Chapter III

JATS VERSUS OTHER CASTES/COMMUNITIES

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

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

2 Letter to Hardwari Lal, 19 Feb. 1935, see Appendix V. Chhotu Ram remarked in the Punjab Council that the Jats of south-east Punjab were certainly more courageous than the Banias from south-east Punjab. P.L.C.P., XV, 21 Mar. 1930, pp. 813-4.
among all the castes of Punjab. The Haryana Tilak described Punjab as a "caste ridden province" and defined casteism as "Biradarism" with "Jatism", "Vaishism", "Brahminism", "Jainism" and "Rajputism" as its manifestation, though 'Jatism' was considered to be the most dangerous of the lot, because it had achieved a very high degree of intensity. Chhotu Ram and his weekly, the Jat Gazette, were accused of preaching casteism of a virulent form. Chhotu Ram argued that other castes/communities disapproved of and had grown antagonistic to Jats as the Jats were attempting to consolidate themselves. He said:

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

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4 For details of "Biradarism" see HT, 15 Aug. 1933, p. 4; 24 April 1934, p. 3; 4 May 1934, p. 3; 8 May 1934, p. 3; 16 May 1934, p. 3; 22 May 1934, p. 3; 29 May 1934, p. 3.

5 Ibid.

6 JG, 11 Sept. 1927, p. 3.
exclusively theirs. Hindus accuse us of possessing a mentality of separatism. The Arya Samajists feel that the claims of Jats to their recognition as a separate entity constitute a threat to the Arya Samaj; Gaur-Brahmins and Hindus subscribing to the Sanatan Dharam seem to think that Jats as a community will be joining the Arya Samaj and have, therefore, turned against us. Members of other professions and traders, etc., feel that Jats are turning their back on their own profession and are encroaching on theirs. Everybody is jealous of ourselves.

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

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

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

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

9 See above chapter I, p.26-7. f.n.66.
losing their position. Land transactions of all kinds led to a large number of and ever increasing civil cases in Rohtak. These civil cases...  

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

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<th></th>
<th>1901-05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Suits for money or moveable property. Registered:</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>Unregistered:</td>
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<td>1221</td>
<td>1601</td>
<td>4424</td>
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<td>Other suits:</td>
<td>2053</td>
<td>2710</td>
<td>2589</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>489</td>
<td>726</td>
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<td>Total:</td>
<td>3847</td>
<td>3996</td>
<td>4236</td>
<td>5114</td>
<td>4680</td>
<td>6540</td>
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| II. Suits for possession or recovery of movable property other than pre-emption | 213     | 231     | 291     | 393     | 319    | 367    |

| III. Suits to establish a right to pre-emption:                  | 97      | 67      | 129     | 156     | 102    | 91     |

| IV. Mortgage suits for foreclosure or redemption etc., and other suits for possession by mortgagor or mortgagee: | 500     | 331     | 149     | 102     | 69     | 121    |

| V. Suits relating to religious endowment:                        |         | 1       | 1       |         |       |       |

| VI. Any other suit not included in the foregoing column:         | 100     | 120     | 199     | 245     | 328    | 260    |

| VII. Total II to VI:                                            | 941     | 749     | 769     | 897     | 818    | 839    |

| VIII. Grand Total:                                              | 4758    | 4745    | 5005    | 6011    | 5498   | 7379   |

| IX. No. of suits shown in col. 1 (Total) which were brought by bankers & shopkeepers against agriculturists: | 2668    | 2557    | 1710    | 1966    | 1775   | 2711   |

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<td>435</td>
<td>214</td>
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<td>633</td>
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Source: Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1936, II, Prt. B (Lahore 1936), Table No. 35.
Cases involved registered and unregistered suits for money or movable property; suits for possession or recovery of immovable property other than pre-emption suits; suits between mortgagor and mortgagee for possession; suits to establish the right to possession or mortgage; suits for foreclosure of redemption, etc., and suits for possession by mortgagor or mortgagee. Furthermore, revenue cases under the Tenancy Act and the Land Revenue Act and cases under Redemption of Mortgage Act also increased. It is not possible to

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average 1900-06</th>
<th>Average 1906-11</th>
<th>Average 1911-16</th>
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<td>1. Revenue Court Cases under the Tenancy Act:</td>
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<td>4. Revenue Officers Cases under the Land Alienation Act:</td>
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<td>71</td>
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<td>5. Cases Under Redemption of Mortgage Act:</td>
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<td>251</td>
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<td>6. Miscellaneous Revenue Officers cases:</td>
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<td>789</td>
<td>984</td>
<td>381</td>
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<td>7. Total Revenue Cases:</td>
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<td>5044</td>
<td>6458</td>
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<td>6. 222</td>
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<td>1427</td>
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<td>9341</td>
<td>8604</td>
<td>9941</td>
<td>11238</td>
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Source: Ibid. Figures taken from Table No. 36, 'Revenue Court and Officers' cases'.
know from the given figures the number of Jats involved in these cases or the capacity in which they were involved. The landholding structure of Rohtak in which the Jats dominated as majority of landowners is a good index of the involvement of Jats in these innumerable civil and revenue cases, for such cases directly dealt with the landowner and the other categories of his economic subordinates. Whatever side of economic life the Jats occupied, whether that of landowner or the tenant, their full involvement in these cases was clear. Chhotu Ram very often lamented the involvement of Jats in civil and revenue cases and considered the enormous number of cases as a severe draw on the resources of Jats. These cases may, therefore, be taken as a fair indication of the strained relationship existing in Rohtak district between different castes, whether agriculturist or non-agriculturist, in which Jats due to their special position in relation to land were directly involved. This led to a widespread feeling that 'Jats were not at one with the other castes'.

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

13 JG, 12 July 1925, p. 7; 9 Sept. 1931, p. 7. The JG clearly laid down that in village Beri, which had 95% Jat population, the court cases mostly involved the Jats. JG, 22 July 1925, p. 7.
castes who were intimately connected with the Jat landowners as their agricultural labourers were: Khati (carpenter), Lohar (blacksmith), Kumhar (potter), Kahar (water carrier), Saghe (Muslim water carrier), Chhuhra (sweeper), Nai (barber), Sheikh (mostly weavers) Phanak (scavenger), and Chippi (tailor). Together they constituted 60 percent of the depressed classes who were associated with agriculture.

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

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

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

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

20 GI: Home Poll, 4/33, p. 12. Mahatama Gandhi's movement for the 'Harijan uplift' in 1930s was for the same reasons considered a dangerous political movement.
customary law of the land heavily favoured the landowners as against
the other agricultural classes because it maintained the status-quo
in the villages. This policy of status-quo resulted in mounting
friction between the landowners and their kamins. However, despite
overwhelming evidence of this friction the British officials till
the end of the Raj continued to "see and accept" the relation of
the landowning community with their kamins in view of the "long
tradition" already established in the villages.

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

Apart from this, four other factors, which contributed greatly

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

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

25 Board of Eco. Inq., Punjab Village Surveys: Gijhi, a Village
in Rohtak District (Lahore 1932), p. 103. Also Punjab Village
Surveys: Naggal, a Village in Ambala district (Lahore 1933),
p. 59. Also for the indebtedness of the untouchables to the
landowners in Rohtak dist. see HT, 23 Jan. 1934, p. 3;
towards the oppression of the kamins and consequent illfeeling and friction, were: the proprietary body of the village exacted village-cesses from them, compelled them to render Begar, kept the wages of the agricultural labourers determinedly low and, lastly, objected to their use of village shamilat (common) land.

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

26 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op. cit., p. 57. Some of the commonest village cesses were: 'Kodi-Kamini' or hearth-cess of the eastern Punjab, and the corresponding 'Hak-Bha' or the 'door-cess' in some of the western districts; 'Kamini', 'Ahrafi', or 'Muhatarfa' was paid by the artisans to the proprietors of the village in which they plied their 'Hijra' or trade. 'Dharat' or 'weightment fee' levied on sales of village produce, and 'marriage-fee' known by various names as 'Puch-Bakri', 'Thana-Patti', etc., also existed. See J.M. Douie, Punjab Settlement Manual (Lahore 1915), p. 49.


28 J.M. Douie, op. cit., p. 49. The village-cesses were significantly described in this Manual as: "signitorial cesses in their essence such as found in the primitive societies in which certain persons or classes are dependent on other persons or classes for protection". Ibid.
Sunars, and others, were also made to pay the hearth-fee which was usually charged at the rate of Rs. 2 per hearth, per annum, by the village proprietary body. In 1878-79 no less than Rs. 40,000 were calculated to have been realised from this source from 323 out of the 481 inhabited estates then existing in Rohtak district.

Few attempts had been made to abolish these dues in the late 19th century because the British administrators adopted in 1893 a policy of non interference in the matter of levies of small dues by the proprietary body from the other inhabitants of the village on the ground that they saw "nothing necessarily objectionable in the continuation of a system by which one class of subjects were allowed to tax another class for the benefit of their pockets."

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

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29 Punjab dist. Gazetteer, Rohtak, 1910, IIIA, p. 79. It was further explained that technically there was no distinction between the 'hearth-fee' paid by the menials and the professional-tax called "Taraf Ahtrafi" paid by the traders and the artisans; both were levied at the same rate and in the same way and were loosely grouped together as 'hearth-fee'. Ibid.

30 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op. cit., p. 57. The report also pointed out: "curiously enough, the largest proportional number of estates in which these fees are not realised is found in Rohtak tehsil". Ibid.

31 J.M. Douie, op. cit.; see Sir Dennis Fitzpatric's letter No. 16, 15 Oct. 1893, p. 50.

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

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

34 In village Rohad (a big Jat village) the Jat landowners tried to coerce their kamins into giving a tax of Rs. 5 per house, called 'Jari and Tari', a supposed contribution towards a dance recital for the entertainment of village inhabitants. See HT, 14 Mar. 1927, p. 1.
36 Ibid.
more highly remunerated. These three were necessary for repairing
and making the cultivators' tools. The services of others, i.e.,
potters, weavers, washermen, etc., called "Khangui Kamini" or the
household menials, were not as constant and were less well-paid.
In return, the kamins were given certain dues; sometimes at the
rate of so many seers per crop, or per plough, or a definite
fraction of the produce of cereals and pulses. Very often the
dues of Lohar, Khati and Chamar came to be 1/40th to 1/20th of the
entire crop of grain. Both the dues and duties of the kamins
differed from district to district and even from village to village.

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

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

J.A. Ferguson, Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, pointed out in 1922
that some village menials were refusing to perform their "immemorial
village duties" and consequently the landowners were retorting back.

The Haryana Tilak also referred to a number of cases to show that the
kamins in return for rendering Begar service were not getting full
'customary dues' from the landowners. Even the Jat Gazette, almost
always partial to the landowners, mentioned one such case. The offici-
al evidence however generally suggests that the attitude of both,

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
42 IOR/F/11372/1923, F. No. 721/28. See note recorded by
DC Rohtak, 22 Nov. 1923.
43 HT, 12 Nov. 1929, p. 6; 19 Nov. 1929, p. 3.
44 JG, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3.
the landowners as well as their kamins, was responsible for the conflict. For example, in 1910 the Punjab Board of Economic Inquiry said that Chamars, who were traditionally given the skin of dead cattle by their landowners without any charges and in return got the customary two pairs of shoes a year and small leather articles used in husbandry, were showing along with the landowners a different pattern of behaviour in observing these customs. One reason for this was the rise in prices of hides owing to the growing demand for export. The landowners instead of giving them hides totally free of cost attempted to sell it to them; and in certain villages they succeeded in discarding the old custom and in selling the hides in the market themselves. The Chamars retaliated by poisoning the cattle. They also attempted to sell their commodities to the landowners at higher rates. Consequently, in Rohtak district, where this trade flourished, these disputes had become extremely common. Any resistance by the Chamars was met by forcibly closing the tannery and forcing them to work outside the village abadi (residential area). Significantly, under the Unionist regime, the statutory panchayats of the villages were empowered by the Village Panchayat Act of 1939 to prohibit the dyeing and tanning of skins within 220 yards of the village abadi. The panchayats of the village proprietary bodies also met frequently to fix the prices of

45 Board of Eco. Inq., Cattle and Dairying in the Punjab (Lahore 1910), pp. 44-45.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
50 Ibid. Also see Board of Eco. Inq., Cattle and Dairying in the Punjab, pp. 44-45.
51 Ibid.
shoes and certain other articles needed by them for cultivation.

The menials on their side made attempts at substitution of the existing customary dues paid in kind by cash payment specially during the agriculturally depressed period. The landowners obviously resisted these demands; but, at the time of high agricultural prices, they on their side attempted to reduce the customary dues payable in kind on the ground that agricultural commodities fetched high prices.

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

54 HT, 12 May 1938, see "Bepaur Aur Mazdoor" an article by Nandu Ram, p. 7.
compared to the rest of Punjab. Even in Punjab, the same surveys concluded that the increase in rural wages had not kept pace with the increase in the cost of living. This led to a constant tussle between the payers and receivers of rural wages.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rohtak dist.</th>
<th>Montgomery dist.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>5 annas</td>
<td>6 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>$\frac{5}{2}$ annas</td>
<td>6 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>4 annas</td>
<td>8 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>6 annas</td>
<td>12 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>3 annas</td>
<td>6 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>4 annas</td>
<td>6 annas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>12 annas</td>
<td>16 annas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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


IOR:P/12017/1933, F. No. 1010/13/0015, pp. 16, 23.
actually to reduce the wages of agricultural labourers. The menials were hardly in a position to retaliate specially during the depression of the 30s when one of the economies effect by the landowners was to reduce, as far as possible, the quantum of hired labour employed on the land. Agricultural labour was thus further hit by severe unemployment which further brought down their wages.

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

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

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

64 10R/F/12017/1933, F. No. 1010/13100/5. See DO No. 649 R, from the Registrar Cooperative Societies Punjab, Camp Maharu, 24 May 1933.
65 See editorial, "Zamindars and Agricultural Labourers" in JG, 20 June 1923, p. 5. Same view was expressed in the editorial of 27 June 1923, p. 5. Also see below, pp.101.2.
maund in 1926. Despite this fall, he claimed, the agricultural wages had retained the all time high level of 1926. In view of the steep fall in agricultural prices the Jat Gazette made a case in 1931 for reduction of agricultural wages to one anna per day instead of eight annas per day which the labourers of Rohtak district, it was claimed, were demanding. Interestingly, the Punjab Government rejected the demand of higher wages made by the agricultural labourers of Rohtak district employed for relief work during the famine of 1938 on the ground that the prices of agricultural commodities were very low.

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

66 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3; 16 Sept. 1931, p. 1. For more details see below, p. 88 and chapter IV, pp. 142-3.
70 HT, 27 April 1937, p. 4.
number of them, therefore, fled the Haryana region and migrated to Lahore, Amritsar, Montgomery, and other districts of central and western Punjab and even Sindh. The official records also give evidence to the fact that even in 1908-9 the village servants had revealed an increased tendency to migrate to more favoured parts. This had the effect of increasing the value of those who stayed behind; consequently they became more determined to assert themselves. Open clashes between the two due to disputes relating to the payment of wages were not infrequent. Od, a nomadic tribe, who also worked as agricultural labourers in the Haryana region, destroyed the standing crops of the landowners by hordes of sheep which they (Ods) maintained. In 1928 alone, 32 landowners had been killed in Rohtak by Ods on three different occasions.

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

72 HT, 5 June 1934, p. 7.
74 IOR:P/7841/1908, F. No. 59, p. 11.
75 CFDC Gurgaon, F. No. 14(b). Also see JG, 7 Oct. 1925, p. 3; 28 Oct. 1925, p. 2; 10 May 1939, p. 7. HT, 10 Nov. 1939, p. 5; 8 Sept. 1938, pp. 6, 8; 15 Sept. 1939, pp. 11-12.
76 For details of the incidents see letter of SP Rohtak, No. 17497 to D.M. in CFRR Rohtak, F. No. P. IV-56, pp. 27-29.
77 JG, 8 July 1931, p. 3.
78 JG, 21 Oct. 1923, p. 2. Also see 20 June 1923, p. 7; 27 June 1923, p. 5.
79 Zamindar, 12 Sept. 1923, and Vakil, 16 Sept. 1923, cited in JG, 24 Oct. 1923, p. 3. Also see Chhotu Ram's explanation in the same issue.
justification he pointed out the "unreasonable" demands of the menial classes in the context of steep fall in the prices of agricultural produce. In fact, except on the question of mazdoori (agricultural wages) Chhotu Ram projected through the Jat Gazette the existence of cordial and amicable relations between the Jat landowners and their kamins. Regarding this question, he went to the extent of advocating boycott of Jullahas, Barahi, Lohars, and Chamars, until they agreed to behave themselves and to reduce not only their demands as regards wages but also the prices of other services rendered to the village proprietary bodies.

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

80 Ibid.,
83 Board of Eco. Inq., Breeds of Indian Cattle in Punjab (Calcutta 1903), pp. 36-37.
agricultural conditions of the Haryana region and the extensive Barani tracts impelled the zamindars to add to their quota of cattle wealth as a supplementary source or even as an alternative source of income. Similarly the kamins were led to increase their own herds of animals. Apart from keeping their own cattle in some cases, the kamins were increasingly undertaking to maintain goats and sheep for the butchers as their maintenance cost them nothing. The clash of interests was inevitable. In central Punjab the kamins challenged the exclusive rights of the zamindars over the shamilat land and sought grazing rights in the common grazing ground. They also sought recognition of their right to the manure of their own cattle and facilities of storing it in pits on the shamilat land. In the south-east Punjab also the assessment report of the Bhiwani tehsil of Hisar district reported in 1909 "a distinct movement (among landowners) to take some fees" for giving grazing rights to the kamins.

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

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85 For details see below chapter IV, pp. 144-7.
86 Macnab of Macnab Papers, see Appendix B "Extract from Confidential Reports", p. 317.
87 Ibid.
village menials sometimes found themselves to be boycotted for months on end. And, it would not be merely the landowners who would boycott the menials. The landowners would also compell their economic subordinates, whether agriculturists or non-agriculturists, to join them in boycotting the menials. The Bania shopkeepers, for example, were forbidden to sell their goods to them. Brahmins had to carry their own dead cattle. Untouchables were forbidden to use village wells to secure drinking water. They could not even use the village _shamlat_ land for defecation purposes. The cattle belonging to untouchables had to stay inside their houses and even dead cattle had to be buried in the house compounds, if any. Criminal cases were trumped up against the untouchables. Not infrequently they were put under police surveillance. Their names were very often registered at the police station among no. 10 Badmares. Also,
there were always threats from the proprietary bodies that additional taxation would be levied. Cases of even worse oppression on the part of the landowners were noticed. Untouchable women were raped. The Haryana Tilak, in fact, held the behaviour of the landowners particularly the Jat landowners responsible for the rapid conversion of the untouchables to Christianity in the Haryana region. In many of its issues the Haryana Tilak commented adversely on the relationship subsisting between landowning Jats and the village menials. A long but significant extract may be reproduced:

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

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

92 HT, 12 April 1926, p. 10.
did. Since the Jats dominated among the landowning class the
general impression created was that 'Jats' were the enemies of the
untouchables. The impression gained strength because the 'non-
official' revenue agency was in most cases manned by the leading
Jat landowners who not only extracted Bega for themselves but
also helped their other compatriots to get it. These village
officials punished those menials who refused to render Begar.

Here, it may be noted that the word 'Begar' was also used, as pointed out earlier, as a comprehensive term to include several other complaints of the untouchables against their landowners. 

Begar complaints ranged from protests against 'unjust hearth-fee', village cesses, or inadequate payment of 'customary dues', or inadequate payment of their agricultural wages. It was also of course used in many cases in its technical meaning, i.e., extraction of work without any payment. Any of these factors, and not necessarily extraction of work without any payment, could be seen operating behind the innumerable complaints of the kamias.

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

The extensive news items appearing in the HT regarding extraction of Begar by the landowners or the government officials and the high handed punishment on those who refused may be taken as authentic news because of the following factors: (a) The news items mention full name, parentage, details of villages involved, and even the receipt number of the applications made to the police stations, or to the SDOs or DCs. Sometimes, full applications along with the mention of thumb prints are given. Names and addresses of the eyewitnesses are also frequently given. Significantly, the Superintendent's office in Rohtak district had a separate file on "Begar" F.No. A-IX-3, which unfortunately could not be traced. The JG which was given to frequent contradiction of the news items appearing in the HT did not contradict any such news dealing with relations of landowners with their kamins. Such news items were indirectly acknowledged by making the Congress responsible for alienating the untouchables from the Jat landowners. See JG, 4 May 1937, p. 6; 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3. The few anonymous complaints of Begar sent to the HT were clearly described as being "anonymous" in the weekly. See HT, 9 July 1935, p. 4. On the whole the HT may be relied upon for exposing the relationship of the landowners, specially the Hindu Jats, with their kamins. For wide scale prevalence of Begar in Punjab also see Lok Mat (Hindi newspaper), 12 Jan. 1930 in Neki Ram Sharma Papers, F.No. 8, p. 1.


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

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

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

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

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

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

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101 Note_s, CF Comm, Ambala Div, F. No. A-4, pp. 40-1.
103 For the opinions of different DCs of Ambala div. see WR:E/11372/1923, F. No. 721 B, Oct. 1921.
between the landowners and their *kamins*. Indeed, the government viewed with the greatest apprehension the initiation of any official action that would disturb a settled feature in the economic life of the village.

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

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

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105 JG, 12 July 1939, p. 8.

106 Some of the villages very frequently mentioned in the HT, were Chhara, Gochhi, Ratayoni, Kheri, Shahbad, Katsara, Kaboolpur, Sampla, Jhajjar, Rohad, Bamauli, Patra, Sonepat, Khatiwas, Ballabhgarh, Beri, Jotala, Badli, Jakholi & Mandothi. These were all Jat villages. See HT, 18 May 1925, p. 6; 1 June 1925, p. 10; 24 Aug. 1925, p. 6; 12 April 1926, p. 10; 14 Mar. 1927, pp. 1, 4; 21 April 1927, p. 4; 28 April 1927, p. 3; 26 May 1927, p. 3; 6 June 1927, p. 6; 13 June 1927, p. 5; 20 Dec. 1927, p. 9.

107 JG, 10 April 1929, p. 3; 24 April 1929, p. 7; 1 June 1929, p. 5. Also see PLAD, I, 1 July 1937, pp. 837-9; II, 25 June 1938, p. 855; 27 June 1938, p. 952; XIX, 6 Dec. 1929, pp. 125-332.
the Jat landowners and the untouchables. In any such confronta-
tions, Chhotu Ram showed himself alive to the danger to the land-
owners. As early as 1921, his appeal to the landowners addressed
in the Jat Gazette read:

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

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

108 CGSO Rohtak, F. No. P. IV-56, pp. 1-2. Also see JG,
11 Dec. 1929, p. 3.
109 JG, 26 Jan. 1921, p. 3.
110 "The Punjab and Depressed Classes", an article by Chhotu
Ram in Tribune, 8 April 1932, pp. 5-6. Also see for
similar views JG, 20 Nov. 1929, p. 3; 16 June 1937, p. 7;
12 July 1939, pp. 7, 9.
111 JG, 12 July 1938, pp. 7, 9.
to speak contrary to his cherished dream. Instances of clashes between landowners and untouchables, specially in the districts of Karnal, Sonipat, and Hissar, were cited by him to once again warn the landowners. The blame for this was not put on the deteriorating relationship between the two but on the inciting activities of the Congress which, in his opinion, was bent upon alienating the untouchables from the Jats and was attempting to drive a wedge between the two.

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

114 CSFO Rohtak, F. No. H-12, SP to DIG, 20 Mar. 1925. Also CSFO Rohtak, F. No. 6 A & KW, see secret Police Report, 13 May 1921, 20 May 1921 and 21 May 1921 regarding the Congress activities in connection with the system of Begar in different villages of Rohtak district. CSFO Rohtak, F. No. 1-23, see weekly diary of SP, 9 Oct. 1937. Also see Letter of Neki Ram Sharma to Sikandar Hayat Khan and Chhotu Ram, 22 Sept. 1938. Also Linlithgow Coll, 87: DO 123, 9 Feb. 1939.
warning to the landowners of Punjab:

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

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

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

The word 'Jats' was used here as a synonym of landowners. This warning to the kamins was repeated by Chhotu Ram on different occasions.

In 1938 he advised the landowners to be more considerate to the kamins, "since injustice and zoolam sowed the seed of ruin".

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

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116 JG, 11 Dec. 1929, p. 3.
117 See below chapter VIII, p. 263.
118 C & MG, 12 Aug. 1938, p. 7.
was forbidden by the continued denial of the status of statutory agriculturists which alone would have got them the right of ownership of land. When the demand for the amendment of Alienation of Land Act intensified, specially under the Provincial Autonomy, to accommodate untouchables in order to give them the right to own land, the pro-landowner outlook of Chhotu Ram was brought into open. He had to candidly acknowledge that landowners did not want the houses inhabited by untouchables and the land on which they were built to be owned by them. Chhotu Ram said: "No government could do anything to remedy this state of affairs as the total number of landowners in Punjab is 40 lakhs; with wife and children they total to about 1¼ to 1½ crores; the untouchables on the other hand have a population of 15 lakhs only. What government would annoy 1¼ crores of people for pleasing 15 lakhs?" he asked.

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

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121 "The Untouchables", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 17 July 1939, pp. 7-9.
122 Ibid. For more details see below chapter VIII, pp. 261-4
123 HT, 12 June 1935, p. 5; 19 June 1935, p. 5; 19 Nov. 1935, p. 15; 26 Nov. 1935, pp. 3, 6. The HT quoted Chhotu Ram regarding his objections to the abolition of village cesses. He was declared to have said to the untouchables of village Medina in Rohtak district: "I cannot annoy my own brothers to benefit you. If the zamindars do not want to stop this practice I cannot do anything. If on this basis you want to deprive us of your votes, do so, for it does not matter. The zamindars are numerically stronger than you in the villages." See HT, 14 Mar. 1939, p. 3.
resolutions of Achut Udhar committees and associations regarding the untouchables, i.e., free education, jobs in services, opening of temples and wells, found enthusiastic support of Chhotu Ram.

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

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

124 IOR:P/11953/1930, F. No. 32, pp. 39-40. Out of all these demands the education of the children of village kamins received maximum attention and publicity. Also see IOR:P/11883/1930, F. No. 440/14100/16.
125 JG, 4 May 1938, p. 6. For further details see below chapter VIII, p. 263.
126 Figures for ejectment of occupancy tenants and tenants of all other kinds in dist. Hissar see FBA; for the relevant years. Figures for Rohtak district are given below (f.n. 127).
Commenting on these ejects under section 45(6) of the Punjab Tenancy Act XVI of 1887, even the official report of the years 1921 to 1940 declared them to be "continually high" for Rohtak. In 1927-28 figures for Rohtak showed 100 percent increase over 1926-27. In 1921-22 the reason for these ejects was the increased profits of agriculture which made it impossible for the landlord to obtain new tenants willing to pay a higher rent than what those in occupation were prepared to pay unless they were threatened by legal process. Otherwise, the only explanation generally given was 'Kisan trouble' (word Kisan being used for tenants), but the causes for it were not

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenancy without right of occupancy</th>
<th>1921-22</th>
<th>1922-23</th>
<th>1923-24</th>
<th>1924-25</th>
<th>1925-26</th>
<th>1926-27</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i. No. of applications under section 43, 42(b)</td>
<td>841</td>
<td>1191</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. No. of notices issued under section 45(1)</td>
<td>1710</td>
<td>2081</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1370</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. No. of cases ejectment actually made under order of process or a Revenue Court of Officer:</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>185</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>244</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>1152</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>361</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii.</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>763</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii.</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

128 FLRA, 1927-28, p. 18.
129 Ibid., 1921-22, p. 17.
indicated. There was hardly any case of ejectment of occupancy tenants in Rohtak as the district contained very few occupancy tenants. Certain law suits for enhancement of rent were also registered in Rohtak.

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

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

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

130 Ibid., 1929-30, pp. 19-20.
131 See statement No. XVI for the relevant years in FLRA.
132 See statement No. XV of FLRA. The maximum number of suits being in 1925-26; 1929-30 and again in 1935-39.
134 "Untouchables", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 12 July 1939, pp. 7-8.
135 "Our Marwari Brothers - The Jats of Marwar", an article by Chhotu Ram in JG, 22 Sept. 1925, p. 3.
the

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

The bulk of agricultural tenants in the Haryana region were Chamars. The relations of Chamars as agricultural labourers with their Jat landowners, as noticed earlier, were very tense and strained. They did not improve even with the improvement in their economic status, i.e., from agricultural labourer to that of tenants. These relations were perhaps worsened as a result.

By early 20th century the Rohtak district Gazetteer reported, though without giving any reasons, that the customary position of Chamars as agricultural labourers had changed to a contractual one. Chamars became increasingly associated with the Jat landowners as Sanjhis (co-sharers) on agricultural holdings on terms which permitted the division of profits from agricultural produce. Chamars were also coming to acquire the status of independent tenants in increasing numbers. In fact their association with agriculture was so intimate that many British officials considered them to be deserving the status of 'agriculturists'. However, their often repeated demand

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

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

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

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

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

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

145 H.C. Fanshawe and W.E. Purser, op.cit., p. 59. Also HT, 11 Sept. 1917, p. 3; 27 May 1925, p. 3; 1 June 1925, p. 10; 22 Aug. 1927, p. 3; 30 Nov. 1927, p. 3.
147 HT, 5 Nov. 1929, p. 5 (figures not given).
149 HO Notes, Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.
150 JG, 20 July 1927, p. 6. There was a split among the Gaur-Brahmins also and in many villages certain factions of Gaur-Brahmins supported Chhotu Ram. See HT, 21 June 1932, pp. 1,6; 22 May 1940, p. 5; 10 April 1940, p. 4.
Jats had come into the fold of Arya Samaj in large numbers while Gaur-Brahmins by and large continued to subscribe to the Sanatan Dharam.

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

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

152 Ibid. For Arya Samaj influence on Jats, see below chapter V.
155 Ibid.
156 For details of this case see Prem Chowdhry, "Rural Relations Prevailing in the Punjab at the Time of Enactment of the So-called 'Golden Laws', or Agrarian Legislation of the late Thirties", The Punjab Past and Present, X-II. (Oct. 1976), pp. 461-80. Also see below chapter VI, p.191.
Certain villages of Gurgaon district also supplied similar examples.

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

The Jat and Bania rivalry had become almost legendary in the village life of Rohtak district. ’Bania’ as village moneylenders were generally known as exploiters of Jat peasantry. The popular proverb in the rural areas quoted by Lal Chand to the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee summed up this popular feeling very well: "Tis Ko Baniya ho var, uska dushman kiya darkar" (a man who has Bania as a friend needs no other as an enemy).

Even the Harivansh Tilak, a staunch opponent of the Unionist Party, acknowledged as beyond doubt the past exploitation of the Jat peasant by the Bania and the Mahajan sahukar. The weekly however analysed the growing bitterness between the two communities in terms of the growing economic and numerical dominance of the Jats and the weak and deteriorating strength of the Mahajans and

157 HT, 3 May 1926, p. 3; 21 June 1928, p. 8.
158 GI Home Poll, F. No, 12/6/37, June 1937.
159 See Prem Chowdhry, loc.cit. Also Linlithgow Coll, 113:
Emerson to Linlithgow, 22 April 1937.
160 HT, 3 June 1930, p. 4. Also see below chapter IV, p. 153.
163 HT, 1 May 1934, see "Vaishism" an article by S.R. Sharma.
In fact the weekly went on to accuse the Jats of murdering and looting the Banias. These accusations were not without basis.

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

166 H.C. Fanshawe, and W.B. Pursser, op. cit., p. 57.
167 HO Notes, K.B. Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op. cit.
168 Ibid.
170 HT, 18 Feb. 1924, p. 2.
made to pay a sum of Re. 1 annas/ per article purchased from the shops in question. In 1929 a fine of Rs. 849/- was imposed on the Mahajans of village Kharkhoda because of the allegation that they had effected a cut in a canal though quite evidently they had done nothing of the sort. The Jat Gazette also mentioned Jat-Bania trouble in village Kaloi in 1931 though from the point of view of the Jats. If any Mahajan dared to resist the orders of the village proprietary body, social boycott was their lot. He was, like the others, denied access to village shamilat for purposes of defecation. Again, Jats were not the only landowners who maltreated the Banias and Mahajans. Even in villages dominated by Muslim Rajputs, Mahajans and Banias received a similar treatment. By and large, the Banias and Mahajans were under great pressure. Sometimes even open looting of certain Banias and Mahajans took place. In 1924, in village Chhara of Jhajjar tehsil, some Jats and Brahmins robbed a Mahajan of Rs. 1,000 in broad day light. But the Mahajan was not able to produce any witnesses to support his case. The increasing dacoities of which the richer among the Banias and Mahajans of Rohtak district were victims in the early thirties were noted by the district administrators. The Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, recorded on 11 April 1936, the following note in this connection:

173 JG; 15 July 1931, p. 4.
174 HT, 14 Feb. 1940, p. 4.
175 HT, 11 Feb. 1924, p. 2; 20 April 1925, p. 4.
176 HT, 30 June 1924, p. 9. Also see 18 Feb. 1930, p. 5; 10 Mar. 1930, p. 4.
177 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 11 April 1936, op.cit.
There had been a wave of dacoitation (sic) in the past where it was found that the dacoits had been invited by the village from outside to loot the houses and burn the Babis (account books) of the Mahajans with whom the villagers had extensive money dealings.

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

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

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

179 See above chapter I, pp. 20-21.
181 HO Notes, Zaman Mehti Khan, 4 Nov, 1931, op.cit. For other reasons regarding the feeling of the Banias and Mahajan sahukars in towns see below chapter IX, pp. 338-9.
year as a result of the civil disobedience campaign there was a large crop of dacoition (sic) in the district. All these dacoities were organised by Jats and many Mahajans were looted and lost their lives at the hands of the Jats and their associates. The Mahajans were so terror-stricken that well-to-do from amongst them migrated to towns and even now some of them have not recovered from the shock.

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

183 HO Notes, Ghulam Mustafa, 26 June 1939, op.cit.
185 Ibid.
186 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 15/43. See SP Rohtak to the DM, 1 Oct. 1931. Also HO Notes, Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov., 1931, op.cit. The evidence against Tika Ram was weak; therefore, the case was dropped. The Comm. of Ambala Div. made the following remark regarding the case: "As you know Ch. Tika Ram is the right hand man of Ch. Chhotu Ram and unless it is considered necessary to strike at the latter by means of prosecution it would mean stirring up a considerable amount of trouble which at the moment is at any rate inactive." See CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 15/43, Comm. to DC Rohtak, 10 Nov., 1931.
involved in politics, the Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak described
him in 1923 as a "general counsel for accused in murder cases
which failed for want of evidence". Even later, in the thirties,
after Chhotu Ram had entered provincial politics his supporters
who continued to be arrested in connection with similar cases
received his full support. Chhotu Ram very frequently intervened
on behalf of his supporters not as an advocate but as "an
influential individual". The district officials found this so
objectionable that in one instance in course of an interview with
Chhotu Ram, W.C. Connor, the Superintendent of Police, threatened
to hand-cuff Chhotu Ram if he continued to interfere in police
matters. An interesting account of Chhotu Ram's keen interest
in the accused in criminal cases and their social identity may
be traced in a letter written by Chhotu Ram to the Deputy
Commissioner in 1936:

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

187 "Men to be known", op.cit.
188 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, DC Rohtak to CC Garbett, Chief Secretary to Govt. of Punjab, 21 Sept. 1931.
189 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.
190 Ibid.
Such cases were further 'spoilt' in the law court by regular suborning and threatening of the witnesses. The district officials once again were of the opinion that it was being done by "young Jat pleaders, hangers on and lieutenants of Chhotu Ram". Chhotu Ram himself was accused by the police of influencing the witnesses in not giving evidence against the accused. In 1933, E.H. Lincoln, recognising this widely prevalent phenomenon also mentioned that Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand "would not lift a finger to stop this", i.e., deliberate spoiling of cases. The state of affairs was confirmed in 1936 by M.R. Sachdev whose personal experience in village Garhibala in Sonepat tehsil showed that despite his presence no Jat witnesses would come forward to testify to a murder committed in broad day light. On account of their (Jat) attitude in the matter of arrests of absconders, in 1935 punitive police was imposed in 32 villages and 3 Mohalles of Rohtak at the expense of the inhabitants. Chhotu Ram enraged at this fought for the abolition of punitive police in Rohtak district, but without success.

192 See HO Notes of both E.H. Lincoln and M.R. Sachdev, op.cit.
193 Ibid. Also see "men to be known", op.cit. Some of the young pleaders were: Tika Ram, Lahiri Singh, Shadi Ram and Sirdi Chand (nephew of Chhotu Ram).
194 CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 11/39, p. 6. Also reference to this made in Confidential DO from DC Rohtak, to Chief Secretary, Govt. of Punjab, 9 Jan. 1932. Ibid., p. 72.
195 HO Notes, E.H. Lincoln, 4 April 1933, op.cit.
196 HO Notes, M.R. Sachdev, 11 May 1936, op.cit.
197 CFDC Rohtak, F.No. 10/38, Chhotu Ram to DC Rohtak, 10 Jan. 1935.
198 Ibid. Also see several articles in JG, 28 Jan. 1931, p. 3; 18 Feb. 1931, p. 4; 15 April 1931, p. 8; 12 Aug. 1931, p. 4. For failure of Chhotu Ram in this connection see below chapter VIII, pp. 292-3
However, so far as the conflict with the man in debt was concerned, the Jat moneylender did not far far better at the hands of Jat peasantry even though they belonged to the same caste. The relation of Jat moneylenders with the Jat peasantry were equally strained. Evidence given in 1929-30 to the Punjab Provincial Banking Inquiry Committee showed the murders of agricultural moneylenders as well. General relations between peasantry and agriculturist moneylenders were also, it was said, very strained for the last twenty years. Agriculturist moneylenders were said to be generous in advancing loans but extremely exacting in the matter of recovery. Lal Chand's bitter accusation of the Bania moneylenders, who took all the produce of the land of the proprietor and reduced him to an agricultural labourer fully applied to the Jat moneylenders as well.

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

200 Ibid.
201 Ibid. K.L. Darling who had been extremely critical of the agriculturist moneylenders was often quoted in the Punjab Council by the non-agriculturist opponents of Chhotu Ram. Chhotu Ram criticised Darling on this account and called him "Beloved of the Bania". Chhotu Ram advised that instead of Darling, Calvert should be consulted regarding the plight of agriculturists under Bania moneylenders. For details see JG, 8 June 1927, pp. 6-8. For Chhotu Ram's extremely benevolent attitude towards the agriculturists moneylenders or Jat moneylenders, see below chapter IX, p. 328.
203 PLCD, XXIV, 29 Oct. 1936, p. 129.
of moneylenders; for these their debtors were held responsible.

Moneylenders were also victims of 91 dacoities, 10 of which were proved to have been committed or abetted by debtors.

Both the Haryana Tilak and the Jat Gazette covered some of the more sensational murders of both Bania and Jat moneylenders in Rohtak district. Some well known Jat moneylenders murdered were: Ram Sarup Jat of Makrauli, Kore Singh of Karontha, and a rich Jat woman moneylender of Rohtak. The two weeklies mentioned several other cases.

Chhotu Ram made reference in the Assembly to the murder of Kore Singh of Karontha and of another rich Jat moneylender at Rattangarh; both belonged to the Unionist Party and had fallen victims to their debtors. Clearly, in the context of the demand for credit in rural areas, the agriculturist moneylenders had come to be a necessary evil. Early enough the government had apprehended a widespread agitation against the moneylenders. In course of time the situation

204 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. Q-27, pp. 1-2. Total no. of moneylenders murdered in Punjab: 409 in 1905; 329 in 1906; 743 in 1923; 833 in 1931; and 53 in 1933. See Report of Lala Lal Kunwar, ADM to DC Rohtak. Ibid. (separate figures for Rohtak dist. not given; also the no. of agriculturist among the murdered moneylenders not given.)

205 Total no. of dacoities of moneylenders in Punjab: 59 in 1905; 80 in 1906; 333 in 1923; 187 in 1931; 91 in 1933. Ibid. (no separate figure given either for Rohtak dist. or for the agriculturists among the affected moneylenders.)

206 HT, 4 July 1936, p. 6; 18 Jan. 1938, p. 4; 28 June 1938, p. 3; 30 May 1939, pp. 1-3; 20 June 1939, p. 3.


208 Elaz, XII, 14 Mar. 1940, pp. 539-40.

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

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

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210 PLAD, XXIX, 19 Oct. 1939, p. 189. The year in which this system was introduced in Punjab is not clear. However, E.H. Lincoln had advised restrictions to be imposed on the renewal and grant of armed licenses during the tenure of his office (1931-34). He wanted licenses to be issued only to those who had assisted the administration. Others were apparently to be left to their own devices and resources. See HO Notes, 22 Mar. 1934, op. cit.

211 Reference to Chhotu Ram's activities in inciting the Jats against the Banias was made in a letter of the Comm. of Ambala Div. to the DC Rohtak. See letter No. 460 in CFDC Rohtak, F. No. 12/40. Also for Chhotu Ram's public speeches in which he spoke of Banias and Mahajans in extremely derogatory terms, see Vir Bharti, 10 Aug. 1938; 13 Aug. 1938; 15 Aug. 1938; 19 Aug. 1938; 6 Sept. 1938; 17 Sept. 1938; 21 Sept. 1938; 20 Feb. 1940; 26 Feb. 1940; 16 Nov. 1940; cited in Gokal Chand Narang, op. cit., pp. 4-7. For example, Vir Bharti of 28 Feb. 1940 cited Chhotu Ram as saying: "I shall not rest until I make every Bania salam a Jat three times a day. I must have six crores out of them and make their children cry for a cup of milk". p. 7. Also Appendix II. Also see below chapter IX, p. 338.

212 Nearly all the issues of JG breathe the anti-Bania spirit. See for example, two leading articles by Chhotu Ram against the Banias in JG, 22 May 1939, p. 3; 7 Aug. 1939, p. 6. Similarly nearly all issues of HT commented on such speeches and articles. HT, in fact, accused Chhotu Ram of inciting the Jats against Banias which, in its opinion, resulted in the increase of murders, thefts and other incidents. HT, 30 Aug. 1938, p. 3.
Incidentally, Chhotu Ram's opinion regarding Banias and Mahajans of the Haryana region was the same as that of the British officials who contemptuously dismissed them as a "timid community". The British officials nevertheless felt that Chhotu Ram's dealings with the non-agriculturists, specially the Banias, was prejudiced and unfair.

And in their opinion Chhotu Ram crossed all limits in his dealings with them. His anti-Bania prejudice became a major topic of discussion between the Punjab Governor and the Viceroy during 1938-43. During the eight years that Chhotu Ram remained a minister under the Provincial Autonomy his anti-Bania tendency seemed to have got more and more marked. In 1943 the Governor of Punjab remarked:

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

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

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213 GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/1/32, Jan. 1932. It is interesting to note that some of the proscribed literature held poems which held the 'British' responsible for creating differences and antagonism not only between Hindus and Muslims but also between Jats and Banias. See Proscribed Literature Punjab, "Congress Ka Bigul aur Dukhiya Bharat" (Hindi) (Delhi 1934), NAI, NW, IOL & R. Also see above chapter II, p. 68.


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

Anna merega to save me hi dalega. (One's own people will be merciful even in killing).

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

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

217 See below chapter IX, p. 328. Also see Cartoon equating Capitalists with Banias, or sahukars with Banias. Appendix II.
218 RG, 4 May 1938, p. 1.
Banias and Mahajans as his targets, even if it was primarily to rally the Hindu Jats together. He was able to show to his fellow educated Jats that the provincial administration stood dominated by 'Hindu non-agriculturists' to the disadvantages of 'Hindu agriculturists'. Chhotu Ram's 'anti-Bania' front became more pronounced during election time. As early as 1927, the question of 'Jat vs. Bania' in Rohtak district had become a live issue in the elections. Chhotu Ram's attack on the Banias and Mahajans or 'non-agriculturist Hindus' intensified during and after the agrarian legislation of the late thirties. Among non-agriculturists many from the castes of traders had emerged as the chief opponents of the agrarian bills. Consequently, Chhotu Ram ended up by earning the repute of being a "bitter enemy of Banias and mahajans".

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

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

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


See above pp. 118-9. Also see below chapter IX, p. 324.

GI: Home Poll, F. No. 18/V/31, May 1931.
were directed to the entire Jat caste, and on behalf of all of them. Attempt was to bring the entire Jat tribe under one banner and on a single platform. That there was clash of interests among different sections of Jats themselves was ignored and only the caste identity was emphasised. However, this widely acclaimed caste solidarity hardly operated in practice in the Rohtak district of Chhotu Ram's days. In any conflict between the Jats Chhotu Ram himself took sides and many a times Chhotu Ram went more by his class than caste affiliations. For example, whenever there was a question of Jat tenants against the non-Jat proprietors Chhotu Ram in actuality sided with the latter. In this connection what happened in some of the minor and neighbouring princely states and also between landlords and tenants of two large estates in the Haryana region, i.e., Chuchakwas' and the Skinner's estates, may be noted.

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

In the case of tenants of Skinner's estate Chhotu Ram also wrote a

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223 Haryana Tilak criticised Chhotu Ram for affecting such a posture. See HT, 4 Mar. 1923, pp. 4-6; 2 Sept. 1923, p. 5; 2 June 1924, p. 5.
224 Chhotu Ram was aware of the existence of class divisions among Jats. He spoke of the Jats having three classes like all other castes and also made a rough sort of division, i.e., the rich proprietary class, middle class and the poor. See JG, 16 Jan. 1929, p. 16.
225 See above p.108 ; also below chapter VI, p.191.
226 Ibid.
227 HO Notes Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op.cit.
letter showing his sympathy with them; he did nothing in practice. This outward expression of sympathy was obviously motivated by the fact that the Congress was supporting both these movements. Moreover, the higher authorities had already expressed their willingness to bring about a settlement. Chhotu Ram obviously wanted to claim credit for himself for an eventual compromise between the tenants and the landlords; credit which would have otherwise gone to the Congress in Rohtak. In the opinion of the Deputy Commissioner this show of support to the tenants by Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand was because they were anxious to secure their votes in the Council elections. Ultimately it was clear that Chhotu Ram played no role at all, as the settlement was effected by the Deputy Commissioner without any reference to these "Jat leaders". At a crucial stage Chhotu Ram, when approached, had flatly refused to head or lead the movement of the tenants. The Haryana Tilak greatly criticised this action of Chhotu Ram and indicated that he was with the landlords; it rightly posed the question: "are the tenants not zamindars, as Chhotu Ram has been claiming?". In withdrawing his support from these movements Chhotu Ram clearly showed himself to be sharing the apprehensions of the British officials regarding the movements

228 Ibid.
229 CFSO Rohtak, F. No. D-3, Dated 9 May 1929, from Miles Irving, Commissioner Ambala Div. to DC Rohtak; also DC Rohtak to Comm. Ambala Div., 6 May 1930.
230 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op. cit.
231 This point is revealed in Chhotu Ram's letter to DC Rohtak, 2 April 1930, CFSO Rohtak, F. No. D-3.
232 HO Notes, Malik Zaman Mehdi Khan, 4 Nov. 1931, op. cit.
233 Ibid.
getting out of hand and their possible effects on the neighbouring areas. Moreover, the possibility exists that Chhotu Ram had been ticked-off by the district officials as in the case of Loharu.

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

237 All issues of HT from 20 Aug. 1935 to 18 May 1937 gave this "Jat agitation" an extensive coverage.
238 JG, 10 June 1931, p. 5.
239 HT, 8 June 1937, p. 1; 18 Sept. 1940, p. 4.
240 HT, 12 May 1936, p. 6; 3 June 1936, p. 3; 8 June 1937, p. 1.
The affair of Seekur state of Rajputana provides an even more significant example. Chhotu Ram openly declared that "Jat kisans" of Seekur had been destroyed and he undertook to organise the Jat tenantry. But as soon as the tenants took to agitational methods to back their demands against the Thakurs and Rajput landlords, Chhotu Ram would have nothing to do with them. He did try to bring about normalcy between Jat tenantry on the one hand, and Rajput landlords on the other, but he did nothing concrete to support the agitation or to secure acceptance of the demands of the tenants.

Same was the case with regard to the petty state of Dujjana. The 'Jat tenants' of the Nawab of Dujjana were suffering under very unfavourable terms. Chhotu Ram assiduously refrained from mentioning their condition in his paper and totally ignored their cause.

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

It is quite clear that Chhotu Ram attempted to project the image of a leader with a united 'Jat community' behind him. But nothing he did or said could hide the divisions among Jats stemming from economic factors. Jats, cut across by economic-class divisions,
could hardly function as a single political unit. In fact, what Chhotu Ram demanded on behalf of the Jats was not calculated to benefit the community as a whole but only a section of it. The Jats who were coming together to form Chhotu Ram's base were the emerging rich Jat landowners and military personnel of Rohtak district who, because of their dominant economic position in the agrarian society of the district, had come to be rather isolated from the other castes as well as the economic subordinates from among their own caste. As seen above, the resultant tensions and antagonisms developed not around caste issues but around economic questions. The caste aspect was nevertheless used extensively to cloud the main issues relating to the mutually antagonistic economic relations of the major supporters of Chhotu Ram and their economic subordinates and rivals whatever their caste.

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