

# *Wundt*

A  
Social  
Experiment

On the occasion of his birthday, November 1938 the Rajasaheb announced his intention to give a complete Responsible form of Government to the people of Aundh.

The History.

On January 21st 1939 a new Constitution implementing this intention was passed with enthusiasm by the then existing Legislative Assembly.

The Act passed on January 21st 1939 is not an isolated impulsive action, but the last chain in the logical development of the action taken by the Rajasaheb in 1923 when he started the first Legislative Assembly.

A clear elected majority in 1926, an elected president of the Assembly in 1928, an elected member of the Assembly taken as a member of the Darbar in 1935, complete separation of Judiciary and the Executive in 1934, were the prominent links in the chain of development of the first step taken in 1923.

Village democracy is the Basis of the New Constitution.

The New Constitution. Every village elects by the vote of all of its adults a Panchayat of five persons. One of these five is elected by the Panchayat unanimously as their President. If this unanimity is not possible then all the adults of the village elect the president out of the Panchayat.

Duly elected Presidents of a group of villages constitute the Taluka Panchayat. The Taluka Panchayat decides in its meetings the way in which it would spend the money that it receives. It receives as near as possible half the revenue that is collected in that Taluka. The villages prepare their budgets and present them through their Presidents to the Taluka Panchayat. These are discussed and a budget for the whole Taluka is prepared. The villages can spend the money they get as they think fit. As yet education and public-works, constitute the chief items of expenditure.

Taluka Panchayat. The Taluka Panchayat elects two out of its members for the central Assembly one of whom is the elected President of the Taluka Panchayat. From the Taluka one more member is elected by all adults to the Assembly. Thus each Taluka sends three members to the Assembly, two of whom are the presidents of the village Panchayats and therefore, members of the Taluka panchayat. A link is thus established between the village and the Assembly.

Assembly. The members of the Assembly know not only about the affairs of the central Government but they are intimately connected with the everyday work in the villages and they get acquainted with the work of other villages in their

Taluka at the meetings of the Taluka Panchayat. The member of the Legislative Assembly, in this way, is an active worker almost 12 hours of the day. It is not that he stands for election, gets elected on certain issues and does not worry about these till the next election. He has to face the villagers every day. The constitution gives the power of re-call to the villagers. 4/5 of the voters can ask for a re-election of the Panchayat.

It has been the practice during the last year to send drafts of Bills to the Panchayats for discussion. The idea is to let legislation grow out of the villagers themselves. After the draft is discussed, doubts and difficulties solved, the bill is presented to the Assembly. As the bill has been already discussed by the members in their capacity as the Presidents of the Panchayats the Assembly passes the bill with very few changes.

The Rajasaheb asks one of the elected members of the Assembly to form his ministry which is responsible to the Assembly.

The Panchayats dispense justice. The Villager need not spend money, go out of his village and spend days at the Taluka town to get a hearing. The Panchayat decides his case on the spot.

The peasant can get witnesses in the village. And in the cases that are difficult and involve intricate points of law, a sub-judge comes to the village and assists the Panchayat with the dispensation of justice. The sub-judge

not only gives expert advice to the Panchayat, but also acts as a guide to the peasant who many a time is completely ignorant of his legal rights and is therefore liable to be misguided by the vested interests - the Goondas.

Appeals are made to High Court. This is an independent body. Complete separation of the High Court. judiciary and the administrative departments has been effected during the last 6 years. The High Court Judge is irremovable during his term of office and good behaviour.

It is barely six months since this new System of dispensation of justice has been started. But already the results are most assuring. It is obvious that the real motive of cheap and speedy justice behind the scheme is being fulfilled. In the Panchayats of two Talukas alone 197 criminal and civil suits have been disposed off. There are but a few suits now pending. Out of the 197 decisions in only 20 cases appeals to the High Court were made.

It is interesting to see what the people have saved. In 3/4 of the Civil suits before the Panchayat the parties did not engage a pleader. In more than 1/2 of the criminal cases they did not think it necessary to have a pleader. The parties did not have to make a long journey to a distant town. The witnesses called in the village were not paid a pie. Both the parties saved their time.

Most of the cases were decided without any adjournment on the spot, and at one sitting.

It is really wonderful to see all the village turning out to hear a case being decided. It is everybody's experience that for a lecture it takes hours before we can get together a handful of people. But when a Panchayat is deciding a case and especially when the sub-judge is visiting the village all the people of the village gather with enthusiasm. The questions being settled, though in the most unofficial manner, are extremely vital to them. Nothing induces them to miss the occasion. And what a glorious opportunity for the people to understand and realise the principles of Justice!

Training for democracy.

And it is seen that they do make full use of this opportunity. It is rare that a man lies before the whole of the village. It is experienced that mostly he confesses the crime and the Panchayat then is very lenient in its punishment. The case that would have been fought for days, and with the help of witnesses bitterly, at a distant town is decided by the confession of the culprit and a minor fine. Small punishment means less stigma, less violence and less causes for the perpetuation of the feud.

Erradication of the root cause of the trouble is the object of this system. In 50 % of the cases there is a compromise; what opportunity for the sub-judge that tours from village to village for mass contact, and especially when every villager gathers around him! What a glorious occasion for training the people to be tolerant, to be truthful and to control their violent tempers !!

Not only does the Panchayat get adequate training in being impartial, detached and therefore just, but the whole

village gets a lesson in settling their disputes without bitterness. In almost every village there is a wise old man who is listened to because he is impartial; that is the spirit that every citizen must cultivate, and this new system helps him to do it.

Democracy is a means for the freedom of man. Freedom implies equality of opportunity to develop one's faculties and to enjoy the amenities that Social institutions afford for all. Every Politico-Economic organization that is democratic must keep this principle well in mind. We must realise that most of the so called democracies that we try to imitate have failed to fulfill this function. Democracy has come to mean the rule of a political or economic clique. That is why the Aunlh experiment insists on decentralising democracy; that is why he who does constructive work for 12 hours of the day for the village would have a place in the political structure. We have too many ambitious political careerists in this country—it is necessary that they indentify themselves completely with the villager, live with him, work with him. If that is not possible for him then let the villager himself speak.

It is necessary to tell about the difficulties that have been experienced during the last year.

In a number of villages where there were already existing factions a Panchayat representing one of the factions had a desire to pay off old scores. But persistent efforts have helped to a great extent to modify the intensity of the bitterness. Mostly the root causes of such factions, in some

cases an individual goonda, in others some wrong done by one of the leading men of the party, are righted and an atmosphere of peace reigns.

It is most difficult as yet for the Panchayat to be completely self-less. There have been occasions when they have not been able to be above their self-interests. But then, even educated people fight like dogs over bones of vested interests. The only way out is gradual but persistent attempt to raise the moral standard, awaken their conscience and make Truth and Non-violence the basis of the activities of the villagers. It is most reassuring to see the villager making a brave attempt at this. As he does make the attempt he is sure to succeed.

Certain amount of difficulties were created by those vested interests and those who had enjoyed power in the villages before Attempts were made and are being made to misrepresent facts to the villager. Until now the good intentions behind the experiment and the spirit of tolerance that pervades it have won. Let us hope that that would be the case in the future also.

Then there were those who made a terrific hullabaloo because as soon as Responsible Government was given milk and honey did not flow. One always forgets that it is easy to get Freedom but very difficult to live it. With the coming of freedom the real work begins. With freedom tolerance, truth and love also must come, or if they do not come, they must be assiduously cultivated. A democratic institution only makes it possible for every one to cultivate it and be civilized—democracy does not give it. If a Panchayat made a mistake or committed a crime there were cries of " Well,



we told you so ". But they always forget that a panch is an individual and therefore not above law. And that he is liable to be punished as an individual human being. Admittedly it is difficult to live the life of freedom, but that is the only way in which man can attend his moral stature. It is only the beginning, we have to go far; it will take at least five years to realise fully the implications of this step, *One has to grow in to freedom.* And the first year has been most reassuring.

In the field of economic organization during the first year it has not been possible to achieve much. Land taxes have been brought to the level existing in the adjoining British territory. A beginning has been made to organize buying societies, to purchase the villagers' produce at an average price advancing him 60% of the price and selling it for him when the prices rise. Thus the terrific loss incurred by the peasant in selling when prices are low and buying when they are high is mitigated. During the next year a chain of store houses and a complete organization for purchasing the produce is going to be organized. It is expected that it would be most beneficial to the peasant.

The probleme of land erosion is very serious in India. We want during the next year to start a fund to finance the villager to bund his land, to sink wells, to buy good breed of cattle etc. All this financing will be interest free. The peasant will pay the loan back in 25 or 30 instalments. These land improvement works will be supervised by a committee and expert engineering advice given. As far

as possible the unemployed labour of the village will be utilised.

In matters of education Aundh State has always been progressive. Since 1920 every village has a school. Last year when franchise was based on a literary test, nearly 35% of the adult population learnt to read and the direct consequences of this have been an increase in the demands for schools and the number of students has gone up. Twenty-four new schools have been started taking the total to 88 in 72 villages. The number of boys has increased by 1329 taking the total to 5689. In the higher standards manual training has been made compulsory and correlation on the Wardha Education lines is being attempted.

Physical education is compulsory. Boys do the Surya Namaskars every morning; Jamborrees of students in groups, of villages were organized, the peasants attending in thousands to see their boys perform.

Little has been done. Much remains to be done; it is an important work we are doing.

**WE WANT YOUR SYMPATHY & ADVICE.**

*Appa Pant,*

*Aundh.*

*Why not visit Aundh? You are very near to it*

From Poona the following trains on the M. S. M. meter gauge Poona Bangalore line will take you to Rahimatpur, the Station for Aundh.

*FROM POONA,*

*7-25 A. M.*

*12-40 P. M.*

*REACHING RAHIMATPUR.*

*12 P. M.*

*4-40 P. M.*

Buses run from Rahimatpur to Aundh.  
Please let us know when you are coming.