

## **CHAPTER XXXVII.**

### **Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV.**

#### **Proposals to place the Representative Assembly and the Legislative Council on a reformed basis.**

In the year 1902 when the present Maharaja assumed the reins of Government, no meeting of the Representative Assembly was held on account of the virulence of the plague which prevailed in the State during the season of the Dasara festivities. On the 5th October 1903 His Highness was able to open the Assembly personally when it met as usual in that year at Mysore. His Highness at the very start stated that the decision of the previous year to postpone the meeting was taken with much reluctance and acknowledged that one of the conspicuous results of the establishment of the Assembly was the consolidation of a sense of common interest between the Government and the people.

In the Dasara Session of 1913 a proposition was brought forward by the members of the Assembly that a second session should be held, as one sitting in a year for a few days was not enough to deal adequately with all the subjects which the representatives brought forward. Of the prominent speakers on this subject at the time may be mentioned the names of Ramanuja Iyengar of Gubbi, C. Srinivasa Rao of Chickmagalur, Amble Anniah Pandit, M. Venkatakrisniah of Mysore, D. Venkataramiah of Bangalore. In this year certain rules were for the first time issued for the discussion of subjects in the Assembly. It was laid down that every subject was to be first introduced and explained by the member or one of the members by whom it was sent up to Government and that any other member who wished to speak on the subject might follow. The members introducing the subject were given the right to close the discussion with a reply.

The system of triennial election was, as we have seen, instituted in 1894 and on the occasion of the 8th such election in 1915 the election rules were slightly revised, the candidates being required to notify their desire to stand for election one month

before the date fixed for such election. The dates for the several preliminary events such as the submission of the representations to be brought forward, the district meeting for the selection of subjects were all fixed a month earlier than usual. The number of representatives due to be returned was fixed at 290.

The privilege of holding a second session of the Assembly every year was granted by the Maharaja in 1917, and in April of that year when the second session was held for the first time, the State budget was placed before it for discussion prior to its going to the Legislative Council. A new procedure for the preliminary investigation of questions by means of committees was adopted. This procedure, it was expected, if properly developed would facilitate the work of the Assembly by placing before it concrete issues or definite recommendations formulated after a thorough study of the questions by members specially interested in them. The change was intended also to provide special opportunities to members to make constructive proposals for the consideration of Government in matters in which they took an interest.

Among the committees appointed was one to discuss and report on the constitution and improvement of the Assembly itself. In passing orders on this report in April 1918 the Government introduced certain changes in the constitution of the Assembly. Firstly, the electorate was broadened by the adoption for all taluks in the State of a uniform qualification of the payment of land revenue of Rs. 50 or of a Mohatarfa payment of Rs. 10 per annum. Secondly, the distinction between the qualification for voting and for membership was abolished, thereby rendering it identical for both, and thirdly the privilege of interpellation on matters of public interest subject to certain restrictions were granted. Subsequently a re-distribution of the seats was also made in order to provide larger representation to Municipalities.

In his concluding remarks at the close of the meeting of the Representative Assembly in April 1918, the Dewan Sir M. Visvesvaraya pointed out that till then members brought up individual subjects of varying degrees of importance, but that in the

future, time had to be found not only for such subjects but also for large questions previously reported upon by special committees and for budget debate and interpellations. Thenceforward it was necessary for the Assembly, the Dewan further said, to curtail greatly individual complaints and specific subjects and for the members to give increased attention to large schemes, comprehensive proposals and general principles of progress, not to speak of attempts to place correct ideals before the public to mould their habits and thoughts properly.

On the 13th October 1919 the question of the time for holding the second session of the Assembly was discussed and on the suggestion of Amble Anniah Pandit and other members, it was settled that the second session should begin every year a few days prior to the Birthday of the Maharaja.

In 1920 the term of office of the members deputed by the Municipal Councils and other corporate bodies was raised from one to three years so as to be in agreement with that of the members returned from the taluk electorates, as the term of one year was found too short for any useful work and the change also avoided the drawback of re-elections to the Legislative Council from the Representative Assembly in the case of members elected by that Assembly. Provision was also made for bye-elections when vacancies occurred. Retired officers of the Mysore State troops were given the privilege of voting for members as well as standing for membership.

In July 1921 a deputation of ladies interested in the subject of women's franchise waited on the Dewan Sir M. Kantaraj Urs and pressed for the removal of sex disqualification in the matter of voting for and election to the Representative Assembly, the Legislative Council and Local and Municipal bodies. This subject was also discussed in the Dasara Session of the Representative Assembly of the same year.

In 1922 the Legislative Council had in addition to the Dewan and Members of Council a strength of 30, of whom 12 were officials and 18 were non-officials. The functions of this Council

as they stood at the time comprised—(1) legislation (2) discussion of the budget (3) interpellations and (4) moving of resolutions, which power had been conceded in 1919. Certain subjects such as the Subsidy payable to the British Government, the Civil List, Military Forces were outside the competence of the Council. No measure could also be introduced without the previous sanction in writing of the Dewan.

It was now felt that the time had come to take a further step forward in the policy of associating the people more and more with the Government and increasing the popular element in the administration and accordingly a re-constitution of both the Representative Assembly as well as of the Legislative Council was decided upon, based on past experience of the working of these institutions. The general principles on which the reconstitution was to be based were clearly enunciated.

The Representative Assembly was to have a definite place in the constitution of the State. The qualifications for voters were to be substantially reduced so as to extend the franchise to a considerable extent. The sex disqualification for voters was to be removed. No new tax was to be levied without previously consulting the Assembly. This Assembly was also to have the right of moving resolutions on matters relating to the public administration and also on the annual State budget. It was to be consulted in regard to all important legislative measures. The legislative programme of the year was to be placed before it at the Dasara Session and the general principles of the Bills were to be discussed. In cases where legislation was introduced in the Legislative Council before discussion in the Assembly, the Maharaja's consent was ordinarily to be reserved till the next session of the Assembly. The strength of the Assembly was to be fixed at about 200, provision being also made for the representation of minorities and of special interests by nomination, if necessary. The Dewan was to continue to be the President of the Assembly, while the Members of the State Council were to be Vice-Presidents. Local subjects were not, as a rule, to be brought before the Assembly but were to go before the District Boards whose functions were to be enlarged.

The strength of the Legislative Council was to be increased and fixed at not less than 40 and not more than 50 members. The number of members elected from the Representative Assembly to this body was to be substantially increased. Provision was to be made for the representation of special interests such as industries and commerce, planting, educational, minorities. This Council was also to be given the power of voting on the annual State budget by major heads in respect of all items of expenditure except those affecting the Palace, the military, pensions of public servants and the political relations with the British Government. In particular, cases where this Council refused its assent to a provision in the budget or reduced it, it was to be open to the Government to restore the provision, if they considered it essential.

All matters relating to the internal administration of the State were to be thrown open for discussion both in the Representative Assembly as well as in the Legislative Council except those specifically excluded. The resolutions of the Representative Assembly and the Legislative Council were to have effect only as recommendations to Government. In order to enlarge the opportunities of the non-official representatives of the people to influence the everyday administration, one or more Standing Committees consisting of the members of the Legislative Council and the Representative Assembly were to be appointed in an advisory capacity on the model of the Standing Committees of the Indian Legislature. The members were to be selected from a panel to be elected by the members of the Representative Assembly and the Legislative Council respectively from among themselves. The meetings of the Standing Committee were to be held under the chairmanship of a Member of Government and summoned at such times and as frequently as might be decided by the Dewan. All major questions of general policy on which the member in charge of the department concerned desired the advice of the committee were to be placed before it. The existing Budget Finance Committee consisting of officials and non-officials was to be abolished.

On the 10th October 1922 when the Dasara Session of the Representative Assembly concluded, Sir Albion Banerji made the

following appeal to the members in connection with the reform of the constitution:—“..... This is not the time to discuss the merits of the scheme that His Highness has been pleased to sanction for the liberalisation of his administration on the lines generally indicated. No scheme however perfect can please everybody. All I desire to impress upon you is that so far as His Highness' Government is concerned, every shade of opinion expressed has been carefully weighed and considered and that they have reason to believe that the scheme will receive the enthusiastic support of the whole moderate opinion of Mysore. I am myself fully confident that with the political insight and sagacity which the people of Mysore possess in a marked degree they will recognise that Mysore history and Mysore traditions and above all, the absolute solidarity of interest between the Ruler and the ruled that exists in the State point to a path of progress and healthy evolution on the lines now announced and that they will appeal to one and all as the measure of advancement in constitutional progress that is indicated by our present conditions and limitations.....”

Before the Assembly dispersed to meet again in June 1923 for the second session, the Dewan announced that the Maharaja had given his approval to the appointment of a mixed committee of officials and non-officials presided over by Dr. (afterwards Sir) Brajendranath Seal, Vice-Chancellor of the University, for the elucidation of all the details connected with the constitution of the Assembly, the electorates, the length and frequency of the sessions and the procedure of the House.