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DEMOCRATIC PATH TO PROSPERITY

AN UPHILL TASK AHEAD OF NATION, SAYS NIHAL SINGH

JAIPUR, Dec 28.—The Governor of Rajasthan, Mr Gurmukh Nihal Singh, inaugurating the 22nd session of the Indian Political Science Conference said here today that in spite of certain defects, the parliamentary system of government had been found in the long run to be the best in the interests of the masses.

Government by free discussion, in a spirit of toleration and compromise, was necessary to maintain freedom and the general system of rights, to secure peace and progress of the people and above all, to preserve and advance human dignity, he added.

Parliamentary system of government, he said, had its own defects and difficulties. Political parties were not generally as democratic in their organization as they ought to be. They were not always scrupulous about the means they employed either at the time of elections or after elections in the working of parliamentary system.

General elections disturbed the normal tenor of life, were expensive and were not free from an element of corruption, he said. The required standards were not always upheld by Ministers, legislators and officials. There was a tendency towards centralization and bureaucratization. All these defects were capable of at least substantial reduction so that they might not be a real hindrance to the successful functioning of parliamentary democracy.

SERIOUS OBSTACLES

He said it was universally admitted that India's past traditions and customs, sectional divisions and some of their social institutions, ignorance, illiteracy and abysmal poverty were serious obstacles to the successful functioning of any system of democratic government. There were also dangers to the system of parliamentary democracy from regionalism and lingulism.

The display of bad manners and indiscipline, the challenging of the authority of the Chair in legislatures, refusal to withdraw from the Chamber when ordered to do so, staging walk-outs on comparatively trivial matters, and creating unseemly scenes in legislative chambers were most deplorable, he said. All these brought discredit to the representatives of the people and interfered seriously with the working of parliamentary government.

Equally reprehensible, the Governor said, was the growing practice of hunger-strikes, general strikes and movements which often resulted in violence. What was still more serious, from the standpoint

of the future of democracy in the country was the indiscipline and "unruly and violent behaviour" exhibited by the younger generation.

It was clear, he added, that they had "an exceedingly uphill task" before them. They must strive hard to safeguard democracy from all dangers and save it from such mishaps as had occurred in the neighbouring countries. It was heartening to see what they had been able to accomplish in the last 10 years, in spite of several difficulties. He hoped they would improve upon their performance in the next 10 years and succeed in their efforts to uproot the evils in their midst and advance moral and material standards and people's welfare.

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

Dr A. K. Ghosal, Principal, Surendranath College of Commerce, University of Calcutta, in his presidential address, said that political democracy to be fruitful must have social and economic democracy as its bases.

Dr Ghosal said increase in national income and rise in living standards should be accompanied by removal of economic disparity, social disabilities and inequality. Socialism, which they had pledged themselves to achieve, had both a material and an ethical and spiritual content. Other countries experimenting with socialism had discarded democratic methods and slipped into totalitarianism, and capitalistic democracies again had "degenerated into plutocracies, denying social justice and security to millions". People had, therefore, begun to ask if a marriage between democracy and socialism was at all practicable.

He added: "We in our Constitution have pledged ourselves as a nation to work towards democratic socialism and have thus resolved to take up the challenge. If we succeed, it will be a great achievement and we shall be setting a glorious example to the world and particularly to the other undeveloped countries of Asia who are keenly watching our great experiment. This is an achievement for which it is worth while to make every sacrifice individually and collectively".—PTI.