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. 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. 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. 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, 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. 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. He also did not participate in any of its monthly or yearly functions. The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak observed in 1916-17 that Chhotu Ram was "not at all a bigoted Arya". 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. 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 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 "Men to be known", op. cit.
9 Ibid.
establishment of the Jat Mahasabha, and Jat educational institutions. Along with numerous Arya Samajists again, Chhotu Ram joined the Congress in 1916.

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:

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. 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. 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. 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:

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.
15 CBC 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". 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. Swami Shardhanand, a revered leader of the Arya Samaj, had been calling upon the Arya Samajists to vote for none but the Congress candidates. 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. 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 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.
Samajist by religion but were Jat by blood and family ties". '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. 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. 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. He supported the Shudhi movement of the Arya Samaj 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. 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. 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:

20 HT, 29 Jan. 1936, p. 3.
21 JG, 5 June 1917, pp. 3-5. Also see Chhotu Ram's speech at village Keloi where he answered charges made by the Tej, JG, 17 Aug. 1938, p. 4; 31 May 1939, p. 1.
23 JG, 28 May 1923, pp. 11-12.
24 JG, 28 May 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 Khatris, Banias and Mahajans. The reins of the Arya Samaj, he asserted, had always remained and would remain with the urbanites. 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. He also made a grievance of the fact that Khatris, Banias, 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.

He accused these castes of creating a rift between Arya Jats and non-Arya Jats and of holding the non-Arya Jats in contempt. 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. 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. 1939, p. 16.
33 Ibid. Also 3 June 1931, p. 4; 30 Aug. 1939, p. 3.
was promoting the interests merely of urban Bania. 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. 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.

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. 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?"

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. This opposition was projected by Chhotu Ram as

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35 JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.
36 Ibid.
38 JG, 30 Jan. 1929, p. 3.
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 Jat 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 Jats 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. 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 members 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 leading Arya Samajists on the agriculturists. Bhai Parmanand, described

40 JG, 30 Dec. 1931, pp. 4-5.
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:

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.

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. 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 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". 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.
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 Milep newspaper came down heavily on Khushal Chand Khushand, 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 1933 which had published a news item mentioning that the sahukars 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 sahukars 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

51 Ibid.
52 JG, 28 June 1939, p. 5.
53 Ibid.
"Golden Bills" through non-agriculturists associations. Insisting that no other behaviour was expected at them, the Jat Gazette made a blistering attack on the 'Bania' Arya Samajists:

A Bania, whether he is an Arya Samajist or a Congressite or an Akali or a Khalsa, will never forget his Bania- hood. He remains a Bania first and last.

The Haryana Tilak did not help the Arya Samajists when in its issue of 13 February 1936 it reproduced a part of the speech made by "a true Arya Samajist" Professor I.N. Vachaspati, son of Swami Shraddhanand, in a Dehati (rural) conference in village Bahu-Akbarpur of Rohtak district:

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 Udeeshiks 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

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54 JG, 15 Feb. 1936, p. 6; 28 June 1939, p. 5.
56 HT, 18 Feb. 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. The two factions were shown to be indulging in venomous mutual attacks. Chhotu Ram in his turn accused the Arya Samaj Updeshiks and Pracharaks of trying to damage the image of the Jat leaders.

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. 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 kams 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 Sanajists and Hindu Sabhaites of attempting to incite the untouchables against Jats.

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. 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. 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. The ground advanced for this rejection was that the

66 See resolution of 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 CFOO 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.

Sanatan Dharmis would object to such proposals and consequently a quarrel would develop between the Arya Samajists and the Sanatan Dharmis. Consequently, the Jat landowners of the two villages of Rohtak district, Bammoli and Gangana, also Arya by faith, boycotted the untouchables because as Arya Samajists the untouchables had taken to wearing the *Janoo* (sacred thread).

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 anywhere near it. 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. The Jat Arya Samajists went to the extent of suggesting the opening up of a separate Gurukul exclusively for the untouchables. In Arya Samaj sabhas, the *Haryana Tilak* reported, the Jat Aryas were refusing to sit with the *kamins* who were also Arya Samajists. Many such functions organised by the 'kamin Arya Samajists' in village Dhahola of Rohtak district were consequently disturbed by the Arya Jat landowners. The *Jat Gazette* also acknowledged that in the Arya Samaj functions and sabhas the untouchables were specially discriminated against. The *Jat Gazette* put the blame for this on the non-Jat Arya Samajists. It cited the example of Swami Ishwar Chand, one

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69 Ibid.; also see above chapter III, pp. 107-8.
70 *HT*, 22 June 1925, p. 6.
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", on 24 May 1931. The "Chamar Bhai" was told by this Brahmin Arya Samajist to get the services of a Jat Arya Samajist instead. 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'. 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.

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,

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
80 HT, 22 May 1934, p. 3; 26 Nov. 1935, p. 6.
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. Similarly, the attitude of British officials regarding the two Gurukuls in Rohtak district, at Bainswal 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. Doctor Ramji, one of the first and staunchest promoters of Arya Samaj in the Haryana region, had however put a stop to the attempt. 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. 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. 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. 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 Pathshals (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 FLCB, VI, 3 Mar. 1924, p. 401. See reply to the question raised by Chhotu Ram.
86 H, 12 Jan. 1921, pp. 8-10; 11 April 1923, pp. 11-12.
the government that the Pathshalas were serving as centres of the Congress activities.

Despite the British administrators continuing deep suspicion of the Arya Samaj in Punjab, an attitude of which Chhotu Ram was perfectly aware of, 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. A similar stand was taken during Bharatpur Satyagraha of Jat Arya Samajists.

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. 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.
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; 13 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. 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 letter 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, the Census Commissioner, J.C. Hutton, 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 census operation of 1931. They were advised to give their religion as 'vedic' but caste as 'Arya Jats' and not as 'Arya'. The caste Jat

93 CPR Rohtak, F. No. 2-1.
94 Ibid, See letter No. 10364 (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 Sarasvadashik, and Arya Pritinidhi Sabha of Delhi, to Secretary Home Department. See GI: Home Poll, F. No. 45/72/30.
96 Ibid.
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". 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:

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, where as 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", 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. 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.
Bania-non-zamindar Arya Samajists who had demanded the abolition of the Alienation of Land Act. 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 in 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 local 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. 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.
107 Calculated from Census of India 1921, Punjab, XV, prt. 1.
whelming adherents of the Arya Samaj from among the Jats of Rohtak. Chhotu Ram himself believed that as in case of all other castes the 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 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.

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