

Periodic Research

Chhotu Ram : The Unionist Hero in the Politics of Undivided Punjab



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Abstract

Chhotu Ram began as a Congressite and ended as a pure and true Unionist. The first political organization that Chhotu Ram joined was the All India Congress Party in 1916. He became the President of Rohtak District Congress Committee in that year and remained so till he resigned in August 1920. Along with Congress Politics, Chhotu Ram was also active in the socio-religious reform movement of the Arya Samaj in the South-East Punjab at that time.

After a resounding success by a majority of 1902 votes, Chhotu Ram joined Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand in the Punjab Council. They had organized themselves into an 'Agriculturist Party or the 'Zamindar Party'. Although Lal Chand was associated with Fazl-i-Hussain earlier than Chhotu Ram, it is Chhotu Ram who is regarded as the actual co-founder of the National Unionist Party in Punjab. By the time of the implementation of the Provincial Autonomy in Punjab, Fazal-i-Hussain and Chhotu Ram were the "acknowledged leaders" of the Unionist Party. In fact the support of Chhotu Ram and his group proved crucial to the success of Unionist Party in the elections of the first Punjab Assembly. Fazal-i-Hussain died in July 1936 and the elections of 1937 were managed by Chhotu Ram. The consequent success of the Unionist Party was a personal success for him. In the cabinet Chhotu Ram was ranked number two, next to the Premier.

The two occasions i.e. Sikandar- Jinnah Pact and the food-crisis of 1943 when the ministry could have fallen, Chhotu Ram as the leader of the Hindu Unionist members of the Punjab Assembly contributed to the very life and existence of the Muslim dominated Unionist ministry in Punjab. And finally, Chhotu Ram turned out to be a valiant hero and a true Unionist.

Keywords: Congress, Unionist Party, Zamindar, Ministership, Undivided, Government, Assembly, Provincial Autonomy.

Introduction

Chhotu Ram's Entry into Active Politics

The first political organization that Chhotu Ram joined was the All India Congress Party in 1916 and became the President of Rohtak District Congress Committee. Chhotu Ram was also active in the socio-religious reform movement of the Arya Samaj which was sweeping the South-East Punjab at that time. However, despite being involved in both these organizations Chhotu Ram was able to stay on the right side of the British Government. Chhotu Ram entered the provincial politics in 1924 and joined the Punjab National Unionist Party established by Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand. He was to remain one of the staunchest supporters and pillars of this party till his death in January 1945.

Although Chhotu Ram was both a Congressite and Arya Samajist, yet he had rendered invaluable services towards war recruitment in Rohtak District. During this period i.e., 1916-19, Chhotu Ram had established a close personal equation with H. Harcourt, the then Deputy Commissioner of Rohtak, who considered Chhotu Ram his personal friend. Harcourt was condemned and ridiculed by the subsequent Deputy Commissioners of Rohtak as a "sympathetic officer", who was too much of a "Ma Baap" and not enough of a "Hakim"

Jats of Rohtak were split in two distinct factions during this time. One was the Arya Samaj faction headed by Lal Chand and Chhotu Ram and the other the Sanatan Dharam faction headed by Jats like Mahants of Bohar, Bahal Singh Zaildar of Bohar, and Ghasi Ram of Gohana tehsil, head of the Jats of Ahulana gotra (sub-caste). Of these two factions, Harcourt blatantly favoured the Arya Samaj faction and of two leaders of the Arya Samaj faction he favoured Chhotu Ram as against Lal Chand. This partiality shown towards Chhotu Ram was shared to a certain extent by C.W. Dallas, the then commissioner of Ambala division. Chhotu Ram,

who headed the District war Committee for recruitment during the war and was a favourite of the Deputy Commissioner. Chhotu Ram succeeded early in his career in establishing his influence among some of the "socially superior" Jats of Rohtak. Consequently, during this period he came to be known, in the official circles, as "the strongest man in the district" who had "his finger in every political pie". Before his transfer from Rohtak district, Harcourt got sanctioned a substantial reward of 4 squares or 100 acres of land for Chhotu Ram in a new colony in Montgomery and the title of '*Rai Sahib*'. Things, however, changed swiftly for Chhotu Ram after the war and for two years (1919-1921) he was caught amidst great controversy.

The disturbances prevalent in the Punjab of 1919 changed the political equilibrium of the province. The Congress furiously agitated against the Rowlatt Acts. The Jat dominated district of Rohtak also showed a great deal of participation by Jats in this agitation. It was expected of the favoured "Jat leaders" like Chhotu Ram that they would not only boycott the agitational meetings but also render "service" to the government by refuting the "false" allegations made against the Rowlatt Acts and explaining its 'true' scope and meaning. Chhotu Ram not only failed to do this but he actually participated in the meetings organized against the acts. In fact, in a mass meeting held at Rohtak on 11 August 1919, Chhotu Ram advocated the sale of prescribed literature. This was a direct challenge to the Punjab Government because on that very day a fresh order prohibiting the publication of any account regarding the disturbances without pre-censorship in any newspaper English or Indian had been issued.

R.C. Bolster, who succeeded H. Harcourt on 18 March 1919, took exception to this behavior of Chhotu Ram whose efforts in establishing himself as the 'leader of Jats' had been so amply and readily promoted by Bolster's predecessor and who had been selected as a recipient of both honours and material rewards. Bolster, therefore, proposed prosecution of Chhotu Ram for his "seditious" role in the disturbances of 1919. Although this could not be carried out in view of lack of incriminating evidence against Chhotu Ram, still for the official record, Bolster firmly penned down that "during the unrest of 1919 this man (Chhotu Ram) had proved actively disloyal". He also passed stay orders in 1920 regarding the reward of land grant made to Chhotu Ram with the following noting: "No action to be taken till his attitude became more clear". It was later found, much to the regret of the Deputy Commissioner, that Chhotu Ram had already acquired possession of the land grant in the summer of 1919 due to some mistake. Chhotu Ram having been pointedly asked by the district officials to clarify his attitude found it necessary to resign from the Congress on 8 August 1920, following the adoption of the creed of non-violent, non-cooperation movement by the Congress.

Chhotu Ram's withdrawal from the Congress had clearly cost him dear in terms of support from the 'Jat community'. He had also alienated many of his Jat followers by ignoring their claims for rewards at a time when he had enjoyed the confidence of the

Deputy Commissioner and was in a position to recommend their cases. This decline in Chhotu Ram's popularity resulted in 1921 in his defeat in the first election to the Punjab Council from the Hajar and Sonepat rural constituency of Rohtak district. Chhotu Ram lost to Rai Bahadur Sarup Singh, a Jat Risaldar and a follower of the Arya Samaj, though only by 26 votes. However, by the time of the second elections to the Punjab Council, Chhotu Ram was able to consolidate his position among his Jat voters. In 1924, he got himself elected as the Vice-Chairman of the Rohtak District Board and also as the Director of the local Cooperative Bank.

With the decline of Sanatan Dharam faction, the Arya Samaj faction emerged supreme in Rohtak district politics. Although, within a year, this faction was also to split into two - between Chhotu Ram and Lal Chand factions, it certainly ensured for the time being the victory of both in the second elections to the Punjab Council. After a resounding success by a majority of 1,902 votes, Chhotu Ram joined Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand in the Punjab council. They had organized themselves into an 'Agriculturist Party' or the 'Zamindar Party' as it was then known.

Chhotu Ram and Fazl-i-Hussain

Chhotu Ram who had not been able to enter the Punjab council in its first election showed himself a scathing critic of Fazl-i-Hussain in particular and the ministry in general. In the Jat Gazette of January 1921, Chhotu Ram wrote:

"We cannot congratulate the government on appointment of two urban based members as ministers. It is an insult to the rural members who are in majority. At least one minister should have been appointed from among them."

In April 1923, he applauded the attempt of Raja Narendra Nath to bringing a vote of censure against the ministry, and commented:

"Sir Fazl-i-Hussain peruses a policy which benefit the Muslim only as he himself it a Muslim. He has also never attached any significance to the rights of zamindars or issued any circular for their benefit."

In July 1923, Chhotu Ram repeated the charge that Fazl-i-Hussain was a communalist and anti-Zamindar:

"We have objected to the appointment of Sir Fazl-i-Hussain because he is communal minded. He says that he stands for backward classes but in reality he makes no concessions to the zamindars. He works for Muslim non-zamindars alone."

The very next year, in 1924, soon after the election, Chhotu Ram joined the group in Punjab Council headed by the same man whom he had condemned as a 'communalist', 'urbanite' and 'anti-zamindar' and started to defend him. By 1936, Chhotu Ram had several times condemned all similar condemnations of Fazl-i-Hussain as being born out of "narrow mindedness", "partisanship and petty jealousy". In reality, the social basis of the two leaders was the same. Both were landlords- Chhotu Ram was 'urban' by profession and Fazl-i-Hussain by origin.

Chhotu Ram, Unionist Party and British Government

Chhotu Ram thus found a great deal of common ground which could be shared with Fazl-i-Hussain's Rural Bloc, which had already been joined by Lal Chand. What emerged out of this alliance was the National Unionist Party of Punjab. Although Lal Chand was associated with Fazl-i-Hussain earlier than Chhotu Ram, it is Chhotu Ram who is regarded as the actual co-founder of the National Unionist Party in Punjab. In March 1923, he entered the Punjab Council. Chhotu Ram was taken as the Minister of Agriculture in place of Lal Chand who had been unseated as a result of successful election petition against him on charges of corrupt practices.

The new Governor, Malcolm Hailey had found it "extremely difficult" to choose Lal Chand's successor. Hailey did not consider Chhotu Ram to be "very distinguished a politician". In fact, Hailey had been extremely sorry to see Lal Chand go; but at that time, he was determined to keep the Agriculturist Party in power.

Chhotu Ram remained the Minister of Agriculture for about six months. He handed over this ministry to Sardar Joginder Singh and served as the Minister of Education from 1925 to 1927. After the third elections to the Punjab Council, Chhotu Ram was dropped from Ministership in favour of Manohar Lal, an Urban Hindu. Manohar Lal was declared by the Tribune a "genuine Hindu" and intellectually superior to Chhotu Ram. The Tribune, claiming to project 'Hindu interests' remarked that Hailey had earned "the gratitude of the Hindu community" of Punjab by dropping Chhotu Ram, and went on to smugly suggest that Chhotu Ram had been given his due. By substituting Chhotu Ram with an Urban Hindu, Hailey was able to accomplish three very important objectives. Firstly, he effectively weakened the Agriculturist Party. Secondly, by introducing communal principle at the ministerial level he also weakened forces of existing non-communal political parties, particularly the Congress. Thirdly, as Hailey himself claimed, he successfully brought about a situation in Punjab in which "Hindus would have but little connection with all India politics". The formation of Punjab Ministry on this new principal, once effected, was firmly maintained as a "set convention" till 1937, thus leaving no room for a rural Hindu, i.e., Chhotu Ram. The press by and large, applauded the ministerial change made by Hailey. Fazl-i-Hussain however made his displeasure clear through his paper the 'Muslim Outlook' which passed scathing strictures on Hailey and his professed abhorrence of communal considerations. Although Chhotu Ram did not complain of any "personal bitterness" on account of being excluded from the ministry, he doubted the "constitutional correctness" of Hailey's action. He also faced embarrassment amongst his associates when Hailey refused to let Chhotu Ram publish a letter in which he (Hailey) had ostensibly given some reason for dropping Chhotu Ram from the ministry. Chaffing under the change, Chhotu Ram assumed the role of the opposition leader in the council under the guidance of Fazl-i-Hussain, who had also been shifted to the Governor's Executive council in 1926 as a

Revenue member, and brought a motion of no-confidence against the ministry. But the motion was lost miserably.

So far as the Muslim dominated Unionist Party was concerned, Chhotu Ram despite the greatly diminished support which he offered to them after 1926 elections, was still valuable enough to be accommodated in different party posts. In January 1926, Chhotu Ram was elected as leader of the Unionist Party; a position which he retained till October 1936. Although the real head continued to be Fazl-i-Hussain, Chhotu Ram's nominal leadership gave to the overwhelmingly Muslim-dominated Unionist Party the image of a non communal body. He also headed the Government Select Committee to give evidence before the Simon Commission in 1928. It was at Fazl-i-Hussain insistence that Chhotu Ram was included in the committee. In 1929, Chhotu Ram was nominated a member of the Punjab Reforms Committee to make recommendations on the distribution of seats and formation of constituencies and the problem of franchise in Punjab. In the years 1928, 1930 and 1931, Chhotu Ram was also a nominated member of the panel of Chairmen of the Legislative council and a member of the standing Committee on Finance.

In 1930 elections, the number of Chhotu Ram's rural Hindu followers from the South-East Punjab had considerably increased; and they had begun to urge that if the Unionist Party was keen on their support, they should "accommodate their leader. By 1936, the position of Chhotu Ram had become very embarrassing and he had started to feel the need to clarify his position. But Chhotu Ram, who knew of his unpopularity with the Urban Hindus, was still willing to take a chance with the Muslim Majority in the council. Commenting on his unpopularity H. Lincoln had said in 1933:

"He (Chhotu Ram) will never represent the Hindus in the council unless the Muslim party throws him entirely and he turns a complete somersault. It is perhaps with this in mind and in of the overtures from 'Urban Hindus' made from time to time, that Chhotu Ram decided to call matters to a head. A shrewd judge of the political situation Chhotu Ram realized, as did some of the other Muslim members of the Unionist Party such as Nawab Muzaffar Khan, that the trend of politics as indicated by the Simon Commission in its Report of 1929-30 was going to make some Hindu support to the Muslim majority essential for its very existence in power. In 1930, Nawab Muzaffar Khan had written the following in a secret note to the home secretariat: "So far as the Muslims are concerned, the position has become worse than before."

Nevertheless, the deteriorating relationship among the Unionist Muslims had ended up by May 1936 in giving Chhotu Ram the much desired leverage. Chhotu Ram became one of the signatories of an important memorandum of reconciliation effected on 17 May 1937 between the two factions of Sikandar Hayat Khan and Shahub-ud-din.

Chhotu Ram - A Loyal Hindu Leader in the Unionist Ministry

Fazl-i-Hussain died in July 1936 and the elections of 1937 were managed by Chhotu Ram. The consequent success of the Unionist Party was a personal success for him. For this success Chhotu Ram was knighted in 1937. The Unionist captured 90 out of a total of 179 seats in the Punjab Assembly. In the Ambala division the hold of Unionists was considered so complete that in the opinion of Sri Ram Sharma, a prominent Congressite:

"No one could dare stand from rural constituencies in the Haryana region".

In the fourteen years preceding 1937 Chhotu Ram had consolidated his own position in his constituency to such an extent that no one was willing to stand on Congress ticket from Rohtak. The congress was able to win only one rural seat in the Ambala division out of the five which it had contested. It however was able to capture both the urban seats of this division. The Unionists headed by Chhotu Ram captured seven rural seats in the division out of a total of eight. In the words of Emerson:

"The influence of Rao Bahadur Chhotu Ram and the organization which he has been building up for years were the decisive factors".

Chhotu Ram was also given credit for forcing the Congress to remain exclusively Urban Hindu in complexion. Apart from this, Chhotu Ram also supplied to the predominantly Muslim and big landlord-ridden Unionist Party the massive following of the comparatively small landowners of the Haryana region, thereby giving it, superficially at least, a wider social base than it could ever hope to acquire on its own.

Chhotu Ram having proved his worth both to the Unionist Muslims and to the British Government now was a clear choice for a ministerial post which had been denied to him for so long. He was openly tipped for ministership by the newspapers. The Governor of Punjab had also written just before the elections that "Chhotu Ram was the most outstanding rural candidate for ministership". Chhotu Ram was consequently made the Minister of Development in 1937, a post which he held till 1941. In 1941, he was made the Minister of Revenue; he continued in this office till his death in 1945. In the cabinet Chhotu Ram was ranked number two, next to the Premier. Chhotu Ram in fact informed the Punjab Governor that Sikandar Hayat Khan had chosen him (Chhotu Ram) to be his (Sikandar) successor. However, after the death of Sikandar Hayat Khan in December 1942 Chhotu Ram declined to contest for the leadership. He was fully aware that whatever his political importance to the Unionist Muslims, the communal situation in Punjab would not let anyone except a Muslim hold the office of the Premier for any length of time.

The periodic reports of Punjab Governor to the Viceroy regarding Punjab Ministers and notes on other matters relating to the province stand a testimony to the high esteem which Chhotu Ram was held by the official world and specially by the two Viceroys, Linlithgow and Wavell. While Sikandar

Hayat Khan was alive, Chhotu Ram was ranked above him in all respects and also above the next Premier, Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana, who in any case is not considered to be of the same caliber as Sikandar Hayat Khan. Glancy, for example, wrote to Linlithgow in January 1942 :

"Sir Chhotu Ram is made of sterner stuff than his leader (Sir Sikandar). He still pursues his ideals persistently and often passionately. But though his outlook is the same as ever, he has been of late circumspect in big public utterances. He is an effective and hard working minister of marked capacity whose instinct is to ride straight at his fences, whatever their dimensions."

This view was fully endorsed by Linlithgow. In 1943, at the time of filling up the vacancy in the Executive Council, the highest office open to an Indian right up till independence, the Viceroy showed his marked preference for Chhotu Ram. He wrote to the Governor on 2 March 1943 that he would very much like to get one of those tough Punjabees like Chhotu Ram. A few days later he again added:

"I have a high opinion of Chhotu Ram's ability and courage and I dare say he would make a very good member". Glancy confirming this opinion of the Viceroy, wrote back : "In point of ability, application and the courage of expressing his opinion, I think Sir Chhotu Ram is admirably fitted to be a member."

However, Chhotu Ram was not appointed to the Viceroy's Council. Linlithgow felt that a walk out by Chhotu Ram and his rural Hindu group together with the Sikhs on the question of a Muslim League Government in Punjab could have meant the end of an effective ministerial government in Punjab. The political situation was, therefore, safe only so long as there was no merger of the Muslim League and the Unionist Party. Chhotu Ram, who was obviously "upset" by the Sikandar-Jinnah pact, nevertheless put up a spirited defense of Sikandar Hayat Khan in public and in a press statement declared that the Unionist Party "unaltered" by the pact.

By January 1943, even Chhotu Ram privately agreed that the party had been living on its "past prestige". Khizr, a weaker man than Sikandar and wavering in his attitude, could not be relied upon by the British administration to withstand Jinnah. By May 1944, Chhotu Ram opened that Premier was "surrounded on all sides by weak persons" and was being "plied by so many people with weak advice"

Chhotu Ram's inevitable opposition to a Muslim League government was bound to weaken the solidarity of Punjab and hence undermine the British war efforts. It is in this situation, so crucial to the British in India, that Chhotu Ram seemed to have played the key role, which is best described in Glancy's report to the Viceroy:

"Throughout Jinnah campaign he (Chhotu Ram) has been a most valuable and uncompromising supporter of the Unionist cause. He has played the role of an indomitable sheep dog, padding steadfastly

round the flock with a baleful eye and a bared fang for any straggler whom panic might dismay."

It may also be noted that Jinnah's talks with Chhotu Ram to get him to join as a representative of his group in a Muslim League Ministry does highlight Chhotu Ram's importance in the province. Equally interesting is the fact that Jinnah's public receptions in Punjab invariably ended with the slogans of "Quaid-i-Azam Zindabad and Chhotu Ram Murdabad". The contemporary press also, during the entire ministerial crisis of 1943-44, gave importance mainly to Chhotu Ram. His attitude and agreement was considered essential to any future change of nomenclature and fate of the Unionist ministry.

Even otherwise Chhotu Ram played a very important role in the field of non-Muslims war recruitment to the British Indian army. Chhotu Ram's influence was considered decisive as he was only leader who could command the following of his fellow castemen. His hold over this region had come to be considered so complete by 1937 because no other member of his group of rural Hindus could come anywhere near him in popularity, prestige and acceptability as a leader so much so that the government was hard put to appoint Chhotu Ram's successor after his death. No one was considered outstanding enough and in fact officials feared the dissolution of the Jat group. Tika Ram, his successor, fell far short Chhotu Ram's capacity for work and forcefulness. The by-election in Chhotu Ram's constituency was won by his nephew, Siri Chand with a "streaky past", he was believed to have won the seat because of the "sheer popularity and prestige" which Chhotu Ram had commanded. Some newspaper speculated about the future of the Unionist ministry as a result of Chhotu Ram death. The Governor himself considered Chhotu Ram's death a "calamity" and severe blow to the Unionist Party. In fact, Glancy doubted for some time the ability of Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana to lead the Unionist Party after losing his Chief lieutenant, Chhotu Ram. The importance of Chhotu Ram in the political alignments of Punjab is also brought out in the repeated attempts made by the Hindu communal leaders to woo him away from the Unionist Party to their side. The first attempt had been made in 1926 by Gokul Chand Narang and a few other Hindu communal leaders who approached Chhotu Ram with the offer of a a ministership. Again in 1930, a political offer had been made this time the Presidentship of the Punjab Legislative Council was offered. In 1935, a joint Hindu Sikh front of Joginder Singh, Master Tara Singh, Gokul Chand Narang, Raja Narendra Nath, and Sardar Mangal Singh, offered Chhotu Ram the leadership of their joint Hindu Sikh front and the post of a minister. Once again in March 1936, Gokul Chand Narang tried to get all the Hindus and Sikhs under his banner, but Chhotu Ram would have nothing to do with this. Chhotu Ram rejected all these offers and remained consistently loyal to the Unionist Party.

The food crisis was a definite indication to the fact that by now even leaders like Chhotu Ram, who had been generally cooperating with the colonial

government, wanted to exact a price for their cooperation. The British colonial government was certainly anxious that the Punjab ministry should not fall. The two occasions, i.e. Sikandar Jinnah Pact and the food crises of 1943, when the ministry could have fallen were closely associated with Chhotu Ram and the possible withdrawal of his support to the ministry. This confirms the importance of Chhotu Ram who as the leader of Hindu Unionist members of the Punjab Assembly contributed the required basic indispensable element to the very life and existence of the Muslim dominated Unionist Ministry in Punjab. Even the Haryana Tilak, the arch enemy of Chhotu Ram, acknowledged in its editorial of 22 September 1939 what was obviously common feeling and common knowledge among the people. The Unionist Government cannot remain in power without the support of South East Punjab or the Haryana region. Haryana eight to twelve members are with Chhotu Ram who is with the Unionist Government. If their support is removed the Government will collapse. In Chhotu Ram the loyalist Muslims of the Unionist Party found a Hindu who would not rejoin the Congress or the Hindu communalists. He combined them in forming a stable political party and a stable ministry. Apart from this, Chhotu Ram, as the most stabilizing factor in the ministry in power in Punjab, also got the backing of the British authorities in India who for reasons of their own anxiously desired the successful working of the Provincial Autonomy in Punjab.

Concepts and Hypothesis

The paper falls in the category of historical research where many a historical facts from authentic history books, journals, newspapers and other related sources have been consulted, analysed and discussed attentively. This paper deals with the political upbringing of Sir Chhotu Ram. It has been explained that Chhotu Ram succeeded early in his career in establishing his influence among some of the socially superior Jats of Rohtak. During this period he came to be known as the strongest man in the district who had his finger in every political pie. The paper concentrates on Chhotu Ram's contribution to the Unionist Party. Although he was a Congressite in the beginning of his career, yet it was purely his choice to join Muslims dominated (secularist) Unionist Party which remained in power in the undivided Punjab till 1947. Being at the second rank in the Party, he supported it through thick and thin and ultimately came out as a valiant hero for the cause of Unionist Party.

Findings

The findings are as follows:-

1. Sir Chhotu Ram started his journey as a Congressite and ended it up as a true and staunch Unionist. He joined the All India Congress Party in 1916 but soon resigned in 1920 thinking that there would be difference of opinions if he resumed as a Congressite.
2. Besides working for the cause of Arya Samaj and some other social causes, Chhotu Ram joined hands with Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand in Punjab Council. The Unionist Party emerged out of this alliance. Thus, Chhotu Ram is considered the co-founder of Unionist Party.

3. Due to his participation in agitations against Rowlatt acts, Chhotu Ram saw many ups and downs in his career. No doubt his glory diminished for some time, but he emerged out as a staunch Unionist.
4. Chhotu Ram also saved the ministry from falling and showed his presence and importance during Sikandar-Jinnah pact and food-crisis of 1943. Even the British considered his contribution to be indispensable so far as the politics of undivided Punjab was concerned.
5. And finally, he was hailed as a great Unionist who despite being a Hindu politician gave life to a thoroughly Muslim Party i.e. Unionist Party.

Conclusion

Sir Chhotu Ram joined All India Congress Party in 1916 and became the President of Rohtak District Congress Committee. He was also active in the socio-religious reform movement of the Arya Samaj in the South-East Punjab. The disturbances prevalent in the Punjab during 1919 changed the political equilibrium of the province and Chhotu Ram saw many ups and down in his career. Chhotu Ram entered the provincial politics in 1924 and joined the Punjab Unionist Party established by Fazl-i-Hussain and Lal Chand. They had organized themselves into an 'Agriculturist Party or the 'Zamindar Party'. He remained one of the staunchest supporters and pillars of this party till his death in January 1945. In Chhotu Ram, the loyalist Muslims of the Unionist Party found a Hindu who would not rejoin the Congress or the Hindu communalists. To sum up, Chhotu Ram was the Unionist hero in the politics of undivided Punjab.

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