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WESTERN SYSTEM NOT SUITED TO ASIA

'Participatory' Democracy Advocated By JP

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

KARACHI, Dec. 14.—Mr J. P. Narayan, Indian Sarvodaya leader, pleaded for evolving a system of "participatory democracy" which would enable the common people to manage their own affairs without being divided by political parties.

He was addressing a meeting of the Pakistan committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom here today.

The Pakistan High Commissioner-designate to India, Mr A. K. Brohi, in his presidential address said a major problem of the political systems was to evolve an effective method of control on exercise of power without which they became instruments of inhuman governance.

Mr Narayan said the countries which had won their freedom recently were groping for best manner of organizing national life because their economic and political institutions, which were imitations of the West, had been found universally unsuitable.

From Jakarta to Cairo country after country was passing through crisis and the question everywhere was how to shape economic and political institutions which might give satisfaction to the present and future generations, he added.

Mr Narayan said in India forms of Western parliamentary democracy were still operating but even though there were 200 million voters, a sizable portion of whom exercised their votes, common people did not feel they had any part to play therein. The democratically elected Governments did influence people's lives but vast masses were kept outside the sphere of these democracies.

PARTY SYSTEM

He emphasized that many were concerned about the fate of democratic institutions in India at a time when the present generation would pass away. Even in the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries parliamentary democracy was successful only where the two-party systems, backed by strong public opinion and free Press, existed and elsewhere like France and Italy it broke down.

Mr Narayan said the popular definition of democracy was the Government of, for and by the people but while there were many Governments of and for the people a Government truly by the people had yet to be created. Even Western political thinkers admitted that parliamentary democracy did not enable people to rule themselves because the processes of elections left very narrow and restricted choice to the people and they could only choose between two or three sets of elites, thus reducing democracy to no more than oligarchy.

Party system influenced the people through propaganda, Press and other unseen ways and persuaded them to do what the parties wanted.

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Mr Narayan said the rulers of Pakistan were deeply interested in the problems of democracy.

He said big cities were human jungles and industrial civilization had by atomizing society reduced it to a conglomeration of individuals whose life had become impersonalized. This was unnatural. The present democratic and totalitarian systems evolved collective values and enforced these on the people. There was no reason why human beings should not re-establish society for themselves.

Mr Narayan said that under democracy millions of voters collectively created the State but after that there was no intermediary stage between the State and the voter.

VARIOUS TIERS

He said in ancient India primary communities had organized themselves in such a stable set-up that revolutions, political upheavals, dynastic wars and external aggression only affected them like sea waves on rocks. These were deliberately destroyed by the British as part of the imperial policy and if they had been left untouched, rebuilding of India and Pakistan would have been a lot easier.

The result of this destruction was that hardly any initiative had been left with the people, as shown by experience in the field of community development in India.

Mr Narayan pleaded for revival and resuscitation of those institutions in the rural and urban areas on an agro-industrial basis so that the society, instead of being a conglomeration of individuals, could become a vital organ of the body politic and communities could manage their affairs directly, the only limit on their scope being their ability to do so.

He said bigger problems should be tackled by wider communities and thus by a process of selection various tiers of this system should be evolved so that ultimately only such problems as the railways and communications, currency, defence and foreign affairs remained to be tackled at the top. In this system there was no scope for political parties because they, by exaggerating differences and undertoning agreements, played a divisive, instead of an unifying, role.

Mr Narayan expressed keen interest in Pakistan's experiment of basic democracies and hoped that the role of nominated members and officials would more and more be relegated to the background and people would be enabled to manage these democracies without political parties.