

of people who have exercised their votes even in the very limited franchise of the past few decades testifies to a basic lack of interest and suggests futility in trying here and now to introduce universal suffrage. Apart from the probability of its proving an empty right, a vote for every adult in the land has for the present dangerous implications. When used it is apt to be misused—thanks to the proverbial unscrupulousness of the politician and the demagogue. It may be good democracy in the generic sense of the term, but that it will be sound democracy is a tall claim in the existing conditions of India. Proper education and the cultivation of the requisite political habits may in future warrant adult suffrage, but today unqualified adult suffrage is no guarantor of popular rule.

Dr. Ambedkar, while submitting the draft constitution to the Constituent Assembly, used somewhat extravagant language in defence of the rejection of the village as a unit of political structure. He took little account of this great factor for stability and made light of the universally recognised fact that India lives in her villages. Individual farmers or artisans who make the village are different from the village as an entity or political unit. The latter will represent the collective sense and wisdom of rural India which constitutes the bulk of the population, while the former will be swayed by passing political blasts. The voice of the villager spoken through the *panchayat* or any other representative body can well be sound and sedate, while that of the individual is liable to be listless and uninformed. The constitution-maker's process of thought has descended from the state to the individual citizen instead of rising from the village as the base-unit. The one is a novelty in Indian life, the other native; the one is hybrid, the other natural. It is not yet too late to restore village polity to a reasonable position in the constitution.

DEMOCRACY

Need For Effective Checks

Discussion on the draft constitution has largely been confined to criticism of its numerous details. Insufficient attention is bestowed on basic principles and the overall picture of the future. Many have suggested improvements in respect of clauses; some have challenged the principles of the constitution formulated by the Constituent Assembly, including the conception of the state to be; but very few appear to have examined provisions as designed to ensure the safe and successful working of democracy. There has been relatively little emphasis on the means to capture and embody in the constitution the genius of India or on the steps necessary for the adaptation of western self-governing institutions to a vast population inevitably lacking training and experience in the fine art of democracy. Assuming that the goal of Indian polity is sovereign democracy—granting that the constitution-makers fill in the details with adequate care—a gap remains unbridged. Checks and balances are essential to translation of the ideal into practice.

BIG FLAW

Perhaps the biggest flaw in the constitution, which has been drafted admittedly after a great deal of study, is that it seeks to implant in Indian soil democratic institutions reared in foreign countries to suit the political climate and social character of other peoples. An admirable attempt has been made to take the best in each system and to avoid the mistakes of others in the light of history. Even so, it is a moot question whether the resulting amalgam is best suited to the spirit of India, is applicable to the state of development of the nation's political character and is calculated to serve as well as it could the long-range interests of the country. There is a measure of truth in the remark that the draft constitution is "kneaded from the dry dust of books and not from the wet clay of (Indian) life." The demand that the constitution requires to be "Indianised" has considerable force. To the extent that a constitution should not only embody the ideals and aspirations of a people but also reflect their genius and accord with the national temperament and emotional balance, the draft now before the Constituent Assembly fails to satisfy as much as we feel it could.

The Indian is traditionally conservative and indifferent to new impulses. Either through temperament or as the result of prolonged inexperience of political rights and obligations he is relatively indifferent, compared to the citizens of countries in the west, to the conduct of democracy. The small percentag