

## CHAPTER XVII.

### PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATIONS.

#### GENERAL ELECTION, 1952.

After the attainment of independence the First General Election was held in 1952. This election was a unique feature in the history of the representation of the district. It was for the first time that the election was held on the basis of adult franchise. It was a new experiment in the country. Though we have no record as to what percentage of population received the franchise in Saran by the Act of 1935 but it was certain that franchise in the district was not more than 10 per cent which is the All-India figure.\* The other unique feature of the election of 1952 was that it provided equal opportunity for women and the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes.

\* In the General Election of 1952, 15,59,567 persons or about 50 per cent of the population of Saran district were eligible for exercising their right of franchise. There were 25 constituencies for the Bihar *Vidhan Sabha* and 4 for the *Lok Sabha*. The *Lok Sabha* constituencies were the (1) Saran North, (2) Saran Central, (3) Saran East, and (4) Saran South. For the purpose of the *Lok Sabha* a few constituencies of Gopalganj subdivision were joined in the Saran-cum-Champaran Constituency. There were 25 constituencies for the Member of the Legislative Assembly out of which 3 were double-member constituencies, thus forming a total of 28 seats in the district. They were as follows :—

Subdivision.	Name of the constituency.	Total number of electorates.
Sadar	Ekma	54,151
	Manjhi	52,559
	Masrakh North	45,750
	Masrakh South	38,983
	Marhaura	63,142
	Baniapur	60,307
	Chapra Town	51,945
	Chapra Mofussil-cum-Garkha (double-member constituency).	98,082
	Parsa	41,448
	Dighwara	44,267
Sonepur	40,475	

\* *An Advanced History of India* by R. C. Mazumdar, H. C. Roy Chaudhury and K. K. Dutta, page 925.

Subdivision.	Name of the constituency.	Total number of electorates.
Siwan	Siwan (double-member constituency).	1,31,633
	Barharia .. .. .	49,799
	Mairwa .. .. .	65,129
	Darauli .. .. .	72,707
	Raghunathpur .. .. .	62,785
	Maharajganj .. .. .	51,173
	Basantpur West .. .. .	52,258
	Basantpur East .. .. .	46,816
Gopalganj	Kuchaikot .. .. .	50,827
	Gopalganj .. .. .	59,941
	Barauli .. .. .	68,589
	Baikunthpur .. .. .	47,602
	Kateya-cum-Bhorey (double-member constituency).	1,16,545
	Mirganj .. .. .	72,704

The political parties which contested the General Election of 1952 were the (1) Indian National Congress, (2) Socialist Party, (3) Kisan Mazdur Praja Party, (4) Jan Sangh, and (5) Communist Party.

So far as the Parliamentary Constituencies are concerned there was a triangular fight among the three major political parties, viz., the Indian National Congress, the Socialist and the Kisan Mazdur Praja Party. The Socialist Party contested all the four Parliamentary seats while the Kisan Mazdur Praja Party only two seats. The Independents contested the three Parliamentary seats. Out of the total of 13,12,658 votes only 4,55,580 were polled in all the four constituencies of the district. Out of it the Indian National Congress secured 2,54,818 or about 55 per cent of the total votes polled, Socialist Party 1,03,756 or 22 per cent, Kisan Mazdur Praja Party 41,067 and the Independents 55,939. On the whole the Indian National Congress fared better in the Parliamentary election of the district as it polled 2,54,818 as against 2,00,762 of the combined votes of the Socialist Party, Kisan Mazdur Praja Party and the Independents.

For the 28 Assembly seats there were 133 candidates out of which 28 were the nominees of the Indian National Congress, 27 of the Socialist Party, 17 of the Kisan Mazdur Praja Party, 6 of the Jan Sangh, 2 of the Communist Party, 3 of the Ram Rajya Parishad, 1 of the Revolutionary Socialist Party and 49 were Independents. As stated above the total strength of the electorates in Saran was 15,39,567 out of which 6,20,966 or about 40 per cent votes were cast. Out of the 28 seats, 27 were bagged by the Indian National Congress and only 1 by the Kisan Mazdur Praja Party.

The total votes polled by each party are as follows :—

Name of the Party.	Total votes polled.
Indian National Congress .. ..	3,14,352
Socialist Party .. ..	1,25,632
Kisan Mazdur Praja Party .. ..	43,131
Communist Party .. ..	5,573
Ram Rajya Parishad .. ..	4,860
Jan Sangh .. ..	4,861
Independents .. ..	1,20,894
Revolutionary Socialist Party .. ..	1,663
Total .. ..	6,20,966

Thus the Indian National Congress secured 3,14,352 votes as against 3,06,614 by the other parties opposed to the Congress taken together. From the figures it is apparent that the communal parties like Jan Sangh and the Ram Rajya Parishad and the Communist Party had practically no hold in Saran. In the post-election report it is mentioned that in strength and organisation the Congress Party had great hold in the district. Being the oldest and most popular as a single party in the country it had its workers in every thana and village. The other parties were new and had not as many workers and volunteers as the Congress Party. The Independents were in a better position than the other parties. Being local men of influence they were expected to win at many places but a high incidence of rivalry among themselves as is obvious from the huge number of contestants marred their prospects.

It is remarkable that in this election women took keen interest and in some cases they polled about 60 per cent of their votes. The cases of false personation and malpractices were very few.

#### GENERAL ELECTION, 1957.

The Second General Election was held in 1957 on the basis of the electoral rolls made in 1952 subject to modifications made therein in course of five years that elapsed since then. The total number of electors in 1957 in Saran was 16,19,891 as against 15,59,567 in 1952. The number of the Parliamentary seats remained 4 as was in 1952 but there had been decrease in the Assembly seats which came down to 26 as against 28 in 1952. In this election also some constituencies of Saran for Parliamentary purposes were combined with the Kesaria Parliamentary Constituency and for which the Returning Officer was the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division.

The name of the 4 Parliamentary Constituencies with total number of electors and the actual votes polled are given below :—

Name of the Constituencies.	Total Electors.	Total votes polled.
(1) Maharajganj .. ..	3,85,849	1,47,420
(2) Chapra .. ..	3,89,668	1,66,322
(3) Siwan .. ..	3,78,240	1,38,756
(4) Gopalganj .. ..	3,68,473	1,34,227
Total .. ..	15,22,230	5,86,725

There were 12 candidates for the 4 Parliamentary seats : (1) the Indian National Congress—4, (2) Praja Socialist Party—4, (3) Communist—1, (4) Jan Sangh—1 and (5) Independents—2. In this election the Praja Socialist Party captured one seat while three went to the Indian National Congress. The following will show the total votes secured by members of the different parties :—

Name of the parties.	Number of votes secured.
Congress .. ..	2,94,431
Praja Socialist .. ..	1,91,011
Communist .. ..	15,629
Jan Sangh .. ..	43,443
Independents .. ..	42,211

Thus the total votes polled by the Indian National Congress was greater than the opposite parties as the combined votes of the opposite parties were 2,92,294 as against 2,94,431 by the Congress.

For the 26 Assembly seats there were 91 candidates—26 nominees of the Indian National Congress, 20 of the Praja Socialist Party, 8 of the Janta Party, 4 of the Communist Party, 3 of the Jan Sangh, and 30 were Independents. The total votes for the Assembly was 16,19,891 out of which 7,14,286 were polled or about 44 per cent of the electors exercised their right of franchise. The total votes secured by the parties are as follows :—

Name of the parties.	Number of votes secured.
Congress .. ..	3,26,491
Praja Socialist .. ..	1,89,088
Socialist .. ..	727
Janata .. ..	49,440
Communist .. ..	19,256
Jan Sangh .. ..	9,948
Independents .. ..	1,19,336

From the above table it is apparent that as a single party the Indian National Congress fared much better than any other party in the district. But the combined votes of the opposite parties were 3,87,795 as against 3,26,491 secured by the Congress. This was partially due to the votes polled by the Independents\* who did not belong to any particular party.

Out of the 26 Assembly seats, 17 were bagged by the Indian National Congress, 6 by the Praja Socialist Party, 1 by the Janata Party and 2 were won by the Independents. As a party the Socialist Party practically disappeared from the scene as it contested only one seat which also it lost and secured only 727 votes. The Praja Socialist Party appears to have made a great headway in this election in comparison to the last General Election of 1952. It secured one Parliamentary seat and six Assembly seats whereas in 1952 it had secured only one seat in the Assembly. The Communist Party and the Jan Sangh did not make any appreciable mark. The newly-formed Janata Party captured one Assembly seat.

From the abovementioned figures it is clear that the people are slowly realising the value of party system in the democratic form of Government. They also indicate that a party machinery to fight the elections has a better advantage than Independents working on their own. The Independents, however, were able to capture votes more due to their local popularity and influence. Only two Independents were returned, one was a retired District and Sessions Judge and the other was a dissident Congressman. It is mentioned in the post-election report that the cases of personation and malpractices were appreciably small. The women had taken great interest in the election. It is significant that two ladies were successful in getting Assembly seats.

#### NEWSPAPERS.

No daily newspapers are published in the district. In Saran only six Hindi periodicals are published. They are (1) *Narad*, (2) *Adarsa Kisan*, (3) *Adhikar*, (4) *Sarswati Sandesha*, (5) *Prahari*, and (6) *Naya Bihar*. Excepting the last the other papers are published from Chapra.

*Narad*.—It is a weekly periodical and its circulation figure is about 2,000. The majority of the columns are covered by the sale notices of the Civil Court and certificate cases. Only a few pages are covered by local news.

*Adarsa Kisan*.—It is a weekly periodical. It is a sort of farmer's bulletin and deals with modern methods of cultivation. It has a circulation of about 1,600 copies.

*Adhikar*.—A weekly periodical which publishes only local news. Its circulation is about 1,200.

*Sarswati Sandesha*.—It is a literary weekly which publishes short stories and literary essays. It has a circulation of about 1,000 copies.

*Prahari*.—It is a weekly periodical publishing local news and has a circulation of about 300 copies.

*Naya Bihar*.—A fortnightly periodical published from Goreakothi dealing with news items of Bihar. It has a circulation of 3,300 copies.

Apart from the periodicals there is a Hindi monthly magazine called *Agradut* published from Chapra by the Regions Beyond Mission, Chapra. The other two local missions also co-ordinate. Its circulation is not large since it has been recently founded (April, 1959). It is a religious paper for the propagation of the gospel.

The daily papers which are published outside the district and are in common circulation are the *Indian Nation* and *Searchlight*, two English dailies of Patna. The circulation figures of the two dailies are near about 1,000 copies each. The other daily English newspapers in circulation are the *Statesman* (Calcutta), *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), *Leader* (Allahabad), *The Times of India* (Delhi) and the *Hindustan Standard* (Calcutta). Their circulation figures are said to be within 100 copies each. So far English magazines are concerned the *Careers and Courses* (Delhi), *Modern Review* (Calcutta) are popular among the students and the college common room. Their circulation figures will come about to 100 each. The *Blitz* (Bombay) has a circulation of about 100 copies.

Among the Hindi daily newspapers the *Aryavarta* of Patna, *Aj* of Benaras, *Pradip* of Patna, *Vishwamitra* of Patna have a circulation of near about 300 to 1,000 copies in Saran. Among the weekly Hindi periodicals the *Dharmayug* (Bombay) and the *Navashakti* of Patna have a circulation of about 300 to 500 copies. The other weekly Hindi periodicals are the *Hindustan* (Delhi) and the *Bhudanyagna*. Their circulation figures will come within 100 copies. Among the monthly Hindi magazines the *Sahitya Sandesha* (Agra) has a circulation of about 100 copies in the colleges, schools and among the students. The other Hindi monthly magazines are the *Navneet* (Bombay) and the *Gnanodaya* (Calcutta) with a circulation of about 50 copies.

Among the Urdu daily journals the *Seyasate-e-jadid* of Kanpur and the *Sadayam* of Patna have circulation of near about 500 to 600 copies. A Bengali daily journal the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta has a circulation of about 150 copies. The other Bengali daily paper is *Yugantar* with a circulation of less than 100 copies.

The habit of reading newspapers has not taken roots excepting among the educated urban population. Even if on the average it be taken that one paper is read by three persons the number of newspaper readers will not be very large. The newspapers in the libraries are read on the average by 50 to 100 persons every day.

## VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATIONS.

There are frequent references in the old English Correspondence Volumes kept in the District Archives, Chapra, of the munificence of Shri Banwari Lal Shah of Chapra and his two wives. From Foreign Political Consultations, October, 1869, nos. 178—183 in the National Archives, New Delhi, it appears that Shah Banwari Lal received the title of Rai Bahadur as an acknowledgment of his liberality and he was also conferred with a suitable *khillut*. It is mentioned in the Government papers "that the crowning act of this man's generosity was the construction of a *sarai*, and the Bengal Government now report that two of his wives have each offered to give Rs. 10,000 towards the construction of a house and gate in connection with the *sarai*".

The Collector of Saran requested that these ladies might be allowed to style themselves "*Syed-o-Zanan-o-Suttodia 'Khandan*" as a prefix to their names. The Bengal Government, however, recommended the title of "*Janwadoon-nissa-suttodia Khandan*". Although such titles were unusual for ladies the titles were considered suitable and appropriate. The Governor-General agreed that the titles and the *Khilluts* be conferred. The meaning of title was "the most liberal of the females and most praised of her family".

The present Rajendra College named after Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, is housed in the old *sarai* of Shah Banwari Lal. It is mentioned in the old records that the Sadar Hospital owes much to the munificence of Shah Banwari Lal. The next important medical institution in the district is the Victoria Hospital at Chapra, constructed by the Maharani of Hathua in memory of Queen Victoria. The Hathua Raj family also made liberal grant to the Patna General Hospital where there is a ward known as the Hathua Ward. The present high school and the college at Hathua owe much to the Hathua family. Describing the progress of education in Saran Mr. P. N. Gupta in his Revisional Settlement Operations Report for 1915—1921 had given lavish praise on the Hathua family when he had mentioned that no other zamindar in the district is known to have noticeably associated himself with the advancement of education. "The zamindars should take the lead in improving the education of the tenantry who are in many ways dependent on them. It is a matter for regret that they have done little or nothing to justify their position."

It would not be out of place to mention here that the value of the social institutions has been emphasised by religious creeds. The *Arya Samaj* is an institution which was founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati. The *Arya Samaj* Mandir was established in Siwan in 1898 and later its followers spread throughout the district. The activities of *Arya Samaj* are more concentrated at Siwan town than in the other parts of the district. In the field of education its activities range from the maintenance of schools from the stage of lower

primary to degree college. All their educational institutions have the prefix of D. A. V. (Dayananda Anglo Vedic). There is also a *Balvikash Bhawan* where teaching is imparted on the *gurukul* pattern. In such institutions much emphasis is laid on the physical and moral education of the children. At Gopalganj there are both D. A. V. High and Middle schools. The Chapra branch of the *Arya Samaj* maintains a D. A. V. Middle School and a *Kanyapathsala*. There is also a *gurukul* school which imparts education up to *sastrī* standard in Sanskrit and up to matriculation on the general line.

The Siwan branch of the (*Arya Samaj*) maintains a *Bidawa Sanrakshan Samiti* and a *Anath Sanrakshan Samiti* for the protection of the widows and the orphans. The *Samaj* makes arrangement for the marriage of the rescued widows or if possible they sent back to their homes. When such arrangement fails the rescued widows are sent to Patna or Muzaffarpur *mahila ashram* for receiving training in handicrafts to make them self-supporting. The orphans are generally sent to Danapur where there is an orphanage. At Siwan there is also a *Dalita Udhara Pathsala* for the welfare of the boys of the poorer class which is now maintained by the Siwan Municipality.

*Theosophical Society.*—The Theosophical Society was founded by Madame H. R. Blavatsky and Col. H. S. Olcott in the United States in 1875. They came to India in 1879 and in 1886 established their headquarters in Adyar, a suburb of Madras. The real success of the movement in India is, however, due to Mrs. Annie Besant, who joined the Society in 1889 and settled in India in 1893 at the age of forty-six.

The Theosophical Society from the very start allied itself to the Hindu revival movement. The Theosophical Society, with its many branches all over India, has proved an important factor in social and religious reform. It is not possible to give a detailed account of the activities and achievements of the Society as here we have to confine ourselves so far as the Chapra Theosophical Society is concerned.

The Chapra Lodge of the Theosophical Society is a branch of the Bihar Federation of the Theosophical Society with its headquarters at Patna. The Bihar Federation itself is a branch of the Theosophical Society with its headquarters at Varanasi. The International headquarters of the Theosophical Society is at Adyar (Madras).

The Chapra Lodge was established sometime during the first decade of the present century. The aim of the Society is to preach universal brotherhood and the comparative study of all the religions. For this purpose the Chapra branch of the Society holds public meetings and arranges for lectures on allied subjects. The lodge celebrates *jayanties* (anniversaries) of the founders of great religions such as Lord Mahabir's birthday, Buddha *jayanti* and the prophet's day, etc. The society maintains a Montessori school for the children through the assistance of public subscriptions.



*Seva Sadan.*—A *Seva Sadan* was started at Chapra in 1957 through the efforts of the Theosophical Society with public supports. The aim and object of the institution are to provide useful service to illegitimate and crippled persons by giving training in craft and cottage industries. The institution is in its formative stage and has not yet made much headway.

*Association for social and moral hygiene.*—An all-India Association for moral and social hygiene was formed in 1950 and in response to the humanitarian work its branches spread throughout the country. A branch of this association was also established at Chapra in 1956. The aims and objects of the association are to eradicate traffic in women and children and other allied evils allied to sex. To provide and manage institutions or homes for the rescued women and children and to make them self-supporting by useful training and to make a survey of the existing homes for women within the State and to study their conditions are other objects.

In view of the last object the Chapra branch of the association for moral and social hygiene made a survey of the fallen women (prostitutes) localised in the Bhagwan Bazar mahalla of the Chapra town. They made a door-to-door survey of the fallen women and suggested ways and means to eradicate the evils of prostitution. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the majority of the prostitutes wanted to discard their profession provided they have other source of livelihood. The rescued women are sent to Patna as the association has no rescue home.

#### *Social Welfare Project, Chirand.*

A Social Welfare Project was established in the village Chirand in 1956 for the welfare of the children and women. The welfare project is carried on in the contiguous 25 villages with a population of 25,000 in a radius of five miles. Apart from Chirand the other welfare centres are at Khalpura, Audhpura, Bhairapur and Mahraul and thus each centre is attached with five villages.

For the execution of the welfare project a *gram sevika*, *dai* and a craft mistress are appointed in each centre. Besides them a midwife has been appointed at Chirand to conduct labour cases and attend the expectant mother. These staff have itinerant duties for the execution of the welfare project. Much emphasis is given on sanitation, cleanliness of the children and on craftsmanship. It is a quasi-Government organisation headed by a non-official lady chairman.

*Kishore-dal.*—In the voluntary social service organisation the name of the *Kishore-dal* is also worth mentioning. The *Kishore-dal*, Chapra, was established in 1954 for the mental and physical development of the children between the age-group 4 to 14. As a part of their activities, Chapra *Kishore-dal* has started a Montessori school under the name of "*Sishu Bhawan*" since November, 1957. This school is becoming popular in the locality.

*Mairwa Kustasram.*—As mentioned before the *Mairwa Kustasram* was established in 1953. It is now a quasi-Government institution. In this asylum both curative and preventive measures are adopted.

*Yatimkhana.*—At Siwan there is an *yatimkhana* which is called *Yatimkhana-Islamia-Rizvi*. It is run by a managing committee, About 15 to 30 orphans and illegitimate children are kept in the *yatimkhana* where they get free lodging and fooding. A *Madrassa* is attached to the *yatimkhana* for the education of the orphan children. In 1958 the State Government made a grant of Rs. 400. It is mainly run by public subscriptions.

There is also a *yatimkhana* at Gopalganj which is attached with the *Madrassa Islamia*, Gopalganj. About 16 orphans are kept who receive free fooding and lodging. The expenditure on it is met by public subscriptions.

*Christian Missionaries.*—There are now three missions—Assemblies God Mission at Chapra, two Regions Beyond Missions, one at Dahiyama mohalla of the Chapra town and the other at Gopalganj. The Regions Beyond Mission at Gopalganj which is located at Tirbirwa mohalla of the Gopalganj town has earned good reputation in the locality. It has one homeopathic dispensary for the outdoor patients where about 40,000 patients are annually treated. It also maintains a leper clinic for outdoor treatment. The other two missions are only engaged in religious activities. The German Evangelical Lutheran Mission at Chapra and the Protestant Mission at Siwan have been closed.

*Bharat Sevak Samaj.*—The Saran branch of the *Bharat Sevak Samaj* was established in Chapra in 1953. It is an all-India organisation and as its name connotes was established to serve the people by doing development work. The *Bharat Sevak Samaj* of the Saran branch has 31 branches and the strength of its members enrolled to 1,069 up to February, 1959, out of which 93 were females. The *Samaj* has performed useful service in the flood-stricken areas in 1953-54. It formed a flood relief committee under the presidentship of Dr. Sayyed Mahmud and alleviated the sufferings of the people by relief. It distributed clothes and also rendered monetary help. Every member of the *Bharat Sevak Samaj* has to offer *shramdan*, i.e., manual labour. Due to *shramdan* it has repaired 25 miles of old roads, constructed 3 new wells, 3 schools and 2 miles of embankment. The *Samaj* has launched camp movement in Saran and thereby achieved a great success. Out of 21 camps there are 3 camps for women. Some foreign women also participated in the ladies camp of Hathua in 1956. The women are doing useful service in the society by sanitation drive. Sanitation drives are carried on twice in a year both in the urban and rural areas.

#### DEPRESSED CLASSES LEAGUE.

This organisation was established for the propagation of national ideas among the Harijans. During the Round Table Conference in

1932-33 this League was an independent organisation although it had affiliations with the Indian National Congress.

Sri Jagjiwan Ram, Railway Minister, Government of India, and a few others have recently organised the League throughout India. There is a very active branch in Saran district which is closely associated with social reforms among the Harijans. In 1936-37 Elections the League in collaboration with the Congress had secured 14 out of 15 seats. It is now essentially a body for bringing in social reforms and removal of untouchability.