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J. P. Narain

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REVIVAL OF BASIC DEMOCRACIES

Narain Extends Support To Pakistani Experiment

KARACHI, Dec 15.—Mr J. P. Narain yesterday extended his support to Pakistan's experiment of "basic democracies" and called for a revival of "this ancient institution of self-government" in the subcontinent and elsewhere in Asia, says PTL.

The Indian Sarvodaya leader, who was addressing a meeting of the Pakistan Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, said that these "basic democracies" in the form of self-governance of villages by the villagers themselves were destroyed by the British imperialist rulers to import a foreign system of administration and foreign economy into this subcontinent.

Later this destruction, was found conducive to the introduction of a sustained system of democracy in which the individual played a very small or no role at all, he said.

Mr Narain said the ancient institution in the form of panchayats stood up to "all upheavals of time through the ages". They functioned irrespective of who ruled at Delhi. Today the village had been atomized and every family had been left to itself. The present form of democracy was no more than oligarchy, he added.

The Western system of democracy, he said, was unsuited to the genius of the people of Asia. From Jakarta to Cairo, the political institutions modelled after the West had broken down except in India.

INDIAN EXPERIMENT

Although in India the form of Western parliamentary democracy was still operating, "this democracy does not touch a fringe of her people". It represented a very small fraction of the people of the country because power was centralized and the people did not have any part in the administration, he added.

"In fact, some of us are concerned", Mr Narain continued, "over the future of this kind of democracy (in India), particularly when the present leadership is removed from the scene with the passage of time".

Mr Narain said the "Indian soil and climate is unsuitable for this kind of Western democracy. Even in the West search is going on there for a more satisfactory form of democratic life. It is necessary for us to think of a new form of democratic institution which can give satisfaction to the people and their future generations".

Mr Narain said he was deeply interested in the experiment now being conducted in Pakistan in reviving this ancient institution. Similar experiment was going on in the United Arab Republic.

The Sarvodaya leader said that the system of basic democracies could "conceivably run without political parties".

Earlier, Mr Narain conferred with the Pakistan President, Field-Marshal Ayub Khan.

It is understood their talks related to Indo-Pakistan relations.

Later he was the chief guest at a dinner given by the President.

Mr Narain's stay here has been