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". Opting instead for caste distinction the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak wrote to the Commissioner and Superintendent of the Delhi division in 1900:

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.

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

1 Both JG and HT held this opinion. See JG, 21 Oct. 1923, p. 3; HT, 28 Mar. 1927, p. 7.
2 GFRR Rohtak, F. No. 1 VI-V, p. 101.
province the Muslims were a minority. In Rohtak district they constituted a mere 7 percent of the total population. Muslim communal papers of Punjab like the Muslim Outlook, Zamindar, Yakil, and Al-Shams, all vehemently accused the Hindus and among Hindus the Jats of monopolising all governmental positions in Rohtak district. 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. 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".

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

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4 For details see below p.129, fn. II-12.
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.
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. GHHome 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. RO Notes DCs Rohtak from 1929 to 1944, op.cit.
Moreover, the basis of distribution of governmental posts was religion and not castes. 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,

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, pt. B, table 16.

12 The non-agriculturists among the Muslims, mostly lower castes, were: 91 Banjare; 298 Bhatiara; 61 Bharabhuja; 813 Chhundra; 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 Manjar; 2,685 Mirasi; 948 Nai; 8,528 Qassab; and a few insignificant numbers of 7 Chhundra; 6 Chamar; 30 Dariji; 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
ture of the Muslims Rajputs who constituted the majority of land-
owners among Muslims. The figures of all land transactions, whether
mortality or sale, between 1926 to 1940 show the heavy and contin-
uous losses incurred by Muslim Rajputs not only in Rohtak district
but also in the entire Ambala division. The Jats as a caste were
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 land-
owners 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 that
"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 FLRA, 1926-40.
16 Ibid.
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 Inquillab 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". 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 challaned (summoned to court) many Muslims. Written complaints by a number of Muslims were sent to the Deputy Commissioner and even to the Viceroy. Outside help was also sought. 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. 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

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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. 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. Interestingly enough, the Deputy Commissioner's confidential report and the confidential fortnightly report of the Punjab Government on communal matters 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 Police 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. 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. The quarrel over building

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25 JG, 18 Oct. 1933, p. 6; HT, 6 Nov. 1933, p. 5.
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. 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. This was not accepted by the Muslims. Subsequently, the bricks were carried away by the Muslims themselves and the quarrel had begun. 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. 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.

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. 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). 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. 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.

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. 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 proportion 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.
quarrels regarding their right in shamlat 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. 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. 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". 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.

The Urdu weekly Harvana Tilak blamed the entire trouble on "Muslim Goondas" and their attack on the "Hindu Risans". 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

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41 CESO 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 challaned.

The confidential report of the Superintendent of Police to the Deputy Commissioner revealed the real cause of trouble at 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 Ilagoo (region). The much feared trouble at Moharram celebrations never 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 Jat tenants. The panchayat made no reference to any religious controversy in the village.

Trouble occurred again in March 1938 when the Hindu tenants 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

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

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. 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, 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

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., CGSO Rohtak, F. No. 26/51 and F. No. I-14.
tehsil Sonepat, village Gathwal in tehsil Gohana, and some other villages of the district were cited as examples. But the cause of confrontation in all the cases was the dispute relating to the 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 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' was averted. In 1937 there was direct confrontation, termed a '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 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 other claimants, i.e., the 'Muslims'. The revenue records showed the

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'. Consequently, when some
Muslims resisted, wide scale arrests had to be made and the case had
to be taken to the court. A similar case initiated by certain Jats
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
Sonepat, the Brahmin landowners protested against the extension of
Id-gah on the shamilat land by the Muslim community. The resulting
quarrel was settled by the Sub-Divisional Officer of Sonepat though
it was again revived, according to the district officials, by a
Congress leader of Rohtak. Similar 'communal trouble' arose
between some Hindu Rajputs and some Muslims in village Jakhali.

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
Jakhali 97 percent of the population was of Hindu Rajputs and a
mere 3 percent that of the Muslims; Hindu Rajputs owned 2,940 acres

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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. 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. This site had been originally given to them by the Hindu proprietary body for housing purposes. 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". 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.

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. In the resulting 'communal clash'

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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 GL HomePoll, F. No. 18/11/37, May 1937.
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. 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 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; all 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 sometimes 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 anything 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-proprieters, 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.
80 Ibid.
81 JG, 27 May 1925, p. 7.
82 Muslim Rajput and Hindu Jat landowners of village Moth in Hisar dist. joined together to stop the untouchables from constructing a Famma 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 Kami, Manjar, Dhobi, Sherwals and Kunjra, as arising out of not communal but economic grounds. In 1931, Chhotu Ram advocated boycott of Julahas, Barahis, Lohars, and Chamars, some of whom were Hindus and others Muslims. The Muslim kami, like their Hindu counterparts, incurred the displeasure of Hindu as well as Muslim landowners on account of their demand for 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 deprecated by all landowning Muslim and Hindu members of the Punjab Legislature. By and large, the grievances of Muslim kami, 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. 38-39.
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 kami (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; 13 May 1925, p. 7. In the opinion of the JG the Muslim landowners observed as much Chhu-a-Chhut (discrimination) against their kami, 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 '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. 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, noted 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. This stealing

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 Mehd Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op. cit.
of the cows by the 'Mohammedans' 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". Stealing of cows was indeed very frequent in Rohtak district as also elsewhere in the Ambala division. 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. Stealing of cattle, specially cows, by the menials increased in this region because of increase in the price and export of hides. The menials found that the hide of a slaughtered animal was more valuable than that of a dead animal.

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. 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. 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. 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. 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". The menials, on the other hand, were terrorised by the Jat landowners into not having any dealings with the butchers. The chief instrument for making the menials obey

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.
97 See above chapter III, pp. 89-90.
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 see 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 writing about Punjab of 1890-1925 said:

The Haryana tract is largely Hindu, but the peasant are shrewd agriculturists and rapidly dispose off inefficient stock to the Mohammeden butchers (Quassai) of Panipat, Sonepat, 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, Sonepat, written in October 1937 to R.C. Jeffery, Deputy Inspector General Police of Eastern Range. The despatch read:

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 Kasais 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 were so practical that they would themselves kill a Bijjar (bull) who destroyed their crop by grazing in the fields.

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. 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. 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.

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 Purkhias on 4 October 1937 to stop cow-slaughter. The panchayat was to decide on socio-economic boycott of the Muslim butchers and cattle dealers. Such a decision was bound to lead to widespread trouble. With situation turning very tense and serious, 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 Sonepat. The district administration most generously acknowledged their help. 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)
and there need be no socio-economic boycott of the Muslim butchers 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 turn 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 Sonepat, 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 the biggest moneylenders in the area. The contemplated boycott had entailed that none buy, or sell, or have any money dealings with 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 Sonepat 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.
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. 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. 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.
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.

117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., p. 49.
120 HO Notes, Buch, Comm. Ambala Div., 24 Oct. 1942;
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. 5/32/35; 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'. It not only favoured but also promoted the shuddhi movement in the district and elsewhere. The district Congress party of Rohtak which was easily branded as 'Bania' 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. In fact 'Muslims' in the rural areas of Rohtak district were declared to be showing "distinct hostility" to the Congress. For example, the two provincial Congress meetings held in the rural areas of Rohtak district on


123 HT, 9 April 1923, p. 4; 23 April 1923, p. 4; 30 April 1923, p. 7.

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

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 Ahirar 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 Hisar 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

126 Ibid.
128 H.D. Craik, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Punjab, to all the Comms. and DCs of Punjab, 2 July 1926; also Confidential DC NO. 22640 (H-General) 1 Sept. 1927, in CF Comm, Ambala Div., F. No. H-22(b).
129 G & 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". 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. '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. Similarly, the confidential reports of Sub-Divisional Officer of Sonepat 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. 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.
and Muslim Rajputs. 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. 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". 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 "manoeuvering" these 'communal affairs'. 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. 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. 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

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135 Ibid.
136 Ibid.
137 CPSO 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 HC, 24 Oct. 1922, p. 3.
139 HO Notes, Sheikh Khursheed Mohammad, 17 Aug. 1931, CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(b).
house of few Congressites searched in village Jakholi.

In view of the fact that Chhotu Ram 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. 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". He also advised the Punjab Governor to prosecute the weekly in this connection under Section 153-A. This led Chhotu Ram, the then Minister of Agriculture, to tender an unconditional apology in his paper.

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.
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. 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. The news regarding shudhi appearing in his weekly the Jat Gazette would seem to provide conclusive proof in this connection. 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.


147 For reasons behind such professions of Chhotu Ram, see below chapter V, pp. 164-3.

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 Jat panchayats of the district. On 12 November 1925, a resolution to the same effect was passed at a huge gathering of Jats, presided 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 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 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 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-Guarra 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 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.
152 JG, 30 Nov. 1927, p. 4.
153 Ibid.
154 See a note titled "Aryaism" written in 1908, reviewed and brought up to date in 1910 by Major Barton in CFSG Rohtak, F. No. 2-I, p. 5.
155 JG, 7 Feb. 1923, p. 3; 2 May 1923, p. 5; 9 May 1923, p. 5.
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. He
also pointed out that Hindu Jats were being converted to Sikhism.
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. "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". 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. 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 conver-
sion of ½ 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,
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.

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. 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. 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

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162 For details of such attempts of Chhotu Ram and motives behind such attempts, see below chapter V, pp. 160-1.
164 Ibid.
publications were promptly banned by the government. Out of feeling of revenge Mughla was said to be killing the Hindus instead. It was even rumoured that Chhotu Ram was one of Mughla's intended 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 being Muslim officers. In truth Mughla was an assassin who could 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 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 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

165 GJ: 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.
169 Ibid. DC Rohtak disclosed that Mughla had started to charge Rs. 30 to Rs. 40 for committing a murder.
170 Ibid.
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". 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, 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. 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'. 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,
173 CF Comm, Ambala Div. F. No. H-22(b), see D O No.
11467-3, 12 Feb. 1930.
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. 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.