

## CHAPTER XVI.

### OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES.

#### LABOUR WELFARE.

The labourers may be divided into two sections, agricultural and non-agricultural. The condition of the agricultural labourers has been indicated in some of the other Chapters. It has been mentioned that there is no statutory rule to enforce their rights and obligations. The Agricultural Minimum Wages Act has not yet been enforced in the district. The agricultural labourers are mobile and could sell themselves at the highest market whether within or without their own villages. A non-agricultural labourer may be described as a factory hand when working in the sugar factory and he may occasionally hire himself as an agricultural labourer. It is difficult to come to any precise estimate of the number of non-agricultural labourers. The matter of the welfare of industrial labour has been covered in the Chapter on Industries.

#### PROHIBITION.

Prohibition has not yet been enforced in the district. It has been mentioned elsewhere that as an experimental measure in some parts of the district prohibition had been enforced during the first Congress Ministry. The experiment was not successful. But the State Government have gradually been increasing the price of the intoxicants to lessen the number of the consumers. From 1st April 1959 sale of opium for oral consumption has been prohibited. Opium will now be available only on medical certificates.

#### ADVANCEMENT OF BACKWARD CLASSES AND TRIBES.

Twenty-two castes or groups of Saran district were notified as Scheduled Castes under the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950. Similarly 28 castes or groups of Scheduled Tribes were notified as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. Thirty-eight castes or groups of Saran district were notified as Backward Classes. These castes or groups under the three categories are found all over the district. According to the Census Table of 1951 the Scheduled Tribes were enumerated only in urban area. A large number of Scheduled Tribes found in the rural areas was left out. Their number according to 1951 census was as follows :—

	Male.	Female.
(1) Scheduled Castes .. ..	1,54,206	1,77,817
(2) Scheduled Tribes .. ..	221	231
(3) Backward Classes .. ..	1,72,683	1,74,948
<b>Total ..</b>	<b>3,27,110</b>	<b>3,52,996</b>

The total population of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes was 6,80,106 according to 1951 census. This comes roughly to 22 per cent of the total population. There is no doubt that this 22 per cent of the total population of Saran district is extremely backward from social and economic point of view.

The responsibility of social backwardness mainly lies with the caste-men who have placed a certain amount of taboo and untouchability on most of these classes. They had been relegated to the "untouchable class" in spite of the fact that they fill a very important role in the economy of the district. There is, unfortunately, a certain amount of taboo among the different classes of the Harijans as well. Inter-dining and inter-marriage among the Harijans (a name given to these classes by Mahatma M. K. Gandhi) themselves had persisted. A co-ordinated attempt to remove the disability and the backwardness of the Harijans is being made in very recent times. When Mahatma Gandhi visited the neighbouring district of Champaran in 1917 in connection with the oppression of the indigo *railyats* he felt that the social backwardness of a vast population could only act as an impediment on the progress of the society as a whole. Mahatma Gandhi started a number of schools in the interior of Champaran district where teachers and the students had to be their own scavengers. This example of Gandhiji had created a certain amount of stir in the neighbouring district of Saran. The *Kabirpanthis* and some of the members of the *Arya Samaj* had early felt the necessity of working among the Harijans and to help them in getting over their backwardness. Once converted into Christianity there was no division. A comprehensive Harijan movement started by Gandhiji in the later years of the Non-Co-operation Movement had some effect in this district. Many of the local Congressmen gave up untouchability as a creed and this helped the move to a very great extent. Spread of education and democratic ideas, reservation of seats in the legislature and special provisions for education have upgraded the economic standard of the Harijans to some extent. But there is much that has to be done yet.

After the attainment of Independence the State Government acted to the popular wishes when a District Harijan Welfare Officer was appointed in 1948 with his headquarters at Chapra under the administrative control of the District Magistrate. The District Harijan Welfare Officer has mainly to see that the money sanctioned by the Government was properly utilised in the welfare of the Harijans. The Bihar Harijans (Removal of Social Disabilities) Act, 1949, has been enforced in the district from 1951. The Harijan Temple Entry Act, 1955, is another attempt to remove the social disabilities of the Harijans by taking statutory steps. Untouchability is now a crime since the passing of the Untouchability (Offence) Act, 1955. The Bihar Privileged Persons Homestead Tenancy Act has been passed and no person could be evicted from his homestead. The State Government have also issued a circular that new Khasmahal

*chaur* lands wherever they are available should be settled with the Harijans.

But mere statutory obligations have seldom raised a community that is socially backward. There must be voluntary workers and efforts from the Harijans themselves to change the outlook. A number of non-officials had devoted themselves to this work. Thakkar Bappa's scheme of social amelioration of such classes was sought to be implemented in this district. Dr. Shib Das Sur has been working in a voluntary social service centre at Chirand. A branch of the Harijan Sewak Sangh has been opened at Chapra and works in close co-operation with the District Harijan Welfare Officer. The District Harijan Sewak Sangh has been functioning for the last eighteen years with the object of looking after the educational and economic condition of the Harijans. Bharat Sevak Samaj has a branch and workers in this district. But only a fringe of the problem has been touched.

The Government have undertaken a ten-year scheme beginning from 1953 for the housing of the destitute Harijans who have no lands and also for those who have lands but no means to construct houses. So far (1958) only eight houses have been built for the Harijans in different parts of the district. Not much work has yet been done for implementing housing for the landless and the homeless Harijans.

Monetary assistance is given to the poor agriculturists of these classes. The skilled persons are given loans to develop their cottage industries. A number of wells have been sunk in the Harijan villages where there were no facilities for drinking water.

State help is being given to the boys and girls of these classes for receiving education. Monthly stipends, book-grants and occasional grants for general purposes are given to them. Hostels are being opened for such students and they are also given hostel grants for stay elsewhere.

There are six Harijan *Kalyan* hostels running in this district owing to the efforts of the Welfare Department. They are situated one at Chapra, two at Siwan, one at Gopalganj, one at Hussainganj and one at Bhere.

There are special schools for the Harijans. There are twenty-six Harijan Lower Primary Schools in the district run with the aid of the Welfare Department. There are more than one thousand boys and girls reading in these institutions. Non-Harijan children are also admitted as students. There is one Junior Basic Residential School at Hathua managed by this department.

#### STATE SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND AIRMEN'S BOARD.

Saran district has always contributed a large number of men to the police and the army. During the Great War of 1914-1918,

Saran contributed a large number of Combatant and non-Combatant soldiers in Mule, Labour Corps and Infantries, known as Russell's Infantries. The total strength was estimated to be near about 5,050. Many of the Combatants had served in France, Flanders, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Egypt. The War ended in 1918 and the Combatants and Non-Combatants were demobilised between 1919 and 1921.

Later questions arose as to the care of the families of those who were dead or incapacitated. Their maintenance was a problem. Pensions were granted according to Army Orders but they were not sufficient for all requirements.

The ex-Commissioned and non-Commissioned Officers under the guidance of Sardar Bahadur Subedar Sheo Balak Singh, formed an association in 1922 to look into the interest of their demobilised fellowmen. Sardar Bahadur Subedar Sheobalak Singh, became its President and Rasaldar S. K. Prem Singh its Secretary with other 21 ex-servicemen as members. The association held its meeting at intervals and expenses of running the association were met entirely from subscription raised among the members. Sir Henry Wheeler, Governor, became its patron and granted an assistance of Rs. 500 towards its upkeep. On 7th July 1924 the association under instruction from Government came to have the name of the District Soldiers' Board, Saran, with the District Officer of Saran, as its first *ex-officio* President. The association besides watching and furthering the interest of their own class, helped the Government when Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience Movement were launched.

In 1933 the Indian Soldiers' Board began to meet its establishment charge by getting a recurring grant of Rs. 300 yearly. In 1942 the Indian Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Board increased the grant to Rs. 700 and in the middle of 1943 the I. S. S. A. Board and Provincial Sailors', Soldiers and Airmen's Board took over the control of the District Soldiers' Board and began to meet its full establishment charges. In 1943, due to heavy recruitment in all the three wings, the Soldiers' Board of Saran was named District Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Board and became an unit of the I. S. S. A. Board and P. S. S. A. Board.

The Board is now located in its own building which provides accommodation to its office and a rest house for the ex-soldiers. The Rest House was built through the contribution of the general public in memory of those who fell in 1939-1945 and in Kashmir campaign.

The Board endeavours to promote and maintain a feeling of good-will between the civilian and military classes and to represent to the civil authorities in all matters of importance to the ex-military families. Information regarding educational concessions and employment facilities for ex-military personnel and their children are circulated. Legal advice is procured in case of necessity and

generally the interests of the family members of the demobilised soldiers are looked into. The Board will also be useful for recruitment. For a district like Saran which has a large number of families contributing men to the military personnel in the last 150 years, a Board of this type has its special value.

#### *Recruitments.*

The people of Saran district form one of the fighting sections of Hindustan. They have in former times furnished a rich field of recruitment to the Indian Army and rendered valuable service to Government on several occasions. The recruitment in 1914—1918 was 3,000 Combatants and 2,050 non-Combatants. In 1939—1945, the number of recruits was 13,169 in different corps. The percentage of recruits in all the corps were as follows :—

	Per cent.
Army Medical Corps .. .. .	19.5
Army Supply Corps .. .. .	34.5
• Electrical Mechanical Engineering Corps ..	4.5
Infantries and General Services Corps ..	11.5
Labours and General Services Corps ..	23
• Signal Corps .. .. .	3.5
Army Ordinance Corps .. .. .	3.5

Now even in peace time the recruitment is 10 to 11 persons per month, 90 per cent goes to the Infantries while 10 per cent to the Signals and other Corps. This district gave the second largest recruits in the Kashmir Campaign in 1951 amongst all the other districts of the State of Bihar.

#### *Resettlement after Demobilisation.*

Eighteen per cent has gone to agriculture, 70 per cent absorbed in services (in Government and private firms), 5 per cent in their own business and 7 per cent are pensioners. The number of pensioners are 1,095 (gents 865, ladies 128, male children 55 and female children 47).

#### CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS.

The public trusts and endowments made by the Hindus in Saran district are governed along with similar trusts and endowments in other districts by the Bihar Hindu Religious Trust Act I of 1950. The State Government have appointed a Special Officer with its headquarters at Patna to administer the Act.

The Act imposes a duty on the trustees of a public trust to which the Act has been applied to make an application for the registration of the trust with specific particulars. The trustee should mention in the application the approximate value of movable and immovable property belonging to the trust, the average annual income and the expenditure. No registration is, however, essential for trusts

owned privately. From the registered trusts the Board realises a fee at the rate of 5 per cent on the income of the trust property.

Some of the more important trusts in Saran district are as follows :—

*Ratnapura Math.*—This *math* is situated at Ratnapura mahalla of Chapra town. The famous temple of Dharamnathji and a Sanskrit College are maintained by the trust. The trust has about 250 *bighas* of land and a good income from the offerings at the temple.

*Mansar Kumna Math.*—This *math* is situated near Kuposamhauta Railway Station. This trust maintains a high school, *Dharamsalas* at Varanasi (Benaras) and Prayag (Allahabad). The *math* has about 3,600 *bighas* of land.

*Dhanauti Saheji Math.*—This *math* is considered to be the *Guru gaddi* seat of preceptor of the *Kabirpanthis*, followers of the creed propounded by Kabir, a saint. The trust has a property of about 1,100 *bighas* of land.

*Sawari Math.*—This is situated near Kuposamhauta and maintains a high school. It has about 200 *bighas* of land.

*Bhakhband Math.*—It is situated near Maharajganj. It maintains an upper primary school. The landed property of the *math* is about 400 *bighas* of land.

*Patehri Trust.*—Patehri trust lands are in Maharajganj police-station. A high school, a middle school and a dispensary are maintained from the proceeds of the trust.