

CHAPTER XIII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

HISTORY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

Ideas of Local Self-Government had prevailed in the Pre-British days in different parts of Bihar and Saran was no exception to it. The villages and particularly the large villages were, in a way, States in miniature where the local problems and needs for sanitation, communication, the judiciary and the police were served by assemblies of the people themselves with a *Mukhiya* or an executive head. Village administration was more or less entrusted to the village headman, commonly known as *Gopa* in the Hindu period and *Muquoddam* in the Muslim period. Whenever there was a strong chief near about he would try and extend his administration on the other smaller village headman. If the strong chieftain was removed, the units used to separate and again form themselves into separate semi-autonomous bodies. This was the general picture and there used to be variations.

Not much attention had been paid to the condition of the roads, ferries or sanitation. There was hardly any broad policy knitting up the different areas. There was practically not much arrangement for maintaining the trans-district roads although there is no doubt that there were trans-district roads. There had been invasions in a way that have passed through the North Bihar roads. As a matter of fact many of the smaller but strong free booters used to prefer to carry out their ravages in North Bihar and avoid the stronger chiefs in South Bihar.

The British administration inherited a bad legacy so far as the roads, ferries, sanitation and conservancy and other rural problems are concerned in this district. The zamindars were so many small chiefs, often allied to each other and often separating and carrying out their petty quarrels. The old correspondence volumes indicate that many of them were almost like free booters and used to maintain *lathials* and wrestlers for safety and self-interest.* It can well be imagined that it was not to the interest of such zamindars who were entrusted with the roads and other affairs which are now grouped under Local Self-Government to have a proper maintenance. The zamindars immediately prior to the advent of the British administration did not satisfactorily discharge their responsibilities in the matter. Local affairs of this type attracted the attention of the earlier British administrators and they found that they must give a top priority to such matters.

Evidence of this is found in a letter, dated the 1st May 1800, from the Revenue and Judicial Department, to William Cowper,

* "Saran Old Records" published by the Gazetteer Revision Section.

President and Member, Board of Revenue, which was accompanied by a letter that the Governor-General in Council wanted better communications between principal cities and towns throughout the different districts and instructed the Magistrates to report on certain matters. A copy of this letter is preserved in Volume 18, from 1st January 1800 to 23rd July 1800, in Muzaffarpur Record Room. Among other matters, the Magistrate of Saran was required to give an account of the roads, how and in what manner they were repaired, what roads were particularly necessary and how they could best be made and what Regulations were necessary to avoid encroachment and keep them in repair, whether zamindars could do it without taking it to be a hardship, whether the construction of a bridge was necessary and at what expense. The Magistrate was further called upon to report on the conditions of ferries, who maintained the boats, how expenses were being met and what arrangements were necessary for the future regulations of ferries. The proper maintenance of streets in cities and towns and supply of water, drainage were other items that the Magistrate had to look into. The Magistrate was also asked to look into the question of river communication and to report if water communication could be improved by cleaning or deepening the river beds and if that could be done by convicts and at what expense. The Magistrate was asked to indicate any other measure to improve agriculture, commerce, police, health and general condition of the country. The Magistrates were instructed to give a list of priority as to what they wanted to execute first and what at a later stage as well as to suggest the mode of financing the scheme whether by tolls or any other means not liable to any material objection.

It has to be mentioned here that there was a very liberal use of convict labour in the early days of British rule in Saran for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and embankments. Able-bodied convicts used to be detailed out in batches under close guard for such purposes. Regarding the *bundhs* and embankments, old correspondence in the District Record Room of Chapra refers to the work of Captain Sage who was employed for constructing a number of *bundhs* and embankments to keep the district free from inundation.

All this will show that there was a great attempt on the part of the early British administrators in Saran district to give a top priority to the construction of works of public utility as roads, *bundhs*, embankments, ferries and rest houses. They were a great necessity for administrative purposes. Bad communications encouraged highway crimes. There was a good river traffic but the condition of the roads was such that heavy traffic in goods up to the river points was not always easy. As mentioned before it had almost become nobody's business to construct roads or even to maintain the roads that existed. For purposes of trade and commerce and particularly to move indigo, saltpetre and sugar from the *kothis* it was necessary

to have a fairly maintained net work of roads. The riverain district of Saran has always been liable to inundation and it was necessary to have proper embankments and *bundhs*. There is a good deal of old correspondence in the volumes for 1803 in the Record Room of Chuprah tracing the history of the construction of the *ghats*, *bundhs* and embankments. The main policy followed for securing protection from the floods appears to have been to construct high embankments and strengthen them, whenever necessary.

Another important work which required a good set of roads was military movement and the supply and the arrangement for conveyances and *rasad* (food supply) for the troops at a very short notice. There is a letter no. 1319, dated the 22nd October 1857, in which the Commissioner of the Patna Division asked the Collector of Saran to peremptorily arrange for 50 carts, 10 elephants, 10 *dulis* and 10 *ekkas* for transporting the goods and luggages of the Naval Brigade some of whom were sick and were suffering from foot-sore. The Magistrate was also asked to keep several hundreds of sheep, bullocks, huge quantity of vegetables, etc., for the use of the Brigade. This quick raising of supply of labour, conveyance and *rasad* frequently caused embarrassment to the local Magistrate and heightened the necessity of having better communication. The practical effect of the precautions taken was seen when insurrections broke out in 1857. At that time quick military movement had to be arranged for. When the large Nepal Brigade passed through this district to quell the insurrections, the strain on the local administrators would have been hundredfold more if the roads had not been somewhat improved earlier.

Regulations were passed in 1816 and 1819 authorising the Government to levy money for the maintenance of ferries and the repair and construction of roads, bridges and drains. In administering the fund so raised the Government were advised by the local committees with the Magistrate as Secretary which they appointed in each district. This was in a way the nucleus of the formation of the District Board.

In 1794, there were only three main roads in the district which were the road from Chapra to Champaran *via* Mashrak and Sabighat, from Chapra to Muzaffarpur *via* Rewaghat and from Chirand to Manjhi *via* Godna. All these roads were in a deplorable condition and hardly passable in the rains. So far as the bridges, till at least 1815, there was only one bridge apparently worth any notice mentioned in the Collector's report and that was the one on Barauli on the Daha river. There are frequent references in the old correspondence to the munificence of Sri Banwari Lal of Chapra who made an extensive gift of his lands and buildings of *sarai* at Chapra town to the Government. The *sarais* or rest houses were an aid to the travellers. The Collector of Saran was asked to hold a *darbar* and give *samad* and *khillut* to Banwari Lal for his liberal donations. The buildings of *sarai* donated by Banwari Lal Shah today house

the Rajendra College, a first grade college in Chapra. The present Sadar Hospital buildings are also situated on the lands of Banwari Lal and the hospital was further aided by munificent donation from him. A portion of the land gifted by the side of the hospital has been utilised for building the jail. Banwari Lal's two wives also gave donations and were given titles, a unique privilege for a woman in those days. Foreign Political Consultations, October, 1869, nos. 179-183 (National Archives, New Delhi) show that the titles on these two ladies recommended by the Collector were "Syed-o-zanan-o-Sutiodia Khandan" as a prefix to their names. But the Governor-General accepted Bengal Government's recommendation of the title of "Jawadoon-nissa-Sattoodia Khandan" (the most liberal of the females and the most praised of her family).

By 1830 a net work of roads had come into existence, namely, the roads from Chirand to Darauli, Salimpurghat, Rewaghat, Sonepur and Gorakhpur. In 1839 the roads to the north and west of Chaprah town were thoroughly repaired and the ditches were filled up. The inter-district road to Gorakhpur was not maintained properly as has been mentioned in the *Bengal Gazetteer* of 1840. As has been mentioned before convict labour was largely used for the construction and maintenance of the roads. Regarding the *bundhs* and embankments the correspondence in 1830 refer to the work of Captain Sage who was employed for constructing a number of *bundhs* and embankments to keep the district free from inundation. A letter, dated the 15th March 1829, from the Collector, to the Officiating Commissioner of Revenue, mentions the *bundh* work given to Captain Sage who had employed a large number of men and wanted to complete the *bundh* before the rainy season would set in. Regarding the apathy of the zamindars to assist Captain Sage, it was mentioned in the letter "if they would neglect this order, then in such cases, they would be held responsible for such injury as might occur to their estates from an inundation of the river and from the payment of Government *zumma* assessed on them".

A letter, dated the 15th May 1828, from the Council Chamber, to the Magistrate of Saran, gives the resolutions on the construction of bridges on the road between Chapra and Rewaghat as well as on the Soondee and Zeetnullah on the road from Chapra to Revelganj. The cost of construction of the iron bridges over the Zeetnullah and Soondee originally estimated at Rs. 18,368 and the cost was to be defrayed from the surplus of Chaukidaris and ferries. But subsequently the Military Board submitted a revised estimate and observed that the wooden bridges would serve the purpose well. The Military Board, according to this letter was to be instructed to direct the Executive Engineer of the Dinapore Division to commence the work. In the early part of the nineteenth century it appears that the Military Department worked in close co-operation with the civil administration for the construction of roads and bridges.

In a district which has a number of rivers there is great importance of the *ghats*. Many of the *ghats* were under the zamindars or other individual owners. Some *ghats* were taken over by the Government and used to be leased out. The early British administrator also made efforts to repair the existing embankments and the construction of the new ones to protect the district from inundation. The Gandak embankment is one of the oldest in the State. It appears from the Collectorate papers that one Dhauso Ram, the *Naib* of Muhammad Kasim, Subahdar of Bihar, spent over a lakh of rupees in making the embankment in or about 1756. As stated before the embankment had fallen into disorder between 1820 and 1825 and the Government in 1830 repaired the Gandak embankment. The inhabitants of certain villages had to be removed to the south of the *bundhs* for the security of the new embankment of the Gandak.

It will be seen that during this period some of the local works which now come under Local Self-Government offices used to be done by the zamindars or other individual owners, some by the Military Department and some through the efforts of the District Magistrates with convict labour.

In 1870 a great fillip was given to the development of Local Self-Government and by 1871 a system had been introduced in the province whereby cess calculated on a certain percentage of the rent was imposed and utilised for the construction and maintenance of roads. When first cess was imposed there was a great opposition that it was a violation of the Permanent Settlement. The Government partly yielded and decided to restrict the cess only to the amount required for the roads. Thus the roads cess, as it was called in Bengal, could not be diverted to purposes of primary education as was done in other provinces. The committees that were formed to look after the affairs were controlled by the officials but it cannot be said that non-official voice did not have any scope.

In 1882, Lord Ripon, the Viceroy and Governor-General, made an earnest endeavour to remove the defects and to introduce a real element of Local Self-Government on the lines of English convention. He advocated that the subdivision and not the district should be the maximum area served by one committee or local board. An attempt was made in Bengal which included the present State of Bihar to carry Lord Ripon's principles to the fullest extent. But the Bill introduced for the purpose was vetoed by the Secretary of State. However, the urge that the people had started feeling and the push given by Lord Ripon had its result when the Local Self-Government Act was passed in 1885. The District Board was established in 1886. The municipalities of Chapra, Siwan and Revelganj were established in 1864, 1869 and 1876, respectively.

The District Board originally consisted of 26 members. The District Magistrate was the *ex-officio* member and the Chairman on his own rights and this arrangement continued up to 1923—1934.

There is no doubt that the original idea was that the District Boards should be the venue where the people will learn their first lessons of Local Self-Government. The rigidity of official control was irksome but at the same time it must be admitted that the paternal care of the District Magistrate had its good points as well. There was a very big weightage in the administration at that time in favour of the District Magistrate. As a matter of fact a District Magistrate of personality would carry the district administration in his pockets as it were and with that set up a non-official Chairman would not have been able to produce much effect on the District Magistrate. The District Magistrate had a very large say in the purse of the Government and an adverse opinion from him of the non-official Chairman in the earlier days of the District Board could have ruined the Board. That is why, in a way it may be said that the official Chairman was not an unmitigated evil. The defects were recognised in the Montagu-Chelmsford Report (1919). It was proposed to make these bodies as representative as possible and to remove unnecessary restrictions regarding taxation, the budget and the sanctions of works, to bring the franchise as low as possible and to replace the nominated Chairman by an elected non-official member. This report also emphasised the importance of developing the corporate life of the village.

Another landmark was a change of the control of Local Self-Government affairs at Government level. In 1921 Local Self-Government became a transferred subject in charge of a Minister. The Municipalities and Local Boards were given enhanced powers and functions, were comparatively freed from official control and the District Boards were broad-based on a much larger electorate. The District Board was given the right of electing a Chairman. The Provincial Government evinced a good deal of interest for the progress of the Local Self-Government institution.

In 1924-25 the District Boards were reconstituted on an elective basis under the provisions of the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act. This was a definite mark of progress. The reconstituted District Board of Saran consisted of 40 members of whom 5 were *ex-officios*, 5 nominated by Government and 30 elected. The Board came to be presided over by a non-official Chairman for the first time. This amendment introduced a system of direct election to the District Board instead of the hitherto prevailing system of indirect election. On an analysis of the status of the members of the Board in 1927-28 it appears that the land-holding class constituted 60 per cent, pleaders and mukhtcars 22.5 per cent, Government servants 12.5 per cent and others 5 per cent. This shows the larger influence of the land-holding class on the electorate. This was so because the franchise was more or less restricted to property and educational qualifications.

The Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act of 1924-25 was a big step but it was not absolutely free from official control.

One-fourth of the members of the District Board were still nominated by the Government. The franchise being of a limited character kept out the bulk of the villagers. There was not much of attempt on the part of the candidates to enlighten the electorate as to their rights or obligations. The organisation of the Board changed with a fresh election. From 1924, the election of the Board began to be held every three years till 1933 when the life of the Board was extended to five years. In 1941 the Government in the Local Self-Government had to supersede the Saran District Board and place the administration of the Board under the charge of a Special Officer while the three Local Boards of the district remained under the supervision of the respective three Subdivisional Officers concerned. It was on the 22nd November 1947 that the District Board was released from supersession. A fresh election was held and a new Board was constituted. The same Board continued till 1958 when by an ordinance the District Board of Saran along with the other District Boards in the State was vested in the State Government. The District Magistrate took over the District Board and a Special Officer was appointed by the Government in the Local Self-Government Department to run the affairs of the District Board.

The year 1947 was also important in the history of Local Self-Government as in this year the Bihar *Panchayat Raj* Act, 1947, was passed. The Act was put into effect in the district from 1949. The working of the *Panchayats* has been discussed later.

The Local Self-Government Act of 1950 tried to improve on the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act of 1924-25. Section 7 of the previous Act (Bihar Act III of 1885) was substituted in the Bihar Local Self-Government (Amendment) Act of 1950. The substituted section runs as follows :—

- “ 7. (1) The State Government shall by notification fix—
- (a) the total number of members constituting a District Board, not exceeding 50 in number,
 - (b) such number of members as may be elected,
 - (c) such number of members of the scheduled castes, but in any case not less than three in number, as there are Local Boards within the district, to be co-opted by the elected members of such Board in such manner as may be prescribed:

Provided that at least one member shall be co-opted from the area over which each of the Local Boards has authority.

- (2) Subject to the provisions of section 11, the members to be elected under this section shall be elected on the basis of adult suffrage.”

Although this amendment was done and the principle of the election to be held on the basis of adult franchise was recognised, no election was held and the same Board of 1947 was allowed to continue.

The constitution of the District Boards and Local Boards in Bihar received a set back by the Ordinance no. VI of 1958, promulgated by the Governor of Bihar. This ordinance was promulgated under clause (1) of Article 213 of the Constitution of India. By notification no. 8001-L.S.-G., dated the 12th September 1958, it was proclaimed that "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Bihar District Boards and Local Boards (Control and Management) Ordinance, 1958 (Bihar Ordinance no. VI of 1958), the Governor of Bihar is pleased to direct that all the members of the District Boards and Local Boards including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of such Boards constituted under the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act of 1885 (Ben. Act III of 1885) shall vacate their respective offices with effect from the 15th September 1958". In pursuance of this ordinance sixteen District Boards including Saran District Board with their respective Local Boards were taken over by the Government. The reasons for this step are given in the Bihar District Boards and Local Boards (Control and Management) Bill, 1958, as follows :—

"The District Boards and Local Boards constituted under the provisions of the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act of 1885, have outlived their utility under their completely changed circumstances. On attainment of independence, there have been development on a very large scale in the various fields of activities, viz., Agriculture, Industry, Co-operation, Gram Panchayats, etc. These developments call for a complete reorientation in the conception and constitution of District Boards and Local Boards so that these bodies could fulfil their role effectively in the changed circumstances. This is not possible unless the existing law is carefully examined in the light of these developments and amended suitably to meet the present needs of the society.

"The Balvantrai Mehta Committee on the Community Development and National Extension Service have made a number of recommendations specially with regard to future set up of District Boards. These recommendations require detailed examination and careful consideration before the State Government could come to a definite decision in the matter, which will obviously take some considerable time. Besides some of the sister States in India are considering legislation regarding the constitution and powers of these local bodies and it is necessary to examine the provisions

of these laws and their actual working for some time before we embark on a comprehensive amendments of the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act.

“ It is, therefore, clear that the new set up of District Boards undoubtedly require comprehensive amendment of the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act, 1885. It was accordingly decided by the State Government, to take over temporarily for three years, the control and management of District Boards and Local Boards, pending consideration of their future set-up. The Bihar District Boards and Local Boards (Control and Management) Ordinance, 1958, has been promulgated to give effect to this decision.

“ The Bill seeks to convert an ordinance into an Act of the State Legislature as the ordinance will cease to have effect after six weeks from the commencement of the present session of the State Legislature.”

In this way the Saran District Board which was constituted as the result of the elections in 1947 was vested in the State Government.

MUNICIPALITIES.

There are three municipalities in the district, viz., Chapra, Siwan and Revelganj. The total area under municipal administration is 10.75 square miles with a population of 98,255 souls.

The Municipal Board consists of the representatives of the different wards into which a municipal area is divided. These representatives are called Municipal Commissioners and they elect the executive, the head of which is the Chairman. While the majority of the commissioners are elected there are a few members nominated by the Government. Election is held every five years on the basis of adult franchise.

The chief duties of the Chairman of the Municipal Board are—

- (a) to preside at the meetings of the municipality;
- (b) to watch over the financial and executive administration and to perform such other executive functions as may be performed by the municipality; and
- (c) to exercise supervision and control over the acts and proceedings of all officers and servants of municipality.

The executive next to the Chairman is the Vice-Chairman who is entitled to perform all the abovementioned functions in absence of the Chairman. Under the Act the Chairman can also delegate certain powers to the Vice-Chairman. The Act groups municipal functions into two categories, obligatory and optional. The obligatory function includes consideration of all matters essential to sanitation, health, safety and convenience and well-being of the

population while the optional function includes matters which are not considered absolutely essential, viz., construction of parks, gardens, libraries, *dharamshalas*, rest houses, etc.

The Chapra Municipality, the oldest in the district, was established in 1864. The Board consists of 40 members out of which 32 are elected on the basis of adult franchise and 8 are nominated by the State Government. The municipal area is $7\frac{1}{2}$ square miles and has a population of 64,309 souls consisting of 33,939 males and 30,370 females according to 1951 census. There are four wards and the number of rate-payers in 1957-58 was only 12,930. The municipality controls construction of houses within the municipal limit. The duties and powers of the municipality are prescribed in the Bihar and Orissa Municipal Act, 1922.

The chief sources of income are the municipal rates and taxes, marketing tax and the grant from the Government. The municipality levies taxes on all types of conveyances. In 1958 tax was levied on 119 bullock-carts, 71 *tamtams* and 556 rickshaws. The principal items of expenditure are conservancy, medical and education. The figures of income and expenditure in the last five years were as follows :—

Years.	Income.		Expenditure.	
		Rs.		Rs.
1952-53	..	3,84,898	..	4,39,697
1953-54	..	4,03,254	..	4,46,993
1954-55	..	4,03,099	..	3,86,427
1955-56	..	3,43,628	..	3,68,606
1956-57	..	3,38,617	..	5,23,966

It will be seen that the expenditure usually exceeds the income and the deficit is met by grants from Government. The services offered by the municipality are not adequate for the large population of the town. Inadequacy of finance is said to be the main reason for the inadequate amenities offered. There are only 383 employees for the disposal of night-soil and refuge. The arrangement for the removal of night-soil is still primitive. The usual method is to remove night-soil in buckets on the head of the sweepers, which is not a very graceful sight. The condition of the roads is rather bad and there is hardly any proper drainage for the whole town. The total length of *pucca* drain was 10 miles and of *kutchra* 43 miles in 1958. The municipality maintains 33.73 miles metalled and 7.09 miles unmetalled roads.

There are 1,130 deep and shallow wells, 1,137 tube-wells, 176 hydrants and 725 house connections for the supply of water. The figures relate to the year 1957-58. A skeleton tap water scheme has

been in operation from 1956. There are two water towers, the capacity of which is 1 lakh gallons each. These two water towers are not sufficient to supply adequate water to the whole town. There is no fire service squad in the town.

The services of a qualified Health Officer have been placed at the disposal of the municipality. He looks after and supervises sanitation, slaughterhouses, markets and controls the vaccination section. The occasional outbreak of the epidemics keep him quite engaged.

The municipality maintained 246 electric lights and 298 kerosine oil lights in 1957-58. In consideration of the area and the length of the roads the number of lights is extremely inadequate. Primary education has been made compulsory within the municipal area. There are 60 primary schools and 4 middle schools. The expenditure incurred by the municipalities under Education in 1955-56 was Rs. 88,388, in 1956-57 Rs. 1,01,071 and in 1957-58 Rs. 1,14,316.

Siwan Municipality.

Siwan Municipality was constituted in 1869. It has a Municipal Board consisting of 16 members out of which 13 are elected and 3 are nominated. The area is 2 square miles and the population is 22,625 consisting of 11,934 males and 10,691 females. The number of rate-payers is 4,145 only. The average annual income during five years ending 1957-58 was Rs. 1,27,654 and the expenditure was Rs. 1,15,702 as against Rs. 25,426 and Rs. 24,024 in the quinquennium ending 1920-21. The main sources of income and expenditure are the same as in Chapra Municipality. Siwan Municipality maintains 15 primary schools. The income and expenditure of the municipality of the last five years are given below :—

Years.	Receipts.		Expenditure.	
		Rs.		Rs.
1953-54	..	1,10,966	..	1,02,469
1954-55	..	1,34,722	..	1,21,174
1955-56	..	1,12,466	..	1,10,686
1956-57	..	1,34,769	..	1,13,199
1957-58	..	1,45,347	..	1,30,983

Revelganj Municipality.

Constituted in 1876, this municipality has now 16 commissioners out of which 13 are elected and 3 nominated. The area is $1\frac{1}{2}$ square miles and the population, according to 1951 census, is 11,321 souls consisting of 5,411 males and 5,910 females. It maintains $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles metalled roads and 10 miles kutcha roads. The total number of

houses is about 2,100. The sources of income and the items of expenditure are the same as in the case of Chapra Municipality. The income and expenditure for the last five years ending 1957-58 are as follows :—

Years.	Receipts.		Expenditure.	
		Rs.		Rs.
1953-54	..	40,624	..	44,696
1954-55	..	66,379	..	58,720
1955-56	..	55,648	..	56,525
1956-57	..	67,373	..	68,483
1957-58	..	47,486	..	54,512

TOWN PLANNING AND PUBLIC HEALTH.

There is no scheme for town planning in the district. The towns have been allowed to grow in a haphazard manner. The *bazar* portion is extremely congested. There is no segregated slum area. Some of the slum areas are in a very filthy condition. There is no scheme for the building of tenements to replace the slum areas. The majority of the houses are built of bricks and mortar. The reinforced cement and concrete houses are now coming up. Parks and recreation spots are an exception. The red light areas are not segregated.

As mentioned before Chapra Municipality maintains a qualified doctor who is in charge of sanitation and conservancy. There is a District Medical Officer who looks after the administration of public health measures in the district outside the limits of the municipality. The designation of the Civil Surgeon who is the head of the Medical Department in the district has now been changed into that of Senior Executive Medical Officer. The Senior Executive Medical Officer combines in him both the preventive and the curative sides of medical administration. His post has been made a non-practising one and he is expected to be constantly touring within the district and he visits the various blocks and municipal areas and inspects the medical and public health measures. The district is being slowly covered by Blocks consisting of a chain of villages and in charge of Block Development Officers who are also called Anchal Adhikaris. The scheme is to give a doctor to each of the Blocks so that the rural areas get the benefit of a qualified doctor.

DISTRICT AND LOCAL BOARDS.

It has already been mentioned that the District Board was established in 1886. Outside the Municipalities, Notified Area Committees and Union Boards, the maintenance of local affairs, such as the maintenance of roads and bridges, the control of ferries, pounds and medical relief, etc., rest with the District Boards and Local Boards.

Organisation and Structure.

The area administered by the District Board is about 2,642 square miles with a total population of 30,55,304 according to 1951 census. The Board was wholly elected and composed of 50 members out of which three seats were reserved for members of Scheduled Castes. Although as mentioned earlier the District Board is now vested in the State Government the chief functions of the Chairman of the Board according to the Act may be described. His chief functions are—

- (a) to preside over the meetings of the Board;
- (b) to watch over the financial and executive administration of the Board;
- (c) to exercise supervision and control over the acts and proceedings of all officers and servants of the Board in matters of executive administration and in matters concerning the records and accounts of the Board; and
- (d) to dispose of all questions pertaining to the service of the officers and servants, their pay and allowances subject to certain limitation prescribed by rules framed under the Act.

The chief obligatory duties of the Board are—

- (i) the construction of roads and other means of communication and the maintenance and repairs;
- (ii) construction and repairs of hospitals and dispensaries, other public buildings, tanks and wells vested in it,
- (iii) public vaccination and rural sanitary works; and measures necessary for public health;
- (iv) maintenance of ferries and *ghats*; and
- (v) the planting and preservation of trees by the side or in the vicinity of roads vesting in the Board.

The Government by an amendment of the Bihar and Orissa Local Self-Government Act has created the District Education Fund in charge of a District Superintendent of Education since May, 1954, and payment of teachers from primary to middle schools are now made by the District Superintendent of Education. Apart from this some powers which so far vested either in the District Board and Local Boards have been vested in the District Superintendent of Education. No teacher could be appointed without the consent of the District Superintendent of Education. As an ancillary to this measure the powers delegated to the Local Boards in respect of education have been cancelled from September, 1954. In matters of transfer of the teachers, however, the Chairman enjoyed the previous privilege but in this also the consent of the District Superintendent of Education was essential.

Finance.

The receipt of the District Board under different heads during the decennial periods beginning from 1887-88 was as follows:—

Heads.	1887-88.	1897-98.	1907-08.	1917-18.	1927-28.	1937-38.	1947-48	1953-54.	1954-55.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
Closing balance of last year	1,92,524	5,110	1,94,762	53,249	46,286	8,224	9,48,107	14,37,303	15,10,252
LAND REVENUE.									
Local Rates (Road) ..	*1,51,236	1,63,333	1,73,678	3,50,800	4,34,571	4,27,958	4,90,064	7,34,103	6,09,268
Interest ..	..	7,670	3,938	2,951	8,010	6,996	7,002	13,510	11,204
Law and Justice ..	..	..	..	8,262	18,666	8,183	2,945	666	1,824
Police ..	4,645	7,265	6,272	8,397	8,817	6,517	108	96	47
Education ..	1,288	1,169	1,587	73,054	2,21,602	2,54,731	3,29,199	11,32,379	6,324
Medical ..	..	493	12,221	14,738	22,403	35,246	1,97,410	1,95,675	2,01,147
Scientific and other minor departments.	..	1,564	835	1,412	2,297	5,388	358	21,299	21,253
Receipts in aid of superannuation.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Stationery and Printing ..	..	..	..	392	557	594	1,038	718	1,595
Miscellaneous ..	1,598	15,586	8,497	584	1,093	3,409	3,53,787	5,46,293	2,00,589
Civil Works ..	..	41,613	58,836	22,865	36,878	97,013	1,03,539	2,76,652	3,35,877
Contribution ..	..	9,112	18,170	..	..	..	..	..	..
TOTAL INCOME ..	1,58,767	2,47,805	2,84,034	4,83,455	7,54,894	8,46,062	14,85,450	29,21,391	13,97,928
TOTAL INCOME —Including opening (closing of last year) balance.	3,99,124	3,23,770	5,11,634	5,55,538	12,33,698	9,78,750	25,01,608	44,45,701	30,75,530
	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.	Rs. a. p.
Incidence of taxation per head of population.	..	0 1 1	0 1 2	0 2 6	0 3 6	0 2 10	0 2 10	0 3 10	0 3 2
Incidence of income per head of population (excluding balance).	..	0 2 1	0 1 11	0 3 7	0 5 3	0 5 7	0 8 2	0 15 9	0 8 2

*Balance of the District Road Fund under the Cess Act, 1880.

The main source of income of the District Board is a cess derived from the land revenue which is utilised for the construction and maintenance of roads. This cess is known as the road cess. It will appear from the above table that in 1887-88 the road cess was Rs. 1,51,236 as against Rs. 6,09,268 in 1954-55. At first the road cess was levied at the rate of 6 pies in a rupee but now the rate has been raised to 2 annas in a rupee under the Cess Act. Government grants under different heads, particularly Education, Medical, Miscellaneous and Civil Works have gone on increasing. The increase in the receipts under Education is attributable to the increased Government grants owing to the enhanced salary to teachers, grants for provident fund and contingencies.

The expenditure incurred by the District Board under these heads since 1887-88 decadewise is as follows :—

Years.	Education.	Medical and Health.	Roads.	Total.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1887-88	19,335	23	1,41,176	1,60,534
1897-98	23,168	8,671	35,408	67,247
1907-1908	40,238	14,766	2,12,328	2,67,332
1917-18	92,429	57,945	1,15,954	2,66,328
1927-28	2,97,061	1,28,494	2,15,668	6,41,223
1937-38	3,10,370	1,50,467	2,11,367	6,72,204
1947-48	6,41,227	2,54,340	4,03,675	12,99,242
1953-54	15,65,736	4,40,742	4,91,589	24,98,067
1954-55	6,88,294	4,85,842	7,16,529	18,90,665

The above statistics will show a progressive expansion of education and that is why the expenditure of Rs. 19,335 incurred in 1887-88 reached the figure of Rs. 15,65,736 in 1953-54. From 1954-55 with the creation of the Educational Fund under the District Superintendent of Education the Board ceased to have any control over educational purse.

It is of interest to note that Saran District Board was the pioneer in the State to introduce free primary education throughout the district in 1924-25. This pioneer work had coincided with the taking over of the charge of the Board of the first non-official Chairman. Under the devolution scheme sponsored by the Government, however, the maintenance and management of the primary schools was transferred to the three Local Boards of the district. Under the provisions of the Local Self-Government Act in 1924-25 specific allotments required for such transfer of educational institutions were made over to the respective Local Boards. The working of the District Board has not always been satisfactory as the supersession of the Board in 1947 shows. In the Annual Administration Report on

the working of the District Boards in Bihar and Orissa for 1924-25 the following observations were made :—

“The difficulties into which some of the Tirhut Boards (Saran, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga) have become involved owing to irresponsible action of their Local Boards recurring educational expenditure in excess of their income have already been touched upon. It is reported that drastic retrenchments in the direction of closing down schools either have been or are being affected in these districts and Government are aware of the difficulties which non-official Chairmen must experience in supervising and controlling their Local Boards but the fact remains that the exercise of such control is a statutory obligation imposed on the District Board in respect of its agents, Local Boards and that had due care been taken the present serious position from opening new schools and dispensaries owing to a timely realisation of their inability to maintain them. Saran in particular offered to refund the balance of Government grants for new buildings for this reason and has subsequently done so.”

These remarks in 1924-25 were, however, belied later by the progress in primary education.

The expenditure figure for the decade ending 1927-28 was Rs. 1,28,494 as against Rs. 57,945 in 1917-18. Since then the expenditure figures have shown a regular upward trend. The major portion of the expenditure under Medical and Public Health items was borne by Government.

It is only natural that District Board should be spending much more money now than before for the maintenance of roads. In 1954-55 the total mileage of roads under District Board was 144.50 metalled, 870.17 unmetalled and 1,956.12 village roads. Most of the major roads of the district have been provincialised. It may be mentioned here that the Public Works Department in North Bihar came to take up the roads only since 1948. The Public Works Department had functioned for buildings only before that year. The other sources of income of the District Board are pounds, *ghats* and Dak Bungalows. There are 88 pounds and 12 *ghats* in the district. The receipts from the pounds are negligible. The *ghats* are important for keeping up the communication of the district at a fair level. There are 3 Dak Bungalows and 16 Inspection Bungalows. Owing to the improvement in the means of communication and quicker transport most of the old *Dharamshalas*, Dak Bungalows and Inspection Bungalows have considerably reduced. The Dak Bungalows and Inspection Bungalows do not offer proper amenities for a tourist who expects a proper fooding arrangement.

The receipts and expenditure of the District Board incurred during 1955-56 and 1956-57 are given below. Since the District Board had vested in the State in 1958 the figures will be of interest :—

Income Schedule.

	1955-56.	1956-57.
	Rs.	Rs.
(1) Provincial rate	3,83,240	5,82,040
(2) Interest	10,051	..
(3) Law and justice	474	682
(4) Police	139	199
(5) Education .. .. .	..	..
(6) Medical	2,08,605	1,92,473
(7) Scientific and other minor departments.	21,407	21,298
(8) Stationery and Printing	2,226	512
(9) Miscellaneous	2,01,454	1,10,704
(10) Civil Works	1,40,058	4,27,563
(11) Total income	9,67,645	13,35,471
(12) Debts, deposits and advances	86,004	94,421
(13) Total Receipts	10,53,658	10,29,892
(14) Opening Balance	5,21,960	1,59,642

Expenditure Schedule.

	1955-56.	1956-57.
	Rs.	Rs.
(1) Land revenue	13,094	6,398
(2) General Administration	91,058	95,751
(3) Police	21	..
(4) Education	107	597
(5) Public Health	2,30,121	2,04,285
(6) Medical	2,04,420	1,88,381
(7) Scientific and other minor departments.	76,104	64,007
(8) Superannuation allowances and pensions.	25,136	26,891
(9) Stationery and Printing	8,416	12,273
(10) Miscellaneous	19,406	12,331
(11) Famine relief .. .. .	..	..
(12) Civil Works	6,31,945	4,70,981
(13) Total Expenditure	12,90,834	10,81,895
(14) Debts, deposits and advances	1,25,142	1,03,370
(15) Total charges	14,15,976	11,85,265
(16) Closing balance	1,59,642	4,04,269
(17) Grand Total	15,75,618	15,89,534

Local Boards.—There are three Local Boards constituted for the three subdivisions of the district, that is, Chapra, Siwan and Gopalganj. Formerly, all the members of the Local Board were nominated by the Government and the Subdivisional Officer used to act as the *ex-officio* Chairman. Nowadays the majority of the members are elected. The Sadar Local Board was constituted in 1887 under the Local Self-Government Act, 1885. But in 1902 the Sadar Local Board was abolished and was re-established in 1917-18. The Board consists of 14 members of whom 11 are elected and 3 nominated. The Siwan and Gopalganj Local Boards were constituted in 1895 and 1897, respectively. The strength of the members of the Siwan Local Board is 13, of whom 10 are elected and 3 nominated. The Gopalganj Local Board consists of 12 members, of whom 9 are elected and 3 nominated. The District Board annually allot a lump sum for the expenditure of the Local Boards. The powers of the Local Boards have much reduced since the creation of the District Education Fund under the District Superintendent of Education.

UNION BOARDS.

There were 13 Union Boards constituted under the Bihar and Orissa Village Administration Act, 1922, viz., Dighwara, Sonapur, Chetan Parsa, Naini, Manjhi, Mashrakh and Ekma in Sadar, Maharajganj, Khujua, Guthni and Mairwa in Siwan, Mirganj and Manjha in Gopalganj subdivision. But all the Union Boards have been replaced by Gram Panchayat.

NOTIFIED AREA COMMITTEE, GOPALGANJ.

Gopalganj, the headquarters of a subdivision bearing the same name had a Union Board which was constituted in 1925. With the growing township the Union Board was found to be incapable of coping with the problems and by notification no. 10128-L.S.-G., dated the 10th November 1955, the Union Board was converted into a Notified Area Committee. The Committee has 16 members all nominated including the Subdivisional Officer, Gopalganj, as the *ex-officio* Chairman. He is assisted by a Vice-Chairman.

The Notified Area Committee is constituted of the former villages Gopalganj, Jangalia, Khajuria, Hajiapur, Kaithowalia, Sarya Husni and Harkhua. These villages are intermingled with each other and are treated as mahallas of the town. The area of the Notified Area Committee is 3.62 square miles with a population of 14,213. The population comprises of mixed agriculturists, traders, servicemen, businessmen and labourers. The total length of roads is 20 miles out of which 7 miles are stone metalled. The town gets electricity from Mirganj power-house and the total number of lights on roads is 65 in 1958.

The Notified Area Committee is vested with powers and duties under the Bihar and Orissa Municipal Act, 1922. The Committee, however, is not exercising all the powers and duties under the Act.

The main sources of income are at present holding taxes and registration of vehicles. The figures of receipt and expenditure from 1955 to 1958 are as below :—

Year.	Receipt.	Expenditure.
	Rs.	Rs.
1955-56	5,000	8,423
1956-57	17,424	10,376
1957-58	31,291	23,060

In all these three years the State Government have advanced a sum of Rs. 5,000 as loan to the Committee.

GRAM PANCHAYAT.

The Bihar Gram Panchayat Raj Act, 1947, was passed in 1947. The Act was put into operation in Saran district from 1949. The Gram Panchayat is entrusted with multifarious powers and functions. It undertakes planning and construction of roads, wells and works necessary for the villages. The Panchayat is to organise a voluntary force to check crime and to give protection. The Panchayat is vested with judicial powers but the Panchayat is enjoined to try to bring about a compromise first and only if it fails in bringing about a compromise to decide a case.

Generally a Panchayat is formed in an area which has a total population of 2,000 persons. Normally a number of villages falling within a radius of two miles are grouped together under one Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat is headed by a *Mukhiya* who is assisted by an executive committee consisting of 13 to 15 members elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The executive committee controls the annual budget and acts as a check on the *Mukhiya*. The *Mukhiya's* post has become coveted one in the village economy and it seldom goes uncontested.

There is a panel of 15 *Panches* or members which has a head known as the *Sarpanch*. The chief job of the *Sarpanch* is to preside over the Gram Cutchery meetings and to try cases with the help of two *Panches* who are selected by the contesting parties.

The expansion of the Gram Panchayats has been rapid. In 1949-50 there were 20 Panchayats as against 47 in 1950-51 and 113 in 1951-52. In 1956-57 the number of Panchayats went to 429. There are also non-official Panchayats which expect to gain recognition after a certain period. In 1956-57 there were 150 non-official Panchayats. A total population of 21 lakhs or about 67 per cent of the total population was covered by the Panchayats, official and non-official, in 1956-57.

The District Panchayat Officer is the administrative head of this institution and has to work under the superintendence, direction and control of the District Magistrate. Supervision work is done by the

Supervisor, whose total strength in the district in 1957 was 12. Besides them, in every Block there is a Co-operative Supervisor who also looks after the Gram Panchayat within his block area. The number of Blocks in 1956-57 was 15 in the district. There are four Instructors, one in each three subdivisions of the district and other one is the Head Instructor who is placed at the district headquarters. Their main function is to organise night patrolling and impart training to village voluntary force or the chief officers. They also function as the police in the rural areas. Their number in 1956-57 was 358.

At the lowest level are the *Gram Sewaks*, who are paid Government servants. In 1956-57 the number of *Gram Sewaks* was 414. They assist the *Mukhiyas* in maintaining registers and statistics and also function as a bench clerk of the *Sarpanch*.

The total number of Gram Panchayat courts was 393 in 1957-58 in the district. These courts are known as Gram Kutcheries. Besides them there are 3 Panchayat courts established under the Village Administration Act. The Panchayat courts try civil cases of the value not exceeding 100 rupees and in special cases up to Rs. 200 if concerned with movable properties. They also try petty criminal cases. In civil cases these courts are under the administrative jurisdiction of the respective Munsif and in criminal cases of the Subdivisional Officer.

Financial Resources.

The Gram Panchayats are invested with powers to raise taxes, e.g., property tax, professional tax, that is, tax on any business conducted within the area. There is compulsory labour tax payable by all able-bodied males between the age of 18 to 50 years. The minimum tax payable by every tax-payer is 12 units or 48 hours of manual labour per annum. Cash payment in lieu of labour tax is permissible, in case of invalids or those who are incapable for manual labour. The proceeds of the tax are mainly utilised in development works. The Government had entrusted rent collection work to 13 Gram Panchayats in 1954-55 and to 99 in 1956-57.

The following statement shows the expenditure of Gram Panchayats for the years 1956-57 and 1957-58 :—

Heads of expenditure.	1956-57.		1957-58.	
	Rs.	a. p.	Rs.	nP.
(1) Pay of establishment ..	2,04,806	1 0	2,42,049	01
(2) Cost of living allowance ..	6,699	1 0	8,862	63
(3) Travelling allowance ..	9,874	8 0	13,952	40
(4) Contingencies ..	2,844	0 0	3,040	00
(5) Grant-in-aid ..	2,000	0 0	..	..
Total ..	2,26,223	10 0	2,67,904	04

The expenditures are met by the allotment made by the Government for the Gram Panchayats.

As to the constructive work by the Panchayats it is claimed that in the course of five years, that is, from 1952-53 to 1956-57 they have sunk 1,012 wells and have repaired and disinfected a large number of them. Vaccination of persons and inoculation of cattle, sinking of soakage pits, bore-hole latrines and trench latrines have also engaged their attention. The Gram Panchayats are running 457 libraries and have constructed 157½ miles of village roads. They repaired 477½ miles of old roads. For all these construction works the Panchayats had raised Rs. 32,072 as property tax and Rs. 3,71,763 as labour tax.

In 1955-56 seven Gram Panchayats were engaged in the construction of the Mahi Embankment which has a total length of 18 miles. By 1956-57 the Gram Panchayats had disposed of 5,158 criminal cases and 4,001 civil suits.