to Jats.⁹¹ Innumerable requests were made to give figures showing employment of the Hindu Jats in government services since the publication of the government resolution.⁹²

In 1933 Chhotu Ram made a determined attempt in the Punjab Council to get 'minority status' for the Hindu Jats.⁹³ Since 1930, the Jat Mahasabha had also been passing resolutions demanding recognition of the Hindu Jats as a minority community.⁹⁴ Minority status would have immensely helped the educated supporters of Chhotu Ram who had rightly come to look upon him as the representative of their interests. Chhotu Ram, on the other hand, by

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- 89 For resolution No. 4572-S, Simla 3 Oct. 1919, see PLCD, VIII, 12 Mar. 1925, pp. 408-15.
 90 JG, 4 April 1923, p. 6. Also, PLCD, VI, 6 Mar. 1924, p. 397.
 91 PLCD, VI, 6 Mar. 1924, pp. 396-7.
 92 Ibid. Also JG, 17 Aug. 1927, p. 2.
 93 PLCD, XXIII, 2 Mar. 1933, p. 559; 17 Mar. 1933, p. 60.
 94 GI; Home-ests, F. No. 21/6/30, pp. 1-27; 14/15/33, pp. 1-2.

demanding minority status for Jats could effectively claim to stand
 for the 'Jat community' as such.⁹⁵ Although this status was not
 granted, British officials certainly gave recognition to the
 employment claims made by Chhotu Ram on behalf of Jats. D.J. Boyd,
 the Chief Secretary to the Government of Punjab, had as early as
 1930 issued special instructions to the various divisions and heads
 of departments in Punjab that the claims of Hindu Jat community for
 appointments under the government should be carefully considered.⁹⁶
 Even prior to this instruction, British officials had been accused
 of favouring the Hindu Jats.⁹⁷ John Maynard, the Revenue Member of
 Punjab, had been hard put to explain in the Council the selection
 of a large number of Hindu Jat candidates for the posts of sub-
 inspectors in 1924-25.⁹⁸

At the district level, Chhotu Ram openly helped his Jat
 followers whenever he could; thus directly and immediately
 benefitting the affluent and the educated section of Jats. In the
 Rohtak District Board, for example, where the followers of Chhotu
 Ram had gained control by 1931, the district officials commented
 upon the preference being given to Jats in allocation of jobs, in
 granting of contracts for public works, and filling vacancies in
 schools and other branches of the Board. Regarding this, E.H. Lincoln,

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- 95 JG, 3 Mar. 1933, p. 5; 17 Mar. 1933, p. 6; 24 Mar. 1933, p. 2;
 23 April 1933, p. 6; 18 Jan. 1934, p. 6.
 96 GI: Home-ests, F. No. 21/6/30, see letter of D.J. Boyd to
 the Chief Secretary Govt. of India, 26 April 1936.
 97 PLCD, VIII, 19 Jan. 1925, p. 10.
 98 Ibid. The Inspector General of Police promised to send
 special instructions to the SPs in the provinces to ensure
 that 18 Jat youth would be recruited within a month. See
 JG, 20 Feb. 1925, p. 5.
 99 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op. cit.

the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, wrote in 1933:

The District Board is now in the hands of what may be called "the Chhotu Ram Party", though this gentleman prefers to remain in the background. This party has clear majority and will require very careful watching as the policy of "Rohtak for the Jats" is likely to be enforced as far as possible. Already the non-Jats "do not count" except K.S. Shafi Ali Khan who rather goes with Chhotu Ram's party.

It may be noted, however, that such political interference in official appointments, etc., was a common phenomenon in the Punjab of those days. R.M.K. Slater, an ex-civil servant of Punjab, recalls the length to which the ministers and even the Premier would go to secure the appointment of their "protégés" as village accountants or headmen or even to lesser posts.¹⁰¹ But it was Chhotu Ram who came in for open and public denunciation by his political opponents in the Punjab Assembly, thereby enabling him to emerge as the champion of 'Jat rights'. In 1942 he was attacked in the Assembly for showing favouritism to the Hindu Jats of Ambala division.¹⁰² It was suggested that a large number of appointments under his control had been made from amongst the Jats to the detriment of the just rights of other communities.¹⁰³ Chhotu Ram categorically denied these allegations,¹⁰⁴ even though in the Jat Gazette he had been boasting all this time for being "the only one" to give recognition to the "otherwise neglected claims of Hindu zamindars" in the government branches under his ministry.¹⁰⁵ The

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- 100 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op. cit.
 101 Forthcoming publication of IOL&R, "Memoires of the District Officers", see R.M.K. Slater, Punjab Commission, 1939-47.
 102 PLAD, XIX, 16 Mar. 1942, p. 394.
 103 Ibid.
 104 Ibid.
 105 JG, 21 July 1937, p. 2; 18 June 1942, p. 3.

allegations persisted and a question enquiring about the number of Hindu Jats of Ambala division promoted to gazetted ranks since April 1937 and about the details of persons whom they had superseded in Chhotu Ram's ministry (Development) was sent to the Assembly secretariat.¹⁰⁶ An answer was interestingly refused on the ground that it "savoured of communalism".¹⁰⁷

Chhotu Ram kept on enlarging the areas of demand for the rights of Hindu Jats. Several representations over the years were made to the Viceroy by the Jat Mahasabha under the guidance of Chhotu Ram for reservation of some posts for Hindu Jats in the Central and Provincial services, and for the nomination of a Hindu Jat to the Indian Civil Service.¹⁰⁸ Chhotu Ram had in 1923 demanded the allocation of the department of agriculture at the ministerial level to a Jat.¹⁰⁹ Jat 'separatism' reached its limit when Chhotu Ram demanded the representation of Jats on the Round Table Conference.¹¹⁰ The Jat Mahasabha in a resolution contended that despite a Jat majority in areas like Delhi, Haryana, and certain districts of the western United Provinces the Jats had no representation on the Round Table Conference even though the community was not lacking in men with brains.¹¹¹

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- 106 PLAD, XIX, 19 Mar. 1942, p. 494. The question was asked by Khan Sahib Khawaja Ghulam Samad and answered by the then Minister for Development, Dasaundha Singh. However, the period for which information was sought, i.e., 1937-41, was the period when Chhotu Ram was the Minister for Development.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 GI: Home-ests, F. No. 21/6/30, pp. 1-27; 176/31, pp. 1-3; 14/15/33, pp. 1-2. Also, JG, 14 Jan. 1925, p. 6; 3 April 1927, p. 2.
- 109 JG, 14 Nov. 1923, see "Time for the Test of Jat Community", an article by Chhotu Ram.
- 110 JG, 15 July 1931, p. 1; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 3.
- 111 Ibid. Also, 12 Aug. 1931, p. 3.

Under the Provincial Autonomy Chhotu Ram did not consider one Hindu Jat minister, one Hindu Jat Secretary and one Hindu Jat member of the Public Service Commission at the topmost level of the Punjab Government to be a fair representation of the massive Hindu Jat population.¹¹² The state of affairs was considered much worse in the United Provinces which also had a large population of Jats who were considered to have been represented in the Assembly¹¹³ in fair numbers but not in any position of political importance. The aspiration of Chhotu Ram for 'Jats' was very well summed up by him in the remark, "Raj Karega Jat", made in a public meeting in the Haryana region in 1944.¹¹⁴ When criticised in the Assembly for wanting to create "Jatisthan", Chhotu Ram gave the following explanation:¹¹⁵

It is true that on one occasion I had used the expression Raj Karega Jat in my own constituency to a gathering of 25,000 to 30,000 people, 95 percent of which were Jats. All that I mean by this expression is that under the principles of democratic rule which ever community's strength is larger in numbers, whether in India as a whole, or any other province, that community is ultimately bound to get a representation in Government in proportion to its strength.

"Raj Karega Jat" could be possible only in a homogeneous Jat province or state. Therefore, Chhotu Ram visualized an enlarged province of Delhi.¹¹⁶ The first time Chhotu Ram made

112 JG, 5 Jan. 1938, p. 3. For similar views see JG, 9 Feb. 1938, p. 4; 27 April 1938, p. 5; 4 May 1938, p. 3. Chhotu Ram remarked that the United Provinces showed the "political death of Jats". JG, 24 Nov. 1937, p. 6.

113 Ibid.

114 PLAD, XXII, 10 Mar. 1944, p. 493.

115 Ibid.

116 The Congress made a similar demand. See AICC Papers, F. No. G-122, 1929. Also HT, 11 Sept. 1928, p. 8; 15 Jan. 1929, p. 4; 2 June 1931, p. 8; 10 Nov. 1931, pp. 3, 5; 22 Jan. 1935, p. 4.

this demand publicly was in his presidential address to the Jat
 Mahasabha in Agra in 1929.¹¹⁷ From then onwards the Jat Mahasabha
 became propagating it very actively.¹¹⁸ It passed several resolu-
 tions regarding extension of the Delhi province and made a
 representation to this effect to the Viceroy.¹¹⁹ The enlarged
 province of Delhi was to include the Ambala division of Punjab
 (with its five districts of Hissar, Karnal, Gurgaon, Rohtak, and
 Ambala) and the Meerut and Agra districts from the United Provinces.¹²⁰
 The new region was to constitute a "homogeneous Hindu Jat region".¹²¹
 One British official, F.L. Brayne, openly supported this demand
 on grounds of encouraging "provincial nationality".¹²²

The primary motive behind this demand, which reveals
 Chhotu Ram's religious and caste bias was to have an overriding
 numerical superiority of the Hindu Jats in the new region.¹²³ The
 Muslim Jats were now grouped by Chhotu Ram with their co-
 religionists and not with their Hindu caste fellows.¹²⁴ About
 Sikh Jats Chhotu Ram, finding the situation worse, observed:¹²⁵

Sikh Jat is a slave of religion. He is very much
 under the influence of his clever non-zamindar co-
 religionists. There does not seem to be any

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- 117 "Presidential Address" of Chhotu Ram delivered to the Jat
 Mahasabha, Agra, on 30 Nov. 1929, JG, 4 Dec. 1929, pp. 4, 8.
 Also see "The Province of Delhi", an article by Chhotu Ram
 in JG, 4 Nov. 1931, pp. 4-5.
- 118 See GI: Home Poll Index 1931, for the subject abstract of
 F. No. 111/31; and GI: Home General Index 1932, and 1934,
 for the subject abstract of F. Nos. 117/32 Pub and 230/34.
 These files were not transferred to the NAI, but the
 subject abstract in the index is an adequate reference.
- 119 JG, 4 Nov. 1931, p. 2.
- 120 Ibid.
- 121 JG, 4 Dec. 1929, pp. 4-5; 4 Nov. 1931, p. 2.
- 122 Brayne Coll, 275; see "Collection of Articles".
- 123 JG, 4 Nov. 1931, p. 2.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 Ibid.

indication of any bond or unity between Hindu and Sikh Jat in the near future. Therefore, I have decided that I should help those Jats in coming together who are inhabiting both sides of the river Jamuna and where there is no religion to divide them.

Hindu Jats were visualised as dominating the new province.

It was realised that a caste found in such large numbers in so many connected areas was going to have extraordinary facility in organising itself.¹²⁶ The new 'Jat homogeneous province' could, of course, function as such under a limited franchise which alone could ensure the continuing benefits to the upper stratum of the Jat peasantry. Chhotu Ram's advocacy of such a 'state' or 'province' based as it was on the existing limited franchise and continuing British domination was, therefore, seen as a step towards increasing the benefit to the upper stratum of Jats under the euphemism of "Raj Karega Jat".

Surprisingly, Chhotu Ram after having extensively advocated such a plan through public platform and press, did not recommend it to the Indian Statutory Reforms Committee. This question had been left entirely to him, but he along with others raised objections to such a scheme.¹²⁷ The reason may perhaps be found in the report made by the Provincial Re-Distribution Committee of the Indian National Congress in 1928, which also advocated such a scheme.¹²⁸

126 JG, 3 Jan. 1923, p. 3.

127 Indian Statutory Commission, View of the Local Government on the Recommendations of the Indian Statutory Commission, 1930 (Calcutta 1930), pp. 410-11.

128 AICC Papers, F. No. E-122, 1929. See Provincial Re-Distribution Committee Report 1928, by seven Congressmen.

They (Hindu Jats) themselves are not happy in the Punjab and sometimes their temporary cooperation with non-Hindu representatives of the Provincial Council has been a cause of embarrassment to the Hindu population of the Punjab. The separation of the Ambala division would straight away solve a number of political problems of the Punjab, regarding which there is a conflict of opinion today.

Chhotu Ram's dominance in Punjab politics based on his alliance with the Unionist Muslims, as against the so called 'Hindu' Congress, would certainly have been endangered by the proposed scheme. This political calculation alone explains his dropping of the scheme meant to bring about a 'homogeneous Hindu Jat province'. But Chhotu Ram shrewdly continued to exhibit now and then his commitment to the 'Jat province' and did not drop the idea publicly. He kept on propagating it through public platform and press till as late as 1935,¹²⁹ and thus kept alive the feeling of 'Jat separatism' by demanding a separate "home-land" for the Hindu Jats.

As seen earlier, contrary to what was being publicly propagated, all attempts of Chhotu Ram at mobilisation of Jats were clearly limited to the upper stratum of Jat peasantry. This does not however mean that Chhotu Ram's attempts met with full success in this respect or that the upper stratum of Jats accepted him as their undisputed leader. His attempts to woo 'Hindu agriculturists' of the same stratum, amongst a larger audience of 'Hindu agriculturists', was an indication of not only the limited nature of his 'Jatism' but also the limited support from the upper

129 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 13; 7 Mar. 1929, p. 8; 18 Feb. 1931, p. 5; 8 April 1931, p. 2; 3 Nov. 1931, p. 8; 10 Nov. 1931, p. 3; 22 Jan. 1935, p. 4

stratum of Jats. This stratum of Jats in Rohtak had always
 indulged in factional politics.¹³⁰ Till the first elections to the
 Punjab Council in 1921, there had been two factions among Jats of
 Rohtak district: the Sanatan Dharam faction and the Arya Samaj
 faction, both headed by the same kind of men, i.e., Rai Sahibs,
 Rai Bahadurs, landlords and big landowners.¹³¹ Because of certain
 reasons the Sanatan Dharam faction declined after 1921.¹³² Within a
 short period the remaining Arya Samaj faction also got split into
 two led by Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand.¹³³ In May 1930, Chhotu Ram in
 a confidential letter to Lincoln acknowledged the existence of
 'two parties' among the Jats.¹³⁴ In fact Chhotu Ram openly wrote
 in the Jat Gazette about "Jat Party Bazi" in Rohtak district.¹³⁵ In
 1932, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak also acknowledged in his
 official report that "Rohtak affairs were largely Chhotu Ram vs.
 Lal Chand".¹³⁶

These two factions of Jats were drawn from the same social
 groups in Rohtak. Lal Chand who started a new political party in
 January 1932 called "Haryana Liberal League" under the instructions
 of British officials, drew its membership from the military

130 CF Ambala Div. F. No. A-4, I, HO Notes, Comm. Ambala Div.
 1919. Also, see below chapter VII, pp. 216, 219

131 Ibid.

132 See below chapter VII, pp. 219, 221 and chapter VIII, p. 297.
 Also, "Men to be known", op. cit.

133 Ibid.

134 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, p. 148. Also, Lincoln's interview
 with Chhotu Ram, 4 Jan. 1932, CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39.

135 Chhotu Ram wrote articles titled "Jat Quam me Phoot ki Devi",
 "Jat Quam me Kala Sanp", see JG, 3 Oct. 1929, p. 3. For
 similar views see JG, 26 July 1923, p. 9; 5 Sept. 1923,
 pp. 8, 10; 7 Nov. 1923, p. 15; 12 Dec. 1923, p. 11; 26 Dec.
 1923, p. 12; 18 Nov. 1925, p. 7; 9 Dec. 1925, p. 8;
 12 June 1929, p. 3.

136 E.H. Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 4 Jan. 1932,
CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39.

personnel, both retired and serving, lawyers, and even from among the rich pro-British 'lalas' and 'sahukars' of the Haryana region.¹³⁷ Lal Chand's party and that of Chhotu Ram had the same aims and objectives; both were loyalists, believers in constitutional methods, and anti-Congress.¹³⁸ The British officials too commented on this similarity.¹³⁹ Both, therefore, tended to cut into each other's strength. However, out of the two Lal Chand steadily lost his political support.¹⁴⁰ After 1924, when he was unseated on account of his election being held void, primarily due to the efforts of Mukand Lal Puri and Shadi Lal,¹⁴¹ Lal Chand could never stage a come back to the provincial politics in an open contest with the Chhotu Ram group. Chhotu Ram on the other hand made successful inroads among the supporters of Lal Chand. The situation regarding the relative strength of the two factions becomes clear after Chhotu Ram's success in the first election to the Punjab Assembly in 1937, and his assumption of ministership. Chhotu Ram by this time emerged with a clear edge over Lal Chand as the leader of 'Jats of Rohtak' and of the 'Hindu zamindars' of Punjab.¹⁴² For this Chhotu Ram built up a 'caste ideology' to bind Jats of different social strata

137 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, pp. 143-5, 437.

138 Ibid., see "Aims and Objects of the Haryana Liberal League", p. 303.

139 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39; C.C. Garbett, Chief Secretary, Punjab Govt. to DC Rohtak, 19 Jan. 1932.

140 HO Notes, A Latifi, Comm. Ambala Div., 12 Feb. 1930, in CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A/28. Also see Lincoln's handwritten note to the Comm. 15 Dec. 1931 in CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39. Also, confidential DO 9-ST to DC Rohtak, 9 Jan. 1932. Ibid.

141 C & MG, 15 July 1924, p. 4. For details see above chapter I, p.31.

142 Observation noted by the district officials, see HO Notes Sultan Lal Hussain, DC Rohtak, 14 Jan. 1944, op.cit. Also HO Notes Salusbury, Comm. Ambala Div. 31 Oct. 1943, CF Ambala Div., F. No. A/28.

and projected and claimed the 'caste interests' on behalf of all Jats. In this attempt he was aided by the successful strengthening of 'caste awareness' by the British census operations which had built up the caste consciousness from a small local sphere into a phenomenon embracing wider regions. Similarly, the recruiting methods of British officials leading to monthly publication of elaborate /caste-wise statistics admittedly "designed to stimulate inter-district and inter-tribal rivalry" also aided Chhotu Ram's efforts. ¹⁴³

Chhotu Ram was inadvertantly helped in his attempts of creating and building up caste awareness among the Jats by the popular press of the time. Chhotu Ram's very frequent utterances in the public regarding 'Jat Raj' and 'Zamindar Raj' were greatly criticised in various newspapers. ¹⁴⁴ The Haryana Tilak led in this attack on Chhotu Ram. ¹⁴⁵ The popular press played into the hands of Chhotu Ram by attacking him as a Jat leader and by doing so in a manner which could be declared to be hostile to the Jats. Direct attacks on 'Jat Raj' and on attempts at establishing it also meant an acknowledgement that such a 'Raj' existed or could exist in Rohtak district. Chhotu Ram could, therefore, justifiably assert: ¹⁴⁶ "all communities complain that Jats are ruling Rohtak".

143 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 373-B, 1920, p. 116.

144 For this read Chhotu Ram's speeches reported in the Vir Bharti, 8 Nov. 1937; 3 Feb. 1938; 6 April 1938; 10 Aug. 1938; 17 Sept. 1938; 21 Sept. 1938; 28 Feb. 1940; cited in Gokal Chand Narang, Plight of Punjab Minorities under the so called Unionist Government (Lahore 1941), pp. 4-8, 9.

145 HT, 23 Sept. 1931, p. 2; 18 Nov. 1931, p. 4; 2 Dec. 1931, p.4; 19 Sept. 1933, p. 2; 28 June 1938, p. 3; 4 Oct. 1938, p. 8; 15 Dec. 1938, p. 2.

146 JG, 17 Feb. 1937, p. 3.

Interestingly, the Jat Gazette took care to publish the views and opinions of those newspapers which commented on the 'dominance of Jats in Rohtak', e.g., the zamindar and the vakil newspapers were quoted in the Jat Gazette as saying: "only one caste is powerful in Rohtak, i.e., Jat." ¹⁴⁷ The Congress charge that Jats wanted to separate themselves from the Hindus was also greatly publicised. ¹⁴⁸ Other newspapers like the Milap ¹⁴⁹ recognising the 'puppeteer' behind the scenes blamed the British Government for encouraging Jats in their separatist tendencies. The paper insisted that Chhotu Ram's selection as a minister in 1924 was to please the Jats. ¹⁵⁰ The general feeling of the contemporary press indeed was that the government was favouring the Jats. ¹⁵¹ The Milap went on to add: "by its diplomacy the government has caused disunion among the Hindus and while carrying on propaganda for years it has persuaded the Jats into considering themselves a separate community". ¹⁵²

The Jat Gazette gave a great deal of publicity to the denunciation of Chhotu Ram by Lajpat Rai who declared Chhotu Ram and his projection of 'Jat interests' as "anti-national". ¹⁵³ In a

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- 147 For quotes from other newspapers see JG, 24 Sept. 1923, p. 3; 17 June 1927, p. 2; 30 Nov. 1927, p. 3; 23 Sept. 1931, p. 2; 18 Nov. 1931, p. 4; 2 Dec. 1931, p. 4; 17 Feb. 1937, p. 3.
- 148 JG, 6 Feb. 1929, p. 6.
- 149 Milap, 20 Sept. 1924, Native Newspaper Report, Punjab. For similar views see HT, 22 Sept. 1924, p. 3; 29 Sept. 1924, p. 10.
- 150 Ibid. For a similar opinion see HT, 22 Sept. 1924, p. 3; 29 Sept. 1924, p. 10; 16 Feb. 1925, pp. 5-6; 4 May 1925, pp. 3-4.
- 151 Pratap, 15 Nov. 1925, Native Newspaper Report, Punjab. The Pratap emphatically contradicted the popular belief that Lal Chand and Chhotu Ram were taken as ministers because they were Jats. This contradiction indicates that contemporary press was advocating such a view.
- 152 Milap, 20 Sept. 1924, see Native Newspaper Report, Punjab.
- 153 JG, 25 April 1927, p. 6; 18 May 1927, p. 3; 1 June 1927, p. 8; 8 June 1927, pp. 6-8; 15 June 1927, pp. 4-5.

greatly publicised debate between Chhotu Ram and Lajpat Rai, the
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 latter was reported to have remarked:

Chhotu Ram's move may prove beneficial to the Jats,
 as the Jats because of this movement may demand and
 succeed in getting certain privileges for themselves.
 But it would prove injurious to the national spirit.

The frequent charges that Jats were 'selfish', 'separate',
 'anti national', or that 'Jat benefits' were being looked at from
 the narrow point of view of 'caste' and not 'nation', or the
 frequent advice to Jats to sink their differences and join the
 'national cause' successfully aroused a counter charge from
 155
 Chhotu Ram: "did the national benefit exclude those of Jats?"

It was clear that the 'nationalist' press also erred in its
 criticism and showed its own weakness and bias by accepting for
 criticism casteism in terms propagated by Chhotu Ram. By attacking
 'Jat interests' they accepted the existence of a homogeneous 'Jat
 community' and its consequent 'interests' where in fact neither
 existed. Chhotu Ram, therefore, could justifiably claim to speak
 on behalf of the 'Jats' of Rohtak and make demands on the basis of
 their large proportion in the population of Rohtak. Chhotu Ram's
 'Jatism' could not be successfully exposed; and under this
 projection of 'caste ideology' the upper stratum of Jats could
 continue to benefit.

154 JG, 25 April 1927, p. 6.
 155 JG, 23 April 1921, p. 5.

Chapter III

JATS VERSUS OTHER CASTES/COMMUNITIES

Chhotu Ram's attempt at mobilisation of Jats was further facilitated by the feeling already in existence among Jats of being a 'separate' and 'superior' caste or community. This feeling of 'racial superiority' and rank tribalism was carefully nurtured among Jats and widely propagated by the British administrators.¹ What Chhotu Ram did was to give an edge to these feelings and tendencies. The superior economic condition of the caste/community as compared to the other castes/communities was never mentioned at any time. According to Chhotu Ram, Jats were decidedly a "superior" caste/community, superior to Khatri, Aroras, Kashmere Brahmins, and Kayasthas; he went on to assert that other castes/communities were anti-Jat because they felt inferior to Jats.² However, Jats alone were not a victim of casteism. Casteism was manifesting itself

1 The idea of Jats being a 'superior tribe' was widely propagated by the British administrators in Punjab. George Cambell and Gubbins were the first ones to officially designate the Jats as the 'finest population in India without doubt'. Fanshawe & Purser reaffirmed this opinion. See H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op.cit., p. 53. The same opinion was carried on by the other British officials, D. Ibbetson, op.cit.; H.A. Rose, Glossary of the Tribes and Castes of the Punjab, III (Lahore 1914); H. Risley, The People of India (Lahore 1915); and the Census of India 1901, Punjab. All the subsequent Census Reports maintained the same view. Other British officials who encouraged and promoted the same opinion were: M.L. Darling (In his four books); H. Calvert, Wealth and Welfare of Punjab; H. K. Trevasakis, op.cit., I, II (Lahore 1931), and The Land of Five Rivers (Oxford 1928).

2 Letter to Hardwar Lal, 19 Feb. 1935, see Appendix V. Chhotu Ram remarked in the Punjab Council that the Jats of south-east Punjab were certainly more courageous than the Banias from south-east Punjab. PLCD, XV, 21 Mar. 1930, pp.813-4.

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among all the castes of Punjab. The Haryana Tilak described Punjab as a "caste ridden province" and defined casteism as "Biradarism" with "Jatism", "Vaishism", "Brahminism", "Jainism" and "Rajputism" as its manifestation, though 'Jatism' was considered to be the most dangerous of the lot, because it had achieved a very high degree of intensity. Chhotu Ram and his weekly, the Jat Gazette, were accused of preaching casteism of a virulent form. Chhotu Ram argued that other castes/communities disapproved of and had grown antagonistic to Jats as the Jats were attempting to consolidate themselves. He said:

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For the past fifteen or twenty years Jats have been seeking to advance politically, socially, economically and educationally like other communities or castes, which also have had their separate associations and platform. Muslims, however, feel that they have in Jats their rival in demanding from the government various concessions. Mahajans imagine that we are getting something out of what, according to them, is

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- 3 See for example, HT, 11 Sept. 1917, p. 3; 14 Aug. 1923, pp. 4-5; 20 Nov. 1928, p. 3; 5 Feb. 1929, p. 5; 5 Nov. 1929, p. 5; 19 Nov. 1929, p. 5; 21 Jan. 1930, p. 5; 28 Jan. 1930, p. 5; 11 Feb. 1930, p. 5; 25 Feb. 1930, p. 3; 3 June 1930, p. 4; 14 April 1931, p. 5; 5 May 1931, p. 3; 12 May 1931, p. 5; 19 May 1931, p. 10; 14 July 1931, p. 3; 15 Sept. 1931, p. 5; 20 Oct. 1931, p. 8; 27 Oct. 1931, p. 2; 1 Dec. 1931, p. 5; 27 June 1933, p. 4; 5 Sept. 1933, p. 3; 19 Sept. 1933, p. 6; 5 Dec. 1933, p. 1; 17 April 1934, p. 3; 12 June 1934, p. 7; 19 June 1934, p. 7; 3 July 1934, p. 7; 17 July 1934, p. 7; 16 April 1935, p. 3; 23 April 1935, p. 3; 16 July 1935, p. 2; 23 July 1935, p. 3; 6 Aug. 1935, p. 4; 3 Sept. 1935, p. 5; 10 Sept. 1935, p. 2; 8 Oct. 1935, p. 4; 15 Oct. 1935, p. 4; 31 Dec. 1935, pp. 2, 10; 18 Feb. 1936, p. 3; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 3; 3 Mar. 1936, p. 3; 10 Mar. 1936, p. 6; 1 April 1936, p. 4; 14 April 1936, p. 4; 21 April 1936, p. 4; 6 April 1937, p. 2; 27 April 1937, p. 3; 4 May 1937, p. 3; 14 Dec. 1937, p. 5; 25 Jan. 1938, p. 8; 22 Feb. 1938, p. 7; 1 Mar. 1938, p. 2; 26 April 1938, p. 4; 3 May 1938, p. 7; 14 June 1938, pp. 3-4; 6 Sept. 1938, p. 3; 20 Dec. 1938, pp. 3-4; 2 May 1939, p. 4; 9 May 1939, p. 4; 18 July 1939, p. 3; 15 Aug. 1939, p. 2; 14 Feb. 1940, p. 4; 3 April 1940, p. 4; 1 May 1940, pp. 7-8; 22 May 1940, p. 4; 29 May 1940, p. 3; 28 Aug. 1940, pp. 3-4; 18 Sept. 1940, p. 1.
- 4 For details of "Biradarism" see HT, 15 Aug. 1933, p. 4; 24 April 1934, p. 3; 4 May 1934, p. 3; 8 May 1934, p. 3; 16 May 1934, p. 3; 22 May 1934, p. 3; 29 May 1934, p. 3.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 JG, 11 Sept. 1927, p. 3.

exclusively theirs. Hindus accuse us of possessing a mentality of separatism. The Arya Samajists feel that the claims of Jats to their recognition as a separate entity constitute a threat to the Arya Samaj; Gaur-Brahmins and Hindus subscribing to the Sanatan Dharam seem to think that Jats as a community will be joining the Arya Samaj and have, therefore, turned against us. Members of other professions and traders, etc., feel that Jats are turning their back on their own profession and are encroaching on theirs. Everybody is jealous of ourselves.

There had been friction for a long time between Jats and other castes in the rural areas of Ambala division. But the friction had emanated from the economically dominant position of Jats who owned majority of the agricultural lands and not really from any idea of tribal or sectional superiority on the part of Jats. With the spread of education among Jats, they began to claim a share in government services and this added to the long subsisting friction. The consequent competition among the educated of the different castes enhanced the feeling of caste animosity. Chhotu Ram exploited the developing situation. His appeal to the self interests of 'Jats' as regards their share in government jobs went home.⁷

Jats, providing the majority of landholders and agricultural moneylenders, controlled the village economy in Rohtak district. They had also been the major beneficiaries of all land transactions whether mortgage or sale.⁸ This economic superiority determined their relationship with other castes, majority of whom were rapidly

7 For Chhotu Ram's work in this connection see above chapter II, pp.51-60. In fact Chhotu Ram's party in power in the Dist. Board of Rohtak was accused of blatantly favouring the Jats for all jobs and "grossly neglecting the interests of minorities". Minorities here were: Mahajans, Musalmans and Gaud-Brahmins. See HO Notes Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op. cit.

8 For details of the role of Jats in the village economy including the pattern of landholdings in Rohtak district see chapter I, pp.8-10.

9 See above chapter I, p.26-7. f.n.66.

losing their position. Land transactions of all kinds led to a large number of and ever increasing civil cases in Rohtak. These civil

10 Details of Civil Cases in Rohtak district between 1901-1932:

	<u>Average</u> <u>1901-05</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>1906-10</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>1911-15</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>1916-20</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>1921</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>1922</u>				
I. Suits for money or moveable property. Registered:	94	65	46	31	27	23				
Unregistered:	1700	1221	1601	4424	4164	5791				
Other suits:	2053	2710	2589	659	489	726				
Total:	3847	3996	4236	5114	4680	6540				
II. Suits for possession or recovery of movable property other than pre-emption suits and suits between mortgagor and mortgagee for possession:	213	231	291	393	319	367				
III. Suits to establish a right to pre-emption:	97	67	129	156	102	91				
IV. Mortgage suits for foreclosure or redemption etc., and other suits for possession by mortgagor or mortgagee:	500	331	149	102	69	121				
V. Suits relating to religious endowment:	1	-	1	-	-	-				
VI. Any other suit not included in the foregoing column:	100	120	199	245	328	260				
VII. Total II to VI:	941	749	769	897	818	839				
VIII. Grand Total:	4758	4745	5005	6011	5498	7379				
IX. No. of suits shown in col. 1 (Total) which were brought by bankers & shopkeepers against agriculturists:	2668	2557	1710	1966	1775	2711				
	<u>1923</u>	<u>1924</u>	<u>1925</u>	<u>1926</u>	<u>1927</u>	<u>1928</u>	<u>1929</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1932</u>
I	24	47	60	36	109	58	49	67	55	47
	5619	4723	9247	5604	5956	6920	5774	6212	6987	9154
	435	214	265	200	165	68	281	127	92	153
	6078	4984	9572	5840	6230	7046	6104	6406	7134	9354
II	351	343	633	377	339	363	351	518	437	532
III	99	51	56	49	64	58	94	147	35	35
IV	69	48	154	90	48	26	33	13	13	29
V	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
VI	194	233	307	339	370	467	397	502	419	485
VII	713	675	1150	855	821	914	875	1180	904	1081
VIII	6791	5659	10722	6695	7051	7960	6979	7586	8038	10435
IX	2797	1756	5447	3525	3599	4178	3541	5437	4384	4836

Source: Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1936, II, Prt. B (Lahore 1936), Table No. 35.

cases involved registered and unregistered suits for money or movable property; suits for possession or recovery of immovable property other than pre-emption suits; suits between mortgagor and mortgagee for possession; suits to establish the right to possession or mortgage; suits for foreclosure of redemption, etc., and suits for possession by mortgagor or mortgagee.¹¹ Furthermore, revenue cases under the Tenancy Act and the Land Revenue Act and cases under Redemption of Mortgages Act¹² also increased. It is not possible to

11 Ibid.

12 Details of Revenue Cases in Rohtak district tried by the Revenue Officers (original cases only excluding the exemption of decrees) during 1901-1933:

	<u>Average</u> <u>1900-06</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>1906-11</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>1911-16</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>1916-21</u>		
1. Revenue Court Cases under the Tenancy Act:	1168	1367	1248	1054		
2. Revenue Officers Cases under the Tenancy Act:	1081	522	927	1331		
3. Revenue Officers Cases under the Land Revenue Act:	2997	2231	3238	3122		
4. Revenue Officers Cases under the Land Alienation Act:	266	135	71	57		
5. Cases under Redemption of Mortgage Act:	-	-	-	251		
6. Miscellaneous Revenue Officers cases:	817	789	984	381		
7. Total Revenue Cases:	6329	5044	6458	6195		
	<u>1921-22</u>	<u>1922-23</u>	<u>1923-24</u>	<u>1924-25</u>	<u>1925-26</u>	<u>1926-27</u>
1.	1266	1313	1208	1057	1119	1074
2.	1328	1780	738	287	805	270
3.	3024	2637	2680	2944	3456	3444
4.	40	48	63	41	42	56
5.	98	97	57	83	48	32
6.	222	671	213	199	248	222
7.	5978	6546	4959	4611	5748	5098
	<u>1927-28</u>	<u>1928-29</u>	<u>1929-30</u>	<u>1930-31</u>	<u>1931-32</u>	<u>1932-33</u>
1.	1310	1137	1503	1427	1511	1473
2.	351	378	552	342	180	258
3.	4257	4740	6510	6348	7951	9232
4.	47	41	71	56	48	31
5.	63	84	77	22	21	32
6.	282	335	628	409	230	212
7.	6310	6715	9341	8604	9941	11238

Source: Ibid. Figures taken from Table No. 36, 'Revenue Court and Officers' cases'.

know from the given figures the number of Jats involved in these cases or the capacity in which they were involved. The landholding structure of Rohtak in which the Jats dominated as majority of landowners is a good index of the involvement of Jats in these innumerable civil and revenue cases, for such cases directly dealt with the landowner and the other categories of his economic subordinates. Whatever side of economic life the Jats occupied, whether that of landowner or the tenant, their full involvement in these cases was clear. Chhotu Ram very often lamented the involvement of Jats in civil and revenue cases and considered the enormous number of cases¹³ as a severe draw on the resources of Jats. These cases may, therefore, be taken as a fair indication of the strained relationship existing in Rohtak district between different castes, whether agriculturist or non-agriculturist, in which Jats due to their special position in relation to land were directly involved. This led to a widespread feeling that 'Jats were not at one with the other castes'.

In any case, the relation of landholding Jats with other castes were generally marked by hostility and suspicion.¹⁴ Quarrels between the landholding Jats of Rohtak district and others, who entered into a subordinate economic relationship with them, whether they were fellow agriculturists and Jats or belonged to non-agriculturist castes, were most common and a widely acknowledged phenomenon of Rohtak district. Chief among the non-agriculturist

13 JG, 12 July 1925, p. 7; 9 Sept. 1931, p. 7. The JG clearly laid down that in village Beri, which had 95% Jat population, the court cases mostly involved the Jats. JG, 22 July 1925, p.7.

14 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, pp. 79, 143-4.

castes who were intimately connected with the Jat landowners as their agricultural labourers were: Khati (carpenter), Lohar (blacksmith), Kumhar (potter), Kahar (water carrier), Sqqa (Muslim water carrier), Chhuhra (sweeper), Nai (barber), Sheikh (mostly weavers) Dhanak (scavenger), and Chippi (tailor). Together they constituted 60 percent of the depressed classes who were associated with agriculture.¹⁵

Despite their very close economic relationship with other agriculturists the 'menial' classes were not recognised as statutory agriculturists under the Alienation of Land Act of 1900. The instructions sent to the Deputy Commissioners of Punjab clearly laid down that as far as possible the village menials and artisans should not be classed as statutory agriculturists.¹⁶ As early as 1894, the British administrators had felt disturbed by what had come to be described as the "Revolt of the kamins".¹⁷ Village Gohana in Rohtak district and Karnal were two places where this revolt was considered to have taken place.¹⁸ The observation of Colonel J.H. Grey, Commissioner of the Delhi division, regarding the 'revolt of kamins' are relevant even to the period under review, i.e., post 1920s Punjab; these causes continued to operate leading to the repetition of a phenomenon similar to that of 1894 and consequent rapid deterioration of the relations between landowners and their kamins.¹⁹ Colonel Grey observed:

15 Ibid.

16 HO Notes, J.H. Grey, Comm. Delhi Div. 1 Feb. 1894, CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-4.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

The village communities are generally breaking up. Thus the community and its representatives have lost the power whereby they controlled their kamins. The latter are no longer dependent on them for competence and protection. Consequently, customary service is being refused. This emancipation of the kamins is inevitable; but is not convenient and we should certainly do nothing to expedite it.

This opinion of Colonel Grey, delivered in 1894, stood confirmed in the thirties when the British administrators believed that any such 'emancipation' would promote a feeling of hatred and enmity among different classes of 'His Majesty's subjects'.²⁰ The arousal of such a feeling would certainly upset the social equilibrium of the agrarian society of Punjab. To keep the kamins suppressed, thus, became a wish common to both the British administration and the owners of agricultural land. Punjab officials like F.L. Brayne, Deputy Commissioner of Gurgaon district, who were for years involved in the 'Rural uplift work' through the 'natural leaders of society', contemptuously described the other agriculturists belonging to the menial classes as "an inferior and semi-slave race" and held them responsible for the "ruin of Gurgaon peasant".²¹

The suppression of the kamins already decreed in the customary law of the land was sought to be perpetuated by the British administration in early 1881 through codification of the same in consultation with the leading men of the villages.²² This reinforcement of the

20 GI: Home Poll, 4/33, p. 12. Mahatama Gandhi's movement for the 'Harijan uplift' in 1930s was for the same reasons considered a dangerous political movement.

21 Brayne Coll, 29: 22 Feb. 1927, p. A-9.

22 C. Tupper, Punjab Customary Law, I (Calcutta 1881), pp. 17-18. This point has been discussed in great detail by Clive Dewey in his unpublished thesis, "The Official Mind and the Problem of Agrarian Indebtedness in India, 1870-1910" (Cambridge 1972), pp. 225-60.

customary law of the land heavily favoured the landowners as against the other agricultural classes because it maintained the status-quo in the villages. This policy of status-quo resulted in mounting friction between the landowners and their kamins. However, despite overwhelming evidence of this friction the British officials till the end of the Raj continued to "see and accept" the relation of the landowning community with their kamins in view of the "long tradition" already established in the villages.²³

However, as mentioned earlier, the 'revolt' had already begun. The 1908 assessment report of Gohana tehsil of Rohtak district noted the tendency of the menials to "assert" themselves in their relations with the landowners and went on to prophesy the disappearance of their customary relations.²⁴ Indeed the economic relationship between the landowners and the kamins was highly oppressive from the point of view of the latter. Kamins felt compelled to borrow money from the landowners, and thus remained perpetually indebted to them. In the agrarian set up of Punjab where all loans were given on the Haisiyat (personal security) of the borrower the kamin, who provided agricultural labour to the landowner, could hope to borrow from him alone as he had little or no security to offer for the debt.²⁵ Apart from this, four other factors, which contributed greatly

23 Sir George Abell, interview, 7 Nov. 1978. A.A. Williams, another ex-Punjab civilian, also held the same opinion and in retrospect considered this non-interference in the social set up of the country "a mistake". A.A. Williams, interview, 8 Jan. 1979.

24 IOR: P/7841/1908, F. No. 59, p. 11.

25 Board of Eco. Inq., Punjab Village Surveys: Gijhi, a Village in Rohtak District (Lahore 1932), p. 103. Also Punjab Village Surveys: Naggal, a Village in Ambala district (Lahore 1933), p. 59. Also for the indebtedness of the untouchables to the landowners in Rohtak dist. see HT, 23 Jan. 1934, p. 3; 5 June 1934, p. 7; 16 July 1935, p. 4.

towards the oppression of the kamins and consequent illfeeling and friction, were: the proprietary body of the village exacted village-cesses from them, compelled them to render Begar, kept the wages of the agricultural labourers determinedly low and, lastly, objected to their use of village shamilat (common) land.

Among the village-cess charges, the commonest in the villages of Rohtak district was the 'hearth-fee'.²⁶ Untouchables, declared non-agriculturists under the legislation of 1900, were made to pay according to a custom long established this 'hearth-fee' as a sort of "tribute to the lord of the soil", an acknowledgement to the proprietors for their permission to reside. This 'hearth-fee' was known by different names in different parts of Punjab. In south-eastern Punjab, i.e., the Ambala division, it was known as "Kodi-Kamini".²⁷ Just as the income derived from land, village cesses were also defined in the Punjab Settlement Manual as "property" for the landowners. In fact, wherever they were recognised in the Wazib-ul-arz (Record of Rights), they could be recovered by the landowners through suits in the court.²⁸ Not only the menial castes but all the non-proprietors like traders and artisans, i.e., Banias

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- 26 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op. cit., p. 57. Some of the commonest village cesses were: 'Kodi-Kamini' or hearth-cess of the eastern Punjab, and the corresponding 'Hak-Buha' or the 'door-cess' in some of the western districts, 'Kaminia', 'Ahtrafi', or 'Muhatarfa' was paid by the artisans to the proprietors of the village in which they plied their 'Hijra' or trade. 'Dharat' or 'weightment fee' levied on sales of village produce, and 'marriage-fee' known by various names as 'Puch-Bakri', 'Thana-Patti', etc., also existed. See J.M. Douie, Punjab Settlement Manual (Lahore 1915), p. 49.
- 27 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op. cit., p. 57; J.M. Douie, op. cit., p. 49.
- 28 J.M. Douie, op. cit., p. 49. The village-cesses were significantly described in this Manual as: "signitorial cesses in their essence such as found in the primitive societies in which certain persons or classes are dependent on other persons or classes for protection". Ibid.

Sunars, and others, were also made to pay the hearth-fee which was usually charged at the rate of Rs. 2 per hearth, per annum, by the village proprietary body.²⁹ In 1878-79 no less than Rs. 40,000 were calculated to have been realised from this source from 323 out of the 481 inhabited estates then existing in Rohtak district.³⁰ Few attempts had been made to abolish these dues in the late 19th century because the British administrators adopted in 1893 a policy of non interference in the matter of levies of small dues by the proprietary body from the other inhabitants of the village on the ground that they saw "nothing necessarily objectionable in the continuation of a system by which one class of subjects were allowed to tax another class for the benefit of their pockets."³¹

The resentment in Rohtak district against these customary cesses mounted in the thirties of the 20th century and consequently innumerable requests were made for its removal.³² But there was no deviation from the policy adopted in 1893 and the Jat landowners as

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- 29 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, p. 79. It was further explained that technically there was no distinction between the 'hearth-fee' paid by the menials and the professional-tax called "Taraf Ahtrafi" paid by the traders and the artisans; both were levied at the same rate and in the same way and were loosely grouped together as 'hearth-fee'. Ibid.
- 30 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op.cit., p. 57. The report also pointed out: "curiously enough, the largest proportional number of estates in which these fees are not realised is found in Rohtak tehsil". Ibid.
- 31 J.M. Douie, op.cit., see Sir Dennis Fitzpatric's letter No. 16, 15 Oct. 1893, p. 50.
- 32 HT, 14 April 1931, p. 1; 12 May 1931, p. 5; 4 July 1933, p. 4; 1 Aug. 1933, p. 4; 20 Feb. 1934, pp. 4-5; 3 April 1934, p. 4; 24 April 1934, p. 4; 24 Aug. 1934, p. 5; 26 Mar. 1935, p. 5; 12 June 1935, p. 5; 19 June 1935, p. 5; 7 Sept. 1935, p. 5; 26 Nov. 1935, pp. 3, 6; 21 April 1936, p. 4; 6 April 1937, p. 7; 25 Jan. 1938, p. 8; 5 April 1938, pp. 4, 4D; 12 April 1938, p. 4; 19 July 1938, p. 4; 2 Aug. 1938, pp. 2, 4; 6 Sept. 1938, p. 5; 20 Sept. 1938, p. 3; 4 Oct. 1938, p. 8; 10 Jan. 1939, pp. 2, 8; 24 Jan. 1939, p. 5; 7 Feb. 1939, p. 5; 9 May 1939, p. 5; 13 June 1939, p. 4; 10 April 1940, p. 7.

also the other landowners of Rohtak continued to collect these dues. There is no evidence of remission of these dues by the landowners even during the drought years when their own land revenue had had to be suspended or partially remitted by the government. Apart from the village-cesses several attempts were made to impose on the kamins additional taxes and fines.³³ For example, effort was made to make them pay for owning cattle: Re. 1 for a buffalo, annas 8 for a cow,³⁴ and annas 2 for a goat.

The kamins of the village were also involved in rendering certain 'customary duties' or services to the landowners and in return were given certain 'customary dues' by them. This traditional practice, "typical" in all the villages, was termed as "customary Begar" (which was translated as "fagging") by the British officials.³⁵ The Begar system operated in various forms. Among the duties the system entailed assistance in reaping of the harvest, clearance of fields before ploughing, cutting or gathering of fodder, tending the landowners' cattle, digging of the village ponds, rendering of domestic service by menial women, etc.³⁶ Among the kamins rendering these duties, Chamar, Lohar. and Khati were classed separately; their services, being intimately connected with agriculture, were

33 HT, 1 Aug. 1933, p. 4; 16 July 1935, p. 5; 24 Sept. 1935, pp. 6, 8; 7 Sept. 1937, p. 5; 14 Sept. 1937, p. 1; 5 April 1938, p. 4D; 2 Aug. 1938, pp. 2, 7. The fines were imposed on the kamins by the landowners. See HT, 24 Sept. 1935, pp. 6, 8; 15 Oct. 1935, p. 6; 23 June 1936, p. 7.

34 In village Rohad (a big Jat village) the Jat landowners tried to coerce their kamins into giving a tax of Rs. 5 per house, called 'Jari and Tari', a supposed contribution towards a dance recital for the entertainment of village inhabitants. See HT, 14 Mar. 1927, p. 1.

35 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, pp. 138-9.

36 Ibid.

more highly remunerated.³⁷ These three were necessary for repairing and making the cultivators' tools. The services of others, i.e., potters, weavers, washermen, etc., called "Khangui Kamini" or the household menials,³⁸ were not as constant and were less well-paid. In return, the kamins were given certain dues; sometimes at the rate of so many seers per crop, or per plough, or a definite fraction of the produce of cereals and pulses. Very often the dues of Lohar, Khati and Chamar came to be 1/40th to 1/20th of the entire crop of grain.³⁹ Both the dues and duties of the kamins differed from district to district and even from village to village.⁴⁰

The so called system of 'customary Begar' was a frequent cause of conflict between the landowners and the village menials of Rohtak district.⁴¹ The district Gazetteer of 1910 noted:

The quarrels between the Jats and their menials are increasingly common and each side is more apt to claim its dues than to fulfill its obligations.

J.A. Ferguson, Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, pointed out in 1922 that some village menials were refusing to perform their "immemorial village duties" and consequently the landowners were retorting back.⁴² The Haryana Tilak also referred to a number of cases to show that the kamins in return for rendering Begar service were not getting full 'customary dues' from the landowners.⁴³ Even the Jat Gazette, almost always partial to the landowners,⁴⁴ mentioned one such case. The official evidence however generally suggests that the attitude of both,

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., pp. 78-79.

42 IOR/P/11372/1923, F. No. 721/28. See note recorded by DC Rohtak, 22 Nov. 1923.

43 HT, 12 Nov. 1929, p. 6; 19 Nov. 1929, p. 3.

44 JG, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3.

the landowners as well as their kamins, was responsible for the conflict. For example, in 1910 the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry said that Chamars, who were traditionally given the skin of dead cattle by their landowners without any charges and in return got the customary two pairs of shoes a year and small leather articles used in husbandry, were showing along with the landowners a different pattern of behaviour in observing these customs.⁴⁵ One reason for this was the rise in prices of hides owing to the growing demand for export.⁴⁶ The landowners instead of giving them hides totally free of cost attempted to sell it to them; and in certain villages they succeeded in discarding the old custom and in selling the hides in the market themselves.⁴⁷ The Chamars retaliated by poisoning the cattle.⁴⁸ They also attempted to sell their commodities to the landowners at higher rates.⁴⁹ Consequently, in Rohtak district, where this trade flourished, these disputes had become extremely common.⁵⁰ Any resistance by the Chamars was met by forcibly closing the tannery and forcing them to work outside the village abadi (residential area).⁵¹ Significantly, under the Unionist regime, the statutory panchayats of the villages were empowered by the ^{Punjab} Village Panchayat Act of 1939 to prohibit the dyeing and tanning of skins within 220 yards of the village abadi.⁵² The panchayats of the village proprietary bodies also met frequently to fix the prices of

45 Board of Eco. Inq., Cattle and Dairying in the Punjab (Lahore 1910), pp. 44-45.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.

49 HT, 7 Aug. 1934, p. 7; 24 Sept. 1935, pp. 6, 8; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 5.

50 Ibid. Also see Board of Eco. Inq., Cattle and Dairying in the Punjab, pp. 44-45.

51 Ibid.

52 IOR/L/R&J/7/3541, 1939. Punjab Act No. XI of 1939.

shoes and certain other articles needed by them for cultivation.⁵³
 The menials on their side made attempts at substitution of the
 existing customary dues paid in kind by cash payment specially⁵⁴
 during the agriculturally depressed period. The landowners
 obviously resisted these demands; but, at the time of high
 agricultural prices, they on their side attempted to reduce the
 customary dues payable in kind on the ground that agricultural⁵⁵
 commodities fetched high prices.

The attempts of the landowners to compel the kamins to work
 on lower agricultural wages provided yet another ground for serious⁵⁶
 disputes between the two. Agricultural labour in Rohtak district
 was provided almost entirely by the untouchables. The menials of
 Rohtak district, dissatisfied with their existing wages, were asking⁵⁷
 for higher rates prevailing in Punjab. Several factors like heavy
 mortality among the menial classes due to diseases and opening up
 of the canal colonies, etc., which made for severe competition⁵⁸
 among the landowner-employees led to the rise of rural wages. All
 the Rural Wage Surveys conducted between 1912 to 1943 show that
 the rural wages for earners of different categories in Rohtak
 district, despite showing rise, continued to be very low when

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- 53 HT, 7 Aug. 1934, p. 7; 24 Sept. 1935, pp. 6, 8; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 5.
 54 HT, 12 May 1938, see "Begar aur Mazdoor" an article by Nandu Ram, p. 7.
 55 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3; 7 Oct. 1931, p. 3; 1 Sept. 1937, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 1.
 56 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, p. 138.
 57 CF. Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-28, p. 16.
 58 Report of the Second Regular Wage Survey of the Punjab (Lahore 1923), see Report by H.K. Trevaskis, p. 9.

59 compared to the rest of Punjab. Even in Punjab, the same surveys concluded that the increase in rural wages had not kept pace with the increase in the cost of living.⁶⁰ This led to a constant tussle between the payers and receivers of rural wages.

The landowners of Rohtak district, majority of whom were Jats, tried to stabilise the prevailing low wages in their district. In 1917 many villages reported the stoppage or decrease in the amount of grain which used to be given as a supplement to cash wages.⁶¹ On the other hand during the severe economic crisis of 1929-33, the reports of the Deputy Commissioners indicated that due to the steep fall in prices of agricultural commodities, the menials, who were being paid in cash during the days of prosperity, were now being paid in grain.⁶² In most villages of the district the attempt was

59 A comparison of the rural wages of the unskilled labour by-day in the district of Rohtak and Montgomery:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rohtak dist.</u>	<u>Montgomery dist.</u>
1909	5 annas	6 annas
1912	5½ annas	6 annas
1917	4 annas	8 annas
1927	6 annas	12 annas
1932	3 annas	6 annas
1937	4 annas	6 annas
1943	12 annas	16 annas

Figures taken from Report of the Wage Surveys, Punjab, for the years 1912, 1917, 1927, 1932, 1937 and 1943. Almost similar percentage of disparity existed between the skilled labour like carpenters, blacksmith, masons and ploughmen employed in Rohtak district and elsewhere in Punjab. Montgomery district has been taken not only because it was part of the region which attracted migration of agricultural labour from Rohtak, but also because this was the district where Chhotu Ram had his lands. The adjacent areas of Rohtak district kept just as low wages as Rohtak. For example, in Gurgaon district the rate of unskilled labour by day was only 3 annas, 1 anna less than Rohtak, "hardly a living wage". See Wage Survey, 1917, p. 3.

60 Conclusion reached from the Report of the Wage Surveys, Punjab (1912 to 1943).

61 Report of the Wage Survey, Punjab, 1917, p. 3.

62 IOR:P/12017/1933, F. No. 1010/13/0015, pp. 16, 23.

63

actually to reduce the wages of agricultural labourers. The menials were hardly in a position to retaliate specially during the depression of the 30s when one of the economies effect by the landowners was to reduce, as far as possible, the quantum of hired labour employed on the land.⁶⁴ Agricultural labour was thus further hit by severe unemployment which further brought down their wages.

In the controversy around the determination of agricultural wages, Chhotu Ram took the side of landowners and put up a strong case on their behalf for reduction of wages of the agricultural labourers in two of his editorials. Chhotu Ram's editorial dated 20 June 1923 read:⁶⁵

Within two years the prices of agricultural commodities have fallen by more than half, i.e., the price of wheat has fallen from Rs. 7 per maund in 1921 to Rs. 3½ per maund in 1923 leading to severe losses to the landowners. Despite this, the agricultural labourers have continued to charge their wages at the old rates. The fall in agricultural prices has meant that in terms of money there has been an actual rise in their wages for now their expenditure on food has lessened to a great extent. If a labourer earns 8 annas a day, he needs only 3 annas per day for his entire family for daily essentials like roti, dal, tobacco, salt, and chillies, etc. The rest of five annas are his saving. Yet the agricultural labourers complain and agitate for higher wages. The landowners should get together and by mutual agreement devise some way to raise the prices of agricultural commodities and also to bring down the wages of their agricultural labourers.

Same view was advocated by Chhotu Ram in 1931 when he made an identical complaint of wheat being sold in Rohtak district at Rs. 1-4 as. per maund in 1931 when its price was Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 per

63 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, p. 143. Also HT, 14 July 1931, p. 3.

64 IOR:P/12017/1933, F. No. 1010/13100/5. See DO No. 649 R, from the Registrar Cooperative Societies Punjab, Camp Maharu, 24 May 1933.

65 See editorial, "Zamindars and Agricultural Labourers" in JG, 20 June 1923, p. 5. Same view was expressed in the editorial of 27 June 1923, p. 5. Also see below, pp.101.2.

maund in 1926. Despite this fall, he claimed, the agricultural wages had retained the all time high level of 1926.⁶⁶ In view of the steep fall in agricultural prices the Jat Gazette made a case in 1931 for reduction of agricultural wages to one anna per day instead of eight annas per day which the labourers of Rohtak district,⁶⁷ it was claimed, were demanding. Interestingly, the Punjab Government rejected the demand of higher wages made by the agricultural labourers of Rohtak district employed for relief work during the famine of 1938 on the ground that the prices of agricultural commodities were very low.⁶⁸

The landowners as a body had indeed devised certain methods to promote their interests in this connection. Panchayats were held by the proprietary body of the village to decide the rate of wages to be paid to the agricultural labourers. According to the Haryana Tilak the commonest rate enforced was between 1 to 2 annas a day during the thirties.⁶⁹ Extreme measures like hanging of the menials were also discussed; and at least threats to do so were made,⁷⁰ though they were never carried out. They however certainly served their purpose. Work opportunity in the neighbouring villages was also not feasible as the landowners of one village did not accommodate the rebellious agricultural labourers of another village.⁷¹ Only those agricultural labourers who fled enmass to far away places were successful in getting work. Large

66 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3; 16 Sept. 1931, p. 1. For more details see below, p. 88 and chapter IV, pp.142- 3.

67 JG, 16 Sept. 1931, p. 1.

68 Linlithgow Coll, 87: H. Craik to the Viceroy, 26/27 Jan. 1939.

69 HT, 7 Aug. 1934, p. 7; 24 Sept. 1935, p. 8; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 5; 3 Mar. 1936, p. 9; 25 Aug. 1936, p. 5.

70 HT, 27 April 1937, p. 4.

71 HT, 14 Sept. 1937, p. 7.

number of them, therefore, fled the Haryana region and migrated to Lahore, Amritsar, Montgomery, and other districts of central and western Punjab and even Sindh.⁷² The official records also give evidence to the fact that even in 1908-9 the village servants had revealed an increased tendency to migrate to more favoured parts.⁷³ This had the effect of increasing the value of those who stayed behind; consequently they became more determined to assert themselves.⁷⁴ Open clashes between the two due to disputes relating to the payment of wages were not infrequent. Ods, a nomadic tribe, who also worked as agricultural labourers in the Haryana region, destroyed the standing crops of the landowners by hordes of sheep which they (Ods) maintained.⁷⁵ In 1928 alone, 32 landowners had been killed in Rohtak by Ods on three different occasions.⁷⁶

Similarly, the other village kamins were also refusing to work at lower wages. The Jat Gazette took objection to the open refusal of Julaha, Barahi and Lohar to work at lower wages even at the cost of sitting idle.⁷⁷ In 1923 Chhotu Ram wrote about the trouble which Jat landowners were having with Muslim Kannoos, Manjars, Dhobis, Pheriwalas and Kunjaras.⁷⁸ He even acknowledged the charge made by Zamindar and Vakil newspapers that these classes were being troubled by the ^{Jat} landowners in Rohtak.⁷⁹ But in

72 HT, 5 June 1934, p. 7.

73 IOR:P/8120/1909, F. No. 62, pp. 14-15.

74 IOR:P/7841/1908, F. No. 59, p. 11.

75 CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(b). Also see JG, 7 Oct. 1925, p. 3; 28 Oct. 1925, p. 2; 10 May 1939, p. 7. HT, 10 Nov. 1936, p. 5; 8 Sept. 1938, pp. 6, 8; 15 Sept. 1939, pp. 11-12.

76 For details of the incidents see letter of SP Rohtak, No. 17497 to D.M. in CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P. IV-56, pp. 27-29.

77 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3.

78 JG, 21 Oct. 1923, p. 2. Also see 20 June 1923, p. 7; 27 June 1923, p. 5.

79 Zamindar, 12 Sept. 1923, and Vakil, 16 Sept. 1923, cited in JG, 24 Oct. 1923, p. 3. Also see Chhotu Ram's explanation in the same issue.

justification he pointed out the "unreasonable" demands of the menial classes in the context of steep fall in the prices of agricultural produce.⁸⁰ In fact, except on the question of mazdoori (agricultural wages) Chhotu Ram projected through the Jat Gazette the existence of cordial and amicable relations between the Jat landowners and their kamins.⁸¹ Regarding this question, he went to the extent of advocating boycott of Jullahas, Barahi, Lohars and Chamars, until they agreed to behave themselves and to reduce not only their demands as regards wages but also the prices of other services rendered to the village proprietary bodies.⁸²

The village shamilat land and its use also affected the relation between the proprietors and the non-proprietary bodies of the village, specially the kamins. Owing to the increase in population, extension of cultivation, and extensive breaking up of the grazing grounds, the growing herds of cattle threatened the surviving pastures of the shamilat land which was originally designed for grazing ground and cattle breeding.⁸³ The increasing anxiety of the landowners to preserve the shamilat land for their own cattle led them into denying at the slightest pretext the grazing rights, traditionally granted, to their social inferiors specially the kamins. This could be done because the shamilat land belonged to the village proprietary body and could be used only with the permission and at the pleasure of this body. The uncertain

80 Ibid.

81 JG, 11 April 1923, p. 4; 20 June 1923, p. 7; 27 June 1923, p. 5; 16 Sept. 1931, p. 1; 1 Sept. 1937, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 1.

82 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3; 7 Oct. 1931, p. 3; 1 Sept. 1937, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 1.

83 Board of Eco. Inq., Breeds of Indian Cattle in Punjab (Calcutta 1903), pp. 36-37.

agricultural conditions of the Haryana region and the extensive Barani tracts impelled the zamindars to add to their quota of cattle wealth as a supplementary source or even as an alternative source of income. Similarly the kamins were led to increase their own herds of animals. Apart from keeping their own cattle in some cases, the kamins were increasingly undertaking to maintain goats and sheep for the butchers as their maintenance cost them nothing. The clash of interests was inevitable. In central Punjab the kamins challenged the exclusive rights of the zamindars over the shamilat land and sought grazing rights in the common grazing ground. They also sought recognition of their right to the manure of their own cattle and facilities of storing it in pits on the shamilat land. In the south-east Punjab also the assessment report of the Bhiwani tehsil of Hissar district reported in 1909 "a distinct movement (among land-owners) to take some fees" for giving grazing rights to the kamins.

The main weapon in the hands of village proprietary bodies with which they compelled the menials to pay Kodi-Kamini, to render customary Begar, and to keep their wages low, and to have exclusive use of the shamilat land, was social boycott. The recalcitrant

84 IOR:P/8121/1910, F. No. 87, see "Assessment Report of the Rohtak Tehsil of the Rohtak District", p. 10.

85 For details see below chapter IV, pp. 144-7.

86 Macnab of Macnab Papers, see Appendix B "Extract from Confidential Reports", p. 317.

87 Ibid.

88 IOR:P/8121/1909, F. No. 90, p. 19.

89 HT, 14 Jan. 1924, pp. 1-4; 25 April 1924, p. 2; 28 April 1924, pp. 2-8; 11 Aug. 1924, p. 11; 11 Feb. 1925, p. 2; 1 June 1925, pp. 8-10; 20 April 1925, p. 10; 24 Aug. 1925, p. 6; 14 April 1926, p. 10; 14 Mar. 1927, p. 1; 21 April 1927, p. 4; 28 April 1927, p. 3; 26 May 1927, p. 3; 6 June 1927, p. 5; 13 June 1927, p. 5; 14 Aug. 1928, p. 4; 28 Aug. 1928, pp. 7-8 (3 news); 30 Sept. 1928, p. 12; 16 Oct. 1928, p. 10; 23 Oct. 1928, pp. 5, 6, 7 (3 news); 30 Oct. 1928, p. 6; 6 Nov. 1928, p. 10; 29 Jan. 1929, p. 6; 3 Dec. 1929, p. 5; 14 April 1931, p. 1; 12 May

village menials sometimes found themselves to be boycotted for months on end. And, it would not be merely the landowners who would boycott the menials. The landowners would also compel their economic subordinates, whether agriculturists or non-agriculturists, to join them in boycotting the menials. The Bania shopkeepers, for example, were forbidden to sell their goods to them. Brahmins had to carry their own dead cattle. Untouchables were forbidden to use village wells to secure drinking water. They could not even use the village shamilat land for defecation purposes. The cattle belonging to untouchables had to stay inside their houses and even dead cattle had to be buried in the house compounds, if any. Criminal cases were trumped up against the untouchables. Not infrequently they were put under police surveillance. Their names were very often registered at the police station among no. 10 Badmashes. Also,

1931, p. 5; 19 May 1931, p. 10; 14 July 1931, p. 3; 11 July 1933, pp. 4-5 (2 news); 18 July 1933, p. 5; 1 Aug. 1933, p. 4; 5 Dec. 1933, p. 4; 26 Dec. 1933, p. 5; 9 Jan. 1934, p. 4; 23 Jan. 1934, p. 4; 6 Feb. 1934, p. 4; 20 Feb. 1934, pp. 4-5; 5 June 1934, p. 7; 3 July 1934, p. 4; 24 July 1934, p. 7; 31 July 1934, O. 7, 4 (2 news); 14 Aug. 1934, p. 4; 21 Aug. 1934, p. 5; 11 Sept. 1934, pp. 4-8; 25 Sept. 1934, p. 7; 15 Jan. 1935, p. 7; 25 Mar. 1935, p. 5; 16 July 1935, p. 5; 23 July 1935, O. 5; 17 Sept. 1935, p. 6; 15 Oct. 1935, p. 6; 22 Oct. 1935, p. 5; 21 Nov. 1935, p. 5; 21 Dec. 1935, p. 4; 14 Jan 1936, p. 4, 6, 10 (3 news); 28 Jan. 1936, p. 7; 18 Aug. 1936, p. 5; 1 Sept. 1936, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1936, p. 4; 22 Sept. 1936, p. 7; 29 Sept. 1936, p. 4; 13 Oct. 1936, p. 5; 27 Oct. 1936, p. 3; 25 Feb. 1937, p. 6 (2 news), 3 Mar. 1937, p. 9; 10 Mar. 1937, p. 6; 27 April 1937, p. 4; 27 July 1937, p. 4; 14 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 24 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 31 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 7 Sept. 1937, p. 5; 14 Sept. 1937, p. 7; 28 Sept. 1937, p. 7 (2 news); 23 Nov. 1937, p. 6; 7 Dec. 1937, p. 8; 14 Dec. 1937, p. 8; 21 Dec. 1937, p. 5; 25 Jan. 1938, pp. 7-8 (5 news); 5 April 1938, p. 4; 12 April 1938, pp. 3-4 (2 news); 19 April 1938, p. 5; 19 July 1938, p. 4; 13 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 6 Sept. 1938, p. 5; 4 Oct. 1938, p. 5; 18 Oct. 1938, pp. 6, 7 (2 news); 25 Oct. 1938, O. 5; 8 Nov. 1938, p. 3; 29 Nov. 1938, p. 3; 6 Dec. 1938, p. 5; 13 Dec. 1938, p. 7; 20 Dec. 1938, p. 4; 5 April 1939, pp. 4B, C & D (7 news); 29 Feb. 1940, p. 5; 6 Mar. 1940, p. 5; 20 Mar. 1940, p. 5; 27 Mar. 1940, p. 4; 10 April 1940, p. 7; 31 July 1940, p. 4; 14 Aug. 1940, p. 5; 25 Sept. 1940, p. 4; 9 Oct. 1940, p. 5.

there were always threats from the proprietary bodies that additional taxation would be levied. Cases of even worse oppression on the part of the landowners were noticed. Untouchable women were raped.⁹⁰ The Haryana Tilak, in fact, held the behaviour of the landowners particularly the Jat landowners responsible for the rapid conversion of the untouchables to Christianity in the Haryana region.⁹¹ In many of its issues the Haryana Tilak commented adversely on the relationship subsisting between landowning Jats and the village menials. A long but significant extract may be reproduced:⁹²

Some Jats may behave properly but by and large the Jat landowners seek to reduce the Chamars to slavery. In village Pabra of Hissar district a Panchayat of Jats unanimously told the Chamars of the village that they could stay in the village only if they would charge a rupee for a pair of shoes instead of Rs. 2. The Chamars and Dhanks were told in villages of Kasara, Kaboolpur and Ratawani that their women could not wear jewellery. The Chamars were not allowed to take water from the village ponds with a pot; they had to use a lota (small brass jug) for taking water. Chamars were not allowed to take Bura and Khand (sugar) in village Shahbad-Mutsal; even for weddings they could use only Shakkar (brown sugar). Chamars could not have Pacca houses. In a village in Rohtak district the Jat landowners boycotted the Chamars on 2 April 1926 because they had refused to render Begar. Upto the fifth day of the boycott the Chamars were still living inside their houses without having anything to do. They had to keep even their cattle inside their house.

However, the Jat was not the only caste among the landowners who kept their agricultural labourers, artisans and 'village servants' socially and economically suppressed. Landowners of Rohtak district belonging to other castes, i.e., Ahir, Muslim and Hindu Rajput, and Brahmin, behaved precisely as the Jat landowners

90 HT, 19 May 1931, p. 10; 14 Dec. 1937, p. 8.

91 HT, 6 April 1925, p. 6; 20 April 1925, p. 10; 11 May 1925, p. 6; 18 May 1925, p. 6; 1 June 1925, p. 9; 25 Aug. 1926, p.6; 30 Sept. 1928, p. 12; 23 Oct. 1928, p. 10; 10 Sept. 1935, p.4.

92 HT, 12 April 1926, p. 10.

93

did. Since the Jats dominated among the landowning class the general impression created was that 'Jats' were the enemies of the untouchables. The impression gained strength because the 'non-official' revenue agency was in most cases manned by the leading
 94
 Jat landowners who not only extracted Begar for themselves but
 95
 also helped their other compatriots to get it. These village

- 93 HT, 6 June 1923, p. 6; 11 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 26 May 1927, p. 3; 3 June 1930, p. 4; 28 July 1931, p. 10; 11 Aug. 1931, p. 6; 8 Sept. 1931, p. 8; 22 Sept. 1931, p. 8; 30 April 1935, p. 4; 7 May 1935, p. 4; 12 May 1936, p. 4; 1 Sept. 1936, p. 7; 22 Oct. 1936, p. 5; 10 Nov. 1936, p. 5; 23 Nov. 1937, p. 4; 7 Dec. 1937, p. 8. For the differences of Brahmin landowners with their telis and consequent social boycott see Neki Ram Sharma Papers, diary 20-21 Oct. 1914 and 2 Nov. 1914.
- 94 HT, 7 May 1923, p. 13; 14 May 1923, p. 6; 28 May 1923, p. 3; 30 July 1923, p. 7; 15 Oct. 1923, p. 3; 22 Oct. 1923, p. 8; 7 Jan. 1924, p. 7; 14 Jan. 1924, p. 4; 18 Feb. 1924, p. 7; 25 Feb. 1924, pp. 2-3; 13 April 1925, p. 3; 20 April 1925, p. 5; 27 April 1925, p. 1; 20 July 1925, p. 3; 23 Aug. 1926, p. 6; 30 Aug. 1926, p. 8; 27 Dec. 1926, p. 7; 7 Feb. 1927, p. 9; 28 Mar. 1927, p. 10; 30 May 1927, p. 6; 9 June 1927, p. 6; 20 Dec. 1927, pp. 6, 9; 27 Dec. 1927, p. 1.
- 95 HT, 7 May 1923, p. 13; 14 May 1923, p. 6; 28 May 1923, p. 13; 30 July 1923, p. 7; 15 Oct. 1923, p. 8; 19 Nov. 1923, p. 6; 26 Nov. 1923, p. 5; 10 Dec. 1923, p. 6; 24 Dec. 1923, p. 5; 31 Dec. 1923, p. 9; 7 Jan. 1924, p. 4; 14 Jan. 1924, p. 4; 18 Feb. 1924, p. 7; 25 Feb. 1924, pp. 2, 3; 26 May 1924, p. 2; 13 Oct. 1924, p. 10; 13 April 1925, pp. 3-5; 27 April 1925, p. 1; 20 July 1925, p. 3; 28 Feb. 1926, p. 6; 7 Feb. 1927, p. 8; 21 Feb. 1927, p. 8; 28 Feb. 1927, p. 1; 28 Mar. 1927, p. 10; 4 April 1927, p. 3; 9 May 1927, p. 1; 30 May 1927, p. 3; 3 June 1927, p. 2; 10 June 1927, p. 4; 30 Oct. 1927, p. 6; 20 Dec. 1927, pp. 6, 9 (2 news); 27 Dec. 1927, pp. 1, 5 (2 news); 8 Jan. 1928, p. 10; 7 July 1928, p. 10; 14 July 1928, p. 6; 22 Jan. 1929, p. 10; 17 Mar. 1929, p. 11; 31 Mar. 1929, p. 5; 9 April 1929, p. 6; 24 Sept. 1929, p. 10; 26 Nov. 1929, p. 5; 21 Jan. 1930, p. 6; 12 May 1931, p. 10; 19 May 1931, p. 9; 28 April 1931, p. 10; 26 May 1931, p. 9; 22 Sept. 1931, p. 8; 1 Dec. 1931, p. 3; 8 Dec. 1931, p. 3; 9 Jan. 1934, p. 4; 23 Jan. 1934, p. 3; 13 Feb. 1934, p. 4; 27 Feb. 1934, p. 4; 6 Mar. 1934, pp. 3, 4; 31 July 1934, p. 4; 7 Aug. 1934, p. 4; 6 Nov. 1934, p. 7; 11 Dec. 1934, p. 4; 15 Jan. 1935, p. 4; 29 Jan. 1935, p. 5; 5 Feb. 1935, pp. 3, 5; 19 Feb. 1935, p. 4; 15 Jan. 1936, p. 4; 29 Jan. 1936, p. 5; 4 Feb. 1936, p. 5; 3 Mar. 1936, p. 6; 26 Mar. 1936, p. 2; 2 April 1936, p. 4;

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96

officials punished those menials who refused to render Begar.

Here, it may be noted that the word 'Begar' was also used, as pointed out earlier, as a comprehensive term to include several other complaints of the untouchables against their landowners. Begar complaints ranged from protests against 'unjust hearth-fee', village cesses, or inadequate payment of 'customary dues', or inadequate payment of their agricultural wages. It was also of course used in many cases in its technical meaning, i.e.,⁹⁷ extraction of work without any payment. Any of these factors, and not necessarily extraction of work without any payment, could be seen operating behind the innumerable complaints of the kamins

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- 9 July 1936, p. 4; 20 Aug. 1936, p. 4; 27 Aug. 1936, p. 4; 29 Oct. 1936, p. 5; 4 Dec. 1936, p. 2; 23 Feb. 1937, p. 4; 9 Mar. 1937, p. 4; 6 April 1937, p. 7; 1 June 1937, p. 4; 22 June 1937, p. 4; 10 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 17 Aug. 1937, p. 5; 14 Sept. 1937, p. 5; 12 Oct. 1937, pp. 4-5; 2 Nov. 1937, p. 7; 9 Nov. 1937, p. 8; 16 Nov. 1937, p. 6; 30 Nov. 1937, p. 3; 14 Dec. 1937, pp. 4, 7; 21 Dec. 1937, p. 8; 28 Dec. 1937, p. 8; 21 Jan. 1938, pp. 7, 8; 26 April 1938, p. 3; 3 May 1938, p. 6; 10 May 1938, p. 1; 2 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 26 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 13 Sept. 1938, p. 7; 20 Sept. 1938, p. 4; 20 Dec. 1938, p. 5; 3 April 1940, p. 5; 10 April 1940, p. 2; 11 May 1940, p. 4. Even JG, reported instances of Begar service (service rendered without payment by zamindars to the local officials), see JG, 15 Dec. 1923, p. 10; 14 Aug. 1929, p. 6; 23 Oct. 1929, p. 8; 13 May 1931, p. 7; 20 May 1931, p. 4.
- 96 HT, 29 Sept. 1931, p. 7; 6 Oct. 1931, p. 2; 17 Nov. 1931, p. 10; 20 Feb. 1934, pp. 4, 5; 24 July 1934, p. 7; 31 July 1934, p. 4; 16 July 1935, p. 5; 23 July 1935, p. 5; 17 Sept. 1935, p. 6; 24 Sept. 1935, p. 8; 22 Oct. 1935, p. 4; 31 Dec. 1935, p. 4; 14 Jan. 1936, p. 4; 21 Jan. 1936, p. 6; 28 Jan. 1936, p. 6; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 6; 10 Mar. 1936, p. 6; 7 April 1936, p. 3; 14 April 1936, p. 4; 21 April 1936, pp. 3, 4; 27 April 1936, p. 4; 11 May 1937, p. 4; 27 July 1937, p. 4; 28 Oct. 1937, p. 7; 14 Dec. 1937, p. 7 (4 news); 28 Dec. 1937, p. 7.
- 97 The same conclusion was reached by R. Barkerly Smith, DM Agra (1908-1922), who saw these very factors affecting the relations of the landowners with their menials all over India. See Barkerley Smith Papers, pp. 3-17.

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regarding Begar. Nevertheless in those cases where the government officials were involved the complaints of Begar were strictly within its technical meaning. However, it may be noted that although theoretically the British Government banned Begar, i.e., work without payment, in relation to the government officials in January 1922, in practice extraction of Begar, having become an "economic necessity", continued as before. But so far as the landowners

98 The extensive news items appearing in the HT regarding extraction of Begar by the landowners or the government officials and the high handed punishment on those who refused may be taken as authentic news because of the following factors: (a) The news items mention full name, parentage, details of villages involved, and even the receipt number of the applications made to the police stations, or to the SDOs or DCs. Sometimes, full applications along with the mention of thumb prints are given. Names and addresses of the eyewitnesses are also frequently given. Significantly, the Superintendent's office in Rohtak district had a separate file on 'Begar' F.No. A-IX-3, which unfortunately could not be traced. The JG which was given to frequent contradiction of the news items appearing in the HT did not contradict any such news dealing with relations of landowners with their kamins. Such news items were indirectly acknowledged by making the Congress responsible for alienating the untouchables from the Jat landowners. See JG, 4 May 1937, p. 6; 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3. The few anonymous complaints of Begar sent to the HT were clearly described as being "anonymous" in the weekly. See HT, 9 July 1935, p. 4. On the whole the HT may be relied upon for exposing the relationship of the landowners, specially the Hindu Jats, with their kamins. For wide scale prevalence of Begar in Punjab also see Lok-Mat (Hindi newspaper), 12 Jan. 1920 in Neki Ram Sharma Papers, F.No. 8, p. 1.

99 GI: Edu, Health & Lands, F. No. 19, Sept. 1929. Also FLCD, XII, 18 Mar. 1929, p. 860. Also JG, 16 Feb. 1921, p. 3 and HT, 28 Mar. 1927, p. 10.

100 See questions raised in the Punjab Council regarding continuation of Begar in FLCD, XII, 18 Mar. 1929, p. 860. Also JG, 16 Feb. 1921, p. 3. Regarding the economic necessity behind Begar, Col. J.A. Grey, Commissioner of Delhi division, observed as follows in 1894:

If the shopkeeper will not attend the camp of troops of the encampment of officials; if the Chamars will not cut grass and wood; nor the potter supply pots; nor the carpenter tent pegs; if no kamin will turn out to guide the officials' baggage to the next village, to carry the

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were concerned even this theoretical attempt to abolish Begar in its wider connotations was not made. This anomaly in the state of affairs was brought to the notice of the then Financial Commissioner, C.M. King, in 1923. But far from interfering to give relief to the agricultural labourers, he actually gave approval to the practice. In this connection he wrote:

It is true that throughout the Punjab under the provisions of the record of rights landlords are entitled by time immemorial and almost universal custom to call on the kamins of the village for certain services, but to describe such services as Begar or impressment is, in the opinion of Governor-in-Council, to place upon these words an exaggerated and unnatural interpretation.... The Government of Punjab would view with greatest apprehension any formal proposal to disturb by official action a settled feature in the economic life of the village, and in this opinion they have the unanimous support of the whole body of experienced officers (seniors as well) whom they have consulted.

The opinion of the majority of Deputy Commissioners of the Ambala division sent to King in 1921 had emphasised that "impressment" was a distinct feature of the Begar system as it existed. But they also added that impressment was "definitely sanctioned in any village record" and advised against any interference.

The British officials, therefore, once again in 1923 as in 1894, refused to interfere in any aspect of the relationship

munshi's bedding or to help the Huzur's cart through a quagmire; then government will have to spend money very freely, both in procuring supplies for troops and in compensating its officials for the difficulties and the cost of making tours.

- 101 HO Notes, CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-4, pp. 40-1.
 GI: Edu. Health & Lands, F. No. 1-14-A, July 1923, See letter of April 16, 1923, pp. 34-35.
- 102 For the opinions of different DCs of Ambala div. see IOR:P/11372/1923, F. No. 721 B, Oct. 1921.
- 103 Ibid.

between the landowners and their kamins. Indeed, the government viewed with the greatest apprehension the initiation of any official action that would disturb a settled feature in the economic life of the village.¹⁰⁴

Chhotu Ram was totally in agreement with this view of the matter. Begar continued to be projected by him as the most reasonable arrangement between the landowners and their menials brought about by mutual agreement between the two. It was, he said,¹⁰⁵ voluntarily concluded and most satisfactorily worked out.

The unsettled and unsatisfactory economic relations between landowners and untouchables led to a series of confrontations in different villages of Rohtak district.¹⁰⁶ Even the Jat Gazette reported several instances of crops having been burnt and landowners attacked, wounded and even killed in attacks by untouchables specially in the districts of Rohtak, Karnal, Ambala, Hissar and Gurgaon.¹⁰⁷ Several criminal cases had to be effected between

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- 104 GI: Edu. Health & Lands, F. No. I-44A, July 1923, p. 45. The attitude and policy of the British officials also stood revealed in the case of "prolonged revolt" against the "unscrupulous use of Begaris" in the Simla hills where they sided with the claims of Thakurs and advised in favour of continuation of customary Begar practice. See IOR:P/12071/1935, pp. 106-7.
- 105 JG, 12 July 1939, p. 8.
- 106 Some of the villages very frequently mentioned in the HT, were Chhara, Gochchi, Ratawoni, Kheri, Shahbad, Katsara, Kaboolpur, Sampla, Jhajjar, Rohad, Bamnauli, Patra, Sonepat, Khatiwas, Ballabgarh, Beri, Jotala, Badli, Jakholi & Mandothi. These were all Jat villages. See HT, 18 May 1925, p. 6; 1 June 1925, p. 10; 24 Aug. 1925, p. 6; 12 April 1926, p. 10; 14 Mar. 1927, pp. 1, 4; 21 April 1927, p. 4; 28 April 1927, p. 3; 26 May 1927, p. 3; 6 June 1927, p. 6; 13 June 1927, p. 5; 20 Dec. 1927, p. 9.
- 107 JG, 10 April 1929, p. 3; 24 April 1929, p. 7; 1 June 1929, p. 5. Also see PLAD, I, 1 July 1937, pp. 837-9; II, 25 June 1938, p. 855; 27 June 1938, p. 952; XIX, 6 Dec. 1929, pp. 125-332.

108

the Jat landowners and the untouchables. In any such confrontations, Chhotu Ram showed himself alive to the danger to the landowners. As early as 1921, his appeal to the landowners addressed
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in the Jat Gazette read:

All over the world, the stronger and the richer have always preyed upon the weaker and the poorer. In the villages too the zamindars exploit those who are landless. As elsewhere in the world, where the labour is opposed to the capitalists, the time has come when the landless kamins of the village considered untouchables and liable to render Begar or made to work at very low wages will rise in revolt against this maltreatment. We want to warn the capitalists in the villages that unless they change their attitude towards these landless people they would have to face troubles rampant in Europe. Unless the existing relationship between the zamindars and the untouchables is changed the former would have to regret their attitude.

However, despite the evidence of so much of illwill and strained relations between the two and his own recognition of the dangers of such confrontations posed to the landowners, Chhotu Ram, by and large, maintained that on the whole good relations existed between the untouchables and the landowners. Both were declared to be working "side by side in the fields" and "shoulder to shoulder on the threshing floor". They were declared to be receiving "a
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kind and considerate treatment" at the hands of Jat landowners. So much so that the position of the untouchables in the Haryana region was declared by him to be better than that of the landless
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Jats and Rajputs of the United Provinces. However, by 1937-38, as the situation became alarmingly tense even Chhotu Ram was forced

108 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. P. IV-56, pp. 1-2. Also see JG, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3.

109 JG, 26 Jan. 1921, p. 3.

110 "The Punjab and Depressed Classes", an article by Chhotu Ram in Tribune, 8 April 1932, pp. 5-6. Also see for similar views JG, 20 Nov. 1929, p. 3; 16 June 1937, p. 7; 12 July 1939, pp. 7, 9.

111 JG, 12 July 1938, pp. 7, 9.

to speak contrary to his cherished dream. Instances of clashes between landowners and untouchables, specially in the districts of Karnal, Sonapat, and Hissar, were cited by him to once again warn the landowners.¹¹² The blame for this was not put on the deteriorating relationship between the two but on the inciting activities of the Congress which, in his opinion, was bent upon alienating the untouchables from the Jats and was attempting to drive a wedge between the two.¹¹³

The Congress in Rohtak district was indeed active in this respect. Several secret police reports of Rohtak district show how the Congress was able to successfully exploit the Begar issue and get the support of the kamins by making promises to save them from rendering Begar both to the landowners and the government officials.¹¹⁴ Sikandar Hayat Khan and Chhotu Ram had also realised the eventual effect of this work not only on the relations between the landowners and their kamins but also on the politics of the province. In 1938, Sikandar Hayat Khan issued the following

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- 112 JG, 20 April 1938, p. 5; 4 May 1938, p. 6; 7 Aug. 1938, p. 7; 16 Nov. 1938, p. 6.
- 113 Ibid. Also see JG, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3; 11 Mar. 1931, p. 4; 24 Feb. 1937, p. 4; 5 May 1937, p. 3; 16 June 1937, p. 4; 11 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 23 Mar. 1938, p. 3; 18 Oct. 1938, pp. 1,8; 7 Dec. 1938, p. 4; 14 Dec. 1938, p. 1; 20 Dec. 1938, pp. 3-4; 11 Oct. 1939, p. 4; 8 Nov. 1939, p. 3; 11 Dec. 1939, p. 3. Also see a speech of Chhotu Ram reported in the Tribune, 15 Dec. 1938, p. 3; and that of Sikandar Hayat Khan in 25 Oct. 1938, p. 1. Also see Chhotu Ram's speech in HT, 12 May 1936, p. 4.
- 114 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-12, SP to DIG, 20 Mar. 1925. Also CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 6 A & KW, see secret Police Report, 13 May 1921, 20 May 1921 and 21 May 1921 regarding the Congress activities in connection with the system of Begar in different villages of Rohtak district. CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 1-23, see weekly diary of SP, 9 Oct. 1937. Also see Letter of Neki Ram Sharma to Sikandar Hayat Khan and Chhotu Ram, 22 Sept. 1938. Also Linlithgow Coll, 87: DO 123, 9 Feb. 1939.

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warning to the landowners of Punjab:

I have heard that in some villages you are inflicting great hardships on the kamins. They have been serving you since the days of your forefathers, and if you trouble them they will go and settle down in the urban centres where they will surely support your (i.e., the landowners') enemies. So be kind to them and stop them from fleeing the rural areas.

Chhotu Ram had in 1929 issued a more direct threat to the kamins

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themselves:

Kamins are being incited against the Jats who are being shown by the Congress as the exploiters of kamins. If this game continues the untouchables will be the losers because they are, and will continue to be even under Swaraj, totally dependent on the good will of the Jats.

The word 'Jats' was used here as a synonym of landowners. This

warning to the kamins was repeated by Chhotu Ram on different

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occasions.

In 1938 he advised the landowners to be more considerate to

the kamins, "since injustice and zoolam sowed the seed of ruin".

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Despite the full awareness of the state of affairs between the untouchables and the landowners nothing was really done to better the lives of kamins in socio-economic sphere. Wells were to be open to them, and land for their houses was to be made available to them, but they could neither own wells, nor houses, nor any other piece of land. They would thus remain utterly dependent on the landowners of the village. Therefore all attempts at

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digging wells of their own were thwarted. Acquisition of land

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- 115 Speech delivered in village Khelchiyan of Amritsar district. JG, 17 Aug. 1938, p. 7. Many such warnings were made by the Premier. C & MG, 7 Oct. 1938, p. 14; 13 Oct. 1938, p. 4.
- 116 JG, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3.
- 117 See below chapter VIII, p. 263.
- 118 C & MG, 12 Aug. 1938, p. 7.
- 119 HT, 6 June 1922, p. 6; 23 Oct. 1928, pp. 2, 6; 10 Dec. 1931, p. 10; 8 Nov. 1932, p. 4; 23 Jan. 1934, p. 3; 31 May 1934, p. 7; 25 June 1935, p. 7; 27 April 1937, p. 4; 14 Aug. 1940, p. 5.

was forbidden by the continued denial of the status of statutory agriculturists which alone would have got them the right of ownership of land. When the demand for the amendment of Alienation of Land Act intensified, specially under the Provincial Autonomy, to accommodate untouchables in order to give them the right to own land,¹²⁰ the pro-landowner outlook of Chhotu Ram was brought into open. He had to candidly acknowledge that landowners did not want the houses inhabited by untouchables and the land on which they were built to be owned by them.¹²¹ Chhotu Ram said: "No government

could do anything to remedy this state of affairs as the total number of landowners in Punjab is 40 lakhs; with wife and children they total to about $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ crores; the untouchables on the other hand have a population of 15 lakhs only. What government would annoy $1\frac{1}{4}$ crores of people for pleasing 15 lakhs?" he asked.¹²²

Chhotu Ram and his supporters similarly opposed the demand for the abolition of Kodi-Kamini and Taraf-pochi.¹²³ Of course, all other

- 120 For demands of the untouchables for abolition of the Alienation of Land Act see JG, 18 Sept. 1929, p. 3; 11 Mar. 1931, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1935, p. 1; 5 May 1937, p. 3; 16 June 1937, p. 4; 1 Sept. 1937, p. 4. "The Real Uplift of the Harijans", an article by Chhotu Ram, 14 Dec. 1938, p. 1; 12 July 1939, pp. 7,9; "Unjust Demands of the Untouchables", an article by Chhotu Ram, 18 Oct. 1939, pp. 1 & 8. Also see HT, 12 June 1935, p. 5; 19 Nov. 1935, p. 5; 26 Nov. 1935, p. 3; 1 June 1937, pp. 2, 8; 1 Nov. 1938, p. 4; 6 Dec. 1938, p. 3; 13 Dec. 1938, p. 4; 20 Dec. 1938, pp. 1, 7.
- 121 "The Untouchables", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 17 July 1939, pp. 7-9.
- 122 Ibid. For more details see below chapter VIII, pp. 261-4
- 123 HT, 12 June 1935, p. 5; 19 June 1935, p. 5; 19 Nov. 1935, p. 15; 26 Nov. 1935, pp. 3, 6. The HT quoted Chhotu Ram regarding his objections to the abolition of village cesses. He was declared to have said to the untouchables of village Medina in Rohtak district: "I cannot annoy my own brothers to benefit you. If the zamindars do not want to stop this practice I cannot do anything. If on this basis you want to deprive us of your votes, do so, for it does not matter. The zamindars are numerically stronger than you in the villages." See HT, 14 Mar. 1939, p. 3.

resolutions of Achut Udhar committees and associations regarding the untouchables, i.e., free education, jobs in services, opening of temples and wells, found enthusiastic support of Chhotu Ram.¹²⁴

But all this was not calculated to touch even the fringe of the problem. The attitude of landowners in Punjab therefore did antagonise the untouchables. A small number of them were enfranchised under the Government of India Act of 1935. They took their revenge on the landowners, who were mostly under the banner of Unionist Party, by voting against them. The Jat Gazette itself acknowledged that the majority of untouchables voted against the candidates put up by the Unionist Party.¹²⁵ Only three untouchable candidates stood from the Unionist Party and all three lost the elections.

Relations of 'Jats' with castes other than untouchables were no better and were far from cordial. The reason appears to have been that in Rohtak district Jat landowners owned the bulk of agricultural land and the majority of the tenants belonged to other castes. The relationship between the landowners and the tenants was always marked by tensions, even when the tenants happened to be Jats. The very frequent ejections of tenants without right of occupancy, specially in Rohtak and Hissar, lay¹²⁶ markedly behind these tensions.

124 IOR:P/11953/1930, F. No. 32, pp. 3D,E. Out of all these demands the education of the children of village kamins received maximum attention and publicity. Also see IOR:P/11883/1930, F. No. 440/14100/16.

125 JG, 4 May 1938, p. 6. For further details see below chapter VIII, p. 263.

126 Figures for ejection of occupancy tenants and tenants of all other kinds in dist. Hissar see PLRA, for the relevant years. Figures for Rohtak district are given below (f.n. 127).

ments
 Commenting on these eject^{ments} under section 45(6) of the Punjab Tenancy Act XVI of 1887, even the official report of the years 1921 to 1940 declared them to be "continually high" for Rohtak. In 1927-28 figures for Rohtak showed 100 percent increase over 1926-27. In 1921-22 the reason for these eject^{ments} was the increased profits of agriculture which made it impossible for the landlord to obtain new tenants willing to pay a higher rent than what those in occupation were prepared to pay unless they were threatened by legal process. Otherwise, the only explanation generally given was 'Kisan trouble' (word Kisan being used for tenants), but the causes for it were not

127 Statement showing ejectment proceedings during the relevant years in Rohtak district under the Punjab Tenancy Act XVI of 1887:

Tenancy without right of occupancy

- i. No. of applications under section 43, 42(b)
- ii. No. of notices issued under section 45(1)
- iii. No. of cases ejectment actually made under order of process or a Revenue Court of Officer:

	1921-22	1922-23	1923-24	1924-25	1925-26	1926-27	
i.	841	1191	462	615	541	293	
ii.	1710	2081	923	1370	989	551	
iii.	184	523	197	209	147	185	
	1927-28	1928-29	1929-30	1930-31	1931-32	1932-33	
i.	379	339	608	380	244	312	
ii.	703	666	1152	674	444	575	
iii.	341	319	311	313	361	252	
	1933-34	1934-35	1935-36	1936-37	1937-38	1938-39	1939-40
i.	288	330	284	316	446	397	474
ii.	607	616	763	596	674	747	611
	358	368	338	299	564	273	250

Source; Figures taken from PLRA, for the relevant years, statement XVI. Rohtak dist. shows maximum figures of ejectment of tenants during 1929-30 on account of trouble between tenants and landlords in village Chuchakwas, tehsil Jhajjar. See PLRA, 1929-30.

- 128 PLRA, 1927-28, p. 18.
 129 Ibid., 1921-22, p. 17.

130 indicated. There was hardly any case of ejection of occupancy tenants in Rohtak, as the district contained very few occupancy tenants.¹³¹ Certain law suits for enhancement of rent were also registered in Rohtak.¹³²

The ejection of tenants of all kinds by the landlords would certainly lead to tension between the two even if they happened to share the same caste. The tenantry in Haryana region was drawn from among the Brahmins, Ahirs, and Chamars, in addition to Jats.¹³³ Chhotu Ram claimed that the relationship between the landlord and the tenant was cordial where the two happened to be Jats.¹³⁴ According to him the trouble arose wherever the two belonged to different castes. He tried to support this thesis by a reference to the state of affairs obtaining in Rajasthan:¹³⁵

The way of living and character of Jats living in certain districts of Rajputana, despite their being economically subordinate to the Rajputs, is the same as the Jats of Haryana. The Jats of Rajputana are totally dependent on agriculture but have either uneconomical holdings or are landless. They are tenants and agricultural labourers of the Jagirdars who exploit them fully. The Jats in Rajputana in fact are held in the same position by the Jagirdars as the Kamins or the untouchables are held by us (Jats) in Haryana. In fact in certain matters their lot is even worse.

Here, Chhotu Ram certainly showed himself aware of the economic relationship between landlord, tenant and the agricultural labourer. The fact that this opinion was true for the Jat tenants of Rajputana

130 Ibid., 1929-30, pp. 19-20.

131 See statement No. XVI for the relevant years in FLRA.

132 See statement No. XV of FLRA. The maximum number of suits being in 1925-26; 1929-30 and again in 1938-39.

133 H.C. Fanshawe, and W.E. Purser, op.cit., p. 59.

134 "Untouchables", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 12 July 1939, pp. 7-9.

135 "Our Marwari Brothers - The Jats of Marwar", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 22 Sept. 1925, p. 3.

in relation to their landlords and not for ^{the} Jat tenants of Haryana region did not, however, stand the test of realities. Chhotu Ram was perhaps merely trying to paper over the gulf which did exist between the Jat landlords and Jat tenants in the Haryana region because he was much concerned to prove his thesis of 'Jat solidarity'. The considered opinion of British officials in 1894 had been that the fact of landlord and his tenant belonging to the same caste really worsened the situation.¹³⁶

The bulk of agricultural tenants in the Haryana region were Chamars. The relations of Chamars as agricultural labourers with their Jat landowners, as noticed earlier, were very tense and strained. They did not improve even with the improvement in their economic status, i.e., from agricultural labourer to that of tenants. These relations were perhaps worsened as a result. By early 20th century the Rohtak district Gazetteer reported, though without giving any reasons, that the customary position of Chamars as agricultural labourers had changed to a contractual one. Chamars became increasingly associated with the Jat landowners as Sanjhis (co-sharers) on agricultural holdings on terms which permitted the division of profits from agricultural produce. Chamars were also coming to acquire the status of independent tenants in increasing numbers.¹³⁷ In fact their association with agriculture was so intimate that many British officials considered them to be deserving the status of 'agriculturists'.¹³⁸ However, their often repeated demand¹³⁹

136 HO Notes Col. J.H. Grey, Comm. Delhi Div. 1894, CF Comm.

Ambala Div., F. No. A-4.

137 IOR:P/7841, 1908, F. No. 59, p. 11.

138 Ibid.

139 Ibid.

140 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, pp. 78-79.

for such status was frowned upon by Chhotu Ram. He maintained that they were not the hereditary owners of land and could not, therefore, be declared statutory agriculturists.¹⁴¹

Here again Chhotu Ram was merely projecting the argument of the landowners of Haryana region. On this very basis they were able to keep away the menial-turned-tenants from joining the village Cooperative Credit Society in village Naggal of Ambala district; the argument being that the menials (whether agricultural labourers or tenants) had no land and therefore no status.¹⁴² Revealing the hidden reason behind such a stand, the government inquiry noted:¹⁴³

If the menials obtain loans from the society they will no longer be in debt to the owners and thus under no obligation to them; they will therefore have a much more independent status.

Independent status of menials did not suit the landowners. The Chamar kamins-turned-tenants of the Jat landowner therefore had to put up with his wrath in the same manner as the Chamar agricultural labourers. An official inquiry into village Gijhi in Rohtak district disclosed that in 1923-24 two Chamars and two Dhanaks who had been cultivating as non-occupancy tenants under the Jat landowners were refused land for no apparent reason although they had been cultivating land as tenants for quite sometime.¹⁴⁴

Gaur-Brahmins, with a population of about 70,000 in Rohtak district, also by and large stood in relation to the Jat landowners as their tenants. They were in fact second only to Jats as regards

141 JG, 11 Mar. 1931, p. 4; 5 May 1937, p. 6; 11 May 1939, p. 9; 18 Oct. 1939, pp. 1, 8.

142 Board of Eco. Inq., Punjab Village Surveys: Village Naggal in Ambala dist. (Lahore 1933), p. 59.

143 Ibid.

144 Board of Eco. Inq., Punjab Village Surveys: Village Gijhi in Rohtak dist. (Lahore 1932), p. 66.

the number of persons engaged in cultivation.¹⁴⁵ The officials noted that there was no love-lost between the Gaur-Brahmins and the Jats.¹⁴⁶ The Haryana Tilak mentioned village Bhainswal, one of the major Jat villages of Rohtak district, as being notorious for its innumerable court cases regarding disputed land rights between Jat landlords and their Gaur-Brahmin tenants.¹⁴⁷ It is noticeable that to start with Gaur-Brahmins were not regarded as statutory agriculturists. The declaration which made them statutory agriculturists came seven years after the passage of the Alienation of Land Act.¹⁴⁸ This declaration sowed seeds of further dissensions between the Gaur-Brahmins and the Jats. Declared as statutory agriculturists in 1907, the Gaur-Brahmins were now included among Hindu agriculturists who were coming to be preferred for appointment to government services and were getting entitled to other concessions at the hands of the government. Affected Jats were apprehensive that Gaur-Brahmins would get what they felt was exclusively theirs and were resentful of this decision.¹⁴⁹ Resentment of many Jat landowners against the Gaur-Brahmins grew when many among the latter were found to be voting against the candidates put up by the Unionist Party for elections to the Provincial Council.¹⁵⁰ The friction between the two communities grew further as a result of the frequent and mutual attacks of the Arya Samajists and the Sanatan Dharmis.¹⁵¹

145 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op.cit., p. 59. Also HT, 11 Sept. 1917, p. 3; 27 May 1925, p. 3; 1 June 1925, p. 10; 22 Aug. 1927, p. 3; 30 Nov. 1927, p. 3.

146 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op.cit., pp. 55-56.

147 HT, 5 Nov. 1929, p. 5 (figures not given).

148 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. I-VI, v. p. 137.

149 HO Notes, Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.

150 JG, 20 July 1927, p. 6. There was a split among the Gaur-Brahmins also and in many villages certain factions of Gaur-Brahmins supported Chhotu Ram. See HT, 21 June 1932, pp. 1,6; 22 May 1940, p. 5; 10 April 1940, p. 4.

151 JG, 26 July 1927, p. 2; 17 Aug. 1927, p. 2; 18 Feb. 1931, p. 5; 16 Jan. 1932, p. 12.

Jats had come into the fold of Arya Samaj in large numbers while Gaur-Brahmins by and large continued to subscribe to the Sanatan Dharam.¹⁵²

Dogras, with their main occupation of agriculture as tenants,¹⁵³ were said to have made "inoffensive cultivators" in Rohtak district. But they were not recognised among statutory agriculturists in Rohtak although this status was granted to them in other parts of Punjab and also in the adjoining districts of Hissar and Karnal.¹⁵⁴ Their subordinate economic condition in Rohtak and consequent antagonism to the Jat landowners may be taken to be the reason for the refusal of Chhotu Ram to accept even a representation from them regarding this matter.¹⁵⁵

On the other hand, where the Jats stood as tenants and the members of other castes stood as landlords the social effect was the same; for tension between landlords and tenants was inherent in the economic situation whatever their respective community. For example, village Chuchakwas of Jhajjar tehsil witnessed a prolonged struggle between Pathan landlords on one side and tenants and agricultural labourers on the other. The tenants drawn from Ahirs and Jats, and the agricultural labourers drawn mainly from Chamars and other menial castes were united against their Pathan landlords.¹⁵⁶

152 Ibid. For Arya Samaj influence on Jats, see below chapter V.

153 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, *op.cit.*, p. 57.

154 PLCD, XXV, 28 June 1931, pp. 245-6. Also HT, 3 May 1926, p. 6; 21 June 1928, p. 8.

155 Ibid.

156 For details of this case see Prem Chowdhry, "Rural Relations Prevailing in the Punjab at the Time of Enactment of the So-called 'Golden Laws', or Agrarian Legislation of the late Thirties", The Punjab Past and Present, X-II. (Oct. 1976), pp. 461-80. Also see below chapter VI, pp. 191.

Certain villages of Gurgaon district also supplied similar examples. In certain villages where Ahirs owned the land and the Jats were their tenants, friction between the two could be noticed. The Jat tenants of Ingram estate of Gurgaon faced a similar situation. The Jat tenantry again had a prolonged confrontation on Skinner's estate at Hissar. Village Talao of tehsil Jhajjar also saw violent confrontations between Muslim Rajput landlords and their Jat tenantry. In another village of Jhajjar called Khatiwās the situation was reversed and complaints were made by Ahir tenants against Jat landowners.

The Jat and Bania rivalry had become almost legendary in the village life of Rohtak district. 'Bantias' as village moneylenders were generally known as exploiters of Jat peasantry. The popular proverb in the rural areas quoted by Lal Chand to the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee summed up this popular feeling very well: "Tis Ko Baniya ho var, uska dushman kiya darkar" (a man who has Bania as a friend needs no other as an enemy). Even the Haryana Tilak, a staunch opponent of the Unionist Party, acknowledged as beyond doubt the past exploitation of the Jat peasant by the Bania and the Mahajan sahuakar. The weekly however analysed the growing bitterness between the two communities in terms of the growing economic and numerical dominance of the Jats and the weak and deteriorating strength of the Mahajans and

157 HT, 3 May 1926, p. 3; 21 June 1928, p. 8.

158 GI Home Poll, F. No. 18/6/37, June 1937.

159 See Prem Chowdhry, loc.cit. Also Linlithgow Coll, 113: Emerson to Linlithgow, 24 April 1937.

160 HT, 3 June 1930, p. 4. Also see below chapter IV, p.153.

161 HT; 23 Feb. 1925, p. 10.

162 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt, II, evidence, p. 972.

163 HT, 1 May 1934, see "Vaishism" an article by S.R. Sharma.

Banias.¹⁶⁴ In fact the weekly went on to accuse the Jats of murdering and looting the Banias.¹⁶⁵ These accusations were not without basis.

In reality, the economically dominant Jats in the villages were at time as high-handed towards the Mahajans and Banias as towards the untouchables. Included among the non-agriculturists, the Banias and Mahajans were also made to pay hearth-fee. The usual fee was Rs. 2 per house per annum, but the Bania was often made to pay more.¹⁶⁶ The officials' reports also speak of the harassment of Mahajans and kamins by the Jat panchayats.¹⁶⁷ The village panchayats dominated by the landowners went to the length of demolishing houses and shops of certain Banias and Mahajans on the pretext that they constituted encroachments which could be legally removed.¹⁶⁸ The Harvana Tilak also mentioned some villages where the Banias were not allowed even to repair their houses, and in certain cases their houses were illegally occupied by the landowners.¹⁶⁹ In village Ajeeb, in 1924 they were forbidden to use Johars (ponds) and wells,^{and} their cattle were not allowed out of the house.¹⁷⁰ In village Landrawan of Jhajjar tehsil, in 1940 a few Jats forcibly levied a tax of Rs. 20 per shop which was to be realised twice a year and no purchase from a shop was allowed till the tax was paid. All those who defied this order were also

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- 164 HT, 16 May 1923, p. 14; 11 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 18 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 30 June 1924, p. 9; 16 July 1924, p. 10; 15 Dec. 1924, p. 9; 20 April 1925, p. 4; 5 Oct. 1925, p. 9.
- 165 HT, 18 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 30 June 1924, p. 9; 15 Dec. 1924, p. 9; 20 April 1925, p. 4.
- 166 H.C. Fanshawe, and W.E. Purser, *op.cit.*, p. 57.
- 167 HO Notes, K.B. Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, *op.cit.*
- 168 Ibid.
- 169 HT, 18 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 12 April 1926, p. 10; 29 Jan. 1929, p. 6; 10 April 1934, p. 4; 2 Oct. 1934, p. 4; 23 May 1935, p. 5; 10 Mar. 1936, p. 6; 14 Feb. 1940, p. 4.
- 170 HT, 18 Feb. 1924, p. 2.

made to pay a sum of Re. 1 annas/⁴ per article purchased from the
¹⁷¹shops in question. In 1929 a fine of Rs. 849/- was imposed on the
 Mahajans of village Kharkhoda because of the allegation that they
 had effected a cut in a canal though quite evidently they had done
 nothing of the sort. ¹⁷² The Jat Gazette also mentioned Jat-Bania
 trouble in village Kaloi in 1931 though from the point of view of
 the Jats. ¹⁷³ If any Mahajan dared to resist the orders of the village
 proprietary body, social boycott was their lot. He was, like the
 others, denied access to village shamilat for purposes of
 defecation. ¹⁷⁴ Again, Jats were not the only landowners who mal-
 treated the Bantias and Mahajans. Even in villages dominated by ¹⁷⁵
 Muslim Rajputs, Mahajans and Bantias received a similar treatment.
 By and large, the Bantias and Mahajans were under great pressure.
 Sometimes even open looting of certain Bantias and Mahajans took
 place. In 1924, in village Chhara of Jhajjar tehsil, some Jats
 and Brahmins robbed a Mahajan of Rs. 1,000 in broad day light.
 But the Mahajan was not able to produce any witnesses to support
 his case. ¹⁷⁶ The increasing dacoities of which the richer among the
 Bantias and Mahajans of Rohtak district were victims in the early
 thirties were noted by the district administrators. The Deputy
 Commissioner of Rohtak, recorded on 11 April 1936, the following
 note in this connection: ¹⁷⁷

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- 172 HT 22 Jan. 1929, p. 16; 15 Sept. 1931, p. 5.
 173 JG; 15 July 1931, p. 4.
 174 HT, 14 Feb. 1940, p. 4.
 175 HT, 11 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 20 April 1925, p. 4.
 176 HT, 30 June 1924, p. 9. Also see 18 Feb. 1930, p. 5;
 IO Mar. 1930, p. 4.
 177 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 11 April 1936, op.cit.

There had been a wave of dacoitation (sic) in the past where it was found that the dacoits had been invited by the village from outside to loot the houses and burn the Bahis (account books) of the Mahajans with whom the villagers had extensive money dealings.

This merely confirmed the open charge made by the Haryana Tilak in 1924 that the life and property of 'Banias' in Rohtak district were not safe; they were openly terrorised, looted, and murdered by the 'Jats'.¹⁷⁸

At another economic level there had come into existence great rivalry between the increasing number of Jat landowners turned neo-moneylenders and sahuikars who were Bania or Mahajan by caste. In Rohtak district, the agriculturist moneylenders, majority of whom were Hindu Jat by caste, were rapidly replacing the Bania and Mahajan sahuikar.¹⁷⁹ In fact the number of Bania moneylenders had considerably gone down by the thirties of the twentieth century. By 1929-30, there were only 123 Bania moneylenders in Rohtak district with a capital of Rs. 82 lakhs as against the agriculturists moneylenders who numbered 562 and who had invested in moneylending a sum of Rs. 147 lakhs.¹⁸⁰ Another dimension was thus added to the relationship between the Jats and Banias. The rich among them were now pitted against each other and locked in bitter economic rivalry. In this connection confidential report of Rohtak district in 1931 revealed:¹⁸¹

There is no love lost between the Mahajans and the Hindu Jats. If the Hindu Jats had their way they would loot and kill the leading Mahajans. Last

178 HT, 15 Dec. 1924, p. 9.

179 See above chapter I, pp. 20-21.

180 Pu. Pro. Bkg. Ing. Rpt. I, p. 330. For details see above chapter I, pp. 21-24.

181 HO Notes, Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit. For other reasons regarding the feeling of the Banias and Mahajan sahuikars in towns see below chapter IX, pp. 338-9.

year as a result of the civil disobedience campaign there was a large crop of dacoitation (sic) in the district. All these dacoities were organised by Jats and many Mahajans were looted and lost their lives at the hands of the Jats and their associates. The Mahajans were so terror-stricken that well-to-do from amongst them migrated to towns and even now some of them have not recovered from the shock.

In fact all the Deputy Commissioners of Rohtak between 1929 to 1939 considered these murders and dacoities specially of the Bania and Mahajan moneylenders to be on the increase in Rohtak district. The Deputy Commissioners were also unanimous in their concern at the number of absconders in such cases. The reason is not far to seek as these crimes were committed on the invitation of Jats who often took a prominent part in the affairs of the district. It was found that in a number of cases lambardars and leading men of the village were known to have been involved. In return, Jats sheltered the Badmashes. Tika Ram, 'lieutenant and right hand man' of Chhotu Ram and later his parliamentary secretary in 1937, was involved in 1931 in a criminal case for harboring a murderer who had escaped from prison. In fact before Chhotu Ram got

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- 182 See HO Notes of the DCs Rohtak between 1929-39 (i.e., Zaman Mehdi Khan, E.H. Lincoln, M.R. Sachdev, B. Lal Izzat Rai, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa), CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 2, prt. 1.
- 183 HO Notes, Ghulam Mustafa, 26 June 1939, op.cit.
- 184 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 11 Jan. 1936, op.cit.
- 185 Ibid.
- 186 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 15/43. See SP Rohtak to the DM, 1 Oct. 1931. Also HO Notes, Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit. The evidence against Tika Ram was weak; therefore, the case was dropped. The Comm. of Ambala Div. made the following remark regarding the case: "As you know Ch. Tika Ram is the right hand man of Ch. Chhotu Ram and unless it is considered necessary to strike at the latter by means of prosecution it would mean stirring up a considerable amount of trouble which at the moment is at any rate inactive." See CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 15/43, Comm. to DC Rohtak, 10 Nov. 1931.

involved in politics, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak described him in 1923 as a "general counsel for accused in murder cases which failed for want of evidence"¹⁸⁷. Even later, in the thirties, after Chhotu Ram had entered provincial politics his supporters who continued to be arrested in connection with similar cases received his full support.¹⁸⁸ Chhotu Ram very frequently intervened on behalf of his supporters not as an advocate but as "an influential individual"¹⁸⁹. The district officials found this so objectionable that in one instance in course of an interview with Chhotu Ram, W.C. Connor, the Superintendent of Police, threatened to hand-cuff Chhotu Ram if he continued to interfere in police matters.¹⁹⁰ An interesting account of Chhotu Ram's keen interest in the accused in criminal cases and their social identity may be traced in a letter written by Chhotu Ram to the Deputy Commissioner in 1936:¹⁹¹

The number of culprits actual and suspected in connection with criminal activities in 1935-36 was probably twenty seven. Twenty two out of these are Jats and practically all of them belong to the landowning families. One of them has been a safedposh, another, a member of District Board of Rohtak, was one of the best recruits during the Great War and received a grant of land in recognition of his services, two of them served during the Great War and are in receipt of wound pension. One of them was a batch of 25 Jats of his village who offered to serve without pay for a term of the war. I am not suggesting that such men are not capable of committing crimes, but if court finds them not guilty they should not be harassed.

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- 187 "Men to be known", op.cit.
 188 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC Rohtak to CC Garbett, Chief Secretary to Govt. of Punjab, 21 Sept. 1931.
 189 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.
 190 Ibid.
 191 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39. Chhotu Ram's letter to E.H. Lincoln, 1936 (month & date not given), p. 72.

Such cases were further 'spoilt' in the law court by regular
 192 suborning and threatening of the witnesses. The district
 officials once again were of the opinion that it was being done by
 193 "young Jat pleaders, hangers on and lieutenants of Chhotu Ram".
 Chhotu Ram himself was accused by the police of influencing the
 194 witnesses in not giving evidence against the accused. In 1933,
 E.H. Lincoln, recognising this widely prevalent phenomenon also
 mentioned that Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand "would not lift a finger
 195 to stop this", i.e., deliberate spoiling of cases. The state of
 affairs was confirmed in 1936 by M.R. Sachdev whose personal
 experience in village Garhibala in Sonapat tehsil showed that
 despite his presence no Jat witnesses would come forward to testify
 196 to a murder committed in broad day light. On account of their
 (Jat) attitude in the matter of arrests of absconders, in 1935
 punitive police was imposed in 32 villages and 3 Mohallas
 197 of Rohtak at the expense of the inhabitants. Chhotu Ram enraged
 at this fought for the abolition of punitive police in Rohtak
 198 district, but without success.

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- 192 See HO Notes of both E.H. Lincoln and M.R. Sachdev, op.cit.
 193 Ibid. Also see "men to be known", op.cit.
 Some of the young pleaders were: Tika Ram, Lahiri Singh,
 Shadi Ram and Siri Chand (nephew of Chhotu Ram).
 194 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, p. 6. Also reference to this
 made in Confidential D0 from DC Rohtak, to Chief Secretary,
 Govt. of Punjab, 9 Jan. 1932. Ibid., p. 72.
 195 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.
 196 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 11 May 1936, op.cit.
 197 CFDC Rohtak, F.No. 10/38, Chhotu Ram to DC Rohtak,
 10 Jan. 1935.
 198 Ibid. Also see several articles in JG, 28 Jan. 1931, p. 3;
 18 Feb. 1931, p. 4; 15 April 1931, p. 8; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 4.
 For failure of Chhotu Ram in this connection see below
 chapter VIII, pp. 292-3

However, so far as the conflict with the man in debt was concerned, the Jat moneylender did not fair far better at the hands of Jat peasantry even though they belonged to the same caste. The relation of Jat moneylenders with the Jat peasantry were equally strained. Evidence given in 1929-30 to the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee showed the murders of agricultural money-¹⁹⁹ lenders as well. General relations between peasantry and agriculturist moneylenders were also, it was said, very strained for the last twenty years.²⁰⁰ Agriculturist moneylenders were said to be generous in advancing loans but extremely exacting in the matter²⁰¹ of recovery. Lal Chand's bitter accusation of the Bania money-²⁰² lenders, who took all the produce of the land of the proprietor and reduced him to an agricultural labourer fully applied to the Jat moneylenders as well.

The situation grew so alarming that questions about the soaring figures of murders of moneylenders were raised in the Punjab Council. Donald Boyd, the then Finance Member of the Provincial Executive Council, had to make a statement on the subject of murders²⁰³ of moneylenders in Punjab. Special instructions had to be sent to the districts in this matter. The instructions disclosed that in 1932-33 alone there were 156 murders in Punjab out of which 53 were

199 PU.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt, I, p. 139.

200 Ibid.

201 Ibid. M.L. Darling who had been extremely critical of the agriculturist moneylenders was often quoted in the Punjab Council by the non-agriculturist opponents of Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram criticised Darling on this account and called him "Beloved of the Banias". Chhotu Ram advised that instead of Darling, Calvert should be consulted regarding the plight of agriculturists under Bania moneylenders. For details see JG, 8 June 1927, pp. 6-8. For Chhotu Ram's extremely benevolent attitude towards the agriculturists moneylenders or Jat moneylenders, see below chapter IX, p.32s.

202 See above p.109.

203 FLCD, XXIV, 29 Oct. 1936, p. 189.

of moneylenders; for these their debtors were held responsible.²⁰⁴
 Moneylenders were also victims of 91 dacoities, 10 of which were
 proved to have been committed or abetted by debtors.²⁰⁵

Both the Haryana Tilak and the Jat Gazette covered some of the
 more sensational murders of both Bania and Jat moneylenders in Rohtak
 district. Some well known Jat moneylenders murdered were: Ram Sarup
 Jat of Makrauli, Kore Singh of Karontha, and a rich Jat woman money-
 lender of Rohtak. The two weeklies mentioned several other cases.²⁰⁶
 Chhotu Ram made reference in the Assembly to the murder of Kore
 Singh of Karontha and of another rich Jat moneylender at Rattangarh;
 both belonged to the Unionist Party and had fallen victims to their
 debtors.²⁰⁸ Clearly, in the context of the demand for credit in rural
 areas, the agriculturist moneylenders had come to be a necessary
 evil. Early enough the government had apprehended a widespread
 agitation against the moneylenders.²⁰⁹ In course of time the situation

- 204 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. Q-27, pp. 1-2. Total no. of moneylenders
 murdered in Punjab: 409 in 1905; 389 in 1906; 748 in 1923; 833
 in 1931; and 53 in 1933. See Report of Lala Lal Kunwar, ADM to
 DC Rohtak. Ibid. (separate figures for Rohtak dist. not given;
 also the no. of agriculturist among the murdered moneylenders
 not given.)
- 205 Total no. of dacoities of moneylenders in Punjab: 59 in 1905;
 80 in 1906; 333 in 1923; 187 in 1931; 91 in 1933. Ibid. (no
 separate figure given either for Rohtak dist. or for the
 agriculturists among the affected moneylenders.)
- 206 HT, 4 July 1936, p. 6; 18 Jan. 1938, p. 4; 28 June 1938, p. 3;
 30 May 1939, pp. 1-3; 20 June 1939, p. 3.
- 207 HT, 5 Oct. 1925, p. 5; 23 Nov. 1925, p. 6; 10 Dec. 1926, p. 6;
 21 Feb. 1927, pp. 1-6, 7 (3 news); 9 May 1927, p. 6; 10 Dec.
 1929, p. 6; 26 April 1936, p. 2; 4 July 1936, p. 6; 22 June
 1937, p. 4; 18 Jan. 1938, p. 4; 28 Mar. 1938, p. 4; 20 June
 1938, p. 3; 28 July 1938, p. 3; 13 Sept. 1938, p. 4; 9 May
 1939, p. 5; 23 May 1939, p. 4; 30 May 1939, pp. 1-3 (2 news);
 20 June 1939, p. 3. Also see JG, 19 Sept. 1923, p. 6; 28 Nov.
 1923, p. 2; 18 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 18 Nov. 1925, p. 1; 23 Feb.
 1927, p. 1.
- 208 PLAD, XII, 14 Mar. 1940, pp. 539-40.
- 209 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. Q-27, p. 19.

became so explosive that the government had to take special steps for protection of moneylenders as well as the landlords. Special armed licenses were consequently freely issued to the moneylenders and landlords in the villages for their self protection. It may be noted here that landlords in need of protection from their debtors drawn from among their economic subordinates were for once realistically bracketed in the category of moneylenders.

Chhotu Ram was accused, perhaps rightly, of inciting feelings against the Banias in Punjab. The Jat Gazette contained Chhotu Ram's speeches which were blatantly 'anti-Bania'; the Haryana Tilak also fanned the fire by making extensive reference to these speeches.

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- 210 PLAD, XXIX, 19 Oct. 1939, p. 189. The year in which this system was introduced in Punjab is not clear. However, E.H. Lincoln had advised restrictions to be imposed on the renewal and grant of armed licenses during the tenure of his office (1931-34). He wanted the licenses to be issued only to those who had assisted the administration. Others were apparently to be left to their own devices and resources. See HO Notes, 22 Mar. 1934, op.cit.
- 211 Reference to Chhotu Ram's activities in inciting the Jats against the Banias was made in a letter of the Comm. of Ambala Div. to the DC Rohtak. See letter No. 460 in CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40. Also for Chhotu Ram's public speeches in which he spoke of Banias and Mahajans in extremely derogatory terms, see Vir Bharti, 10 Aug. 1938; 13 Aug. 1938; 15 Aug. 1938; 19 Aug. 1938; 6 Sept. 1938; 17 Sept. 1938; 21 Sept. 1938; 20 Feb. 1940; 26 Feb. 1940; 16 Nov. 1940; cited in Gokal Chand Narang, op.cit., pp. 4-7. For example, Vir Bharti of 28 Feb. 1940 cited Chhotu Ram as saying: "I shall not rest until I make every Bania salam a Jat three times a day. I must have six crores out of them and make their children cry for a cup of milk". p. 7. Also Appendix II. Also see below chapter IX, p.338.
- 212 Nearly all the issues of JG breathe the anti-Bania spirit. See for example, two leading articles by Chhotu Ram against the Banias in JG, 22 May 1929, p. 3; 7 Aug. 1929, p. 6. Similarly nearly all issues of HT commented on such speeches and articles. HT, in fact, accused Chhotu Ram of inciting the Jats against Banias which, in its opinion, resulted in the increase of murders, thefts and other incidents. HT, 30 Aug. 1938, p. 3.

Incidentally, Chhotu Ram's opinion regarding Banias and Mahajans of the Haryana region was the same as that of the British officials who contemptuously dismissed them as a "timid community".²¹³ The British officials nevertheless felt that Chhotu Ram's dealings with the non-agriculturists, specially the Banias, was prejudiced and unfair.²¹⁴ And in their opinion Chhotu Ram crossed all limits in his dealings with them. His anti-Bania prejudice became a major topic of discussion between the Punjab Governor and the Viceroy during 1938-43.²¹⁵ During the ^{eight} years that Chhotu Ram remained a minister under the Provincial Autonomy his anti-Bania tendency seemed to have got more and more marked.²¹⁶ In 1943 the Governor of Punjab remarked:

He (Chhotu Ram) is unquestionably a man of great ability and has continued to work devotedly for the advancement of agricultural classes. He has controlled effectively the departments in his charge. He was born a zealot and a zealot he will die. His dislike of Bania and money lender is quite irradicable. He has little, if any, regard for the feelings of others, and in his public speeches, which on normal occasion take the form of vernacular harangues lasting for several hours, he is frequently indiscreet and gratuitously offensive. This is unfortunately an inherent defect in his composition.

This dislike of the Bania and the moneylender by Chhotu Ram did not extend to the similar category of agriculturist moneylenders or the Jat moneylenders of Rohtak district who held the same exploitative position as the Bania moneylender in regard to their debtors drawn

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- 213 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/1/32, Jan. 1932. It is interesting to note that some of the proscribed literature held poems which held the 'British' responsible for creating differences and antagonism not only between Hindus and Muslims but also between Jats and Banias. See Proscribed Literature Punjab, "Congress Ka Bigul aur Dukhiya Bharat" (Hindi) (Delhi 1934), NAI, BM, IOL & R. Also see above chapter II, p. 68.
- 214 Linlithgow Coll, 88: H.D. Craik to Linlithgow, 5 Jan. 1939.
- 215 Linlithgow Coll. See the following letters to Linlithgow: 86: E.P. Moon, June 1938; 88: H.D. Craik, 5 Jan. 1939; 92: B.G. Glancy, 21 July 1943.
- 216 Ibid., 92: B.G. Glancy to Linlithgow, 21 July 1943.

from other castes as well as their own.²¹⁷ In this connection,²¹⁸ interestingly, Chhotu Ram maintained in a public function:

Apna marega to saye me hi dalega . (One's own people will be merciful even in killing).

In any case Chhotu Ram succeeded in making the Bania appear a born enemy of the Jat. This aspect must necessarily be seen within the framework of his general policy of mobilization of Jats. Chhotu Ram certainly succeeded in this intention.

The condemnation of Bania and Mahajan was popular with the Jat peasantry indebted to Bania moneylenders who had continued to exist despite the rise of agriculturist moneylenders, and with the Jat moneylenders who were the immediate competitors of the Bania moneylenders. This was reinforced by the competition provided to the educated Jats in Punjab by the educated Banias and Mahajans in matter of admission to services. Quotas had long been fixed for Muslims and Hindus in admission to services and even to educational institutions. Hindu Jats were newcomers in the field of education. They, therefore, faced great competition within the Hindu quota from their non-agriculturist Bania and Mahajan counterparts who were far ahead of them in education, and who dominated the civil services. Politically, too, this rivalry was intensified by the Congress which became the chief opponent of the Chhotu Ram group in Rohtak and Haryana. The Congress in this region was known as the 'Bania Congress' or the 'Mahajan Congress'.²¹⁹ Chhotu Ram, therefore, indirectly served the British administration also when he made the

217 See below chapter IX, p.325. Also see Cartoon equating Capitalists with Banias, or sahlukars with Banias, Appendix II.
 218 JG, 4 May 1938, p. 1.
 219 FLCD, XXVII, 29 Oct. 1935, pp. 409-10. Also HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.

Banias and Mahajans as his targets, even if it was primarily to rally the Hindu Jats together. He was able to show to his fellow educated Jats that the provincial administration stood dominated by 'Hindu non-agriculturists' to the disadvantages of 'Hindu agriculturists'. Chhotu Ram's 'anti-Bania' front became more pronounced during election time. As early as 1927, the question of 'Jat vs. Bania' in Rohtak district had become a live issue in the elections.²²⁰ Chhotu Ram's attack on the Banias and Mahajans or 'non-agriculturist Hindus' intensified during and after the agrarian legislation of the late thirties. Among non-agriculturists many from the castes of traders had emerged as the chief opponents of the agrarian bills. Consequently, Chhotu Ram ended up by earning the repute of being a "bitter enemy of Banias and Mahajans".²²¹

The 'pro-Jat propaganda' of Chhotu Ram had its reaction in Rohtak district. Other castes and communities turned anti-Jat in general. The confidential fortnightly report of the Punjab Government made a pointed reference to the reactions which Chhotu Ram's 'pro-Jat propaganda' had produced among non-agriculturist Hindus in general and urban Hindus in particular:²²²

In Rohtak district sectional differences have produced a reaction against the Zamindar League propaganda which has shown a tendency to promote ascendancy of the Hindu Jat in a manner distasteful to other interests.

Chhotu Ram utilised this tension and antagonism between Jat landowners and other castes to mobilise the former. Social mobility within and along caste lines was to serve for him an effective avenue of organised politics. The slogans in the process of mobilization

220 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt, I, p. 247. Also Tribune, 29 Dec. 1929, p. 7. JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 4; 3 Feb. 1937, p. 3, 13 Jan. 1937, p. 4.

221 See above pp.II8-9. Also see below chapter IX, p.324.

222 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/V/31, May 1931.

were directed to the entire Jat caste, and on behalf of all of them.²²³ Attempt was to bring the entire Jat tribe under one banner and on a single platform. That there was clash of interests among different sections of Jats themselves was ignored and only the caste identity was emphasised.²²⁴ However, this widely acclaimed caste solidarity hardly operated in practice in the Rohtak district of Chhotu Ram's days. In any conflict between the Jats Chhotu Ram himself took sides and many a times Chhotu Ram went more by his class than caste affiliations. For example, whenever there was a question of Jat tenants against the non-Jat proprietors Chhotu Ram in actuality sided with the latter. In this connection what happened in some of the minor and neighbouring princely states and also between landlords and tenants of two large estates in the Haryana region, i.e., Chuchakwas' and the Skinner's estates, may be noted.

In village Chuchakwas of tehsil Jhajjar the tenants, Ahir²²⁵ and Jat by caste, revolted in 1929 against their Pathan landlords. In the same year Jat tenantry of Skinner's estate in tehsil Hansi of Hissar district also rose in revolt against their Anglo-Indian masters.²²⁶ In both these cases, Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand were reported to have expressed their verbal sympathy with the tenants.²²⁷ In the case of tenants of Skinner's estate Chhotu Ram also wrote a

223 Haryana Tilak criticised Chhotu Ram for affecting such a posture. See HT, 4 Mar. 1923, pp. 4-6; 2 Sept. 1923, p. 5; 2 June 1924, p. 5.

224 Chhotu Ram was aware of the existence of class divisions among Jats. He spoke of the Jats having three classes like all other castes and also made a rough sort of division, i.e., the rich proprietary class, middle class and the poor. See JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.

225 See above p.108 ; also below chapter VI, p.191.

226 Ibid.

227 HO Notes Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.

letter showing his sympathy with them; he did nothing in practice. This outward expression of sympathy was obviously motivated by the fact that the Congress was supporting both these movements. Moreover, the higher authorities had already expressed their willingness to bring about a settlement. Chhotu Ram obviously wanted to claim credit for himself for an eventual compromise between the tenants and the landlords; credit which would have otherwise gone to the Congress in Rohtak. In the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner this show of support to the tenants by Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand was because they were anxious to secure their votes in the Council elections. Ultimately it was clear that Chhotu Ram played no role at all, as the settlement was effected by the Deputy Commissioner without any reference to these "Jat leaders". At a crucial stage Chhotu Ram, when approached, had flatly refused to head or lead the movement of the tenants. The Haryana Tilak greatly criticised this action of Chhotu Ram and indicated that he was with the landlords; it rightly posed the question: "are the tenants not zamindars, as Chhotu Ram has been claiming?". In withdrawing his support from these movements Chhotu Ram clearly showed himself to be sharing the apprehensions of the British officials regarding the movements

228 Ibid.

229 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. D-3, DO. dated, 9 May 1929, from Miles Irving, Commissioner Ambala Div. to DC Rohtak; also DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div., 6 May 1930.

230 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.

231 This point is revealed in Chhotu Ram's letter to DC Rohtak, 2 April 1930, CFSO Rohtak, F. No. D-3.

232 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.

233 Ibid.

234 HT, 20 April 1930, p. 3; 27 April 1930, p. 4. The HT gave an instance of a zamindar function held at village Matan-Hail where Chhotu Ram and the Jagirdars of Chuchakwas jointly participated. See HT, 25 Feb. 1930, p. 4.

getting out of hand and their possible effects on the neighbouring areas.²³⁵ Moreover, the possibility exists that Chhotu Ram had been ticked-off by the district officials as in the case of Loharu.

In Loharu a similar case of tenant agitation against the landlords took place in the 1930s. Loharu shared its boundaries with the Haryana region on three sides. The tenantry was almost entirely drawn from among the Jat peasantry.²³⁶ The Haryana Tilak in fact always referred to it as the "Jat agitation".²³⁷ Initially Chhotu Ram took some interest in the movement and went to the extent of saying in 1931 that the Jats of Loharu must be helped.²³⁸ But as the agitation got intensified and prolonged he completely withdrew from the scene.²³⁹ Loharu was never mentioned in the columns of the Jat Gazette despite grave provocation by the Haryana Tilak which made much of the fact that Chhotu Ram despite his professions of being a 'Jat' was refusing to have anything to do with the "Jat agitation".²⁴⁰ In this case Chhotu Ram had been warned rather early by the officials against any interference in the state's affairs.²⁴¹ He obviously could not make even a theoretical case for them in his weekly as he had done in the case of the tenants of Chuchakwas' and Skinner's estates.

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- 235 HQ Notes, A. Latifi., Comm. Ambala Div., 13 Feb. 1930.
Also CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A/28, pp. 6-7.
- 236 GI:Home Poll, 18/IX/31, Sept. 1931; 18/4/36, April 1936;
18/5/36, 18/6/36, June 1936; 18/7/37, July 1937;
18/8/36, Aug. 1936.
- 237 All issues of HT from 20 Aug. 1935 to 18 May 1937 gave this "Jat agitation" an extensive coverage.
- 238 JG, 10 June 1931, p. 5.
- 239 HT, 8 June 1937, p. 1; 18 Sept. 1940, p. 4.
- 240 HT, 12 May 1936, p. 6; 3 June 1936, p. 3; 8 June 1937, p. 1.
- 241 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/IX/31, Sept. 1931; 18/12/32, Sept. 1932; 18/6/34, June 1934.

The affair of Seekur state of Rajputana provides an even more significant example. Chhotu Ram openly declared that "Jat kisans" of Seekur had been destroyed and he undertook to organise the Jat tenantry.²⁴² But as soon as the tenants took to agitational methods to back their demands against the Thakurs and Rajput landlords, Chhotu Ram would have nothing to do with them. He did try to bring about normalcy between Jat tenantry on the one hand, and Rajput landlords on the other, but he did nothing concrete to support the agitation or to secure acceptance of the demands of the tenants.²⁴³ Same was the case with regard to the petty state of Dujjana. The 'Jat tenants' of the Nawab of Dujjana were suffering under very unfavourable terms.²⁴⁴ Chhotu Ram assiduously refrained from mentioning their condition in his paper and totally ignored their cause.

Significantly, Chhotu Ram strongly championed the cause of the royal family of Bharatpur who were called the "pride of Jats" and "beloved leaders of Jats" not only in the columns of the Jat Gazette but also through innumerable resolutions by the Jat Sabhas and the Jat Mahasabha.²⁴⁵

It is quite clear that Chhotu Ram attempted to project the image of a leader with a united 'Jat community' behind him. But nothing he did or said could hide the divisions among Jats stemming from economic factors. Jats, cut across by economic-class divisions,

242 JG, 22 April 1931, p. 2; 28 Oct. 1931, p. 4; 23 Dec. 1931, p.3.
 243 AICC Papers, F. No. 6, 1935, pp. 1-5.
 244 HT, 16 April 1935, p. 7; 28 Jan. 1936, p. 8; 17 Mar. 1936, p. 9; 17 Jan. 1940, p. 6; 28 Feb. 1940, p. 5.
 245 See editorial and two articles in JG, 23 Oct. 1929, pp. 3-5. Also for similar sentiments see 3 April 1929, p. 3; 10 April 1929, p. 5; 4 Dec. 1929, pp. 4-8; 11 Dec. 1929, p. 7.

could hardly function as a single political unit. In fact, what Chhotu Ram demanded on behalf of the Jats was not calculated to benefit the community as a whole but only a section of it. The Jats who were coming together to form Chhotu Ram's base were the emerging rich Jat landowners and military personnel of Rohtak district who, because of their dominant economic position in the agrarian society of the district, had come to be rather isolated from the other castes as well as the economic subordinates from among their own caste. As seen above, the resultant tensions and antagonisms developed not around caste issues but around economic questions. The caste aspect was nevertheless used extensively to cloud the main issues relating to the mutually antagonistic economic relations of the major supporters of Chhotu Ram and their economic subordinates and rivals whatever their caste.

Chhotu Ram was perhaps conscious of the limited support he had among Jats. In order to widen his sphere of influence, his battle cry in respect to the whole of Punjab was changed to include all the Hindu agriculturists. This cry fitted in better with the general divisions in Punjab in terms of rural vs. urban and agriculturists vs. non-agriculturists. If not 'Jat Raj' at least 'Zamindar Raj' of sorts could be easily claimed in Punjab. With the castes being vulnerable to divisive forces of class, Chhotu Ram came to depend more on the economically dominant communities among the 'zamindars' or 'agriculturists' of Punjab regardless of caste and religion, but even among 'agriculturists' the contradiction inherent in the Jat and non-Jat syndrome was to reproduce itself.

Chapter IV

RELATION OF JATS WITH THE MUSLIMS

Compared to the caste question, the Hindu-Muslim question in Rohtak district was generally acknowledged as not being of any importance. Rohtak district had in fact rejected the principle of religious distinction proposed in 1900 regarding the grouping of various tribes under the Alienation of Land Act, unless the acceptance of the principle was considered "unavoidable for political reasons".¹ Opting instead for caste distinction the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak wrote to the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Delhi division in 1900:²

The Hindu Jat and Mula Jat, the Hindu Goojar and Muhammadan Goojar think more of the common ancestor from whom they have descended than the fact that he is a Hindu or the other a Mohammadan and live in the same village with as much peace and good feeling towards one another as if they were members of the same race and religion, instead of being members of the same race, but of a different religion. The officers and zamindars with whom I have cultivated freely are also of the same opinion, that any religious distinction would be most unpopular and also unwise. It is with no feeling of uncertainty that I advance this view as it represents the feeling of the district itself.³

All the same, under the impact of the growth of communalism, communal rivalry arose on the basis of the competition and controversy regarding the share of the respective religious communities in government departments and public affairs in Punjab which became a live question in the twenties of the current century. In Ambala division of the

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- 1 Both JG and HT held this opinion. See JG, 21 Oct. 1923, p. 3; HT, 28 Mar. 1927, p. 7.
 - 2 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. 1 VI-V, p. 101.
 - 3 Ibid. See Captain P.S.M. Burlton letter No. 455-G, 27 Dec. 1900.

province the Muslims were a minority.⁴ In Rohtak district they constituted a mere 7 percent of the total population.⁵ Muslim communal papers of Punjab like the Muslim Outlook, Zamindar, Vakil, and Al-Shams, all vehemently accused the Hindus and among Hindus the Jats of monopolising all governmental positions in Rohtak district.⁶ Even Chhotu Ram commented that the Muslims of Rohtak had come to regard the Jats as their rivals in demanding various concessions from the government.⁷ Nor did he escape criticism in this connection. In a way he had the worst of both the worlds; for his Hindu communal opponents also inveighed against his association with Muslims so much so that sometimes they described him as "Chhotu Khan" or "Chhotu Deen".⁸

The question arises as to why Jats alone from among rest of the Hindus were the targets of criticism of Muslim communalists of Rohtak⁹ especially when Muslims in general and the Jat followers of Chhotu Ram in particular were considered loyal to the government.¹⁰

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- 4 For details see below p.129, f.n.s. II-12.
 5 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1936, II, prt B, table 16.
 6 For the above quoted newspapers see JG, 24 Oct. 1923, p. 3; 6 May 1925, p. 7; 13 May 1925, p. 8; 22 July 1925, p. 7; 30 Sept. 1925, p. 3.
 7 JG, 11 Sept. 1927, p. 3. Also see "The Jat officers and the Opposition of the Muslims", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 24 Oct. 1928, p. 3.
 8 HT, 22 Sept. 1924, p. 3; 15 Oct. 1929, p. 9; 18 Dec. 1934, p. 3; 5 Oct. 1937, p. 1. For reference to such attacks see JG, 22 Mar. 1939, p. 4. For general criticism of Chhotu Ram's alliance with the Muslims see HT, 13 Nov. 1928, p. 3; 22 Oct. 1929, p. 3; 29 April 1930, p. 4; 30 Jan. 1934, p. 3; 6 Feb. 1934, p. 4.
 9 The other religious minority of the Sikhs in Rohtak district numbered only 596 in 1931 and did not feature in any communal controversy. In fact the whole of Ambala division was completely unaffected even by the 'Shahid Ganj agitation' which elsewhere in Punjab was marked by very turbulent clashes between the Muslims and the Sikhs. GI:Home Poll, F. No. 1817/35, July 1935.
 10 All the DCs of Rohtak from 1929-44 held the Muslims of Rohtak, by and large, as being loyal to the British Govt. HO Notes DCs Rohtak from 1929 to 1944, op.cit.

Moreover, the basis of distribution of governmental posts was religion and not caste. The competition for jobs was between Hindus and Muslims and not between Jats and Muslims. Surely Chhotu Ram's insistence on 'Jat rights' to the singular exclusion of all else in Rohtak was not the only cause of the tirade of the Muslim communalists against the Jats. The answer lies again in the landholding structure of Rohtak district and the consequent socio-economic relationships which made for the semi-isolation of Jat landowners not only from the other castes but from the Muslim religious minority as well.

Among a total of 137,830 Muslims in Rohtak district in 1931 less than half belonged to the statutory agricultural tribes. The remaining half mainly belonged to the lower castes and pursued the 'lower' professions of their Hindu counterparts. These 55,648 Muslim agriculturists controlled in 1910, 40 to 41 revenue estates out of a total of 530 revenue estates or villages in Rohtak district. Among them the Muslim Rajputs were the largest single owners of land. They owned 7 percent of total cultivated land in the district and stood next only to the Jats who owned 60 percent. With the rapid alienations of land since 1900 and the emergence of Jat moneylenders as a major force in the district the position of all other castes,

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- 11 Muslim agricultural tribes in Rohtak dist. were: 2,386 Biloch; 2,466 Gujar; 3,689 Jat; 1,151 Mughal; 33,971 Rajput; 1,590 Sayyed; 7,019 Pathan; and 6,019 Taga. Together they formed 55,648 out of a total population of 1,37,880. See Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1936, II, prt. B, table 16.
- 12 The non-agriculturists among the Muslims, mostly lower castes, were: 91 Banjare; 298 Bhatiara; 61 Bharabhujia; 813 Chhubra; 3,937 Dhobi; 8,812 Faquir; 1,209 Julaha; 1,851 Kumhar; 1,009 Kunjra; 2,271 Lilari or Rangrej; 4,116 Lohar; 6,371 Machhi; 368 Maniar; 2,685 Mirasi; 948 Nai; 8,528 Qassab; and a few insignificant numbers of 7 Chhuhra; 6 Chamar; 30 Darji; 5 Dhanak; 46 Jhinmar; 19 Jogi and 48 Od; total: 69,387. Ibid.
- 13 See above chapter I, p.10.
- 14 See above chapter I, pp.9-10.

whatever their religion, was severely affected. This was specially true of the Muslims Rajputs who constituted the majority of land-owners among Muslims. The figures of all land transactions, whether mortgage or sale, between 1926 to 1940 show the heavy and continuous losses incurred by Muslim Rajputs not only in Rohtak district¹⁵ but also in the entire Ambala division. The Jats as a caste were¹⁶ the major beneficiaries in Rohtak. This was not conducive to a harmonious relationship between those Jats and Muslims who were affected by these transactions. The situation however was no different regarding dealings of Jat moneylenders or rich Jat landowners with other Hindu castes but as the religion was different a communal angle could be given to any subsequent difference between them, and friction between Hindu Jat and Muslim landowners acquired communal overtones.

By 1929 the Commissioner of Ambala division observed that¹⁷ "Hindu Muslim tension existed practically all over the division". By thirties of the twentieth century the so called 'communal riots' became fairly common in Rohtak district. Once again, in majority of cases these clashes took place between certain Muslims and certain Jats. In order to ascertain the real issue behind the so called 'communal riots' case studies of some of the most talked about riots or conflicts between (Hindu) Jats and Muslims may be undertaken. These occurred in the villages of Kanaudha and Kharkhoda of Rohtak district. These were given wide publicity

15 For figures of Rohtak dist., see above chapter I, pp.26-27. For figures relating to the entire Ambala Div. see statement XXIV appended to the PLRA, 1926-40 .

16 Ibid.

17 HO Notes Miles Irving, 31 June 1929, CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-28.

outside the district, aroused bitter passions between Jats and Muslims, and greatly alarmed the district authorities.

Kanaudha communal riot of 1933 created a great stir in Rohtak. The Inquilab of Lahore, dated 3 October 1933, gave a highly coloured version of the affair under the caption, "Grievances of the Musalmans of Kanaudha, Rohatak district"¹⁸. The news item accused the Hindu Jats of forcibly attacking and stopping the Muslims from constructing a mosque on a piece of land which was reported to have been in the possession of Muslims for generations. In the resultant clash between the two, the old mosque was declared to have been demolished by Jats. Jats were also accused of carrying away its old wood-work and the newly ordered bricks meant for rebuilding it. Even government officials were not spared. Being Hindus, they were accused of siding with Jats. In connivance with Jats, the officials were reported to have arrested and challaned¹⁹ (summoned to court) many Muslims. Written complaints by a number of Muslims were sent to the Deputy Commissioner and even to the Viceroy.²⁰ Outside help was also sought.²¹ A petition for help was sent by some Muslims of Kanaudha to the Jumma Masjid Managing Committee of Delhi. The committee in return widely exaggerated the incident and inflamed the religious feelings of Muslims everywhere.²² The danger of outsiders aggravating and exploiting the situation was genuine as Kanaudha was situated on the border of Delhi and Rohtak district. Consequently, several

18 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 26/51.

19 Ibid.

20 For the representation of the Muslims see a series of letters all dated 12 Sept. 1933, Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid., see Handwritten letter of Dabir Ali on behalf of the Muslims of village Kanaudha, 10 Nov. 1933 and 12 Nov. 1933.

arrests were made under security section of the Criminal Procedure Code.²⁴ The Jat Gazette and the Haryana Tilak commented more or less in the same communal way. However, both also noted that the initial cause of quarrel was the desire of Muslims to build a mosque on the village shamilat land.²⁵ Interestingly enough, the Deputy Commissioner's confidential report²⁶ and the confidential fortnightly report of the Punjab Government on communal matters²⁷ also noted briefly the attempt of Muslims to build a mosque on the village common land, and resistance of the Hindu Jats to it as the basic cause of the communal riot in village Kanaudha. But an on the spot inquiry held by the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police²⁸ disclosed that for the purpose^{of} building a mosque the Muslims of village Kanaudha had "usurped" more land in the village shamilat than their share. Their total share in shamilat land was to correspond to the total agricultural land owned by them. This came to a paltry 20 acres. The Hindu Jat landowners on the other hand owned 92,570 acres of land. The Jat landowners had demanded the partitioning of the common land according to the existing rights of ownership before the building work could be undertaken by the Muslims.²⁹ Under the pretext of religion certain Muslims of Kanaudha were, therefore, definitely attempting to usurp more land than was their share.

The other charges of the Muslims were also pronounced by the inquiry as being highly exaggerated.³⁰ The quarrel over building

24 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 16 Mar. 1934, op.cit.
 25 JG, 18 Oct. 1933, p. 6; HT, 6 Nov. 1933, p. 5.
 26 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 29 Oct. 1933, op.cit.
 27 GI:Home Poll, F. No. 18/10/33, Oct. 1933.
 28 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 26/51.
 29 Ibid.
 30 Ibid.

material of 5,000 bricks, bought by the Muslims for the mosque, occurred in reality between the Muslims themselves. The quarrel was on the division of bricks which were joint property of all Muslims who had contributed towards their purchase.³¹ A panchayat of Jats which had put a stop to the building of the mosque had also made a suggestion for the division of bricks.³² This was not accepted by the Muslims. Subsequently, the bricks were carried away by the Muslims themselves and the quarrel had begun.³³ Regarding the allegation that the Jats had carried away the woodwork of the century old Badshahi mosque it was discovered during the inquiry that this particular incident happened long before the present trouble and at a time when the mosque had actually crumpled.³⁴ The doors and the framework of the crumpled mosque were not carried away by any Jat but by the village kamins (both Hindu and Muslim) for being used as fuel.³⁵

In any case, the communal passions ran high and several casualties on both sides were reported. Shafru Ranjout and his two brothers, Abdulha and Mangla Faquir filed a case against Hindu Jats alleging that they had demolished the mosque.³⁶ Shafru Ranjout was a known Goonda whose name was registered in the surveillance register of the police among No. 10 Badmashes in the local Thana (Police station).³⁷ He had collected a large amount of money from the Muslims of the village with the ostensible purpose of rebuilding the mosque. When pressed by his fellow Muslims to account for the

31 Ibid.
 32 Ibid.
 33 Ibid.
 34 Ibid.
 35 Ibid.
 36 Ibid.
 37 Ibid.

collected money he took to instigating them against the Jats.³⁸ The criminal case had no basis and was consequently dismissed. The other case registered by the police under Section 107 Criminal Procedure Code, i.e., King Emperor vs. Sri Ram and King Emperor vs. Shafru, etc., shed light on the fundamental issues involved in what was publicly propagated as the "worst communal tangle" of the Ambala division.

³⁹
The judgement of the court read:

Evidence shows that this plot of land (on which Muslims were building a mosque and Hindus had objected) is in the abadi-deh and the abadi-deh has not been partitioned among the proprietors of the village and nobody may misappropriate a piece of abadi-deh to his exclusive possession without a formal partition, and construction of a mosque is certainly to take exclusive possession of land — a possession which can seldom be restored on sentimental grounds. For the Muslims to attempt to build a mosque without the consent of the proprietors of the village was in fact an overt act in a case of this sort. So Jats' objection is within their rights and danger to peace exists. Muslims clearly are the aggressors. The mere building of a mosque is not an objectionable act in itself but is so when being attempted in the face of position held by the Muslims in the village and the fact that land is undivided shamilat. It is therefore an 'overt act' and must not be attempted.

It was clear that Jats were not being communal minded in stopping the mosque from being built. The whole question was one of the respective share of the proprietary body of the village in the shamilat land and abadi-deh. This share was calculated in proportion⁴⁰ to the land revenue of the estate being paid by each proprietor. It follows, therefore, that those with the strongest objection and taking the lead in the matter would necessarily be those with the largest share in the shamilat land. The Jat landowners who owned the largest share of land came to be naturally involved in most

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Report of Land Revenue Committee 1938 (Lahore 1938), p. 178.

quarrels regarding their right in shamilat land.

Yet another 'communal riot', leading to a clash between some Jats and Muslims, and blown to disproportionate proportions, occurred in 1937-38 in village Kharkhoda of Rohtak district. A dramatically worded telegram sent by some Muslims of the village to the Commissioner of Ambala division read:

Kharkhoda situation serious stop Jats attacking Muslims
stop immediate intervention essential stop please take
necessary action immediately stop

A deputation of Muslims also waited on the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak.⁴² Rumours that Jats would hold a big panchayat to stop cow-slaughter were spread. The question of playing music before mosques was also raised. The Muslims declared themselves in "grave danger" from the Hindu Jats.⁴³ Apprehending further breach of peace the district authorities posted a police guard at Kharkhoda at considerable cost to meet the much feared out-break of a "serious communal riot".⁴⁴ There was no real trouble; and subsequently authorities owned that their fears had been greatly exaggerated and the local leaders of Muslims had grossly misrepresented things in order to effect their self importance.⁴⁵

The Urdu weekly Haryana Tilak blamed the entire trouble on "Muslim Goondas" and their attack on the "Hindu kisans".⁴⁶ It referred to the "grievance of Hindus" as regards Gau-kashi (Cow-slaughter) and also to the Hindu panchayat held to stop this practice. According to the weekly, in the fracas that had ensued 235 Hindus and

41 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-14, p. 33.

42 Ibid., p. 31.

43 Ibid., p. 1.

44 Ibid., p. 31.

45 Ibid.

46 HT, 15 Mar. 1938, p. 4.

22 Muslims were ⁴⁷ challaned.

The confidential report of the Superintendent of Police to the Deputy Commissioner revealed the real cause of trouble at ⁴⁸ village Kharkhoda:

My information is that there is a party feeling amongst Muslim zamindars of Kharkhoda and as their tenants are mostly Hindu Jats of the surrounding villages the mischief is being instigated by some of the Muslims themselves in order to harass their rival Muslims by instigating Hindu tenants against them.

The differences between Jat tenants and Muslim landlords which had for a time threatened to break out in a large scale 'communal riot' were patched up. The district officials brought about a compromise between the two sides through the intervention of certain important representatives of Jats and Muslims of the Ilaqua ⁴⁹ (region). The much feared trouble at Moharram celebrations never ⁵⁰ occurred. Jat panchayat held after the Moharram celebrations was also attended by Sayed Ayub Ali, one of the Muslim landlords of Kharkhoda, who was said to enjoy great popularity among the Hindu ⁵¹ Jat tenants. The panchayat made no reference to any religious controversy in the village.

Trouble occurred again in March 1938 when the Hindu tenants ⁵² joined in the celebrations of the birth of a son to Sayed Ayub Ali. Muslims opposed to Sayed Ayub Ali resented this and once again direct attempts at instigation resulted in a confrontation between the two which was at once described as a 'communal riot'. That there was

47 HT, 31 May 1938, p. 4; 7 June 1938, p. 4; 21 June 1938, p. 1.

48 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-14. See Confidential Report, 22 Feb. 1938.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., p. 25.

51 Ibid., p. 31.

52 Ibid.

nothing communal about the trouble is clear from the secret report
of the Superintendent of Police of the district:⁵³

As they (the other party of the Muslims) could not possibly offer any reasonable protest on any ground so they twisted the matter a bit and attempted to convert it into a question of 'playing music before mosque' on the 18th March 1938.

The Muslims factional exploitation of Jat tenants behind this 'communal' trouble is very clear. The Hindu Jat tenants of Kharkhoda on their side were having trouble with the Muslim vegetable vendors and pheri-walas (hawkers). The Jat tenants successfully boycotted the latter and brought down their charges.⁵⁴ Significantly, no attempt was made by the Muslim landlords to join hands and make a 'communal' cause with their co-religionists, i.e., the low caste Muslim vendors and hawkers against the Hindu Jat tenants.

Apart from these two notorious 'communal cases' in Rohtak district,⁵⁵ there were several others which received much less attention at the hands of the district officials but were largely covered by the paper Haryana Tilak. This weekly publicized a series of 'cases' in Rohtak district between Hindu Jats and Muslims which were described in the popular language as being 'communal cases' and related to actual confrontation between certain groups of Hindu Jats and Muslims, whose economic status was not always disclosed and in the case of Muslims the caste also was not disclosed. Confrontations in several villages, such as village Jakholi in

53 Ibid. See Secret Report No. C-219, 20 Mar. 1938.

54 Ibid.

55 The importance of these two communal cases is evident from the two separate files which the district administration maintained on them, i.e., CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 26/51 and F. No. I-14.

tehsil Sonapat, village Gathwal in tehsil Gohana, and some other
⁵⁶
villages of the district were cited as examples. But the cause of
confrontation in all the cases was the dispute relating to the
⁵⁷
construction of a mosque in the village shamilat. A 'communal riot'
was seriously apprehended in 1936 between Hindu Jats and Pathans of
village Gathwal of tehsil Gohana, where the Hindu Jats and Pathans
even had a mixed Panna, showing perfectly amicable relations between
⁵⁸
the two religious communities. 'Hindu Jats' objected to the building
of a mosque on the shamilat land and went to the extent of stopping
the Muslim kumhar from supplying bricks for the purpose. A
compromise was however reached and the apprehended 'communal riot'
⁵⁹
was averted. In 1937 there was direct confrontation, termed a
⁶⁰
'communal riot', in village Gohana amongst some Jats and Muslims.
The cause, again, was the construction of a mosque over a disputed
piece of land. The matter went up to the district magistrate who
⁶¹
decided in favour of the Hindu Jats.

It was not always that the 'Muslims' alone claimed a certain
plot of shamilat land as their own. The Hindu Jats, too, wanted to
assert their exclusive right over such land. In 1936, a 'communal
riot' was reported in Bahadurgarh when 2 to 3 thousand Jats assembled
to occupy a site on the shamilat land and naturally clashed with the
⁶²
other claimants, i.e., the 'Muslims'. The revenue records showed the

56 HT, 15 Oct. 1937, p. 1.

57 Ibid.

58 HT, 1 Sept. 1936, p. 7. Panna is a compact territorial component
of a village named after some common ancestor who had been
accepted as an important and influential leader in the past.
A mixed Panna would, therefore, mean that the two religious
'communities' of Hindus and Muslims accepted and acknowledged
a common ancestor and traced their origins from him.

59 Ibid.

60 HT, 12 May 1937, p. 8.

61 Ibid.

62 HT, 30 June 1936, p. 4.

land to be in the possession of 'Muslims'⁶³. Consequently, when some Muslims resisted, wide scale arrests had to be made and the case had to be taken to the court.⁶⁴ A similar case initiated by certain Jats⁶⁵ took place between village Dighal and Gochhi in Rohtak district.

The communal trouble in Rohtak district was not confined to Hindu Jats and Muslims alone. Brahmins, too, were involved in similar confrontations. In village Garhi-Brahmanan of tehsil Sonapat, the Brahmin landowners protested against the extension of Id-gah on the shamilat land by the Muslim community.⁶⁶ The resulting quarrel was settled by the Sub-Divisional Officer of Sonapat though it was again revived, according to the district officials, by a Congress leader of Rohtak.⁶⁷ Similar 'communal trouble' arose⁶⁸ between some Hindu Rajputs and some Muslims in village Jakholi.

It would not be true to say that the quarrels over shamilat land, commonly given communal colouring, occurred only between the proprietary classes of the village, i.e., between owners of land who alone could claim a share in the shamilat land of the village. Attempts were made by the non-proprietary body of the village to stake a claim on the village common land on the basis of religion as otherwise no claim could be made. For example, in village Jakholi 97 percent of the population was of Hindu Rajputs and a mere 3 percent that of the Muslims; Hindu Rajputs owned 2,940 acres

63 Ibid. HT maintained that land belonged to the Hindu Jats, and the Muslim. Pathans had mischievously tampered with the revenue records to show that the land belonged to them.

64 Ibid.

65 GI:Home Poll, F. No. 18/6/37, June 1937.

66 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 2, prt. 2. See note by L.P. Addison, SDO Rohtak, 24 May 1935. Also see HT, 1 Sept. 1936, p. 7.

67 Ibid.

68 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-22. Also GI:Home Poll, F. No. 18/6/37, June 1937.

out of a total of 2,946 acres of cultivated land; and the Muslims had occupancy rights over 25 acres of land of which they were in actual possession of 16 acres only.⁶⁹ Even regarding these 16 acres of land they were having a lot of trouble with the landlords. Having no legal right of proprietorship in village common land, the Muslim tenants tried to bypass the control of the proprietors through religion by raising the communal bogey. Consequently, in 1936 they forcibly occupied a site in the village common land for building a mosque.⁷⁰ This site had been originally given to them by the Hindu proprietary body for housing purposes.⁷¹ A civil suit followed and the Judge ruled that the Muslim non-proprietors had attempted to convert the house into a mosque which would have meant "a practical ownership of land under the cloak of religion".⁷² It was also noted that the question was obviously not of building a mosque but converting that particular spot into an independent holding, as the landowners had given the Muslims a choice of four plots on the periphery of the village which was declined by them.⁷³

Although this case occurred between Hindu landlords who were Rajput by caste and their Muslim tenants the basis remained the same even when one party was Hindu Jat by caste. For example, the fundamental issue at stake between Jats and Sheikhs in village Sanghi, as given in the confidential fortnightly report from Punjab, was necessarily the same.⁷⁴ In the resulting 'communal clash'

69 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-22. See on the spot Inquiry conducted by SDO Rohtak, 25 Feb. 1937.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid., see case no. 700 of 1936: Karim-ud-din vs. Bhopal Singh.

72 Ibid., see the Judgement, pp. 147-63.

73 Ibid.

74 GI:Home Poll, F. No. 18/11/37, May 1937.

75

at Sanghi two Jats were killed by some Sheikhs.

It is evident from the records available in the office of Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak that land disputes between 'Muslim' and 'Hindus', mainly Jats in district Rohtak, were deliberately given communal colour. In their essence they were closely linked with socio-economic life of the district where land relations played the prominent part. That is why Jats in majority of cases were one of the two parties involved in these 'communal affairs' in keeping with the landowning structure of Rohtak district. The definition of land in Punjab excluded mosques, temples and graves out of its orbit.⁷⁶ Often enough some of the 'Muslim' would stake their claim to a particular piece of land on the ground that the land in question had borne a mosque or graves. 'Hindus' also employed the same tactics in claiming certain pieces of land. In fact the attempts of both 'Muslims' and 'Hindus' in claiming the land on religious grounds in the Ambala division did not leave out even the Nazul land (government land) and the land belonging to local authority; all⁷⁷ were quite often made subject to dispute in the thirties. The disputes relating to Nazul lands, however, could not be given any communal colour as one of the parties concerned happened to be the government itself. In Rohtak district, since the bulk of land was held by Hindu Jats, disputes occurred quite frequently as a result

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- 75 The HT gave wide coverage of this incident. See HT, 21 Sept. 1937, p. 4; 5 Oct. 1937, p. 1; 26 April 1938, p. 4.
- 76 See definition of 'land' in the Alienation of Land Act of 1900, which was based on the definition as provided in the Punjab Tenancy Act 1887, 4(1), Gazette of India 1899, prt. V.
- 77 For direct attempts of certain Hindus and Muslims to claim the land belonging to the Municipal Committee or the Dist. Boards, see HO Notes, Lincoln, 16 Mar. 1934, op. cit. Also see CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. 4, pp. 407-13.

of some Muslims claiming particular pieces of land for mosques and graves. The Hindu landowners invariably resisted these claims and took to demolishing not only the new structures but also the old ones and some times even the graves. The shamilat land of the village was more often involved in this kind of controversy because it was neglected and ruined by the proprietary body of the village. Even the proprietors failed to get any thing like a just share for the individual proprietor out of the shamilat land. The Jat Gazette also mentioned the frequent fights over the possession of shamilat land and also its misappropriation by many; the actual distribution of this land, in the weekly's opinion, came to depend on the physical strength of the respective parties. The quarrel, therefore, was either between smaller owners of land and bigger owners having bigger share in land or between non-proprietary body of the village with no claim to the shamilat land and the proprietary body. The non-proprietors, agriculturists or non-agriculturists, frequently asserted their right to acquire land under the shelter of religion which alone enabled them to claim the right to grab land and also assured its possible success because of popular appeal.

The other lot of Muslims, designated as non-agriculturists were mostly kamins. The village proprietary bodies, whether Hindu Jats or Muslims, treated them the same way they treated the other Hindu kamins. In this case too, the reasons for dispute were not

78 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/6/37, June 1937.

79 CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 10, S/694, p. 7. Also see S. Wilberforce, Agricultural Cooperation in the Punjab (Lahore 1908), p. 7.

80 Ibid.

81 JG, 27 May 1925, p. 7.

82 Muslim Rajput and Hindu Jat landowners of village Moth in Hissar dist. joined together to stop the untouchables from constructing a Pacca well. See letter of Satyanarayan Saroj to M. Gandhi, dated 3 Aug. 1940, forwarded by Gandhi to Gopichand Bhargava on 12 Aug. 1940 in Bhargava Papers. Also see above Chapter III, pp. 92-3.

communal but economic. Chhotu Ram himself mentioned tension between Jats and Muslim Kannoos, Manjar, Dhobi, Pheriwalas and ⁸³ Kunjras, as arising out of not communal but economic grounds. In 1931, Chhotu Ram advocated boycott of Julahas, Barahis, Lohars, and ⁸⁴ Chamars, some of whom were Hindus and others Muslims. The Muslim kamins like their Hindu counterparts, incurred the displeasure of Hindu as well as Muslim landowners on account of their demand for ⁸⁵ higher agricultural wages. It may be noted that in the period under study the higher castes among Muslims never took up the cause of Muslim lower castes, for example, as seen in the case of village Kharkhoda. Unable to give communal colour to their frequent troubles with Jat landowners no communal references to the friction between the two were ever made. The only instance when the struggle of lower Muslim castes with Jat landowners was given communal colouring was when Muslim Ods were involved. This was generally depreciated by all landowning Muslim and Hindu members of the Punjab ⁸⁶ Legislature. By and large, the grievances of Muslim kamins against Hindu landowners were ignored even by the upper caste landowning Muslims. In Hissar district the two attempts of the Muslim menials, in 1925 and in 1937, to convert an old grave into a mosque and the consequent friction with those Jats who demolished it led neither

83 JG, 24 Oct. 1923, p. 3. Also see above chapter III, pp. 88-89.

84 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3; 7 Oct. 1931, p. 3.

85 Ibid. Also see above chapter III, pp. 84-89. Some of these cases in which Muslim landowners were involved with their kamins (both Hindu and Muslim) are also reported in JG, 22 Aug. 1923, p. 6; 12 Sept. 1923, pp. 5-6; 24 Oct. 1923, p. 10; 10 May 1925, p. 7. In the opinion of the JG the Muslim landowners observed as much Chhu-a-Chhut (discrimination) against their kamins, whether Hindu or Muslim, as did the Hindu landowners. See JG, 2 May 1923, p. 14; 24 May 1923, pp. 3-4; 3 Oct. 1923, p. 2.

86 Reported in JG, 1 June 1929, pp. 3-5.

to any 'communal stir' nor the description of this scrimmage as a
⁸⁷
 'communal riot'.

Gau-kashi was certainly a frequent cause of communal riots in Rohtak district. In fact cow-slaughter was an extremely sensitive issue in the whole of Punjab. There were numerous Gau-Rakshini Sabhas (Cow protection associations). Gau-Raksha (cow-protection) was a question which no non-Muslim association or political party could afford to ignore. It was included in the practical programme of all the political parties, whether the Hindu Sabha or the Congress or the Hindu wing of the Unionist Party, i.e., Chhotu Ram and his associates. Interestingly, the British officials who did not consider the Jats very religious minded made an exception in the matter of cow protection. The question of cow-slaughter in their opinion could arouse the "communal passions" of Hindu Jats.⁸⁸ The Muslims generally involved in cow slaughter were the Muslim butchers known as Qassais and they did not enjoy any official sympathy. Chowdhri Ghulam Mustafa, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, who administered the district between 1936 to 1939, noted⁸⁹ in this connection:

The Butchers (of Rohtak district) are generally a very unruly and troublesome class of people ... the worst among them have made a regular trade of stealing cattle and slaughtering them in a secret manner. As they generally deal with cattle or are meat-sellers it is not always easy to detect such crime among them.

Apart from the butchers, the officials maintained that the Muslim Rajputs were also given to cattle lifting.⁹⁰ This stealing

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- 87 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/8/37, Aug. 1937. For details of this case in 1925 see JG, 15 July 1927, p. 3.
 88 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.
 89 HO Notes, 11 May 1939, op.cit.
 90 HO Notes, Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.

of the cows by the 'Mohammadans' was considered by the district authorities of Ambala division to be "the beginning of clash between Hindu and Muslim zamindars which developed into a general communal tangle".⁹¹ Stealing of cows was indeed very frequent in Rohtak district as also elsewhere in the Ambala division.⁹² The situation from the point of view of Hindu landowners was irreparable as there could not be any chance of recovery of cows or of apprehending the culprits. Complaints lodged with the police were seldom an effective remedy. On the basis of religious sanctity of the cow the Hindu Jat landowners, who dominated among the landowners of this area, could work up the religious sentiments of their fellow co-religionists. It brought better results than a simple protest lodged with the police against mere thieving. It must however be said that the Muslim Rajputs and quassai were not the only cattle lifters; Hindu menials also were very frequent culprits. They not only stole and sold the cattle of their landowners to the Muslim butchers but also their own cattle if any.⁹³ Stealing of cattle, specially cows, by the menials increased in this region because of increase in the price and export of hides.⁹⁴ The menials found that the hide of a slaughtered animal was more valuable than that of a dead animal

91 HO Notes, Comm. Ambala Div. 31 Oct. 1943; CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-28.

92 HO Notes, Sheikh Khurshid Mohammad, DC Gurgaon, 13 Aug. 1931, CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(b), p. 6.

93 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 37/1/37, pp. 130-1. Also see "Harphool Jat Julani ka" by Man Singh Joshi of Shaheedpur (Rohtak 1935). See Proscribed Literature Punjab, F. No. 976, p. 3. The JG also published news regarding the thefts of the cattle belonging to the Jats by the kamins. These kamins however were pointedly claimed to be Muslim by faith and not Hindu. JG, 24 Oct. 1923, p. 3.

94 See above chapter III, p.83.

and hide of a slaughtered cow fetched the highest price.⁹⁵ Cows in Rohtak district, in any case, far outnumbered the other cattle as it was more economical to feed them than a larger animal like the buffalo, specially in the frequent famine conditions of the region and the consequent fodder scarcity.⁹⁶ The increasing thefts of cows therefore added to the tension already subsisting between kamins, both Hindu and Muslim, and the proprietors. Apart from this the kamins had also increased the number of goats and sheep which they maintained for the butchers and grazed them on the shamilat land of the village which was not even adequate for the landowners' own growing herd of cattle.⁹⁷ The resentment of the landowners towards the kamins and the butchers was therefore obvious, and in order to economically hit the butchers the Hindu landowners frequently invoked religious sentiments and tried to stop the sale of cows to butchers altogether. The menials were also forbidden to sell their own cows to the butchers.⁹⁸ All this naturally aroused the resentment of the butchers. Consequently, Chhotu Ram was to argue that the Muslim butchers had taken to attacking the Jats "if and when the occasion arose".⁹⁹ The menials, on the other hand, were terrorised by the Jat landowners into not having any dealings with the butchers.¹⁰⁰ The chief instrument for making the menials obey

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- 95 Board of Eco. Inq., Cattle and Dairying in the Punjab (Lahore 1910), p. 45. The sale price of a dried hide of a slaughtered cow was Rs. 40 per maund and Rs. 33 per maund for a buffalo.
- 96 Board of Eco. Inq., A Cattle Survey of the Rohtak District of the Punjab (Lahore 1935), p. 30.
- 97 See above chapter III, pp. 89-90.
- 98 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 37/1/37, pp. 130-1. Also see CFDC Rohtak, F. No. A/28, pp. 17, 55.
- 99 Linlithgow Coll., 88: H.D. Craik to Linlithgow, 26 May 1939.
- 100 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 37/1/37, pp. 130-1. Also CFDC Rohtak, F. No. A/28, pp. 17-55.

was socio-economic boycott. Anti-cow slaughter panchayats were regularly held to enforce this ban on recalcitrant menials. This was clearly to discourage the wide scale thefts of landowners' own cattle. Yet, when it came to themselves the landowners had for long observed a different code of conduct. H.K. Trevaskis
101
writing about Punjab of 1890-1925 said:

The Hariana tract is largely Hindu, but the peasant are shrewd agriculturists and rapidly dispose off inefficient stock to the Mohammedan butchers (Quassai) of Panipat, Sonapat, or Rohtak "asking no question for conscience sake", so that the hide trade flourishes most in the area celebrated for its breed of cattle.

That this practice continued is clear from the secret despatch of Sant Singh, Superintendent of Police, Sonapat, written in October 1937 to R.C. Jeffery, Deputy Inspector General Police of Eastern Range. The despatch read:
102

The usual practice of Hindu Jats in village Purkhas and about 200 neighbouring villages was to give their old and useless cattle to their Muslim dealers, who were leading butchers also, either in exchange of new ones or otherwise selling to them.

In fact in Rohtak district, notorious for its frequent fodder famines, the landowners, majority of whom were Hindu by religion and Jat by caste, found it economically more and more profitable to sell their cattle to their Qasais than to march them across the river Jamuna for sale to other landowners, or to bring fodder for them from outside at great cost. In fact, the Jats
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were so practical that they would themselves kill a Bijjar (bull)
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who destroyed their crop by grazing in the fields.

- 101 H.K. Trevaskis, op.cit., I, p. 372.
102 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-23, secret D.O. No. C-564, 5 Oct. 1937.
103 IOR:P/11372/1923, F. No. 62, p. 9. Also Board of Eco. Inq., Cattle and Dairying in the Punjab (Lahore 1910), p. 32.
104 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 37/2/35, pp. 53-54.

The fact that voluntary sale of cows among the Jat owners was widely prevalent can be seen in the numerous resolutions passed by the Jat sabhas of different districts against such sales.¹⁰⁵ Chhotu Ram himself passed a resolution in a Jat panchayat held in village Hodal of Rohtak district in August 1929 that the Jats were to stop all sales of cows to the Muslims.¹⁰⁶ The practice of selling their cows despite religious taboos was not confined to the Jat owners; even the other Hindu owners indulged in it. The Brahmins of Ambala district similarly passed a resolution appealing to their fellow Brahmins not to sell their cows for such purposes.¹⁰⁷

A difficult situation arising out of cow-slaughter arose in Rohtak district in 1937. Jat landowners decided to call a panchayat of 200 villages at village Purkhas on 4 October 1937 to stop cow-slaughter.¹⁰⁸ The panchayat was to decide on socio-economic boycott of the Muslim butchers and cattle dealers.¹⁰⁹ Such a decision was bound to lead to wide-spread trouble. With situation turning very tense and serious,¹¹⁰ police help had to be summoned. The district administration solicited the help of local leaders. Chhotu Ram intervened personally along with his parliamentary secretary and other Jat pleaders of Sonapat. The district administration most generously acknowledged their help.¹¹¹ The Jat panchayat, 4,000 strong, consequently ended up by deciding that all the useless cattle should be sent to the Gaushala (an alm house for cattle)

105 JG, 14 Aug. 1929, p. 9.
 106 JG, 28 Aug. 1929, p. 6.
 107 IOR:P/12048/1934, F. No. 442/1415/22, pp. 60-61.
 108 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-23, pp. 4-5.
 109 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
 110 Ibid., pp. 7-8.
 111 Ibid.

and there need be no socio-economic boycott of the Muslim butchers¹¹² and cattle-dealers who belonged mainly to village Ganaur. Here, it may be pointed out that the proposed boycott was to be not of all Muslims but only of the butchers and cattle dealers of the area; yet the situation was termed by district officials and the press as being 'communal'. The panchayat which had aroused such 'communal fears' interestingly ended up with the announcement of a contribution of Rs. 200 by the leading butchers of Ganaur village towards the construction of the proposed Gaushala, and Hindu Jats in their turn¹¹³ thanked the Muslim butchers for their "liberal attitude". It is also interesting that during all this 'communal tension' Jats had nothing to say against slaughter-houses spread all over the country. That the trouble between Hindu Jats and Muslim butchers and cattle dealers had occurred solely on economic issues was borne out by the Superintendent of Police Sonapat, who in his confidential report to the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, emphasised that the Hindu Jats owed large amounts of money to the Muslim butchers of village Ganaur who were not only the biggest cattle dealers but also the¹¹⁵ biggest moneylenders in the area. The contemplated boycott had entailed that none buy, or sell, or have any money dealings with¹¹⁶ the Muslim butchers and cattle dealers. An effective way was, therefore, sought to be found by an overwhelming number of Hindu Jats to settle their economic difficulties vis-a-vis the comparatively few Muslim butchers and cattle dealers by arousing the

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Ibid.

116 Such a resolution was passed by a Jat panchayat at village Saya-Khera on 18 May 1938. See Confidential Note SDO Sonapat to DC Rohtak from village Kakroi, 31 May 1938. Ibid.

passions through 'communal differences'. In any case tension subsided for the moment but not for good.

On 18 May 1938, a panchayat held by the Hindu Jats at village Saya-Khera resolved to boycott the Muslim butchers and decided to impose a fine of Rs. 100 on those disobeying the panchayat decision.¹¹⁷ Another panchayat of 90 villages was to be held at village Purkhas on 18 June 1938 to ensure that the decision with regard to the boycott of Muslim butchers was implemented.¹¹⁸ The so called 'communal problem' thus persisted. Leading landowners of the region and members of the Unionist Party intervened again and again to bury the problem.¹¹⁹ Jats, who because of economic needs were willing to be fairly relaxed in the matter of protection of their cows, nevertheless gave way to 'communal passions' whenever it suited them.

The same attitude could be seen in connection with the large number of 'communal disputes' in the Ambala division apparently arising out of religious processions and the routes taken by them.¹²⁰ For the most part such disputes occurred in the cities and were not necessarily between 'Jats' and 'Muslims'. In district Rohtak, for example, the city of Rohtak was affected most by these clashes. The reason behind these clashes was considered by the district administration to be political, for the Rohtak mandi (grain market) was the chief centre of the Congress activities.¹²¹

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Ibid., p. 49.

120 HO Notes, Buch, Comm. Ambala Div., 24 Oct. 1942, CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A.28.

121 Secret DO No. 163 from DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div. (n.d.) in CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-6. Also see GI : Home Poll, F. No. 5/82/35; 18/IV/34, April 1934.

Politics was bound to have some say in communal matters. In Rohtak district specially, the Congress was hardly secular. The Haryana Tilak, the only mouth-piece of the Congress party in Rohtak, was notoriously anti-Muslim and was given to advocating, by and large, the cause of 'Hindus' as against those of 'Muslims'.¹²² It not only favoured but also promoted the shuddhi movement in the district and elsewhere.¹²³ The district Congress party of Rohtak which was easily branded as 'Eania' and 'Hindu' Congress had hardly any appeal for the Muslims of Rohtak district. All the Deputy Commissioners of Rohtak from 1929 to 1944 held the opinion that the Muslims, by and large, were loyal to the British Government and had indeed held themselves scrupulously aloof from the political movement despite all the efforts of the Congress.¹²⁴ In fact 'Muslims' in the rural areas of Rohtak district were declared to be showing "distinct hostility" to the Congress.¹²⁵ For example, the two provincial Congress meetings held in the rural areas of Rohtak district on

122 See Confidential Statement of newspapers and periodicals published in Punjab in GI: Home Poll, F. No. 53/1/35. Also see HT, 30 Sept. 1928, p. 12; 1 Jan. 1929, p. 6; 12 May 1931, p. 5; 8 Sept. 1931, p. 4.

123 HT, 9 April 1923, p. 4; 23 April 1923, p. 4; 30 April 1923, p. 7; 7 May 1923, p. 10; 18 June 1923, p. 9; 13 Aug. 1923, p. 9; 20 Aug. 1923, p. 8; 27 Aug. 1923, p. 8; 30 Aug. 1923, p. 10; 15 Oct. 1923, p. 8; 26 Nov. 1923, p. 7; 8 Jan. 1924, pp. 3-8; 31 Mar. 1924, p. 3; 9 Feb. 1925, p. 3; 30 Mar. 1925, p. 4; 4 May 1925, p. 6; 11 May 1925, p. 4; 26 May 1926, p. 10; 21 Feb. 1927, p. 5; 28 Feb. 1927, p. 5; 7 Mar. 1927, pp. 4, 5; 14 Mar. 1927, p. 6; 4 April 1927, p. 3; 18 July 1927, p. 4; 11 Aug. 1927, p. 6; 18 Aug. 1927, p. 3; 17 Oct. 1927, p. 3; 26 June 1928, p. 4; 10 July 1928, p. 6; 24 July 1928, p. 7; 7 Aug. 1928, p. 7; 6 Nov. 1928, p. 7; 15 Jan. 1929, p. 6; 29 Jan. 1929, p. 7; 19 Feb. 1929, p. 5; 11 Feb. 1930, p. 9; 4 Mar. 1930, p. 6; 22 April 1930, p. 6; 18 Sept. 1930, p. 6; 11 Sept. 1934, p. 4; 27 Nov. 1934, p. 4; 9 July 1935, p. 4; 12 May 1937, p. 2; 27 July 1937, p. 7.

124 See HO Notes, DCs Rohtak (1929-1944), op.cit.

125 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/XI/31, Oct. 1931.

17-18 October 1937, addressed by Abdul Gaffar Khan, were attended by a considerable proportion of rural Hindu Jats but not the rural Muslims who "almost to a man" absented themselves. Similarly, the Ahrar movement was not considered of "any significance" in Rohtak district.

According to the officials, the Congress party had started to deliberately incite 'communal strife' for political ends. In the absence of any other evidence, it is not possible to fully accept this view. It is presented here as a part of officially accepted theory but its acceptance must await a further scholarly investigation. In Rohtak district this 'communal strife' generally occurred between 'Muslims' and 'Hindu Jats', among some of whom the Congress popularity was increasing. The possible resultant disaffection between the two could be used as effective propaganda material to counteract the popularity of the Unionist Party which with its overwhelming membership of Muslims could be shown as a political party of 'communal minded' Muslims so as to alienate the majority of Hindu Jats who were its major supporters in this region. For example, in the elections of 1937, the Congress in the Hissar Constituency incited the Hindu voters against the Unionist candidate by propagating that the Unionist Party was a 'communal party' in which even Hindus like Chhotu Ram sanctioned cow slaughter. In a different situation, the Congress in this region also tried to brand

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- 126 Ibid.
 127 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/4/34, April 1934; 18/9/3, Sept. 1934.
 128 H.D. Craik, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Punjab, to all the Comms. and DCs of Punjab, 2 July 1926; also Confidential DO No. 22640 (H-General) 1 Sept. 1927, in CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. H-22(b).
 129 C & MG, 17 July 1938, p. 5.

the Jat landowners as 'communal minded' in order to alienate the Muslims from the Unionists. The district officials also tried to prove their assertion that Congress politics lay behind certain communal affairs in Rohtak district. In 1930, a secret letter written in Urdu to the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak said that "loyal Muslim Rajputs" were being troubled in village Talao by the Hindu Jat inhabitants who had come "under the influence of the Congress".¹³⁰ Much earlier, in 1923-24, in village Badhana of district Rohtak another quarrel had occurred between 'Jats' and 'Muslims' and the reason indicated by the officials was political rather than religious.¹³¹ 'Muslims' were prevented from drawing water from the village well. A case was registered under section 107 Criminal Procedure Code. The confidential report of the Sub-Divisional Officer, dated 16 January 1924, emphasised the political nature of the case and the split of village population into two parties.¹³² Similarly, the confidential reports of Sub-Divisional Officer of Sonapat to the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak from 1935 to 1942 go to indicate that strained relations between 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' in a number of villages like Garhi-Nizampur, Kundal and Purkhas were occasioned by political activities of the Congress.¹³³ The official report stated that in village Kalanaur, a big Muslim Rajput village, the two Congress leaders, Satyapal and Sri Ram Sharma, "deliberately courted a communal riot" in 1931 between Hindu Jats

130 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. Q-16, see handwritten letter (Urdu), 17 July 1930.

131 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 1, pp. 11-12.

132 Ibid.

133 HO Notes, SDO Sonapat, 24 May 1935, 19 April 1935; 29 July 1941, 31 Dec. 1942 in CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 2, prt. 2.

and Muslim Rajputs.¹³⁴ For this purpose they were declared to have "imported" 300 Hindu Jats of a village which had been at feud with the 'Muslims' of Kalanaur.¹³⁵ Their attempt to bring about a compromise between Muslim Rajputs and Hindu Jats was expected to result in the establishment of these two leaders of the Congress as "the arbiters of the communal quarrel".¹³⁶ This move was quickly frustrated by the concerned parties with the help of district officials.

Political nature of these 'communal situations' was a charge which found favour with Chhotu Ram also. Chhotu Ram openly accused the Congress of "manoeuvring" these 'communal affairs'.¹³⁷ According to him the Congress in Rohtak district took up the cause of the menials against the Jat landowners and turned it into "Muslim vs. Jat question", when the causes were purely economic.¹³⁸ In truth, the part played by nationalist politics in this connection could be easily exaggerated. Politics did play a part but not in every matter or not to the extent, for example, it was claimed by the district officials to have played in the so called 'communal riots' of Gurgaon district in which Congressites were openly accused of giving 'communal colouring' to the local disputes.¹³⁹ In Rohtak, however, Chhotu Ram's insistence on the Congress involvement in 'communal matters' brought him in great disrepute with the district administration when nothing incriminating was found in the

134 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 8/VII/31, Aug. 1931.

135 Ibid.

136 Ibid.

137 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-22, also F. No. I-23, see Chhotu Ram's letter to SP Rohtak, 24 Sept. 1937. Also see HT, which complained that Chhotu Ram blamed the Congress for 'communal disputes', 5 Oct. 1937, p. 1; 8 Aug. 1939, p. 4.

138 JG, 24 Oct. 1923, p. 3.

139 HO Notes, Sheikh Khursheed Mohammad, 17 Aug. 1931, CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(b).

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house of few Congressites searched in village Jakholi.

In view of the fact that Chhotu Ram/^{was}accused of inciting 'communal situations' in Rohtak district, Chhotu Ram's own responsibility in such matters has to be determined. It was said by his political opponents, both Hindus and Muslims, that his activities produced 'ill feeling' between the Muslims and Jats. He also came under great official wrath and disfavour for publishing in 1925 a series of articles in the Jat Gazette against the Muslim officials of Rohtak district.¹⁴¹ P. Marsden, the then Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, described the Jat Gazette as "as fanatical or anti-Mohammadan and anti-government paper as it could well be".¹⁴² He also advised the Punjab Governor to prosecute the weekly in this connection under Section 153-A.¹⁴³ This led Chhotu Ram, the then Minister of Agriculture, to tender an unconditional apology in his paper.¹⁴⁴ Realising the seriousness of the situation Chhotu Ram also retired Molar Singh, the acting editor of the Jat Gazette at that time, who was held solely responsible for the offensive write-

140 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 22.

141 Objectionable articles in the JG considered anti-Muslim were all related to the Panipat riot case of 1925. These were (a) "Government Punjab's Flat Refusal to the Oppressed Jats", (b) "Police Attack on our Pilgrims at Halia", (c) "The Mischief of Muslim Police Officer", (d) "Heart-Rendering Death of a Jat Child of Five Years by bayonet wound - Tyrannies of Islamic general Dyres". All these articles appeared in JG, 19 Aug. 1925. For the cuttings of these articles see CFSO Rohtak, F. No. N-5. The officials were particularly perturbed at being called various derogatory names. The latest of them being Badmash. See Confidential Report of the DC Rohtak to the Punjab Governor, 25 Aug. 1925, Ibid.

142 Ibid., DC Rohtak to H.D. Craik, 10 Sept. 1925.

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid., DC Rohtak to H.D. Craik, 17 Sept. 1925. Also for an unconditional apology see JG, 9 Sept. 1925, p. 3.

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ups against the Muslim officers.

Chhotu Ram's involvement in communal conflict can also be traced through the Arya Samaj movement in Rohtak district which bred ill-feeling between the 'Muslims' and 'Jats'. By 1921 Rohtak had emerged as the centre of Arya Samaj movement. 89 percent of the registered Aryas in Rohtak were drawn from among the Jats.¹⁴⁶ Arya Samaj with its programme of shudhi (purification), which attempted at reconversion of Muslims to Hinduism, was a potent cause of communal tensions. Chhotu Ram was an Arya Samajist, and an active supporter of the shudhi movement.¹⁴⁷ The news regarding shudhi appearing in his weekly the Jat Gazette would seem to provide conclusive proof in this connection.¹⁴⁸ In fact Chhotu Ram tried hard to get the shudh-shudha (purified) Jats accepted by the Jat community. A resolution was passed on 8 April 1923 in his office

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- 145 The DC Rohtak regarded Molar Singh as "the chief villain of the piece", but he also considered "some others behind him" in writing these articles as Molar Singh was considered "such a fool and of such small ability", see P. Marsden's letter to the Governor, 10 Sept. 1926, Ibid.
- 146 Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, prt. I, Report, p. 181. For details see below chapter V, p. 164.
- 147 For reasons behind such professions of Chhotu Ram, see below chapter V, pp. 164-8.
- 148 JG, 21 Feb. 1923, p. 6; 28 Feb. 1923, p. 7; 7 Mar. 1923, p. 13; 14 Mar. 1923, p. 5; 21 Mar. 1923, p. 3; 28 Mar. 1923, p. 3; 11 April 1923, p. 15; 18 April 1923, p. 3; 1 Aug. 1923, p. 16 (10 news items); 8 Aug. 1923, pp. 3, 15 (11 news items); 15 Aug. 1923, pp. 6, 16 (13 news items); 29 Aug. 1923, p. 16 (16 news items); 5 Sept. 1923, p. 16 (10 news items); 12 Sept. 1923, p. 6 (4 news items); 19 Sept. 1923, pp. 4, 10-11; 10 Oct. 1923, p. 16; 17 Oct. 1923, p. 15 (15 news items); 31 Oct. 1923, p. 9; 14 Nov. 1923, pp. 9-10; 21 Nov. 1923, p. 6; 28 Nov. 1923, p. 5; 21 Mar. 1925, pp. 5, 14; 27 May 1925, p. 4; 10 June 1925, p. 7; 17 June 1925, p. 4; 29 July 1925, pp. 5-6; 18 Nov. 1925, p. 2; 9 Dec. 1925, p. 3; 16 Dec. 1925, p. 13; 19 Jan. 1927, p. 2; 9 Feb. 1927, p. 5; 2 Mar. 1927, pp. 3-4; 16 Mar. 1927, p. 6; 6 April 1927, p. 6; 1 June 1927, p. 6; 22 June 1927, p. 3; 29 June 1927, p. 4; 6 July 1927, p. 5; 7 Mar. 1929, p. 5; 3 Aug. 1929, p. 4.

149

at Rohtak to the following effect:

Shudh-shudha Jats will be fully integrated into the Jat community. No Jat is to discriminate against shudh-shudha Jats in any manner, whether in matter of eating, socialising, or marriage alliances.

At Chhotu Ram's instance similar resolutions were passed by various
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Jat panchayats of the district. On 12 November 1925, a resolution

to the same effect was passed at a huge gathering of Jats, presided
151
over by Maharaj Bijendra of Bharatpur, at Pushkar (Rajasthan).

Supporting the resolution Chhotu Ram urged the audience to implement

it. By 1927, under Chhotu Ram's influence, even the Jat Mahasabha
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became fully involved in the shudhi movement. In the same year

a committee was established for the promotion of shudhi among Jats.

Chowdhri Ghasi Ram, a member of the Punjab Council, became the
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President and Chhotu Ram the Joint-Secretary of the committee.

The Muslims were not slow in retaliating. For one thing some of
them were the chief source of information to the British Government
154
regarding the activities of Arya Samaj; they were also active in

the field of conversions. The Muslim counterparts of the shudhi

movement were the Muslim organisations of Ishat-i-Quarran and

Tabligh-ul-Islam, started in February 1923 with the aim of getting

back the shudh-shudha Jats, Gujars and Rajputs into the fold of
155
Islam.

There was also the Jamit-ul-Ulema trying to get the people

149 JG, 30 Nov. 1927, p. 4.

150 "Embrace your Fallen Brothers", an article by Chhotu Ram
in JG, 5 Dec. 1925, p. 4.

151 JG, 10 Oct. 1923, p. 5; 28 Aug. 1929, p. 6.

152 JG, 30 Nov. 1927, p. 4.

153 Ibid.

154 See a note titled "Aryaism" written in 1908, reviewed and
brought upto date in 1910 by Major Barton in CFSO Rohtak,
F. No. 2-I, p. 5.

155 JG, 7 Feb. 1923, p. 3; 2 May 1923, p. 5; 9 May 1923, p. 5.

156
 to embrace Islam. Through the Jat Gazette Chhotu Ram warned the people of the danger from these Islamic movements and appealed to them to intensify their efforts at conversions through shudhi.¹⁵⁷ He also pointed out that Hindu Jats were being converted to Sikhism.¹⁵⁸ But Chhotu Ram's main emphasis was on reconversion of Jats who had embraced Islam. It needs to be emphasised that Chhotu Ram was not interested in the shudhi movement, as some other Arya Samajists were, in claiming back Hindus of lower caste who had embraced Christianity or Islam in the Haryana region. He only worried lest the number of Hindu Jats got dwindled by their conversion. Pointing to the dwindling number of Hindu Jats in the population of Punjab, Chhotu Ram advocated wide scale shudhi of the Mule Jats (Muslim Jats) as one of the ways in which it could be overcome.¹⁵⁹ "The very aim of the movement", in the words of Chhotu Ram in 1923, "was to integrate the shudh-shudha Jats into the fold of the Jat community so as to strengthen the Jat community".¹⁶⁰ In fact, the failure and success of the entire shudhi movement of the Arya Samaj was measured by Chhotu Ram in relation to the addition it was likely to make to the total number of Hindu Jats.¹⁶¹ The numerical strength of any community was

156 Ibid.

157 JG, 30 Nov. 1927, p. 4.

158 JG, 28 Oct. 1925, p. 3; Census of 1931 brought out the conversion of $\frac{1}{2}$ million Hindu Jats to Sikhism within a span of 50 years (1881-1931). Among reasons mentioned were: the intensive propaganda of Akalis, and the facility available to a Hindu Jat in getting himself enrolled as a soldier if he declared himself as a Sikh Jat. Census of India 1931, Punjab, XVII, prt. I, pp. 340-1.

159 JG, 28 Oct. 1925, p. 3.

160 JG, 18 Sept. 1923, p. 10.

161 "Failure of Shudhi Movement in the Jat Mainland", by Chhotu Ram in JG, 2 Dec. 1923, p. 3. In this Chhotu Ram maintained that the movement had failed in Rohtak district because of the non-acceptance of the purified Mule Jats by the Jat community; Mule Jats, according to him, had had to go back to the Islamic fold.

necessary in the Punjab of Chhotu Ram's days as that alone gave the community a leverage to make claims to the government for allocation of jobs, rewards, patronage, etc. Chhotu Ram's interest and advocacy of shudhi in relation to Jats alone substantiates the theory that he was acting not for the sake of 'Hinduism' but 'Jatism', to maintain the numerical strength of the Jats, and to increase it if possible. Significantly, Chhotu Ram was advocating the readmission of the purified Jats into their own Jat-Biradari (Caste-brotherhood) not as Aryas but as Jats. In fact he resisted all attempts of the Arya Jats to be called Aryas only.¹⁶²

Gradually Chhotu Ram disassociated himself from the activities of the shudhi movement and also of the Arya Samaj. But the tension between Muslims and Arya Samajists, the majority of Arya Samajists being Jats in Rohtak district, did not abate. So much so that the murder of an ardent Arya Samaj leader, Lieutenant Shib Lal of Sixth Jat Regiment, in village Mori was attributed to the activities of some Muslim fanatic.¹⁶³ The murders committed by Mughla, a Sheikh of village Sanghi, and those committed by Harphool, a Jat of village Julani in Jind district, were also seen in a communal light.¹⁶⁴ The tendency in Rohtak district of giving communal colour to any situation in which 'Jats' and 'Muslims' were involved was never taken to such a ridiculous length as in these murders. Most of the exploits of Harphool supposed to have been perpetrated on Muslims were widely brought out in print by communal minded people but the

162 For details of such attempts of Chhotu Ram and motives behind such attempts, see below chapter V, pp.180-1.

163 CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-6. See Secret Intelligence Report, Dec. 1935.

164 Ibid.

165
 publications were promptly banned by the government. Out of feeling
 166
 of revenge Mughla was said to be killing the Hindus instead. It
 was even rumoured that Chhotu Ram was one of Mughla's intended
 167
 victims. However, both these murderers were common murderers
 who were not motivated by any 'communal considerations'. Mughla's
 victims, for example, included a number of Muslims, two among them
 168
 being Muslim officers. In truth Mughla was an assassin who could
 169
 be hired to commit murders at a small price. Besides, those who
 gave him shelter were not only Muslims but also a large number of
 Hindu Jats, without whose help it would have been impossible for
 170
 him to go on for any length of time. "These murders," the Deputy
 Commissioner noted, "were by no means communal in origin, but were
 deliberately given a communal tinge and therefore aroused communal
 171
 feelings".

The above noted observation of the Deputy Commissioner
 regarding 'communal murders' was true to the entire 'Jat-Muslim
 question' in Rohtak district termed 'communal' by one and all. It
 is also quite clear that district administration was in the know of
 actual facts behind these so-called 'communal situations'. The
 official insistence on the 'communal nature' of these situations
 merely strengthens the suspicion that the British administrators

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- 165 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 37/2/35, pp. 53-54; 37/1/37, pp. 130-1.
 166 HO Notes, M. R. Sachdev, 11 May 1936, op.cit.
 167 HO Notes, Ghulam Mustafa, 26 June 1939, op.cit.
 168 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 11 May 1936, op.cit.
 169 Ibid. DC Rohtak disclosed that Mughla had started to
 charge Rs. 30 to Rs. 40 for committing a murder.
 170 Ibid.
 171 Ibid. Also see HO Notes, A.M. Khan Leghan, SDO Sonapat
 to DC Rohtak, 27 July 1941, CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 2. Also
CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-28, p. 7.

wanted to utilise and not end these communal divisions in Indian society. They saw in Hindu-Muslim disputes a factor calculated, in the opinion of the Commissioner of Ambala Division, to "dampen the anti-government activities"¹⁷². At the same time, the situation could not be allowed to grow out of hand when it had to be suppressed as the danger of agitators from outside exploiting it politically against the government, specially in connection with civil disobedience movement,¹⁷³ always loomed large; after all, communal tension was clearly undesirable if its edge turned against the government. The British administrators believed that Congressmen in Punjab always attempted to divert the aroused communal disposition of the Hindus and Muslims towards an anti-government attitude.¹⁷⁴ In the Haryana region specially where the British administrators were clearly emphasising the caste division as well as agriculturists vs. non-agriculturists division, any intensification of the communal situation had another aspect as well. In any communal division between Hindus and Muslims the actual danger, as disclosed by the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak to the Governor of Punjab and also recognised by the 'Jat leaders', lay in the Hindu Jats making "a common cause" with the urban Hindus, generally recognised as being anti-British, against the 'loyal Mohammadans'.¹⁷⁵ Such an attempt would have greatly endangered the entire politics of this region nurtured so carefully by the British administrators

172 HO Notes, Salisbury, Comm. Ambala Div. 31 Oct. 1943,
CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A/28.

173 CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. H-22(b), see D.O. No.
11467-S, 12 Feb. 1930.

174 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/11/35, Oct. 1935.

175 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. N-5, Confidential Report DC Rohtak
to the Governor, 25 Aug. 1925.

with the help of leaders like Chhotu Ram.

However, in keeping with the general stand adopted by the British administrators all over Punjab, in Rohtak district also, any differences between any two parties of different religious complexion were publicly projected as 'communal differences'. The administrators' emphasis on the Hindu-Muslim relation as being 'communal' was highly embarrassing to Chhotu Ram who as a Unionist leader professed to stand against communalism. The Unionist Party which formed the ministry in 1937 had to particularly guard against any dispute assuming major communal proportions as that would have undermined the very basis of the Unionist Government which was a coalition government of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.¹⁷⁶ Chhotu Ram was in fact hard put to explain the complex situation. He would not admit the economic basis of the problem as he always harped on the theory of "no difference between big zamindars and small zamindars". Therefore, ignoring both the economic basis of the problem and its communal manifestations Chhotu Ram continued to blame the Punjab Congress for creating communal cleavages and for deliberately undermining the strength of the Unionist Party.

176 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 19 Feb. 1937.

Chapter V

ARYA SAMAJ IN ROHTAK AND CHHOTU RAM'S INVOLVEMENT IN IT

'Jatism' had provided a political base to Chhotu Ram in Rohtak district. But his influence remained mainly confined to the upper strata of the Jat peasantry. The All India Congress and the Arya Samaj, both vigorous movements at the time, commanded considerable following among Jats. Chhotu Ram resented their growing influence and attributed factionalism among the Jats of Rohtak and their resultant political weakness to the work of Arya Samaj and the Congress.¹ Interestingly, he had earlier been a Congressman and an Arya Samajist. He resigned from the Congress during the wake of the non-cooperation movement 1920-21, and though he did not cease to be an Arya Samajist, he gradually withdrew from the official Arya Samaj. Chhotu Ram's role in the two great movements of the time and his motives in changing the course of his earlier politics was crucial to his emergence as an undisputed leader of the 'Jats' of Rohtak district and the 'Hindu zamindars' of Punjab. It was this new base, extending from the district to the provincial level, that was to provide him with an alternative to socio-religious organisation of the Arya Samaj and the Congress politics in Rohtak. It also provided him with a leverage to establish a long lasting alliance in the politics of the province with the dominant Muslim semi-communal block first in the Punjab Legislative Council and then in the Punjab Legislative Assembly.

The Arya Samaj provided a good recruiting ground to the Congress in Punjab. Chhotu Ram also suggested that the majority

¹ JG, 2 May 1923, p. 3.

of Arya Samajists in Punjab belonged to the Congress.² In Rohtak district also, according to Chhotu Ram, the Arya Samajists came to be the most enthusiastic supporters of the non-cooperation movement of the Congress.³ Yet, Rohtak district termed as "the centre of Arya Samaj movement" in the census of 1921 was unable to give any substantial support to the Congress after the first flush of the non-cooperation movement was over. This dent in the pro-Congress sympathies and loyalty of the Arya Samaj followers in Rohtak was made by Chhotu Ram. An explanation of how and why Chhotu Ram's creed of 'Jatism' proved successful among Arya Jats who constituted 23,995 out of a total 27,089 registered Arya Samajists in Rohtak,⁴ would be crucial to the understanding of the politics of the time.

Chhotu Ram joined a band of ardent workers of Rohtak in 1912 mostly belonging to the Arya Samaj.⁵ However, although he professed that his religious beliefs were based on the Arya Samaj principles, he never got himself formerly registered as a member of the Arya Samaj.⁶ He also did not participate in any of its monthly or yearly functions.⁷ The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak observed in 1916-17 that Chhotu Ram was "not at all a bigoted Arya".⁸ But the district authorities noted in 1918-19 that all the leading Arya Jats of Rohtak were followers of Chhotu Ram and his senior contemporary and partner in legal practice, Lal Chand.⁹ Along with the leading Arya Samajists, Chhotu Ram worked for the uplift of the "backward Jat community",

2 JG, 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5.

3 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.

4 Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, prt. 1, Report p. 181.

5 Speech of Chhotu Ram, 1 Mar. 1942, loc.cit.

6 JG, 10 July 1917, pp. 12-13.

7 Ibid.

8 "Men to be known", op.cit.

9 Ibid.

establishment of the Jat Mahasabha, and Jat educational institutions.¹⁰ Along with numerous Arya Samajists again, Chhotu Ram¹¹ joined the Congress in 1916.¹¹

However, Chhotu Ram's 'Jatism', to the exclusion of all else, was not going to be acceptable to the Arya Samaj. That even at that time he considered himself a Jat first was clear from the fact that as early as in June 1917, he said:¹²

Although I am an Arya Samajist and a well wisher of the Arya Samaj, it does not alter the fact that I am first a Jat.

Chhotu Ram's activities in keeping a separate identity for the Arya Jats from among other Arya Samajists were widely noticed and commented upon.¹³ There were recriminatory exchanges. Chhotu Ram described the Arya Samaj as an urban dominated movement, and accused the Arya Samajists of attempting to separate the Arya Jats from the non-Arya Jats.¹⁴ However, by 1921 Chhotu Ram had not made much headway in his own efforts at separating the Arya Jats from other Arya Samajists. The situation regarding the Arya Jats and their loyalty became clear in 1921 Council elections when Chhotu Ram was defeated. This defeat was interpreted widely as Chhotu Ram's loss of hold over the Jat community.¹⁵ But it is to be remembered that Chhotu Ram had resigned from the Congress in 1920-21, and it is reasonable to infer that this step had alienated large number of Jats. There may be some truth in the Haryana Tilak's comment in this connection in 1925:

10 JG, 3 June 1931, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 6.

11 Tribune, 10 Jan. 1945, p. 7.

12 JG, 5 June 1917, pp. 3-5.

13 HT, 15 May 1934, p. 3; 22 May 1934, p. 2; 29 May 1934, p. 3; 16 April 1935, p. 3; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 3.

14 JG, 16 Jan. 1923, p. 12.

15 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 16/44, ADM, Hissar, to Tek Chand, Comm. Ambala Div., 31 Oct. 1921. For reasons of this defeat see below chapter VII, p. 220.

"Chhotu Ram was popular among Jats as long as he was an Arya Samajist, but he turned out to be a spurious Arya and therefore lost their support"¹⁶. It is true that most of the Arya Samajists had joined the Congress and that they might not have voted for a man who had left the Congress. In his first election to the Punjab Council the Jat Aryas like the non-Jat Aryas had openly asked the Arya Samajists to vote for the Arya Samaj candidates only.¹⁷ Swami Shardhanand, a revered leader of the Arya Samaj, had been calling upon the Arya Samajists to vote for none but the Congress candidates.¹⁸ Chhotu Ram's loud protests during the second Council elections against such interference in political matters by a religious body like the Arya Samaj also confirms the same.¹⁹ Chhotu Ram's defeat in the election of 1921 was the beginning of his tirade against the Arya Samaj and its loyalty to the Congress. From then on, so far as he was concerned, the fight was projected as being between urban Hindus and non-agriculturists on one side and rural Hindus on the other side. The result was a successful dent in the loyalty of the Jat Arya Samajists of Rohtak district to the Congress.

To gain his ends Chhotu Ram moved with great circumspection. He did not ask his Jat followers to renounce the Arya Samaj. It was their political support and loyalty which had to be directed in another direction. The Haryana Tilak correctly remarked in this connection that Chhotu Ram wanted to make out that "Jats were Arya

16 HT, 6 July 1925, p. 9.

17 This fact was disclosed by Chhotu Ram in Oct. 1923 while campaigning during the second Council elections which were scheduled to be held in Dec. 1923. He condemned all those Arya Jats who were asking the Arya Samajists to vote for the Arya Samaj candidates only as "fake representative of the Jats". See JG, 10 Oct. 1923, p. 13.

18 HT, 19 Nov. 1923, p. 2; 18 May 1926, pp. 7-8.

19 JG, 10 Oct. 1923, p. 13.

Samajist by religion but were Jat by blood and family ties"²⁰. 'Jat first and Arya Samajist later' was the essence of his preaching. But with all this he kept on insisting vehemently throughout 1917 to 1938 that he was an Arya Samajist himself and a staunch one at that.²¹ As a token of his loyalty to the Arya Samaj he always made generous donations of money to the two Gurukul schools established by the Arya Samajists in village Bhainswal and Matindo of Rohtak district.²² Similarly, like the other Arya Samajists, he never accepted that the Arya Samaj generated communal strife or the fact that the activities of the Arya Samajists were a danger to Hindu-Muslim unity.²³ He supported the Shudhi movement of the Arya Samaj²⁴ and said that the movement was not directed against any religion. He supported his thesis by insisting that political alliance between Hindus and Muslims had no relation with their religious beliefs.²⁵ Muslims were constantly criticising the Arya Samaj for its initiation of the Shudhi campaign. Defending the latter campaign Chhotu Ram maintained that all religions had a full right to their proselytising activities.²⁶ It was only in 1942, at the acme of his political power, that Chhotu Ram came out openly against the Arya Samaj and accused it of being communal in nature. Then he said:²⁷

20 HT, 29 Jan. 1936, p. 3.

21 JG, 5 June 1917, pp. 3-5. Also see Chhotu Ram's speech at village Keloī where he answered charges made by the Tej,

JG, 17 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 31 May 1939, p. 1.

22 JG, 20 May 1925, p. 6; 16 Mar. 1938, p. 17.

23 JG, 28 Mar. 1923, pp. 11-12.

24 JG, 28 Mar. 1923, pp. 11-12. For details of Shudhi movement see above chapter IV, pp. 156-9.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Speech of Chhotu Ram, 1 Mar. 1942, loc.cit.

In the beginning I was a fairly bigoted Arya Samajist and, as a natural corollary, a communalist. This conflicted with my aspiration for a united front among zamindars (in the Punjab sense of the word), regardless of caste and creed.

All this while Chhotu Ram assiduously projected what he considered to be the reality of the Arya Samaj through the press and platform. The Arya Samaj movement, said Chhotu Ram, was a movement which had been started in the cities by urbanities and was also controlled and dominated by them, i.e., by Khattris, Baniyas and Mahajans.²⁸ The reins of the Arya Samaj, he asserted, had always remained and would remain with the urbanites.²⁹ He justified this criticism by pointing out that although in Rohtak district the Arya Samaj drew its strength from Jats, whose membership of the organisation was far in excess of the membership of any other community, they (Jats) were completely denied all share in the control of the organisation.³⁰ He also made a grievance of the fact that Khattris, Baniyas, Mahajans, and even Brahmins, who styled themselves as Arya Samajists, were actually staunch believers in casteism but were demanding that Jats should forget their 'Jatism' and become Arya Samajists first and last.³¹ He accused these castes of creating a rift between Arya Jats and non-Arya Jats and of holding the non-Arya Jats in contempt.³² In this connection he pointed to the Arya sabhas in Rohtak district whose organisers were all non-Jats who did not consider the Arya Jats as having any organisational capacity or the capability of representing the Arya Samaj in any other centre.³³ He suggested that the Arya Samaj

28 "Weakening of the Unity of Jats" an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 12.

29 Ibid.

30 JG, 3 June 1931, p. 1; 30 Aug. 1939, p. 3.

31 JG, 29 Jan. 1936, p. 3.

32 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.

33 Ibid. Also 3 June 1931, p. 4; 30 Aug. 1939, p. 3.

was promoting the interests merely of urban Banias.³⁴ Advising Jats not to forget that they were Jats, Chhotu Ram went on to suggest that the Arya Jats could claim special privilege in the administration only as Jats and not as Arya Samajists.³⁵ Even while criticising the Arya Samaj, Chhotu Ram was, however, quick to appreciate its efforts to uplift the Jats through establishment of the Jat Mahasabha and Jat educational institutions. Along with this appreciation he criticised the Arya Samaj for utilising these institutions as platforms for Arya Samaj propaganda.³⁶

Chhotu Ram convincingly showed that the non-zamindars or urban Hindus, whether Arya Samajists or not, had always been against the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 which was considered by him as the only security and strength of the agriculturists whether Arya Samajists or not.³⁷ Since the Arya Samaj in Rohtak had both agriculturists and non-agriculturists among its members, Chhotu Ram pertinently commented: "why should the non-zamindar Arya Samajists go against the interests of the zamindar Arya Samajists?"³⁸

In 1931 he bitterly criticised the Arya Pritinidhi Sabha, an organisation of the Arya Samajists, for its opposition to the amendment sought to be made by the Punjab Council in the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 in the interests of the zamindar mortgagors of agricultural lands.³⁹ This opposition was projected by Chhotu Ram as

34 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 12; 3 June 1931, p. 4; 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 6.

35 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.

36 Ibid.

37 JG, 30 Jan. 1929, p. 3; 3 June 1931, p. 1; 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5; 18 June 1939, p. 5.

38 JG, 30 Jan. 1929, p. 3.

39 "Alienation of Land Act and the Arya Pritinidhi Sabha", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 3 June 1931, p. 1.

a proof of the discrimination which the agriculturist Arya Samajists faced at the hands of the non-agriculturist Arya Samajists. The Jat Gazette, projecting Chhotu Ram as the only saviour of Jat⁴⁰ interests, posed the question as follows:

Will Jat Arya Samajist go against Chhotu Ram and support non-zamindar Arya Samajists who were out to abolish the Alienation of Land Act?

Going further, Chhotu Ram accused the Arya Samaj of creating differences not only between Jats and Arya Jats but also between Jats⁴¹ and Gaud-Brahmins who subscribed by and large to the Sanatan Dharam. Jats whether Arya or non-Arya were zamindars, i.e., statutory agriculturists, and as such, he maintained, they should cooperate with other agriculturists instead of joining the non-agriculturists whose interests were not only different but also antagonistic to the interests of the agriculturists.⁴² AS a proof of this conflict of interests Chhotu Ram repeatedly asserted that non-agriculturist preachers of Arya Samaj were always criticising the Zamindar League which had been established for safeguarding the interests of the zamindars or the agriculturists. This criticism was considered specially objectionable as most of the Arya Jats were also members⁴³ of the Zamindar League.

Special attention was drawn to the speeches of non-zamindar Arya Samajists. These speeches were fully quoted in the Jat Gazette to expose the frequent critical attacks being made by the leading⁴⁴ Arya Samajists on the agriculturists. Bhai Parmanand, described

40 JG, 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5.

41 JG, 17 Aug. 1927, p. 2.

42 JG, 16 Jan. 1923, p. 12; 20 July 1927, p. 2; 18 Feb. 1931, p. 5.

43 JG, 18 Feb. 1931, p. 5.

44 JG, 27 May 1931, p. 3.

in the Jat Gazette as an Arya Samajist leader of "considerable status", was quoted as saying:

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In Punjab as elsewhere in India the zamindars have been created as the favourites. The need is to put them down from this favoured position. It can be done only if the British Government discontinues its partiality towards them.

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Commenting on this the Jat Gazette said:

Bhai Parmanand stands to lose his respect among all zamindars of the Haryana region whether Arya Samajists or non-Arya Samajist.

Chhotu Ram's allegations against the Arya Samajists of being anti-zamindar appeared to be substantiated when the Arya Samaj openly criticised the activities and utterances of Chhotu Ram at many of their functions in Punjab. ⁴⁷ The Jat Gazette gave pointed publicity to these speeches in order to reinforce the argument that a fellow Arya Samajist, even if he were of the stature of Chhotu Ram, stood ⁴⁸ to be criticised because he was a Jat.

Matters were made worse for the Arya Samaj in the Haryana region with the enactment of agrarian legislation in the late thirties. The Jat Gazette widely propagated the agrarian bills as being for the "benefit of the poor zamindars and backward and poorer sections of the Punjab society". ⁴⁹ It also wrote extensively about the opposition of the leading Arya Samajists to these bills in order to make the Arya Samaj unpopular with the Jat adherents of the Arya Samaj. Publication of a few chosen excerpts from other news-

45 Ibid.

46 JG, 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5.

47 Chhotu Ram was criticised in the Arya Samaj meetings of Rohtak and Hissar. See JG, 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5 and 15 Sept. 1937, p. 6.

48 JG, 15 Feb. 1936, p. 5; 28 July 1938, p. 5; 10 Aug. 1938, pp. 3, 7; 24 Aug. 1938, p. 1.

49 "The Non-Zamindars are Abusing the Zamindars", an article in JG, 24 Aug. 1938, p. 1. For details of the bills see below, chapter XII, pp. 339-66.

papers highlighting such activities of the Arya Samaj and its leaders certainly went a long way in weakening the already wavering loyalty of many of the Arya Jats even when they continued to be called Arya Samajists.

In its issue of 24 August 1938, the Jat Gazette quoting as follows from the Milap newspaper came down heavily on Khushal Chand Khurshand, Secretary of the Arya Samaj (College section):

Arya Samaj should oppose these bills which have been brought in the Punjab Assembly.

The comment of the Jat Gazette, clearly meant to incite the Arya Jats, read:

Arya Samaj is a religious society where zamindars and non-zamindars, high castes and untouchables are all included. Arya Samaj has no right to take sides when the interests of zamindars and non-zamindars clash.

The Jat Gazette criticised the Pratap of 26 June 1939 which had published a news item mentioning that the sahkars of Sialkot would hold their conference on 30 June 1939 in the Arya Samaj Mandir (temple), Sialkot city, to discuss the "Two Black Bills" before the Punjab Legislative Assembly (Restitution of Mortgaged ^{Lands} and Benami Bills). The news item made an appeal to all sahkars to attend the proposed conference. On this the Jat Gazette commented:

Hindu zamindars should see how capitalists are using the Arya Samaj Mandir against them. Why should the Arya Samaj Mandir be used for such purposes and why are the Hindu zamindars keeping quiet about it? Surely this is political suicide for them.

The Jat Gazette also carefully listed the names of the leading Arya Samajists, all non-agriculturists, who were opposing the

50 JG, 24 Aug. 1938, p. 1.

51 Ibid.

52 JG, 28 June 1939, p. 5.

53 Ibid.

54

"Golden Bills" through non-agriculturists associations. Insisting that no other behaviour was expected of them, the Jat Gazette made a blistering attack on the 'Banias' Arya Samajists:

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A Banias, whether he is an Arya Samajist or a Congressite or an Akali or a Khalsa, will never forget his Banias-hood. He remains a Banias first and last.

The Haryana Tilak did not help the Arya Samajists when in its issue of 18 February 1936 it reproduced a part of the speech made by "a true Arya Samajist" Professor I.N. Vachaspati, son of Swami Shradhanand, in a Dehati (rural) conference in village Bahu-Akbarpur of Rohtak district:

56

Those who do not side with the Congress do not deserve to be called true Arya Samajists.

The Haryana Tilak repeatedly bemoaned the introduction of "casteism", the fatal disease of Haryana region by the Jats into Arya Samaj, leading to a split in the Arya Samaj movement. The weekly inveighed in particular against the Jat Updeshiks and Parcharaks (preachers) who were abusing non-Jat Arya Samajists and the Congress from public platform. In its issue dated 29 May 1934, the weekly commented on the penetration of 'Jatism' into the organization of Arya Samaj in the Haryana region and equated Jat Arya Samajists with non-Arya Jats where the spirit of 'casteism' was concerned. The Haryana Tilak blamed Chhotu Ram for injecting casteism into the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj, according to this weekly, had come

54 JG, 15 Feb. 1936, p. 6; 28 June 1939, p. 5.

55 JG, 24 Aug. 1938, p. 1.

56 HT, 18 Feb. 1936, p. 3.

57 HT, 20 Mar. 1934, p. 3; 29 May 1934, p. 3; 30 June 1934, p. 5; 19 Feb. 1935, p. 3; 16 April 1935, p. 3; 8 Oct. 1935, p. 3; 31 Dec. 1935, pp. 2, 8, 10; 21 Jan. 1936, p. 6; 18 Feb. 1936, p. 3; 25 Feb. 1936, p. 9; 3 Mar. 1936, p. 3.

58 Ibid.

59 HT, 29 May 1934, p. 3. Also see editorial in HT, 25 Feb. 1936, p. 3.

60 HT, 16 May 1934, p. 3.

to be riven with factions, one faction led by Chhotu Ram and therefore being anti-Congress, and the other faction being pro-Congress.⁶¹ The two factions were shown to be indulging in venomous mutual attacks.⁶² Chhotu Ram in his turn accused the Arya Samaj Updeshiks and Pracharaks of trying to damage the image of the Jat leaders.⁶³

In his attempts to win over the Arya Jats, Chhotu Ram had been emphasising the other divisions current in the Punjab society, i.e., rural vs. urban; agriculturist vs. non-agriculturist, Jats vs. other castes, etc. In all this the already estranged relationship between Jat landowners and other castes fostered greatly by the concept of 'Jat Raj' came decidedly handy. This was specially true of the untouchables. The Arya Samaj theory of submergence of caste in the Arya Community appealed to the lower castes who took to it to raise their social status and to be put on the same footing as the higher castes.⁶⁴ The reasons which made Arya Samaj so attractive to the lower castes were precisely the same which were responsible for the non-acceptance and even rejection of some of Arya Samaj's basic tenants by the landowning castes, i.e., the Jats of Rohtak. The already estranged relationship between the kamins drawn from among the untouchable castes, and Jat landowners, whether Arya Samajist or not, was not improved by this work of Arya Samaj among untouchables. Chhotu Ram in a speech in Arya Samaj in Gurukul, Rohtak, blamed some Arya Samajists and Hindu Sabhaites of attempting to incite the untouchables against Jats.⁶⁵

61 HT, 18 Feb. 1936, p. 3.

62 Ibid.

63 JG, 6 Sept. 1939, p. 4.

64 Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, prt. I, Report, p. 181.

65 JG, 12 May 1936, p. 4.

This accusation by Chhotu Ram struck home as Arya Samaj conferences all over Punjab were passing resolutions in favour of the abolition of the Alienation of Land Act, and stoppage of the system of Begar rendered to the landowners by the untouchables.⁶⁶ Both these demands stood to impinge on the interests of the Jat landowners of Rohtak district, the former by giving the untouchables the right to buy land and become independent of the control of the landowners, and the latter by depriving the landowners of the customary services guaranteed to them "from time immemorial" under the provisions of the Record of Rights.

Those among the Arya Jats who attempted shudhi of untouchables, as in village Nangal, were socially boycotted by the rest of the Jats, including some Arya Jats.⁶⁷ This was noted by the Jat Gazette which warned the Arya Jats against any such attempts to help the untouchables. Although a uniform pattern of behaviour could not be expected among all the Jat followers of Arya Samaj, by and large, the Arya Jats did not take kindly to the Samaj's movement among the untouchables to raise their social status. So much so that the Jat Gazette took great exception to an article in the Haryana Tilak of 30 November 1925, which advocated preferential treatment and grant of more rights to the Arya achuts as against the other achuts.⁶⁸ The ground advanced for this rejection was that the

- 66 See resolution of ^{the} Arya Hindu Conference held at Gurgaon on 2 Nov. 1931 in HT, 10 Nov. 1931, p. 3. The propaganda against the system of Begar by the Arya Samajists in the villages of Rohtak was pointed out in the Confidential Report of SP Rohtak to DIG Police, 20 Mar. 1925, in CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-12. For an explanation of the word 'Begar' see above chapter III, pp. 81-84, 93-97.
- 67 Hugga Pani Band (complete social boycott) was observed against them. They were not even allowed to draw drinking water from the wells. JG, 11 April 1923, p. 4.
- 68 JG, 9 Dec. 1925, p. 6.

Sanatan Dharmis would object to such proposals and consequently a quarrel would develop between the Arya Samajists and the Sanatan Dharmis.⁶⁹ Consequently, the Jat landowners of the two villages of Rohtak district, Bamnoli and Gangana, also Arya by faith, boycotted the untouchables because as Arya Samajists the untouchables had taken to wearing the Janeo (sacred thread).⁷⁰

The Haryana Tilak cited several examples in which Arya Jats were shown discriminating against the shudh-shudha achuts. In village Kharkhoda the Jat Arya Samajist headmaster of the school not only refused to allow the untouchable boys to draw drinking water from the well but also did not allow them to go any where near it.⁷¹ Even the two Jat Gurukul schools started by the Arya Jats were accused of discriminating against the untouchable boys and refusing admission to them in the Gurukuls.⁷² The Jat Arya Samajists went to the extent of suggesting the opening up of a separate Gurukul exclusively for the untouchables.⁷³ In ^{the} Arya Samaj sabhas, the Haryana Tilak reported, the Jat Aryas were refusing to sit with the kamins who were also Arya Samajists.⁷⁴ Many such functions organised by the 'kamin Arya Samajists' in village Dhahola of Rohtak district were consequently disturbed by the Arya Jat landowners.⁷⁵ The Jat Gazette also acknowledged that in the Arya Samaj functions and sabhas the untouchables were specially discriminated against.⁷⁶ The Jat Gazette put the blame for this on the non-Jat Arya Samajists. It cited the example of Swami Ishwar Chand, one

69 Ibid.; also see above chapter III, pp.107-8.

70 HT, 22 June 1925, p. 6.

71 HT, 26 April 1938, p. 4.

72 Ibid. Also HT, 20 Dec. 1927, p. 9.

73 Ibid.

74 HT, 13 June 1927, p. 5.

75 Ibid.

76 JG, 3 June 1931, p. 4.

of the first teachers in one of the Gurukuls of Rohtak and on its payrolls for 40 years, who refused his services to a "Chamar Bhai",⁷⁷ on 24 May 1931. The "Chamar Bhai" was told by this Brahmin Arya Samajist to get the services of a Jat Arya Samajist instead.⁷⁸ The Jat Gazette also gave other instances of great chhua-chhut (caste-discrimination) being observed by the 'Arya Brahmins' of Rohtak district against the 'purified untouchables'.⁷⁹ Although instances of non-acceptance of 'purified untouchables' exist among all the landowning Aryas of Rohtak district, the Haryana Tilak insisted on ascribing this discriminatory attitude only to the Arya Jats and that too on account of propagation of 'Jatism' among them by Chhotu Ram.⁸⁰

It is clear that in actuality the Arya Samaj in Rohtak district could not replace caste membership with the community of Aryas. The fact that the landowning Jats, same as the other landowning castes of the district, had not been in sympathy with all the Arya tenants greatly facilitated the work of Chhotu Ram in his attempt at directing their sympathies from the nationalist preachings of the Congress to his own loyalist leanings and in inculcating in them a pro-British attitude. The great ease with which Chhotu Ram succeeded in his attempts at getting the Arya Jats to his side could be seen in the field of education. The fall of the Jat High School of Rohtak, established by Chhotu Ram, to non-cooperators during 1920-21 Congress movement because all the teachers were Aryas,⁸¹

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 JG, 17 Oct. 1923, p. 7.

80 HT, 22 May 1934, p. 3; 26 Nov. 1935, p. 6.

81 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, Comm. Ambala Div. 1921, CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-4.

and its subsequent derecognition by the government, had been a personal tragedy for Chhotu Ram. However, he was able to retrieve this lost position by 1925.⁸² Similarly, the attitude of British officials regarding the two Gurukuls in Rohtak district, at Bhainswal and Matindo, had to be changed. Right from the beginning Chhotu Ram had tried to get the non-Arya Jats more freely admitted to these two Gurukuls.⁸³ Doctor Ramji, one of the first and staunchest promoters of Arya Samaj in the Haryana region, had however put a stop to the attempt.⁸⁴ But as early as 1923, after the non-cooperation movement of 1920-21 had abated, the Arya schools of Rohtak made an application to the government for a grant-in-aid.⁸⁵ Although this was not granted to them for reasons unknown, it was also true, as asserted by Chhotu Ram, that these Gurukuls had not incurred the displeasure of the government.⁸⁶ Indeed, the two Gurukuls controlled by the Arya Jats of Chhotu Ram's group had given up their pro-Congress and anti-government stand. The secret intelligence report also confirmed the changed position of the two Gurukuls in 1934 by conclusively laying down that they were in no way anti-government.⁸⁷ This change was remarkable as elsewhere in Punjab the Gurukuls continued to be under general suspicion of the British authorities.

The other three small Arya Pathshalas (primary schools) at village Garnawadhi, Nandhal and Chiri in Rohtak district, had earlier in 1930 forfeited their grant-in-aid from the District Board Rohtak because Tika Ram, a lieutenant of Chhotu Ram, informed

82 For details see above chapter II, pp.49-50.

83 "Men to be known", op.cit.

84 Ibid.

85 FLCD, VI, 3 Mar. 1924, p. 401. See reply to the question raised by Chhotu Ram.

86 JG, 12 Jan. 1921, pp. 8-10; 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12.

87 CF Comm. Ambala Div.F. No. A-6. See Secret Report, 22 Dec. 1934.

the government that the Pathshalas were serving as centres of the Congress activities.⁸⁸

Despite the British administrators continuing deep suspicion of the Arya Samaj in Punjab, an attitude of which Chhotu Ram was perfectly aware of,⁸⁹ he continued to make insistent claims that he was a staunch or even a "bigoted Arya Samajist". His insistence on this point can be explained only in view of the strong hold of the Arya Samaj over the Jats of Rohtak. Only by projecting himself as an Arya Samajist could Chhotu Ram continue to retain the following of Arya Jats. On the other hand, as has been already brought out, his whole politics negated his claims of firm adherence to the Arya Samaj. He stood additionally exposed when he openly came out to oppose the participation of Arya Jats in the Satyagraha at Hyderabad started by the Arya Samaj.⁹⁰ A similar stand was taken during Bharatpur Satyagraha of Jat Arya Samajists.⁹¹

It was amply clear to the British officials that Chhotu Ram was playing their own (i.e., British officials') favourite game of 'casteism'. Knowing that emphasis on exclusiveness of different castes alone could make the Arya Samaj ineffective in areas like Rohtak district, they encouraged Chhotu Ram's activities in furthering the forces of casteism.⁹² The danger from these 'Jat districts'

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- 88 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 15/43, Handwritten letter of Tika Ram to Vice-Chairman Dist. Board, 1 July 1930.
- 89 See Chhotu Ram's letter, Jan. 1924 in H. Harcourt, Side Lights on the Crisis in India: the letters of an Indian Civilian and Some Replies of an Indian Friend (London 1924), p. 175.
- 90 HT, 23 May 1939, p. 7; 6 June 1939, p. 3; 13 June 1939, p. 2; 20 June 1939, p. 3; 27 June 1939, p. 7; 18 July 1939, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1939, p. 8. Also "The Hyderabad Satyagraha", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 5 July 1939, p. 1. Also see JG, 10 May 1939, p. 3; 17 May 1939, p. 4; 31 May 1939, pp. 3-4.
- 91 JG, 31 May 1939, pp. 3-4; 14 June 1939, p. 4; 28 June 1939, p. 6; 5 July 1939, p. 1; 30 Aug. 1939, p. 3; 6 Sept. 1939, p. 4.
- 92 See above chapter II, pp. 41, 43, 45-50, 57-58.

which had fallen prey to the Arya Samaj movement had to be overcome all the more because these districts were important for recruitment purposes.⁹³ The influence of Arya Samaj was regarded by the British as "pernicious" and the only way to weaken it and get the Arya Jats out of its influence, if not also its fold, was by raising the bogey of 'casteism'. In this respect the importance of caste in official eyes is evident from the confidential letter of the Additional Secretary of Punjab to the Commissioner of Ambala division and all the Deputy Commissioners under him written in May 1918. The letter⁹⁴ read:

The question of enlistment of Arya Samajists in the Indian Army has recently been under consideration and the commander-in-chief has decided that adherence to Arya Samaj shall not in future constitute a bar to the enlistment of men who are members of a caste eligible for enlistment and who have not, by such adherence, severed their connection with that caste. Nor will such men be required to remove the sacred thread they may be wearing.

In keeping with this decision but seemingly giving way to the demand of the Arya Samajists to be registered as Aryas instead of their respective castes,⁹⁵ the Census Commissioner, J.G. Hutton,⁹⁶ sent the required instructions to the census authorities in 1930. Chhotu Ram, realising the implications, immediately issued in the Jat Gazette a warning to the Arya Jats regarding the coming census⁹⁷ operation of 1931. They were advised to give their religion as⁹⁸ 'vedic' but caste as 'Arya Jats' and not as 'Arya'. The caste Jat

93 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. 2-1.

94 Ibid. See letter No. 10384 (Military), 4 May 1918.

95 Resolution No. 9 adopted at the meeting of Working Committee of the All India Arya League held on 23 Nov. 1930; and letter from the All India Arya League, Arya Vartiya Sarvodashik, and Arya Pritinidhi Sabha of Delhi, to Secretary Home Department. See GI: Home Poll, F. No. 45/72/30.

96 Ibid.

97 JG, 25 Feb. 1931, p. 2.

98 Ibid.

was commended to be prefixed to show the caste binding of the Jats; it was to show that they had not ceased to be Jats by turning Arya Samajists. Earlier also, in 1917, Chhotu Ram had vehemently opposed the move of the Arya Samajists to claim separate recruitment in the army as Aryas as against the existing caste basis of recruitment. Opposing this, Chhotu Ram had frankly admitted, "I do not want to divide my caste"¹⁰⁰. The success of Chhotu Ram's attempt in this connection may be seen in the secret intelligence report on the Arya Samaj movement of Rohtak district made by the Recruiting Officer of Delhi in December 1934. The following observation on the Arya Jats was made:¹⁰¹

The followers of the movement wear a sacred thread and this custom is followed by the JATS and AHIRS. A true follower of the Arya Samaj movement will not however remove this thread, whereas the JAT OR AHIR IS QUITE PREPARED TO DO SO, prior to enlistment; and cannot be said to be a Samajist in the true sense of the word. (Capital letters in original).

It was clear that Arya Samaj movement, which in other provinces as well as in the rest of Punjab was still known as "dangerous", "unlawful association", and "anti-christian"¹⁰², had undergone a major change in Rohtak district. From being anti-government it had become pro-government. But this is not to suggest that Chhotu Ram's success was complete; quite a few Arya Jats were opposed to these moves of Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram cursed and attacked them for taking a stand against him and his 'Jat' followers.¹⁰³ He claimed that the Arya Jats were helping the urbanites and the

99 "The Question of the Recruitment of Arya Samajists in the Army", an article by Chhotu Ram, JG, 5 June 1917, pp. 3-5.

100 Ibid.

101 CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-6, Secret Intelligence Report on the Arya Samaj movement, 22 Dec. 1934.

102 Ibid., p. 1. Also GI ; Home Poll, F. No. 101/35, pp. 9-10, 20-23.

103 JG, 15 Sept. 1937, p. 6; 6 Sept. 1939, p. 4.

Bania-non-zamindar Arya Samajists who had demanded the abolition of the Alienation of Land Act.¹⁰⁴ His Arya Jat opponents could very well be those who had gained nothing as a result of the passage of the same act. Despite all this, Rohtak district lent massive support to the Arya Samaj movement in Hyderabad, support which was against the publicly expressed advice of Chhotu Ram. Writing in¹⁰⁵ the Jat Gazette, Chhotu Ram was forced to acknowledge:

The Arya Samajists of Ambala division participated in Hyderabad Satyagraha in very large numbers and Rohtak stood second in the whole of Punjab in supporting these Satyagrahis. The jails of Hyderabad are full of Jat Arya Samajists.

And much to the embarrassment of Chhotu Ram, the jatha of local Jat Aryas of Rohtak district was headed by one Phul Singh, a Jat and a "prominent local supporter of Chhotu Ram and the leader of local¹⁰⁶ Aryas".

Clearly Chhotu Ram's success in winning over the support of Arya Jats in Rohtak was partial but substantial. However, it is not easy to establish the classes from which Arya Jats who became pro-Chhotu Ram and others who remained under the influence of the traditional leadership and hence anti-Chhotu Ram were drawn. In 1924, a mere 9 percent of Jats had become Arya Samajists.¹⁰⁷ It is however not clear from what strata of Jat society these 9 percent Arya Samajists were drawn. Kenneth W. Jones, who traces the socio-economic complexion of the urban Hindus of Punjab, specially among the professional trading and commercial classes, neglects the over-

104 JG, 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5.

105 JG, 30 Aug. 1939, p. 3.

106 Linlithgow Coll, 88: H. Craik to Linlithgow, 26 May 1939; also see letter dated 25 Aug. 1939.

107 Calculated from Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, prt. 1.

108
 overwhelming adherents of the Arya Samaj from among the Jats of Rohtak.
 Chhotu Ram himself believed that as in case of all other castes the
 109
 Jat recruits to Arya Samaj also came from the educated middle class.
 Among these it would be fair to infer that those who found their
 equation with Chhotu Ram were necessarily in majority those Arya
 Samajists who were in their social complexion at one with other
 supporters.

One consequence of Chhotu Ram's rift with the traditional
 Arya Samaj leadership was that the latter became ineffective in its
 programme of social reform. Even the Haryana Tilak was forced to
 110
 remark in 1935:

Arya Samaj has done more harm in the Haryana region
 than good by way of curing the social ills of the
 area.

108 Kenneth W. Jones, "The Arya Samaj in Punjab : A Study of
 Social Reform and Religious Revivalism, 1872-1902"
 (Ph.D.) thesis (California University, 1966) (microfilm)
 Also see his Arya Dharma : Hindu Consciousness in the
 19th Century Punjab (New Delhi 1976). Little is known
 about the spread of Arya Samaj among the Hindu Jats of
 the Haryana region. See "The Politics of Integration:
 Community, Party and Integration in Punjab", Ph.D. Thesis
 (Chicago University 1971) (microfilm), pp. 192-3.

109 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.

110 HT, 31 Dec. 1935, pp. 2, 10.

Chapter VI

CHHOTU RAM AND THE CONGRESS MOVEMENT IN ROHTAK DISTRICT 1920-40

Rohtak district was easily the leading district of the Ambala division from the point of view of Congress influence. That the Congress was better entrenched and better organised in this district than anywhere else in the Ambala division was acknowledged by Chhotu Ram himself in 1920.¹ In fact, from 1920 right upto 1943 Rohtak was considered the "most Congressite" district of this division by Salusbury, the then Commissioner of the Ambala division.² Despite this, it was Chhotu Ram who continued to dominate Rohtak till his death in early 1945. Apart from other reasons, once again, as in the case of Arya Samaj, it was Chhotu Ram's continued hold in Rohtak district among certain classes specially among the Jat landowners and his successful anti-Congress work that primarily accounted for the weak position of Congress in Rohtak.

Chhotu Ram himself started his political career as a Congressite. He joined the Indian National Congress in 1916, and was elected the first President of the Rohtak District Congress Committee that very year. He continued in this capacity up to 8 November 1920, when he resigned from the Congress party itself. His association with and resignation from the Congress would need explaining. During the war years, the Congress had been cooperating with the government in promoting the war efforts and so was Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram was the secretary of the District War Committee, and in recognition of his contribution to the war efforts he was given the

1 JG, 1 Aug. 1923, p. 12.

2 HO Notes, 31 Oct. 1943, CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-28.

title of 'Rai Sahib' and a hundred acres of land in a new colony in
 3
 Montgomery district of Punjab. But the Congress politics underwent
 a radical change after the conclusion of the war. On 4 September
 1920, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress adopted
 at its special session in Calcutta the resolution of non-violent
 non-cooperation. The movement of non-cooperation included surrender
 of titles and honours awarded by the British Government and boycott
 of legislatures, law courts and government educational institutions.
 Along with this, an anti-recruitment campaign started by the "Delhi
 4
 people" also seemed to affect the villages of the Haryana region.
 In order to conduct this movement the Congress was to be reorganised
 from the smallest village unit upto the All India Congress Committee
 which was to appoint a Working Committee to direct the affairs of
 the party. Not all the Indian nationalists were in favour of the
 non-cooperation movement started by Gandhi. Many of them resigned
 from the Congress and began to work either as independents or as
 national liberals. Chhotu Ram also resigned from the Congress but
 he did not join the rank of independent nationalists or of liberals
 who were to form the liberal party distinct from the Congress. He
 in fact turned a complete somersault and landed on the side of the
 loyalists. All that remained of Chhotu Ram's earlier association
 with the Congress was the Khaddar apparel which also he discontinued
 in 1924 after he was included in the Council of Ministers by the

3 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, Comm. Ambala Div. 1919,
CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-4.

4 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, Comm. Ambala Div. 1920. Ibid.

5 Punjab Governor. In explaining why he had resigned from the Congress Chhotu Ram, right from 1920 to as late as 1942, claimed that it was because of his abhorrence of unconstitutional methods of struggle against the British Government and the fact that no campaign of non-cooperation on a really wide scale could remain peaceful and non-violent.⁶ Chhotu Ram also remained unenthused by the constructive programme of the Congress which included rural uplift, panchayati system, swadeshi movement, and the uplift of the untouchables, although he professed great sympathy with it.⁷ It is quite clear that Congress national outlook and technique of mass participation which cut across caste and region was not going to suit Chhotu Ram's emerging politics based on 'casteism' and the upper strata of Jat⁸ peasantry.

Once having resigned from the Congress, Chhotu Ram led a systematic campaign towards the suppression of this movement and in support of the colonial government. The British officials were

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- 5 Hardwari Lal, interview, 9 June 1978: As soon as Chhotu Ram became a minister he seemed to have invested a lot of money in European clothes. He began getting his clothes made by the famous English firm "Ranken and Company" of Lahore. He however retained the turban which was no longer a Khaddar one. Around 30s he changed over to Churidar and Achkan and also to Dhoti and Kurta for his extensive tours of the villages. According to Hardwari Lal, he had firmly bidden good-bye to Khaddar after becoming a minister in 1924 and all his clothes were either silken or at least mill-made.
- 6 JG, 29 Dec. 1920, pp. 3-4; 5 Jan. 1921, pp. 7-13; 19 Jan. 1921, pp. 1, 3-4; 18 May 1921, p. 7; 17 Jan. 1923, p. 3; 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12; 25 April 1925, pp. 13-14. Also see Chhotu Ram's letter, 14 April 1924, in H. Harcourt, op.cit., pp. 40-43. Also, speech of Chhotu Ram, 1 Mar. 1942, loc.cit.
- 7 Chhotu Ram said: "although I support panchayati system, swadeshi movement, and the uplift of the untouchables, yet I cannot support the non-cooperation movement." JG, 20 Aug. 1920, p. 10.
- 8 For certain other reasons behind Chhotu Ram's resignation from the Congress see below, chapter VII, pp. 219-20.

specially worried by two aspects of the Congress movement: the possibility of a campaign for non-payment of land revenue, and the probable impact of the Congress propaganda on the army personnel. The British administrators feared all other aspects of the movement because they would lead to the first. For example, the call of national education was merely to obtain a large body of volunteers who would act as propagandists in the rural areas and in particular instigate the people not to pay the land revenue. The second aspect had special relevance to Rohtak district. Both these questions intimately involved the predominant Jat community in Rohtak district as the Jats were not only the predominant landowning caste in Rohtak but they also supplied a large number of recruits to the Indian army. Chhotu Ram whose politics were based on the support of the landowners and military personnel of Rohtak was as apprehensive of the Congress propaganda as the British officials. Regarding this he wrote in the Jat Gazette of February 1921:

We (Jats) are being invited to leave the army and not to take to education and remain illiterate. We are asked not to give the land revenue so that the government can confiscate our lands. Is this policy going to benefit us? We must look at the non-cooperation movement from the point of view of what is beneficial to our caste.

British administrators knew that the Congress in Punjab was dominated by the non-agriculturists and urban Hindus, and both the officials and the Congress also knew that in the predominantly rural Haryana region the Congress would not be able to make progress without gaining a fair share of support from among the agriculturists and specially from the Jats of Rohtak district. It was thus

9 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-8, Joint-Secretary, Punjab, to all Dcs, 4 Mar. 1921.

10 For details see above chapter I, pp. 8-13, 28-30.

11 JG, 23 Feb. 1921, pp. 4-5.

12 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Pirzada Muzaffar Ahmed, Retired/Deputy Collector, Mehaman dist. to Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 19 Jan. 1932.

imperative for the administration to enlist the help of "influential"¹³ and "respectable Jats" against the Congress movement. The British officials of Rohtak district therefore came to rely for the purpose more and more heavily on Chhotu Ram and his followers and to a lesser degree on Lal Chand as his influence was on the wane.¹⁴ Both of them were treated as sources of information regarding the Congress and were expected to keep their Jat clientele out of 'Congress hands'.¹⁵ Chhotu Ram was to prove extremely useful in checking the growing influence of the Congress.

In his campaign of combating Congress influence and in his critique of the National Congress, Chhotu Ram did not neglect any of the different aspects of the non-cooperation movement some of which he ridiculed in such a way that the point was driven home.¹⁶ Chhotu Ram also laid great emphasis on criticising those aspects of the Congress programme which stood to make a dent among those social classes which were being mobilised by him for creating a base for his future political action, viz., the landowners and the military personnel of Rohtak district.

The no-tax campaign had a special significance for Rohtak district.¹⁷ It was a district prone to yearly natural calamities.

13 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-17, Pirzada Muzaffar Ahmed, Retired Deputy Collector, to Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 17 April 1930.

14 See above chapter II, pp. 64-66.

15 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-17, pp. 85-89.

16 Chhotu Ram declared spinning of Charkha as being "unmanly" and requested Mahatma Gandhi to provide "bangles" to men along with Charkhas. See JG, 16 Feb. 1921, pp. 5, 10; 23 Feb. 1921, pp. 4-5. For Chhotu Ram's views on other aspects of non-cooperation movement see JG, 12 Jan. 1921, pp. 7-10; 19 Jan. 1921, pp. 3-4; 26 Jan. 1921, pp. 11-12; 2 Mar. 1921, p. 1; 17 Jan. 1923, pp. 13-16; 14 Mar. 1923, p. 11; 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12; 18 April 1923, pp. 13-16; 14 Nov. 1923, p. 15.

17 All the Confidential Fortnightly Reports from Punjab (1921-1945) make an observation regarding this. The normal years were few and far between the destructive ones. Also see above chapter I, pp. 15-16.

Crops depended on a precarious monsoon and inadequate canal irrigation and, therefore, often failed.¹⁸ Landowners consequently needed and clamoured for large scale remission and suspension of revenue which often had to be made. But despite these concessions the revenue collection had never been easy. Though the district also contained a few very big landowners, its major population consisted of numerous small landowners and an equally large number of tenants, mostly tenants-at-will. From the point of view of collection of land revenue, it was far easier to control a region dominated by a few landlords and big landowners and much more difficult to control a very large number of small landowners with varying sizes of landholdings in case of their falling prey to the no-tax campaign. This factor combined with the natural inability to pay land revenue due to the bad harvests and notorious fall of agricultural prices in the thirties, created a serious economic situation in Rohtak which could be politically exploited by the Congress campaign in the rural areas. The no-tax campaign of the Congress in Rohtak district would have been equally popular with small landowners as well as tenants of all kinds. In so far as it incited the tenants to withhold the payment of rents to landlords it was calculated to harm the richer landlords. In Rohtak district, where the number of tenants was increasing alarmingly,¹⁹ the emerging rich landowners and landlords, who mainly sided with Chhotu Ram, therefore stood to be gravely affected by the Congress no-tax campaign.

Not feeling much danger from these emerging rich landowners falling prey to the Congress campaign, Chhotu Ram concentrated on

¹⁸ See above chapter I, pp.15-17.

¹⁹ For detailed figures see below chapter IX, pp.319-21.

the smaller landowners by frightening them with the prospect of their losing their land. In 1920 itself Chhotu Ram warned that the non-payment of land revenue by farmers could lead to the deprivation of all their lands at the hands either of "vengeful sundried bureaucrats" or of the moneylenders who would gladly purchase the land when put to auction by the government.²⁰ Between 1921-23, Chhotu Ram constantly referred to the "disastrous results" of following the no-tax campaign.²¹ He claimed that the no-tax campaign in Rai Bareilly and Faizabad had led to violence and murder, burning of crops of kisans (Tenants), confiscation of land, looting of their belongings, and auctioning of their lands and goods, all because of non-payment of land revenue. During the civil disobedience movement of 1930, he pointed to the woes of the cultivators of Bardoli in order to frighten the landowners of Rohtak district.²²

The Haryana Tilak, interestingly for the opposite reasons, extolled the achievements of Bardoli landowners who through their non-cooperation had forced the government into returning the confiscated lands.²³ The Jat Gazette, given to contradicting all such news, gave wide publicity to the fact that the government had indeed confiscated the lands of no-tax supporters as acknowledged by the Haryana Tilak and added that they would not be returned as the government had decided to deal sternly with the movement of non-

20 JG, 3 Nov. 1920, p. 3; 23 June 1920, p. 5. For similar views on no-tax campaign see FLCD, XX, 3 Dec. 1931, pp. 293, 417; XXII, 1 Nov. 1932, pp. 80-81.

21 JG, 5 Jan. 1921, p. 13; 19 Jan. 1921, p. 1; 9 Feb. 1921, p. 3; 16 Feb. 1921, p. 2; 23 Feb. 1921, p. 8; 4 May 1923, p. 7; 23 June 1923, p. 5.

22 JG, 13 Mar. 1929, p. 4; 12 Jan. 1931, p. 7; 4 Feb. 1931, p. 2; 18 Mar. 1931, p. 5; 29 April 1931, p. 4; 10 June 1931, p. 8.

23 HT, 14 Aug. 1928, p. 6; 21 Aug. 1928, p. 4.

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payment of taxes.

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Despite this propaganda, parts of village Chulkana and
 village Gangana²⁶ in Rohtak district joined the movement of non-
 payment of land revenue in the year 1930 and 1932 respectively. The
 landlords of village Chuchakwas, tehsil Jhajjar, were also not able
 to collect rents as the tenants refused to pay.²⁷ Tenants of village
 Chuchakwas were led by Mangli Ram, an Ahir tenant, who was signifi-
 cantly considered "less of an Ahir and more of a Congressman".²⁸ Both
 the Haryana Tilak and the Jat Gazette gave the movement a great deal
 of publicity. The non-payment of revenue movement was no less
 attractive in Rohtak district than elsewhere in India; and Chhotu
 Ram openly recognised, in the press and the Punjab Legislative
 Council, the attractiveness of the civil disobedience and no-tax
 campaign to the landowners.²⁹ Knowing the vulnerable position of
 Rohtak district in this respect, Chhotu Ram made repeated and very
 emotional appeals to the government in 1930-31 in favour of wide
 scale remission and suspension of revenue in case of the landowners
 of Rohtak district.³⁰

It was not only the government which stood to lose by the
 landowners getting involved in the movement of non-cooperation but
 also Chhotu Ram who could lose his following from among the village

24 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-22. See DO No. 114-67-S, 12 Feb. 1930.

25 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, pp. 172-4, 177-8.

26 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, pp. 95-98.

27 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.

28 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, pp. 72-73. Also see above
 chapter III, pp. 108, 122.

29 PLCD, XX, 3 Dec. 1931, p. 293. Also JG, 9 Dec. 1931, pp. 3, 4.

30 JG, 10 June 1931, p. 3; 17 June 1931, p. 2; 2 Sept. 1931, p. 6;
 9 Sept. 1931, p. 3; 23 Sept. 1931, p. 3; 14 Oct. 1931, p. 14;
 21 Oct. 1931, p. 3; 4 Nov. 1931, p. 5; 18 Nov. 1931, p. 6;
 2 Dec. 1931, pp. 2, 8; 9 Dec. 1931, pp. 3, 4; 16 Dec. 1931, p. 8.
 Also see below chapter VII, pp. 272-4.

lambardars, zaildars, and safedposh, the three officials of the subordinate revenue service recruited not only from among the 'rural notables' but also from among the ex-soldiers.³¹ In Rohtak district, the lambardars although belonging to 'non-official' revenue agency were held responsible for the collection of land revenue in their individual and joint capacity.³² It was a difficult situation for the lambardars. They were unable to collect the land revenue not only where the no-tax campaign had made some impact but also where the owners of land were genuinely unable to pay. They were penalised by the district administrators for this inability. Intimidating and pressurising tactics which the revenue collection authorities adopted did not always avail, and there were frequent clashes between the landowners and the authorities.³³ The clashes were reported not only in the weekly Haryana Tilak and daily Pratap but also in the Jat Gazette.³⁴ During 1930-31 a large number of lambardars tendered their resignations and equally large number found themselves locked up for their failure to collect the land revenue.³⁵ Between 1921 to 1940 Ambala division, in the whole of Punjab, showed the highest number of cases of "coersive process" issued against the lambardars for collection of arrears of land

31 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 112, 1931, p. 3.

32 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-11. See instructions from DC. Rohtak to all tehsildars regarding lambardars, 8 Dec. 1931. Also for the responsibility of the lambardars see P.J. Fagan, Land Revenue : Its Origin and Development (Simla 1921), pp. 7-8.

33 JG, 9 Sept. 1931, p. 3; 23 Sept. 1931, p. 3; 18 June 1932, p. 3.

34 Ibid. Also JG, 16 June 1931, p. 2.

35 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, p. 381.

revenue, and Rohtak district headed the list in this division.³⁶ Similarly, among the warrants of arrest executed against lambardars, Rohtak district showed 602 warrants in 1931-32 out of a total of 1,349 warrants in the whole of Ambala division.³⁷ In fact, Rohtak district continued to show the largest number of warrants of arrest against lambardars, i.e., between 50 to 60 percent of the total warrants of arrest in the Ambala division.³⁸ The British officials publicly lamented the "deterioration" of the lambardar agency in the Ambala division.³⁹ Some of the lambardars were of course penalised because of their known sympathy with the Congress.⁴⁰ The Haryana Tilak, which otherwise considered lambardars as the "notorious enemies of the Congress", the "supporters of Chhotu Ram",⁴¹ and the "steal frame of the British in the rural areas", published a series of cases in which lambardars were compelled to resign for having joined the Congress.⁴² The weekly also gave wide publicity

36 Statement of "coercive process" issued in the Ambala division and in Rohtak district against lambardars for collection of arrears of land revenue:

	<u>1930-31</u>	<u>1931-32</u>	<u>1932-33</u>	<u>1933-34</u>	<u>1934-35</u>
1. Ambala Div.	-	1,159	954	714	811
2. Rohtak Dist.	104	213	205	239	276
	<u>1935-36</u>	<u>1936-37</u>	<u>1937-38</u>	<u>1938-39</u>	<u>1939-40</u>
1.	798	740	470	610	818
2.	60	51	86	118	166

'Coercive process' was a term to denote legal action against the person/persons concerned for collection/payment of arrears of land revenue. Figures taken from PLRA, Statement XI, for the relevant years.

37 PLRA, 1931-32, p. 7.

38 PLRA, see para 7 of the relevant years.

39 PLRA, 1935-36, p. 12.

40 SP Rohtak to DC, 10 Dec. 1931 in CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-18, p. 123.

41 HT, 15 Sept. 1931, p. 2. For details of lambardars support to Chhotu Ram see above chapter I, pp.30-31.

42 HT, 29 Sept. 1931, p. 5.

to the case of Rao Kalu Ram, a lambardar of village Kheri-Kumhar, who was on joining the Congress suspended and subsequently dismissed on 2 July 1931 by Zaman Mehdi Khan, the then Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak.⁴³ The dismissal of the lambardars was politically exploited by the Congress to such an extent that a subsequent letter had to be issued in 1935 by the Punjab revenue department advising caution and restraint in the dismissal of the lambardars.⁴⁴

Chhotu Ram openly expressed his apprehension, if only as a matter of tactics, that the refusal of the government to heed the demands of landowners for suspension and remission of land revenue combined with official high-handedness could well create in Rohtak a situation worse than the Congress movement of civil disobedience and the no-tax campaign.⁴⁵ The Haryana Tilak gave wide publicity to Chhotu Ram's apprehensions and predicted that the movement of non-payment of land revenue was imminent in Punjab.⁴⁶ All these sustained and feverish activities of Chhotu Ram in speaking on behalf of the 'poor zamindars' of Rohtak and in warning the government were born not only out of his apprehension that discontented landowners would be alienated from the British Government but also, and indeed more, out of the possibility that the loyalists like himself would lose their following among the landowners. His hold on the landowners,

43 HT, 30 June 1931, p. 3; 14 July 1931, p. 3; 21 July 1931, p. 3; 11 Aug. 1931, p. 9; 8 Sept. 1931, p. 5; 15 Sept. 1931, p. 2; 29 Sept. 1931, p. 5; 20 Oct. 1931, pp. 4-5, 8; 10 Nov. 1931, p. 3. Also Hindustan Times, 9 Aug. 1931, p. 5. JG also mentioned the case, see 8 July 1931, p. 6.

44 IOR:P/12071/1935, F. No. 71/9/00/11, C.N. Chandra, 8 Jan. 1935.

45 JG, 6 Jan. 1931, pp. 1-2; 10 June 1931, p. 3; 2 Dec. 1931, p. 8.

46 HT, 5 Jan. 1931, p. 1.

right up to the civil disobedience movement of 1930-31, depended on his hold over the village notables like lambardars, safedposh and zaildars among the 'non-official' revenue agency and patwaris and tehsildars among the official agency.⁴⁷ It is to be noted that Chhotu Ram was very greatly concerned about the composition of official revenue agency, and he vociferously campaigned for the recruitment of revenue officials including patwaris and tehsildars from among the Jats and Hindu agricultural castes.⁴⁸

The British administrators were always particularly worried about the political situation in Rohtak district because it was from here that the army received a large contingent of recruits. To take one single village, Chhara alone supplied 349 recruits during the World War I out of an average population of 1,017; and 24 of them died fighting.⁴⁹ Rohtak district stood third in the whole of Punjab in the matter of supplying recruits to the army and the majority of these recruits were Jats.⁵⁰ The confidential information reaching the British administrators was disturbing for it showed that the Congress propaganda during non-cooperation and Khilafat movement had indeed affected personnel of the Jat regiments.⁵¹ In fact, Rohtak district was a major stronghold of a successful non-cooperation movement in

47 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11-39, p. 7. Also CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, p. 5.

48 For details see below chapter VIII, pp. 258-9
Also see Appendix I.

49 See the stone in Chaupal of village Chhara on which the details have been inscribed. It is difficult to get the exact figures regarding the population of village Chhara during the World War I. Only an average estimate of 1,017 persons per village in Jhajjar tehsil is available in the District Census of 1951: Punjab Dist. Census Handbook, 1951, Vol. II, Rohtak dist. Table No. 2, 3 (Chandigarh 1965).

50 For more details see above chapter II, pp. 41, 43, 45, 50, 57-58.

51 C.P.C. Bamford, Histories of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat Movement, second edition (Delhi 1974), p. 34.

1920-21.⁵² The town of Jhajjar was the main trouble spot. The non-cooperators took over the local Municipal Committee.⁵³ The Congress and Khilafat flags were hoisted over the Town Hall, pickets were posted at the outskirts of the town; the payment of municipal octroi duty was stopped; a Kaumi Panchayat (national arbitration court) was established in the Town Hall which decided matters for weeks on end. It took the administration 20 days to bring the situation under control.⁵⁴ These attempts were doubly frightening to the British administrators; firstly, because they represented not merely a disintegration of existing law and order but also successful substitution of the existing set up of administration by an adequate alternative, nationalist machinery; secondly, the tehsil of Jhajjar was foremost in the entire district of Rohtak in supplying the largest number of Jat recruits to the British Indian army.⁵⁵ The British apprehensions were further aroused when in view of the huge success achieved in 1921-22, a Congress meeting in March 1929 decided, along with the adoption of the resolution of civil disobedience, to create "a battle field" in Rohtak district.⁵⁶ Rohtak district was selected by Mahatma Gandhi as the "centre" for civil disobedience movement for the Ambala division if not for the whole province.⁵⁷ The district officials believed that this decision of the Congress leading to the reorganisation of the Party at the village level and recruitment of a large number of rural followers

52 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 6-A, K.W, see "Unrest at Jhajjar 1922".

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lt. Col. T.M. Carpendale to DC Rohtak, 31 Oct. 1931.

56 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-17, see Confidential letter from K.B. Pirzada Muzaffar Ahmed, Retired Deputy Collector Meham dist. to Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 17 April 1930.

57 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Dec. 1931, op.cit.

in the Rohtak district would make for an "explosive situation".⁵⁸
 As Rohtak continued to provide a substantial number of army recruits even during the World War II, the apprehensions of the British did not lessen with time. These, in fact, increased due to the close proximity of Rohtak district to Delhi and the known desire of the Congress to stir up unrest among the Jats.⁵⁹ As early as 1922 the Congress propaganda had its effect among the ex-army men in Jhajjar tehsil. In that year four army pensioners, two Jats and two Ahirs,⁶⁰ had become Congress volunteers at village Beri. The threat of⁶¹ forfeiture of their pensions brought three of them around in 1923. Seeing all this and not willing to take any chance the decision to forfeit military pensions and other rewards in case of "grave misconduct" was taken in 1924.⁶² Follow up instructions for "stern action" were circulated by the Punjab Government in 1930 and action was enjoined to be taken during civil disobedience movement and other movements which generated disaffection against the government.⁶³ In the same year recruiting officers were directed to counteract propaganda aimed at creating political unrest among the martial classes.⁶⁴ District Soldiers' Boards were also asked to organise counter-propaganda and to send reports regarding "seditious activities"⁶⁵

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- 58 "Plight of the Congress", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 26 Aug. 1931, p. 4.
 59 Linlithgow Coll, 91: A. Hartley to Glancey, 19 Oct. 1942.
 60 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. 6-A, K.W., Confidential DO, No. 239 to Comm. Ambala Div., 13 Nov. 1922.
 61 Ibid., Report to DC Rohtak, 9 Jan. 1923.
 62 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. M-10, see letter No. A-29162-3(A.G8) Military, 10 Nov. 1924.
 63 CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. H-22, see DO-11467-S, 12 Feb. 1930; Deputy Secretary Army Dept. 30 June 1930; Circular to all Comms and DCs of Punjab, 13 Sept. 1930. All these laid down instructions for the govt. pensioners, military or civil, who were declared to be "under special obligation to abstain from seditious activities", pp. 96-109.
 64 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-16, Confidential letter, dated, 23 June 1930.
 65 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-19, instructions 4 June 1930.

Inspite of all these steps, it was clear that the Congress propaganda among the military personnel was catching on by 1930. During 1930-31, the Congress had in the district active sympathisers and fund contributors among the army pensioners and even among the serving personnel drawn specially from among the Jats of Rohtak.⁶⁶ It was during 1931 that the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak sent orders to the recruiting officer at Delhi that Jats from three villages "notorious" for Congress activities, namely, Sanghi, Mokhra, and Madina, should not be recruited in the army.⁶⁷ Prompt action was also taken against armymen (all Jats in this case) found guilty of supporting the national movement.⁶⁸ Village Madina, a big Jat village, in particular stood out for its anti-government activities. In 1931 this village "illtreated" an infantry column of the Leicestershire Regiment passing through the district.⁶⁹

The establishment of Taziri Chowki (additional police for which the villagers had to pay) on village Madina was recommended as a measure of penalty.⁷⁰ The Congress activities, however, did not slacken. By November 1931, the Congress had succeeded in organising a 'Seva-Dal' in Rohtak and enlisted for it 45 volunteers, mostly Jat

66 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lt. Col. Carpendale to DC Rohtak, 31 Oct. 1931.

67 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC Rohtak to Lt. Col. T.M. Carpendale, 3 Nov. 1931.

68 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-18, SP Report to DC (n.d.), pp. 121-2.

69 Seven complaints were made by Lt. Col. C.S. Davies, the commanding officer of the Battalion. These were: Cows were not allowed to be slaughtered; villagers refused to sell milk and supply wood to the army contractor; partridge shooting was hindered by the villagers by making a line in front of the guns; "R.S.M." and Band Masters were stoned while walking on the main road; officers' tents were stoned after dark; bullocks were not given for drawing water; supply-lorry and the contractor were stoned, etc. GI : Home Poll, F. No. 7/VII/31, Police, 1931, pp. 1-2.

70 Ibid.

by caste.⁷¹ In the opinion of the district officials Rohtak became a 'chhaoni' (cantonment) and these volunteers taught to do propaganda, preach sedition and practice lathi drill constituted the Congress 'Fauj' (army).⁷² Apprehending that Rohtak might provide the lead in civil disobedience movement, as the resumption of the movement had been announced by Mahatma Gandhi in Italy,⁷³ the Seva-Dal was declared an unlawful body under the Criminal Law Amendment Act on 23 December 1931. All the Seva-Dal volunteers were listed as No. 10 Badmashes and put under police surveillance.⁷⁴ Commenting on the Congress Seva-Dal,⁷⁵ the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak observed:

This is a district with numerous ex-soldiers and people who thoroughly understand everything relating to military training and know Fauj serves only one purpose, viz., to fight.

During the World War II, the Congress began to demand the abolition of the division of Indian people into 'martial' and 'non-martial' classes and the conversion of the Indian army into a truly national army by opening recruitment to all castes and to spread it more or less equally over all the provinces. This demand alarmed Chhotu Ram just as it had alarmed the other members of the Unionist Party, who were heavily dependent on the support of military personnel. This demand undercut the economic interests of 'the martial classes' of Punjab and specially of the Jats of Rohtak as the army service was the second biggest profession of the Jats. Chhotu Ram was therefore anxious to maintain the distinction between

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- 71 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, DC Rohtak to C.C. Garbett, Chief Secretary, Govt. of Punjab, 7 Dec. 1931; GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/XII/1931, Dec. 1931.
 72 Ibid. Also HO Notes E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1931, op.cit.
 73 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, op.cit.
 74 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, Confidential DO 246, 7 Dec. 1931.
 75 Ibid. Also see GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/XII/1931, Dec. 1931.

martial classes and non-martial classes. In fact as early as 1921
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he had put the issue rather bluntly:

What have the Jats got apart from agriculture and military service? Literate and semi-literate Jats have joined the army and become Sardar Bahadurs and some even officers. Now we are being asked to leave the army.

During 1931, Chhotu Ram assisted the British officials by giving wide publicity to the suspension of the pensions of army
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personnel on account of their sympathies with the Congress. This was also used as an unmistakable warning to the potential and actual sympathisers of the Congress among army personnel. His own advice
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to them, appended to the news item in the Jat Gazette was:

Steer clear of the Congress movement and its programme which is one of extremism and unconstitutionalism.

Chhotu Ram also helped the government in selecting the possible recruits from among the retired army personnel who could help control the situation regarding their fellowmen in the villages and counter any adverse effects of the Congress programme. He also
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offered to help these recruits in their work. He invited 60 lead-
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ing landowners, ex-armymen and practising lawyers to a meeting
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and the following two resolutions were passed on 10 January 1932:

76 JG, 23 Feb. 1921, pp. 4-5.

77 JG, 25 July 1931, p. 6; 23 Sept. 1931, p. 4. HT also, for different reasons, gave similar news regarding confiscation of the pensions of "Faujhis" of Rohtak district, see 29 Sept. 1931, p. 5.

78 Ibid.

79 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 18, letter of Chhotu Ram to DC Rohtak (n.d.), p. 171.

80 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18. Chhotu Ram sent the names and vocation of 35 people who attended this gathering. A breakup of these shows: 6 military men (all officers); 3 risaldars; 1 dafadar; 8 pleaders; 4 zaildars; 8 lambardars; 2 safedposh; and 2 rich titled men, Rai Sahib Ghazi Ram of Ahulana and Rai Sahib Chowdhri Daryav Singh of Mokhra. All of them were Hindu Jats except 2 Muslim pleaders of Rohtak. p. 243.

81 Handwritten letter of Chhotu Ram to E.H. Lincoln, 10 Jan. 1932, CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18. Chhotu Ram claimed the attendance of 60 people but the list of names given to the DC contained only 35 names.

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strain of this letter reproduced above. All of his letters, contained lists of Jats who were participating in the Congress activities of a "subversive kind", i.e., non-payment of land revenue and boycott of government servants in increasing numbers. Both Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand were invited to wean the Jat volunteers away from such 'dangerous movements'.

Lal Chand and Chhotu Ram rendered invaluable service to the British Government in this connection. Chhotu Ram had already supplied in 1930 two "very dependable" men, both Jats from village Chhara, to control "wilder elements" among landowners in the district.⁸⁷ On personal invitation from the Deputy Commissioner, Chhotu Ram became more active and kept him constantly informed through a series of letters of the progress that he was making in this direction.⁸⁸ He supplied a list of "notorious villages" which were susceptible to Congress propaganda, lists of Congress volunteers who had been sent to Delhi in different jathas, and a list of important Congressmen in the district.⁸⁹ He also deputed Tika Ram to Sonepat and Gohana, and his nephew, Siri Chand to Jhajjar and Rohtak,⁹⁰ to organise anti-Congress activities. He sent to the Deputy Commissioner a list of his friends and close associates, who could be relied upon for supplying similar assistance in bringing the "desired information" to the Deputy Commissioner.⁹¹

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- 86 Ibid. See letters of E.H. Lincoln to Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand, 22 Jan. 1932, 9 Feb. 1932 and 22 June 1932.
- 87 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, Chhotu Ram to H.C. Malik, DC Rohtak, 29 Mar. 1930.
- 88 CFSO Rohtak, F.No. H-18. See letters of Chhotu Ram to E.H. Lincoln, 22 Jan. 1932, 25 Jan. 1932, 28 Jan. 1932, 11 Feb. 1932 and another one n.d.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid., letter 28 Jan. 1932.
- 91 Ibid., letter 11 Feb. 1932.

The Congress had volunteers from all castes and classes. Chhotu Ram could, however, do nothing about 'non-Jat Congress workers'. In fact, he wrote to this effect to the Deputy Commissioner, frankly admitting that 'Brahmins' and 'Mahajans' were not amenable to his influence and that he could tackle the Jat volunteers only, and that too not directly but through "local friends of influence"⁹². Chhotu Ram also seems to have had informers among the Congressmen of Rohtak who kept him posted with the activities of the Congress.⁹³ His description of three of them is rather interesting:⁹⁴

One of them is not a spy but a friend, one of remaining two was practically a spy, and the other midway between the two.

Chhotu Ram also claimed to have placed "five smart young men", through his friend Tika Ram, at the disposal of the Central Intelligence Department for helping them in discovering "revolutionaries".⁹⁵

Right up to the time of his death Chhotu Ram remained a vigorous opponent of the Congress and frequently wrote in the Jat Gazette against all aspects of the non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement of the Congress.⁹⁶ He attacked the Congress in the same way as he had earlier attacked the Arya Samaj. He claimed that the Congress was an organization dominated by

92 Ibid.

93 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 4 Jan. 1932.

94 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 15/43, see handwritten letter of Chhotu Ram marked "Strictly Confidential" to DC Rohtak, 2 Jan. 1932.

95 Ibid.

96 This was brought to the notice of the dist. administrators in a hand written note of Chhotu Ram to E.H. Lincoln (n.d.), CFDC Rohtak, F. No. H-18, p. 33.

urbanites and non-zamindars. The Congress on its part described the Unionist Party of Chhotu Ram as a party of "Nawabs, Jagirdars and big landlords"⁹⁷. Chhotu Ram retorted by describing the Congress Party in Punjab as a party of "moneylenders, shopkeepers, and capitalists, all exploiters of zamindars."⁹⁸

The Punjab Congress, both at the provincial level and at the level of Rohtak district, was riven with factions and infighting.⁹⁹ In referring to this point, Chhotu Ram quoted extensively either from the newspapers sympathetic to the Congress or the top Congress leaders themselves. Jawaharlal Nehru, who criticised the Punjab Congress for infighting and factionalism, was often quoted by Chhotu Ram and his criticism given wide publicity.¹⁰⁰

In exposing the ailments generally of the Punjab Provincial Congress and specially of the Rohtak district Congress, Chhotu Ram secured valuable help from the Haryana Tilak which was controlled by one faction of the Congressites in Rohtak and which also commented with disapproval on dissensions among its fellow

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- 97 JG, 6 April 1938, p. 7.
- 98 JG, 4 April 1937, p. 3; 5 May 1937, p. 3; 10 Oct. 1937, pp. 4-5; 17 Oct. 1937, p. 3; 1 Mar. 1938, p. 3; 25 Mar. 1938, p. 4; 6 April 1938, p. 7; 11 May 1938, p. 6; 18 May 1938, p. 3; 25 May 1938, p. 3; 22 Feb. 1939, pp. 5, 8; 8 Mar. 1939, p. 3.
- 99 For dissensions in the Rohtak Congress party, see AICC Papers, F. No. 7/193. See letters from Rohtak district: Daulat Ram Gupta to Kripalani, 2 Aug. 1938, p. 3; Harish Chander Gupta to Kripalani, 2 Aug. 1938, pp. 15-18; Dharam Chander Gupta, 2 Aug. 1938, pp. 18-23; Mange Ram Vatsa, 8 Aug. 1938, p. 26; for an abstract of another letter cataloging the Congress difficulties in Rohtak, see pp. 27-28; Inspection Report of the Punjab Provincial Committee dealing with misappropriation of funds of Rohtak Congress Committee (26 Jan. 1936 to 29 Nov. 1938) see pp. 4-8. Also see Bhargava Papers, almost all letters deal with factionalism in the Punjab Congress.
- 100 JG, 2 Mar. 1921, p. 6; 16 Mar. 1921, p. 10; 20 Oct. 1934, pp. 3-4; 24 Mar. 1937, p. 3; 28 April 1937, p. 7; 25 Aug. 1937, p. 3; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 3; 15 June 1938, p. 4; 8 Feb. 1939, p. 3; 22 Feb. 1939, pp. 5, 8; 2 Aug. 1939, pp. 1, 8.

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Congressmen.

Under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy, the Unionist Party, which had secured overwhelming majority in the general elections and formed the ministry in Punjab, came under bitter attack by the Congress. Chhotu Ram's criticism of the Congress also grew sharper and more vehement. He took to unsparingly condemning the Congress ministeries formed in other provinces of India. The Congress Government in United Provinces, where 'agriculturists' were estimated by Chhotu Ram to be one crore in numerical strength, was the special target of attack. According to Chhotu Ram, the Congress in the United Provinces had totally failed to accord any representation for the 'agriculturists' in the formation of its ministry. Chhotu Ram's main criticism on this ministry concentrated on the fate of kisans and mazdoors seen in the police repression on them in the cities, in withdrawal of the support of Kisan Sabhas from the Congress, and in the insistence of the Congress on the collection of land revenue against its promises of exemptions. He also criticised the Congress ministers who he claimed were superficially accepting nominal salaries but in reality receiving full allowances. "Hypocrisy" of the Congress promises specially to kisans and mazdoors, who

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- 101 HT, 12 April 1926, p. 5; 18 Oct. 1926, pp. 2, 4; 11 Oct. 1926, p. 3; 24 July 1934, p. 4; 31 July 1934, p. 3; 14 Aug. 1934, p. 3; 20 Oct. 1934, p. 3; 23 July 1935, p. 3; 6 Aug. 1935, p. 4; 3 June 1938, pp. 3, 8; 24 June 1938, p. 4.
- 102 JG, 3 Mar. 1937, p. 3; 11 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 3; 29 Sept. 1937, p. 5; 2 Oct. 1937, pp. 3-4; 13 Oct. 1937, p. 3; 27 Oct. 1937, pp. 4-5; 3 Nov. 1937, p. 1; 1 Dec. 1937, p. 3; 8 Dec. 1937, p. 5; 15 Dec. 1937, pp. 2-3; 22 Dec. 1937, pp. 3, 6; 5 Jan. 1938, pp. 3, 6, 7; 19 Jan. 1938, p. 2; 26 Jan. 1938, p. 8; 2 Feb. 1938, p. 2; 9 Mar. 1938, pp. 5-6; 11 May 1938, p. 6; 18 May 1938, pp. 1, 4.
- 103 All the issues of JG for 1937-38 contain at least one news-item or an article in criticism of the Congress ministry of the United Provinces.

were declared to have voted the Congress ministry to powers, was played up to serve as a warning to their counterparts in Punjab.

Chhotu Ram's vehement attack on the Congress during the elections of 1937 concentrated on showing to the prospective voters the fate of different communities under a possible Congress Government. For the Jats of Rohtak, Chhotu Ram wrote:

The Congress in Rohtak district is in the hands of people who are anti-Jats. They abuse the Jats and will ruin them completely if they ever come to power.

His warning to Hindu agriculturists and minorities in Punjab read:

Minorities will be greatly harmed if the Congress ever comes to power in Punjab, as their first act would be to abolish the Alienation of Land Act, Sahukara Act, Debt Legislation, and the Gurdwara Act.

For the zamindars or agricultural tribes of Punjab, Chhotu Ram wrote:

In Punjab the Congress is controlled by the non-zamindars and a non-zamindar government would necessarily be an enemy of the zamindars.

Chhotu Ram speaking triumphantly in 1938, after the success of Unionist Party in the elections of 1937, "on behalf of millions of zamindars in Punjab" went on to warn:

For rural zamindars, poor kisans, and mazdoors, there is no difference between Gore (white) or Kale (dark) capitalists. They do not want that the government of the British, a government of traders, should be replaced by the government of Hindustani Bania. Zamindars will never want that they should be free from one Bania merely to be put under another Bania.

Agreeing that the Congress aim of 'Purna Swaraj' was very attractive, Chhotu Ram added:

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- 104 JG, 13 Jan. 1937, p. 4.
 105 JG, 23 June 1937, p. 1.
 106 JG, 21 April 1937, p. 8.
 107 JG, 26 Jan. 1938, p. 8.
 108 Ibid. Also see JG, 23 Mar. 1938, p. 3.

The concept of Puran Swaraj in Punjab would only mean disposing off the zamindar government of Punjab so that the lalas of Congress can rule.

Significantly the words 'lalas' and 'banias' were invariably prefixed to the Congress in the vocabulary of Chhotu Ram and his weekly the Jat Gazette.

Apart from the press, Chhotu Ram also used the platform most extensively against the Congress. Touring the province along with Sikandar Hayat Khan, he spoke against the Congress even in the areas known as the Congress strongholds.¹⁰⁹ In 1938, Henry Craik paid Chhotu Ram the greatest tribute by calling him "the most effective and combative platform speaker in the ministry" and added that "Chhotu Ram showed plenty of courage in attacking the Congress".¹¹⁰ However, Chhotu Ram's zeal in attacking the Congress in public soon got out of hand. In August 1937, he had to tender an unconditional apology and issue a clarification to the press with regard to his speech which had been highly critical of the Congress.¹¹¹ The publicly insulting behaviour of Chhotu Ram towards Congressmen led the Congress to boycott Chhotu Ram socially and to ignore him completely.¹¹²

In any case, by the late thirties Chhotu Ram had emerged as the most effective champion of the agrarian policy followed by the

109 Linlithgow Coll, 86: H.W. Emerson to Linlithgow, 12 Feb. 1938.

110 Ibid. "Note on the Punjab Ministers", pp. 114-15.

111 Chhotu Ram in his speech in village Kharar of Rohtak dist. called the Congressmen, "Pagal Kute" (mad dogs) and also voiced certain very 'severe' and 'wholly wrong and irresponsible criticism' of the Congress. Chhotu Ram claimed that his speech had been deliberately distorted. For the entire controversy see Tribune, 12 Aug. 1937, p. 1; the editorial in 13 Aug. 1937, p. 7; 17 Aug. 1937, p. 3; 31 Aug. 1937, p. 2; 3 Sept. 1937, pp. 5, 6.

112 AICC Papers, F. No. PL-10 (1937-39), Jawaharlal Nehru to Gopi Chand Bhargava, 1 Oct. 1937.

Unionist ministry.¹¹³ This agrarian policy placed the Punjab Congress in a very embarrassing position. The Congress in Punjab could not support the agrarian programme of the Unionists because by doing so they stood to evoke the wrath of the urban mercantile and middle class population and press among whom the Punjab Congress had its real following.¹¹⁴ At the same time, they could not oppose the agrarian legislation as it meant alienating the rural majority of Punjab. In failing to safeguard the interests of the professional and trading classes, the Congress of Punjab lost greatly in influence.¹¹⁵ Chhotu Ram exposed all this in his unrestrained attacks on the Congress and consequently became the "most unpopular minister" of Punjab among the Congress and the urban circles of the province.¹¹⁶

A survey of the period from 1920 up to early forties would show that the Congress in Rohtak district was never a negligible political factor. All the personal interest and activity of Chhotu Ram and the Rohtak district officials as also intensive propaganda through press and platform did not fully succeed in counteracting the otherwise 'weak and divided' Congress in Rohtak. The increase in the number of Congress followers could not be denied. Official records indicate that during the civil disobedience movement of 1930-31, the Congress in Rohtak district drew its volunteers mainly from amongst the Jats, Brahmins, Banias and Chamars; but among these the Jat volunteers were the most

113 Linlithgow Coll, 88: "Note on the Punjab Ministers", pp. 10-11.

114 AICC Papers, F.No. PL-10 (1937-38), Satyapal, President Punjab Provincial Congress Committee to Subhas Chander Bose, 8 Dec. 1938.

115 Linlithgow Coll, 88: H.D. Craik to Linlithgow, 19 Oct. 1939.

116 Ibid., "Note on the Punjab Ministers", pp. 10-11.

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 numerous. Even Chhotu Ram, who always spoke and wrote of the Congress with a 'Bania' prefix, had to agree with the claims of the Haryana Tilak that the Congress in Rohtak district drew its largest number of recruits from among the Jats. 118 This popularity of the Congress among Jats of Rohtak was acknowledged even in the Jat Gazette which published a news item regarding a conference of the Congress party held in Rohtak on 17-18 October 1931 and attended by 20,000 Jats. 119 The realisation that many Jats followed the Congress was not something new to Chhotu Ram. As early as 1923 he had accused the Congress of splitting the 'Jat community' into two. 120 If this was so, then why did the Congress not succeed in undermining the strength of Chhotu Ram, strength which was primarily claimed on the basis of his Jat following in Rohtak district? The answer to this lies in tracing the social basis of the Jat followers of the Congress in Rohtak and the extent to which it infringed on the following of Chhotu Ram.

Some of the Jat following of Congress in Rohtak district, as already pointed out earlier, can be clearly traced to military personnel, officials of the district revenue agency, and small landowners, who refused to pay land revenue during the civil disobedience movement. About the military personnel, the Deputy

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- 117 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.
 Also see CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, p. 7. For the 'Jat following' of the Congress in Rohtak district also see below chapter VII, p. 217 ; chapter VIII, p. 279.
- 118 JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 7; 27 Oct. 1937, pp. 3-4. Also HT, 21 Jan. 1930, p. 3; HT claimed that 3/4ths of 2,000 Congress members in Rohtak dist. were from the agricultural tribes; most of these were claimed to be Jat by caste.
- 119 JG, 20 Oct. 1931, pp. 4-5.
- 120 JG, 1 Aug. 1923, p. 12; 14 Nov. 1923, p. 5; 21 Nov. 1923, p. 3; 16 Dec. 1925, p. 8.

Commissioner was of the opinion that except for a few it was impossible to get any definite evidence of their sympathies and support for the Congress movement and that if any sizable number of them were in sympathy with the Congress their sympathies were covert.¹²¹ This may be said to hold true of the officials of the land revenue agency as well. Then, there were some landowners of village Chulkana and village Gangana in Rohtak district, who during the civil disobedience movement of 1930-31 refused to pay the land revenue. In village Chulkana the ring leader arrested by the police was a landowner called Kala, son of Badan, Gujar by caste.¹²² According to the Superintendent of Police, the land revenue against his name was merely Rs. 1 annas 12 and pies 9.¹²³ In village Gangana, the six defaulting Jat landowners arrested were described as "illiterate" and "small zamindars" with "not much means at their command".¹²⁴ The official reports clearly indicate that the Congress recruits who joined the no-tax campaign were necessarily men of small means; a limited number of them being petty landowners and others mainly tenants as in the case of village Chuchakwas. This, therefore, was hardly a dent in Chhotu Ram's support derived mainly from the bigger landowners of Rohtak. These small landowners along with a limited number of followers from among the officials of district revenue agency and the military personnel were never substantially large in number or socially influential to tip the

121 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC Rohtak to Lt. Col. Carpendale, 3 Nov. 1931.

122 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, SP to DC Rohtak, 14 Sept. 1931.

123 Ibid.

124 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, Report of tehsildar of village Gohana to DC Rohtak, 5 Jan. 1932, pp. 95-96. Also see Report of Hazari Singh, Honorary Magistrate, *ibid.*, p. 98.

balance against Chhotu Ram especially as most of them would not even qualify as voters under the system of restricted franchise.

The above mentioned classes clearly did not provide the bulk of Jat volunteers of the Congress in Rohtak district. Then, who were these so called Jat volunteers who provided the numerical strength of the Congress following in Rohtak? According to Chhotu Ram, the Congressmen of Rohtak referred to these Jat Congress volunteers as "mazdoors"¹²⁵ Chhotu Ram described them as "doers of all menial jobs", those who set up Pandals and performed other construction work and prepared food for other Congressmen.¹²⁶ He pointed out that most of the Jats in the Congress fold were "illiterate".¹²⁷ Yet they were always in the forefront when it came to the point of courting arrest.¹²⁸ According to him, the Jat Congressites were discriminated against even inside the jails.¹²⁹ They got "inferior class" in the jails and were denied the facilities which were available to the "urban Congressmen".¹³⁰ Whatever "sacrifices" the Jat Congressmen made, Chhotu Ram claimed, they were never recognised and rewards and recognition went to the "lalas" in the Congress.¹³¹ Chhotu Ram effectively pointed out that not a single Jat occupied any "respectable position" in the Congress organisation.¹³² Even the Haryana Tilak was unable to contradict Chhotu Ram in this connection. The only person of importance which the Haryana Tilak could indicate in its catalogue

125 JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 4.

126 "An Appeal to the Jats of Rohtak District Congress", an article by Chhotu Ram, JG, 26 Jan. 1938, p. 4.

127 JG, 21 Jan. 1931, p. 4; 26 Aug. 1931, p. 3; 26 Jan. 1938, p. 4.

128 Ibid.; also 7 Jan. 1931, p. 4.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid., also 25 Mar. 1931, p. 5.

131 Ibid.

132 JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 7; 27 Oct. 1937, pp. 3, 4.

133

of "Haryana Desh Bhakt" (patriots of Haryana) was master Baldev Singh, who incidentally also joined the Unionist Party in 1940. In the context of all this Chhotu Ram exhorted the Jat Congressmen to assert themselves and to form their own separate organisation inside the Congress - a clear bid to split the Congress on caste lines.¹³⁴

The official records of Rohtak district clearly point out that most of what Chhotu Ram was saying about the participation of Jats in the Congress movement was based on facts. The district records disclose that although the Rohtak district Congress Party drew its volunteers mainly from among the Jats, it was at the same time also true that no Jat held any office of importance in the organisational set-up of the Congress.¹³⁵ The office bearers of the Congress were either Brahmins or Banias.¹³⁶ Those arrested during the civil disobedience movement of 1930-31 numbered about 500, and the majority of these arrested volunteers were Jats.¹³⁷ But the political limelight was stolen by six Congressmen who went on hunger strike in the jail on certain issues; of these six, four were Banias and two Brahmins.¹³⁸

133. "Haryana ke Desh Bhakt", leading article in HT, 30 April 1930, p. 6. The same stands affirmed in the list of prominent people involved in the Congress movement of 1919, 1921, 1931 and during 1937-46, as catalogued by Sri Ram Sharma, in his work, Haryaka Ka Itihas (Hindi) (Rohtak 1974), pp. 61, 66, 72, 90, 111, 116. Sri Ram Sharma was one of the most prominent Congress workers of this period (1921-45).

134. JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 4.

135. CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, tehsildar Sonepat to DC Rohtak, 19 Feb. 1930.

136. Ibid.

137. HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit. Also see CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, p. 7.

138. CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-17, pp. 97, 100-1.

The observation of the social complexion of the Congress recruits among Jats of Rohtak made by Lal Chand to the district authorities further substantiated Chhotu Ram's opinion. In his report, Lal Chand declared the Jat volunteers of the Congress to be, ¹³⁹ "men of no means, sort of run- aways from their homes".

With majority of its followers among Jats coming from such social groups in Rohtak, it is clear why Congress was unable to make any substantial inroads in the higher class following of Chhotu Ram. This is however not to say that Chhotu Ram's sway over the Jat landowners in general was complete even in Rohtak district. But, by and large, a very negligible number from these landowners were recruited by the Congress. Even then Chhotu Ram was uneasy enough to speculate on changing his constituency for contesting the election under Provincial Autonomy. He seriously played with the idea of contesting from the landlords constituency, in which the voters ¹⁴⁰ were persons possessing big landholdings only. In fact both the Congress as well as the Arya Samaj were Chhotu Ram's rivals in claiming the loyalty of Jats. But neither the Arya Samaj nor the Congress ever succeeded appreciably in weakening Chhotu Ram's hold over the Jat landowners. Chhotu Ram, on his side, contrary to realities and in contradiction to his own recognition of the truth, kept on insisting upon and projecting the image of a 'united Jat community' which backed him, with himself as 'the sole representative of Jat interests'.

139 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. H-18, Lal Chand to DC Rohtak, 13 Feb. 1932.

140 For details see above chapter I, pp.38-39.

Chapter VII

CHHOTU RAM IN THE POLITICS OF PUNJAB

Chhotu Ram entered the provincial politics in 1924. In the Council he joined the Punjab National Unionist Party established by Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand. He was to remain one of the staunchest supporters and pillars of this party till his death in January 1945. Before 1924, from the point of view of the officials of Rohtak district, Chhotu Ram had been involved in very dubious politics which kept their suspicions of him alive till the introduction of Provincial Autonomy in Punjab.¹

The first political organisation that Chhotu Ram joined was the All India Congress Party in 1916. He became the President of Rohtak District Congress Committee in that year and remained so till he resigned in August 1920.² Along with Congress politics, Chhotu Ram was, as pointed out earlier, also active in the socio-religious reform movement of the Arya Samaj which was sweeping the south-east Punjab at that time.³ However, despite being involved in both these organisations Chhotu Ram was able to stay on the right side of the British Government. This was possible because till the end of World War I, the Congress party itself had not fallen on the wrong side of the British and had in fact greatly helped the British in their war efforts. The case of Arya Samaj was different because the

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- 1 For details see below chapter VIII, pp. 269-80. No unfavourable comment on Chhotu Ram is available in the District Records once he became a minister under the Provincial Autonomy in 1937.
 - 2 For details see above chapter VI, pp. 184-6.
 - 3 For details see above chapter V, pp. 163-7.

British had nearly always been suspicious of the Arya Samaj. But even here they had to acknowledge that the Jats of Rohtak district despite very strong Arya Samaj influence had rendered great assistance during the war. Chhotu Ram himself, although at that time both a Congressite and an Arya Samajist, had rendered invaluable services towards war recruitment in Rohtak district. During this period, i.e., 1916-19, Chhotu Ram had established a close personal equation with H. Harcourt, the then Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, who considered Chhotu Ram his personal friend. Harcourt was condemned and ridiculed by the subsequent Deputy Commissioners of Rohtak as a "sympathetic officer", who was too much of a "Ma Baap" and not enough of a "Hakim". Harcourt had initiated the practice of working through various committees which he had established in the district for different objects and had the leading people of the district fully involved in the work of the committees. Harcourt had specially taken many of the Jats into his confidence for this work and had consulted them on various subjects. These Jats were helped by Harcourt in their work of social mobilization. He gave active backing to the local Jat sabhas and Jat Mahasabha and gave direct support in the establishment of Jat educational institutions and the starting of a paper for the Jats, i.e., the Jat Gazette

4 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, Comm. Ambala Div. 1919, in CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-4.

5 See above chapter I, pp. 28-30.

6 H. Harcourt, op.cit. Chhotu Ram and Harcourt were actually the co-authors of this book; for this see Harcourt's letter to Gandhi, 10 May 1927 in Gandhi Coll., XXXII, p. 12494, p. 118.

7 HO Notes, C.W. Dallas, 1916, CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-4.

8 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 1919, op.cit.

9 Ibid.

of Chhotu Ram. During this time Jats of Rohtak were split in two distinct factions.¹¹ One was the Arya Samaj faction headed by Lal Chand and Chhotu Ram and the other the Sanatan Dharam faction headed by Jats like Mahants of Bohar, Bahal Singh zaildar of Bohar, and Ghasi Ram of Gohana tehsil, head of the Jats of Ahulana Got (sub-caste).¹² Of these two factions, Harcourt blantly favoured the Arya Samaj faction and of the two leaders of the Arya Samaj faction he favoured Chhotu Ram as against Lal Chand.¹³ This partiality shown towards Chhotu Ram was shared to a certain extent by C.W. Dallas, the then Commissioner of Ambala division.¹⁴ Chhotu Ram, who headed the District War Committee for recruitment during the war and was a favourite of the Deputy Commissioner, succeeded early in his career in establishing his influence among some of the 'socially superior' Jats of Rohtak. Consequently, during this period he came to be known, in the official circles, as "the strongest man in the district" who had "his finger in every political pie".¹⁵ Before his transfer from Rohtak district, Harcourt got sanctioned a substantial reward of 4 squares or 100 acres of land for Chhotu Ram in a new colony in Montgomery and the title of 'Rai Sahib'.¹⁶ Things however changed swiftly for Chhotu Ram after the war and for two years (1919-1921) he was caught amidst great controversy.

The Punjab disturbances of 1919 changed the political equilibrium of the province. The Congress furiously agitated

10 For details see above chapter II, pp. 41-9.

11 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 1919, op.cit.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 HO Notes, C.W. Dallas, 1916, op.cit. Even H.A. Casson supported Chhotu Ram to a certain extent regarding his land grant. See HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 1919, op.cit.

15 "Men to be known", op.cit.

16 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 1919, op.cit.

against the Rowlatt Acts. The Jat dominated district of Rohtak also showed a great deal of participation by Jats in this agitation.¹⁷ It was expected of the favoured "Jat leaders" like Chhotu Ram that they would not only boycott the agitational meetings but also render "service" to the government by refuting the "false" allegations made against the Rowlatt Acts and explaining its 'true' scope and meaning.¹⁸ Chhotu Ram not only failed to do this but he actually participated in the meetings organised against the acts. In fact, in a mass meeting held at Rohtak on 11 August 1919, Chhotu Ram advocated the sale of proscribed literature.¹⁹ This was a direct challenge to the Punjab Government because on that very day a fresh order prohibiting the publication of any account regarding the disturbances without pre-censorship in any newspaper English or Indian had been issued.²⁰ Chhotu Ram, who had openly participated in the public display of unprecedented enthusiasm against the acts, refused along with other prominent residents of his district to join Lal Chand, the only 'Jat leader' of Rohtak who openly sided with the British,²¹ in issuing a "loyal manifesto" as desired by the British officials. R.C. Bolster, who succeeded H. Harcourt on 18 March 1919, took exception to this behaviour of Chhotu Ram whose efforts in establishing himself as the 'leader of Jats' had been so amply

17 For the impact of disturbances of 1919 in Rohtak district and the participation of Jats, see "Disorders Inquiry Committee", evidence: Statements of the Government of Punjab, Rohtak district, in V.N. Dutta (ed), New Light on the Punjab Disturbances, I (Simla 1975), pp. 335-7, 353, 359, 362, 363-6, 521.

18 Comm. Ambala Div. to DC Rohtak, 29 April 1918, HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 1919, op.cit.

19 "Disorders Inquiry Committee", evidence: The Ambala Div. op.cit., p. 478.

20 Ibid., p. 336.

21 Ibid.

and readily promoted by Bolster's predecessor and who had been selected as a recipient of both honours and material rewards. Bolster, therefore, proposed prosecution of Chhotu Ram for his "seditious" role in the disturbances of 1919.²² Although this could not be carried out in view of lack of incriminating evidence against Chhotu Ram, still for the official record Bolster firmly penned down that "during the unrest of 1919 this man (Chhotu Ram) had proved actively disloyal".²³ He also played down Chhotu Ram's earlier help to the British in active war recruitment and said that Chhotu Ram had helped in the British war efforts only because his own "Jat community" stood to benefit by it.²⁴ He also passed stay orders in 1920 regarding the reward of land grant made to Chhotu Ram with the following noting:²⁵

No action to be taken till his attitude became more clear. It was later found, much to the regret of the Deputy Commissioner, that Chhotu Ram had already acquired possession of the land grant in the summer of 1919 due to some mistake.²⁶

Chhotu Ram had clearly fallen in great disfavour after the departure of Harcourt. In fact, none of the Deputy Commissioners who succeeded Harcourt favoured his policy of taking the local leaders into confidence. Consequently, Harcourt's policy was reversed.²⁷ Chhotu Ram was also on his side unable to establish any equation with any other Hakim (official) of Rohtak. In fact, the administrative circles of Rohtak district were describing Chhotu

22 Ibid. Also "Men to be known", op.cit.

23 "Men to be known", op.cit. Also see "Disorders Inquiry Committee", evidence, op.cit., p. 478.

24 Ibid.

25 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 21 Jan. 1921, op.cit.

26 Ibid. Also "Men to be known", op.cit.

27 HO Notes, H.A. Casson, 21 Jan. 1921, op.cit.

Ram as one of those who had "instigated" the murder of Rai Sahib Balbir Singh, a zaildar of Bohar; for Chhotu Ram had always been considered a "dead enemy" of the Mahant of Bohar, head of the Sanatan Dharam faction of Jats in Rohtak. Chhotu Ram in return took to criticising the district officials in the Jat Gazette. He complained that he was being unnecessarily persecuted by the district officials who had issued orders to suspend his occupation of the land grant and who, he claimed, also attempted to cancel his licence as a practising lawyer.

This obvious official pressure on Chhotu Ram was to affect adversely his association with and membership of the Indian National Congress as he began to reel under it. In the wake of the new turn taken by the politics in Punjab, the hitherto loyal 'Jat leaders' were generally being asked to 'redefine' their loyalty to the government. Chhotu Ram having been pointedly asked by the district officials to clarify his attitude found it necessary to resign from the Congress on 8 August 1920, following the adoption of the creed of non-violent non-cooperation by the Congress. Apart from other reasons that made Chhotu Ram resign from the Congress, it is clear that having cooperated with the British officials for so long and having received their very generous patronage under Harcourt, he decided to continue to remain in the ranks of the recipients of

28 "Men to be known", op.cit.

29 Ibid. Also for Chhotu Ram's criticism of the district officials, see below chapter VIII, pp. 292-8.

30 JG, 1 June 1921, pp. 3-5.

31 Reference to this was made in a letter of Chowdhri Lajpat Rai, President of the Jat Association, Hissar, 22 April 1919, to H.A. Casson, Comm. Ambala Div. See CF Comm. Ambala Div. F. No. A-4, I.

32 For other reasons behind his resignation from the Congress, see above chapter VI, pp. 184-6.

official favours rather than sign away his all as the Congress creed of 1920 demanded from its followers.

Withdrawal of Chhotu Ram from the Congress made little impact on the non-cooperation movement in Rohtak. The Jat High School of Rohtak, a pet project of Chhotu Ram, fell to the non-cooperators.³³ Chhotu Ram's withdrawal from the Congress had clearly cost him dear in terms of support from the 'Jat community'. He had also alienated many of his Jat followers by ignoring their claims for rewards at a time when he had enjoyed the confidence of the Deputy Commissioner and was in a position to recommend their cases.³⁴ This decline in Chhotu Ram's popularity resulted in 1921 in his defeat in the first election to the Punjab Council from the Jhajjar and Sonapat rural constituency of Rohtak district. Chhotu Ram lost to Rai Bahadur Sarup Singh, a Jat Risaldar and a follower of the Arya Samaj, though only by 26 votes.³⁵ This defeat was seen by the officials and others as a clear indication of the diminished influence of Chhotu Ram among the Jats of Rohtak.³⁶

However, by the time of the second elections to the Punjab Council Chhotu Ram was able to consolidate his position among his Jat voters. In 1924, he got himself elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Rohtak District Board and also as the Director of the local Cooperative Bank;³⁷ both these were offices of influence and also of vast patronage. By that time the local 'Jat politics' of Rohtak

33 See above chapter II, pp.49-50.

34 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 16/44, Khwaja Rahim Baksh, ADM of Hissar to Diwan Tek Chand, Comm. Ambala Div., 31 Oct. 1921.

35 IOR:L/P & J/6/1925, F. No. 3302. Also see above chapter V, pp. 165-6.

36 "Men to be known", op.cit. Also see above chapter I, pp.34-35.

37 C & MG, 16 Sept. 1924, p. 5.

had also witnessed a change. The Sanatan Dharam faction of Jats had been weakened considerably by the murder of Rai Sahib Balbir Singh and the death of Rai Sahib Ram Saran Dass. These two deaths had large repercussions on the strength of this faction primarily because they led to a split and intense infighting over the possession of the monastery lands, as the Mahants had been owners of very large estates.³⁸ Chhotu Ram, on the other hand, was feverishly working all this time towards the mobilization of the Arya Samaj faction of Jats.³⁹ With the decline of Sanatan Dharam faction, the Arya Samaj faction emerged supreme in Rohtak district politics, and although within a year this faction was also to split into two,⁴⁰ i.e., between Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand, it certainly ensured for the time being the victory of both in the second elections to the Punjab Council. After a resounding success by a majority of 1,902 votes,⁴¹ Chhotu Ram joined Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand in the Punjab Council. They had organized themselves into an 'Agriculturist Party' or the 'Zamindar Party' as it was then known. The broad idea of organising such a party had originated with Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, who had advocated "political alignments by race and not by religion" as the "only solution for Punjab".⁴² Fazl-i-Hussain had given shape to this idea by organising a group of 35 Mohammadan members in the first Punjab Council into a 'Rural Bloc' as the majority belonged to rural areas. This 'Rural Bloc' was enlarged to include a few

38 HO Notes, E.H.Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.

39 For details see above chapter V.

40 For details see above chapter II, pp.65-67.

41 IOR:L/P&J/6/1925, F. No. 3302. Chhotu Ram won this election in a triangular fight.

42 Macnab of Macnab Papers, p. 103.

Hindu ruralites headed by Lal Chand. Soon fifteen members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee also started to support it.⁴³ Thus came into being the National Unionist Party, officially described as "a local moderate party mostly comprising of landowners of Punjab".⁴⁴

In the first Reform Council, Edward Maclagan, the then Governor of Punjab, selected Fazl-i-Hussain and Lala Harkishan Lal to the first ministry established by him in 1921.⁴⁵ Fazl-i-Hussain openly used his ministerial powers as the education minister to further what the officials described as the 'Mohommadan interests'.⁴⁶ Chhotu Ram who had not been able to enter the Punjab Council in its first election showed himself a scathing critic of Fazl-i-Hussain in particular and the ministry in general. In the Jat Gazette of January 1921, Chhotu Ram wrote:⁴⁷

We cannot congratulate the government on appointment of two urban based members as ministers. It is an insult to the rural members who are in majority. At least one minister should have been appointed from among them.

Chhotu Ram continued to attack Fazl-i-Hussain and said that his election from the special constituency of landlords made a mockery of the "true representation" of the "zamindar interests" in the Council.⁴⁸ In April 1923, he applauded the attempt of Raja Narendra Nath to bringing a vote of censure against the ministry, and commented:⁴⁹

43 H.K. Travaskis, op.cit., I, p. 148.

44 Ibid.

45 PAR, 1920-21, p. 14.

46 H.K. Trevaskis, op.cit., p. 138.

47 "Ministers of Punjab", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 12 Jan. 1921, p. 2.

48 Ibid.

49 "Zamindars and Fazl-i-Hussain", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 4 April 1923, p. 4.

Sir Fazl-i-Hussain pursues a policy which benefits the Muslims only as he himself is a Muslim. He has also never attached any significance to the rights of zamindars or issued any circular for their benefit.

In July 1923, Chhotu Ram repeated the charge that Fazl-i-Hussain
50
was a communalist and anti-zamindar:

We have objected to the appointment of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain because he is communal minded. He says that he stands for backward classes but in reality he makes no concessions to the zamindars. He works for Muslim non-zamindars alone.

The very next year, in 1924, soon after his election, Chhotu Ram joined the group in Punjab Council headed by the same man whom he had condemned as a 'communalist', 'urbanite' and 'anti-zamindar' and started to defend him. By 1936, Chhotu Ram had several times condemned all similar condemnations of Fazl-i-Hussain as being born
51
out of "narrow mindedness", "partisanship and petty jealousy".

In reality the social basis of the two leaders was the same. Both were landlords; Chhotu Ram was 'urban' by profession and Fazl-i-Hussain by 'origin'.
52
Chhotu Ram moreover was as much of a constitutional communalist as Fazl-i-Hussain.
53
Chhotu Ram's 'Jat interests' and 'Hindu zamindar interests' were virtually the same as 'Muslim interests' of Fazl-i-Hussain. Both were indeed representatives of the upper stratum of the 'interests' which they claimed to represent. Another common basis was their publicly professed hatred of the 'urban Hindu'. In case of Fazl-i-Hussain,
54
a British official recorded:

50 JG, 25 July 1923, p. 2.

51 C & MG, 14 July 1936, p. 6.

52 For the 'urban origin' of Fazl-i-Hussain see D. Page, "Prelude to Partition: All India Muslim Politics, 1920-1932", Ph.D. Thesis (Oxford 1974), pp. 39-40.

53 For constitutional communalism of Chhotu Ram and Fazl-i-Hussain see above chapter II, pp. 51-61 and below chapter VIII, pp. 260-1.

54 H.K. Trevaskis, op.cit., I, p. 138.

He (Fazl-i-Hussain) realised that the Hindu moneylender was hateful to the peasant and particularly to the Mohammadan peasant ... his astute mind had also grasped the fact that the rural representatives were a majority of legislative Council; could they be induced to act unitedly? This he soon taught them to do and urban Hindus learnt to quail before him.

Chhotu Ram thus found a great deal of common ground which could be shared with Fazl-i-Hussain's Rural Bloc, which had already been joined by Lal Chand. What emerged out of this alliance was the National Unionist Party of Punjab. Although Lal Chand was associated with Fazl-i-Hussain earlier than Chhotu Ram it is Chhotu Ram who is regarded as the actual co-founder of the National Unionist Party in Punjab. The reason lay perhaps in the acute differences between Lal Chand and Fazl-i-Hussain and open confrontation between the two in the Punjab Council in March 1923. Besides, it was Chhotu Ram who in actuality made this newly established party a permanent and most stable political factor in Punjab politics.

The same year that he entered the Punjab Council Chhotu Ram was taken as the Minister of Agriculture in place of Lal Chand who had been unseated as a result of successful election petition against him on charges of corrupt practices. Lal Chand himself had taken over from Harkishan Lal who had resigned in 1923. Maclagan believed that Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand formed a

55 In the opinion of Azim Hussain, son of Fazl-i-Hussain, the reason was the deep imprint left by the ability and efficiency of Chhotu Ram and also his loyalty to the principles of the Unionist creed; so much so that any earlier association of a "lesser man" like Lal Chand with the Unionist Party was all but forgotten. Azim Hussain, Interview, 10 Nov. 1978.

56 Lal Chand moved a cut in Fazl-i-Hussain's salary on 13 March 1923 as a protest against his policy of giving insufficient weightage to the minorities on communal grounds. See PLCD, IV, 13 Mar. 1923, pp. 1274-7.

57 See above chapter I, pp. 30-31; chapter II, pp. 65-67.

combination which represented the feelings of the predominant majority in the Council on most questions.⁵⁸ Chhotu Ram's appointment as a minister to succeed Lal Chand was also said to be in keeping with the constitutional practice of making the choice of the ministers on party lines.⁵⁹ Maclagan had not followed this principle in the formation of the first Punjab ministry. The reason advocated then was that in the first Council it had been impossible to forecast the lines on which the party feeling would range itself. Therefore, those persons were selected as ministers who primarily represented the 'interests' of different communities.⁶⁰ With the emergence of the Rural Bloc in the Council and Lal Chand's support to this bloc the 'constitutional practice' was claimed to have been implemented. However, the appointment of Chhotu Ram in place of Lal Chand had not been really matter of fact or automatic. The new Governor, Malcolm Hailey had found it "extremely difficult" to chose Lal Chand's successor.⁶¹ Hailey did not consider Chhotu Ram to be "very distinguished a politician".⁶² Indeed, Chhotu Ram was at the time a man of little importance; he had negligible following in the Council; and most people outside Rohtak had not even heard his name.⁶³ In fact Hailey had been extremely sorry to

58 Ibid. Also PAR, 1923-24, p. 24.

59 PAR, 1923-24, p. 3.

60 Ibid.

61 Hailey Coll, (MSS Eur E.220), 68: Hailey to Council, 12 Aug. 1924. Hailey had very seriously considered Raja Narendra Nath as a possible successor to Lal Chand. The Raja was only dropped because the Swarajists had promised to support him; support which was considered very "undesirable" and "uncertain" by Hailey. For details, see *ibid.*

62 Ibid., Hailey to Michael O'Dwyer, 19 Sept. 1924.

63 Tribune, 17 Sept. 1924, p. 1. Also see K.L. Gauba, Oral History Transcript No. 76, prt. II, (NMML), p. 258. Gauba said: "He (Chhotu Ram) was a small man from Rohtak when he was picked up by Sir Fazl-i-Hussain".

see Lal Chand go, but at that time he was determined to keep the
 Agriculturist Party in power.⁶⁴ Chhotu Ram was therefore selected
 as a minister in place of Lal Chand primarily because he had the
 advantage of keeping the Agriculturist Party together and, as a
 'Hindu representative', he could work with this predominantly
 Muslim party.⁶⁵

Chhotu Ram's candidature was advocated by Fazl-i-Hussain who
 arranged several telegrams to be sent to the Governor from different
 places in Punjab requesting the appointment of Chhotu Ram as a
 minister.⁶⁶ A deputation of military officers of Rohtak also met
 the Governor for the same purpose.⁶⁷ The military personnel of
 Rohtak after the disqualification of Lal Chand had clearly come to
 look up to Chhotu Ram for representing and safeguarding their
 interests in the Punjab Council. Interestingly this deputation
 emphasised the appointment of a Muslim as a minister in case Chhotu
 Ram was not acceptable to the Governor.⁶⁸ The forces of landed
 interests were clearly bidding for solidarity and positions of power
 inside the Council. Chhotu Ram's selection aroused great resentment
 among the Hindu Communal press because his membership of Fazl-
 Hussain's party had branded him in the eyes of the Hindu
 communalists.⁶⁹ Even Tribune deprecated the appointment of Chhotu

64 J.P. Thompson Papers, MSS Eur F. 137, p. 18: See Diary,
 13 & 14 Aug. 1924.

65 Hailey Coll, 6 B: See Hailey to W.H. Vincent, 12 Aug. 1924;
 Hailey to Michael O'Dwyer, 19 Sept. 1924.

66 Tribune, 12 Sept. 1924, p. 4.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 See HT, 16, 22 & 29 Sept. 1924; Partap, 19 Sept. 1924,
 15 Nov. 1924; Milap, 20 Sept. 1924; Kesri, 19 Sept. 1924;
Tribune, 17 Sept. 1924, in Native News Paper Report Punjab.

Ram on communal grounds and declared that he was totally unacceptable to the 'Hindus' of Punjab.⁷⁰

Chhotu Ram remained the Minister of Agriculture for about six months. He handed over this ministry to Sardar Joginder Singh and served as the Minister of Education from 1925 to 1927.⁷¹ After the third elections to the Punjab Council Chhotu Ram was dropped from ministership in favour of Manohar Lal, an urban Hindu. Manohar Lal was declared by the Tribune a "genuine Hindu" and intellectually superior to Chhotu Ram.⁷² The Tribune, claiming to project 'Hindu interests', remarked that Hailey had earned the "gratitude of the Hindu community" of Punjab by dropping Chhotu Ram, and went on to smugly suggest that Chhotu Ram had been given his "due".⁷³

The reason for dropping Chhotu Ram from the ministry was given later in an interesting observation by a British official:⁷⁴

Chowdhri Lal Chand's Hindu successor though an agriculturist had neither his character nor his ability. Consequently after the elections to the third Council in December 1926 the Governor, Sir Malcolm Hailey, decided to revert to the original practice and an urban Hindu was substituted; his appointment making a definite abandonment of the principle of party (or so called constitutional) government.

This open reflection on Chhotu Ram's ability or rather lack of it was obviously biased as Chhotu Ram was notoriously unpopular with the district administrators.⁷⁵ The real reason for this change was indicated by Irwin in his letter to Birkenhead, the Secretary

70 Tribune, 16 Sept. 1924, p. 11; 17 Sept. 1924, p. 4.

71 PAR, 1926-27, p. 2.

72 "The Punjab Ministry", editorial in Tribune, 4 Jan. 1927.

73 Ibid., also p. 4.

74 H.K. Trevaskis, op.cit., p. 148.

75 For unpopularity of Chhotu Ram with the district administrators see below pp.241-2, f.n. 150; chapter VIII, pp.292-7.

of State for India, in January 1927:

You have no doubt seen that Hailey has appointed three ministers in the Punjab and his reasons for doing so may interest you. The old ministry consisted of two - Joginder Singh and Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram though a Hindu, was accepted as a Minister by the Muslim party (which was practically the "Rural Party") for the sake of the few extra votes he brought to the combined block. In the recent elections however he has lost two followers and his value to Muslims has therefore decreased. On the other hand, the Hindus, who had for some time been in permanent opposition, but had lately shown an obvious desire to come into closer touch with the government, felt the weakness of their position as a permanent minority in the population, and believed that they had suffered greatly from what they described as a coalition of government and the Muslim party. Hailey's difficulty was that if he carried on with the old ministry, the Hindu Party as such would have been permanently excluded, as they would have entirely refused to accept the pro-Muslim Chhotu Ram as a representative. They would probably have been driven back on opposition, which would have aggravated the communal tension in the province, and possible to swaraj. Hailey could, of course, have carried on government by aid of the Muslim bloc, but he decided that it would be wrong to exclude the Hindus and he therefore appointed Manohar Lal as a more or less moderate member of their party. He realises the risk of alienating the Muslim bloc and he has done what he could to sooth them by giving them a minister of a distinctly rural type in Firoj Khan, who is a barrister and also a representative of the "country families". In the third minister, Joginder Singh, he has a man of no particular party but friendly to government. I think Hailey has taken the wisest course, though personalities count for so much in Indian politics that it is not safe to say that his scheme will succeed.

Hailey's abandonment of the earlier constitutional practice in 1927 and the consequent dropping of Chhotu Ram from the minister-ship was clearly related to the changed politics of Punjab. The second Reform Council of 1924 contained the representatives of the Swaraj Party for the first time. Within two years the party's anti-government posture had proved disturbing to the British officials. Hailey's apprehension regarding the 'urban Hindus'

76 Birkenhead Coll, MSS Eur D.104/M2/10/5L, letter, 13 Jan. 1927.
 77 H.K. Trevaskis, op.cit., I, p. 146.
 78 Ibid.

going over to the Swaraj Party had a basis in this. The possibility of keeping the two separate existed as the differences between the two, non-Congress urban Hindus and Congress urban Hindus, hinged on their activity inside the legislature. The non-Congress Hindu members had dismissed the policy of non-cooperation within the Council for more active participation in order to safeguard the 'Hindu interests' in Punjab. In their opinion the 'Hindu interests' could be best served by joining Fazl-i-Hussain and thus placing themselves in what they considered to be the best position from which they could forestall any new "anti-Hindu policies".⁷⁹ If permanently excluded from sharing power there was nothing to stop them from joining the pro-Congress forces. The communal minority of non-Congress urban Hindus was openly threatening to turn themselves into "permanent" non-cooperators.⁸⁰ Hailey realised that any rejection of their overtures of friendship might drive them to 'extremist' politics and into the "arms of the Congress".⁸¹ The British administrators certainly did not want the strengthening of the Swarajist forces in Punjab on any account. In fact the "progressive disintegration" of the Swarajists by the time of third election to the Punjab Council, leaving only three members where earlier there had been nine, had afforded immense satisfaction even to the members

79 This argument has been convincingly brought out by Gerald A. Heegar in his article, "The Growth of Congress Movement in Punjab, 1920-40", Journal of Asian Studies, Nov. 1972, XXXII, No. 1, pp. 39-53.

80 Tribune, 17 Sept. 1924, p. 1.

81 This point was emphasised by Hailey in all his correspondence during 1925-1928. See Hailey Coll, 7 B: Hailey to Michael O' Dwyer, 6 August 1925; 10 A: Hailey to Alexander Muddiman, Home-member, Jan. 1927; 9 C: Raja Narendra Nath to Hailey, 18 Dec. 1926.

82

of the House of Commons in England. Hailey, who had always been somewhat contemptuous of Chhotu Ram, had considered him and his three followers as "insignificant and negligible in the Council",⁸³ and since his value in terms of actual support to the Muslim Bloc of the Unionist Party had in any case been greatly reduced in 1926 elections, he was conveniently dropped in 1928.

Another major factor which prompted this change was the desire of Hailey to weaken the Agriculturist Party of Punjab.⁸⁴ By 1928 Hailey was convinced that the newly acquired strength of the Agriculturist Party in the Punjab Council could be an effective hindrance to the collection of land revenue and other allied rates specially during the agriculturally bad years.⁸⁵ He voiced his suspicions and anxiety regarding the inevitable menace and danger of the rural representatives championing the demands of the 'agriculturists' in the Council and successfully opposing the government on every possible question till such demands were met.⁸⁶ The same apprehension had been voiced by Maclagan, the former Governor of Punjab, to Reading in 1924.⁸⁷ Hailey had, undoubtedly by 1928,

82 House of Commons Debates (Hansard), 20 July 1926. See comment of Earl Winterton, Under-Secretary of State for India, p. 1066.

83 Hailey Coll, 8 A: Hailey to John Maynard, 2 July 1925.

84 Hailey in a lengthy written explanation to Dr. A. Low, 10 Jan. 1961, denied any deliberate attempt to weaken the Agriculturist Party. For this see Hailey Coll, 51: pp. 5-29. However Hailey's papers clearly belie this assertion.

85 Hailey Coll, 12 B: Hailey to E.B. Francis, 10 May 1928.

86 Hailey Coll, 12 C: Hailey to C. Rhodes, 5 July 1928.

87 Reading Coll, MSS Eur E.238/26: Maclagan to Reading, 27 May 1924. Maclagan in May 1924 had advised the Viceroy against any extension of franchise which in his opinion was bound to lead to the predominance of both 'rural' and 'Muslim' elements in Punjab. As an effect of the same he candidly opined:

There are always dangers in having too agrarian a Council as has been found in other countries and we shall probably have difficulties with the rural element in matters such as settlements and the enhancement of water rates.

Ibid.

experienced this danger in Punjab in his dealings with the Agricultural Party.⁸⁸ Therefore a representative of the 'urban element' "out of sympathy with the old landowning and military classes" was introduced in the ministry as a counterpoise to the growing strength and ambition of the 'agriculturists'. Chhotu Ram was replaced by an 'urban Hindu' who was not "entirely under their (agriculturist) thumb".⁹⁰ Hailey, by his own admission, feared in Punjab not so much an "urban agitation" as the "possibility of agrarian combination in regard to land revenue and similar questions", and the fact that the same could be exploited against the government.⁹¹ This change brought by the growing importance of the Rural Party in Punjab was sought to be justified by Hailey to the Viceroy on the ground that such a move stood to "broaden the basis of our administration" and had the added advantage of "turning our opponents into friends".⁹²

By substituting Chhotu Ram with an 'urban Hindu', Hailey was able to accomplish three very important objectives. Firstly, he effectively weakened the Agricultural Party which was his original intention.⁹³ Secondly, by introducing communal principle at the ministerial level he also weakened the forces of existing non-communal political parties, particularly the Congress. Majority of the contemporary press was quick to point out that this change made a

88 For details of the troubles which Hailey faced at the hands of Agricultural Party, see Hailey Coll, 12 B: Hailey to E.B. Francis, 10 May 1928.

89 Hailey Coll, 12 B: Hailey to Viceroy, 17 Feb. 1928.

90 Hailey Coll, 10 A: Report, Hailey to Arthur Hirtzel, Under-Secretary of State for India, 10 Mar. 1927.

91 Hailey Coll, 10 C: Hailey to C. Rhodes, 5 July 1928.

92 Hailey Coll, 12 A: Hailey to the Viceroy, 7 Feb. 1928.

93 For communal representation of the ministry see Irwin's letter to Birkenhead, 13 Jan. 1927, above, p.228.

mockery of the 'non-communal' stand of the Unionist Party or its claim of being a political party at all; Thirdly, as Hailey himself claimed, he successfully brought about a situation in Punjab in which "Hindus would have but little connection with all India politics". The formation of Punjab ministry on this new principle, once effected, was firmly maintained as a "set convention" till 1937, thus leaving no room for a 'rural Hindu', i.e., Chhotu Ram.

The press, by and large, applauded the ministerial change made by Hailey. Fazl-i-Hussain however made his displeasure clear through his paper the Muslim Outlook which passed scathing strictures on Hailey and his professed abhorrence of communal considerations. Although Chhotu Ram did not complain of any "personal bitterness" on account of being excluded from the ministry, he doubted the "constitutional correctness" of Hailey's action. He also faced embarrassment amongst his associates when Hailey refused to let Chhotu Ram publish a letter in which he (Hailey) had ostensibly given some reason for dropping Chhotu Ram from the ministry. Chaffing under the change, Chhotu Ram assumed the role of the opposition leader in the Council under the guidance of Fazl-i-Hussain, who had also been shifted to the Governor's Executive Council in 1926 as a Revenue Member, and brought a motion of no-confidence against the ministry. But the motion was lost miserably.

94 Tribune, 4 Jan. 1927, p. 3.

95 Hailey Coll, 7 B: Hailey to E.B. Francis, 26 May 1925.

96 Linlithgow Coll, 112: see Report of Emerson, 16 Oct. 1936.

97 Hailey Coll, 36 B: see "Press cuttings", Tribune, 4 Jan. 1927; C & MG, 8 Jan. 1927; Leader, 10 Jan. 1927; Sunday Times, 27 Feb. 1927.

98 Ibid.; Muslim out look, 5 Mar. 1927.

99 Hailey Coll, 10 A: Chhotu Ram to Hailey, 24 Jan. 1927.

100 Ibid., Hailey to Chhotu Ram, 31 Jan. 1927.

101 Hailey Coll, 36 B: "Press cuttings", Sunday Times, 27 Feb. 1927 and Tribune, 2 Mar. 1927.

Moreover, by attacking Hailey's ministry, Chhotu Ram lost the
¹⁰²
 Governor's sympathy altogether.

Despite his dislike of Chhotu Ram even Hailey was unable to stop the growing importance and political stature of Chhotu Ram. By selecting him as a minister in September 1924 as soon as he entered the Council Hailey had unwittingly provided him with a spring-board to fame and popularity. Although he remained a minister only for 2½ years and could not come back as a minister for more than 10 years, the fact that he was a likely candidate for ministership acted in his favour and helped him emerge as the undisputed leader of the 'Jats' of Rohtak district and the 'Hindu agriculturists' of Punjab.

So far as the Muslim dominated Unionist Party was concerned, Chhotu Ram, despite the greatly diminished support which he offered to them after 1926 elections, was still valuable enough to be accommodated in different party posts. In January 1926, Chhotu Ram was elected as the leader of the Unionist Party; a position which he retained till October 1936.¹⁰³ Although the real head continued to be Fazl-i-Hussain, Chhotu Ram's nominal leadership gave to the overwhelmingly Muslim-dominated Unionist Party the image of a non-communal body.¹⁰⁴ He also headed the Government Select Committee to give evidence before the Simon Commission in 1928. It was at Fazl-i-Hussain's insistence that Chhotu Ram was included in the committee. But Hailey showed his resentment by giving the Unionist Party three

102 Ibid.

103 Tribune, 7 Mar. 1937, p. 3.

104 This was pointed out in a Secret Report of the Director of Intelligence Bureau, 14 May 1936. See IOR: L/P & J/8/690, 1942.

members instead of four, as he had earlier intended, because of the Unionist Muslims' "clinging to Hindu Chhotu Ram"¹⁰⁵.

In 1929 Chhotu Ram was nominated a member of the Punjab Reforms Committee appointed to make recommendations on the distribution of seats and formation of constituencies and the problem of franchise in Punjab.¹⁰⁶ In the years 1928, 1930, and 1931, Chhotu Ram was also a nominated member of the panel of Chairmen of the Legislative Council and a member of the Standing Committee on Finance.¹⁰⁷ But all this did not bring Chhotu Ram the much coveted ministership. Although he was the leader of the Unionist Party in Punjab he was passed over for ministership on many occasions. The reason for this, in the opinion of Emerson was:¹⁰⁸

Chhotu Ram could be a minister only in place of a Muslim and with the consent of the Muslim Community, or at any rate with the consent of Unionist Party, which is practically the Muslim party. The Muslims have not been able to pull the interests of party above communal considerations, and as a result their leader has not been for some years able to obtain office.

There is obvious truth in the above statement as the Muslims of the Unionist Party were hardly ever united. But it may be emphasised that Fazl-i-Hussain repeatedly wrote that he considered Chhotu Ram as deserving of a ministerial post and also showed his disappointment when Chhotu Ram was by-passed in 1930.¹⁰⁹ Fazl-i-Hussain held very high opinion of Chhotu Ram's capability and wrote in October 1935 that in case of his (Fazl-i-Hussain's) forming the

105 Hailey Coll, 12 B: Report to Irwin, 12 May 1928.

106 GI: Reforms Office, F. No. 82/33, R & KW, 1933, see "Punjab Delimitation Report", proposals of Chhotu Ram, pp. 44-51.

107 PLCD, III, 28 Nov. 1928, p. 48; XXVII, 24 Oct. 1930, p. 2; XX, 26 Nov. 1931, p. 31.

108 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Viceroy, 16 Oct. 1936.

109 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll (MSS Eur E. 352), 6: Diary, 14 Oct. 1930, 28 Oct. 1930, 22 May 1932.

ministry under the Reforms it would not be without Chhotu Ram.¹¹⁰
 Fazl-i-Hussain also made it a point to profusely praise Chhotu Ram
 at public functions whenever an occasion arose.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, this neglect of Chhotu Ram gave the urban
 communal Hindus, who "bittingly disliked" him, the opportunity of
 "jeering" at him.¹¹² In 1930 elections, the number of Chhotu Ram's
 rural Hindu followers from the south-east Punjab had considerably
 increased, and they had begun to urge that if the Unionist Party was
 keen on their support they should "accomodate" their leader.¹¹³ By
 1936 the position of Chhotu Ram had become very embarrassing, and
 he had started to feel the need to clarify his position.¹¹⁴ He there-
 fore staked his claim to the presidentship of the Legislative Council
 which fell vacant in 1936 owing to the appointment of Shahub-ud-din
 as a minister in place of Fazl-i-Hussain.¹¹⁵

It had been a risk, though a calculated one, for Chhotu Ram
 to force the hands of the Muslim members of his party in the Punjab
 Council who had not been able to put the interests of the party
 above their 'communal considerations'. But Chhotu Ram, who knew
 of his unpopularity with the 'urban Hindus', was still willing to
 take a chance with the Muslim majority in the Council. Commenting
 on his unpopularity, E.H. Lincoln had said in 1933:¹¹⁶

He (Chhotu Ram) will never represent the Hindus in the
 Council unless the Muslim party throws him over entirely
 and he turns a complete somersault.

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- 110 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 25: Diary, 19 Oct. 1935.
 111 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 26: Speech, 1936.
 112 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 16 Oct. 1936.
 113 Ibid.
 114 Ibid.
 115 Ibid.
 116 HO Notes, DC Rohtak, 3 April 1933, op.cit.

It is perhaps with this in mind and in view of the overtures from 'urban Hindus' made from time to time,¹¹⁷ that Chhotu Ram decided to call matters to a head. A shrewd judge of the political situation Chhotu Ram realised, as did some of the other Muslim members of the Unionist Party such as Nawab Muzafar Khan, that the trend of politics as indicated by the Simon Commission in its Report of 1929-30 was going to make some Hindu support to the Muslim majority essential for its very existence in power. Nawab Muzafar Khan had written in 1930 the following in a secret note to the home secretariat:¹¹⁸

So far as the Muslims are concerned the position has become worse than before. Uptil now the Muslim majority in the Punjab had been maintained with the help of official votes. If the Simon suggestions are followed and the official element removed the present strength of Muslims will be gone and they will be at the mercy of non-Muslims.... what an average Muslim feels is that Muslims have been placed at the mercy of Hindus.

The consequent India Act of 1935 incorporating certain changes in the constitution lent credence to the above observation. By 1936,¹¹⁹ even the Governor of Punjab saw it fit to comment in the same vein:

The Unionist Party is the largest single party but is not sufficiently strong to out-vote all other non-officials if the latter combine.

This reality had also been recognised by the "more intelligent among Muslims"¹²⁰. The support of Chhotu Ram and his followers had become essential and far more important under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy than it had been under the Reformed Council. It was also felt that it was unlikely that the Unionist Muslims, divided into factions due to personal jealousies and intrigues, would ever

117 See below, p. 251.

118 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 346/30, 1930, p. 5.

119 Linlithgow Coll, 12: Emerson to Linlithgow, 11 Oct. 1936.

120 Ibid., Emerson to Linlithgow, 16 Oct. 1936.

succeed in coming together.¹²¹ In fact, there had always been the danger that because of factional struggle among the Unionist Muslims the non-Muslim members of the party might get the leverage. Fazl-i-Hussain had therefore always advised his Unionist Muslim colleagues in Punjab that non-Muslims should be kept out of the factional trials of strength among the Unionist Muslims.¹²² Nevertheless, the deteriorating relationship among the Unionist Muslims had ended up by May 1936 in giving Chhotu Ram the much desired leverage. Chhotu Ram became one of the signatories of an important memorandum of reconciliation effected on 17 May 1937 between the two factions of Sikandar Hayat Khan and Shahub-ud-din.¹²³ The position accorded to Chhotu Ram in 1937 in this factional discord ultimately resulted in 1943 in his holding the balance between two warring factions of the Unionist Muslims and being solely responsible for keeping them together under the Premiership of Khizir Hayat Khan Tiwana.¹²⁴ The importance of the support of Chhotu Ram's group to the Unionist Muslims also grew as there was hardly any support available from other political quarters. The 'urban Hindus' could not be depended upon. They were, by and large, either sympathetic towards the Congress or too openly communal to throw in their lot with the Muslim Unionists. Besides, ideologically they had been projected as the enemies of ruralites for all these years. Relations with the Sikhs had been seriously spoilt over the Shahid Ganj dispute. In October 1936 it seemed unlikely that the 'Sikhs' would join the

121 Ibid. Also, for factional fights in the Unionist Party. see letters of Fazl-i-Hussain in Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 12: to Sikandar Hayat Khan and Firoz Khan Noon, 13 Oct. 1930; 11: to Chhotu Ram, 13 Oct. 1930; and 12: to Firoze Khan Noon, 7 Mar. 1931.

122 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 12: Fazl-i-Hussain to Sikandar Hayat Khan and Firoze Khan Noon, 2 Oct. 1930.

123 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 15: Shahub-ud-din to Fazl-i-Hussain, 17 May 1936.

124 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 17 Mar. 1943.

Unionist Party although it was speculated that some may support a coalition ministry.¹²⁵ In view of all this, the dependence of the Unionist Muslims on the rural Hindu group of Chhotu Ram grew and specially so because Chhotu Ram had been consistently loyal to the Unionist Party, and his followers had joined this party at his command.¹²⁶ Chhotu Ram's attempt to contest the election of the President of the Legislative Council in 1936 was, therefore, a reflection of the increased importance of the Rural Hindu Bloc led by him in the reigning political alignments of Punjab.

In view of his newly gained importance as the leader of Rural Hindu Bloc, Sikandar Hayat Khan made a special attempt, and with a great deal of manouvering among the Unionist Muslims succeeded, to get their support for Chhotu Ram.¹²⁷ With every member present and voting Chhotu Ram was elected by a very large majority.¹²⁸ The victory of Chhotu Ram also established the importance of his support and that of his group of Hindu ruralites to the Unionist Muslims. The victory, in the opinion of the Punjab Governor, finally destroyed any chance of the rural Hindu following of Chhotu Ram breaking away from him.¹²⁹ Such a possibility had obviously existed and had unmistakably been a potential threat to Sikandar Hayat Khan, thus compelling him to manouver things on behalf of Chhotu Ram. Politically the Unionist Party stood to gain as, by its own admission, Chhotu Ram's position in the Council could be utilised to gain the support of the general rural constituencies.¹³⁰

125 Linlithgow Coll, 12: Emerson to Linlithgow, 10 Oct. 1936.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 16 Nov. 1936.

129 Ibid.

130 C & MG, 23 Oct. 1936, p. 7.

It also finally reasserted the non-communal nature of the party.

By the time of the implementation of the Provincial Autonomy in Punjab, Fazl-i-Hussain and Chhotu Ram were the "acknowledged leaders" of the Unionist Party.¹³¹ In fact, the support of Chhotu Ram and his group proved crucial to the success of Unionist Party in the elections to the first Punjab Assembly. Fazl-i-Hussain died in July 1936 and the elections of 1937 were managed by Chhotu Ram. The consequent success of the Unionist Party was a personal success for him.¹³² ✓ For this success Chhotu Ram was knighted in 1937. The Unionists captured 90 out of a total of 179 seats in the Punjab Assembly.¹³³ In the Ambala division the hold of Unionists was considered so complete that in the opinion of Sri Ram Sharma, a prominent Congressite, "no one could dare stand from rural constituencies in the Haryana region".¹³⁴ In the fourteen years preceding 1937 Chhotu Ram had consolidated his own position in his constituency to such an extent that "no one was willing to stand on Congress ticket from Rohtak".¹³⁵ Consequently, the Congress, the main opposition party in the south-eastern Punjab, was noticeably unsuccessful in the rural constituencies of this region.¹³⁶ The Congress was able to win only one rural seat in the Ambala division out of the five which it had contested.¹³⁷ It however was able to capture both the urban seats of this division.¹³⁸ The Unionists headed by Chhotu Ram

131 Lala Firoze Chand, Oral History Transcript No. S.105 (Cambridge), 17 Sept. 1974, p. 34.

132 The Indian Year Book, 1940-41, p. 988; PLAD, I, 2 July 1937, p. 500; XVII, 8 April 1941, p. 402.

133 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/2/1937, Feb. 1937.

134 Sri Ram Sharma, Oral History Transcript, (NMML), No. 191 (Hindi) p. 61.

135 Ibid.

136 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/2/1937, Feb. 1937.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

captured seven rural seats in the division out of a total of eight.¹³⁹ The British officials were jubilant at the failure of the Congress in the rural constituencies of south-eastern Punjab which bordered on the obviously troublesome United Provinces; and Chhotu Ram was given full credit for this.¹⁴⁰ In the words of Emerson: "The influence of Rao Bahadur Chhotu Ram and the organization which he has been building up for years were the decisive factors".¹⁴¹ Chhotu Ram was also given credit for forcing the Congress to remain exclusively urban Hindu in complexion.¹⁴² Apart from this Chhotu Ram also supplied to the predominantly Muslim and big landlord-ridden Unionist Party the massive following of the comparatively 'small landowners' of the Haryana region, thereby giving it, superficially at least, a wider social base than it could ever hope to acquire on its own. It is significant to note here that in the widely differing landholding structure of Punjab the upper stratum of the peasantry or the 'rich landowners', the followers of Chhotu Ram in this region, were but 'petty landowners' as compared to the really 'big landowners' of those districts of Punjab from where the predominantly landlord Muslim followers of the Unionist Party were drawn.

Chhotu Ram having proved his worth both to the Unionist Muslims and to the British was now a clear choice for a ministerial post which had been denied to him for so long. He was openly tipped for ministership by the newspapers.¹⁴³ The Governor of Punjab had also written just before the elections that "Chhotu Ram was the most

139 Ibid.

140 Linlithgow Coll, 87: Emerson to Linlithgow, 19 Feb. 1937.

141 Ibid.

142 C & MG, 18 Feb. 1937, p. 2, see editorial, "The Punjab Lead".

143 C & MG, 22 Jan. 1937, p. 1.

outstanding rural candidate for ministership"¹⁴⁴. Chhotu Ram was consequently made the Minister of Development in 1937, a post which he held till 1941. In 1941, he was made the Minister of Revenue; he continued in this office till his death in 1945.

In the cabinet Chhotu Ram was ranked number two, next to the Premier.¹⁴⁵ Chhotu Ram in fact informed the Punjab Governor that Sikandar Hayat Khan had chosen him (Chhotu Ram) to be his (Sikandar's) successor.¹⁴⁶ However, after the death of Sikandar Hayat Khan in December 1942 Chhotu Ram declined to contest for the leadership.¹⁴⁷ He was fully aware that whatever his political importance to the Unionist Muslims the communal situation in Punjab would not let any one except a Muslim hold the office of the Premier for any length of time.¹⁴⁸ Subsequently in January 1943 the choice of the Premier fell on Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana. Nevertheless it speaks volumes for the strength and influence of Chhotu Ram that even the Viceroy expected "pressure" on behalf of Chhotu Ram in this matter.¹⁴⁹

Chhotu Ram had emerged, since the highly successful result of 1937 elections, as the blue-eyed boy of the highest British bureaucrats not only in Punjab but also at the all India level. Whatever may have been the opinion of the officials of Rohtak district, under the Provincial Autonomy, no official could find

¹⁴⁴ Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 16 Oct. 1936.

¹⁴⁵ Linlithgow Coll, 91: Glancy to Linlithgow, 5 Feb. 1942.

¹⁴⁶ Linlithgow Coll, 92: Glancy to Linlithgow, 2 Jan. 1943.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Also see 'Note on the Punjab Ministers', 21 July 1943. Even C & MG speculated upon Chhotu Ram's chances of becoming the Premier. See, 29 Dec. 1942, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Linlithgow to Glancy, 1 Jan. 1943.

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any fault with Chhotu Ram now. His prestige among official circles rose higher every year. The periodic reports of Punjab Governor to the Viceroy regarding Punjab ministers and notes on other matters relating to the province stand a testimony to the high esteem in which Chhotu Ram was held by the official-world and specially by the two Viceroys, Linlithgow and Wavell. ¹⁵¹ While Sikandar Hayat Khan was alive, Chhotu Ram was ranked above him in all respects and also above the next Premier, Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, who in any case was not considered to be of the same calibre as Sikandar Hayat Khan. ¹⁵² Glancy, for example, wrote to ¹⁵³ Linlithgow in January 1942:

Sir Chhotu Ram is made of sterner stuff than his leader (Sir Sikandar). He still pursues his ideals persistently and often passionately. But though his outlook is the same as ever, he has been of late circumspect in his public utterances. He is an effective and hard working minister of marked capacity whose instinct is to ride straight at his fences, whatever their dimensions.

This view was fully endorsed by Linlithgow. In 1943, at the time of filling up the vacancy in the Executive Council, the highest

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- 150 In the days when appointment of the ministers depended a great deal upon the good opinion of the dist. officials, Chhotu Ram's appointment was the only exception. See B. Tyabji, "Civil Services", Statesman (Delhi, daily), 31 Dec. 1977, p. 8. Chhotu Ram's open and vocal contempt for the dist. administrators was testified to by Badr-ud-Din Tyabji, Interview, 16 Aug. 1979 and by J.M. Shrinagesh, Interview, 16 Aug. 1979.
- 151 For details see Linlithgow Coll, 86: 'Notes on Punjab Ministers', 2 July 1938; 88: 'Note on Punjab Ministers', 5 Jan. 1939; Craik to Linlithgow, 27 Jan. 1939; 90: Glancy to Linlithgow, 26 June 1941; "Note on Punjab Ministers", 8 July 1941; 91: Craik to Linlithgow, 11 Jan. 1942; 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 11 Mar. 1943; 92: Glancy to Linlithgow, 13 Mar. 1943; Linlithgow to Glancy, 17 Mar. 1943; also "Note on Punjab Ministers", 21 July 1943. For Wavell's opinion of Chhotu Ram, see Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal, ed. by Penderal Moon (London 1973), p. 51.
- 152 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 1 Jan. 1943.
- 153 Linlithgow Coll, 91: "Note on Punjab Ministers", 11 Jan. 1942.

office open to an Indian right uptill independence, the Viceroy showed his marked preference for Chhotu Ram. He wrote to the Governor on 2 March 1943, that he would "very much like to get one of those tough Punjabees like Chhotu Ram"¹⁵⁴. A few days later he again added: "I have a high opinion of Chhotu Ram's ability and courage and I dare say he would make a very good member"¹⁵⁵. Glancy, confirming this opinion of the Viceroy, wrote back:¹⁵⁶

In point of ability, application and the courage of expressing his opinion, I think Sir Chhotu Ram is admirably fitted to be a member.

However, Chhotu Ram was not appointed to the Viceroy's Council. The reasons reveal the importance of Chhotu Ram as the leader of the Rural Hindu Bloc in the Assembly and the value of his actual physical presence in the Punjab ministry for its continuation in office. Both the Viceroy and the Governor declared Chhotu Ram to be "indispensable" to the newly formed ministry of Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana and his withdrawal from the cabinet at that juncture was seen to be "dangerous" to the ministry.¹⁵⁷ He was deemed to be "one man who was keeping the ministry together".¹⁵⁸

The Punjab Premier, Sikandar Hayat Khan, also acknowledged that Chhotu Ram's support through his group of Hindu ruralites was essential for the very existence of his ministry. He firmly resisted Jinnah's pressure to merge the Unionist Party with the Muslim League and refused to hail the catchword of "Pakistan" in March 1941, even though such a step left him in a minority of one.¹⁵⁹

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- 154 Linlithgow Coll, 12: Linlithgow to Amery, 2 Mar. 1943.
 155 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 13 Mar. 1943.
 156 Ibid. Also letter, 11 Mar. 1943 and 17 Mar. 1943. Also see Glancy to Linlithgow, 13 Mar. 1943.
 157 Ibid., 13 Mar. 1943.
 158 Ibid., Linlithgow to Glancy, 17 Mar. 1943.
 159 Linlithgow Coll, 90: Craik to Linlithgow, 4 Mar. 1941.

The acceptance of such a proposal, in his opinion, would have brought about a split between himself and his non-Muslim supporters, i.e., the Khalsa National Party and "the most important Hindu rural group led by Sir Chhotu Ram"¹⁶⁰. Without their support, he contended, his party could not command a majority in the assembly or hope to secure a majority in the next general elections.¹⁶¹ Linlithgow also felt that a walk out by Chhotu Ram and his rural Hindu group together with the 'Sikhs' on the question of a Muslim League government in Punjab would have meant the end of an effective ministerial government in Punjab.¹⁶² The political situation was, therefore, safe only so long as there was no merger of the Muslim League and the Unionist Party. Chhotu Ram, who was obviously "upset" by the Sikandar-Jinnah pact,¹⁶³ nevertheless put up a spirited defence of Sikandar Hayat Khan in public and in a press statement declared that the Unionist Party was "unaltered" by the pact.¹⁶⁴ He ignored the possible inconsistencies in Sikandar Hayat Khan's attitude and made a united cause with him out of his fear of the danger from the Congress just as certain Sikhs under the guidance of Sunder Singh Majithia had done.¹⁶⁵

160 Ibid.

161 Ibid. A.H. Batalvi holds the "threat" of Chhotu Ram and his group of eight associates going out of the Unionist Party as the only reason why Sikandar did not form a Muslim League ministry in Punjab, despite explicit agreement in the Sikandar-Jinnah Pact. A.H. Batalvi, Interview, 9 Dec. 1978. Also see his Iqbal ke Akhri do Saal (Lahore 1961), third edition (Urdu), pp. 6-8.

162 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 21 July 1943.

163 Linlithgow Coll, 113: Emerson to Linlithgow, 29 Oct. 1937, p. 12.

164 See Chhotu Ram's statement, Tribune, 18 Oct. 1937, p. 1. Also for similar statements see JG, 20 Oct. 1937, pp. 4-5; 27 Oct. 1937, p. 7. Also see C & MG, 19 Oct. 1937, p. 6.

165 Zetland Coll, MSS Eur D.609, Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 Oct. 1937.

It is true that help of both the Hindu Rural Bloc of Chhotu Ram and the Khalsa Sikhs under Sunder Singh Majithia was essential for the continuation of the ministry; but it may be noted that whereas Chhotu Ram and his group of rural Hindus were Unionists, the Sikh supporters of the Khalsa National Party were a different political party altogether. In fact the only political party of the Sikhs which could claim to be a 'Rural Party' was the Akali Dal which was anti-Unionist and in coalition with the Indian National Congress. Despite the Sikandar-Baldev Singh Pact of June 1942, the British officials remained very sceptical of the 'Sikh' support to the ministry.¹⁶⁶ With the 'Sikhs' so "utterly unreliable" and willing to bargain with any political party, whether the Unionists or the Congress or the British Government, whoever offered them the best terms,¹⁶⁷ the importance of a steadfast and loyal group like that of Chhotu Ram increased. The continued presence of Chhotu Ram and his Rural Hindu Bloc alone gave some viability to the claims of the Unionist Party, an overwhelmingly Muslim semi-communal party, of being a 'non-communal zamindar party'. It was small wonder, therefore, that Sikandar Hayat Khan took care to emphasise publicly that the division of 'zamindar and non-zamindar', i.e., agriculturist and non-agriculturist, had no communal basis precisely because its existence was first prominently noticed and accepted in the Hindu 'dominated' south-eastern Punjab, particularly Rohtak district, and not in its Muslim 'dominated' areas.¹⁶⁸

166 IOR/L/P & J/8/510, 1942, Linlithgow to Amery, 15 June 1942.

167 IOR:L/P & J/6/1995, 1930, Emerson to H. Haig, Secretary to the Govt. of India, Home dept. New Delhi, 3 Jan. 1930. An ex-Punjab civilian similarly maintained that "Sikhs" were indeed considered "untrustworthy people". A.A. Williams, interview, 8 Jan. 1979.

168 JG, 12 Oct. 1938, see speech of Sikandar Hayat Khan delivered at Lyallpur, p. 7. Also another speech of Sikandar delivered at Rewari in Tribune, 8 Oct. 1938, p. 9. Chhotu Ram was called "father of zamindar movement" and Rohtak as the "birth place of zamindar movement".

The value of Chhotu Ram and his group to the Muslim Unionists and the British colonial government became even clearer under Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana, the second Premier of Punjab. The Punjab ministry was in 1943-44 facing a crisis of great magnitude. Jinnah, who had laid low during the time of Sikandar Hayat Khan, made a determined bid now to turn the Unionist label of the Punjab ministry into a Muslim League one. By January 1943, even Chhotu Ram privately agreed that the party had been living on its "past prestige"¹⁶⁹. Khizar, a weaker man than Sikandar and wavering in his attitude, could not be relied upon by the British administration to withstand Jinnah.¹⁷⁰ Despondent under his onslaughts, Khizar very often felt that he was fighting a losing battle.¹⁷¹ By May 1944 Chhotu Ram opined that the Premier was "surrounded on all sides by weak persons" and was being "plied by so many people with weak advice"¹⁷². Except for Chhotu Ram, Khizar's ministers were considered unreliable and without any political backing.¹⁷³ The British administrators were greatly apprehensive of the disruption of the Unionist Party, as it would have undermined their war efforts.¹⁷⁴ This "disaster" was to be

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- 169 Appendix IX, Chhotu Ram to A. Hussain, 4 Jan. 1943.
 170 IOR:L/P & J/8/662, 1945, Wavell to Amery, 16 May 1944.
 171 IOR:L/FO/10/21, 1944, Wavell to Amery, 18 April 1944.
 172 See Appendix IX, X. Chhotu Ram, realising the critical political situation in Punjab, attempted to call Azim Hussain, ICS, from Delhi to Punjab to strengthen the resistance to Jinnah. Azim Hussain, interview, 10 Nov. 1978.
 173 Regarding the ministers during the Unionist and Muslim League controversy, Glancy wrote to the Viceroy in late 1943 that Manohar Lal "had no political backing and therefore was of no consequence"; Mian Abdul Ghye was "distinctly nervous when the trouble was at its worst"; Nawab Jamal Khan was "wavering in his loyalty to the Premier"; Nawab Ashraf Hussain Quereshi was "too new" and was related through marriage to Shaukat; lastly Baldev Singh was described as a kind of "political opportunist", who was "inclined to side against Jinnah as long as the line of action did not amount to political suicide". See IOR:L/P & J/5472, 1945, Glancy's note on the Punjab ministers, 1943.
 174 IOR:L/P & J/8/662, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 14 April 1944. Also PRO:CAB, F. No. 91/1, 1942, Secret Proceedings of the War Cabinet, 3 Mar. 1942.

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averted at any cost. The reason for this fear was clearly penned down by Wavell in a private letter to Amery on 18 April 1944:¹⁷⁶

A Muslim League government would be bitterly opposed by Chhotu Ram an influential rural Hindu element and probably by some of the Muslims.

This observation was based on the report of the Punjab officials sent to the War Cabinet which, after giving certain reasons, firmly concluded that the 'Hindu Jats' would remain attached to Punjab only so long as the Unionist Government survived.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, there was no question of Chhotu Ram joining Jinnah on any ground as any acceptance in any form, of Jinnah's communal approach would have proved suicidal for Chhotu Ram in relation to his base in the predominantly 'rural Hindu' and 'Jat electorate' of the south-east Punjab. In any such realignment the 'Hindu communal' parties which had always campaigned on communal grounds, assuredly stood to gain at his expense. Therefore, Chhotu Ram's inevitable opposition to a Muslim League government was bound to weaken the solidarity of Punjab and hence undermine the British war efforts.

It is in this situation, so crucial to the British in India, that Chhotu Ram seemed to have played the key role, which is best described in Glancy's report to the Viceroy:¹⁷⁸

Throughout Jinnah's campaign he (Chhotu Ram) has been a most valuable and uncompromising supporter of the Unionist cause. He has played the role of an indomitable sheep-dog, padding steadfastly round the flock with a baleful eye and a bared fang for any straggler whom panic might dismay.

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- 175 IOR:L/P & J/8/662, 1945, Wavell to Glancy, 15 April 1944.
 176 Ibid., Wavell to Amery, 18 April 1944.
 177 PRO:CAB, F. No. 91/1, 1942, Secret Proceedings of the War Cabinet, 8 Mar. 1942.
 178 IOR:L/P & J/5472, 1945, Secret note on Chhotu Ram, Revenue Minister, 10 July 1944. Sir Penderal Moon also firmly held the opinion that Chhotu Ram was "an obstacle" to Jinnah in winning over the Unionist Muslims to his side. Interview, 2 Nov. 1978.

The battle has been welcome enough to one of his fiery composition.... It would certainly have been an interesting experience to have listened in at the interview when Jinnah endeavoured to persuade Chhotu that the Unionist label should be dropped; few of the Qaid-i-Azam's ventures can have been more futile or foredoomed to failure.

It may also be noted that Jinnah's talks with Chhotu Ram to get him to join as a representative of his group in a Muslim League ministry ¹⁷⁹ does highlight Chhotu Ram's importance in the province. Jinnah openly vowed to "break Chhotu Ram's power in the Punjab" as he believed that Chhotu Ram alone was a hindrance to his political designs in Punjab. He in fact accused Chhotu Ram of "weakening the ¹⁸⁰ building force of Islam" through the Jat Mahasabha. ¹⁸¹

Although Chhotu Ram's role in a primarily 'Mohammadan' quarrel was understandably and essentially limited, it is interesting to note that the failure of Jinnah to have his way in Punjab was put down to "Khizar's subservience to Chhotu Ram" and the fact that "Khizar was ¹⁸² coming too much under the control of Chhotu Ram". Equally interesting is the fact that Jinnah's public receptions in Punjab invariably ended with the slogans of "Qaid-i-Azam Zindabad" and "Chhotu Ram ¹⁸³ Murdabad". The contemporary press also, during the entire ministerial crisis of 1943-44, gave importance mainly to Chhotu Ram; his attitude and agreement was considered essential to any future change ¹⁸⁴ of nomenclature and fate of the Unionist ministry.

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- 179 IOR/L/P & J/8/662, 1945, "The Punjab Ministry", 5 April 1944.
 180 Ibid., R.F. Mudie, Member, Executive Council of the Viceroy, to Jenkins, 14 April 1944.
 181 IOR:L/P & J/5472, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 10 July 1944. Also see Chhotu Ram's Presidential Address in the All India Jat Mahasabha, 8-9 April 1944 in M.N. Mitra, Indian Annual Register, I, Jan.-June 1943, pp. 291-2.
 182 IOR:L/P & J/5/221, 1944, Confidential Report from G. Conghlan (N.W.F. Province) to Wavell, 23 May 1944.
 183 IOR:L/P & J/8/662, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 21 April 1944.
 184 C & MG, 12 July 1943, p. 2; 16 July 1943, p. 6; 20 June 1943, p. 4; 23 June 1943, p. 2; 6 Aug. 1943, p. 3. Also see Shankar's cartoon in Hindustan Times, 28 April 1944, p. 3, in Appendix XI.

Even otherwise Chhotu Ram played a very important role in the field of non-Muslim war recruitment to the British Indian army. The south-eastern Punjab, which had supplied a large number of recruits in the World War I, was once again needed to perform a similar service during the World War II. In this case Chhotu Ram's influence among the 'martial' classes of south-eastern Punjab and specially among the Jats of Rohtak district was going to prove decisive, specially in case the Unionist Government broke down for some reason. On this ground also the support of Chhotu Ram and his group of Hindu ruralites was more significant in the eyes of British officials than the support of any of the Sikh groups. Attitude of the 'Sikhs' had always remained rather disconcerting to the British since the Gurdwara agitation of the 1920s.¹⁸⁵ As early as 1925, the House of Commons made a reference to the "embittering relations" between the British and the "Military Sikhs".¹⁸⁶ The Khalsa National Party which was backing the British could not speak of much support for themselves.¹⁸⁷ The Akalis had pointedly refrained from endorsing the British stand during the World War II. The World War II did not bring the same large flow of volunteers from among the Sikhs as earlier,¹⁸⁸ despite several efforts at speeding up recruitment among

185 For details of the Anglo-Sikh relations see Stephen Oren, "The Sikhs, Congress and the Unionists in British Punjab, 1937-1945", Modern Asian Studies, 1974, VIII, pp. 397-418.

186 House of Commons Debates (Hansard), Vol. 186 (1924-25), 9 July 1925, pp. 668-9.

187 P. Moon, Divide and Quit (London 1961), p. 32.

188 There was considerable anxiety over the 'Sikh situation' as the number of desired recruits was difficult to obtain. One of the main reasons for this reluctance, according to some officials, was the feeling among the 'Sikhs' that if they went overseas their lands and villages would be seized by the Muslims who were "plotting" to seize power in Punjab. See IOR:L/FO/6/106 B, 1942, note by Major General Lockhart, 25 Feb. 1942.

189 them. It was noted in the secret proceedings of the War Cabinet
 190 in September 1943 that "the Sikhs are inclined to be truculent".
 For this reason, the south-eastern region of Punjab and recruitment
 from there came to be considered rather important; and Chhotu Ram's
 influence was considered decisive as he was the only leader who
 could command the following of his fellow castemen. His hold over
 this region had come to be considered so complete by 1937 because no
 other member of his group of rural Hindus could come anywhere near
 him in popularity, prestige and acceptability as a leader;¹⁹¹ so much
 so that the government was hard put to appoint Chhotu Ram's successor
 after his death. No one was considered outstanding enough and in
 fact officials feared the dissolution of the 'Jat group'.¹⁹² Tika Ram,
 his successor, fell far short of Chhotu Ram's capacity for work and
 forcefulness.¹⁹³ The by-election in Chhotu Ram's constituency was won
 by his nephew, Siri Chand with a "streaky past"; he was believed to
 have won the seat because of the "sheer popularity and prestige"
 which Chhotu Ram had commanded.¹⁹⁴ Some newspapers speculated about
 the future of the Unionist ministry as a result of Chhotu Ram's
 death.¹⁹⁵ The Governor himself considered Chhotu Ram's death a

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- 189 Forthcoming publication of IOL&R "Memoires of the District
 Officers", see A.A. Williams, Punjab ICS, 1937-1947.
- 190 PRO:CAB, F. No. 91/2, Sept. 1943.
- 191 The rural Hindu followers of Chhotu Ram, except for Ram
 Sarup (from North-Rohtak Rural Constituency), were all new
 men who had been elected to the Punjab Assembly for the
 first time in 1937. This also gave Chhotu Ram an edge over
 them inside the Assembly. He had been a member since 1924.
 See PLAD, I, 5 April 1937, pp. 1-6.
- 192 IOR:L/P & J/5/248, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 24 Jan. 1945.
- 193 IOR:L/P & J/5472, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 10 June 1945.
- 194 IOR:L/P & J/5/248, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 19 May 1945.
- 195 IOR:L/P & J/5/258, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 24 Jan. 1945.

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"calamity" and a "severe blow" to the Unionist Party. In fact, Glancy doubted for some time the ability of Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana to lead the Unionist Party after losing his chief lieutenant, Chhotu
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Ram.

The importance of Chhotu Ram in the political alignments of Punjab is also brought out in the repeated attempts made by the Hindu communal leaders to woo him away from the Unionist Party to their
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side. The first attempt had been made in 1926 by Gokal Chand Narang and a few other Hindu communal leaders who approached Chhotu Ram with the offer of a ministership. Again, in 1930, a political offer had been made; this time the presidentship of the Punjab Legislative Council was offered. In 1935, a joint Hindu-Sikh front of Joginder Singh, Master Tara Singh, Gokal Chand Narang, Raja Narendra Nath, and Sardar Mangal Singh, offered Chhotu Ram the leadership of their joint Hindu-Sikh front and the post of a minister. Once again in March 1936, Gokal Chand Narang tried to get all the Hindus and Sikhs under his banner, but Chhotu Ram would have nothing to
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do with this. Chhotu Ram rejected all these offers and remained consistently loyal to the Unionist Party. His universally known popularity with the Unionist Muslims of Punjab is therefore not a
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matter of surprise. Together they were able to keep the Congress at bay. Internally divided the Congress Party of Punjab did not know how to deal with Chhotu Ram whose presence had provided the most

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- 196 Ibid.
 197 IOR:L/P & J/5472, 1945, Glancy to Wavell, 10 June 1945.
 198 C & MG, 28 July 1936, p. 2. Also see "Leaves from a Unionist's Diary", an article by Ahmed Yar Khan Daultana, 6 Aug. 1936, p.2.
 199 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 25: Diary, 2 Mar. 1936. Also see JG, 24 Mar. 1937, p. 4; 7 April 1937, p. 3.
 200 K.L. Gauba, Oral History Transcript (NMML), No. 76, prt-II, p. 257. Also C & MG, 28 July 1936, p. 2; 6 Aug. 1936, p. 2.

essential and stabilising element in the pro-British Unionist ministry and whose personal popularity in the 'Hindu dominated' region of Punjab was growing every year at the cost of the Congress. In the opinion of a Punjab civilian, Chhotu Ram had the "unusual distinction of keeping rural Hindus in the eastern Punjab out of the Congress fold". He further destroyed the Congress hold over the "agricultural masses" of Punjab through his agrarian legislation. In fact, the Congressmen in Punjab were unable to deal with his frequent abusive tirade against the Congress and Congressmen, and often accused him of corrupting individual Congressmen, tarnishing their image and that of their party and its work, and successfully misleading the "masses" of Punjab. Even Jawaharlal Nehru was unable to devise any effective method to combat Chhotu Ram's continuing menace to the Congress except to recommend a social boycott. Chhotu Ram, therefore, as was accepted by the Congress, was one effective unsurmountable barrier to the growth of Congress in Punjab.

Chhotu Ram's pivotal role in the formation and continuation of the Unionist Government was again underlined when in 1943 the threatened dismissal of Chhotu Ram nearly brought down the Unionist ministry. This crisis occurred in June 1943 when Chhotu Ram, in view of the prevailing high prices, advised the landowners of Punjab, in a series of speeches delivered during his tour of the province, that

201 See above, pp. 238-40.

202 James Penny Papers, MSS Eur D.823/1, p. 175.

203 For details see below, chapter IX, pp. 380-3.

204 AICC Papers, F. No. PL-10, 1937-39, Satyapal, President Punjab Congress Committee to Subhash Chander Bose, 8 Dec. 1938, pp. 1-9.

205 Ibid., Jawaharlal Nehru to Gopi Chand Bhargava, 1 Sept. 1937, pp. 77-78.

there being no possibility of import of Australian wheat they should withhold wheat from the mandis, not sell it at the controlled price, and hold out for a better and higher price. He was sternly pulled up by the Punjab Governor and made to issue a repudiation. However, again at the Food Conference in Delhi, Chhotu Ram once again demanded a very high price for the Punjab wheat, and consequently came under heavy attack. British administrators, who had been supporting and abetting the landowners of Punjab, were now frightened of this menace of food shortages and high prices. They turned around and accused the Punjab ministers of "conniving" at higher prices for wheat because they were all landowners. Equally suddenly, "the starving peasants" of Bengal became more important and Punjab ministers were dubbed as "black marketeers". Chhotu Ram came under specially virulent attack by the British officials. The Viceroy, under heavy pressure from the cabinet and public opinion in England, felt it necessary to threaten Chhotu Ram with dismissal even if it meant the fall of the ministry or imposition of section 93 in Punjab. Glancy, however, explained the persistent posture of Chhotu Ram on the question by the facts that the rate of wheat in other states was much higher than in Punjab and that all states, e.g., the United

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- 206 Linlithgow Coll, 81: Linlithgow to Glancy, 16 June 1943; Glancy to Linlithgow, 18 June 1943; cuttings of the Tribune, 9 June 1943 and the Milap, 10 June 1943. Also see below, p.
- 207 Linlithgow Coll, 92: see Chhotu Ram's repudiation in Inquilab, pp. 41-42. Also Glancy to Linlithgow, 18 June 1943.
- 208 Ibid., Glancy to Linlithgow, 29 July 1943.
- 209 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 8/5/43, May 1943. Also C & MG, 15 Jan. 1943, p. 3.
- 210 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 27 Sept. 1943.
- 211 For details see below chapter VIII, p. 283.
- 212 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 19 June 1943, 27 Sept. 1943.

Provinces and even Bengal, had indeed made huge profits out of the sale or export and import of agricultural commodities in their provinces.²¹³ He also pointed out that if this discrepancy continued the Punjab grower will not refrain from "embarassing" the ministry and the ministry in turn would make things awkward for the colonial government.²¹⁴ The food crisis was a definite indication to the fact that by now even leaders like Chhotu Ram, who had been generally cooperating with the colonial government, wanted to exact a price for their cooperation. Consequently, if their own interests or the interests of their constituents were served by inflation they would encourage it. The crisis blew over. The Punjab Unionist ministry survived the only serious crisis brought about by Chhotu Ram's insistence on keeping in the forefront the interests of the big landowners of Punjab. In a conflict between the interests of big landowners and the colonial government it was clear whose interests were to prevail but not without a fight from the representatives of those interests such as Chhotu Ram. Here, it may also be noted that the other Unionist ministers also held the same view as Chhotu Ram, but once again it was Chhotu Ram who was held by the officials to be the most "uncompromising" and "fanatical" about prices, and the "chief offender" in the entire food crisis.²¹⁵

The successful working of the Provincial Autonomy in Punjab²¹⁶ held a pride of place in the eyes of British authorities in India.

213 Ibid., Glancy to Linlithgow, 30 Sept. 1943.

214 Ibid.

215 IOR:L/P & J/5/246, 1943, Glancy to Wavell, 30 Oct. 1943; IOR/PO/10/21, 1944, Wavell to Amery, 16 Nov. 1943 and Amery to Wavell, 2 Dec. 1943; IOR:L/P & J/5/247, 1944, Glancy to Wavell, 6 April 1944. In fact the Viceroy, fully aware of Chhotu Ram's "fanatical views", wanted to keep him out of the Food Conference, see IOR:L/P & J/10/21, 1944, 27 Sept. 1944.

216 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 17 Aug. 1943.

Punjab was held up as an ideal case province where constitutional advance in the parliamentary form of government towards realisation of the goal of self government according to the colonial model was to be successfully demonstrated not only to the whole of India but to Britain as well as the rest of the world.²¹⁷ Punjab's massive contribution to the war effort and its continuation in office when the Congress ministries had tendered resignations in 1939 in other provinces of India justified the opinion expressed by Linlithgow in August 1943 that Punjab Government had been "much the most successful parliamentary government in India".²¹⁸ The British colonial government was certainly anxious that the Punjab ministry should not fall. The two occasions, i.e., Sikandar-Jinnah Pact and the food crises of 1943, when the ministry could have fallen were closely associated with Chhotu Ram and the possible withdrawal of his support to the ministry. This confirms the importance of Chhotu Ram who as the leader of the Hindu Unionist members of the Punjab Assembly contributed the required basic indispensable element to the very life and existence of the 'Muslim dominated' Unionist ministry in Punjab. Even the Haryana Tilak, the arch enemy of Chhotu Ram, acknowledged in its editorial of 22 September 1939 what was²¹⁹ obviously common feeling and common knowledge among the people:

The Unionist Government cannot remain in power without the support of south-east Punjab or the Haryana region. Haryana's eight to twelve members are with Chhotu Ram who is with the Unionist Government. If their support is removed the Government will collapse.

217 C & MG, see editorial, 7 April 1937, 8 April 1937.

218 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 17 Aug. 1943.

219 HT, 22 Sept. 1939, p. 4.

In Chhotu Ram the loyalist Muslims of the Unionist Party found a Hindu who would not re-join the Congress or the Hindu communalists and who combined with them in forming a stable political party and a stable ministry. Apart from this, Chhotu Ram, as the most stabilising factor in the ministry in power in Punjab, also got the backing of the British authorities in India who for reasons of their own anxiously desired the successful working of the Provincial Autonomy in Punjab.

Chapter VIII

THE NATURE OF CHHOTU RAM'S IDEOLOGY AND PROPAGANDA

Chhotu Ram had realised quite early that his ideological position in Rohtak district, i.e., 'Jatism', was too narrow to prove serviceable in the whole of Punjab, although, numerically speaking, the Jats constituted in Chhotu Ram's estimate about 50 percent of all the agricultural castes in Punjab.¹ Chhotu Ram had also speculated for a time on enlarging his ideology of 'Jatism' in Rohtak to include a few more agricultural castes which could be termed as "Ajgr" consisting of Ahirs, Jats, Gujars and Rajputs.² This notion remained, however, at the realm of mere speculation and was soon dropped permanently in favour of the word zamindar, 'zamindar interests', and finally a 'zamindari party'. Even for this purpose, 'statutory casteism' created by the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 continued to be the basis. Chhotu Ram openly admitted that the 'zamindar' was constituted by caste alone and did not mean the actual tiller of soil. In 1933 he maintained:

I always mean by the word zamindar, a statutory zamindar. There are no other zamindars in existence.⁴

Again in 1937 Chhotu Ram asserted in the Punjab Assembly:

A man born in an agriculturist family even though he may have left his ancestral profession continues to be an agriculturist in mentality.

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- 1 JG, 18 Dec. 1916, p. 2. The population of Jats in the whole of Punjab in 1921 was 4,411,129 out of a total of 10,447,000 recognised as "agricultural tribes". This made them 42.23 percent of the total agriculturists in Punjab. Figures calculated from Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, prt. II, p. 220.
 - 2 JG, 23 Jan. 1923, p. 6; 14 Mar. 1923, p. 7; 16 Sept. 1925, p. 2; 28 Oct. 1925, p. 2.
 - 3 PLCD, XXXII, 17 Mar. 1933, pp. 559-60. Chhotu Ram answers a query of Gokal Chand Narang.
 - 4 PLCD, I, 2 July 1937, p. 950.

Making 'zamindar interests' the basis of his ideology for the whole of Punjab, Chhotu Ram carried on a relentless war on their behalf through the press and platform as he had done for the 'Jats' of Rohtak district. All the demands made on behalf of Jats, beginning from places in government services to proportional representation at the Round Table Conference at the all-India level, were made simultaneously for the 'zamindars' of Punjab as well. The demand for a 'just share' for the 'zamindars' was carried on in the columns of the Jat Gazette and through questions and debates in the Legislative Council. Chhotu Ram claimed 56 percent share for the 'zamindars' (statutory agricultural tribes) in the whole of Punjab in all government services on the basis of the executive resolution of 1919, 80 percent on the basis of zamindar population, and 90 percent on the basis of the zamindars contribution to the

5 "The Share of Zamindars in Government Services", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 13 April 1927, p. 3. Also see 6 April 1927, p. 2; 20 April 1927, p. 2; 27 April 1927, p. 7; 25 May 1927, p. 1; 1 June 1927, p. 3; 8 June 1927, pp. 6, 7, 8; 29 June 1927, pp. 3, 7; 6 July 1927, p. 3; 31 Aug. 1927, pp. 3, 6; 3 Dec. 1928, pp. 5, 6; 16 Jan. 1929, p. 14; 23 Jan. 1929, p. 4; 20 Feb. 1929, p. 5; 13 Mar. 1929, p. 18; 3 April 1929, p. 5; 1 May 1929, pp. 4-5; 8 May 1929, pp. 6-7; 13 Nov. 1929, p. 5; 23 Nov. 1929, p. 2; 15 July 1931, p. 1; 22 July 1931, p. 2; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 3; 3 Mar. 1937, p. 3; 27 April 1938, p. 5; 22 June 1938, p. 4; 13 July 1938, p. 1; 8 Feb. 1939, p. 4; 20 Dec. 1939, p. 3. For criticism of Chhotu Ram's demands made for the 'zamindars', see HT, 13 Mar. 1928, p. 3; 20 Nov. 1928, p. 3; 25 Feb. 1930, p. 3; 19 Jan. 1932, p. 3; 8 April 1936, p. 1. Also see PLCD, XI, 5 Mar. 1928, pp. 893-4; 9 Mar. 1928, pp. 586-90; XII, 19 Mar. 1929, pp. 960-2, 1044-6; VII, Oct. 1932, p. 50; XXIII, 2 Mar. 1933, pp. 174-6, 559; 17 Mar. 1933, pp. 559-61, 570-1; 27 July 1933, pp. 1039-40; XXIV, 5 Mar. 1934, pp. 491, 493-4, 496; XXV, 20 Dec. 1934, pp. 1350-1, 1359; XXVI, 11 Mar. 1935, pp. 452-3; XXVIII, 20 Mar. 1936, p. 762.

6 PLCD, XI, 9 Mar. 1928, p. 586.

7 PLCD, XXIII, 2 Mar. 1933, pp. 174-5. Also "Non-Zamindars and the Unionist Party" an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 3 Feb. 1937, p. 1.

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government treasury. It may be repeated here that all the demands made by Chhotu Ram on behalf of the agriculturists were mainly for the Hindu agriculturists, although in the counting of percentage agriculturists of all religions were included.

In its essence, the basis of all these demands was the notion of agriculturists vs. non-agriculturists. In his belief in the principle of a division between agriculturists and non-agriculturists, Chhotu Ram went to the extent of suggesting that maintenance of such a division alone would bring salvation first in Punjab and then in the whole of India. His ultimate aim, he said, was to establish a 'zamindar government' in the centre, as in numerical terms the agriculturists comprised $\frac{2}{3}$ ths of the entire population of India. This ideological commitment to 'zamindar interests' found full public expression under the Provincial Autonomy when Chhotu Ram claimed that "Zamindar Raj" had been established in Punjab in which, he proudly declared, five out of six ministers were "Taksali zamindars" (pure). In public meetings in 1938 Chhotu Ram boasted:

Jo rasta mene bataya hai agar is per chalen to Punjab mein Zamindar Raj hamesha qayam rahega. (If you continue to follow the path indicated by myself there shall always be Zamindar Raj in Punjab).

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- 8 JG, 13 April 1927, pp. 3-4; 25 April 1927, p. 7; 29 June 1927, p. 7; 31 Aug. 1927, pp. 3-6; 3 April 1929, p. 5.
- 9 JG, 25 May 1927, p. 7.
- 10 JG, 7 Jan. 1931, p. 4.
- 11 PLAD, V, 21 Mar. 1940, p. 794. Also JG, 5 Jan. 1938, p. 4; 9 Feb. 1938, p. 4; 9 Mar. 1938, p. 4; 29 Mar. 1938, p. 8; 4 Jan. 1939, pp. 1, 8. Sikandar Hayat Khan similarly made claims for 'Zamindar Raj' in Punjab. See Sikandar Hayat Khan's speeches delivered at different places, cited in Gokal Chand Narang, op.cit., pp. 8-10.
- 12 Chhotu Ram's speech at Rohtak in JG, 5 Jan. 1938, p. 4. Also see his speech at Sonapat zamindar conference in JG, 9 Feb. 1938, p. 5. Chhotu Ram in his speech at Khanewal on 13 Dec. 1938 declared at a huge gathering of zamindars: "If zamindars would only keep awake they would hold political power in the province for all times to come". See Tribune, 15 Dec. 1938, p. 2.

An ideology based on 'zamindar interests' in Punjab had necessarily to assume the character of being non-communal as well; for the zamindars belonged to all religious complexions. Therefore, the category of zamindars of Chhotu Ram included statutory agriculturists of all castes, creeds and communities, thus giving an outwardly wider dimension to the 'zamindar ideology'. This non-communal basis of the Unionist Party, popularly called the 'Zamindar Party', was widely proclaimed and propagated by Chhotu Ram.¹³ Chhotu Ram repeatedly insisted that communalism had no place in his political creed. "I do not stand either for Hindu rights or for Muslim rights. My creed stands on the basis of common secular and economic interests",¹⁴ he declared in 1929 in the Punjab Council.

Whatever their approach in theory, in practice the Unionists could not rise above constitutional communalism. This is clear from the appeals and demands of the Unionist leaders themselves. Chhotu Ram's appeal to the British Government to do justice to the Hindu agriculturists in preference to the Muslim agriculturists or Sikh agriculturists was one clear indication of this. In fact, in such matters, Chhotu Ram seldom spoke on behalf of the Muslim or Sikh agriculturists. Other Unionist leaders like Fazl-i-Hussain also put forward loud claims for their own co-religionists.¹⁵ Chhotu Ram himself was, as late as April 1933, openly accusing Fazl-i-Hussain of being a communalist.¹⁶ But, by 1932, Chhotu Ram was giving open credit to the same man for having created a "non-communal zamindar party"

13 PLCD, XIV, 20 Sept. 1929, p. 240; XVIII, 4 Mar. 1931, p. 16. Also, Indian Statutory Commission, Oral Evidence, Punjab, II, see evidence of Chhotu Ram on 6 Nov. 1923, pp. 16-17. Also see Appendix VII.

14 PLCD, XII, 21 Mar. 1929, pp. 103-7.

15 For details see Punjab Politics by a "Punjabee" (Lahore 1938), the pamphlet was actually written by Fazl-i-Hussain.

16 JG, 4 April 1923, p. 4. Also see above chapter VII, pp. 222-3.

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amidst communal clashes. Chhotu Ram's own concept of what constituted communalism was no different from that of Fazl-i-Hussain. In 1935, in a tribute to Fazl-i-Hussain, Chhotu Ram made his own stand on communalism absolutely clear. He said:

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Sir Fazl-i-Hussain has been credited with pro-Muslim proclivities. I, for one, am prepared to admit that within limits Sir Fazl-i-Hussain was and probably still is pro-Muslim. But is not a Hindu pro-Hindu or a Sikh pro-Sikh or a European pro-European within the same or possibly even wider limits?

Similarly, although Chhotu Ram acclaimed the Unionist Party as the 'Zamindar Party' of Punjab he also had to acknowledge that the membership of Zamindar Party was not confined to the agriculturists alone, and that the Muslim non-agriculturists and Muslim urbanites were also included in it. Fazl-i-Hussain had never denied this inclusion of urbanites and non-agriculturists. This had necessitated use of another supplementary word. The word 'backward classes' was therefore often substituted for zamindar to be able to claim support of wider sections of society. These were designated as the "have-nots" of society who were included in the programme outlined by Fazl-i-Hussain at the time of the establishment of the party. Among backward classes were included all agriculturists, irrespective of their socio-economic status, all the untouchables, irrespective of their being non-agriculturists, nearly all Muslims, and in general all 'backward classes' whether urban or rural,

17 Chhotu Ram, Punjab National Unionist Party (Lahore 1932), p. 1.

18 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll., 24: see statement of Chhotu Ram in The Light, 1 April 1935.

19 Muslim non-agriculturists and urbanites mentioned by Chhotu Ram were: Sheikh Sir Abdul Qadir, Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, K.S. Din Mohommad, Sheikh Abdul Ghani, Sheikh Muhamad Sadiq, and Khawaja Muhamad Yusuf, *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

20 A. Hussain, Life of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain (Bombay 1946), pp. 152-7.

21 Punjab of Information Bureau, Five Years of Provincial Autonomy (Lahore 1942).

irrespective of their religion or caste.

The slogan of raising the 'backward classes' and 'backward areas' to the level of advanced classes was included by Chhotu Ram among the four basic principles of the Unionist Party.²² However, beyond bracketing the untouchables with the agriculturists and making verbal commitment to raise the lot of the 'backward classes' nothing was ever done in practice for them. On the question of extending the Alienation of Land Act to other backward classes, Chhotu Ram exposed himself. The often repeated demands of the untouchables to be included among the statutory agriculturists created by this act were repeatedly turned down by him. On the contrary, he advised them not to raise the question of any repeal or amendment of the act as this would evoke the antagonism of the zamindars against them.²³ Chhotu Ram, himself, like the other members of his party, was heavily reliant on the votes of the landowners who were perpetually engaged in a socio-economic conflict with the untouchables,²⁴ whose voting rights were severely limited at the time. In the fact of his assertion of 'Jat Raj' for Rohtak and 'Zamindar Raj' for Punjab it was very difficult for Chhotu Ram to convincingly advocate the interests of the untouchables while projecting an ideological commitment to the 'backward classes'. In any controversy between the landowners and untouchables, the two supposedly integral parts of the backward classes, Chhotu Ram openly took the side of the landowners.²⁵ Chhotu Ram, who demanded recognition of Hindu agriculturists as a separate unit and of Hindu

22 Chhotu Ram, op.cit., p. 3.

23 For details see above chapter III, pp. 101-2.

24 See above chapter III pp. 75-80.

25 See above chapter III, pp. 86-89, 98, 101-2.

Jats among Hindu agriculturists as a further separate sub-unit, vehemently opposed any similar demand from the untouchables.

Chhotu Ram's pro-landowner bias as against untouchables got reflected in his propaganda; propaganda which showed almost no attempts to woo them even during the 1937 elections. The only major reference he made to the untouchables was to repeatedly accuse the Congress of exploiting the untouchables for its own political game.²⁶ The Congress in this region had started to pay special attention to the untouchables right from 1920s.²⁷ After the elections of 1937, Chhotu Ram openly acknowledged that the untouchables had not voted for the Unionist Party.²⁸ After the elections, however, seven out of a total of eight representatives of untouchables, all of whom had won with Congress help, went over to the Unionists. Chhotu Ram had openly advised them to be "practical" and join hands with the ruling party.²⁹ "Their salvation in Punjab lay only with the Unionist", said Chhotu Ram quite blatantly, "for the Congress would never form the ministry in Punjab".³⁰ He also pointed out that in refusing to join the Zamindar Party the untouchables also stood to antagonise the agriculturists in the rural areas where both had mutual interests.³¹ Chhotu Ram could issue this 'threat' as he knew that under the restricted franchise the untouchables would hardly become politically dangerous specially when they were economically weak with no resources

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- 26 JG, 15 Sept. 1937, p. 1; Also see above chapter III, pp.99-102.
 27 All the issues of HT deal with the work of Congress Committee Rohtak with regard to the untouchables.
 28 JG, 24 Feb. 1937, p. 8; 4 May 1938, p. 6; Also see above chapter III, p.102.
 29 JG, 23 Feb. 1938, p. 3; 2 Mar. 1938, p. 4; 7 Dec. 1938, p. 4; 14 Dec. 1938, p. 1; 8 Nov. 1939, p. 3. Also see HT, 11 May 1937, p. 3.
 30 Ibid.
 31 JG, 16 June 1937, p. 4; 22 Dec. 1937, p. 6; 4 May 1938, p. 6; 2 Nov. 1938, p. 3. Also see above chapter III, pp.101-2.

to fall back upon.

As a reward for changing loyalty two from among the seven untouchable members were made parliamentary secretaries. This was held as an example of the "interest" taken by the 'Zamindar Govern-³²ment' in the welfare of the untouchables. Other achievements claimed³³ on behalf of the untouchables were in the field of education. Officially, the party in five years of its administration claimed as its greatest achievement an expenditure of Rs. 29,968/- per year on scholarships for the children of the untouchables. It is significant that the Unionist Government had set aside a much larger sum of Rs. 1,25,000/- as annual scholarships for children of the soldiers during the same period.³⁵ Some of the elected representatives of the untouchables having found that the Unionist Party was clearly unwilling to take up any of their demands went back to the Congress³⁶ fold. Beyond propaganda commitment to uplift the 'backward classes', the Unionists refused even to accommodate and project their demands in the official programme and propaganda of the party. The word 'backward classes' therefore included effectively in its contents 'zamindars' or the landowning agriculturists as the major and perhaps the only component.

The word 'zamindar' and 'zamindar interests' as used by

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- 32 JG, 14 Dec. 1938, p. 1. Also see 11 Aug. 1937, p. 4; 23 Feb. 1938, p. 3; 2 Mar. 1938, p. 4; 26 Oct. 1938, p. 7.
- 33 Tribune, 8 April 1932, pp. 5-6. Also see JG, 18 Oct. 1938, pp. 1, 8; 26 Oct. 1938, pp. 3, 7; 9 Nov. 1938, p. 7; 18 Jan. 1939, p. 1; 22 Mar. 1939, pp. 1, 8; 8 Nov. 1939, p. 3.
- 34 Punjab Information Bureau, Five Years of Provincial Autonomy in the Punjab (Lahore 1942), pp. 34-35.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 HT, 1 June 1937, pp. 2, 8; 7 Feb. 1938, p. 7; 14 June 1938, p. 6; 12 July 1938, pp. 7, 9; 18 Oct. 1938, pp. 1, 8; 1 Nov. 1938, p. 4; 6 Dec. 1938, p. 3; 13 Dec. 1938, p. 4; 20 Dec. 1938, pp. 4-7; 11 Oct. 1939, p. 4.

Chhotu Ram and his fellow Unionists were used as blanket terms regardless of any socio-economic content or categories. In fact, the definition of the word zamindar as a statutory agriculturist excluded from its fold agricultural labourers and many of the tenants. But Chhotu Ram maintained that the words zamindars and kisans were synonymous regardless of the land relationship among them as they belonged to the same community. He repeatedly declared that "moong moth me koi farq nahin hota" (there is no difference between moong-one kind of pulse and moth - another kind of pulse). According to him, except for Punjab, all other provinces of India, especially the United Provinces, the Central Provinces and Bihar had unbridgable differences between zamindars and kisans, and very complicated problems regarding mazdoors (agricultural labourers) and the untouchables. But Punjab was, he declared, a unique state in this respect.

The official view of the Unionist Party was in this respect an obvious projection of Chhotu Ram ideas. This myth of the "identity of interests" between the big landowners, petty owners, tenants and agricultural labourers was sedulously propagated through official channels by the Unionist ministry. The Punjab Information Bureau brought out two publications: "Eighteen Months of Provincial Autonomy"

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- 37 JG, 1 July 1931, pp. 1-2; 9 Nov. 1938, pp. 2, 7; 22 Feb. 1939, pp. 5, 8; 2 July 1939, pp. 7, 8.
- 38 PLAD, I, 2 June 1938, pp. 949-50. Also see JG, 9 Feb. 1939, p. 4.
- 39 An article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 12 July 1939, pp. 7-9. For similar opinion see JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 1; 4 Jan. 1938, pp. 1, 8; 27 April 1938, p. 8; 22 June 1938, p. 4; 6 July 1938, p. 4; 17 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 31 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 21 Sept. 1938, p. 2; 28 Sept. 1938, pp. 2, 7; 12 Oct. 1938, pp. 4, 5; 26 Oct. 1938, pp. 3, 7; 4 Jan. 1939, pp. 5, 8; 24 May 1939, p. 2; 12 July 1939, pp. 7-9.
- 40 Ibid.

in 1939, and "Five Years of Provincial Autonomy" in 1942.⁴¹ Both works attempted to explain the happy cooperation between the landowners and the tenants not only on the agricultural farm but also at the polling station. It was claimed that the zamindars were behind the political solidarity of the Unionist Party. Both works maintained that the term 'zamindar' in Punjab applied to "all classes ranging from the few big landlords to the numerous tenants and agricultural labourers many of whom belong to the so called scheduled castes". These classes were considered to be overlapping one another. It was also claimed that "more than six lakhs of the smallest holders stood in the same position and had the same interests as the owners of big estates".⁴² Finally, it was added:

These hard facts blur the distinction which certain economic theorists in the Punjab try to draw between the landowners and the tenants as if they were mutually exclusive classes or between the 'non-working land magnate' and the 'cultivating proprietor of a small holding'.

In rejecting all socio-economic differences within the category of zamindar Chhotu Ram and his colleagues were greatly helped by the Alienation of Land Act of 1900, which had proclaimed certain castes as 'statutory agriculturists'. The castes proclaimed as 'agriculturists' or 'zamindar castes', as they come to be known, were 'zamindars' by virtue of belonging to a 'zamindar caste'. For example, in the 'zamindar caste' of Jats, the zamindars were not only the actual landowners but also tenants of all kinds and even some agricultural labourers. The 1911 census of Punjab acknowledged that apart from conferring material advantages the act had in fact

41 Eighteen Months of Provincial Autonomy (Lahore 1939). Also extracts of it given in the editorial of Tribune, 12 Jan. 1939. Also Five Years of Provincial Autonomy (Lahore 1942).

42 Ibid., see introduction.

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given "dignity" to this class of agriculturists. Chhotu Ram's insistence on the word zamindar being an all embracing word was, therefore, a mere projection of the euphemism 'zamindar' as applied to the Punjab society through the legislative enactment of 1900. Playing upon the 'dignity' part of it, Chhotu Ram asked the tenants to reject the word 'kisan' as it was being applied to them by the Congress in favour of the word 'zamindar', for "kisan" in his opinion was "an inferior word and insulting in its connotations".⁴⁴

These varied categories of 'agriculturists' ranging from the non-working landed magnates to untouchables jumbled together under the heading of zamindar were, it was claimed, in return represented by the so called 'zamindar members' in the Council. However, a description of the true complexion of these members by Chhotu Ram himself contradicted the above claim. Regarding these members,⁴⁵ Chhotu Ram had written in 1932:

A large portion of them are grantees of land, jagirdars, title-holders, honorary magistrates, sub-registrars, and zaildars, or candidates for government patronage and official favours.

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- 43 Census of India 1911, Punjab, XIV, prt. 1, Report, p. 428. Also see Annual Report on the Working of Alienation of Land Act Punjab, Act XIII of 1900, yr. 1902, pp. 4, 13. Being an agriculturist placed immense "social distinction" on people. Even the ICS recruits including those like B. Tyabji, a Muslim from Bombay, were categorised into agriculturists and non-agriculturists. It caused a great deal of resentment among those who did not fall in the former category. Badr-ud-Din Tyabji, Interview, 16 Aug. 1979.
- 44 "My Political Belief", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 17 July 1931, p. 2. The Congress on the other hand tried to expose the class divisions existing in the rural society of Punjab. The HT in this connection wrote that the attempt to make zamindars (landowners) out of kisans (tenants), was a "sly design" of Chhotu Ram and his partymen. The weekly posed the question: "How will the condition of Kisans improve even if they are called zamindars as is being suggested by the Jat Gazette". HT, 18 April 1939, p. 3.
- 45 Chhotu Ram, op.cit., p. 17.

According to Chhotu Ram, "for men of this type opposition to the government of the day would in any country be a heresy", and "such men were necessarily conservative by nature"⁴⁶. There is no reason to believe that such men did not continue to dominate the Unionist Party of the Provincial Autonomy established under the India Act of 1935. With this complexion of the zamindar representatives, Chhotu Ram rightly maintained in 1936 in his pamphlet, "Punjab Unionist Party - Rules and Regulations", that the basic policy of the Party at the provincial level could only be a policy of "close cooperation" with the government in all spheres of life and the adoption of constitutional means for attaining their declared goal of Dominion Status.⁴⁷ This pamphlet was issued as the election manifesto of the Unionist Party in the same year with one significant change made by Fazl-i-Hussain who substituted the goal of "Dominion Status" by "complete independence"⁴⁸.

This theoretical identity of goal, somewhat forced and superimposed, did not bring the Unionists closer to the Congress. Chhotu Ram and his partymen continued to adhere to his declared policy of 1932, i.e., cooperation with the British Government to subvert "the hot house growth of national independence"⁴⁹. In following this policy the Unionists came to adopt an ideological programme and propaganda which was both a response and a reaction to the programme of the All India Congress. Fazl-i-Hussain in his

46 Ibid.

47 In the pamphlet which was later published as the 'Unionist Manifesto' 'cooperation' was called "constructive work" and 'cooperators' were called "practical progressives". See Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 26: "Manifesto of the Punjab Unionist Party" by Chhotu Ram (Lahore 1936).

48 Ibid., see hand written change made by Fazl-i-Hussain.

49 Chhotu Ram, op.cit., p. 3.

foreword to the pamphlet 'National Unionist Party', written by Chhotu Ram in 1932, had acknowledged: "the programme of work was practically put into my hands by the Congress movement".⁵⁰

Chhotu Ram went one step further and claimed during the elections of 1937 that the Unionist Party was the "real Congress" in Punjab.⁵¹ For himself, he claimed the status of a Congressman. Explaining how all this transformation had taken place, Chhotu Ram declared in 1939:⁵²

I found out about the Congress when I was a member of it for four years, that it was only a party of greedy Banias who wanted to swallow the zamindars. So we established another Congress foundations of which were laid down by Sir Fazl-i-Hussain. We are the poor man's Congress in actuality.

At the more immediate and local level of his constituency, Chhotu Ram was compelled by circumstances to assume the role of a Congressman, during the years before 1937 when he was 'out of power' and was trying to create a strong political base for himself in Rohtak district. The Jat peasantry was moreover undergoing extreme economic distress because of the depression and the resulting drastic fall in the prices of agricultural products. Chhotu Ram could not hope to maintain his political influence unless he took up radical postures. In impersonating this role Chhotu Ram utilised the Jat Gazette and the Zamindar League to a great extent. Regarding this Zaman Mehdi Khan, the Deputy Commissioner, wrote in this respect to CC Garbett, the Chief Secretary to Government of Punjab in September 1931:⁵³

I want to put you in possession of real facts. As you are aware there is little difference now between the Congress and the Zamindar League of Chowdhri Chhotu Ram.

50 Ibid.

51 JG, 1 Sept. 1937, p. 6; 15 Sept. 1937, p. 5; 6 Oct. 1937, p. 3; 4 Jan. 1939, pp. 1, 8; 1 Mar. 1939, p. 4.

52 JG, 4 Jan. 1939, pp. 1, 8.

53 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC Rohtak to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Punjab, 21 Sept. 1931.

His newspaper, Jat Gazette, is carrying on practically the same propaganda against the Government as the Congress.

By 1933, the general remarks made by the district administration⁵⁴ regarding the tone, etc., of the Jat Gazette read:

A paper of Rao Bahadur Chhotu Ram's party started with the object of uplifting the Jat community, but has since become a blind supporter of the party and attacks the government servants indiscriminately. It often exhibits pro-Congress tendencies.

The 'pro-Congress' activities of Chhotu Ram which gave him a radical image, created later a great deal of misunderstanding regarding his ideology. Immediately, it brought the wrath and aroused the suspicions of the district authorities. His activities and movements were kept under surveillance from the year 1931.⁵⁵ Lincoln gave direct orders to the tehsildars in 1932 to quietly discourage the zamindars from helping or joining the Zamindar League of Chhotu Ram.⁵⁶ Plans to sue the secretary of the Zamindar League under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code were however dropped.⁵⁷ The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak inquired in 1932 into the grounds of the land grant made to Chhotu Ram long time ago in 1919.⁵⁸ In order to bring the Jat Gazette to its knees he also proposed to blacklist it with the government as well as with the regiments; the paper being mainly supported by the government advertisements and by the subscriptions supplied from regimental funds.⁵⁹ The proposal was, however, for

54 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40, M.R. Sachdev to Sheepshanks, Comm. Ambala Div., 16 Sept. 1933.

55 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Chhotu Ram to E.H. Lincoln, 24 Dec. 1931.

56 Ibid., Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 12 Jan. 1932. Also HO Notes, DC Rohtak, 3 April 1933, op.cit.

57 Ibid.

58 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC Rohtak to Mian Abdul Aziz, Comm. Ambala Div., 7 May 1932.

59 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 22 Mar. 1934, op.cit. Also see above chapter II, pp. 48-49.

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 reasons unknown, not carried out. Another attempt was made in 1933
 by the district officials to have the Jat Gazette prosecuted under
 sections 124-A and even 153-A of the Indian Penal Code; the attempt
 was however dropped later.⁶¹ Inundated with complaints from the
 district authorities, the Governor promised to have "Chhotu Ram on
 the mat".⁶² Lincoln recorded gleefully that the same had been effected.⁶³
 Yet the suspicions of the district authorities regarding Chhotu Ram's
 involvement in the Congress movement were to remain till as late as
 1936 when great exception was taken to his contribution of Rs. 10/-
 towards the Congress Jubilee Celebrations in December 1935. The
Haryana Tilak, on the other hand, ridiculed Chhotu Ram for this
 paltry contribution.⁶⁵

Chhotu Ram's propaganda work in the rural areas of Rohtak
 district was declared by the Deputy Commissioner in 1936 to be
 "communist" in nature.⁶⁶ In fact, several of Chhotu Ram's articles
 appearing in the Jat Gazette could indeed be interpreted to show a
 similarity with the communist propaganda of the time and the utili-
 sation of the same by Chhotu Ram. For example, the Jat Gazette quoted
 Ram Kishan, a member of the Nau-Jawan Sabha, and a proto-communist
 organisation, as having said at Rohtak in November 1929: "We do not
 want to exchange the rule of Kale Baniyas with Gore Baniyas. We want
 kisans and mazdoors to rule India."⁶⁷ Chhotu Ram adopting the same

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- 60 Ibid.
 61 CFDC Rohtak, F.No. 12/40, Lincoln to Mian Abdul Aziz, 10 Nov. 1933.
 62 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 22 Mar. 1934, op.cit.
 63 Ibid.
 64 CFDC Rohtak, F.No. 10/38, DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div.,
 22 Feb. 1936.
 65 HT, 15 Jan. 1936, p. 5.
 66 CFDC Rohtak, F.No. 12/40, Lincoln to Mian Abdul Aziz, 10 Nov.
 1933. Also HO Notes, Ghulam Mustafa, DC Rohtak (1936-39),
 26 June 1939, op.cit.
 67 JG, 27 Nov. 1929, p. 4.

68

slogan repeated it verbatim in 1938. Those of Chhotu Ram's articles which were considered "communist" in nature by the district authorities appeared mostly in 1933, and were addressed to the kisans. Several such articles under the heading of "Bechara Zamindar" (the unfortunate peasant) were written by Chhotu Ram in the Jat Gazette. The Deputy Commissioner felt that he was creating general dissatisfaction with regard to the payment of land revenue in the minds of agricultural classes. Chhotu Ram in these articles challenged the basic principle that government was the owner of land and stated:

Forgive me if I ask you how this land belonged to you and how are we your tenants.

In the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner, Chhotu Ram deliberately referred to the "inequities" in the land revenue law in order to create "disaffection in the minds of the zamindars". His greatest objection was to the following passages of the Jat Gazette:

No body can put off the revenue demand. It is like a messenger of death which must have its toll. There is the fear of attachment and sale. The property both moveable and immoveable is in danger. There is an apprehension of arrest. There is the fear of the arrest of Lambardar. There is the fear of forfeiture. Evidently, when the non-payment of a demand is full of such terrible consequences, it is much more unbearable than death itself. The demand is made without having regard to the produce. Remission is almost nil. Suspension is not a blessing but has often proved a

- 68 JG, 23 Nov. 1938, p. 3. For a similar quotation of Chhotu Ram see above chapter VI, p.206.
- 69 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40, SP to DC Rohtak, 1933.
- 70 "Bechara Zamindar", JG, 28 June 1933; 12 July 1933; 19 July 1933; 26 July 1933; 9 Aug. 1933. Also see, "Zamindar Ko Nai Zahiniat Ki Zaroorat Hai" (the need for a new mentality for the zamindar) in JG, 30 Aug. 1933. Also, reference to these articles is made in HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 20 Oct. 1933, op.cit.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 "Bechara Zamindar", JG, 19 July 1933, p. 3.
- 73 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40, p. 3.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 3-4. For details see "Bechara Zamindar", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 28 May 1933, pp. 3-4.

course for in Barani land the crops are average once in three years. For these reasons the land revenue has been the chief source of the indebtedness and the ruin of the zamindar.

In the 9 August 1933 issue of the Jat Gazette, Chhotu Ram argued that the government was not going to grant any redress to the zamindars and that it was only interested in providing relief to the non-zamindars and the urban population. In conclusion, Chhotu Ram went on to say:

The zamindar should take to action and should find out some way to get rid of his present trouble. There is only one solution and that is that the zamindar must take to action with full devotion and give preference to the work of organisation over everything else.

Chhotu Ram's appeals for large scale exemptions of land revenue because of "sorry plight" of the landowners were however not accompanied by a corresponding demand on behalf of the tenants for the lowering of rents, although their (i.e., tenants') 'sorry plight' had obviously come in handy in his writings. Other articles of Chhotu Ram, considered "most objectionable" by the district authorities, appeared in the Jat Gazette and other newspapers mostly between 1931 to 1933. Here, it must also be noted that while he was writing such

75 Ibid. Also JG, 9 Aug. 1933, pp. 3-4.

76 Newspaper cuttings of Chhotu Ram's "most objectionable" work were collected in the district office Rohtak. Along with the cuttings a resume of "the most objectionable" articles was given as follows: (a) Tribune, 1931: "Chhotu Ram's statement to the press as the leader of the rural Unionist Party answering the question, whether Congress is dead or alive, appeared under the heading, 'Is Congress Moribund?' Chhotu Ram declared Congress 'a dynamic force' which was tightening its hold everywhere". (b) Tribune, 1931: "'Congress and the Rural Areas', an article by Chhotu Ram applauding the Congress work at the national level". (c) JG, 20 Jan. 1931: "Two newspaper cuttings describing the non-payment of taxes as the strongest weapon in the hands of the Congress". (d) JG, 2 Mar. 1931: "Two articles, one against British rule in India showing corruption in the government and second criticising the repressive policy of the government of

'objectionable' articles, he was also severely criticising the Congress movement for civil disobedience through his writings and speeches.
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According to the district officials the sole aim of these articles was to arouse the zamindars by telling them that the government was pursuing an anti-zamindar policy and to incite them to action.
78 The Deputy Commissioner was in particular worried by the fact that several schools of the district contributed to the paper. He called attention to the alarming headlines in the Jat Gazette dated 26 July and 30 August 1933 which exhorted the readers of the Jat Gazette to read out these articles to their "illiterate brothers".
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'cutting the vein but not applying the balm'. (e) JG, 10 Aug. 1931: "'Congress Movement and the Government', indicating that government will have to abandon its present policy of repression even though the Congress movement was dead". (f) JG, 10 Aug. 1932: "Communal Bitterness in Punjab". (g) JG, 7 Oct. 1931: "Withholding of Land Revenue in Punjab due to Debt and Economic difficulties of the Cultivators". (h) JG, 4 Nov. 1931: "'Attack on the Police', also another article, 'Government and the Zamindars', indicating how government alone is responsible for the sorry plight of the zamindar and if it wants to improve the lot of the zamindar it must revise its unjust revenue policy which was opposed to the principles of revenue assessment in force in other civilised countries". (i) JG, 31 Aug. 1932: "The communal Award has kindled the Fire of Communalism". (j) Tribune, 25 Nov. 1932: "Chhotu Ram called the Congress 'a dynamic force' and the Congress movement despite repressive roller of the British Bureaucracy still not dead; said, Congress enjoys far greater prestige among people than its complacent critics are disposed to concede". (k) JG, 15 Feb. 1933: "'The Bharatpur State and the Jats', criticised British Resident of Bharatpur Council is not respecting Jat sentiments in celebrating the birth anniversary of the Maharaja Suraj Mal on Basant day. Situation may lead to Jat Jathas. British administration warned not to force the hands of the Jats in taking up Satyagraha".

CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, pp. 143-9.

77 See above chapter II, pp.45-46 ; chapter VI, pp.190-1,200,206:

78 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40, p. 7.

79 Ibid., p. 6.

The effect of these articles was declared to be "pernicious" on the minds of the readers "who were mostly Jats of Rohtak district".⁸⁰ The Superintendent of Police was similarly concerned about the "objectionable articles" addressed to kisans in the Jat Gazette which would find their way into schools where their contents would be imbibed by the students.⁸¹

Similar propaganda was carried on by Chhotu Ram through the Zamindar League. The confidential fortnightly report of the Punjab Government for April 1931 pointed out that the more or less constitutional Zamindar League of Chhotu Ram has been swallowed up by the far more extreme Zamindar Sabha although the old name had been retained.⁸² The Deputy Commissioner felt that Chhotu Ram was responsible for making the Zamindar League more and more like the Congress.⁸³ Although the Zamindar League was founded in 1924, it became active only in 1928; by the thirties, it had started to propagate that the zamindars were under a much greater burden of taxation than the townsmen.⁸⁵ Lincoln maintained that the Zamindar League propaganda was preparing the "soil for the Congress", and that in the matter of non-payment of taxes there was little to distinguish between what the Congress and the Zamindar League was preaching.⁸⁶ The secret official communications repeatedly asserted that the propaganda of the Zamindar League was little removed from the Congress propaganda. For instance it had become a common feature of the day for the Zamindar League to hold "monstrous meetings" all over Rohtak

80 Ibid.

81 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 14/40, SP to M.R. Sachdev, 4 Sept. 1933.

82 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/IV/31, April 1931.

83 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.

84 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 19 Nov. 1931.

85 Ibid., Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 4 Jan. 1932.

86 Ibid.

and discuss openly the "alarming and starving condition and distress of zamindars owing to the failure of crops".⁸⁷ The speakers described the "pitiabile" and "miserable" condition of the zamindars in such a way that the rural audience was reported to have been "moved to tears".⁸⁸ All these Zamindar League functions ended up by passing several resolutions for exemption of zamindars' dues to the government.⁸⁹ Apart from this, a certain confusion regarding Chhotu Ram's activities through the Zamindar League also arose because similar bodies with identical names, like the Zamindar League of central Punjab, were close to communism.⁹⁰

The propaganda of Chhotu Ram through press and platform dubbed as 'communistic' by the district officials would seem to indicate a development in his ideology to accommodate the tenants demands along with those of the landowners. A reading of his articles written during years of economic depression has led not only his contemporaries but even later writers to hold up Chhotu Ram as the upholder of the downtrodden and the weak.⁹¹ This changed ideology also seemed to justify Chhotu Ram's claims to be the representative of all 'zamindars', i.e., from landowning cultivators, tenants and agricultural labourers, to big landowners, landlords and

87 IOR:P/12071/1935, F. No. 92/51/100/1, pp. 6-7.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 GI : Home Poll, 18/IV/31, April 1931; 18/9/32, June 1932; 18/7/33, June 1933; 18/2/34, June 1934.

91 For the opinion of Chhotu Ram's contemporaries that Chhotu Ram was the champion of have-nots, see Tika Ram, Sir Chhotu Ram : Appostle of Hindu Muslim Unity (n.d.), pp. 73-91. For a similar but recent opinion, see Raghbir Shastri, Chowdhri Chhotu Ram, Jeevan Charitra (Hindi) (Delhi 1965); Madan Gopal, Sir Chhotu Ram: a political biography (New Delhi 1977); H.L. Agnihotri and S.N. Malik, A Profile in Courage - A Biography of Chhotu Ram (New Delhi 1978), and Y.P. Bajaj, "Chowdhry Chhotu Ram and his Work", Ph.D. thesis (Kurukshetra University 1972).

landed magnates. But we have to answer the question: Why did these changed ideas not become a permanent part of his ideology, were given up completely later, and why were they projected only during a certain period? After projecting near communistic propaganda, why did Chhotu Ram attempt in 1937 to fight the election from landlords' constituency? The continued support of Chhotu Ram by the landowning classes from among the rest of the agricultural classes in Rohtak district casts doubts on the fact of any real change in his ideology; for the landowning classes not only offered the greatest opposition to the Congress programme in Punjab⁹² but also stood against the interests of agricultural labourers and small tenants. The allegation of the district administrators about Chhotu Ram being an "advanced Congressman" is so obviously prejudiced that it has to be discounted. Yet the reasons behind the projection of a different ideology by Chhotu Ram during certain specific years have to be explained.

These reasons can be traced both in the general condition prevailing in Punjab as also in the specific conditions found at the local level in Rohtak district. The period between 1916 and 1927 was a period of high agricultural prices in Punjab. The crash came in 1929-30. The enormous fall in the price of agricultural commodities in the post 1929-30 period brought the average landowner of Punjab to the brink of bankruptcy by 1931.⁹³ With this came the declaration of civil disobedience movement by the Congress resulting in political panic among the British authorities. In 1930s, Sri Ram Sharma and Ram Phul, both Congress leaders, were publicly preaching in Rohtak district the start of the civil disobedience and non-payment

92 GI; Home Poll, F. No. 18/IV/30, Mar. 1930.

93 For details see below chapter IX, pp. 309-11.

94

of taxes movement. They were openly accusing the British officials of "looting the zamindars to fill the government treasury". Punjab was inundated with Congress hand-bills and pamphlets telling the kisans of Punjab "Lagaan Mat do" (not to pay land revenue) on account of economic depression and general apathy of the government towards them during this time. The propaganda of the Congress fell on very favourable ground created by extremely low prices. The Congress stood ready to cash-in on the economic discontent specially among the lower sections of the Punjab rural society. Rohtak district was also witnessing the growing popularity of the Congress and rapid recruitment into its ranks particularly from among the 'Jat zamindars'. In November 1931, Zaman Mehdi Khan wrote:

There is no doubt that the Congress is very strong in this district and the party of Rao Bahadur Chowdhri Chhotu Ram M.L.C., a leader of the Jats in this district, is in active sympathy with it. A large number of Jat zamindars were convicted for various political offences last year and even now a majority of the Congress volunteers come from this community.

The reason for Chhotu Ram's sympathy with the Congress at this time emerge clear. Chhotu Ram was faced with the rapid growth of the

94 IOR/L/P & J/7/2008/1930, F. No. 283.

95 Ibid.

96 The activities of the Congress in this connection specially in regard to the rent demand made on the tenants during an economically depressed period may be seen in the Proscribed Literature Punjab (1930-35), NAI, IOL&R, and BM. For example, "Prantiya Congress Committee Ka Kisanon Ko: Lagan Ka Ek Paisa Na Do" (n.d.), "Jwala Mukhi Mein Dabi Hui Aag" (1930), "Prantiya Congress Committee Ka Kisanon Ko Adesh: Lagan Ka Ek Paisa Na Do" (1932); "Zulmi Sarkar" (1934); "Mazdoor Kisan" (1935); "Lagan Band Ker Do" by Prantiya Congress Committee (n.d.); "Congress Committee Ka Elan: Lagan Bandi ka Elan" (n.d.).

97 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC to Lt. Col. T.M. Carpendale, 3 Nov. 1931. For 'Jat following' of the Congress in Rohtak district see above chapter VI.

Congress among 'Jats', i.e., the Jat tenants and petty owners of land. He realised the attraction of Congress propaganda to these classes of Jats and he privately acknowledged to the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak that a programme similar to that of the Congress had become necessary in order to cut into the strength of the Congress.⁹⁸

At a time when the attempt of the Congress was concentrated in setting up a parallel government in the "home of Hindu Jats", i.e., Rohtak district,⁹⁹ Chhotu Ram was obviously hard put to appease the young rebels in his own party who, he claimed, were getting "impatient" and who wanted to work with the Congress so long as the Congress did not harm "their interests".¹⁰⁰ The younger men also considered the Jat Gazette to be "unnecessarily pro-government".¹⁰¹ The other local paper, the Haryana Tilak, on the other hand, was active in exposing the hollow pretentions of Chhotu Ram by a non-stop attack on his professed ideology.¹⁰² It concentrated on showing that different classes and strata existed among the so-called zamindars of the Haryana region and alleged that Chhotu Ram and his party were spokesmen of the big zamindars only. In return, the Haryana Tilak put forward the claim of being the representative of the interests of the kisans of this region.¹⁰³ In the face of this attack, Chhotu

98 Ibid., Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 12 Jan. 1932.

99 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/IV/31, April 1931, 18/V/31, May 1931.

100 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 12 Jan. 1932.

101 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Secret letter of Chhotu Ram sent to his friends and associates, 11 Jan. 1932.

102 HT, 23 Oct. 1928, p. 3; 20 Nov. 1928, p. 3; 15 Oct. 1929, p. 9; 5 Sept. 1933, p. 3; 12 Sept. 1933, p. 5; 19 Sept. 1933, p. 3; 17 Oct. 1933, p. 3; 7 Nov. 1933, p. 5; 17 July 1934, p. 3; 28 Aug. 1934, p. 3; 1 April 1937, p. 8; 1 July 1938, p. 8; 14 June 1938, p. 3; 29 Sept. 1938, p. 6; 17 Jan. 1940, p. 2; 24 Jan. 1940, p. 4; 14 Feb. 1940, p. 2; 8 May 1940, p. 1.

103 Ibid.

Ram's partial adoption of the Congress programme was necessarily an attempt to establish his bona fides regarding his claim to represent all zamindars, from landowners to tenants of all kinds. Thus, knowing the attraction of the Congress propaganda in the rural areas of Rohtak district, Chhotu Ram tried to put forward a similar programme himself. When assailed by the district officials for such attempts made through the Zamindar League, Chhotu Ram told them in private:¹⁰⁴

It is necessary for the League to organise the zamindars, otherwise the Congress would organise the zamindars for its own purpose.

Clearly an alternative to the Congress had to be offered to the smaller landowners and tenants of Rohtak district who were being mobilised by the Congress on the slogans of opposition to heavy taxes and the non-payment of taxes. Chhotu Ram explained to the Deputy Commissioner that criticism of heavy taxation and demand for their revision or scaling down had to be incorporated even in his own election campaign.¹⁰⁵ About the Zamindar League, Chhotu Ram clearly told the Deputy Commissioner:¹⁰⁶

Unless the League kept on working it could not take action against the Congress in time of need, as the people would say that it only came out at the bidding of government.

As an assurance to the district officials, Chhotu Ram pointed to his own conservatism behind the projection of radical demands by insisting in private that the pace of reforms demanded was to be the slowest and that the zamindar could not hope to get any thing they

104 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 19 Nov. 1931.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid.

were out for even in twenty years.¹⁰⁷ About the Zamindar League also, he gave assurance that during his life time it would never pass into bodies like the Zamindar Sabha and the Kirti Kisan Sabha of the central Punjab.¹⁰⁸ By 1943, with the latter two bodies becoming stronger, he dropped the Zamindar League of Rohtak in favour of the Jat Sabha.¹⁰⁹

The fact that Chhotu Ram was not with the Congress as was alleged by the district authorities of Rohtak is also obvious from his anti-Congress work which he was zealously pursuing at the same time as his 'pro-Congress' work.¹¹⁰ This was brought to the notice of the district officials by Chhotu Ram himself from time to time.¹¹¹ In carrying out simultaneously two contradictory lines through the Jat Gazette and the Zamindar League, i.e., condemning the civil disobedience movement of the Congress and trying to woo the potential Congress recruits by adopting an approach similar to that of the Congress, Chhotu Ram had made himself a persona non grata with the district authorities.¹¹² But his contradictory stand of Chhotu Ram was understood somewhat better by the officials by late 1933, when Lincoln wrote in his handing over notes:¹¹³

I think there is a great deal of bluff in Rao Bahadur Chhotu Ram. In his heart of hearts he probably thinks it best to keep clear of Congress and not risk his skin

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- 107 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 4 Jan. 1932.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 HO Notes, Salisbury, Comm. Ambala Div., 13 Oct. 1943, CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A-28.
- 110 For Chhotu Ram's anti-Congress work, see above chapter II, pp. 45-46 ; chapter VI, pp. 186-213.
- 111 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, C.C.Garbett to Lincoln, 19 Jan. 1932. All issues of the HT comment on the anti-Congress and anti-kisan work of Chhotu Ram.
- 112 HO Notes, E.H.Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.
- 113 Ibid.

but he and his lieutenant Tika Ram do not fail to take advantage of Congress for their own ends, a lot of sword rattling I should call it.

However, the fact that the lower class voters of Rohtak district needed a different kind of approach was realised not only by Chhotu Ram but also acknowledged by the Governor. Emerson in his letter of 21 January 1937 to the Viceroy wrote the following
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in regard to the Hindu and Sikh constituencies:

I was told that with many of the smaller voters there was a definite prejudice against any one who could be described as pro-government.

Thus the necessity for weaning of the "smaller voter" away from the Congress had clearly emerged by the time of the Punjab Assembly elections. That is why Chhotu Ram had felt that a different ideological approach was necessary through the Jat Gazette and the Zamindar League. The British officials, on the other hand, knowing fully well the dangers of an "aroused consciousness" among the zamindars because of the intensive anti-government propaganda of Chhotu Ram, put pressure upon him to moderate his demagogical
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activity among them. According to Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa, Chhotu Ram started to behave himself from 1934 onwards as he was
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effectively pulled up by the Governor.

Effective stoppage under official pressure and prodding of Chhotu Ram's propagation of a different, more radical ideology to suit the lower class voters of Rohtak also explains his desire to change his constituency and fight election from the landlords constituency in the elections of 1937. The ultimate appeal of Chhotu

114 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 21 Jan. 1937.

115 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 22 Mar. 1934, op.cit.

116 HO Notes, DC Rohtak, 26 June 1936, op.cit.

Ram remained confined to his traditional supporters with majority of them belonging to the landholding classes. That is why even in the course of the election campaign he highlighted the following approach:¹¹⁷

To promote the interests of the masses without undue encroachment on the interests of the capitalists, big landholders and moneyed people.

That the more radical ideological approach to the petty landowners and the tenants, etc., remained confined to paper is also clear, apart from other factors, from the agrarian policy adopted by the Unionist Party in the late thirties. The fact that Chhotu Ram was the main driving force behind the agrarian legislation, which proved 'golden' for the bigger landowners only,¹¹⁸ clearly discounts any serious or genuine commitment of Chhotu Ram to a radical ideological approach during 1931-33.

Further, though much to the annoyance of the highest British officials, Chhotu Ram's advice to the landowners of Punjab to withhold their produce from the market in order to get the "maximum price" during the World War II also clearly points to the class of landowners who were being supported by him in reality.¹¹⁹ This act of Chhotu Ram was for once frankly and truthfully condemned by the Viceroy as "ruthless political opportunism" and an "unholy bid for his own popularity".¹²⁰ This condemnation of Chhotu Ram, however, surfaced only when the British interests and the overriding call of war along with the general food situation in India and Europe came in direct conflict with the interests of the better off and substantial landowners who were so ably represented by Chhotu Ram

117 PLAD, I, 2 July 1937, p. 947, see Chhotu Ram's speech.

118 For the agrarian legislation see below chapter IX, pp. 372-5

119 For details of the food controversy see above chapter VII, pp. 252-4.

120 Linlithgow Coll, 92: Linlithgow to Glancy, 13 June 1943, and 19 June 1943.

in the Punjab Assembly. Also, Chhotu Ram's support to the continuation of the 'Batai' system in Punjab exposed that his sympathy lay primarily with the upper stratum of landowners. In Rohtak, where most of the land was Barani, the Batai system prevailed extensively.¹²¹ Under this system rent was paid in kind; landlord's share equalled half the produce of the soil; the landlord did not share in any of the expenses of cultivation or provide the plough or cattle.¹²² Chhotu Ram declared Batai to be a system which was conducive to a "happy relationship between the zamindar and the kisan, both sharing equally during good and bad crops".¹²³ He actually espoused the Batai system and declared that it was superior to the cash rent system prevalent in other regions and provinces.¹²⁴ In reality, the Batai system was notorious for being beneficial to the landlords only. In 1926, the Punjab Government inquiry into the Batai system in Lyallpur district had revealed that the landlord took 80 percent of the net produce and not half as was generally believed.¹²⁵

Another matter which greatly contributed to the confusion regarding the ideological commitment of Chhotu Ram was his advocacy, during 1927 to 1935, of the application of the principle of income-tax to land revenue. However, he actively opposed this principle from 1940 onwards, and advocated its replacement by the Peasant Welfare Fund. On 22 February 1928, Chhotu Ram moved a resolution in the Punjab Council asking for the application of the principle of

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- 121 Board of Eco. Inq., Punjab Village Surveys; village Gijhi in Rohtak dist. (Lahore 1932), p. 190.
 122 The Famine Inq. Commission Rpt., prt. IV (Madras 1945), p. 266.
 123 JG, 12 July 1939, see Chhotu Ram's article on the Batai system, pp. 7-9.
 124 Ibid.
 125 Board of Eco. Inq., Some Aspects of Batai Cultivation in the Lyallpur dist. of Punjab (Lyallpur 1926), p. 7 and statement IX.

income-tax to the assessment of land revenue leading to the exemption of owners of small holdings altogether or scaling down the revenue demand on them to an appreciable extent.¹²⁶ The official majority declared the proposal to be "revolutionary" and "politically inexpedient" and combined with the non-agriculturists and Fazl-i-Hussain to defeat the move. The resolution was lost by 14 votes,¹²⁷ there being 20 Ayes and 34 Noes.

This was a demand that was to be turned into a battle-cry by the Congress and the other leftist forces in Punjab.¹²⁸ Since this demand was extremely unfavourable to the big landowners and was also anti-government, Chhotu Ram's support to it made him appear a radical or even a revolutionary, and definitely an upholder of the rights of the petty landowners. Interestingly, in the contemporary press except for Chhotu Ram the rest of the 'zamindar members' stood condemned as false sympathisers of 'zamindars'. Lajpat Rai's weekly, The People, wrote: "Hollow pretentions of the Rural Party to ask for justice to the small peasant proprietor stood exposed by its opposition to Chhotu Ram's resolution".¹²⁹ The Tribune wrote: "Chhotu Ram's resolution furnished a test of the sincerity of zamindar members".¹³⁰ It declared the resolution to be the "touch stone of the much-wanted affection which the Government and non-official members of the house

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- 126 PLCD, XI, 22 Feb. 1928, pp. 79-89; 23 Feb. 1928, pp. 89, 115, 128-30. For the propagation of this principle before it was introduced in the Punjab Council, see Appendix I, II, III.
- 127 For the list of names see PLCD, XI, 22 Feb. 1928, pp. 129-30.
- 128 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/7/33, June 1933; 18/2/34, Jan. 1934; 18/11/35, Oct. 1935: The 'Punjab Peasant Bureau' at village Cheman-Kalan in Jullundur dist. adopted on 20-21 Mar. 1936, resolution on the levy of land revenue on income tax principles. See AICC Papers, F. No. G-13, pp. 101, 165.
- 129 The People, VI, no. 9, 1 Mar. 1929, p. 131.
- 130 Tribune, 25 Feb. 1928, pp. 2, 10.

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professed for the poor zamindars". Chhotu Ram alone came out successful in this test of the sincerity and affection which many professed for the petty landowners. In fact Chhotu Ram's arch enemy, the Haryana Tilak, also complimented him on his stand and requested him to forsake the so called zamindar party because all pretensions of this party stood exposed.

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The Jat Gazette, even 10 years after the proposal was mooted, continued to remind its readers of the "generosity" of Chhotu Ram in bringing forward this proposal. It often quoted outside acclaim which the other newspapers accorded to Chhotu Ram in this connection. One such article taken from the newspaper Naresh of January 1937 read:

Chhotu Ram, a big landlord and a big zamindar of the Unionist Party, had proposed in the Punjab Council that the land revenue should be charged on the income-tax principles. If it had been passed the small zamindars would have been relieved of the land revenue demand and the burden would have shifted to the big zamindars. Chhotu Ram also proposed total exemption of those who paid Rs. 5/- as land revenue. The Unionist Party alone shows that big zamindars are willing to even harm themselves for the benefit of small zamindars.

In this controversy Chhotu Ram had clearly emerged as the champion of the smaller peasant proprietors. This feeling was never allowed to die down by Chhotu Ram who propagated it through the press, in his public speeches, and in the debates of the Punjab Council. He also

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- 131 Ibid.
 132 HT, 6 Mar. 1928, p. 6. Also see editorial, "The Reality of the zamindar party", 13 Mar. 1928, p. 3.
 133 JG, 6 Jan. 1937, p. 1.
 134 JG, 18 Sept. 1929, p. 6; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 7; 11 Aug. 1936, Chhotu Ram's speech in village Khewara, Sonapat, pp. 5-6; 13 Oct. 1937, speech in village Chhara, pp. 4-5; 18 Mar. 1938, p. 2; 6 April 1938, speech in village Karkhan, Dist. Sheikhpura, p. 7; 27 April 1938, speech in Gurgaon Zamindar Conference, p. 2; 'editorial' in 27 April 1938, p. 3; speech in village Jarod, tehsil Jhajjar, p. 5; article on p. 8; 14 Sept. 1938, p. 8; 4 Jan. 1939, speech in the zamindar conference, Lyallpur, p. 2; 5 April 1939, p. 2; 15 Nov. 1939, p. 6. Also C & MG, 23 July 1936, p. 6; Tribune, 12 Jan. 1939, p. 3; 6 Feb. 1939, p. 7.
 135 PLCD, X, 7 Mar. 1927, p. 139; XI, 8 May 1928, p. 1028; XXV, 25 Mar. 1935, p. 186.

blatantly accused the opposition of the "non-Party Hindu politician fraternity" in the Council for defeating his attempts in this direction.¹³⁶

Why was Chhotu Ram foremost in voicing a demand which stood to affect his chief supporters? Once again, it may be noted that this demand was the most popular demand of the day. It was made popular by the constant attacks of the Congress on the land revenue system. The often repeated claim, voiced by local Congressmen of Rohtak district, that under Swaraj the poor farmers would not be required to pay any land revenue had to be somehow countered.¹³⁷ Chhotu Ram's proposal in the Council was therefore a step in the direction of taking the wind out of the Congress sails. It was so effective that even the nationalist press could not deny him credit on this score. But despite all this praise of the 'principle' behind Chhotu Ram's proposal of 1928, it remained in his own eyes a "goal" to be reached within the next forty years.¹³⁸ In his oral evidence to the Indian Statutory Commission Chhotu Ram reasserted that it was merely an "ideal" to be worked out in the course of the next forty years.¹³⁹ Starting from 1928, the achievement of the goal was visualised only in 1968! This was the revolution which Chhotu Ram wanted to accomplish.¹⁴⁰ It may also be noted that the proposal was never visualised by Chhotu Ram as being against the interests of the big

136 C & MG, 23 July 1936. See "Achievements of the Unionist Party", an article by Chhotu Ram.

137 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/X/31, Oct. 1931. See speech of Lala Shyam Lal (Congress) in Rohtak.

138 PLCD, XI, 22 Feb. 1928, pp. 79-89; 23 Feb. 1928, pp. 89-130.

139 Indian Statutory Commission - Oral evidence Punjab, II, Chhotu Ram's evidence, 6 Nov. 1928, pp. 20-24.

140 Except for the weekly The People, 1 Mar. 1928, VI, No. 9, p. 131, no other paper, including the HT or the Tribune commented on this lengthy period of 40 years. They merely commented on and applauded the principle behind it.

landowners as understood at the time. Regarding this he had said
¹⁴¹
 in the Council:

My resolution does not propose that the burden of land revenue would be shifted from the shoulders of smallest holders to those of the landlords.

Yet both these aspects were ignored by the popular press which
¹⁴²
 continued to harp on the principle of the proposal, thereby giving Chhotu Ram a handle to project his own image as the upholder of the rights of the smallest of landowners. In any case, Chhotu Ram started to oppose this principle in 1940. In that year, Chhotu Ram interestingly revealed to the Assembly that he had raised the cry for the assimilation of the principle of assessment of land revenue to the principle of assessment of income-tax in the hope that the government might, in order to avert this "threat", agree to make other "reason-
¹⁴³
 able concessions" to the zamindars.

The situation changed under the Provincial Autonomy. The Unionists formed the ministry and the demand for the application of Chhotu Ram's proposal was pressed from all quarters specially the
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 Congress and the Communists. In view of this, a land Revenue Committee was set up immediately on 24 June 1937 to examine it and
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 its underlying principle. Chhotu Ram, who had never been serious about his own proposal and knew that under the system of Provincial Autonomy instead of the British Government he himself would be the special target of attack for having projected the demand for so long, took a quick somersault in 1940. He opposed Sri Ram Sharma's

141 PLCD, XI, 22 Feb. 1928, pp. 80-82.

142 Even a newspaper like the Tribune criticised the government and non-official members for professing to stand for 'poor zamindars'. The attack was clearly reserved for the government and non-officials only. Tribune, 24 Feb. 1928, pp. 2, 10.

143 PLAD, XII, 4 Mar. 1940, p. 47.

144 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 22 May 1937.

145 Ibid.

amendment to the Land Revenue Bill on 7-8 January 1940 which had asked for the exemption of land revenue of small landowners and self cultivators.¹⁴⁶ From then onwards, Chhotu Ram started to openly criticise what he had earlier espoused. Interestingly, he offered the same arguments against the proposal which had been put up by the official group in rejecting the demand in the Council of 1928. Chhotu Ram advocated 'unpracticability'^{of} making an assessment on this principle as one of the arguments.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, he agreed that the "illiterate cultivators" would not be able to maintain their accounts.¹⁴⁸ Another official argument which had been advanced and which he now took up was that it would lead to the fragmentation of landholdings by owners who would sub-divide their holdings in order to avoid the application of the income-tax provisions.¹⁴⁹ The need of the hour in 1940, he maintained, was consolidation and not fragmentation of the land holdings. In the opinion of Haryana Tilak, the change of front by Chhotu Ram and others of his party in 1940 was because the real purpose of taking up the cry of income-tax principle for land revenue purposes and exemption of small landowners from land revenue had been achieved. The purpose being to get the support of these classes during the elections of 1937.¹⁵⁰

Having changed front, Chhotu Ram at once accepted the recommendations of the Land Revenue Committee of 1938 to establish

146 HT, 24 Jan. 1940, p. 4; 14 Feb. 1940, p. 2.

147 PLAD, XII, 4 Mar. 1940, p. 47. This argument had been advocated both by H.W. Emerson, the then Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Punjab and also Fazl-i-Hussain in 1928. PLCD, XI, 22 Feb. 1928, pp. 79-89 and 23 Feb. 1928, pp. 89-130.

148 Ibid.

149 Ibid. Also XVIII, 12 Jan. 1942, pp. 514-23; XXII, 7 Mar. 1944, p. 405. This argument was advocated by Sayad Mohammad 1928, pp. 2, 9; The Report of Land Revenue Committee 1938, also held the same opinion.

150 HT, 8 May 1940, p. 1.

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a small scale development fund. This recommendation was given a practical shape in the form of "Peasant Welfare Fund" launched in 1942 by Chhotu Ram himself with an initial contribution of Rs. 30 lakhs. The Fund was to receive Rs. 10 lakhs a year out of the land revenue receipts from small holders and was to be utilised for rural development.¹⁵² Chhotu Ram's 'radical proposal', 'revolutionary' in principle, was quickly exchanged for a project in which relief in land revenue to the small owners found no place. Only Chhotu Ram publicly pledged that this fund would be utilised for giving relief to the small landowner in times of scarcity.¹⁵³ In fact the items on which the fund was to be spent bore not even the remotest relation to the problem of land revenue demand in Punjab.¹⁵⁴ Curiously, this was the outcome when Chhotu Ram was the Chairman of the Committee of 14 members which decided on the utilisation of this fund.¹⁵⁵

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- 151 The Report of Land Revenue Committee 1938, p. 126.
- 152 PLAD, XVIII, 12 Jan. 1942, pp. 514, 523; XIX, 13 Mar. 1942, p. 328; XXII, 9 Nov. 1943, p. 249; 7 Mar. 1944, p. 405. Also Five Years of Provincial Autonomy, 1942, pp. 20-21. Also see JG, 8 Sept. 1943, p. 8.
- 153 C & MG, 13 Mar. 1943, p. 3; 12 Aug. 1943, p. 2.
- 154 The proposal of Chhotu Ram for spending "Peasant Development Fund" was:
- 1) Rs. 10 to 15 lakhs for scholarships to the children of agriculturists paying a land revenue of not more than Rs. 25/.
 - 2) Rs. 5 lakhs for promotion of rural and cottage industries.
 - 3) Rs. 5 lakhs for grant of special relief to the agriculturists who could not be included under the then existing rules of the government.
 - 4) Rs. 5 lakhs for building roads linking villages with the high ways.
 - 5) Rs. 5 lakhs for supply of drinking water and reafforestation.
 - 6) Rs. 15 lakhs for opening of cooperative shops for the sale of agricultural produce and supply of agricultural needs. This was declared to be for both the 'poor agriculturists' and the 'bigger landowners' who could join the cooperative shops by paying a certain amount of money.
- See Chhotu Ram's speech in Rawalpindi in JG, 8 Sept. 1943, p. 8. Also PLAD, XXI, 12 Mar. 1943, p. 216; XXII, 7 Mar. 1944, pp. 405-6.
- 155 C & MG, 31 Aug. 1943, p. 7.

Apart from land revenue on income-tax principle, Chhotu Ram¹⁵⁶ had also demanded lessening of the rate of land revenue. This demand for substantial relief to the small holder was also born out of political necessity.¹⁵⁷ But since the officials frowned upon it and did not consider it necessary, Chhotu Ram gave it up after 1937.¹⁵⁸ The plea he made this time was the need to carry on 'constructive work' which would be hampered by any such relief.¹⁵⁹ He accepted in return the proposal for assessing land revenue on a sliding scale made by the British officials.¹⁶⁰ Although the sliding scale of land revenue was subject to a maximum and not to a minimum the British officials themselves realised that in practice the proposal stood to benefit the government by securing for it the benefit of high prices;¹⁶¹ for in the wake of economic depression and natural calamities coupled with tense political situation, suspension and even remissions had, in any case, to be granted.¹⁶² Even the official report on land revenue had commented adversely on the perpetual operation of the land revenue system by way of remissions.¹⁶³ Emerson openly and proudly claimed that the sliding scale introduced in the land revenue system one element found in the assessment of income-tax, viz., assessment would be approximately in accordance with current

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- 156 Linlithgow Coll, 113: Emerson to Linlithgow, 22 May 1937. Also see PLCD, XI, 8 May 1928, pp. 1913, 21, 26. Tribune, 6 Feb. 1933, p. 7.
- 157 Linlithgow Coll, 113: Emerson to Linlithgow, 22 Dec. 1937.
- 158 Ibid., Emerson to Linlithgow, 22 May 1937.
- 159 Ibid.
- 160 PLAD, XIV, 6 Dec. 1940, p. 856; XII, 27 Jan. 1941, p. 962; XIX, 10 Mar. 1938, p. 47.
- 161 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 19 Dec. 1936.
- 162 CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. H-22(b), DO No. 11467-S, 12 Feb. 1930. Also see 'Press Communique of Punjab Govt. in GI : Home Poll, F. No. 77/31, 1931.
- 163 Report of the Land Revenue Committee 1938, p. 48.

164 profits. The system, interestingly, left out the other half of the income-tax principle which would have meant exemption of land revenue on certain small payers altogether. In practical working it was found that a rise in land revenue demand was almost invariably shifted on to the shoulders of the subordinate cultivators by the bigger land-owners who had surplus to sell and who were the chief beneficiaries of the rise in prices. This was evident in the application of the sliding scale to the Lyallpur district which led to the kisan movement of 1939-40.¹⁶⁵

Thus, to sum up in this aspect, on all the questions regarding land revenue Chhotu Ram showed himself in reality to be contrary to the image he was projecting. His advocacy of certain principles regarding land revenue, etc., remained clearly at the level of propaganda. Though he partially succeeded in his attempts at creating in the popular mind a different image of himself and of the interests he stood for, in reality his policy, initially moulded in response to the Congress, continued to be guided by the dictates of British Raj, and the interests of the larger landowners, and remained essentially conservative.

One last aspect of Chhotu Ram's political and ideological stance, mainly during the years 1930-1936, moulded in response to his personal relations with the district officials and its reflection in his questions in the Council and in the columns of the Jat Gazette, remains to be discussed. Almost all the issues of the Jat Gazette

164 H. Emerson, Note on the Land Revenue System in Punjab (Lahore 1938), p. 7.

165 Proscribed Literature Punjab (. NAI.) "Annual Report of the All India Kisan movement in Punjab" (Mar. 1939 to Feb. 1940) by Kartar Singh Gill, General Secretary, pp. 17-22.

till 1936 carry news items and special articles written by Chhotu Ram strongly criticising the district officials, which the district officials as well as the people took as direct criticism of the government itself. For example, the district officials took strong exception to 23 articles serialised under the heading "Bazar Thagi¹⁶⁶ Ki Sair" (a ramble through the Thagi market), in which the government was attacked for corruption in various departments. Another article termed "very objectionable" by the officials was titled "Mr. Lincoln Phir Tashrif La Rahe Hain"¹⁶⁷ (Mr. Lincoln is coming again). Zaman Mehdi Khan, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak in 1931, wrote to the Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab, that Chhotu Ram had criticised him greatly in the Jat Gazette and had also prepared a memorandum demanding his transfer knowing that his transfer from Rohtak had already been sanctioned.¹⁶⁸ According to him, Chhotu Ram's object was "to impose upon the ignorant people and to show them that he, i.e., Chhotu Ram could get even the Deputy Commissioner transferred".¹⁶⁹ Lincoln also had opined earlier that the Jat Gazette followed the policy of "attacking all outgoing officers".¹⁷⁰ The reason in the Deputy Commissioner's opinion was to show that he (Chhotu Ram) had access to the highest provincial officials and could get them to take action against the local administrators.¹⁷¹ Chhotu Ram's intentions behind these attacks were also

166 Beginning from 4 April 1933 JG carried 23 articles in a serial form titled "Bazar Thagi Ki Sair". For objections to it see CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40, DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div., 16 Sept. 1933.

167 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40, Lincoln to Comm. Ambala Div., 10 Nov. 1933.

168 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DO from DC Rohtak, 21 Sept. 1931.

169 Ibid.

170 Ibid., Lincoln's interview with Chhotu Ram, 4 Jan. 1932.

171 Ibid.

interpreted as "Sambhaloing" ('taking care of') the in-coming
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 officer.

Because of his criticism many of the district officials turned so much against Chhotu Ram that they refused in 1933 to remove the punitive police imposed on Rohtak in 1930 on account of dacoities even when they themselves agreed that there was no longer any need
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 for its continuation. The reason was that Chhotu Ram had been writing a great deal against the punitive police in the Jat Gazette
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 and demanding its removal. Thus the Superintendent of Police wrote to the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak in 1935 against its withdrawal before the originally proclaimed period because that would give the impression to the public that Chhotu Ram had been able to get the punitive police removed despite the opposition of the district officials who would then lose all prestige.
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 The Deputy
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 Commissioner, agreeing with the Superintendent of Police, added:

Impression will go around that concession is the outcome more of the representation and influence of Chowdhri Chhotu Ram who was able to show how unjust the government action has been than the conviction that the circumstances of the case justified the curtailment of the period.

Several complaints were also made of Chhotu Ram's general "misbehaviour" and "bullying attitude" towards police by the district
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 officials. Chhotu Ram openly referred to the police during the

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- 172 Ibid., DO from DC Rohtak, 1 Mar. 1933.
 173 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 10/38.
 174 Ibid., Chhotu Ram to DC Rohtak, 10 Jan. 1935. Also see JG, 28 Jan. 1931, p. 3; 18 Feb. 1931, p. 4; 25 Feb. 1931, p. 4; 15 April 1931, p. 8; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 4.
 175 Ibid., SP to DC Rohtak, 14 April 1935.
 176 Ibid., DO No. 149-57 from DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div. (n.d.).
 177 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 10/38, pp. 13-27, 29-30.

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 court cases as "expert liars". In one case, the Additional District Magistrate complained that Chhotu Ram had made a most unwarranted remark in the court by saying: "Agar Police ka yahi hal Raha to is Government ka takhta ult jayega" (if the police continues this way, the government of the day would be toppled).¹⁷⁹ Chhotu Ram's frequent and public attacks on the police were particularly resented, as an attack on the police was considered a "natural attack" on the government itself.¹⁸⁰

Chhotu Ram also spoke very openly against the judicial system introduced and operated by the British administrators in India. He repeatedly and publicly asserted that it worked in favour of the "educated urban class" against the "illiterate zamindars".¹⁸¹ Chhotu Ram's comment on his own wholesale condemnation of the judiciary was that he had begun to speak in the "strain of Mahatma Gandhi".¹⁸² In the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner, the reason behind the severe condemnation of judiciary was the attempt of Chhotu Ram, also a practising lawyer, to obtain "ascendency over the magistrate".¹⁸³ According to him Chhotu Ram succeeded in getting his own way where there were "timid" magistrates.¹⁸⁴

Chhotu Ram also became notorious for asking in the Council a

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- 178 Ibid. Above remark was made in the court of Mr. Ratan Singh, case No. 98/2 under Section 397 IPC and also in the Garhi-Sampla Police Assault case. These and other instances of Chhotu Ram's 'misbehaviour' were recorded on 21 Oct. 1932.
- 179 Ibid., ADM to DC Rohtak, 18 Oct. 1932.
- 180 IOR:L/P & J/6/3358/1926, F. No. 1931, p. 26.
- 181 JG, 5 Jan. 1921, p. 7; 14 Mar. 1923, p. 4; 16 Sept. 1931, pp. 4-5. Also see letters of Chhotu Ram to Harcourt in H. Harcourt, *op.cit.*, pp. 7-16. Also below Chapter IX, p.
- 182 Chhotu Ram to Harcourt, 13 April 1924, in H. Harcourt, *op.cit.*, p. 13. Confidential
- 183 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 9/37, / circular of DC Rohtak, to all DMs, 27 Oct. 1932.
- 184 Ibid.

series of questions, what he turned as "questions of public interests", regarding the nature and amount of work done by certain magistrates, number of acquittals and discharges, number of police stations inspected by the Superintendent of Police, and so on. The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak believed that the motive behind these questions was to "intimidate" the officials who were serving in the district.¹⁸⁶ The Commissioner of Ambala division agreed with this interpretation and added that Chhotu Ram in fact wanted to establish through these questions a sort of "ascendency" over officials serving in the district.¹⁸⁷ On the whole, the district officials considered Chhotu Ram's articles and numerous Council questions as a "nuisance". In the Deputy Commissioner's words, the motives of Chhotu Ram were:¹⁸⁸

First to try and funk the local officers and secondly to give him (Chhotu Ram) access to high government officers to talk of matters thus giving him an opportunity of complaining against them. Then of course, there is his own importance involved.

Regarding the innumerable complaints of lower officials against Chhotu Ram, Mian Abdul Aziz, Commissioner of the Ambala division, also observed that it had indeed become difficult to deal with Chhotu Ram at the local level as he was given to frequent

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- 185 A sample of the type of questions which Chhotu Ram asked can be found in Q. No. 1301 sent to the Punjab Council on 18 Oct. 1932:
 (a) The number of Magistrates at present exercising powers under section 30 of the Criminal Procedure Code in Rohtak district.
 (b) The number and nature of cases tried by each of the Magistrates referred to in (a). (c) The date on which evidence first commenced to be recorded in each case. (d) The date on which the evidence of the last witness entered in the calendar was recorded. (e) The date on which arguments were heard. (f) The date on which order was announced.
 Source: CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 9/37, pp. 1(a), 3(a).
- 186 Ibid., Lincoln to Comm. Ambala Div., 26 Sept. 1932.
 187 Ibid., Mian Abdul Aziz to Lincoln, 29 Sept. 1932.
 188 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.

"running down" of the district officials in his paper in order to impress the "Rohtak Jats" with his own importance.¹⁸⁹

This modus operandi was also necessary in view of the fact that the Jats of Rohtak were at this time, during the early 1930s,¹⁹⁰ split into two factions, i.e., those of Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand. Chhotu Ram was always able to score over Lal Chand precisely because of the image that he was able to project, i.e., the image of getting 'work' done for the 'Jats' of Rohtak district and commanding considerable influence with the government.¹⁹¹ Lal Chand on the other hand despite being "pleasant" and always having got along well with the officials was no longer considered "useful" in the district by 1936 even by them.¹⁹²

Chhotu Ram, who had realised that at the local level of his constituency the dominant Jat electorate of Rohtak district were going to be impressed by what he could do for them and by his bullying and anti-district officials attitude, was not deterred by the fact that at the provincial level he cooperated so closely with the same government. He had very early realised the advantages of making the "maximum noise and speeches", and had asserted as early as 1921 that the government "gave in" to those who made a political impact on it.¹⁹³ Chhotu Ram's ultimate triumph at the more immediate and local level through these methods certainly showed that he had succeeded in

189 HO Notes, Comm. Ambala Div. 1933, CF Comm. Ambala Div., F. No. A/28.

190 For details of factional politics in Rohtak district see above chapter II, pp. 65-6z.

191 An assessment of Chhotu Ram before the Punjab Assembly elections under Provincial Autonomy was made by the DC Rohtak, see HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev (1936-39), 11 May 1939, op.cit.

192 Ibid.

193 JG, 12 Jan. 1921, p. 2; 14 Mar. 1925, p. 7.

evolving a political style which was popular with and appreciated by his constituents.

At the provincial level Chhotu Ram's identification with the political policies and ideology of the colonial government was total, and he fully cooperated with it. A complete loyalist, it was he who with Sikandar Hayat Khan had proclaimed a month before the war broke out that "If England fights the Punjab fights"¹⁹⁴. As Chhotu Ram himself put it: "Punjab had manfully shouldered the burden of carrying on the King's Government and defied Congress and League alike"¹⁹⁵. It was clear that Chhotu Ram's domination in politics depended upon keeping Punjab free of both Congress and Muslim League influence. This could be done only if the British remained firm in Punjab where alone, according to Chhotu Ram, existed the third party constituted by the "agriculturist and the martial classes - the soldier and the loyalist"¹⁹⁶. The All India Jat Conference actually adopted a resolution requesting the British officials to throw in their lot on the side of the loyalists.¹⁹⁷ Regarding the ultimate ambition for Punjab, the Unionist Government, of which Chhotu Ram was one of the most important architects, wanted the province to pull out of British India and develop a direct relationship with the Crown.¹⁹⁸ They wanted a "Sovereign Punjab" as a reward for its war services with "sovereign rights of a native state of the highest

194 Brayne Coll, 64: See Brayne's note titled "The Honourable Sir Chhotu Ram".

195 Ibid.

196 Brayne Coll, 69: See Brayne's note to R. Coupland, 19 Sept. 1943.

197 C & MG, 7 Dec. 1942, p. 4. See "Jat Advise to Britain".

198 For details see D. Page, "Prelude to Partition: all India Muslim politics 1920-1932", Ph. D. Thesis (Oxford 1974), pp. 169, 263.

standing" and a British Ambassador in place of a Resident.¹⁹⁹

At the height of Indian national movement during the war Chhotu Ram along with Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana was quoted by F.L. Brayne as saying: "Neither quit nor divide"²⁰⁰. Both of them, according to Brayne, wanted the British "to stay and help in their standard of living, to develop their country and to share in the government of it, but hesitated to say so openly for fear of victimisation if we depart"²⁰¹. As a political solution of India's problems, Chhotu Ram in a long chat in June 1943 with Brayne²⁰² disclosed his mind candidly. Brayne recorded in his diary:

Saw Chhotu Ram in afternoon... long talk on politics; he agrees entirely that we must bypass Gandhi etc., says Jinnah is a nobody, made sentinel by the British. Says we summon all who want to win the war. 90 percent of Congress will join us, disfranchise the rest and invite the cooperators to name ministers. Viceroy's Council should consist of men with following in the rural-martial tribes, not intellectuals with no following who will disappear when trouble starts.

Both Chhotu Ram and Khizar were "very suspicious" of Delhi and White Hall. "They say", Brayne reported, "not only is Delhi Bania minded but it always tries to appease its enemies at the expense of its friends"²⁰³. Both of them in fact advised that the "traitors" should remain "locked up"²⁰⁴. Chhotu Ram wrote to Brayne in January 1944

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- 199 IOR:L/P & J/7/6251, 1943, letter of Major Short to the Secretary of State, 13 Oct. 1943.
- 200 Brayne Coll, 69: A note on politics by F.L. Brayne, 19 Sept. 1943.
- 201 Ibid., A note by Brayne (n.d.).
- 202 Brayne Coll, 194: Diary of F.L. Brayne, 28 June 1943. The distortion in the language is because of the style of writing adopted for recording observations in the diary.
- 203 IOR:L/P & J/8/53, 1944, Brayne to Amery, 7 Dec. 1944, p. 209. Even Wavell commented in July 1944 that Chhotu Ram was "suspicious of the Government of India", Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal, ed. by Penderel Moon (London 1973), p. 79.
- 204 Brayne Coll, 69: Brayne's letter, 4 July 1943.

that "so far the Government of India has always had a soft corner
for those who thwart it and obstruct its policy".²⁰⁵

It was resentment of sorts that led Chhotu Ram to politically project his otherwise deeply conservative and loyalist political ambitions at the national level once again during the 1940s in a 'revolutionary' way. In May 1943, Chhotu Ram's advice openly given at a public function of the Chamars held in Lahore cantonment stunned and shocked the British officials. In this function, Chhotu Ram advised the Chamars not to stand in the way of Swaraj, as "Free India will afford the maximum of opportunity for self expression to the members of all communities".²⁰⁶ Chamars were interestingly promised a due share in the administration of "free India" in proportion to their population.²⁰⁷ For this speech, so contradictory to the realities of his aims and ideology and privately offered advice, Chhotu Ram was once again pulled up by the Governor on orders from the Viceroy, who took strong exception to this speech as reported in the newspapers.²⁰⁸ Chhotu Ram was sternly told to issue a refutation which, he of course did immediately.²⁰⁹ Yet Chhotu Ram's shrewdness is apparent. For many who had attended the function Chhotu Ram stood as much for Swaraj as the Congress regardless of what his political critics and detractors had to say.

However, as brought out earlier, it was really at the local and not the national level that Chhotu Ram projected a different,

205 Brayne Coll, 69: Chhotu Ram to Col. F.L. Brayne, 2 Jan. 1944.

206 C & MG, 13 May 1943, p. 2. Also Tribune, 17 May 1943, p. 6.

207 Ibid.

208 Linlithgow Coll, 125: Linlithgow to Glancy, telegram 17 May 1943.

209 Ibid., Glancy to Linlithgow, telegram 18 May 1943.

populist line of policy and propaganda towards officials which led to a great deal of confusion in a correct understanding of the true basis of his ideological and political commitment. The lower class voters of Rohtak district, very susceptible to the Congress propaganda, needed a different kind of popular propaganda from what was being undertaken by the Unionist Party at the provincial level. Chhotu Ram reflected this need in his Congress-style propaganda with its special appeal to the kisans of Rohtak and in his anti-government official attitude through the Jat Gazette and the Zamindar League. For more than a decade, before 1937, Chhotu Ram's upholding of the application of the principle of Income-tax to land revenue and exemption of smaller landowners, along with questioning the rate of land revenue demand, confused the political picture. The agrarian legislation of the late 30s, for which Chhotu Ram was given the entire credit, also succeeded in obtaining for him a radical image. In fact, Chhotu Ram in a zamindar conference of Lyallpur, held in September 1938, declared that he had brought "Inquilab" (revolution) among the zamindars through the 'Zamindar Laws'. He also asserted that he was himself ²¹⁰ Inquilab personified. In fact during 1938-45, he took to frequently concluding his speeches with the slogan of "Inquilab-²¹¹ Zindabad" (long live revolution). All these enabled Chhotu Ram to acquire a radical and populist image which he fully exploited to woo the lower class voters. His appeals for remission and exemption of land revenue, innumerable Council questions, criticism of district officials, and personally offensive

210 C & MG, 6 Sept. 1938, pp. 1-5; 13 Oct. 1938, p. 1.

211 Ibid.

behaviour towards them, were all part of a wider strategy of getting to be known at the local level as the chief source of assistance to the peasantry and their indefatigable defender. That he succeeded in this objective is quite clear. Similarly his appeal in Rohtak district to caste and tribal sentiments endeared him to the majority of 'Jat voters' of the time thereby enabling him to claim the general following of the single largest 'community' in Rohtak. It was this that enabled him to speak with authority inside the Unionist Party. It is to Chhotu Ram's credit as an astute political tactician that being a big landlord himself, and the champion and benefactor of the richer sections of the land-owning classes and of the retired and serving men of the British Indian army, he could successfully claim to represent rural areas and agriculturists drawn from all rural socio-economic classes and strata. His final success lay in his being accepted by the contemporary as well as the present day readers and writers as the 'champion of have-nots' in the province and representative of the 'poor down-trodden kisans'. That this image was also accepted by the majority of the rural voters in Punjab is clear from the success that the Unionist Party achieved under Chhotu Ram's leadership in the elections of 1937.

Chapter IX

CHHOTU RAM'S ROLE IN THE AGRARIAN LEGISLATION OF PUNJAB

Chhotu Ram from his local base in the rural areas of Rohtak district to the provincial level claimed his support from the zamindars defined as agriculturists, irrespective of all divisions of caste, class, and creed. He further claimed to represent in his own person the zamindar interests. He was always in the forefront of projecting these interests through the Agriculturist or the Zamindar Party in the Reformed Council and later, in the so called, Zamindar Raj established under the Provincial Autonomy. It is, therefore, in the agrarian field corresponding with 'zamindar interests' that Chhotu Ram, by his own profession as well as according to others, played a major role specially during 1937-45. Any evaluation of the role of Chhotu Ram in Punjab politics has, therefore, to include his role in the field of agrarian legislation.

The major achievements of the Zamindar Party in agrarian field in the 12 years of its life span from 1923 to 1936 were noted by Chhotu Ram in the election manifesto of the Unionist Party he prepared in 1936.¹ Among these were included works of rural uplift and reconstruction, better sanitation, water supply, medical relief, rural dispensaries, inter-village roads, education, reading rooms, new libraries, night schools, intermediate colleges, improvement of cooperative movement, and consolidation of holdings, etc. In the field of agrarian legislation Chhotu Ram claimed the

1 Fazl-i-Hussain Coll, 26: See "Manifesto of the Punjab Unionist Party" by Chhotu Ram (Lahore 1936).

2 Ibid.

enactment of the Regulation of Accounts Bill, two amendments of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, and passing of two important measures for the indebted peasantry, i.e., Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934 and the Debtors' protection Act of 1936.

Chhotu Ram claimed that the above mentioned schemes of rural reconstruction and legislative enactments were affected by the Zamindar Party under the Reformed Councils. This assertion was made despite his own realisation in the same manifesto that only those measures could be pushed through which had the blessings of the bureaucracy. However, these claims became important because later, when the Unionist Party formed the ministry under the Provincial Autonomy, it carried on the policy of rural development and agrarian legislation initiated earlier by the bureaucracy under the Reformed Councils. It stands to reason, therefore, that the motivating factors behind the Zamindar Party's emulation of the policies initiated earlier by British officials were necessarily shaped by considerations similar to those which had prompted these policies in the first instance. In its effects, such a policy was likely to lead to the perpetuation of results already manifest under the Reformed Councils. At the same time, the loyalist Zamindar Party stood to gain and strengthen its own social base by following a policy initiated earlier for that very social base.

British motivations regarding the programme of rural reconstruction and agrarian legislation were closely linked to political considerations. In 1928 Hirtzel, the Under Secretary of State for India, wrote to Hailey that "Government has got somehow as a mere matter of self preservation to take the wind out of communist and socialist sails by a progressive agricultural

and labour policy"³. In 1930s with the increasing danger of civil disobedience movement, mass contact decision of the Congress, low agricultural prices, and bad harvests, the situation was politically explosive for the British in India. From Punjab Fazl-i-Hussain recommended in 1934 that the loyalist parties should take up those aspects of the constructive programme of Congress which were sure to be adopted by Congressmen when the movement of civil disobedience came to an end.⁴ This would lessen the influence of the Congress, and also secure for the local government some part of the popularity which would otherwise go to the Congress.⁵ The British officials were already thinking on similar lines. This was disclosed by the Home Secretary who recommended Fazl-i-Hussain's proposal and in addition to it advised introduction of agrarian legislation on the pattern of the Bill on Rural Indebtedness being prepared at that time by the Government of United Provinces.⁶ This correspondence was consequently followed by the circular of 23 November 1934 from the Government of India to all the local governments.⁷ The circular declared that the real intention of Gandhi's movement of rural reconstruction and Village Industries Association was to prepare thousands of volunteers to back the civil disobedience movement at an appropriate time.⁸ The local governments were told not to give Gandhi a walk over but to anticipate his movement by adopting similar practical measures for the economic recovery of the peasant.⁹

3 Hailey Coll, 12 C:A.Hirtzel to Haily, 6 July 1928.

4 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 4/6/1933, pp. 1, 6.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., see handwritten remark of the Home Secretary on the proposal of Fazl-i-Hussain, p. 8.

7 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 3/16/34 & K.W., see Confidential Circular, 23 Nov. 1934.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

The circular also suggested certain areas of rural reconstruction work which were to be emphasised.¹⁰ The Punjab Government received Rs. 8.5 lakhs towards this programme in 1935 out of a total fund of Rs. 1 crore reserved by the centre for the purpose.¹¹ It was privately acknowledged that "good political effect" would be created if the government was to stand forth as the "helper of the masses".¹² The activities regarding the official rural reconstruction work were to be given great publicity in the local papers.¹³

The Punjab Government confirmed that Gandhi's constructive programme, though ostensibly directed towards the economic recovery of the peasant, was potentially dangerous.¹⁴ In fact, several overtures from the followers of Gandhi were made to F.L. Brayne, who was carrying out village uplift experiments in Gurgaon, for combining the two village uplift movements; these were rejected in no uncertain terms.¹⁵ Punjab took a lead in the official work of Dehat Sudhar (rural reconstruction). Great publicity was given to this work by Chhotu Ram who also claimed credit for the scheme which was in reality decided in its minutest details by the British

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- 10 Special steps suggested in the circular for rural reconstruction work were: encouragement and development of the cooperative movement; improvement in methods of agriculture, i.e., formation of better farming societies, improvement of marketing conditions, development of village and cottage industries such as handloom, weaving, tannery, agriculture and public health. It may be noted that these were the fields in which the Agriculturist Party of Chhotu Ram was claiming credit.
- 11 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 11/1/35, see letter, 3 Mar. 1935 to all Provincial Governors.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 11/2/35, Confidential DO, 13 Nov. 1935 to local governments.
- 14 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 3/16/34, Punjab Govt. to Home Dept., 23 Nov. 1934.
- 15 Brayne Coll, 36: See Gandhi to Brayne, 25 Dec. 1934; Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur to Brayne, 19 Dec. 1934; L.E. Stanley Jones of Leonard Theological College, Jabalpure, to Brayne, 5 Feb. 1935.

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bureaucrats.

By 1937, just before the first elections to the Punjab Assembly, the rural reconstruction programme of the Punjab Government had achieved complete success according to the officials. This was claimed by Lieutenant Colonel D.H. Currie in a secret report on his tours of the rural areas of Rohtak district and Delhi.¹⁷ On the basis of this report he also assured complete success of the "zamindar" candidates in the coming elections.¹⁸ It is clear that in Punjab the Unionist Party candidates, styled as the zamindar candidates, being loyal to the British Government, were allowed to take the credit for rural reconstruction work to assure their success in the elections. It is not surprising that Chhotu Ram should lay claims to all the credit in this sphere of activity.

16 The total fund of Rs. 8.5 lakhs for rural development of Punjab was to be spent in the following way:
consolidation of holdings, Rs. 1,04,000; sanitation improvement in the 31 villages of Gujrat dist., Rs. 9,000; bore-hole latrines in Shukargarh tehsil of Gurgaon dist., Rs. 10,000; water supply scheme, Rs. 2,25,000; serum cellers, Rs. 20,000; reconstruction of veterinary hospitals in Rohtak dist., Rs. 12,000; construction of 10 veterinary hospitals, Rs. 60,000; broadcasting scheme, Rs. 48,000; tanning scheme, Rs. 76,000; fruit growing, Rs. 62,000; well boring, Rs. 50,000; cinema film and loud speakers, Rs. 59,000; sheep development, Rs. 15,000; district officers discretionary grant, Rs. 1,00,000; total, Rs. 8,50,000. For the Haryana region certain items on which the fund was to be spent were mentioned in addition to the above expenditure. For example, in Gurgaon dist. against hook worm disease, rebuilding of veterinary building in Rohtak dist. destroyed by floods in 1933, 10 new veterinary hospitals for an area covered by Dhanni and Haryana cattle, and also for breeding schemes; Rohtak, Karnal and Gurgaon were chosen to install 40 receiver sets for broadcasting station. See

17 CI: Home Poll, F. No. 11/1/35, pp. 1-3.
CFSO Rohtak, F. No. M-1. See Secret Report of Lt. Col. D.H. Currie of his tours, 2-9 Jan. 1933.

18 Ibid.

When the Zamindar Party formed its ministry, the Dehat¹⁹ Sudhar propaganda was greatly strengthened in Rohtak. The Dehat Sudhar platform was openly utilised for propagation of the Zamindar Party and its ministry.²⁰ The Haryana Tilak repeatedly complained²¹ against such activities. The so-called Zamindar Party, like the colonial rulers, clearly needed the support of, and therefore attempted to identify itself with, the rural masses through this scheme. And although in its socio-economic effects the Dehat-Sudhar programme was a failure in Punjab,²² politically it was successful as it enabled the government of the day to project itself as the helper of the masses and also to score against the Congress.

The other aspect in which the British administrators had initiated policy was in the field of agrarian legislation. In this case the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900 provided the launching pad for all subsequent legislation in the agrarian field before and after the Provincial Autonomy. The Unionist Party which itself was, by and large, the creation of this act naturally hailed it as their "Magna Carta".²³ Apart from other legislation enacted since the passing of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, this act itself was amended ten times, leading to its further limitation and clarification in favour of the already

19 HT, 3 May 1938, p. 7; 25 April 1939, p. 4.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 E.N. Mangat Rai, Interview, 14 Aug. 1979.

23 FLRA, 1929-30, p. 312. It is interesting to note that Chhotu Ram who was one of the champions of the 1900 act had opposed it vehemently before he joined the Unionist Party on the same grounds as the 'Hindus' of Punjab were opposing it. C & MG, 4 Mar. 1937, pp. 1, 8.

favoured classes and strata. It would be, therefore, correct to say that the forces let loose by this act were further strengthened and perpetuated by its subsequent amendments and also by other agrarian legislation supplementary in nature to this act.

The 1900 act had resulted in providing major economic benefits to the richer among the agricultural castes. This may be specially seen in the rise of agricultural moneylenders in the rural areas of Punjab.²⁴ It is difficult to estimate their exact numbers but the number of registered moneylenders in Punjab went up from 8,400 in 1902 to 15,000 in 1917 and shot up to 40,000 during the thirties.²⁵ Tentative and cautious estimate of the Banking Inquiry Committee Report for Punjab put the number of moneylenders at 55,000 in the late 1920s.²⁶ This figure included 19,000 agriculturist moneylenders also. However, this excluded the agricultural mortgagees whose advances on land were a form of moneylending.²⁷ The inclusion of these mortgagees would have considerably raised the number of agricultural moneylenders as more than 75 percent of the land mortgaged in the last 25 years was considered to have been mortgaged to agricultural tribes; and out of a total mortgage debt of 59 crores in 1929, about 45 crores was due to the agriculturists.²⁸ By 1928 - 29 moneylending had emerged as the most important economic activity after agriculture in the countryside. Moneylenders were paying 36 percent of the

24 See above chapter I, pp. 21-28.

25 Pu. Prov. Bkg. Inq. Rpt, 1929-30, I, p. 129.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 139. Also M.L. Darling, Punjab in Prosperity and Debt (Lahore 1947), p. 198.

total income-tax paid by business and industry in the province.²⁹
 There were more income-tax payers among moneylenders than were
 found in any other profession in Punjab.³⁰ Rohtak district
 emerged as the leading district in the business of moneylending³¹
 in the whole of Punjab.

This foot-hold created for the agriculturist moneylender
 in the rural economy of Punjab was further strengthened by the
 peculiar economic conditions which led to increase in rural
 indebtedness in Punjab. The period between 1916 to 1929 was a
 period of very high prices in the province.³² It was estimated
 that the average purchasing power of Rs. 246/-, during 1920-25³³
 was the same as that of Rs. 100/- during 1889-94. The Punjab
 Banking Inquiry Committee Report showed 50 percent increase in³⁴
 the agricultural debt between 1921 and 1929. The official report
 on the working of agrarian acts in Punjab noted that the mortgage
 debt in the province increased far more in the period between
 1919 to 1929 than it had done in the previous 20 years.³⁵ The
 official estimate put this increase in indebtedness during the
 boom period at about twice the previous rate.³⁶ The crash came

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- 29 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., p. 129; Census of India 1931, Punjab,
 XVII, part I, p. 225.
- 30 M. Calvert, op.cit., p. 225.
- 31 For details of moneylending in Rohtak district see above
 chapter I, pp. 21-28.
- 32 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P-XIII.209. "Review of the Working of
 the Agrarian Acts in the Punjab", 2 April 1942, p. 3.
- 33 Ibid., p. 4.
- 34 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., I, p. 165.
- 35 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P-XIII.209, p. 4. The detailed figures
 are not given. However in one single tehsil of Lahore dist.
 the settlement officer reported that in the prosperous 1920-30
 decade as much as Rs. 59 lakhs were raised by mortgages; and
 on the usually accepted assumption that unsecured debts at
 the time were twice the secured debts the total increase in
 indebtedness in this one tehsil was calculated to be nearly
 180 lakhs in one year. Ibid.
- 36 Ibid., p. 4.

in 1929-30. In Rohtak district for example, the price of wheat, cotton, and Gur, fell from Rs. 5 annas 6 a maund, Rs. 24 a maund and Rs. 6 annas 7 a maund, respectively, in 1924, to Rs. 1 annas 8, Rs. 6 annas 10, and Rs. 1 annas 8 per maund, respectively, in 1929-33.³⁷ However, despite the tremendous fall in prices the commutation prices adopted for the land revenue demand remained the same. The wholesale prices of two main crops of wheat and Gur in Rohtak district fell much below the commuted price line maintained for land revenue purposes.³⁸ The land revenue demand in terms of real price increased several fold. So also increased the real level of the debts which were expressed in terms of rupees. It was estimated that anyone wishing to repay a debt in 1931-32 which was incurred in 1921-22, even without interest, would have had to sell three times as much wheat as the original loan could have bought.³⁹ Unrestrained borrowing in the boom years followed by sudden collapse of the market in agricultural produce brought the average landowner of Punjab to the brink of bankruptcy by 1931.⁴⁰ For the lower economic category of people in the south-east Punjab the conditions were so bad that in the whole of Punjab this region alone reported actual starvation during these years.⁴¹

37 FLCD, XXIV, 5 Mar. 1935, p. 115. Also XXIII, 21 Mar. 1933, p. 645.

38 Statement of Rohtak district showing the 1905-10 settlement and the commutation prices adopted: Wheat Rs. 2/- per maund, Gur Rs. 2 annas 10 per maund, and cotton Rs. 4 annas 4 per maund. The Report of the Land Revenue Committee 1938, Appendix IV. Compare this with the reigning prices of the same commodities for the period 1929-33 in Rohtak district cited above.

39 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 4.

40 Ibid.

41 IOR:P/12017/1933, see Report of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Punjab, 24 May 1933.

Increased rural indebtedness mainly to richer agriculturists and agriculturist moneylenders led to rapid alienation of land in favour of these classes. After the passage of 1900 act, the agricultural land could be sold only to the statutory agricultural tribes. This process of alienation of land was looked upon by the Government of Punjab as a form of liquidation of secure and insecure debts.⁴² Apart from outright sales there were innumerable cases of mortgage of land especially after 1901 which again amounted practically to the alienation of land belonging to small peasants. This produced a radical change in the pattern of ownership of land and, indeed, in the fabric of the rural society of Punjab.

The urdu weekly Daur-i-Jadid, a mouthpiece of the Unionist Party, made no secret of its pleasure at this development in an article in 1929. The Jat Gazette reprinted this article verbatim for the benefit of its readers in Rohtak district. The article gave startling figures of rapid alienation of land in Punjab to the agricultural tribes between 1902 to 1920.⁴³ The importance of

42 PLAD, V, 21 July 1938, p. 1559; XXVI, 24 Jan. 1939, p. 452.

43 Daur-i-Jadid gave two tables in its article as follows:

Year	Sale of land to the agricultural tribes		
	Sale of land by agricultural tribes: acres	Purchase of land by agricultural tribes: acres	Total loss & profit in land transactions: acres
1902-6	150,000	149,000	- 1,000
1907-11	170,000	178,000	+ 8,000
1912-16	180,000	189,000	+ 9,000
1920	182,000	191,000	+ 9,000

...contd. on next page

the figures given in the article were brought out in the
 following words:⁴⁴

Although the act has not affected the transfer of land through mortgage and sale, it has had the effect of making the land safe in the hands of agriculturists and preventing the forcible seizure of land by the sahkars.

The weekly merely saw in this substitution of 'zamindar' (agriculturist) for sahkars (non-agriculturist) the most beneficial effect of the Alienation of Land Act. The article closed with
 the words:⁴⁵

There is no need to explain as to how the zamindars have gained by this act.

The emphasis was clearly on the net gain made by the agriculturists in all land transactions. The 'agriculturists' did gain; but those who gained were rich agriculturists who replaced Bania or sahkars moneylenders.

In Rohtak district, the situation for the richer agriculturists had been different even before the enactment of the 1900 act. In fact, in the entire south-east region of Punjab, known as the Hariana tract, the "evil" of alienation of land from the hands of the agriculturists to Mahajans, Banias and Khatriis,

II Mortgages of land by the agricultural tribes:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Mortgage of land by agriculturists: acres</u>	<u>Redemption of land by the agriculturists: acres</u>	<u>Mortgage of land to the agriculturists: acres</u>
1902-06	190,000	178,000	1,762,000
1907-11	240,000	296,000	219,000
1912-16	264,000	270,000	238,000
1917	264,000	199,000	220,000
1920	284,500	348,000	267,000

For other details see reprint of the article in JG,
 27 Mar. 1929, p. 5.

44 JG, 27 Mar. 1929, p. 5.

45 Ibid.

which was supposedly the motivating factor behind this act, had never been considered by officials as "acute", as was the case in the northern districts of Punjab where it prevailed extensively.⁴⁶ That acute stage, necessitating governmental interference in the form of an act, was considered "a long way-off"⁴⁷ for the south-east region. On the contrary, Ambala district was unique in reporting an interesting movement in existence prior to the enactment of the act, a movement for the sale of land by the trading classes of Mahajans, Khattris and Banias to the well-to-do landowners.⁴⁸ The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak district had strongly advised the Commissioner of Delhi division⁴⁹ against the passing of the proposed legislation of 1900. The enactment of legislation which restricted competition from the side of non-agriculturists was bound to lead to the acceleration of land alienations and moneylending activities in favour of richer agriculturists on a scale which had not been available earlier and on less favourable terms from the point of view of the debtor. The available figures for 30 years in Rohtak district from 1901-1931, since the passing of the 1900 act,

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- 46 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. I-IV, DC Rohtak to Comm. Delhi Div.,
26 Dec. 1900.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid., see the note of H.J. Maynard, D C Ambala dist.
on Alienation of Land Act, 1900, 16 Dec. 1900.
- 49 Ibid., Captain P.S.M. Burlton to Comm. Delhi Div.,
26 Dec. 1900.

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show that the sale and mortgage of land doubled in numbers. The annual average of 2,947 cases of sale of land and 14,770 cases of mortgage of land between the years 1901-2 to 1905-6 rose to an annual average of 5,436 and 25,945 cases respectively during the years 1926-27 to 1930-31. Although the annual average of land sold or mortgaged during this period did not radically change, the price of land sold or mortgaged during this period rose five times. The sale price of Rs. 977,383 for 15,872 acres of land rose to Rs. 4,830,321 for 16,592 acres of land in 30 years. Similarly mortgage price of Rs. 2,137,821 for 54,782 acres of land rose to Rs. 10,648,093 for a mortgaged area of 62,024 acres of land. Although the mortgage of land unlike the sale of land could also be to the non-agriculturists, it was calculated by the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee that in Rohtak district more than ninety percent of the total mortgaged area was

50 Sale and mortgage of land for Rohtak district between 1901-1931:

Year	Sale of land			Mortgage of land		
	No. of cases	Area of land in acres	Purchase money Rs.	No. of cases	Area of land in acres	Mortgage money Rs.
1901-2 to 1905-6:	2947	15872	977383	14770	54782	2137821
1906-7 to 1910-11:	2926	16402	898550	17298	50373	2369045
1911-12 to 1915-16:	6457	21563	2031330	21710	54553	3814535
1916-17 to 1920-21:	3502	15456	2342627	22680	63967	9180534
1921-22 to 1925-26:	3594	13370	3314682	21819	56555	8019708
1926-27 to 1930-31:	5436	16592	4830321	25495	62024	10648093

Figures taken from Rohtak dist. Gazetteer II, prt. II, Statistical tables (Lahore 1936), table no. 21.

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held by statutory agricultural tribes.

The 100 percent increase in the total number of cases regarding mortgage and sale of land in Rohtak district clearly indicates the involvement of so many more agriculturists in the land transactions. The high prices available for land specially during 1921-1931, however, succeeded in limiting the acreage of land under these transactions. Even during the period of enormous rise in the price of land, clear from the figures noted above, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak interestingly observed in 1934: "the agriculturist moneylenders could dictate their terms and get the land of the small zamindars at a price far below it would have fetched in "an open market"⁵². The restriction on the purchase of land by the non-agriculturists had clearly provided the rich agriculturists and the agriculturist moneylenders in Rohtak district, and indeed elsewhere in Punjab, with a condition of semi-monopoly to buy land cheaply.

The area made available each year through mortgages and sales of land in Rohtak, as elsewhere in Punjab, was leased out for cash or kind to either the smaller landowner whose holding was uneconomic, or to other tenants who did not own land at all. This added to the number of tenants of all kinds. Calvert was to pointedly assert in 1921 that in Punjab the increase in the number of tenants was due to increase in the number of mortgages, as the mortgagors in a great number of cases were entered in the records as tenants cultivating under mortgagees.⁵³

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- 51 Pu. Pro. Bkg. Inc. Report, II, evidence, pp. 872-4.
 52 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. Q.27, see Report of E.H. Lincoln, 4 Feb. 1934. Also see above chapter I, p.21.
 53 H. Calvert, op.cit., p. 87.

The increase in the number of tenants of all kinds in Rohtak district can also be seen from the figures of usufructuary mortgage⁵⁴ held by the agricultural tribes in Rohtak district.

In less than 20 years, i.e., between 1921-22 to 1939-40 the number of usufructuary mortgages almost doubled. From 34,752 in 1921-22 they reached 68,191 in 1939-40. The actual acreage of

54 Area owned by agricultural tribes with details of portion held by usufructuary mortgage during 1921-1922 to 1939-40 in Rohtak district:

Year	Total cultivated area: acres	Total No. of mortgages:	Cultivated area under mortgage: acres	Percentage of area held under mortgages to the total cultivated area:
1921-22	1,042,198	34,752	90,867	7.9
1922-23	1,046,033	34,804	90,926	7.9
1923-24	1,053,414	36,395	94,162	8.1
1924-25	1,054,680	37,807	97,990	8.4
1925-26	1,054,933	39,178	100,975	8.7
1926-27	1,049,829	38,276	95,159	8.2
1927-28	1,044,163	42,326	107,393	9.3
1928-29	1,040,941	44,504	111,339	9.7
1929-30	1,035,751	46,466	115,846	10.1
1930-31	1,044,787	50,793	121,652	10.6
1931-32	1,043,123	52,952	128,289	11.2
1932-33	1,052,397	54,072	132,177	11.4
1933-34	1,062,883	60,453	144,194	12.4
1934-35	1,170,864	70,189	172,627	14.7
1935-36	1,066,455	61,470	147,399	12.6
1936-37	1,063,707	63,501	151,045	12.9
1937-38	1,056,866	65,790	155,832	13.4
1938-39	1,050,334	66,880	157,959	13.7
1939-40	1,040,219	68,191	158,685	13.9

Table prepared from statement III appended to the PLRA, for the relevant years.

Usufructuary Mortgage means a mortgage by which the mortgagor delivers possession of the mortgaged land to the mortgagee and authorises him to retain such possession until the payment of the mortgage money and to receive the rents and profits of the land and to appropriate them in lieu of interest or in payment of the mortgage money or partly in lieu of interest and partly in payment of mortgage money. Definition taken from the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, 1900 (Act No. XIII of 1900), Gazette of India 1899, prt. V, p. 135.

area given by agricultural tribes in usufructuary mortgage to their fellow agricultural tribes showed 88 percent increase in relation to the total cultivated area owned by agricultural tribes. Mortgaged area which was 7.9 percent of the total cultivated area in 1921-22 increased to 13.9 percent in 1939-40. These figures support the thesis that the number of tenants of all kinds was progressively on the increase. Although sufficient evidence is lacking about the exact number of cultivators of land under usufructuary mortgages, as it could be let out to tenants-at-will, or to the agricultural labourers, or to the mortgagors themselves; all that can be said with certainty is that the number of tenants and agricultural labourers increased greatly. What is available, however, is the economic status of majority of cultivators indulging in various kinds of mortgages. In the estimate of Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee, in 73 percent of the mortgages in Rohtak district effected since 1907, the mortgagors⁵⁵ were owners of not more than five acres of land. The one aim of the British promoters of the Alienation of Land Act of 1900, had been to enable the richer among the agricultural tribes to invest⁵⁶ in land. This was obviously realised largely at the expense of petty landowners of uneconomic holdings. The "questionable" nature of giving free access to such persons among agricultural tribes to acquire land from their fellow tribesmen had been⁵⁷ recognised but ignored in 1900.

55 Pu. Pro. Bkg. Inq. Rpt., II, evidence, pp. 872-4.

Also see below p. 335.

56 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. I-IV, see letter No. 117, 12 Nov. 1900. For details see above chapter I, pp. 18-21.

57 Ibid.

It was clear that not only in Rohtak district but also in other parts of Punjab more and more petty landowners were either mortgaging or selling their lands to the richer agriculturists. The fact that smaller landowners were more involved in these transactions even in the other regions of Punjab is evident from the tremendous increase in the number of small landholdings. This fast spreading problem of the landholdings getting smaller was serious enough for the Viceroy to order an inquiry in June 1936.⁵⁸ The inquiry was conducted by M.L. Darling, who after taking into consideration the evidence of factors like population growth, irrigation facilities, war, and the consequent price rise, etc., concluded that there was indeed a very large increase in the number of very small holdings.⁵⁹ The village surveys undertaken by the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry similarly showed that in seven out of eight villages in different districts the average area per owner had decreased in the last 30 years.⁶⁰

In Rohtak district the startling deterioration in the economic status of the petty owners is distinctly noticeable in the swelling of the number of tenants and agricultural labourers. The census figures of 1921 and 1931 relating to different agricultural categories make this amply clear. Although these two census are regarded/^{as} controversial in nature for being recorded in what were termed as unnatural times, the resultant general trend indicated by their figures is fully supported by the earlier census figures of 1911 and of the later

58 Darling Papers, Box 5, F. No. 1, see letter of Laithwait, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 3 June 1936.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61

ones of the census of 1951. The figures of different agricultural categories as available in Rohtak district for 1911 and 1951

- 61 There are severe reservations regarding the authenticity of the census figures of 1921 and 1931 mainly because of the two different definitions adopted for the word 'economic activity' in determining various categories of the agricultural classes. Apart from this the demographic and economic disturbances of influenza epidemic of 1918, and the agricultural depression of 1930, made both the census years somewhat 'unnatural'. This has also been taken to result in "vagaries in figures" of the two census operations. Therefore, a longer time span indicated by census operations in Punjab from 1911 to 1951 has been taken to interpret long term socio-economic trends. The trends as interpreted, leaving a margin for 'vagaries in figures' of 1921 and 1931 censuses, may be taken to be authentic trends as they are also supported by other evidence belonging to the same period. For details of this controversy see J. Krishnamurthy, "Changing Concepts of work in the Indian Censuses: 1901-1961", The Indian Economic and Social History Review, XIV, no. 3, July-Sept. 1977, pp. 324-40. It may be noted here that Punjab, as compared to other provinces of British India, was in somewhat better position regarding the reporting of matters relating to land and agriculture. Punjab employed Patwaris for all such reporting who, though inefficient, handed in more reliable figures than the Chowkidars employed in the southern and eastern provinces. Figures of land and agriculture handed in by the Patwaris were "under-reported" rather than "over-reported" and more reliable than the "whimsical and unchecked" reporting of the Chowkidars. For details see "Patwaris and Chowkidars - Subordinate Officials and the Reliability of India's Agricultural Statistics", in C. Dewey and A.G. Hopkins (ed.), The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India (London 1978), pp. 280-314.
- 62 Figures of different agricultural categories in Rohtak district:

	1911	% of inc- crease	1921	% of inc- crease	1931	% of inc- crease	1951
1. Rent Receivers	3539	+38.5	4898	+ 8.57	4940	+ .9	5389
2. Ordinary cultivators (petty owners) and tenants of all kinds)	99355	+30.76	136723	+54.84	211718	+59.23	337127
3. Agricultural Labourers	9916	+60.77	16610	+66.65	27681	+43.03	39593

Figures taken from Census of India 1911, Punjab, XIV, Prt. II, Table XV, Prt. A; Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, Prt. II; Census of India 1931, Punjab, XVII, Prt. I.

show a mere nominal change, less than one percent, in the total number of rent receivers between 1921 and 1951, although there was an increase of 38.5 percent between 1911-1921. This discrepancy merely reinforces the point that bigger landowners were gaining at the expense of smaller landowners. A phenomenal increase can be seen in the total numbers of so called ordinary cultivators, a term which included petty owners and tenants. From 99,355 in 1911 they increased by 30.76 percent in 1921 and stood at 136,723. By 1931 census an increase of 54.85 percent had been effected, and by 1951 they had once again risen by 59.23 percent. It may be safe to infer that big landowners substantially added to their holdings in this period. The agricultural labourers of Rohtak district too showed a 60.77 percent increase from 1911 to 1921, 56.65 percent increase from 1921 to 1931 and 43.03 percent increase from 1931 to 1951. The rather substantial increase of 66.65 percent among agricultural labourers during the economically tense period of 1921 and 1931 is therefore fairly well supported by both the 1911 and 1951 census reports.

It is thus unmistakably evident that since the enactment of Punjab Alienation of Land Act, the agriculturist moneylenders along with the emerging rich agriculturists having been given a privileged position had acquired a predominant position in the agrarian field of Punjab. Helped greatly by difficult economic conditions, they scored over the small landowners by dispossessing them of their rights in land, partly or wholly; thus resulting in a large increase in tenants of all kinds and agricultural labourers, specially in Rohtak district.

The situation was no different in other parts of Punjab. The figures relating to Punjab as a whole show a similar increase in the number of tenants as also in the acreage of cultivated land under them.⁶³ This phenomenon consequently gave rise to the charge of the "swallowing of small fishes by big fishes".⁶⁴ This was vehemently denied by the Punjab Government both before and during the period of Provincial Autonomy. As justification, it published the report of the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry in 1931 according to which during 1922-23 to 1926-27 only an insignificant number of 2.3 percent small zamindars sold out their land to the big zamindars.⁶⁵ Another estimate which covered a small area of Punjab for three years, 1931-32 to 1933-34, similarly asserted that only 6 percent of the land of small zamindars was 'swallowed' by the big zamindars.⁶⁶ The Board in both these surveys defined the 'small owner' as the owner of 100 acres or less of land and 'buyers' as those who paid rupees 100 or more of land revenue. It may be noted that in a place like Rohtak district where an average holding was 5.7 acres and an economic holding was 12 acres those who paid rupees 100 and over as land-revenue came to only 358.⁶⁷ These alone could fall in the category of 'buyers' and 'big landowners'. If the owners of the really average holdings had been taken into account the conclusions of the Board of Economic Inquiry would

63 For details see Prem Chowdhry, Loc. cit.

64 Tribune, 7 Aug. 1938, p. 5.

65 Board of Eco. Inq., A Note on the Sale of Land between the Motified Agricultural Tribes in the Punjab during the Quinquennian 1922-23 to 1926-27 (Lahore 1931).

66 Board of Eco. Inq., Sale of Land in South-west Punjab, 1931-32 to 1933-34 (Lahore 1936). The areas covered were Jhung, Muzaffargarh and Dera Ghazi Khan.

67 See above chapter I, p.14, f.n.22.

have been radically different and the percentage of the small landholders having become landless would have been considerably raised from mere 2.3 percent and 6 percent as claimed in the two reports. Indeed, the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee certainly recognised this wide scale phenomenon, though it upheld this exchange of land between statutory agricultural tribes as an "exchange of a bad farmer by a good one".⁶⁸ Similarly, even M.L. Darling in his evidence to the Royal Commission on Agriculture officially justified the effect of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act by maintaining that "good advantage" was achieved "if a strong landowner could become stronger by buying land".⁶⁹

Throughout the period of Reformed Councils and Provincial Autonomy, attempts at further clarification and application of the 1900 act and other successive legislative enactments in Punjab led to an increasingly monopolistic situation in the agrarian field for the benefit of the rich agriculturists and agriculturist moneylenders who became the staunchest supporters of colonial government and shared political power under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy.

The British administrators hardly ever recognised the existence of the agriculturist moneylender. By and large, the official line taken in 1900 remained in later years that the moneylenders or sahu⁷⁰kars were all non-agriculturist. In this

68 Pu.Pro.Bkg.Inq.Rpt., I, p. 117.

69 Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, VII, evidence (Bombay 1928), p. 637.

70 Sahu⁷⁰kar was popularly accepted as a non-agriculturist moneylender and a moneylender in Punjab was always referred to as a 'sahu⁷⁰kar'. This was the view held and projected since the 1900 Act. See below, pp. 324, 336-7.

respect, the Punjab Administration Report for the year 1923-24
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recorded:

The story of that piece of legislation (The Alienation of Land Act) is well known. The fatal facility with which the agricultural tribes of the Punjab had got into the clutches of moneylenders, resulting in course of time in the reduction in their status from proprietors to tenants, had long been marked, and remedies for arresting this tendency had been discussed. The outcome of the years of discussion was Act XIII of 1900.

Since the restrictions of the 1900 act were imposed on non-agricultural tribes only, it is clear from the quotation that officially the term 'moneylenders' applied only to those who were drawn from among the non-agriculturists and not to the agriculturist moneylenders. Again, an official note of 1934 on rural indebtedness in Punjab held the village Mahajan responsible for reducing the borrower to the condition of a serf through his
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exorbitant rate of interest.

Chhotu Ram projected the same view. He too popularised the notion that the word sahuakar stood only for moneylenders drawn from Bania, Mahajan and Vaish castes. These latter alone were to be considered professional moneylenders and not the agriculturist moneylenders who had captured the moneylending business of Punjab and particularly of Rohtak district. Similarly, in 1937, regarding the two acts of 1934 and 1936, which were enacted to control moneylending and had made no ostensible distinction between the agriculturist and non-agriculturist
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moneylenders, Chhotu Ram maintained:

71 PAR, 1923-24, pp. 76-77.

72 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 11/3/35, see official note on "Rural Indebtedness in Punjab", p. 1.

73 Speech of Chhotu Ram delivered in a village in Jullundur district, see Veer Bharti, 20 Sept. 1937, in Gokal Chand Narang, op.cit., p.6.

These two measures had been enacted to check the increasing dishonesty of the Banias and Lalas.

Thus, Chhotu Ram's vocabulary admitted only the Banias and Lalas in the definition of the word moneylender and excluded the agriculturist moneylender altogether. But when he was forced to acknowledge the existence of agriculturist moneylenders, he showed a benevolent attitude towards them which set them apart as a class from the traditional sahuakar. In a debate in the Punjab Council in 1934, condemning the often repeated criticism of the agriculturist moneylenders for being more "rapacious" than non-⁷⁴ agriculturist moneylenders, he said:

An agriculturist moneylender fortunately has not learned so far to make false entries in his account books (hear, hear,). He does not lend Rs. 50 and enter Rs. 100 in his account book. Fortunately also he has not learnt so far as to omit to give credit to a debtor for payments which the latter makes.... Again, an agriculturist moneylender is not a shopkeeper, he is not a trader, he is not a middleman, while unfortunately an ordinary non-agriculturist moneylender is a trader, a shopkeeper, a middleman and also a creditor. This combination of various capacities gives a non-agriculturist moneylender an advantage of immense value which is not availed of by an agriculturist moneylender. The latter does not use false weights; he does not use a tricky beam; he does not use short measures. He is not in a position to do all these things.... Therefore an agriculturist moneylender cannot be expected to be so ready for remission of interest as a non-agriculturist moneylender. But it is wrong to conclude from this that the agriculturist moneylender is harsher than a non-agriculturist moneylender. Only the non-agriculturist moneylender has a better control of his feelings and perhaps a better control of his facial muscles than a Jat. If a Jat gets angry he will show it in his face; but if a bania gets angry there will be no show of his anger at all. That is the only difference. But it is entirely wrong to suggest that the agriculturist moneylender is heartless.

This attitude of Chhotu Ram towards the agriculturist moneylender was of course not confined to him alone. Majority

⁷⁴ PLCD, XXV, 1 Nov. 1934, pp. 842-3. Also see above Chapter III, pp. 119-20.

of the members of the Unionist Party were rich landowners in direct sympathy with the familiar activities of agriculturist moneylenders in the rural areas of Punjab. Such an identity of interest was to lead to provisions for the safety of agriculturist moneylenders in Punjab through legislative enactments. Most of the legislative measures in this respect undermined the economic strength and influence of the non-agriculturist moneylenders and tried to prevent them from operating in the rural areas of Punjab, thus leaving a free field for the operations of the richer among the agriculturists. This favoured position created in 1900 was further promoted by the acts of 1907 and 1913. Punjab Alienation of Land (amendment) Act of 1907⁷⁵ brought the occupancy rights under the definition of land and gave the landlord, whether agriculturist or non-agriculturist, the right to purchase the ownership of his occupancy tenants. The Punjab Pre-emption of Land Act 1913⁷⁶ revised this act in favour of the agricultural castes by putting restrictions on permanent alienation of occupancy rights to non-agriculturist landlords which they had come to exercise under the 1907 act. Significantly, even the mortgage of occupancy rights by the tenants could be made only to the agriculturist landlords.⁷⁷

This position was further strengthened by the Punjab Alienation of Land (amendment) Act of 1931.⁷⁸ This act was brought

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- 75 See Punjab Alienation of Land (amendment) Act, 1907, Punjab Act 1 of 1907.
- 76 Redemption of Mortgages Act, 1913, Punjab Act II of 1913 in Punjab Govt. Gazette, 14 Mar. 1913.
- 77 IOR:P/11953/ 1931, F. No. 442/10/001, S.K. Kriplani, Revenue Department of Punjab to Comm. Ambala Div., 2 Jan. 1931.
- 78 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 253/31.

because several court rulings had held that the temporary alienation of land of a member of agricultural tribes to the non-agriculturists even beyond twenty years did not countervene the provisions of the Alienation of Land Act of 1900, as the concerned section 16 of the act prohibited only the sale and not temporary alienation of such land. The legislation of 1931 therefore laid down that the period of twenty years should not be extended by any device. Chhotu Ram, a member of the Select Committee on the bill, agreed with Sikandar Hayat Khan, the then Revenue Member, that the act did not differentiate between the agriculturist and non-agriculturist moneylenders in matters of temporary alienations permissible in execution of decrees in the court.⁷⁹ But it may be noted that the restriction in favour of statutory agriculturists was solely in cases in which temporary alienation for the repayment of debt was called for. In all other cases of mortgage between the agriculturists only no time limit was set. For non-agriculturists there could be only temporary alienation which was set at twenty years. There was no time limit for agriculturists in case of transactions regarding alienation of land transacted out of courts as the limit was placed only on 'judicial alienations'.

Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900 was again amended⁸⁰ in 1936 by Act III of 1936, which enlarged the definition of the word land to include trees as well. Trees became subjected to the same restrictions/^{as} agricultural land.

79 Ibid.

80 Punjab Alienation of Land (amendment) Act, Punjab Act III of 1936.

The economic depression from 1929 onwards led the Punjab Government to provide a series of legislative enactments in an attempt to deal with the problem of rising indebtedness. The Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Report showed the agricultural⁸¹ debts in Punjab in 1929-30 to be Rs. 135 crores. The continued fall in the prices of agricultural produce made the pressure of debt on the cultivators even heavier than before. Both the Royal Commission of agriculture and the Central Banking Inquiry⁸² Committee recommended steps to regulate moneylending transactions.⁸³ The Punjab Regulation of Accounts Act of 1930 was the first attempt towards this. Moneylenders were required to maintain proper accounts and to furnish six monthly accounts to their debtors. Failure to maintain proper accounts could lead to loss of due interest, partially or wholly, and also loss of⁸⁴ the cost of suits for the recovery of arrears. Chhotu Ram, who was a member of the select Committee on the bill, had been in favour of sterner penalty on the moneylenders for infringing the act. He had also not wanted any issue to be left to the discretion of the courts. The courts in his opinion always favoured the creditors. In his minute of dissent, Chhotu Ram⁸⁵ maintained:

- 81 Pu. Pro. Bkg. Inq. Rpt. I, p. 16.
- 82 Report of the Committee of Indebtedness, 1932 (Lahore 1932), see introduction.
- 83 The Punjab Regulation of Accounts Bill had been passed by the Punjab Legislative Council on 7 July 1926, but the Governor of Punjab withheld his assent and in 1930 an official Bill, more restricted in scope, was brought. Chhotu Ram pointed out that the veto of the Governor in 1926 after the bill had gone through the select committee was on account of the sensitiveness of the government to the agitation and threats of violence against the bill. See dissent of Chhotu Ram, GI : Home JudI, F. No. 608/29, 1929, p. 5.
- 84 Punjab Govt. Gazette, 28 Aug. 1930, prt. 1.
- 85 GI : Home JudII, F. No. 608/29, 1929, see minute of dissent by Chhotu Ram, p. 5.

The present complexion of the judiciary in this province as well as in others is not calculated to inspire confidence in the debtor classes. It is a notorious fact that the sympathies of the judiciary are with the creditors. As observed by Mr. Calvert, this indictment of the judiciary is fully borne out by the complete failure of the Usurious Loans Act.

The economic condition of Punjab peasantry continued to deteriorate. The situation was so bad in 1930 that even complete remission of land revenue was considered.⁸⁶ The suggestion was not accepted as grant of remission on account of a fall in prices was considered a dangerous precedent; earlier, remissions had been granted on account of failure of crops alone.⁸⁷ Actual loss anticipated in the land revenue due to depression in prices was Rs. 35 lakhs a year. The sympathies of British officials lay at the time with the larger owners of land. They were expected to be "harder hit" due to fall in rents as there was no accompanying fall in the money wages which they had to pay.⁸⁸ The small owners of land, on the other hand, were not expected to be hit so hard as they were expected to consume their own foodgrains to a large extent.⁸⁹ Chhotu Ram as a well-wisher of the bigger land-owners held an identical view and aired it vigorously.⁹⁰

The Punjab Government, knowing that in the years of economic depression the landowners found it hard to pay land revenue, conceded a 50 percent remission in the Rabi crop of 1931.⁹¹ They

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- 86 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 36/3/1932, see note sent by the finance dept. containing a record of the discussion with Punjab officials held on 11 Aug. 1930, pp. 10-14.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 For Chhotu Ram's views see above chapter III, pp. 86-87.
- 91 PLCD, 11 May 1931, pp. 370-5..

also appointed a committee in March 1932, with Chhotu Ram as one of its members, to examine the recommendations relating to the relief of indebtedness made by the various inquiry committees.⁹² Some of the recommendations were adopted in the two acts which followed, i.e., the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934, and The Debtors' Protection Act, 1936. In the enactment of both these measures Chhotu Ram played an important part. Subsequently, under the Provincial Autonomy an attempt was made to adopt other recommendations made by the Committee on Indebtedness.

The Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934, introduced as an official bill,⁹³ came into force on 8 April 1935. It controlled the rate of interest chargeable by the moneylenders. This control of iniquitous rates of interest had also been recommended by the officials of Rohtak district who had held the high rates of interest responsible for the increasing murders of moneylenders at the hands of their debtors.⁹⁴ The act adopted the principle of Damdapat.⁹⁵ It also provided for the constitution of Debt Conciliation Boards to scale down debts. It forbade the issue of warrants of arrests for debt except in cases of contumacy.⁹⁶

Three important clauses of the act stood to benefit the richer classes of agriculturist debtors. Firstly, the exemption

- 92 Report of the Committee of Indebtedness, 1932 (Lahore 1932), see Introduction.
- 93 Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Bill, 8 Mar. 1934, GI : Finance, F. No. 17(36), 1934 (D. 1945). Also, see GI : Edu. Health, Lands, F. No. 17(13), 35, 1935-F.
- 94 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. A-27, see Report of Lala Raj Kumar, ADM of Rohtak, 1 Feb. 1934.
- 95 Principle of Damdapat meant that no decree could be made in satisfaction of the principal and interest for more than twice the amount due at the commencement of the act to the debtor. See Prt.V, Clause 30, in the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934, op.cit.
- 96 Ibid.

from attachment of houses, which were not let out on rent or lent to others or left vacant for a period of one year or more, was clearly for those who had more than one dwelling. Chhotu Ram hotly disputed this charge and demanded the opposition to "cite a single case" of a sahuakar having attached the house of a big landlord or having applied to the court for his arrest. "Moneylenders", he maintained, "are far too clever to do anything to give offence to big people". Secondly, through two other clauses the act extended the scope of mortgages and loans covered by the Punjab Redemption of Mortgages Act passed in 1913. The 1913 act had helped the agriculturists with mortgaged area upto 30 acres and the loans secured under the mortgages upto Rs. 1,000 to redeem their mortgages through a simple summary procedure adopted by the Collector of the district. The Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934 increased the upper limit of the mortgaged area to 50 acres and mortgaged loans to Rs. 10,000; the lower limit of debt was brought down from Rs. 500 to Rs. 250. But all the debts below Rs. 250 were left untouched. Thirdly, the upper limit of debt liability set at Rs. 10,000 revealed the assistance and relief given to the richer classes of agriculturists in bringing down their debts to within their repaying capacity. Yet Chhotu Ram regarded this ceiling of Rs. 10,000 as "too low". He had in fact argued in the Select Committee

97 PLAD, XIII, 8 April 1940, p. 233.

98 Ibid.

99 The Redemption of Mortgages Act, 1913, op.cit.

100 See prt. VII, clause 33, amendment of the Redemption of Mortgages Act Punjab, 1913, in the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934, op.cit.

101 The Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934, op.cit.

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 against having any upper ceiling at all. Chhotu Ram had also
 condemned the narrow definition of the word 'debtor' as adopted
 in the 1934 Bill, which included the statutory agriculturists
 only. He wanted the definition to include all members of the
 depressed classes of all religions, including tenants and agri-
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 cultural labourers. This change was ultimately effected in
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 this act by the Governor. Yet, interestingly, Chhotu Ram made
 no comment on the lower ceiling of debts being placed at Rs. 250
 and in practical effect being too high to be of any use to the
 above mentioned classes.

Chhotu Ram in his note of dissent condemned the 1934 act
 as "halting and half hearted" because many clauses recommended
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 by the majority of the Select Committee were not accepted. An
 understanding had been effected, however, that the Punjab Govern-
 ment would give facilities for the introduction of a private
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 member's bill containing these provisions. This was taken
 up by Chhotu Ram as a non-official member of the Punjab Council.
 He prepared and piloted another measure known as the Punjab
 Debtors' Protection Bill on 31 March 1936, which became an act
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 on 16 April 1936. This act placed further obstacles in the way
 of the creditors seeking to execute a decree. The act exempted
 sufficient land for the maintenance of the judgement debtor and
 his family to be decided by the court of the Collector even in

102 Ibid., see Select Committee Report. Also see his speech
 in PLCD, XXV, 15 Nov. 1934, p. 976.

103 PLCD, XXV, 15 Nov. 1934, p. 976.

104 The Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, op.cit., see
 the recommendations of the Governor.

105 Ibid., see the Select Committee Report.

106 Ibid.

107 For the text of the bill see GI : Home Judll,
 F. No. 41/35, 1935.

cases of temporary alienation of land. Further, custom notwithstanding, no ancestral land could be used as a liability for attachment and sale in execution of a decree for debts incurred by a predecessor. This rule was not to have retrospective effect except in special circumstances. The act did not lay down any provision for fresh application for execution of decree in case six years had elapsed from the date of default. The burden of proving consideration was also to be on the moneylender.¹⁰⁸

This act for which Chhotu Ram alone was held responsible¹⁰⁹ by the Governor of Punjab was certainly in favour of and resulted in benefit to the landowners but mostly bigger landowners and agriculturist moneylenders. Although no apparent difference was made between the agriculturists and non-agriculturist moneylenders in any of the acts, in reality this difference did exist. For example, the act of 1936 excluded from its purview any transaction of money which was in substance a mortgage or a sale of immovable property.¹¹⁰ This in reality meant the actual removal of the agriculturist moneylenders from its fold, because it was a well known fact that the richer agriculturist-turned-moneylender took part of his debtor's land on mortgage. These mortgages were generally always usufructuary, with mortgagee taking immediate¹¹¹ possession of the land and paying himself out of the usufruct. In any case, the question of his suing the debtor could hardly

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- 108 The Punjab Debtor's Protection Act, 1936, op.cit.
 109 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 16 Oct. 1936.
 110 See sub-clause No. 6 of clause No. VII of the Punjab Debtors' Protection Act, 1936, op.cit.
 111 IOR:P/11649/1925, F.L. Brayne to Comm. Ambala Div., 28 Mar. 1925.

arise as the agriculturist lender because of his position and influence was able to secure repayment more easily than the non-agriculturist moneylender and therefore did not take recourse to the law courts.¹¹² Not only these two acts, but all the acts passed between 1934 to 1940 attacked the moneylender, whether agriculturist or non-agriculturist, only when he went to court and if he could avoid that he was free of any 'pernicious' effects of any of these acts. No act could touch him if he could recover his advances without going to a civil court. The agriculturist moneylender was in a position to avoid the civil court which his non-agriculturist counterpart was not. Further, under the provisions of 1936 act several exemptions for attachment were made; "enough land" for the maintenance of the judgement debtor and the members of his family had to be left. The provision of exemption applied to all transactions. Since sale of land to the non-agriculturist moneylender was prohibited only temporary alienation was left. The non-agriculturist moneylender found that he could not even get temporary alienation of land in case of small landowners as under the provision of exemption from attachment 'enough land' had to be left for the maintenance of¹¹³ the judgement debtor and the members of his family. The agrarian conditions in Punjab varied so much from district to district and even from village to village, that it was found impossible to issue general instructions in this matter to the collector of the district.¹¹⁴ In view of the fact that six acres was estimated

112 Ibid.

113 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 1.

114 Ibid.

to be the average holding of land in Punjab the same was officially acknowledged as the very least required for the maintenance of a family of four.¹¹⁵ It is easy to see that it were the small landowners who totally lost their creditworthiness. This was bound to change the social set up of the rural areas.

The report from Rohtak district regarding temporary alienations made under the collector's orders since the passing of 1936 act reveals that out of the cases which were brought to the court, in 78 percent cases no satisfaction was possible.¹¹⁶ In the remaining cases sanctioned for temporary alienation, only 18 percent of the total decretal amounts were satisfied.¹¹⁷ These figures confirm the indebtedness of the small landowners. The high percentage of exemption of land from attachment required for maintenance of the judgement debtor and his dependents, resulted in preventing the creditors from recovering their debts out of the very land against which the loans were advanced. The indebted small landowners of course gained immediately. This enabled Chhotu Ram to claim proudly before a gathering of 20,000 landowners in Sirsa village:¹¹⁸

Moneylenders can now attach neither your person nor your lands, unless they be unoccupied. Even when he obtains temporary lease of your land he has to exempt such proportions as the Deputy Commissioner considers necessary for your maintenance.

Chhotu Ram was, however, ignoring the fact that in the long run the small landowners' credit with the non-agriculturist moneylenders naturally dwindled so completely that it left them

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid., p. 6.

117 Ibid.

118 Brayne Coll, 48: See his note, 1 Feb. 1940.

totally at the mercy of the agriculturist moneylenders who there-
by gained immensely and who were now in a position to dictate
terms to the debtors. Emerson, for example, wrote to Linlithgow
in December 1936:¹¹⁹

Owing to recent legislation and other causes money-
lenders have found it extremely difficult to collect
their dues. Landowners have taken advantage of this
to drive hard bargains and in many cases moneylenders
have been prepared to take a mortgage for a short
term of years in full satisfaction of their claims ...
which is often four or five years only.

The debt being a necessary feature of the agrarian set up
of Punjab, the small landowners became more and more reliant upon
the richer agriculturists and agriculturist moneylenders for
their ordinary seasonal needs as the non-agriculturist money-
lenders became shy of advancing them loans. This phenomenon
had even otherwise become more marked during the economic
depression of the 30s when the non-agriculturist moneylenders
and traders of the villages collected what they could from the
villages and migrated to the towns.¹²⁰ Commenting upon widescale
migration Emerson in a public speech delivered in mid 1933 gave
the reason as the large fall in the agricultural prices leading
to "difficulties in selling food and recovering debts from the
rural debtors".¹²¹ The acts of 1934 and 1936 accelerated this
movement and the moneylenders were reported to be panicky.¹²²
However, this panic had started much earlier and was visible
immediately after the passing of the Regulation of Accounts Act,

119 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Emerson to Linlithgow, 19 Dec. 1936.
120 IOR:P/12017/1933, F. No. 10/13/00/15, p. 40.
121 Emerson Papers, see Speech, 27 July 1933.
122 HO Notes, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa (1936-1939), 26 June
1939, op.cit.

1930. This fact could be seen in the "exceptionally large" money decrees brought by the moneylenders against their rural debtors in Rohtak district during 1 April 1931 and 31 August 1932. The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak declared them to be the "largest figure in the whole province". The total number of decrees passed during this period was 3,981 amounting to Rs. 2,103,594. Chhotu Ram inquired into the causes of this phenomenon; the two causes given were: the prolong economic depression and the effects of the Regulation of Accounts Act. Commenting on the working of this act, the judges of Punjab High Court declared:

Many village moneylenders, being more or less illiterate and uncertain about the exact purpose and effect of the act, are reported to have hastened to the courts with a view to realising their dues and closing their business.

123 No. of money decrees passed on the basis of private awards during the period commencing from 1 April 1931 and ending with 31 August 1932:

<u>District</u>	<u>No. of decrees</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>No. of decrees</u>
Hissar	269	Gujranwala	12
Gurgaon	82	Gujrat	22
Karnal	2,024	Shahpur	16
*Rohtak	3,981	Jhang	116
Ambala	133	Jhelum	21
Simla	16	Rawalpindi	20
Hoshiarpur	6	Attock	6
Jullundur	7	Mianwali	22
Ludhiana	4	Montgomery	54
Ferozepore	50	Lyallpur	105
Lahore	282	Sheikhupura	20
Amritsar	115	Multan	29
Gurdaspur	-	Muzaffargarh	38
Sialkot	34	Dera Ghazi Khan	83

Source: IOR:P/12070/1934, Comm. Ambala Div. to the Home Secretary Punjab, Dec. 1934.

124

Ibid.

125

Ibid.

126

IOR:P/12047/1933, F.M. Innes, Registrar of the Lahore High Court to the Home Secretary, Punjab, 1932.

127

Ibid.

Although it is not possible to know how many of these creditors were 'agriculturists' by caste, it was unlikely for an agriculturist moneylender, with his major occupation of agriculture, to close his 'business' in the village and flee to town.

This panic certainly increased after the 1934 and 1936 acts. According to the Rohtak district officials the "Bania class" from which the non-agriculturist moneylenders had been drawn, was in any case treated 'very badly'.¹²⁸ They held Chhotu Ram and his two organs, the Jat Gazette and the Zamindar League, responsible for this. The cumulative effect of all these factors, according¹²⁹ to the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, was:

The relations between the Hindu Jats and the Mahajans have been strained and have become very much worse after the Rural Indebtedness Legislation in which Rao Bahadur Chhotu Ram took such a prominent part. The Mahajans hate Chhotu Ram and show their feelings against him when ever they get a chance.... As a result of the legislation, believed to be harmful to the Mahajans, these feelings were intensified so much that the Mahajans have shifted to the towns and mandis.

The benefit of their shifting to mandis and towns naturally went to the agriculturist moneylenders; and the emergence of Jat moneylenders, as noticed in 1929-30 by the Punjab Provincial¹³⁰ Banking Inquiry Committee, became more pronounced in Rohtak district after the debt legislation of 1934 and 1936. In this¹³¹ connection, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak noted:

The Mahajans are no longer anxious to lend, the agriculturists find it difficult to borrow and it would appear that a class of moneylenders among the agriculturists is gradually springing up, who in the

128 See above chapter III, pp. 109-21.

129 HO Notes, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa, 26 June 1939, op.cit.

130 See above chapter I, pp. 21-28.

131 HO Notes, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa, 26 June 1939, op.cit.

course of time may probably make moneylending their regular profession. There are a very large number of retired military officers among the agriculturists for whom moneylending is a lucrative business.

The rich agriculturists gained not only as the creditors but also as debtors. In the actual working of the acts of 1934 and 1936 the benefits accrued to the big landowner debtors because exemptions of standing crops from attachment sanctioned under section 10 of the act showed that all over Punjab an "unfair advantage" had been given to those who possessed surplus crops which could not be attached.¹³² When the Relief of Indebtedness Bill was under consideration some of the Deputy Commissioners had advised that the agricultural produce of the bigger landowners, specially those owning more than 50 acres of cultivatable land, should not be exempted from attachment and only small landowners should be allowed to avail of this provision.¹³³ But this proposal had been rejected. A similar change was attempted in 1939 by Duni Chand, a Congress member, who introduced a bill to amend the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934.¹³⁴ The amendment sought to apply the definition of 'debtor' to "smaller men" by excluding all landowners whose annual income was Rs. 1,200 and more. Chhotu Ram, opposing it vehemently in the Council, declared:¹³⁵

It is barbarous to incarcerate a person for non-payment of a debt whatever his financial position.

A rejection of these proposals clearly shows the classes which the framers of the act wanted to benefit.

132 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 1.

133 IOR:P/12071/1937. See opinion of A.C. Machab, Comm. Rawalpindi div. to the Revenue Dept. regarding exemption of produce from liability of attachment and sale, 24 Oct. 1934.

134 PLAD, IX, 20 April 1939, p. 852.

135 Ibid., p. 855.

Thus the class which benefitted most from the acts of 1934 and 1936 were the rich agriculturists, whether creditors or debtors. This can also be seen in the continuing rise in the indebtedness of the agriculturists of Punjab. Substitution of one type or kind of moneylender by another was not going to restrict the agricultural debt in the province. The official estimate put the amount of debt at Rs. 135 crores in 1929-30 and with accumulated interest and fresh borrowing at Rs. 160 crores in 1943. Interest on Rs. 160 crores calculated at a 'moderate rate' of 15 percent was estimated to be Rs. 24 crores when the gross agricultural income of Punjab was estimated at Rs. 81 crores only. Beneficiaries of this rising agricultural indebtedness were the agriculturist moneylenders and not the non-agriculturist moneylenders whose field of operation had been restricted to a great extent.

Chhotu Ram was not satisfied with the act of 1936. He declared that it had been passed in a "mutilated form".

136 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 4. Even Chhotu Ram put the figures of agricultural debt in Punjab in 1936-37 at Rs. 200 crores and declared it to be an under estimate. See "Indebtedness in the Punjab" an article by Chhotu Ram, Madan Gopal, Sir Chhotu Ram, a Political Biography (New Delhi 1977), pp. 97-107.

137 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P. XIII-209, p. 4.

138 Chhotu Ram wanted the maintenance of a register of all the licenced moneylenders by the collector of each dist. with a right to cancel the licence of any moneylender who, in the opinion of the dist. collector, was not fit for the profession of moneylending; and no case of an unlicenced moneylender was to be entertained by the collector. These recommendations of Chhotu Ram were later carried out by the Unionist ministry in the Punjab Registration of Moneylenders Act of 1938. For Chhotu Ram's proposal, see clause 4 and 10 in the act as introduced by Chhotu Ram in the Punjab Council, GI : Home General Dept., F. No. 41/35, 1935. Also GI : Finance Dept., F. No. 6 (14)F(D 1945), 1935.

fresh proposals of Chhotu Ram were subsequently passed in the Registration of Moneylenders Act in 1938, after the Unionists had formed the ministry. An amending Act XII of 1940¹³⁹ was also prepared and introduced by Chhotu Ram which greatly strengthened the provisions and effects of the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934, and the Punjab Debtors' Protection Act of 1936.

According to the Relief of Indebtedness (amendment) Act XII of 1940 all interest above $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent simple interest on secured debts, and $12\frac{1}{2}$ percent simple interest on unsecured debts, was to be treated as usurious in case of all moneylenders, agriculturists or non-agriculturists, except in case of debts to Banks and Cooperative Societies.¹⁴⁰ No debtor could be arrested or imprisoned in execution of a decree for money. The milch and transport cattle and places for tying them were similarly protected. The use of false documents in a suit was made a criminal offence. The principle of Damdapat applied to debts contracted after 1934 under the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act of 1934, was in 1940 made to cover all debts incurred even before 1934. Consequently no decree could be passed against the agriculturist debtors for more than twice the principal.

The amending Act XII of 1940 benefited the agriculturist moneylender in two ways. Under all the acts of 1934, 1936 and 1940, as pointed out earlier, it was the creditor who sued his

139 Punjab Relief of Indebtedness (amendment) Act 1940, Punjab Govt. Gazette (extraordinary), 5 Oct. 1940.

140 The Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934, had fixed the rate of interest of secured loans at 12 percent simple, 9 percent compound interest, 18 percent simple interest on unsecured loans, and 14 percent compound interest on unsecured loans. See Act VII of 1934, op.cit.

debtor for payment; the agriculturist moneylender benefited in this because he did not advance money on pronotes or bonds but did it generally on mortgage with possession.¹⁴¹ And as he was already in possession of land for certain number of years he hardly needed to go to the court. The non-agriculturist moneylender on the other hand was hit hard because he was forced to sue his debtor for payment of his dues.¹⁴² Other provisions of the act also made it more difficult for the non-agriculturist moneylenders to go to court and get execution of decrees against the agricultural debtors. The earlier panic which had led them to sue their debtor in the courts now gave way to almost total withdrawal from both spheres, i.e., the moneylending business with the agriculturist debtors as well as recourse to the courts. They had already discovered that despite their suing the debtors for recovery of loans in such large numbers as in Rohtak district very few cases had been settled.¹⁴³ By 1940 such cases in Rohtak district went down a great deal and in Punjab the figures dwindled to a mere 1/3rd of that of 1934.¹⁴⁴ Diminishing number of cases in Rohtak district can also be seen in the loss of income from registration,

141 IOR:L/E/8/556, 1942, see Report of Select committee on the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness (amendment) Bill, No. 28 of 1939.

142 Ibid.

143 See above, p.337.

144 For Rohtak district see HO Notes, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa, op.cit., (figures not given). In Punjab the number of money suits instituted from 1934-40 was as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Rs.</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Rs.</u>
1934	173,609	1938	101,045
1935	137,358	1939	84,128
1936	129,550	1940	60,612
1937	119,300		

Source: CFFR Rohtak, F. No. P. XIII-209, p. 13.

revenue stamps, etc., experienced by the district. This evidence obviously supports the earlier argument that the withdrawal of the non-agriculturist moneylenders benefited the richer class of land-owners. Even when suits were filed in the civil courts, there was great difficulty in recovery of loans for the exemptions, especially after 1940, were so wide that most agriculturist debtors were hardly left with any attachable property. In the latter eventuality, the debtor very frequently put in an application to the Debt Conciliation Board for the whole procedure to be stayed under section 25 of the Punjab Relief of Indebtedness Act, 1934, until the debt boards had settled the case or dismissed the application. The debtor, therefore, was able for a very considerable period to defeat all efforts of his creditor to collect from him. It was found that those debtors who wished to reduce the delay in disposal of writs or who wanted to avoid payment of fees often went to the conciliation boards. The proceedings of the civil court were also sometimes held up while boards entertained, dismissed and decided cases on revision applications. Further, bogus creditors were reported to be included in the application of the debtors in order to delay matters and thwart genuine creditors.

All this resulted in increasing the importance of Debt Conciliation Boards. In the opinion of Punjab officials, this

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- 145 HO Notes, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa, 26 June 1939, op.cit. (figures not given).
 146 Ibid.
 147 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-179, Ram Sarup Singh, Under-Secretary Development Dept. to all the DCs (Except Simla which did not have the Debt Conciliation Board), 15 Mar. 1941.
 148 CFRR Rohtak, F.No. P. XIII-209, pp. 6-7.
 149 Ibid., p. 7. Also, Report on the Working of Debt Conciliation Boards in Punjab (Lahore 1940), p. 1.
 150 Ibid.

phenomenon was also the direct result of the very great difficulty which the creditors had to face in executing decrees in the court; arbitration was resorted to because it was simple and less

expensive.¹⁵¹ Further, no registration of moneylenders was required in order to avail of the services of Debt Conciliation Boards¹⁵² as was the case in the money-suits before the courts.

This facility provided to the sahuakar was noted by Chhotu Ram who¹⁵³ issued an interesting advice to the landowners:

Although we are receiving several requests for setting up of Debt Conciliation Boards in other districts, I am personally not in favour of these boards, because the sahuakars stand to benefit most. In 90 percent of cases the sahuakars fight shy of going to the courts, as they have to pay heavy fees. They also know that even when the decrees are awarded to them, the chances of satisfying these decrees are remote in view of the wide scale exemptions which we have granted under the indebtedness legislation. In the Debt Conciliation Boards, the sahuakars do not incur any expenditure and whatever they get is for their benefit. Knowing all this you (zamindars) should not be so keen for the establishment of these boards.

However, even in the Debt Conciliation Boards the creditors faced difficulty; the percentage of cases agreed and decided upon was rather low. In 1940, the proportion of the agreed amount to be paid to the admitted debt was 39 percent in the whole of Punjab; in the case of Rohtak district, 32 percent; while in the case of creditors' applications in the whole of Punjab it was merely

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- 151 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 7. Also see IOR:P/12047/1934, DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div., 12 July 1933.
- 152 This change was brought about only in 1938 by the Registration of Moneylenders' Act 1938. See below pp. 346-7.
- 153 JG, 26 April 1939, pp. 2, 7. Chhotu Ram's speech in Roper.

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 29 percent. Chhotu Ram, the then Minister for Development, giving statistics for the Haryana region disclosed that by April 1940 a total of 1,160 applications were received by the Sonapat District Debt Conciliation Board and a total debt of Rs.1,203,730 was decided for Rs. 328,332 only. Ratio of the agreed payment of money to the total debt was less than 1/5th in Hissar and Gurgaon districts, little more than 1/4th in Rohtak district, and a little more than 1/2 in Karnal district. Even these debts could not be collected as an agreement to pay before a board was by no means the same thing as payment. An agreement took effect as a decree of a civil court and as the debtor paid up in "rare cases only", the creditor had to face the difficulties of execution. The only way such settled cases could be effectively executed was by realising them as arrears of land revenue as per provisions of a similar act as/Central Provinces. The Punjab act made no such provision because the government considered it "politically unwise" to stand as the collector of the agricultural debt in Punjab. In the opinion of Emerson, the Governor of Punjab, this decision had seriously effected the collections of the boards, and he himself

- 154 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209. In the year ending 31 Dec. 1940, the Debt Conciliation Boards in the whole of Punjab (excluding Simla) received 43,621 applications of which 18,000 were made by the creditors. Out of these total applications, 26,000 applications involving Rs. 24,600,000 were disposed off and debts amounting to Rs. 91.45 lakhs were actually admitted. The amount which the debtors agreed to pay was Rs. 35.85 lakhs. On the creditors' applications on the other hand, the admitted debts were Rs. 14.42 lakhs and the amount which the debtors agreed to pay was Rs. 4.19 lakhs.
- 155 ibid., p. 6.
- 155 PLAD, XIII, April 1940, see G. No. 6245. The same information is available in HT, 24 April 1940, p. 2. Tribune, 21 Oct. 1938, p. 13, shows the extreme fall in the usefulness of the board in Karnal.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 Linlithgow Coll, 113: Emerson to Linlithgow, 19 June 1937.
- 158 Ibid.

doubted the ability of the boards to "do much good".¹⁵⁹

It may be noted here, that all those who lent without any documents were left untouched, as they could not be brought under any clause of the enactments. Here again the agriculturist money-lenders scored over the Bahee Khatas (account books) of the non-agriculturist moneylenders, because the former were generally not known for keeping the Bahee Khatas.¹⁶⁰ As mentioned before, the Unionist Government had also found it expedient to further regulate the business of moneylenders by getting them registered. Therefore, further restrictions were made through Registration of Moneylenders' Act passed by the Assembly on 16 July 1938.¹⁶¹ According to Mukand Lal Puri, a political opponent of Chhotu Ram and spokesman of non-agriculturist moneylenders and merchants, Chhotu Ram, who was held responsible for most of the "legislative monstrosities" of the province, was also the "real author" of the Registration of Moneylenders' Act.¹⁶² This was indeed true; for the clauses of this act were those which Chhotu Ram had introduced in the Punjab Debtors' Protection Act of 1936 which he had framed himself. These clauses, which had been struck down at the time, were now re-enacted under the act of 1938.¹⁶³ The act required that except for the landlords, who lent money to their tenants for purposes of husbandry only, all other moneylenders, whether agriculturist or non-agriculturists, to get themselves registered and procure a licence on payment of a

159 Ibid.

160 IOR:P/11649/1927. See the opinion of Income Tax officers of Rohtak, Karnal & Ambala, January 1927.

161 Punjab Registration of Moneylenders' Bill (Bill No. 10 of 1938) and Act No. III of 1938, see GI : Finance Dept, F. No. 22(78) F/38. Also Punjab Govt. Gazette, 24 June 1938, p. 80; Punjab Govt. Gazette (extraordinary), 2 Sept. 1938.

162 PLAD, IX, 24 June 1938, p. 335.

163 For the relevant clauses introduced by Chhotu Ram see above, pp. 340, f.n. 138.

prescribed fee. It provided that suits and applications for execution of decrees were to be dismissed unless the moneylenders making them were registered and licenced. The licence could be cancelled for various reasons stated in section 6 of the act. Chhotu Ram pointed to this act to counter the charge of the opposition that the Unionist Party had discriminated against the non-agriculturists. "Moneylenders, whether agriculturist or non-agriculturists", he maintained, "are under equally severe restrictions".¹⁶⁴ Along with this, however, he took care to¹⁶⁵ emphasise the benefits of this act to the agriculturist debtors:

We are doing everything in our power to safeguard the interests of our zamindar debtors. We had earlier imposed several statutory restrictions on the satisfaction of a decree issued against a zamindar. Now we have made it difficult for them to even procure that decree. A decree against a debtor can be obtained only through the court and under this act (Registration of Moneylenders' Act) if a sahuakar is not registered and licensed he can not even move the court to obtain that decree.

This act was however struck down by the Federal Court as being against section 298 of the Government of India Act of 1935. An amended bill could be passed only in 1943.

The working of the act showed that in 1939 only 9,206 money-lenders¹⁶⁶ were registered and in 1940 even less, i.e., 8,232. In 1929-30 itself, the conservative estimate of the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee had put the number of moneylenders in the province at 55,000. Yet a very small proportion of the moneylenders got registered. Among these few registered moneylenders

164. JG, 19 April 1939, p. 1.

165. JG, 6 July 1938, p. 5. Also see 29 Mar. 1939, p. 8; 14 June 1939, p. 4.

166. CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 8.

the total number of agriculturists moneylenders were not specified. Regarding penalty, it was found that in 1940 the licences of only five moneylenders were cancelled in the whole of Punjab; and out of these, three were successful in appeal. No separate figures are available for Rohtak district but it is obvious that agriculturist moneylenders continued to operate without any hindrance.

It is quite evident that in all these enactments the richer among the agriculturists continued to gain because of the favoured conditions created for them by the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900. The Unionists not satisfied with the effects of this act, which came into operation only from 8 June 1901, sought to make it retrospective in effect in order to bring about redemption of lands mortgaged and still subsisting to the non-agriculturists before the enactment of this act. This "deficiency" was claimed, by Chhotu Ram, to have existed for more than 37 years and needed to be corrected. For this purpose the Punjab Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act was enacted, and it came into force on 15 May 1939.

The act provided for the termination of mortgages effected before 8 June 1901 which were still subsisting and for the restitution and possession of the mortgaged land. There was to be reasonable compensation where a mortgagee had not benefited to the extent of at least twice the amount of the principal advanced. The question of compensation was duly recognised to be "purely academic" as it was unlikely that there was any mortgage left in

167 Ibid.

168 JG, 12 July 1938, p. 1; 17 Dec. 1938, pp. 7-8; 29 Mar. 1939, p. 1.

169 PAR, 1938-39, p. 39. For the text of the bill see Govt. Gazette Punjab, 24 June 1938, pp. 803-4.

which the mortgages had not earned twice the amount of the original principal.¹⁷⁰ The minimum profit earned was calculated to be about 300 percent and in very large number of cases even 800 percent.¹⁷¹ Clearly, this act sought to remove a major social anomaly and source of intensive exploitation.

The Bill on the Restitution of Mortgaged Lands, as originally conceived, was to apply only to those mortgagors who were members of the notified agricultural tribes under the 1900 act, and who had mortgaged their lands to persons who were not members of the notified tribes. It had to be amended to embrace both agriculturists and non-agriculturists creditors as well as debtors, for in its original form it clashed with the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1935. The agriculturist moneylenders had, therefore, to be brought into the purview of the act.¹⁷² Chhotu Ram, however, emphasised in his public speeches that originally the act was intended for the benefit of the statutory agriculturists alone and maintained:¹⁷³

Had it not been necessary to plug the legal loophole, we would have happily ignored the criticism of the opposition.

Although finally the act itself did not distinguish between agriculturist and non-agriculturist mortgagees during the 40 odd years but in actual working it was discovered that most of the mortgages with the agriculturist moneylenders had been purchased by them since 1901, while the non-agriculturists had been prevented

170 IOR/L/E/9/584, 1943, see minute note of Economic & Overseas Dept., 21 July 1938.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.

173 JG, 27 July 1938, p. 1.

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from doing so by the Alienation of Land Act of 1900. Consequently, the major beneficiaries of the act, despite the inclusion of non-agriculturists, were going to be almost exclusively the agriculturists who had mortgaged with the non-agriculturists. Without disclosing the real reason behind the benefit to the 'agriculturists' alone, both Chhotu Ram and Sikandar Hayat Khan pointed out that the percentage of land mortgaged with statutory agriculturists which stood to be restituted was only 5 percent against 95 percent

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mortgaged with non-agriculturists. Understandably even this minor loss of 5 percent to the agriculturists as compared to 95 percent to the non-agriculturists needed to be explained and justified. Both of them devoted a series of public speeches to explain this loss of 5 percent accruing to the 'bigger landowners'

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in Punjab. This 5 percent was repeatedly publicised by Chhotu Ram and his ministerial colleagues, both inside and outside the Assembly, as a "sacrifice of the better-off zamindars for their poorer brethren".

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This fitted in very well with Chhotu Ram's cherished theory of the "identity of interest between big and small landowners".

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Speaking in a public gathering Chhotu Ram maintained:

Along with the big zamindars, the other 345,000 small zamindars also stand to gain by getting back their mortgaged lands. Those big zamindars who might have mortgaged their lands will certainly get them back but such zamindars may very well be the creditors of

174 CFRR Rohtak, P. XIII-209, p. 8.

175 JG 27 July 1938, p. 1.

176 JG; 6 July 1938, pp. 5, 6; 13 July 1938, p. 2; 27 July 1938, p. 1; 22 Mar. 1939, p. 1; 5 April 1939, p. 1.

177 PLAD, V, 18 July 1938, pp. 1332-3. Also JG, 5 April 1939, p. 1.

178 JG, 5 April 1939, p. 1.

small zamindars and under this act they will have to give back those lands without any compensation. Sir Sikandar and Khizir will have to relinquish land worth $5\frac{1}{2}$ lakh of rupees and $1\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs of rupees, respectively.

Sikandar Hayat Khan and Khizar Hayat Khan Tiwana were in fact reported to be heading a list of 12 "losers" from among the members of the Punjab Assembly.¹⁷⁹ Losses accruing to the bigger landowners were published to counteract the charge of the critics that the schemes of the Unionist Party were calculated to benefit the richer and bigger landowners at the expense of the poorer and smaller landowners.¹⁸⁰ Chhotu Ram, reiterating again and again that the benefits of the act would go to the small landowners, inquired from a member of the opposition:¹⁸¹

Does my honourable friend consider any of these persons (agriculturist debtors) who have not been able to redeem their lands for the past two or three generations as rich? No; they are poorest of the poor.

In keeping with this stand the Punjab Bureau of Information also publicised certain figures to show that the sole beneficiaries of the Punjab Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act were the very small zamindars.¹⁸² Figures given out were: the total number of debtors, total acreage of land under mortgage, and the total number of mortgages effected before 8 June 1901 and still persisting. On the basis of these figures it was curiously deduced that this act stood to effect in terms of acreage an average of $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres per debtor,¹⁸³ and $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres per mortgage in Punjab. These average figures were

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- 179 PLAD, V, 18 July 1938, pp. 1332-3. Also see JG, 14 Dec. 1938, p. 2; 5 April 1939, p. 1.
- 180 JG, 13 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 14 Dec. 1938, pp. 2, 7; 21 Dec. 1938, pp. 2, 8. Also Tribune, 9 Aug. 1939, p. 1.
- 181 PLAD, XIII, 10 April 1940, p. 376.
- 182 See the pamphlet cited in JG, 9 Nov. 1938, p. 6.
- 183 Ibid. Figures given were: total no. of debtors in Punjab, 306,738; total amount of land still under mortgage, 756,130 acres; and total no. of mortgages still subsisting, 166,864.

publicised to affirm and emphasise that the benefits of the act accrued only to the very small landowners.

The Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act was applied to cases affected before 8 June 1901 only as inclusion of mortgages after that date would cause losses to the richer agriculturist creditors also. Subsequent to that date the agrarian society of Punjab saw a rapid replacement of non-agriculturist moneylenders by rich agriculturists. Therefore, the Unionists vehemently opposed all moves of the opposition to apply this act to the post-1901 period.¹⁸⁴ The reason, candidly acknowledged by Chhotu Ram, was that 2/3rds of the mortgaged land between 1901 to 1938 had been mortgaged to the agriculturists.¹⁸⁵ Sikandar Hayat Khan also openly maintained¹⁸⁶ in December 1938:

The critics know fully well that the mortgages of land from zamindars after 1901 have been to the zamindars only, therefore, the loss suffered by the cancellation of those mortgages would be borne by the zamindars only. This would lead to disorder and confusion amongst them.

Evidently, this disorder and confusion would have been created by the withdrawal of support from the Unionist Party by the rich agriculturists and moneylenders who had in their possession 2/3rds of the total mortgaged land in Punjab. Their

184 PLAD, V, 21 July 1938, pp. 1551-3; 22 July 1938, pp. 1558-9. Also see editorial in Tribune, 7 July 1938.

185 JG, 7 Dec. 1938, p. 7; editorial in Tribune, 8 July 1938. In the estimate of Raja Narendra Nath the total area from 1901 to 1936 mortgaged to the non-agriculturists of Punjab was 168,057 acres only, whereas with the agriculturists it was 3,427,600 acres. See editorial in Tribune, 2 Aug. 1938. It may be noted that Raja Narendra Nath's estimate confirmed that of Chhotu Ram's and although no figures of the total mortgaged area to the agriculturists are available, 2/3rds seem to be the accepted estimate of the time.

186 JG, 7 Dec. 1938, p. 7.

interests were thus protected by the Unionist ministry, which laid emphasis primarily on the great gain occurring to the agriculturists through the restitution of lands mortgaged with the non-agriculturist moneylenders. Chhotu Ram particularly emphasised this point.¹⁸⁷ His own estimate put the number of beneficiaries among the landowners of Punjab at 1,300,000 with redemption of 4,000,000 ¹⁸⁸ bighas of land, calculated by him to be worth Rs. 16 crores. All this, according to him, was going to be given back to the zamindars from the "Bania sahuakar" without payment of "a pie in compensation".¹⁸⁹

It is however very interesting to note that no statistics had been collected about the number of mortgages to which the bill stood to apply; and the Unionists ministry, to the embarrassment of British officials, had obviously operated totally in the dark.¹⁹⁰ When Mukand Lal Puri called for statistics showing mortgages of land in various districts according to different communities and also details of areas mortgaged to the agricultural tribes and to others these statistics could not be produced.¹⁹¹ Only in November 1938, when the act had already been in operation for over 6 months, the Punjab Bureau of Information brought out a pamphlet giving some figures of debtors in an attempt to show that the act benefited only the smaller landowners and was not based on communal lines as asserted by the opposition; and so far as the

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- 187 Pratap, 13 July 1938, cited in JG, 20 July 1938, p. 2. Also see other newspapers (not named) cited in JG, 31 Aug. 1938, p. 4.
- 188 JG, 25 Jan. 1939, p. 6.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 Linlithgow Coll., 86: Craik to Viceroy, 22 July 1938.
- 191 IOR:L/E/9/584, 1943, see minute of dissent to the Report of the Select Committee on the bill, 6 July 1938.

major religious communities of Punjab were concerned the benefit of the act corresponded to their ratio in the population of the province.¹⁹²

This act was challenged both in the Lahore High Court and the Federal Court. During the pendency of the suit, its working was suspended. Consequently, by 1941, although over 24,000 cases in the whole of Punjab were pending before the collectors, a comparatively small number had been decided.¹⁹³ The delay was first on the part of the public in making applications and then on the part of the revenue staff which had to be strengthened in order to deal with the laborious and intricate task of calculating the benefits accruing to the mortgagees over a period of 40 years.¹⁹⁴ Rules under this act had to be amended to mitigate this difficulty. A ready reckoner had to be prepared in the Financial Commissioner's office to calculate the benefits to the mortgagees.¹⁹⁵

The working of this act in Rohtak district is a sample of the fate of the agrarian legislation in Punjab which was so enthusiastically proclaimed by Chhotu Ram. By November 1944, a total of 543 applications regarding Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act had been received by the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak.¹⁹⁶ They could not be disposed off immediately for, according to Sardar Abdus Samad, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, their

192 The figures of debtors affected by this act according to their religious complexion were: 58.66% Muslims; 26.8% Hindus; 14.5% Sikhs. These figures corresponded roughly to their ratio in the population of Punjab, i.e., 56.5%; 26.8%, and 12.9% respectively. See pamphlet cited in JG, 9 Nov. 1938, p. 6.

193 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 8.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid.

196 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. O.V-27, DC Rohtak to Revenue Secretary and Financial Commissioner, 11 Nov. 1944.

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disposal awaited the appointment of a special officer. By September 1945 four more applications had been made thereby raising their numbers to 547; yet not a single case had been disposed off. ¹⁹⁸ Only after 25 September 1945, when Chowdhri Amar Singh was appointed as an Extra Assistant Commissioner, "a few cases" ¹⁹⁹ were decided by December 1945. These few cases (number not given) led to release of 202 bighas of land and discharge of Rs. 9,903 and annas 8 as mortgage money. ²⁰⁰ By this time, Chhotu Ram had been dead for nearly a year.

In the opinion of the Sub-Divisional Officer of Rohtak ²⁰¹ the main reason for this delay was:

Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act cases are pending in the Collector's court. I know the applicants in these cases are feeling much trouble specially in getting the original mortgage mutations' copy because the illiterate zamindars do not know the exact date and year in which such mutation was decided. For finding number of mutation they have to pay search and inspection fee and when such mutation is not found in one jamabandi, they pay such a fee for another. In this connection Rule 3(2) of the Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act lays down that the applicant, when he is unable to supply such copies, should pay a fee of Rs. 2 and the collector should get the copies from the office. They incur heavy expense and experience difficulty in coming over and over again to sadr.

This difficulty was however not limited to Rohtak alone, although Rohtak was perhaps the last district to start work regarding this act. Even elsewhere the number of cases decided under this act ²⁰² remained comparatively small. The major benefit of this act

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- 197 Ibid.
 198 Ibid., see statement of DC Rohtak on the number of cases pending, 30 Sept. 1945.
 199 Ibid.
 200 Ibid., see DC Rohtak to Revenue and Finance Secretary, Punjab, 8 Dec. 1945.
 201 Ibid., Sher Singh SDO Rohtak to DC, 6 April 1940. The distortion in the language is in the original.
 202 Ibid., p. 8. The Report however does not give detailed figures.

continued to be its immense propaganda value.

Inordinate delay was experienced not only in the working of this act but all the four agrarian acts which were enacted by the Unionist ministry. This practical difficulty due to "very heavy and extra burden of work on the revenue officers", who had to administer these acts, was visualised much earlier by the Punjab Governor when the agrarian bills were sought to be introduced in the Punjab Assembly. ²⁰³ Regarding the Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act, specially, a memorandum issued in June 1944 by the Deputy Secretary of the Revenue Department of Punjab brought out the delay in the entire province caused by the over-²⁰⁴burdening of the existing administrative machinery. In fact, as a consequence of this delay several applicants felt it more advantageous to pay off a mortgage debt rather than seek relief ²⁰⁵ under the act after undergoing protracted proceedings. In view of this, Chhotu Ram felt compelled to warn the landowners of ²⁰⁶Rohtak against any such compromise with the sahlukars. In some cases, however, the landowners took direct possession of their ²⁰⁷mortgaged lands without going through the official procedure.

The second piece of agrarian legislation the Unionist Government enacted, Act X of 1938, commonly known as the Benami

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- 203 Linlithgow Coll, 86: Craik to Viceroy, 20 July 1938.
 204 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. O.V-27, see memorandum, 23 June 1944.
 Also see F. No. P. XIII-209, p. 13.
 205 Ibid.
 206 JG, 6 July 1938, p. 5.
 207 See news items from Veer Bharti, 22 July 1938, 27 July 1938, 3 Aug. 1938, 21 Sept. 1938, 5 Aug. 1940, cited in Gokal Chand Narang, op.cit., pp. 34-35.

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Act, brought about one of the most important amendments of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900. Its most important amendment was section 13-A which attacked the Benami (fictitious) transactions through which non-agriculturists sought to evade the provisions of the main act by getting their rights recorded in the name of agriculturists who were usually their debtors. Section 13-A gave the Deputy Commissioner the power to decide such cases, to declare void all Benami transactions, and to restore possession to the alienator with retrospective effect. Originally the bill had not been conceived as retrospective in its effect but was .

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made so at the committee stage. The Secretary of State had strong objections to the bill being made retrospective in effect but the Punjab ministry was determined to do so.

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Ever since the passing of the 1900 act, it had become common for the sahuakar to force his debtor to part with his land and, while taking possession himself, to show a member of the agricultural tribe to be in possession in order to defeat the act. Sometimes the non-agriculturist moneylenders actually cultivated the land himself, though hardly ever appearing as such in the revenue records. Sometimes he appeared as the Benami owner's tenant-at-will though never in practice paying any rent. At other times, he gave the land to a tenant and collected rent from him. He

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208 For details see the Punjab Alienation of Land (2nd amendment) Bill, 1938, and Punjab Act X, 1938 (Benami). See Punjab Govt. Gazette, 24 June 1938, p. 799, and Punjab Govt. Gazette (extraordinary), 28 Feb. 1939 respectively.

209 IOR:L/E/9/567, 1940, see minute paper, Economic & Overseas Dept. by A.J. Morley, 30 Sept. 1938.

210 Ibid., Zetland to Linlithgow, 13 Dec. 1938.

211 The reports of Benami transactions started to regularly flow in from 1928-29 onwards. PLRA, 1928-29 to 1937-38, in para 31 of the relevant reports.

212 PLRA, 1930-31, para 31, pp. 28-29.

safeguarded himself against the Benamidar by taking from him a fictitious bond in which he (i.e., the Benamidar) promised to pay the amount of the debt due from the original mortgagor to the money-²¹³ lender. When such cases were taken to the civil courts the money-lenders through the Benamidar usually succeeded against the mortgagor either because there was a transfer prima facie in order, and proved by the revenue records from the mortgagor to the Benamidar, or because the Benamidar was not allowed to plead his own fraud. In such cases, the Benamidar almost always testified that the transaction was genuine, because he was in the power of the moneylender.²¹⁴ And those Benami mortgages which were cancelled by the revenue officers were challenged in the civil courts by the sahlukars through their middle men and such decisions were nearly²¹⁵ always reversed.

Although officially the Benami transactions were declared²¹⁶ to be difficult to detect, it was also commonly admitted by the officials that Rohtak district, along with Gurgaon, Ambala and²¹⁷ Sialkot, contained the highest number of Benami transactions. In Chhotu Ram's estimate, Hansi tehsil alone had Benami transac-²¹⁸ tion worth Rs. 10 lakhs. However, it was only in 1937 that a special tehsildar was appointed in each division for the investi-²¹⁹ gation of Benami transactions. He was required to ascertain through official and non official sources all the particulars of

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- 213 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P-XIII 209, p. 9. Also see JG, 23 Nov. 1938, p. 2; 7 Dec. 1938, pp. 7-8; 21 Dec. 1938, pp. 2, 8.
- 214 Ibid.
- 215 JG, 23 Nov. 1938.
- 216 PLRA, 1928-29, para 31, p. 29.
- 217 Ibid., 1929-30, para 31, pp. 31-32.
- 218 JG, 28 June 1939, pp. 4, 5.
- 219 PLRA, 1937-38, para 31, pp. 39-40.

cases which contravened the provisions of the Alienation of Land Act and bring them to the notice of tehsildars or naib-tehsildars of the circle and also the revenue assistants. During 1937-38, in the whole of Punjab, a total of 15,572 Benami cases were investigated, out of which 7,974 alone were recommended for review. Ambala division with 2,674 cases out of a total of 4,538 of those investigated showed the highest number of cases recommended for review.²²⁰ By March 1941, the field cases regarding Benami transactions reached over 47,000 in the whole of Punjab. The amount relating to such fictitious transactions was estimated to be about 16 crores.²²¹ However, in April 1939 itself Chhotu Ram triumphantly claimed in a zamindar gathering: "Within twenty months of our being in office we have been able to guarantee you back land worth 20 crores of rupees".²²² In 1942, the proceedings under the Benami Act were stayed pending the orders of Federal Court on the validity of section 13-A of the act.²²³

220 Statement showing the progress of work in regard to Benami transactions in Punjab:

<u>Division</u>	<u>No. of cases investigated:</u>	<u>No. of cases recommended for review:</u>
Ambala	4,538	2,674
Jullundur	2,723	2,399
Lahore	2,039	1,760
Rawalpindi	4,625	250
Multan	1,647	891
	<u>15,572</u>	<u>7,974</u>

Source: S.S. Majithia Papers, F. No. 84, Sept. 1938, p. 1.

221 Ibid.

222 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P. XIII-209, p. 9.

223 PLAD, XII, 5 Mar. 1940, p. 3; 31 Mar. 1940, p. 603.

224 JG, 5 April 1939, p. 2, see Chhotu Ram's speech.

It is clear that even after the passage of 1900 act the non-agriculturist moneylender had continued to indulge in money-lending on mortgages and sales fictitiously in the name of their statutory agriculturist 'friends'. This indicated that the non-agriculturist moneylender, still a somewhat continuing force in the money market of rural Punjab, was a hidden rival to the agriculturist moneylender. The Benami Act may, therefore, be seen as a further effort to enable the richer agriculturists to remain the only source from which the agriculturists could secure loans. This skilful elimination of all competition was greatly to the benefit of the agriculturist moneylenders.

The third amendment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act, also known as the 'Zamindar Sahukara Act' was introduced by Act V of 1938. The statement of objects and reasons for the enactment of this act was rather revealing:

Experience has shown that agriculturist moneylenders can be as rapacious in their methods of compelling their debtors to part with their lands as non-agriculturist moneylenders. This bill is intended to check the permanent alienations of land to agriculturist moneylenders by their debtors and is a step towards the agriculturist moneylenders being placed for the purposes of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act in the same position as non-agriculturists in the matter of permanent alienations of land under that act.

It may be noted that this act was the first and the only acknowledgement by the so called zamindar representatives that the agriculturist moneylenders needed to be officially placed in the same 'rapacious' category as the non-agriculturist moneylenders.

225 The Punjab Alienation of Land (3rd amendment) Act 1938, Punjab Act No. V of 1938, in GI : Finance, F. No. 22(80) F/38, 1938.

This acknowledgement was, therefore, contrary to what Chhotu Ram²²⁶ was officially and unofficially claiming and propagating.

Section 3-A of this act made it necessary for the agriculturist moneylender to obtain the sanction of the Deputy Commissioner for the permanent alienation of the land of his statutory agriculturist debtor. Such an alienation could be sanctioned to the agriculturist creditor only when three years had elapsed from²²⁷ the date of the repayment of loan by his debtor. This change brought in 1938 was projected as having placed the agriculturist moneylender in the same position as the non-agriculturist moneylender²²⁸ in the matter of permanent alienation of land. Chhotu Ram was once again in the forefront of the passage of this act²²⁹ and in building up a case for it. He claimed:

By putting an effective stop to the buying up of the land of agriculturist debtors by their zamindar sahumars, the Unionist Party has given ample proof of their genuine interest in the welfare of the small peasants and the backward classes.

He went on to candidly inquire: "Is this handicap imposed on ourselves not proof enough?"

Chhotu Ram also claimed that the agriculturist moneylenders had been put under the same restrictions as the non-agriculturist moneylenders.²³⁰ In actual fact, the act placed no practical curb on the moneylending activities of the agriculturists. Most of the rich agriculturists were outside the purview of this act because

226 Chhotu Ram openly maintained that an agriculturist moneylender was different from the non-agriculturist moneylender, i.e., sahumar, see above p.325.

227 The Punjab Alienation of Land (amendment) Act, 1938, op.cit.

228 PLAD, X, 22 July 1938, p. 1568. Also PLRA, 1935-36, para 31, p. 39. Also see JG, 23 Nov. 1938, p. 2; 26 April 1939, p. 1.

229 JG, 26 April 1939, p. 1.

230 JG, 19 April 1939, p. 1; 26 April 1939, p. 1; 14 June 1939, p. 4.

the definition of a "creditor" in the act demanded that a person had to be a moneylender before he could be brought under the act. Agriculturists who habitually took land on mortgage did not fall within the definition of "creditors" as given in the explanation to section 3-A,²³¹ and could not be compelled to obtain the sanction of the Deputy Commissioner to any alienation of land in their own favour by their debtor clients. Besides, even an agriculturist "creditor", covered by the section 3-A of the Alienation of Land (amendment) Act of 1938, though not able to convert an unsecured loan into a permanent mortgage, nevertheless was not prevented by the act from taking in the land of a new client in mortgage for an unlimited period of time. The limited restrictions on sale also added to the number of tenants. The mortgagor would be reduced to the status of a tenant as he would now effect mortgage with possession for an indefinite time, and would to that extent become landless until the repayment of the loan. Debtor was given a very temporary protection for three years only, which in fact had been reduced from a period of five years to three,²³² and an agriculturist who could not be determined as a "creditor" or a "moneylender" could buy the land of his debtor without any restriction. Small landowners had consequently little more safety than before. But in actual fact, the act was more or less an eyewash. It afforded no protection to the economically poorer agriculturists from the richer agriculturists or even from the professional moneylenders among them; for it firmly continued

231 See Section 3-A of the Punjab Act No. V of 1938, op.cit.
 232 IOR:L/E/9/567, 1940, see handwritten remark on the bill.

to maintain, as before, the invidious distinction between the non-agriculturist moneylender and the agriculturist moneylender in the matter of buying or mortgaging the land of the agriculturists. In fact, it was because of this aspect that the British administrators, the economic experts, the Governor, and the Secretary of State, all agreed, though not publicly and openly, with the 'Hindu Urban opposition' on the futility of the act so far as doing any practical good to the small owner was concerned. ²³³ But, interestingly, despite this the Governor recommended to the Viceroy sanctioning of the act and saw "no reason" why the sanction should be withheld. ²³⁴ Sikandar Hayat Khan and Chhotu Ram, on their side, resisted all attempts of the opposition to abolish the distinction between non-agriculturist and agriculturist moneylenders. Sikandar Hayat Khan's speech in this connection, given wide publicity in the Jat Gazette, perhaps to assuage the fears of the agriculturist moneylenders, ²³⁵ read:

Although the zamindar Government is willing to save the usurpation of land of poor zamindar in lieu of debt, yet it is not willing to throw the sahuakar zamindar out of the zamindar community and deprive him of other privileges as granted under the Punjab Alienation of Land Act. They would continue to have the same rights and continue to be the main beneficiaries in regard to buying and mortgaging of lands in relation to other people.

The last effort in this series of agrarian acts was called ²³⁶ the Punjab Agricultural Produce Markets Act, 1939 - Act V of 1939. Chhotu Ram introduced this act, popularly known as the Mandi Act,

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- 233 Ibid., see extract of the Governor's letter, 22 July 1939.
 234 Ibid.
 235 JG, 30 Nov. 1938, p. 2. See speech of Sikandar Hayat Khan.
 236 See the text of the Act in Govt. Gazette (extraordinary) Punjab, 1 May 1939. Also GI : Edu. Health. Lands F. No. 7-4/39-A, 1939.

in the Punjab Assembly on 7 July 1938. Although the Punjab Assembly passed the bill on 2 February 1939, its application was postponed on account of wide protests that it evoked and consequently it hardly became operative. ²³⁷ This act was amended twice, once in 1941 and again in 1944, due to powerful opposition and agitation ²³⁸ against it in which both Hindus and Muslims were jointly involved. The entire issue during the World War II got mixed up with the public controversy on the centre's decision to inaugurate grain control, price control of wheat, and the newly passed General Sales Tax Act. Consequently, the application of the Markets Act remained suspended.

The purpose of the act was claimed to be the establishment of regulated markets in order that the agriculturist might get a fair price for his produce. ²³⁹ Chhotu Ram's expectations from this act were: ²⁴⁰

The act will insure that the producers get a better price for the grain sold to the sahuakar. The zamindar will be exempted from the hitherto illegal cuts made into this payment by the Lalajis on the pretext of payment to the sweeper, the chowkidar, the waterman, the Arhati's cook and the beggars. They will also be free from the compulsory cash deductions made from the final payment in the name of certain charities such as Dharmshals, Gaushalas and Pathshalas. The proceeds of these deductions are seldom applied to objects for which they are ostensibly charged. Other dues having the sanction of usage are paid by the zamindars alone, i.e., Arhat (commission payable to the arhati), Dalali (commission payable to the broker), Tulai (due payable to

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- 237 IOR/L/E/9/24, 1944. Note by legal adviser to the Secretary of State, 1944.
- 238 Ibid. Also see GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/4/41, April 1941; 18/6/41, June 1941; 18/7/41, July 1941.
- 239 Statement of objects and reasons, Bill No. 9 of 1941, op.cit.
- 240 Chhotu Ram's speech on Mandi Bill in JG, 23 Nov. 1938, p. 8.

the man who roughly dresses the produce as it is put into the scalepan), Charahi (due payable to the man who fills the scalepan), Otai (due payable to the man who holds open the mouth of bag), Munimi (to arhati's scribe), and Palledari (porter), all these would be duly regulated. Barring Arhat and Dalali other dues are payable in kind. Karda, a deduction in weight, is also conventionally made on account of impurities. Why should the zamindars pay all this? The lala equates a maund with 41 seers. 69 percent of the scales tested and 42 percent of the weights checked by the Punjab Banking Inquiry Committee were found to be incorrect. All in all, the zamindars get only 9½ annas in a rupee for his produce. All this will be set right by the act.

Interestingly, on one hand, the Mandi Bill was advertised²⁴¹ as "The Punjab Markets Bill: Higher prices for the cultivators", and, on the other, it was projected as benefiting the poor and small landowners rather than the big landowners. The reason for²⁴² this, in the opinion of Chhotu Ram, was:

The bigger zamindars do not need to go to the mandi as the wholesale traders go to their houses and buy the produce. Even when they have to take their produce to the market the Dalal (middleman) respects them such a lot that he does not dare to cheat or snub them. Whereas the small zamindars get cheated and looted by the sahuakar.

That the small landowner did not have enough surplus to sell in the mandi (market) was conveniently forgotten by Chhotu Ram. Any surplus that existed was taken away by the moneylender, generally agriculturist in this case, from the threshing floor itself. Chhotu Ram also agreed that the sahuakar took the surplus from the threshing floor, but Chhotu Ram's 'sahuakar' was only the²⁴³ non-agriculturist sahuakar and not the agriculturist sahuakar.

It is clear that although theoretically all the agrarian acts had included in their ambit of 'debtor' class landowners

241 C & MG, 5 July 1938, p. 8.

242 JG, 23 Nov. 1938, p. 8.

243 "Indebtedness in Punjab", an article by Chhotu Ram, see Madan Gopal, op.cit.

along with tenants of all kinds, as also agricultural labourers, in reality all these acts were designed to safeguard the property of the landowner whether it was land or houses or trees. The agricultural labourers, mostly drawn from among the untouchables of Punjab and not included among the statutory agricultural tribes, were not even allowed to possess land or houses. Thus, the official report on the working of agrarian legislation in Punjab cited the ²⁴⁴ opinion of the Commissioner of Rawalpindi division:

I will not ... discuss the question how far agriculture has suffered, by many inefficient and improvident landowners of the privileged tribes being safeguarded in their possession of land, and other classes dependent on the land, particularly those known as village menials, being forever debarred from rising to the status of landowner, with the probable stimulus that this will ultimately give to class war and communistic movements.

In view of this, even Chhotu Ram who had been so insistent upon the inclusion of untouchables among the 'debtor' class was unable to point out any benefits accruing to them. He could merely say: "The Harijans have gained by these acts in the same way as all other castes have gained, who are directly or indirectly connected with the agriculturist castes."²⁴⁵

Among the landowning debtors the acts imposing statutory control on interest rates and wide scale exemptions from attachment were theoretically beneficial to all debtors big or small. And the petty landowners did gain to a certain extent, but perhaps to a very paltry and dubious extent and for a very negligible length of time. For example, in Rohtak district, in view of the wide-scale exemptions, 78 percent of the judgement debtors were able to save

²⁴⁴ CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 11.
²⁴⁵ JG, 14 Dec. 1938, p. 1.

their landholdings, standing crops, milch cattle, etc., from being attached.²⁴⁶ Among the remaining 22 percent cases also only 18 percent judgement debtors suffered merely temporary alienation of their lands. Although there is a complete lack of any other statistical data regarding the operation of the agrarian acts at the district or provincial level,²⁴⁷ it is not difficult to visualise that these 78 percent judgement debtors were not able to sustain the initial benefit granted to their small landholdings against a decree attachment. The consequent stoppage of credit from the decree holding moneylenders exposed them to the only other source which was readily available and functioning in the rural society of Punjan, viz., the big landowners, landlords and the agriculturist moneylenders.

In fact, the big landowners, landlords and the agriculturist moneylenders stood to gain most by these acts and in comparison the non-agriculturist moneylenders stood to lose[?] most. So long as the Punjab Alienation of Land Act of 1900 remained dividing the population of Punjab among agriculturists and non-agriculturists and also separating the agriculturist moneylenders from other non-agriculturist moneylenders, all controls on the moneylenders were bound to adversely effect the business of non-agriculturist moneylenders alone. Apart from the legal restrictions and exemptions which made the recovery of loan from agriculturists so difficult, Chhotu Ram was also accused of inciting the agriculturists to withhold

246 For details see above, pp. 335, 342.

247 Almost total lack of information about the working of these acts was frequently acknowledged and commented upon by the officials of the Secretary of State for India. See IOR:L/E/9/24, 1944.

payment of borrowed loans to the sahlukars with the political
 motivation of winning them to his side.²⁴⁸ There was also "natural
 fear" among them, since the passing of the Restitution of Mortgaged
 Lands Act, that other mortgages dating after 1901 might also be
 interfered with by legislation.²⁴⁹ All these accumulated factors,
 resulted, as brought out earlier, in many a non-agriculturist
 moneylenders winding up their business and migrating to the towns.²⁵⁰
 The upper stratum of landowning class, which had already gained a
 footing in the rural credit system since the passing of 1900 act,
 effectively substituted the vacant moneylending agency in the
 villages.

Even Chhotu Ram was unable to make a case on behalf of the
 upper stratum of landowning class that it had not benefited by
 these acts. Against the most persistent and frequent accusations
 of the opposition regarding this, Chhotu Ram maintained that the
 total number of big landowners in Punjab was insignificant.
 Declaring that their number was limited to a mere total of 23, he
 maintained in April 1940:²⁵¹

In the Punjab there are just 13 landholders who pay a
 land revenue of Rs. 10,000 or more. There are only 23
 landholders who pay a revenue of more than Rs. 5,000.
 Now suppose these 23 landholders stand a chance of
 getting the benefit of this definition (débtor) will
 the heavens fall?

The Minister for Development, who firmly declined to make any
 statutory distinction between the big and the small landowners,
 made his views clear to the Punjab Assembly:²⁵²

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- 248 HT, 21 Nov. 1939, p. 3.
 249 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 10.
 250 For details see above chapter III, pp. II2-3, and above pp. 335-8
 251 PLAD, XIII, 9 April 1940, p. 325. Also see JG, 17 Aug.
 1938, p. 4; 31 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 21 Sept. 1938, p. 7.
 252 PLAD, XIII, 8 April 1940, p. 283.

I do not think that there is any harm if one big zamindar also gets some benefit along with one thousand small agriculturists, particularly when the benefit cannot be secured to the small agriculturists without bringing the big zamindars also with him. I have no hesitation in saying that we do not desire to make any distinction between big zamindars and small zamindars. Our opponents, no doubt, seek to drive a wedge into the ranks of zamindars by creating distinction of big zamindars and small zamindars, rich zamindars and poor zamindars, tenants and landlords. But let me assure my honourable friends that our policy is to resist all attempts to create such distinctions and thereby to promote mutual discord between zamindar and zamindar (Cheers).

Under the all embracing word 'zamindar' whether creditor or debtor Chhotu Ram knew which strata stood to gain most.

In fact the well-to-do zamindar debtors became defiant in repayment of their debts. This attitude was more marked in their dealings with the Cooperative Societies and greatly contributed to the failure of this movement in Punjab. Almost all the Cooperative Societies were known to have suffered from the effects of excessive and improvident lending in the years when prices were high; with the setting in of the economic depression when the obligations could not be met many Cooperative Societies had to be liquidated. In the opinion of Punjab officials, after the agrarian legislation the zamindars became "obstinate in refusing to pay" the dues of the Cooperative Societies, and even the Taccavi loans of the government. In this respect the Registrar of Cooperative Societies, writing in 1942, observed:

I think the indebtedness legislation jointly with other causes has weakened the sense of moral obligation to a very great extent and the correcting of

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- 253 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P. XIII-209, p. 11. Also see Report on the Working of Cooperative Credit Societies in the Punjab, 1929 (Lahore 1930), pp. 36-37; 1932 (Lahore 1933), p. 47.
- 254 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P-XIII-209, p. 12.
- 255 Ibid.

this tendency is one of the chief social problems of the province. On this point cooperative officers have special knowledge because the movement rests so largely on mutual trust and moralities but it remains to be seen how far the movement can stand now that the legal sanctions for enforcing petty debts have almost ceased.

However, even before the indebtedness legislation, so far as Rohtak district was concerned even as early as 1930, there were certain agriculturist creditors who had been "intentionally malingering" and the Cooperative Societies had to take action against them.²⁵⁶ But by 1944, after a series of legislative enactments, the situation certainly deteriorated. In this connection Sultan Lal Hussain Khan, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, observed:²⁵⁷

The cooperative movement has not been quite a success in this district, partly due to overloading of poor peasantry and partly due to relief legislation which has made indebted peasantry, defiant and truculent in the hope of getting away scot-free by persistent refusal.

This "defiant" and "truculent" indebted peasantry in Rohtak district was actually from the strata of well-to-do debtors. This was acknowledged by Chhotu Ram in the Punjab Assembly. Speaking of the Cooperative Societies and the creditors of Rohtak and Hissar districts, Chhotu Ram said in February 1940:²⁵⁹

I had lists prepared which showed that in some cases members who owed, say a few hundred rupees to a society, had purchased land worth thousands of rupees during the last few years and had never cared to repay the debts which they owed to societies.

Chhotu Ram made ineffective appeals to the debtors to pay their debts and openly acknowledged the failure of cooperative

256 HO Notes, A Latiff, Feb. 1930, CF Ambala Div. F. No. A/28.
 257 HO Notes, DC Rohtak, Jan. 1944, op.cit.
 258 PLAD, IX-A, 28 Feb. 1940, p. 775.

259 movement. As more and more debtors refused to repay many Creditor
 Cooperative Societies in Rohtak district had to be declared
 260 bankrupt. So much so that, according to the Haryana Tilak, the
 losses started to be forcibly collected from the zamindars and, by
 April 1940, the Cooperative Departments of the districts of Rohtak
 and Karnal showed 3,736 decrees, 170 auctions and 10 arrests of
 261 their debtors. Because of these forcible methods the Cooperative
 Department of Rohtak district came to be called Halqua Haryana ka
 262 Boochar-Khana" (slaughter-house of the Haryana region).

Another consequence of the agrarian acts, which was political
 in its nature, was the withdrawal of political support to the
 Unionist Government by the representatives of those non-agricul-
 turists who stood to be adversely affected by these acts. The
 sahlukars were so badly hit by the agrarian legislation that some
 of the leading Mahajans and Banias who had been so far loyal to
 the British Sarkar got alienated. 263 The opposition from them grew
 so strong that even the urban Hindu members sitting on the govern-
 264 ment benches turned into opponents of the government. However,
 what the colonial government lost in the form of support of rich
 Banias and other 'representatives' of the non-agriculturist castes
 in Punjab was far outweighed by the direct political support from

259 JG, 4 Mar. 1931, p. 4; 15 Oct. 1935, p. 2; 29 Oct. 1935,
 pp. 4, 5; 5 Nov. 1935, pp. 9, 10; 19 Nov. 1935, p. 5;
 14 Jan. 1936, p. 8; 21 Jan. 1936, p. 9; 3 Mar. 1937, p. 3;
 21 April 1937, p. 2; 4 Mar. 1938, p. 5; 3 May 1938, p. 6;
 21 Nov. 1939, p. 3; 3 April 1940, p. 7; 12 June 1940, p. 1;
 19 June 1940, p. 7; 4 Sept. 1940, p. 3.

260 HT, 3 April 1940, p. 7.

261 Ibid.

262 Ibid.

263 CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(d), pp. 3, 4.

264 GI : Home Poll, 18/7/38, July 1938.

the 'agriculturists' especially the large landowners that accrued to the government and its leaders like Chhotu Ram.

Chhotu Ram's political gains were enormous. The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak pointed out in 1939 that the recent legislation had further enhanced Chhotu Ram's prestige and had added to his influence among rural population.²⁶⁵ Hailed as the "champion of the downtrodden and the have-nots"²⁶⁶ Chhotu Ram was considered, even by some of the Congressmen, to be "genuine" in upholding the cause of small landowners.²⁶⁷ When Chhotu Ram spoke of benefitting the 'small zamindar' by the agrarian legislation he was not entirely incorrect. This was partly because of the widely differing patterns of landholdings in Punjab. The big landowner of Rohtak district and indeed that of the south-east Punjab, was a 'petty landowner' of the Western Punjab where landholdings were far larger than the 'big landholdings' of the Haryana region. Chhotu Ram alone, among the "aristocratic sort of" Unionist Party,²⁶⁸ emerged as the representative of "wider interests".

The agrarian legislation certainly strengthened the socio-economic base of Chhotu Ram's support in Rohtak district. Among his supporters the advantages to the agriculturist moneylenders were obvious. The number of regular moneylenders among agricultural tribes in Rohtak district which was calculated in 1929-30 to be double that of the non-agriculturist moneylenders²⁶⁹ undoubtedly

265 HO Notes, Chaudhri Ghulam Mustafa, 20 June 1939, op.cit.

266 See above chapter VIII, p 276.

267 Bhimsen Sachar, Oral History Transcript, No. 182 (NMMI), p.145.

268 Sir George Abell, Interview, 7 Nov. 1978. Interestingly, most of the ex-civilians of Punjab remember Chhotu Ram as the leader of "petty peasants".

269 See above chapter I, pp. 21-28.

increased manifold, greatly spurred by the economic field being made safe for them by the agrarian legislation so much so that the word 'Jat moneylender' came to be openly used for the agriculturist moneylenders in Punjab and even Chhotu Ram used it as such. The agrarian acts of Punjab therefore turned out to be 'golden' for the richer among the agriculturists of Punjab and the agriculturist moneylenders. Chhotu Ram's support and advocacy of agrarian legislation helped him in greatly strengthening his position among these classes who became not only his staunch supporters but also of other so-called zamindar representatives in Punjab.

The agrarian legislation was also responsible for the popularity and prestige of the Unionist Party in Punjab. Indeed, the popularity necessary for a successful continuation of the Unionist ministry, had also become imperative from the British point of view. The Governor of Punjab, writing to the Viceroy in 1938, commented:

There is no doubt that the prestige of the Ministry at the moment stands extremely high throughout the Province. This is largely, of course, due to their recent agrarian legislation....

Out of all the Unionist ministers, Chhotu Ram was singled out as being responsible for this legislation. Chhotu Ram had

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- 270 PLCD, XXVII, 29 Oct. 1935, pp. 409-10; PLAD, V, 22 July 1938, p. 1572. Also see above, p.325.
- 271 For the importance of Punjab and successful working of the Provincial Autonomy in Punjab see above chapter VII, pp.254-5.
- 272 Linlithgow Coll, 87: See letter, 26 Oct. 1938. Same opinion was expressed in an earlier letter of Craik to Viceroy, 24 Aug. 1938. The Viceroy wrote to Zetland: "I have no doubt that the stock of the Punjab government with the majority of the population is very high indeed". IOR:L/E/8/1038, 1938.
- 273 All the ex-Punjab civilians interviewed agreed that Chhotu Ram was the single most potent force behind the agrarian legislation.

taken a prominent part in the agrarian legislation even under the Reformed Councils. And he was again in the forefront of promoting agrarian legislation in the Assembly and its popularisation outside through the press and platform. His extensive propaganda tours in this connection were also used by the Unionists as well as the Punjab officials to project him as "the most effective champion of the agrarian policy of the ministry"²⁷⁴. The Punjab Governor described him as the "main driving force behind the various measures for agrarian relief."²⁷⁵ Chhotu Ram's association with the agrarian legislation had great political significance for he had gradually emerged as the chief spokesman of the Unionist Party.

The extensively propagated identification of Chhotu Ram with the agrarian legislation, served an important purpose. It succeeded in giving to the Muslim dominated Unionist Party a handle and a platform to counteract the most serious charge of the Hindu communal opposition against the legislation, that the legislation was 'communal' in spirit and had been brought for the benefit of the 'Muslims' alone, as the 'Muslims' unlike the 'Hindus' were overwhelmingly 'rural'.²⁷⁶ This was perhaps one of the important reasons why Chhotu Ram was again singled out for attack by the 'non-agriculturist Hindus' in the Assembly and outside. The Haryana Tilak published innumerable news items regarding the opposition of 'non-agriculturists' to the agrarian acts and their

274 Linlithgow Coll, 88: P. Moon to Linlithgow, 5 Jan. 1939.

275 Linlithgow Coll, 90: "Note on Punjab Ministers", 8 July 1941.

276 See all PLAD from 1938 to 1940. The most persistent charge of the 'urban Hindu' opposition was this.

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attacks upon their 'chief author', Chhotu Ram. These news items and articles were very faithfully and regularly reported and commented upon in the Jat Gazette and Chhotu Ram effectively used the opposition of the representatives of the affected non-agriculturists to project it as the opposition of all the non-agriculturist Hindus' to all the 'agriculturists', and himself in particular. Interestingly, more the representatives of these affected 'non-agriculturists' attacked Chhotu Ram as being responsible for these acts more he stood to gain personally as the 'champion of the zamindars of Punjab', a posture which he himself was keen to adopt and project. What greater tribute could be paid to Chhotu Ram in the eyes of the 'agriculturists' than the bitter attack of Gokal Chand Narang in the Punjab Assembly:

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I can lay a wager that if Chhotu Ram was not in the cabinet probably none of these measures would have been brought forward.

○ The enormous political impact of the agrarian legislation in Punjab is thus clear. What is less clear is that such an impact was sought to be made deliberately through enactment of the acts

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- 277 HT, 2 April 1935, p. 5; 9 April 1935, p. 3; 23 April 1935, p. 1; 30 April 1935, pp. 3-4; 21 May 1935, pp. 2, 6; 12 July 1938, pp. 1-5, 6; 19 July 1938, p. 4; 2 Aug. 1938, p. 1; 13 Sept. 1938, p. 6. Tribune gave similar news, see 5 July 1938, p. 4; 7 July 1938, p. 3; 8 July 1938, p. 3; 2 Aug. 1938, p. 3; 4 Aug. 1938, p. 3; 6 Oct. 1938, p. 8; 13 Oct. 1938, p. 5; 17 Oct. 1938, p. 3; 30 Oct. 1938, p. 7; 27 Nov. 1938, p. 3; 30 Nov. 1938, p. 3; 11 Aug. 1939, pp. 8, 12; 12 Aug. 1939, p. 5; 13 Aug. 1939, pp. 9, 12; 14 Aug. 1939, p. 1, 22 Aug. 1939, pp. 8, 12, 15.
- 278 JG, 8 June 1938, p. 5; 15 June 1938, pp. 5-6; 6 July 1938, p. 3; 13 July 1938, p. 3; 20 July 1938, p. 2; 27 July 1938, pp. 3-4.
- 279 PLAD, V, 24 June 1938, p. 238.

rather than through their actual implementation. ²⁸⁰ While the bills were being framed Emerson, the Governor of Punjab, had pointed this out to Linlithgow in his letter dated 22 December 1937: ²⁸¹

... during the last month or two, as I have noted in recent letters, there has been a tendency to favour spectacular measures, which would have little practical results but would react against the moneylenders and the urban classes to the benefit of the rural classes.

This "spectacular" nature of the agrarian measures was reinforced by the hurry with which they were introduced. Later on, in July 1938, H.D. Craik, the Governor of Punjab, also reasserted what Emerson had held and advised the Premier not to insist upon the Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act without collecting proper statistics. ²⁸² Sikandar Hayat Khan conceded the point but maintained that the Unionist Party could not even "consider" the postponement of the measure. ²⁸³ Similarly, E.D.R. Lumby, the legal adviser to the Secretary of State, remarked in January 1939 on the hurry with which the amendment of section 3-A in the Punjab Alienation of Land (3rd amendment) Act of 1938 by another amendment act in the same year was sought to be carried out: ²⁸⁴

These amendments appear to be sound enough but when a Bill of four clauses passed in July requires three amendments in November before it comes into force it seems to imply that things were being done in a somewhat slap-dash fashion.

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- 280 The actual operation of the acts was considerably delayed on account of two of the acts being challenged in the Federal Court, i.e., Alienation of Land (amendment) Act, 1938, and Restitution of Mortgaged Lands Act, 1938, and also due to the enormous increase in the work of the revenue officials which invariably delayed matters to a great extent.
Linlithgow Coll, 86: Craik to Viceroy, 22 July 1938.
- 281 Linlithgow Coll, 113: Emerson to Linlithgow, 22 Dec. 1937.
- 282 Linlithgow Coll, 86: Craik to Viceroy, 22 July 1938.
- 283 Ibid.
- 284 IOR:L/E/9/567, 1940.

Indeed, the four agrarian legislative measures were all introduced in July 1938, i.e., between the 16th and 21st July 1938. The fifth act known as the Agricultural Produce Markets Act was introduced in September 1938. This fact was used by Chhotu Ram as a slogan. He repeatedly asserted: "What we have achieved in four months the Congress can not do in 14 years"²⁸⁵.

Apart from the impact which was sought to be made by this package of agrarian laws, the hurry had very sound economic and political reasons. One such reason was the widespread destruction of the bumper crop and spread of cattle mortality soon after the new ministry took charge.²⁸⁷ In fact the south-eastern Punjab specially the districts of Rohtak, Hissar and Karnal were in the grip of a severe famine.²⁸⁷ Ruin faced many landowners as extensive debts had been undertaken on the promise of a rich harvest. A British official recorded that the zamindars expected full remission from the "new ministry" which was economically not possible, and the "infant ministry" stood to "stand or fall" by their handling of the situation as the outside agitators stood ready to exploit it against them.²⁸⁸ It was therefore necessary for the infant ministry to hurry up with ostensibly inqualabi (revolutionary) measures which could be propagated as favouring

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- 285 JG, 17 Aug. 1939, p. 4. Also see 5 Jan. 1938, p. 4; 9 Feb. 1938, p. 5.
 286 For details see C.C. Garbett, Friend of a Friend (London 1943), pp. 173-8.
 287 Linlithgow Coll, 87: Craik to Viceroy, 26 Oct. 1938. Also see above chapter I, pp. 15-16.
 288 C.C. Garbett, op.cit.

the small landowners but which would in reality strengthen the social basis of the Unionist Party.

This 'hurry' in the introduction of agrarian measures was seized upon by the 'urban Hindus', who strongly objected to the measures being rushed through the Assembly. This hurry, despite strong 'urban Hindu' objections created, according to some, "a very unfortunate impression" that the measures were directed against the "non-agriculturist community". This impression had, of course, a positive side from the side of Chhotu Ram and other Unionists. They could thereby not only 'prove' that measures were 'pro-agriculturists' but also that 'agriculturists' existed as a community as they had been claiming for years. Decidedly, the impact of the enactment of four agrarian measures, all introduced one after the other within a very short period, was going to be much greater than the introduction of the same measures if spaced out over a number of years. In any case, the impression that these acts were for the benefit of "all agriculturists" rapidly gained ground. The confidential fortnightly report of the Punjab Government for July 1938 pointed out:

The Bills command the support of all agriculturists and have been openly appreciated by such subversive bodies like district kisan committees.

In August 1938, it again pointed out:

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- 289 IOR:L/E/9/584, 1943. See minute of dissent in the Select Committee Report.
- 290 CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P.XIII-209, p. 13.
- 291 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/7/38, July 1938.
- 292 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/8/38, Aug. 1938. In Sept. 1938, however, a 'kisan conference' organised at Lyallpur passed a resolution against the agrarian laws. The officials opined that they were instigated by the 'non-agriculturists'. See GI : Home Poll, 18/9/38, Sept. 1938.

The popularity of the Bills among all classes of agriculturists has been strikingly illustrated by those who welcome and listen to the speeches of the Minister of Development (Sir Chhotu Ram) during his tours of districts in south-west and central Punjab.

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In August 1938, Craik reported to the Viceroy:

There seems to be a widespread impression that the tillers of the soil are now beginning to get a square deal.

Indeed, this widely created and projected "impression" was the best result of the agrarian legislation as it helped the 'Zamindar Government' to claim the support of 'all agriculturists' regardless of caste, class and creed. Even the Congress leaders had to agree that the Unionist Party had succeeded in "posing" as the "guardian of agricultural interests" and in winning over their sympathy.

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Apart from this direct gain to the 'Zamindar Government', the colonial government also stood to gain. This was clearly recognized in a confidential letter of Craik to the Viceroy in September 1938:

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... in the last resort the safety of India depends not on the attitude of the Congress, but on the loyalty of the Punjab. As Hailey used to observe "So long as you have a loyal and contented Punjab peasantry, you can rely on your Indian Army and can face with confidence any situation that may arise in other provinces".

In Sir Sikandar's view (and again I may add in mine) the great mass of the Punjab peasantry are at present loyal to the British connection. In spite of low prices and consequent economic depression, they have been heartened and encouraged by the recent agrarian legislation and believe that the Ministry is determined to do still more to promote their prosperity and that a better time lies ahead.

293 Linlithgow Coll., 87: See letter, 24 Aug. 1938.

294 Bhargava Papers, A.K. Azad to Gopi Chand Bhargava, 14 Mar. 1940.

295 Ibid., see letter, 10 Sept. 1938.

This impression of the impact of the agrarian legislation on the "contented Punjab peasantry" was also responsible for the fact that the agrarian acts received official sanction despite very severe reservations by the British officials on the merits of these acts. These acts also increased the Unionist ministry's leverage vis-a-vis the colonial authorities. This is clear from the letter of H.D. Craik to Linlithgow written on 26 January 1939:²⁹⁶

Sikandar and the ministry are not prepared to accept the amendments proposed by the Secretary of State. But there is some further information which I think I ought to give you privately. Sikandar told me that from a political point of view he would not particularly mind if the Secretary of State continued to oppose the Bill, although this would mean the resignation of the ministry, which would presumably be followed by the dissolution of the assembly, as no alternative ministry could command its confidence, and a general election. This sequence of events would, in Sikandar's view, have the effect of rallying his party both in the assembly and in the constituencies. He and his colleagues would take a firm line and gain considerable credit by representing themselves as sticking to their guns and boldly refusing to accept dictation from White Hall.

I have no doubt in my mind that a campaign on these lines would have most unfortunate consequences.... quite apart from the political difficulties with which it could confront us and the exultation which it would creat in Congress circles all over India. It is not necessary for me to emphasise how very unjudicious it would be to precipitate anything of this kind, specially when no important principle is at stake.

The British colonial government also gained by the political damage that this agrarian legislation caused to their chief opponent, i.e., the Congress. The dilemma of the Congress was highlighted by the confidential fortnightly report of the Punjab Government for July 1938:²⁹⁷

296 IOR/L/E/9/567, 1940, Craik to Linlithgow, 26 Jan. 1939.
297 GI : Home Poll, F. No. 18/7/38, July 1938.

The Congress Party, both in and outside the legislature, has found its position extremely difficult. It has been strongly urged by Urban Hindu organisations to oppose the Bills, but under pressure from above has found itself unable to show itself hostile to measures which are clearly intended to benefit the masses and are popular with the great majority of electors. The Congress members of Assembly have therefore adopted a vacillating attitude which has evoked the severe condemnation of the Hindu nationalist papers, the Hindu Mahasabha leaders and a number of Congress workers who disapprove of the new legislation.

In the opinion of the Punjab Governor, expressed to the Viceroy in September 1938, the vacillating attitude of the Congress regarding the agrarian legislation in Punjab had the following result: ²⁹⁸

It's prestige is probably lower than it has been for many months. It has, however, now come down pretty definitely on the side of the non-agriculturists and against the Bills. This move is certainly not likely to increase the Congress' chances of strengthening its hold on rural areas.

The Punjab Congress President acknowledged this in a letter to the All India Congress Committee in December 1938: ²⁹⁹

Although the Congress is not clear about agrarian legislation this provides the Unionist Party with a handle to defame the Congress. They say that the Punjab Congress is opposed to measures which help the agriculturists. This point should be cleared otherwise there is no chance of the Congress becoming popular in the masses, majority of which are agriculturists.

The agrarian acts were indeed used extensively by Chhotu Ram to attack the Congress for its ambiguous attitude towards

298 Linlithgow Coll, 87: Craik to Viceroy, 6 Sept. 1938.
 299 AICC Papers, F. No. PL-10, 1937-39, Dr. Satyapal to Subhas Chandra Bose, 8 Dec. 1938. Differences within the Congress on this account were openly acknowledged by the Tribune, 7 July 1938, p. 3; 14 Aug. 1939, p. 1.

300 them. In all this Chhotu Ram was ably helped by newspapers like the Statesman and ^{the} Civil and Military Gazette.³⁰¹ The effort of some of the Punjab Congress leaders to show that the agrarian laws were against the interests of agriculturists was not successful. These endeavours of the Congress, together with its own vacillating stand on agrarian issues, and the solid opposition offered by certain non-agriculturists in the name of entire castes, justified, in the eyes of the general rural public, the criticism made by Chhotu Ram that the Congress was an association of sahkars and shopkeepers and hence 'anti-agriculturist'. In fact, it was the agrarian legislation of the Unionist ministry which did the greatest damage to the Congress. H.D. Craik, writing about the Congress in September 1938, commented:³⁰²

It is torn by internal dissensions and has been thoroughly discredited even among the rural population by its equivocal attitude towards the recent legislation.

The agrarian legislation of Punjab, therefore, stood to directly strengthen the social base of the privileged landowners

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- 300 Linlithgow Coll, 87: Report of Scott, DIG, Police, 15 Sept. 1938. Scott mentions that agrarian acts had given a "handle" to Chhotu Ram for attacking the Congress. For Chhotu Ram's open and public attacks on the Congress on account of the agrarian acts see JG, 6 July 1938, p. 6; 20 July 1938, pp. 3, 4, 5 (2 articles and 1 speech); 13 July 1938, pp 3, 4, 8; 27 July 1938, p. 4; 3 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 10 Aug. 1938, p. 3; 17 Aug. 1938, pp. 3-4; 24 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 31 Aug. 1938, pp. 4, 5; 7 Sept. 1938, p. 3; 21 Sept. 1938, pp. 1, 7; 5 Oct. 1938, p. 4; 12 Oct. 1938, p. 3 to 5; 9 Nov. 1938, pp. 3-4; 16 Nov. 1938, p. 6; 23 Nov. 1938, p. 4; 5 Oct. 1938, pp. 2, 7; 25 Jan. 1939, p. 6; 15 Feb. 1939, p. 6; 19 April 1939, p. 3; 31 May 1939, p. 1; 21 June 1939, p. 2; 24 Aug. 1939, p. 2; 13 Dec. 1939, p. 4.
- 301 For Statesman, 9 Feb. 1939, See IOR/L/E/9/24, 1944. Also see C & MG, 7 July 1938, p. 8; 8 July 1938, p. 2; 9 July 1938, p. 2; 12 July 1938, pp. 8-11; 13 July 1938, p. 2; 17 July 1938, pp. 2, 13; 26 July 1938, p. 8; 31 July 1938, p.2.
- 302 Linlithgow Coll, 112: Craik to Linlithgow, 10 Sept. 1938.

favoured by the British since 1900 and also to weaken the Congress. Both these factors noticably stood to strengthen the British hold in Punjab.

All in all, the agrarian legislation in the late thirties was the outcome of a successful alliance between colonial government and the landowners of Punjab. The attempt of Chhotu Ram and his colleagues was not so much to protect the economically poorer agriculturists, whose socio-economic condition deteriorated noticably as seen in the case of Rohtak district, but to safeguard and promote the interests of the comparatively stronger landowning strata in Punjab. There could possibly be no one policy in agrarian field which could produce uniform legislation for all the different categories and classes of agriculturists. For example, the agrarian legislation of Punjab theoretically operated in relation to all landowners, big or small, and also the tenants and agricultural labourers. However, the latter classes, who generally borrowed from the landowners, did not even formally fall in the category of 'debtors' because the lending authority, i.e., the landlord lending to his tenants, etc., was not included within the scope and definition of a 'moneylender'.³⁰³ Interestingly, Chhotu Ram who had strongly condemned the exclusion of landlords from the definition of the moneylender as being "illogical" when the Registration of Moneylenders' Bill was under discussion in 1925 and had said "that if the landlord was not included he would become from a landlord a pure moneylender",³⁰⁴ himself

303 See Punjab Alienation of Land (3rd amendment) Act 1938, *op.cit.*

304 IOR:P/11649/1927, see proceedings of the Committee on Punjab Moneylenders' Registration Bill, 7 to 9 Sept. 1925.

excluded the landlord from the scope of the definition of a money-lender while helping to frame a similar bill in 1938.

In practical working, therefore, the agrarian reforms of Punjab benefited the bigger landowners at the expense of small landowners as well as the non-agriculturist moneylenders, while producing marginal benefits for the small landowners. For the small landowners it was a mere substitution of one sahuکار by another; one as rapacious, if not more, than the other. This fact did not find adequate public expression at the time because the major critics of the agrarian legislation were the rich non-agriculturists who made this point to protect their own exploitative position. Often the opposition, beyond saying that the agrarian legislation benefited only the big zamindars and jagirdars, was unable to explain why this was so; nor was it able to project an alternative legislative programme that would benefit the small landowners, tenants and agricultural labourers at the expense of both the agriculturist and non-agriculturist landlords, moneylenders and big landowners. The Congress attempt at defining the "smaller men" among the landowners to be restricted to those with an income of Rs. 1,200 and below was a rather petty effort in this direction.³⁰⁵

The report of Punjab officials on the working of agrarian legislation in Punjab made a very relevant and interesting observation regarding this point:³⁰⁶

305 See above p. 339.

306 CFRR Rohtak, P. XIII-209, p. 14.

In 1939 many zamindars were still in doubt whether the acts were golden as their sponsors alleged or of some baser metal.

For Chhotu Ram such doubts did not exist. Speaking on behalf of all zamindars he publicly claimed that as a result of agrarian legislation, "ninty percent of our debts stand extinguished".³⁰⁷

CONCLUSIONS

The political career of Chhotu Ram as the 'leader of Hindu Jats' of Haryana region was launched by ^{the} British officials. Their open support of him as a 'Jat leader' against the other leaders of different factions of Jats in Rohtak in the initial years of his career helped him to emerge rather early as 'the strongest man' in the district. Casteism fostered by the British therefore provided Chhotu Ram the basis of successful political organisation. In the hands of Chhotu Ram 'casteism' took the form of promoting the 'Jat interests' at its surface level; it was enlarged to encompass 'Hindu zamindar interests' in the context of the entire province. Both these slogans were successful; the first at the local level in ensuring a safe constituency for Chhotu Ram for over twenty years, and the second at the provincial level in the widely acclaimed recognition of Chhotu Ram as the leader of 'Hindu zamindars' of Punjab. Creation of such a strong caste-political position for Chhotu Ram enabled him to construct a highly stable and enduring political alliance with the Muslim Unionists.

At the local level the Jats, with their triple monopoly of socio-economic and numerical strength were easily mobilised. And although in his attempts at the political mobilisation of Jats Chhotu Ram projected 'Jatism' on behalf of the entire caste or tribe of Jats, regardless of any economic divisions within them, the social level of mobilisation however remained confined to the rich Jat landowners and the military personnel of the district, both serving and retired. In the given agrarian society of Rohtak

district, where the socio-economic structure was fully controlled by these very social strata, the representatives of these strata, like Chhotu Ram, under the restricted franchise system and high cost of fighting elections, could, and did, embark upon an active political career. In establishing their socio-economic hegemony in the district the rich Jat landowners of Rohtak were greatly helped by British administrators through direct legislative enactments starting from 1900 onwards. Similarly their efforts towards political mobilization were indirectly promoted by the British officials, their help taking various forms from direct financial aid in the establishment of Jat sabhas, educational institutions, and the press, to the grant of preference to the educated Jats in various governmental jobs. The British officials not only helped create effective tools of mobilisation but also helped the rich landowners among the Jats to gain access to the levers of political machinery both at the district and the provincial levels. However, having promoted 'caste politics' so determinedly in this region the colonial rulers also determined their political character. 'Caste politics' in Rohtak district from the very beginning was, therefore, loyalist politically. The eventual triumph of casteism as seen under Chhotu Ram's leadership helped the British both in acquiring a political base for their rule and in creating another dividing line within Indian society into which mutually antagonistic interest groups were formed and strengthened. This divide was of course effected as much by the British as leaders like Chhotu Ram who played the game of casteism in this region in their own interest.

In his attempt at the political mobilisation of the upper strata of the Jats of Rohtak district, Chhotu Ram fully exploited the existing socio-economic differences and antagonisms between landowners and their economic subordinates. These differences, projected as 'caste antagonisms' and 'caste questions', were mainly seen existing between the Jats and other castes. An analysis of the economic relationships in the district between the landowning Jats and other rural social strata drawn from other castes as well from within the Jats, throws light on the deliberate attempts of Chhotu Ram and the district officials to camouflage the latent social antagonism existing within the agrarian society of Rohtak and Punjab and encouraging the Jats to maintain a 'separate identity' from other castes. However, in the context of the existing tense relationships among different agrarian strata Chhotu Ram, regardless of his professed 'Jatism', blatantly sided with the landowners against the tenants and agricultural labourers not only in Rohtak district but also elsewhere in Punjab. And, despite its inherent contradictions the caste ideology of Chhotu Ram was able to on the whole operate successfully in Rohtak district in, on the one hand, binding the economically poorer Jats and the landowning Jats together and, on the other, in using Jat caste domination to keep the non-Jats firmly under control.

As with other castes, the relations of 'Jats' with the Muslims of Rohtak district, erupting in mutually violent confrontations now and then, were also universally projected by the press and deliberately interpreted by the district officials as 'communal'. Behind the garb of religion and communalism, however, operated economic issues relating primarily to land

rights and the acquisition of land. And since the Jats constituted the majority of landowners in Rohtak district they naturally came to be far more frequently involved in these land disputes with the Muslim landowners, etc., which were deliberately given a religious colouring. Differences on matters like Gau-kashi, mainly between certain Jats and Muslim Qasais, were also basically economic in character. They were often the result of the attempts of Hindu Jat landowners to deal with the question of wide scale and frequent thefts of their cattle, or of the efforts of Jat peasants to settle the question of indebtedness to their Muslim butcher-cum-money-lenders. Certain nationalist-cum-communal politicians also played a part in raising the 'Jat vs. Muslim' question, because the Congress in Rohtak district was hardly a non-communal body and was given to politically exploiting any situation. Chhotu Ram himself was accused by others of fanning communal tensions by his advocacy of the rights of 'Hindu Jats' against the Muslims. These accusations were made notwithstanding Chhotu Ram's alliance with the Unionist Muslims at the provincial level and his theoretically non-communal approach necessarily born out of his politics based on 'zamindars' of Punjab who belonged to all religious complexions. However, in reality Chhotu Ram was as apprehensive as the British officials of communal passions becoming strong in Rohtak district and consequently obliterating the caste divisions among the Hindus mutually nurtured by Chhotu Ram and the district officials in this region. Communal tensions would have resulted in bringing together the hitherto separated 'Hindu Jat' and 'Hindu Bania' or in giving a boost to the Congress notoriously known as

the 'Banias Congress' in Rohtak district, which stood for all-caste and community unity against the British.

The political success of Chhotu Ram in his constituency on the basis of 'casteism' is also seen in relation to the two anti-British and supposedly casteless movements of the time, i.e., the Arya Samaj and the Congress. The socio-economic structure of Rohtak district, which assured the success of Chhotu Ram's 'casteism' in the political field, also resulted in negating the effects of the anti-caste social reform movement of Arya Samaj. Apart from Chhotu Ram's attempts in this direction, the threat that the Arya Samaj movement posed to the traditional and hierarchical social structure of Rohtak district dominated by the rich Jats ensured the almost certain failure of this aspect of the movement. Even the Shuddhi movement, whether among the high caste Mule Jats of the lower spectrum of Hindu castes, was not acceptable to the majority of the landowning Jat followers of the Arya Samaj in the district. Even Chhotu Ram's attempts to make the Arya and non-Arya Jats accept the Mule Jats in order to increase the numerical strength of the total Jat population in Rohtak could not succeed. However, Chhotu Ram achieved substantial success in his attempts at directing the political sympathies of the Jat followers of Arya Samaj from the nationalist preachings of the Congress to his own loyalist leanings and pro-British politics. Inadvertantly aided in these attempts by the popular so-called nationalist press of the time, which represented urban Hindu mercantile groups, and the unfortunate utterances of the leading Arya Samajists, Chhotu Ram succeeded in making Rohtak district unique in this respect. Despite being called the 'home of Arya Samaj', Rohtak district retained the confidence of the

British officials and remained loyalist. Fully supported in his attempts by the British, Chhotu Ram had also realised like them that the Arya Samaj alone could succeed in breaking the hold of 'casteism' in this region. 'Casteism', so blatantly promoted, therefore, succeeded in making the suspected 'dangerous aspect' of the Arya Samaj totally ineffective among most of its landowning Jat followers. Chhotu Ram thus transformed Rohtak from what could have become a 'dangerous' and 'anti-government district' into one of the safest and most reliable ones.

Apart from the Arya Samaj, the Congress also drew its major recruiting strength from among the 'Jats' of Rohtak district. Chhotu Ram fully cooperated with the district administrators with all the resources under his command to counteract and weaken the growing popularity of the Congress among 'Jats'. And although he failed to check its growth, his own political and electoral position remained safe because the Jat followers of the Congress were primarily drawn from among the petty landowners, or other lower classes, though some of the officials of the district revenue agency and some military personnel also supported it. Under the system of restricted franchise these social groups were neither electorally large enough to tip the balance against Chhotu Ram in elections, nor was the Congress strong among them such as to be politically and socially dangerous to him and his supporters. It was in fact the inherent weakness of the nationalist forces in Rohtak and Punjab which made for the success of Chhotu Ram's politics. Moreover, the Congress practised its own brand of caste politics in Rohtak district as also in Punjab, so that it was unable to expose Chhotu Ram and his casteist politics and propaganda.

Nevertheless, the combination of economic depression and growing popularity of the Congress among petty landowners of Rohtak district compelled Chhotu Ram to adopt part of the Congress programme during the civil disobedience years of thirties. So vigorous and effective was he in the propagation of this programme that district administrators grew apprehensive about Chhotu Ram's real intentions and declared his pronouncements to be pro-Congress and even 'communistic' in nature. Even before this, Chhotu Ram had nearly always, out of necessity imposed by the political situation, adopted an anti-official attitude and carried an anti-official propaganda at the district level; although at the same time he fully cooperated with the officials at the provincial level. At the district level he succeeded in evolving a political style which was popular and appreciated by his constituents. Outwitting other political factions in the district, he established himself as the chief source of assistance to the 'zamindars'. This different political style at the district level had also been adopted by him partly because of the realisation that an anti-government attitude was popular with the petty landowning voters of Rohtak district. Similarly, he adopted in the early thirties at the provincial level also a partly radical ideological and pragmatic approach, for example, on questions of the application of income-tax principles to land revenue and lessening its rate to give substantial relief to small holder. All this should not, however, hide the fact that Chhotu Ram was a very able representative of the landed interests in Punjab. Such demands were the outcome of socio-economic and political forces of the time. His whole political career was based on the advocacy of the landed

interests. In fact his blatant championing of the cause of the big landowners during the World War II on the question of agricultural prices came into direct conflict with the war-time policies of the colonial rulers. In his unflinching advocacy of the rights of big landowners, he even showed some signs of the inevitable rise of economic nationalism under a colonial set up even among out and out cooperators. Chhotu Ram's support of the landowning interests was, indeed, the basis of his coalition with the representatives of the predominant Muslim landowning interests of the western Punjab in the form of the Unionist Party of Punjab.

The support of the Hindu Rural Group led by Chhotu Ram became unquestionably essential to the very life and existence of the Unionist ministry formed under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy. The complete stability of the ministry despite various crises faced by the Unionist Muslims, whether due to death of Sikandar Hayat Khan at a crucial time leaving the Unionist Muslims with ineffective and weak leadership, or to the growing attacks of Jinnah on the Punjab ministry, or to the food crisis during the World War II, or to the potential and ever present danger of the secular and nationalist Congress, was all due to the unflinching support of Chhotu Ram to the Unionist Muslims. As such, he provided the most essential element in the stable politics of Punjab. Indeed, Chhotu Ram ostensibly enlarged the social base of the Unionist Party in Punjab by providing to the Unionist Muslims, who were in the main supported by and representatives of big landowners, the massive following of the comparatively 'small landowners' of the Haryana region.

Chhotu Ram's support was indispensable for the enactment of very comprehensive agrarian legislation in the late thirties, which proved 'golden' for the rich landowners and the agriculturist money-lenders of Punjab. This agrarian legislation, following the definite trend in the agrarian policy already adopted and initiated by the British bureaucracy from the beginning of the 20th century, had the effect of further strengthening the privileged landowners who had come to be openly favoured by ^{the} British officials. The adoption of a comprehensive agrarian legislation satisfied the basic demand of the landed interests in Punjab, i.e., more and easy accessibility for investment in the agrarian field, for acquisition of land, and in the business of moneylending with severe limitations on the competition provided by a similar class of moneylenders from among the non-agriculturists. Benefits occurring to this privileged class brought a drastic change in the society of Punjab as is evident in the case of Rohtak district. In this district where the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 had resulted in a spectacular rise of Jat money-lenders, the major beneficiaries of the agrarian legislation of late thirties also proved to be the same class of people. The richer landowners and agriculturist moneylenders gained at the expense of petty landowners whose economic position was thereby radically changed in this period resulting in a tremendous increase in the number of tenants of all kinds and agricultural labourers not only in Rohtak district but in the whole of Punjab. Direct benefits to this class naturally strengthened Chhotu Ram's and that of his colleagues' hold among their supporters in this class. The agrarian legislation increased the prestige of the ministry, and also exposed the Congress which, because of its failure to support the legislation, stood condemned as an 'urban' and 'anti-agriculturist'

party. For Chhotu Ram, the agrarian measures were a personal achievement. He gained enormously in stature as 'the man' behind the agrarian legislation. His final triumph came with the universal acceptance of his much propagated word 'zamindar' and 'zamindar interests' being used for all 'agriculturists' regardless of the socio-economic divisions within them. An impression was created that these measures were 'pro-agricultural community' in their content and effects. However, there was wide acceptance even by the main opposition parties that such a community existed in reality. After the passage of the agrarian legislation, notwithstanding the opinion of the officials of Rohtak district who because of Chhotu Ram's deliberately troublesome behaviour had continued to dislike him, now even the highest British officials, for example, the Governor and the Viceroy, paid him handsome tributes. After all, Chhotu Ram's politics, including his agrarian legislation proved of immense benefit to the colonial rulers. This not only strengthened the loyalist land-owning classes in Punjab but also weakened the Congress, their foremost enemy. Both these results meant strengthening of the hold of the British in Punjab, a province which was admittedly most important for them politically because of its role in army recruitment.

Chhotu Ram's role in Punjab politics was significantly determined by his emergence as the leader of 'Jats of Rohtak' and the 'Hindu zamindars of Punjab'. This in return was achieved by Chhotu Ram with the help of the British authorities by the successful utilisation and exploitation of the existing socio-economic structure of the agrarian society of Punjab. Chhotu

Ram's ultimate success lay in turning 'constitutional casteism' as created by the British administrators in the form of 'agriculturists and non-agriculturists' in Punjab by the Alienation of Land Act 1900, into a viable and successful political force in the Haryana region and Punjab.

PERSONALITIES

- Abbot, S.E: ICS, Secretary to the Premier of Punjab, 1939-44.
- Abdus Samad, K.B. Sardar: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1944-45.
- Abdul Aziz, K.B. Mian: ICS, Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1931-33.
- Abell, Sir George: ICS, Secretary to the Governor of Punjab, 1941-43; Deputy Secretary to the Viceroy, 1943-45.
- Addison, L.P.: ICS, Assistant Commissioner in the districts of Ambala Division, 1932-45; Settlement Officer, Gurgaon, 1941.
- Amery, L.S: Secretary of State for India, 1940-46.
- Anand Kumar, Diwan: Son of Raja Narendra Nath; Member of Hindu Mahasabha; Lecturer in Lahore College.
- Barkerley Smith, Rupert: District Magistrate of Agra, 1920-22.
- Batalvi, A.H: Joint-Secretary of the Punjab Muslim League Party, 1937-45.
- Bhargava, Gopi Chand: An active and prominent member of the Congress; Secretary, Lahore District Congress Committee, 1921; Member of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, 1921-26.
- Birkenhead, First Earl of Birkenhead: Secretary of State for India, 1924-28.
- Bolster, R.C: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1919-20.
- Brayne, Colonel F.L: ICS, 1905-41; Commissioner Rural Reconstruction, Punjab, 1937-40; Financial Commissioner and Secretary, Revenue Department, Punjab, 1940-41.
- Brendon, P: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1937-45.
- Burlton, Captain, P.S.M: Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1897-1900.
- Burton, F.H: Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1906-7.
- Calvert, H: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1912-14; Registrar Cooperative Societies, 1915-1925; Commissioner, 1926-30; Financial Member of the Executive Council, Governor of Punjab, 1930-32.
- Casson, H.A: ICS, Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1919-21.
- Chandra, C.N: ICS, Junior and Additional Secretary to the Financial Commissioners, Punjab, 1934-45.

Chelmsford, First Viscount of Chelmsford: Viceroy of India, 1916-21.

Craik, Sir Henry Duffield: ICS, Governor of Punjab, 1938-41.

Dallas, C.W: ICS, Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1914-16.

Darling, M.L: ICS, Commissioner of Income Tax, Punjab, 1921-27; Registrar Cooperative Societies, Punjab, 1924-30; Chairman, Banking Inquiry Committee, 1929-30; Financial Commissioner, Punjab, 1936-40; Chairman, Punjab Land Revenue Assessment Committee, 1937-38.

Daultana, Mian Ahmad Yar Khan: Landlord, Member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937-45; General Secretary, the Punjab National Unionist Party, 1936-45. Also, Chief Parliamentary Secretary, 1937-42.

De Montmorncy, Geoffery: ICS, Governor of Punjab, 1928-33.

Duni Chand, Lala: A prominent leader of the Congress from Ambala; Member, Punjab Assembly from Ambala and Simla, general rural constituency, 1937-45.

Emerson, Sir Herbert William: ICS, Governor of Punjab, 1933-38.

Ferguson, J.A: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1921-22.

Firoj Chand, Lala: Joined Congress, 1920; A close associate of Lala Lajpat Rai; One of the first ones to join the Servants of the People's Society; editor, Bande Matram, The People.

Garbett, C.C: ICS, Financial Commissioner and Secretary, Government of Punjab, 1936-45.

Gauga, K.L: Member, All India Muslim League and All India Muslim Conference; in the Executive Committee of the Ahrar Party, 1934; Member, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1934-37; Chairman, All India Khaksar Parliamentary Board, 1943.

Gill, H.A.C: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1929-37.

Glancy, Sir Bertrand James: ICS, Governor of Punjab, 1941-46.

Haig, H.G: ICS, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 1925-26; Secretary to the Viceroy, Home Department, 1926-30; Home Member, Viceroy Council, 1932-34.

Hailey, Sir Malcolm, First Baron Hailey: Governor of Punjab, 1924-28.

Hailes, Lt. Colonel, W.L: British Indian Army, 1914-40; toured the 'Jat' villages of Ambala Division, 1926-27.

Halifax, First Earl of Halifax (also Lord Irwin): Viceroy of India, 1926-31.

Harcourt, H: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1914-19.

Hardwari Lal: Tehsildar, 1937-40; Extra Assistant Commissioner, 1940-45.

Hirtzel, Sir Arthur: Under Secretary of State for India, 1924-30.

Howe, R.D: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1938-41.

Hussain, Azim: ICS, Assistant Commissioner and Sub-Divisional Officer, 1937-41; Director of Panchayats, Punjab, 1941; With Government of India, Defence Department, 1942-45.

Hussain Khan, Sultan Lal: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1941-44.

Irwin (also Halifax): Viceroy of India, 1926-31.

Irwin, Miles: ICS, Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1928-29.

Jenkins, E.M: ICS, Personal Secretary to the Viceroy, 1938-45; Governor of Punjab, 1946-47.

Jones, J.K: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1937-45.

Josh, Sardar Sohan Singh: Member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937-45; A communist member of the Congress Socialist Party.

Laithwaite, Sir Gilbert: Private Secretary to the Viceroy, 1936-43.

Latifi, A: ICS, Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1929-30.

Lincoln, E.H: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 6 Nov. 1931 to 4 April 1933; 31 Oct. 1933 to 22 Mar. 1934.

Linlithgow, Second Marquis of Linlithgow: Viceroy of India, 1936-43.

Maclagan, Sir Edward: Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, 1918-20; Governor of Punjab, 1920-24.

Macnab A.C., Macnab of Macnab: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1911-14; Deputy Commissioner, Karnal, 1921-23; of Sargodha, 1923-28; Senior Secretary to the Financial Commissioners, 1928-33; served as Commissioner in different districts, 1936-40.

Majithia, S.S: Revenue Member, Punjab Executive Council, 1921-26; Honorary Secretary, Chief Khalsa Diwan, 1902-20; Formed Khalsa National Party, 1936; Revenue Minister in the Unionist Ministry, Punjab, 1937-41.

Malik, H.C: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1926-29.

Mangat Rai, E.N: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1938-43; Assistant Director and later Director of the Civil Supplies, and Under Secretary, Government of Punjab, Home Department, 1943-45.

Marsden, P: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1923-26.

Maynard, Sir Herbert John: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Ambala District, 1899-1903; Additional Member, Viceroy Council, 1914-15; Financial Commissioner, Punjab, 1916-18; Member Executive Council, Governor of Punjab, 1921-26.

Mehdi Khan, Malik Zaman: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1929-31.

Moon, Sir Penderal: ICS, Secretary to the Governor of Punjab, 1938-42.

Morley, Viscount Morley: Secretary of State for India, 1905-10, 1911.

Morton, K.V.F: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Punjab Districts, 1930-41; Deputy Commissioner, 1942-45.

Mudie, Sir Francis: Member, Executive Council of the Viceroy, 1944.

Muddiman, Sir A. Philipps: ICS, Deputy Secretary, Government of India Legislative Department, 1915-20; President, Council of State, 1921-24.

Mustafa, Chaudhri Ghulam: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1936-39.

Muzaffar Khan, K.B. Nawab: Director Information Bureau, 1925-31; Revenue Member, Punjab, 1935-37; Member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937-45.

Narendra Nath, Raja: Member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1921-37; Member, All India Hindu Mahasabha.

Noon, Malik Firoj Khan: Member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1920-36; Minister, Punjab Government, 1927-30, 1931-36; Member, Viceroy's Council, 1941-45.

O'Dwyer, Michael: Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, 1913-18.

Penny, Sir James: ICS, Chief Secretary, Government of Punjab, 1937-41; Financial Commissioner, Development, 1941-45.

Reading, First Marques of Reading: Viceroy of India, 1921-26.

Rhodes, Sir Campbell: Member, India Council, 1930.

Sachar, Bhim Sen: Secretary, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, 1921; Member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937-45; Leader of the Congress Party in the Punjab Assembly, 1940-47.

Sahni, J.N: Joined the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1920s; Active association with formation of the Congress Socialist Party; editor, Hindustan Times, 1926-35.

Sachdev, M.R: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1934-36.

Salisbury, C.V: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Ambala, 1929-31, Karnal, 1932-33; Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1942-43.

Seton, Sir Malcolm: Assistant Under Secretary of State for India, 1924-30; Deputy Under Secretary of State for India, 1930-32.

Shabud-ud-din, K.B. Chaudhri: President Legislative Council, Punjab, 1931-36; Minister for Education, Punjab, 1936-37; Speaker, Punjab Assembly, 1937-42.

Sharma, Neki Ram: The oldest Congressman from Hissar, attended the Indian National Congress, 1910; Member, All India Congress Committee; Member, Hindu Mahasabha; involved in anti-Begar movement.

Sharma, Sri Ram: A prominent Congressman from Rohtak District; started the weekly paper Haryana Tilak in 1923; Member, Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937-52.

Shrinagesh, J.M: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Ambala District, 1939-41; Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1941, 1944.

Tek Chand, Dewan: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Karnal District, 1919, and Ambala District, 1919-21; Commissioner, Ambala Division, 1924-26.

Thompson, J.P: ICS, Chief Secretary, Punjab, 1916-21.

Trevaskis, H.C: ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Rohtak District, 1913-14; Assistant Commissioner in the different districts of Ambala Division, 1915-19.

Tyabji, Badr-ud-Din: ICS, Assistant Commissioner, Hissar, 1941-42; Controller of Supplies, Department of Supply, Punjab, 1942-45.

Vincent, Sir William H.H: Member, India Council, 1931.

Wavell, Field Marshal Viscount Wavell: Viceroy of India, 1943-47.

Williams, A.A: ICS, Assistant Commissioner in Punjab Districts, 1932-45.

Wilberforce, S: ICS, Registrar Cooperative Credit Societies, Punjab, 1904-8; Joined the Indian Judicial Service, 1910-21.

Winterton, M.P. Earl of: Under-Secretary of State for India, 1921-24.

Zetland, Second Marquis of Zetland: Secretary of State for India, 1935-40.

GLOSSARY OF SELECTED LOCAL TERMS

Abadi-deh	: Inhabited site of the village.
Abiana	: An Assessment levied in addition to the assessment at unirrigated rates on account of the advantage derived from irrigation.
Achut Udhar	: Uplift of the untouchables.
Badmash	: Bad Character.
Barani	: Dependent on rainfall.
Batai	: Rent taken by division of crop.
Benami	: Fictitious.
Bigha	: A land measurement varying in different parts of Punjab. In the Ambala division it approximated to five eighths of an acre.
Bijjar	: Bull.
Biradari	: Caste/Community.
Chahi	: Irrigated from a well.
Chhua-Chhut	: Caste discrimination against the untouchables.
Chari	: Green Fodder.
Dehati	: Rural
Dehat-Sudhar	: Village uplift.
Dharmshala	: A kind of rest-house.
Gau-Kashi	: Cow-slaughter.
Gau-Rakshni Sabha	: Cow-Protection Association.
Gaushala	: Alm-house for cattle.
Goonda	: A rouge, a ruffian.
Got	: Sub-caste.
Id-gah	: Id-Mosque; A mosque where Id prayers are held.
Ilaqua	: Region.
Inquilab	: Revolution.
Jatha	: Volunteers' Corps.

Jama-Bandi	: Register of holdings of owners and tenants showing land held by each and amount payable as rent, land revenue and cesses.
Jamadar	: A non-commissioned officer of the army.
Kacha	: Not lined with Masonary (applied to a well).
Kacha Bigha	: 1/5th of an acre.
Kamin	: Village menial or servant.
Kharif	: The autumn harvest.
Kisan	: Tenant
Lathi	: A stout stick or staff.
Mahant	: Chief priest; a hereditary head of a religious shrine or trust.
Mandi	: Market (a grain-market)
Mandir	: A Hindu Temple.
Masjid	: A Muslim place of worship.
Mazdoor	: Labourer
Methi	: Fenugreek, a fodder crop
Mohalla	: A residential area; compound of houses and adjacent areas around a street.
Nazul	: Land in or near towns or villages which has escheated to the government.
Panna	: A compact territorial component of a village.
Pracharak	: Preacher.
Pandal	: Temporary covered arena or pole and cloth building used for outdoor public gathering.
Pathshala	: Primary School.
Qasai	: Butcher
Rabi	: The spring harvest.
Risaldar	: An Indian army officer commanding a troop of horse.
Sahukar	: Moneylender.

Sanjhi	: Co-sharer.
Sarkar	: Government.
Shamilat	: Common Land. of the village.
Shudhi	: Purification (a movement of Arya Samaj)
Shudh-Shudha	: Purified.
Subedar	: A non-commissioned officer of the army.
Taccavi	: Loan for agricultural purposes given by the State.
Tehsil	: A sub-division of a district.
Thana	: Police Station.
Updeshik	: Preacher.
Wajib-ul-Arz	: Record of Rights.
Zamindar	: Landowner.
Zoolam	: Tyranny.

APPENDIX I

Jat Gazette, 21 Sept. 1927, p. 2.

Religion should have nothing to do with Politics

Q: Why are there Zamindar and Non-Zamindar parties in the Punjab Council?

Ans: All the zamindars have common economic interests regardless of their respective religions. There must, therefore, be a Zamindar Party embracing Hindu, Muslim and Sikh zamindars.

Demands of the Zamindar Party
(Below, right hand side)

1. The Alienation of Land Act should not be abolished.
2. The zamindars are heavily taxed. In order to lighten their burden, rate of Abiana should be lowered; Chahi rate should be abolished; and no land revenue should be charged from those zamindars whose income is less than Rs. 2,000 a year.
3. The zamindars went in for education much later than non-zamindars. Therefore, till there is parity in education between the two sections, the zamindars should be given preferential treatment as regards appointments to government services. And in the departments connected with agriculture only zamindars should be recruited.

Demands of the Non-Zamindar Party
(Below, left hand side)

1. Abolition of Alienation of Land Act.
2. The rate of Abiana should not be lowered; Chahi rate should not be abolished. Instead Motor-tax should be abolished; and burden of the taxes should remain on the zamindars alone.
3. No weightage should be given to the war services of the zamindars for purposes of recruitment to government services. The system of open competition should be instituted instead and recruitment should be made on merit alone.

APPENDIX II

Jat Gazette, 15 October 1927, p. 2.

بدھوار ۵ اکتوبر ۱۹۲۷ء روتنگ جلد ۱۱

زراعت پیشہ کنبہ کی پریشانی

۴۰ بیگہ زمین کا مالک ۱۰۰ بیگہ زمین کا کاشت کار

سوڈ خوار کنبہ کے مزے

سوس پتے ہوتے ہیں کوس ہزار روپے کا سرمایہ دار



S. K. D. M.
Vaishk...
R...

سوال۔ رشای ٹھاٹھ باٹھ کیسے؟
جواب۔ گھر سے لے کر سوڈ کا دھیر دے جاتے ہیں۔ اگر دو سو روپے سالانہ
سے ایک روپیہ بھی کم آمدنی سے تو ایک پتہ بھی گورنمنٹ کو ایکس نہیں
دینا پڑتا۔ پھر رشای ٹھاٹھ باٹھ نہ ہوں؟
سوال۔ یہ کنبہ کیوں پریشان ہے؟
جواب۔ باوجود دولت کا کرنے درقرض لیکر روپیہ لگانے کے اس کے
کھیت میں طرف سے ۳۰ روپے کی سالانہ بچت ہوتی ہے اور ٹری ٹیکل
یہ ہے کہ کھیت میں کچھ پیدا ہوتا ہے جو ۱۰ روپے سرکاری ٹھان ضرور کر
جاتا گزٹ۔ العاق لائق نہ تو یہ ہے کہ جس زمیندار کی آمدنی ۲ ہزار روپے سالانہ سے کم ہو اس سے کوئی ایکس نہ لیا جائے۔ جیسا کہ اس کے پردی کے لئے کیا ہوا ہے۔ ہر ایک کی آمدنی کا
تقدیر ۱۰ روپے

APPENDIX IIJat Gazette, 15 Oct. 1927, p. 2.Tribulations of a Peasant Family: The Owner of
40 Bighas of land Worth Rs. 10,000.

(Right)

Q: Why is this family so harassed?

Ans: Despite working day and night and having borrowed money on interest, they eke out a mere income of Rs. 304 per year out of this land. They face worse trouble when regardless of the produce of their land they have to remit Rs. 40 to the government as land revenue.

The Comforts of Moneylenders: Capitalists of Rs. 10,000

(Left)

Q: How do they enjoy such luxuries?

Ans: Without doing any work themselves they receive interest from the Kisans. The government does not charge any tax if their income is even a rupee less than Rs. 2,000 a year. They are bound to lead a luxurious life.

Jat Gazette: Is this justice? All zamindars whose income is less than Rs. 2,000 a year should also be exempted from taxation so that they are at par with their neighbours.

APPENDIX III

Jat Gazette, 15 October 1927, p. 8.

جائے گزرو رتبہ ۱۵ اکتوبر ۱۹۲۷ء

رقبہ	نقص	اندازہ آمدنی	فستق	اندازہ آمدنی	محل ہسٹری	خرچ
۴ بیگہ	کپاس	۸۰ روپیہ	میتھی	۳۰ روپیہ	۱۱۰ روپیہ	دوبیلوں کا سلاخ چھ ۲۴ روپے
۳ بیگہ	مرچیں	۱۰۰ روپیہ	میتھی	۳۰ روپیہ	۱۳۰ روپیہ	سرخہ کی مزدوری ۵ روپے
۳ بیگہ	اکیچہ	۱۳۰ روپیہ	خالی		۳۰ روپیہ	کھاوا ۴ روپے
۳ بیگہ	چری	۴۰ روپیہ	چنا	۳۰ روپیہ	۶۰ روپیہ	آلات کی مرمت ۵۰ روپے
۳ بیگہ	مکی	غلا ۴ روپیہ کرب ۲ روپیہ	جھی	۳۰ روپیہ	۴ روپیہ	یج ۵ روپے
۳ بیگہ	خالی		گہنوں	غلا ۲۰ روپیہ بھوسہ ۱۰ روپیہ	۲۰ روپیہ	دوبیلوں کی قیمت سود ۵ روپے
		میرا سالانہ آمدنی و خرچ		۹۵ روپے	۶۵ روپیہ	

لیٹی ہوئی۔ اس صورت میں ۳ بیگہ زمین میں ماضیت کرنے والے ہندوستانیوں کے پاس کل ۳۰ روپے کی سالانہ بھرتی ہوتی ہے جس کے لئے وہ مہوائے عورت اور بچوں کے دن رات گزارتا ہے۔ اسی آمدنی میں سے اسکو سرکاری مکان کا ۲۰ روپے سالانہ اور ان کے لئے تاجے اگر وہ اپنا کھانا نہ بنائے پھر فوراً فیکسنگ لگ جاتا ہے تو اس کو خرچ ہی خرچ ہونا ہوتا ہے۔ اور سرکاری زمین پر بھی اس کے لئے کھانا بنانا ہوتا ہے۔ اس پر ہندوستانیوں کی مجلسی کا شکار نہ ہونو اور کون ہوا؟ میں گورنمنٹ ہندوستانیوں کی بے بسی اور مجلسی کو بڑھانے سے لئے کچھ عملی ذرائع اختیار کرے گی اور ان چھوٹے ہونے والوں کو مجلس سے سری کرنے کی اجازت اور روپے سالانہ سے کم سے ہندوستان کی برابری کا باعث ان کی مجلس سے کیوں نہیں ہوگی ہندوستان کی آبادی کا ۱۰ حصہ ہیں۔ ان کی ترقی ہندوستان کی ترقی ہے اور گورنمنٹ کی بہتری اور نیک نالی ہے۔ کیا اہل ہند کے قوم پرست بھی ان کی تکلفات کا احساس کرتے ہیں؟

APPENDIX III

Jat Gazette, 15 Oct. 1927, p. 8.

The Table of the income of a Kisan who pays Rs. 40 as Land Revenue

Area	Kharif Crop	Estimated income	Rabi Crop	Estimated income	Total Income	Expenditure
4 Bighas	<u>Kapas</u> (Cotton)	Rs. 80	<u>Methi</u> (Fenu-greek)	Rs. 30	Rs. 110	Yearly expenditure on 2 oxen Rs. 360
4 Bighas	<u>Mirch</u> (Chillies)	Rs. 100	<u>Methi</u>	Rs. 30	Rs. 130	Mazdoori Rs. 50
4 Bighas	<u>Ikh</u> (sugar-cane)	Rs. 130	fallow	-	Rs. 130	Manure Rs. 40
4 Bighas	<u>Chari</u> (Green fodder)	Rs. 40	grain if rain falls	Rs. 30	Rs. 70	Repair of implements Rs. 100
4 Bighas	<u>Makki</u> (Corn)	<u>Galla</u> Rs. 40 <u>Karab</u> Rs. 4 (grain and fodder)	Jau (barley)	Rs. 30	Rs. 74	Seeds Rs. 50
20 Bighas	-	-	Wheat	Wheat Rs. 400 Bhoosa Rs. 40	Rs. 440	Interest of 2 oxen Rs. 50
Total Yearly Income & Expenditure					Rs. 954	Rs. 650

Note: The cultivator of 40 Bighas of land has a net income of Rs. 304 per year only. For this he works himself to the bone in order to feed his wife and children. Out of this income he has to give Rs. 40 per year as land revenue. If he digs a well, he is immediately taxed. The government land revenue demand stifles him. Naturally the Indian Kisan is bound to be poor. Will the Government of India, seeing the utter poverty and helplessness of these kisans, take some steps to remedy matters and exempt from land revenue the small kisans whose income is less than Rs. 2,000 a year. The poverty of these people is the reason for the lawlessness in the country. Such people form 2/3rds of the entire population of the country. Their progress is the progress of the country and also that of the Government. Are the national leaders even aware of these difficulties?

(Note: The word kisan is used here for a landowner.)

APPENDIX IV

Chhotu Ram to Hardwari Lal, Lahore, 19 December 1934

RAO BAHADUR
CHAUDHRI CHHOTU RAM,
B.A., LL.B., M.L.C.,
ADVOCATE.

Lahore.

~~PCHEAK.~~

Dated 19-12-34

Dear Hardwari Lal, I believe you will spend your Christmas holidays at Postak. Please get a copy of the pedigree-table of all the descendants of your great-grand-father, have an English translation of the pedigree-table and show in it definitely which of those descendants fought during the Great War, ~~who~~ Also let me have a copy

APPENDIX IV (Contd.)

of the result of the examination
of the first six successful candi-
dates.

yours sincerely
C. H. W. M.

APPENDIX V

Chhotu Ram to Hardwari Lal, Rohtak, 19 February 1935

RAO BAHADUR
CHAUDHRI CHHOTU RAM,
B.A., LL.B., M.L.C.,
ADVOCATE.

ROHTAK,
Dated 19th Feb., 1935.

Dear Hardwari,

It is not easy to destroy vested interests. It is only the first line of cleavage that has been taken so far. It may be sometime before the second line is taken. I do not believe inspite of my wishes on the contrary, that vested interests can entirely be destroyed at any time.

You take an entirely erroneous view of my duties. I can only fight for a class. It is not my business to fight for individuals. It is true that in a very few cases I have departed from that principle. But there can be no denying the fact that sometime the position which I can take out is to press the claims of a class and not of individuals.

You make a reference to a system of competition having been advocated by Mr. Manohar Lal. Probably you are not aware of the answer that I made to that suggestion. If you had in your mind what I said by way of reply

APPENDIX V (Contd.)

SHRI BHADUR
 CHAUDHRI CHHOTU RAM,
 B.A., LL.B., M.L.C.,
 ADVOCATE.

ROHTAK.

Dated _____

you would have come to a different conclusion.

I am not prepared to advocate or even to accept a pure system of competition. If all the appointments were to go by competition the result would be that one possible- only possible Hardwari- and 20 other zamindars may have to suffer.

You must admit that Partap Singh, Kanwal Singh, Ratan Singh, Khushi Ram and Ragu etc. are, from a class point of view, hundred times better than Khatris, Aroras, Kashmere Brahmans and Kayasthas, and inspite of anything that you or your numerous friends may say I am not prepared to encourage the introduction of a system which will result in the elimination of the zamindar section of the class which does not seem to appeal to you at present.

As I have to go to court I have not been able to read through the whole of your letter, nor am I in a position to reply it. But I feel that your present mood is a result of a sense of personal grievance which not unoften viciates ones judgment.

Yours sincerely,

Chhotu Ram

APPENDIX VI

Chhotu Ram to Hardwari Lal, Lahore, 1 April 1937

RAG BAHADUR
Ch. CHHOTU RAM

LAHORE

~~1st April~~ 1937

My dear Hardwari,

I think it is useless to discuss academically things of the character to which you refer in your letter.

Chaudhri Amar Singh has been accepted for the post of Tahsildar. I am very glad that something has been done for the Hissar District which had been neglected in the past. He is a very promising young man, strong, well built and handsome. I am sure he will do well in the service. You may convey my congratulations to his father.

Yours affectionately,

Chhotu Ram

Ch. Hardwari Lal Sahib, B.A.,
Tahsildar, Hissar.

APPENDIX VII

Chhotu Ram to Hardwari Lal, Lahore, 2 March 1941

RAO BAHADUR
Ch. Sir CHHOTU RAM

SHAKTI BHAWAN
GARDEN TOWN
LAHORE.

2nd March, 1941.

My dear Hardwari,

I am pained to hear that ^{the} recent selections of Assistant Sub Inspector candidates have been so unfavourable to the Hindu agriculturist of the Ambala division. I can only hope that your information is not well-founded. However, I fear that it may be true in toto.

It so happened that when your letter came into my hands I was just putting into an envelope a note to the Premier complaining of the inadequate representation of Hindus in general and Hindu zemindars in particular in the various grades of police service along with another note relating to the Education Department and the case of four jat young men including Ch. Dip Chand. I do not know whether anything will result from these notes, particularly in the Police Department which has very special rules of its own which only the Governor can alter.

Yours Sincerely,

Chhotu Ram

Ch. Hardwari Lal,
Tehsildar on special duty.
2, Mission Compound Jullundur.

APPENDIX VIII

Chhotu Ram to Hardwari Lal, Lahore, 25 April 1941

RAO BAHADUR
/ CH. SIR CHHOTU RAM

SHAKTI BHAWAN
GARDEN TOWN
LAHORE.

25th April, 1941.

My dear Hardwari,

Your letter of the 21st April.

I wish things had been otherwise under the Central Government but unfortunately under that Government there are no distinctions of agricultu-
-rists and non-agriculturists and of martial
classes and non-martial classes. However, I cannot go beyond the provincial sphere which gives me a sufficient volume of important work to attend to.

Yours sincerely

Chhotu Ram

APPENDIX IX

Chhotu Ram to Azim Hussain, Lahore, 4 January 1943

RAO BAHADUR
 Ch. Sra CHHOTU RAM

SHAKTI BHAWAN
 GARDEN TOWN
 LAHORE.

4.1.1943

My dear Azim, I am in receipt of your letter
 of 1.1.43.

Sir Sikander's death is a blow from
 which I have not yet recovered. Normally
 my spirit rises with my difficulties.
 This trait of my character has failed to
 assert itself so far. I hope it has not left
 me or weakened beyond repair. I feel
 terribly depressed and dispirited.

Your criticism is well-founded and
 your advice sound. Khizar as Minister
 displayed unmistakable signs of courage,
 strength and independence. Whether the
 greater responsibilities of his new office

APPENDIX IX (Contd.)

will moderate the quality of these virtues is too early to say yet.

Both Khizar and I used to discuss you as the proper person for Abbott's place. I would love to have you in his place. I propose to suggest the change to him. If he agrees you must be ready to come back in April next. An earlier transference may look like a sudden change perhaps.

It is perfectly true that the Party has been living on its past prestige. But I assure you that the original momentum derived from Mian Sahib is not yet spent up and the inspiration has not yet faded. A Party paper and an early — as early as possible — reversion to Mian Sahib's policy and programme will work miracles. That will revive me also.

yours & sincerely
 to the end
 to the end

APPENDIX X

Chhotu Ram to Azim Hussain, Lahore, 2 May 1944

Lahore:
2nd May, 1944.

Dear Azim,

Many thanks for your letter of the 28th April and the copy of your letter to Premier enclosed therewith. I do not know why this letter has come into my hands only to-day. It ought to have arrived here on the 29th. On a glance at the envelop I find that the letter was subjected to censorship which is obviously the cause of this delay.

I do not know when you are to come here. Your arrival will be a great help to Premier who is surrounded on all sides by weak persons and is plied by so many people with weak advice. What is really needed is the presence of men with nerve and strength about him.

Copies of Premier's statement have already been sent out to a number of persons and the process is still continuing. I have reasons to believe that his statement has had a very salutary

APPENDIX X (Contd.)

effect on the general public.

The statement which was issued on behalf of his non-Muslim colleagues has been exceedingly well received in non-Muslim quarters. I do not know what reactions it will have in Muslim circles. But I believe that it is likely to enable moderate Leaguers at least to see Mr. Jinnah in a different light to what they have been seeing him in previously. The exposure of relentless and inflexible attitude adopted by Mr. Jinnah in his conversations with Premier ought to have the effect of exposing Mr. Jinnah himself.

Yours sincerely,

Abdullah Khan

APPENDIX XI

Hindustan Times, 28 April 1944, p. 3.

SPOILS OF VICTORY



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