CONCLUSIONS

The political career of Chhotu Ram as the 'leader of Hindu the Jats' of Haryana region was launched by British officials. Their open support of him as a 'Jat leader' against the other leaders of different factions of Jats in Rohtak in the initial years of his career helped him to emerge rather early as 'the strongest man' in the district. Casteism fostered by the British therefore provided Chhotu Ram the basis of successful political organisation. In the hands of Chhotu Ram 'casteism' took the form of promoting the 'Jat interests' at its surface level; it was enlarged to encompass 'Hindu zamindar interests' in the context of the entire province. Both these slogans were successful; the first at the local level in ensuring a safe constituency for Chhotu Ram for over twenty years, and the second at the provincial level in the widely acclaimed recognition of Chhotu Ram as the leader of 'Hindu zamindars' of Punjab. Creation of such a strong caste-political position for Chhotu Ram enabled him to construct a highly stable and enduring political alliance with the Muslim Unionists.

At the local level the Jats, with their triple monopoly of socio-economic and numerical strength were easily mobilised. And although in his attempts at the political mobilisation of Jats Chhotu Ram projected 'Jatism' on behalf of the entire caste or tribe of Jats, regardless of any economic divisions within them, the social level of mobilisation however remained confined to the rich Jat landowners and the military personnel of the district, both serving and retired. In the given agrarian society of Rohtak
district, where the socio-economic structure was fully controlled by these very social strata, the representatives of these strata, like Chhotu Ram, under the restricted franchise system and high cost of fighting elections, could, and did, embark upon an active political career. In establishing their socio-economic hegemony in the district the rich Jat landowners of Rohtak were greatly helped by British administrators through direct legislative enactments starting from 1900 onwards. Similarly their efforts towards political mobilization were indirectly promoted by the British officials, their help taking various forms from direct financial aid in the establishment of Jat sabhas, educational institutions, and the press, to the grant of preference to the educated Jats in various governmental jobs. The British officials not only helped create effective tools of mobilisation but also helped the rich landowners among the Jats to gain access to the levers of political machinery both at the district and the provincial levels. However, having promoted 'caste politics' so determinedly in this region the colonial rulers also determined their political character. 'Caste politics' in Rohtak district from the very beginning was, therefore, loyalist politically. The eventual triumph of casteism as seen under Chhotu Ram's leadership helped the British both in acquiring a political base for their rule and in creating another dividing line within Indian society into which mutually antagonistic interest groups were formed and strengthened. This divide was of course effected as much by the British as leaders like Chhotu Ram who played the game of casteism in this region in their own interest.
In his attempt at the political mobilisation of the upper strata of the Jats of Rohtak district, Chhotu Ram fully exploited the existing socio-economic differences and antagonisms between landowners and their economic subordinates. These differences, projected as 'caste antagonisms' and 'caste questions', were mainly seen existing between the Jats and other castes. An analysis of the economic relationships in the district between the landowning Jats and other rural social strata drawn from other castes as well from within the Jats, throws light on the deliberate attempts of Chhotu Ram and the district officials to camouflage the latent social antagonism existing within the agrarian society of Rohtak and Punjab and encouraging the Jats to maintain a 'separate identity' from other castes. However, in the context of the existing tense relationships among different agrarian strata Chhotu Ram, regardless of his professed 'Jatism', blatantly sided with the landowners against the tenants and agricultural labourers not only in Rohtak district but also elsewhere in Punjab. And, despite its inherent contradictions the caste ideology of Chhotu Ram was able to on the whole operate successfully in Rohtak district in, on the one hand, binding the economically poorer Jats and the landowning Jats together and, on the other, in using Jat caste domination to keep the non-Jats firmly under control.

As with other castes, the relations of 'Jats' with the Muslims of Rohtak district, erupting in mutually violent confrontations now and then, were also universally projected by the press and deliberately interpreted by the district officials as 'communal'. Behind the garb of religion and communalism, however, operated economic issues relating primarily to land
rights and the acquisition of land. And since the Jats constituted the majority of landowners in Rohtak district they naturally came to be far more frequently involved in these land disputes with the Muslim landowners, etc., which were deliberately given a religious colouring. Differences on matters like Gau-kashi, mainly between certain Jats and Muslim Qasais, were also basically economic in character. They were often the result of the attempts of Hindu Jat landowners to deal with the question of wide scale and frequent thefts of their cattle, or of the efforts of Jat peasants to settle the question of indebtedness to their Muslim butcher-cum-money-lenders. Certain nationalist-cum-communal politicians also played a part in raising the 'Jat vs. Muslim' question, because the Congress in Rohtak district was hardly a non-communal body and was given to politically exploiting any situation. Chhotu Ram himself was accused by others of fanning communal tensions by his advocacy of the rights of 'Hindu Jats' against the Muslims. These accusations were made notwithstanding Chhotu Ram's alliance with the Unionist Muslims at the provincial level and his theoretically non-communal approach necessarily born out of his politics based on 'zamindars' of Punjab who belonged to all religiouscomplexions. However, in reality Chhotu Ram was as apprehensive as the British officials of communal passions becoming strong in Rohtak district and consequently obliterating the caste divisions among the Hindus mutually nurtured by Chhotu Ram and the district officials in this region. Communal tensions would have resulted in bringing together the hitherto separated 'Hindu Jat' and 'Hindu Bania' or in giving a boost to the Congress notoriously known as
the 'Bania Congress' in Rohtak district, which stood for all-caste and community unity against the British.

The political success of Chhotu Ram in his constituency on the basis of 'casteism' is also seen in relation to the two anti-British and supposedly casteless movements of the time, i.e., the Arya Samaj and the Congress. The socio-economic structure of Rohtak district, which assured the success of Chhotu Ram's 'casteism' in the political field, also resulted in negating the effects of the anti-caste social reform movement of Arya Samaj. Apart from Chhotu Ram's attempts in this direction, the threat that the Arya Samaj movement posed to the traditional and hierarchical social structure of Rohtak district dominated by the rich Jats ensured the almost certain failure of this aspect of the movement. Even the *Shuddhi* movement, whether among the high caste Mule Jats of the lower spectrum of Hindu castes, was not acceptable to the majority of the landowning Jat followers of the Arya Samaj in the district. Even Chhotu Ram's attempts to make the Arya and non-Arya Jats accept the Mule Jats in order to increase the numerical strength of the total Jat population in Rohtak could not succeed. However, Chhotu Ram achieved substantial success in his attempts at directing the political sympathies of the Jat followers of Arya Samaj from the nationalist preachings of the Congress to his own loyalist leanings and pro-British politics. Inadvertantly aided in these attempts by the popular so-called nationalist press of the time, which represented urban Hindu mercantile groups, and the unfortunate utterances of the leading Arya Samajists, Chhotu Ram succeeded in making Rohtak district unique in this respect. Despite being called the 'home of Arya Samaj', Rohtak district retained the confidence of the
British officials and remained loyalist. Fully supported in his attempts by the British, Chhotu Ram had also realised like them that the Arya Samaj alone could succeed in breaking the hold of 'casteism' in this region. 'Casteism', so blatantly promoted, therefore, succeeded in making the suspected 'dangerous aspect' of the Arya Samaj totally ineffective among most of its landowning Jat followers. Chhotu Ram thus transformed Rohtak from what could have become a 'dangerous' and 'anti-government district' into one of the safest and most reliable ones.

Apart from the Arya Samaj, the Congress also drew its major recruiting strength from among the 'Jats' of Rohtak district. Chhotu Ram fully cooperated with the district administrators with all the resources under his command to counteract and weaken the growing popularity of the Congress among 'Jats'. And although he failed to check its growth, his own political and electoral position remained safe because the Jat followers of the Congress were primarily drawn from among the petty landowners, or other lower classes, though some of the officials of the district revenue agency and some military personnel also supported it. Under the system of restricted franchise these social groups were neither electorally large enough to tip the balance against Chhotu Ram in elections, nor was the Congress strong among them such as to be politically and socially dangerous to him and his supporters. It was in fact the inherent weakness of the nationalist forces in Rohtak and Punjab which made for the success of Chhotu Ram's politics.

Moreover, the Congress practised its own brand of caste politics in Rohtak district as also in Punjab, so that it was unable to expose Chhotu Ram and his casteist politics and propaganda.
Nevertheless, the combination of economic depression and growing popularity of the Congress among petty landowners of Rohtak district compelled Chhotu Ram to adopt part of the Congress programme during the civil disobedience years of thirties. So vigorous and effective was he in the propagation of this programme that district administrators grew apprehensive about Chhotu Ram's real intentions and declared his pronouncements to be pro-Congress and even 'communistic' in nature. Even before this, Chhotu Ram had nearly always, out of necessity imposed by the political situation, adopted an anti-official attitude and carried an anti-official propaganda at the district level; although at the same time he fully cooperated with the officials at the provincial level. At the district level he succeeded in evolving a political style which was popular and appreciated by his constituents. Outwitting other political factions in the district, he established himself as the chief source of assistance to the 'zamindars'. This different political style at the district level had also been adopted by him partly because of the realisation that an anti-government attitude was popular with the petty landowning voters of Rohtak district. Similarly, he adopted in the early thirties at the provincial level also a partly radical ideological and pragmatic approach, for example, on questions of the application of income-tax principles to land revenue and lessening its rate to give substantial relief to small holder. All this should not, however, hide the fact that Chhotu Ram was a very able representative of the landed interests in Punjab. Such demands were the outcome of socio-economic and political forces of the time. His whole political career was based on the advocacy of the landed
interests. In fact his blatant championing of the cause of the big landowners during the World War II on the question of agricultural prices came into direct conflict with the war-time policies of the colonial rulers. In his unflinching advocacy of the rights of big landowners, he even showed some signs of the inevitable rise of economic nationalism under a colonial set up even among out and out cooperators. Chhotu Ram's support of the landowning interests was, indeed, the basis of his coalition with the representatives of the predominant Muslim landowning interests of the western Punjab in the form of the Unionist Party of Punjab.

The support of the Hindu Rural Group led by Chhotu Ram became unquestionably essential to the very life and existence of the Unionist ministry formed under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy. The complete stability of the ministry despite various crises faced by the Unionist Muslims, whether due to death of Sikandar Hayat Khan at a crucial time leaving the Unionist Muslims with ineffective and weak leadership, or to the growing attacks of Jinnah on the Punjab ministry, or to the food crisis during the World War II, or to the potential and ever present danger of the secular and nationalist Congress, was all due to the unflinching support of Chhotu Ram to the Unionist Muslims. As such, he provided the most essential element in the stable politics of Punjab. Indeed, Chhotu Ram ostensibly enlarged the social base of the Unionist Party in Punjab by providing to the Unionist Muslims, who were in the main supported by and representatives of big landowners, the massive following of the comparatively 'small landowners' of the Haryana region.
Chhotu Ram’s support was indispensable for the enactment of very comprehensive agrarian legislation in the late thirties, which proved ‘golden’ for the rich landowners and the agriculturist money-lenders of Punjab. This agrarian legislation, following the definite trend in the agrarian policy already adopted and initiated by the British bureaucracy from the beginning of the 20th century, had the effect of further strengthening the privileged landowners who had come to be openly favoured by British officials. The adoption of a comprehensive agrarian legislation satisfied the basic demand of the landed interests in Punjab, i.e., more and easy accessibility for investment in the agrarian field, for acquisition of land, and in the business of moneylending with severe limitations on the competition provided by a similar class of moneylenders from among the non-agriculturists. Benefits occurring to this privileged class brought a drastic change in the society of Punjab as is evident in the case of Rohtak district. In this district where the Alienation of Land Act of 1900 had resulted in a spectacular rise of Jat money-lenders, the major beneficiaries of the agrarian legislation of late thirties also proved to be the same class of people. The richer landowners and agriculturist moneylenders gained at the expense of petty landowners whose economic position was thereby radically changed in this period resulting in a tremendous increase in the number of tenants of all kinds and agricultural labourers not only in Rohtak district but in the whole of Punjab. Direct benefits to this class naturally strengthened Chhotu Ram’s and that of his colleagues’ hold among their supporters in this class. The agrarian legislation increased the prestige of the ministry, and also exposed the Congress which, because of its failure to support the legislation, stood condemned as an ‘urban’ and ‘anti-agriculturist’
party. For Chhotu Ram, the agrarian measures were a personal achievement. He gained enormously in stature as 'the man' behind the agrarian legislation. His final triumph came with the universal acceptance of his much propagated word 'zamindar' and 'zamindar interests' being used for all 'agriculturists' regardless of the socio-economic divisions within them. An impression was created that these measures were 'pro-agricultural community' in their content and effects. However, there was wide acceptance even by the main opposition parties that such a community existed in reality. After the passage of the agrarian legislation, notwithstanding the opinion of the officials of Rohtak district who because of Chhotu Ram's deliberately troublesome behaviour had continued to dislike him, now even the highest British officials, for example, the Governor and the Viceroy, paid him handsome tributes. After all, Chhotu Ram's politics, including his agrarian legislation proved of immense benefit to the colonial rulers. This not only strengthened the loyalist landowning classes in Punjab but also weakened the Congress, their foremost enemy. Both these results meant strengthening of the hold of the British in Punjab, a province which was admittedly most important for them politically because of its role in army recruitment.

Chhotu Ram's role in Punjab politics was significantly determined by his emergence as the leader of 'Jats of Rohtak' and the 'Hindu zamindars of Punjab'. This in return was achieved by Chhotu Ram with the help of the British authorities by the successful utilisation and exploitation of the existing socio-economic structure of the agrarian society of Punjab. Chhotu
Ram's ultimate success lay in turning 'constitutional casteism' as created by the British administrators in the form of 'agriculturists and non-agriculturists' in Punjab by the Alienation of Land Act 1900, into a viable and successful political force in the Haryana region and Punjab.