

elsewhere – is not all a matter of Parkinson's Law. Dead-wood there undoubtedly is in this process and certainly some empire-building; and we shall have to be ever vigilant for getting rid of the former, and for keeping the latter under rigid control. But there are also other abiding forces that have been at work, forces which originate in man's desire to wrest from the complexity of modern life a secure and satisfactory future for all. The process of expanding government is by no means free from dangers. Nor is it something free from difficulties of its own making. But within limits, expansion is inevitable and desirable. To regard every expansion in government as a sign of inefficiency and waste or, worse still, of infringement of individual liberty would be to betray a gross misunderstanding of the social and other forces in operation in all civilized societies. Let us by all means be ever vigilant about this process of expanding government. The course of wisdom undoubtedly is to regard governments as subservient to human ends – as necessary as we consciously and collectively wish them to be, but circumscribed nevertheless by the ultimate supremacy of the ends in view. But if we as members of modern societies demand of our governments responsibility for ever-growing functions, it would be short-sighted indeed to develop uncritical hostility to expanding governments.

2

DECENTRALIZED DEMOCRACY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

WE, people of this country, can justifiably congratulate ourselves upon the fact that we have deliberately chosen the way of democracy. We see what is happening all around us, and therefore it would not be wrong if we prided ourselves upon this achievement. We have given to ourselves, the people of India, a democratic constitution and we have chosen with our eyes open the democratic way of life. But I fear that many of us are apt to be satisfied more with the outward shell of democracy and lose sight of the substance of it. We have borrowed certain institutions and certain processes of democracy from the democratic countries of the West, and we are apt to feel that we have done our duty and that there is nothing further to do except to make these institutions work as well as possible. But even in the West, where the existing forms of democracy have gone through a long period of refinement and development, the people feel that the institutions and the processes that exist need reformation, sometimes radical reformation, and there are movements pressing for the particular kinds of reforms. But here, I find there is an aptitude amongst us – rather 'aptitude' is not the proper word – an inclination amongst us to look upon what we have taken from the West as more or less the last word, which I think is a very dangerous state of mind.

Lecture delivered on 26 July, 1961

Democracy, all of you would agree, is a value; and it is the essence of all democratic institutions and practical processes involved to preserve the value of democracy and to make it possible for it to grow. As far as I am concerned, democracy means to me more than anything else self-government. I am not speaking of the value so much, but when you put it into practice, when you practice democracy, it must mean self-government of the people. Now we have certain representative institutions and certain methods today by which people can choose their representatives and we have a system of democracy in which representative government is established in which government by the consent of the people is or can be carried on. While I confess that a Government by the consent of the people or by the representatives of the people is a great advance over all undemocratic forms of Government, I do not think that is an adequate form of democracy, an adequate framework of democracy with which the people which are conscious, which are aware of their own responsibilities should be satisfied. It is possible that the people might take the view that just as we have management of industry or business which happens to be a very complicated kind of activity for which you need specially trained people, so is Government a very complicated affair and it is good to leave the business of government in the hands of a few chosen people. But it is very doubtful whether the present system of democratic government in any democratic country of the world, really succeeds in the selection of specially trained persons. I am not talking of the civil service, but those who really constitute the Government. Their selection depends on many other factors than the factor of competence to govern or their having received a special training as a manager receives it. In the first place, Government might be a complicated affair and might require special training. It does happen that in the extant folds of democracy, the processes are not such that you have the end result of the type that you wish to have.

Secondly, I think a people which things like that, after all government being a question of special training, it is not for all of us to be concerned with it. It is enough for us if somebody whom we have chosen does the work for us, manages the work for us. I should think that that would not be the democratic way of thinking.

To me it appears that the democratic way of thinking would be for the people to say that in order to practise democracy, they must practise government as far as possible themselves. It appears to me that a representative Government or a Government by consent, as I said earlier, is an inadequate definition or practice of democracy. I would like to go beyond that and press for a form of democracy in which there was more participation, or as much participation by the people as possible, in the business of government. Now it is possible to visualize an ideal society in which the human individual has evolved morally and spiritually to such a high level that there is no need for a Government. All idealists and Utopians, including Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi, have visualized a certain deal state of society, as have also others whom I have not named. I think it has been a secret ambition of the human individual to be free from constraint of any kind from outside, free from all kinds of coercion from above, or from without. You can see it if we see it in the child, and we see it in the adult and the grown individual, but it is also obvious that because man is a social animal and has to live with others it is most impossible for him to be without social restraints. But as our moral preceptors say, if the individual has attained those heights of internal growth, that he is always mindful more of the rights and welfare and well-being of his neighbours, of others than of himself; if there are such individuals, and if society were to be made of such individuals, then a stateless society would come into existence. It would not come into existence as a result of any kind of social or economic transformation, transformation in the institution by a nationalization or collectivization, those things have, as history has shown, led to more constraint on the individual than less constraint. It is the moral growth of the individual which leads to widening of the spheres of democracy. But I think, limited as all of us are, while there may be a few ideal human beings in society, most of us are going to fall far short of the ideal and some sort of coercion from some institutions in society would be necessary, and necessary perhaps for all times. Even Gandhiji, who always put forward the ideal of a stateless society, was quick to add that he thought that such a state would never be reached, and he was wont to quote the example of the Euclid definition of a line which is supposed to have only length and no breadth, and he

used to say that just as no such line has been drawn in practice by anyone which has no breadth, but yet the definition of line, as given by Euclid was the basis of mathematics, or one of the bases of it, in the same manner the ideal must be there. Every democrat must work for the end that the functions and powers and jurisdiction of Government are reduced to the minimum so that there is as much of self-government as possible, self-government in the individual sense and as little of government from outside the individual as possible.

II

I believe that democracy of any kind, of the most elementary kind, is not possible without some sort of self-discipline, and the more self-discipline there is the higher will democracy rise. Otherwise, the functions and powers of the State will go on increasing. It would mean denial of democracy, even though those powers might lie in the hands of elected representatives of the people. Now since the self-governing individual and a society made up of self-governing and self-bound to exist. Therefore to follow this line of argument, the next proposition that becomes almost inevitable to be accepted would be something like this: that in a truly democratic society, or in a society which is more democratic from other societies which also may be democratic but less, Government should be as near the people as possible. The more removed in distance the Government is from the people, the less democratic it is likely to be. Unitary Government in India would be less democratic than a Federal Government in India. A Communal Government of India – I am not using the word ‘communal’ in the sense in which we always use it: the vulgarization of this beautiful word ‘community’ that has happened in this country is deplorable, but in the sense of community, panchayati, let us say, which is common now. Panchayati Government in India would be more democratic than the present federal structure that we have. The more you take Government from Delhi, down below, as near to the people as possible, the more democracy you have, because the more people have a chance to participate in the management of their affairs, in the conduct of their affairs.

In the mass society of the West which has resulted from this undesirable form of industrialization, as a result of which you have in the United States this idea of the megalopolis – New York to Washington, allotting a large area around it, Chicago, and in course of time, perhaps, the whole country; in course of time the whole of England becoming one continuous conglomeration or agglomeration of individuals – now this, I think is an unnatural mode of existence for human beings. As human society has existed, as it exists in our own country, we have the individual and then we have the family, and then we have a federation of families, which we might call the primary community, urban or rural. New Delhi or Old Delhi is not a primary community, but you may have a small township which does still retain the flavour of community, the character of community, though much of it has been wasted even in the rural community, that is, in the villages of our country. But that more or less has been the mode everywhere, and personally I think that it is by living in the family and by living in the small primary community that man can attain a really human life, a really social life in the sense that there is an integral kind of relationship between the individuals constituting the community, the whole individual meeting the other whole individuals, not the fragmented individuals that you have in these large conglomerations with large cities like London or Tokyo or New York. There man does not meet man really. Life as a whole does not come in contact with life as a whole. A worker meets a worker, a sportsman meets a sportsman, or a club member meets a club member. But in that real community it is the family, the individual as producer, as consumer, as player, as, let us say, quarrelers – they can quarrel amongst themselves also – and all this: and the whole of life is lived together, and it is in this living together that you have the essence of human life or human society, living together. In the cities, even neighbours are more or less strangers; sometimes full of strangers. There isn't that bond that should exist between human beings, and as a result of the absence of these bonds you have a way of life developed which is highly individualistic, which has its value, of course, but it has its evils also, and perhaps in this case the faults outweigh the virtues. However, that may be a controversial subject.

It is often said that the individual in the community is limited.

Well, he may be limited if the need is to be an extraordinary individual: if he is to be a great artist. The community, the primary community or a federation of primary communities may not give him enough scope for the expression of his individuality because he is an exceptional individual. But I think that such exceptional individuals can always make the whole world perhaps their home, and even if human society is made up of communities, bar these exceptional individuals, the limitation of these communities will not be a barrier. But for the ordinary individuals, I am sure that life in the community can be much more satisfying. All the human values have grown out of the family or the small community. I need not elaborate upon this. However, the fact is that in our own country we have 555,000 rural communities and we have a few small urban communities and then few large towns and cities. 82.3 per cent of our people are still in these rural communities.

Now, if we have to take Government to the people, what does it mean? Taking Government to the megalopolis will be – I won't say impossible, but it would be rather difficult. I think the mechanics of it could be worked out there also. But in this situation, which, I think, is not a bad situation, it is a situation which is near the ideal, and it can be converted or developed into the ideal condition of social organization. Today of course, the village communities and others do not have enough community spirit and that is a problem. But the cause of that is not the primary community. The cause of that is the ocean around the primary community and the invasion by values which are foreign to the community, that have resulted in all this. Now if this process of taking Government to the people is recarried to its logical conclusion, then the principle, on the basis of which decentralization can be achieved – that is, Government can be taken to the people – that is, the principle or the method by which the people could be enabled to participate more than they are doing at present. Cent per cent participation is not always possible in all communities and in every field of activity – but possible to the extent in which it can be made to be possible, the principle on which this decentralization should take place is a very simple principle which Gandhiji had formulated; that is at each level – now what are these levels? He called them concentric circles with the individual in the centre and then the family around the

individual, and then the primary community around the family, and a federation of primary communities around the primary community, around the village, around the township. It may be a taluk, it may be a tehsil, it may be a block. I hate this word block but somehow it has come into existence. It is an entirely foreign word. It means nothing to us – not that all foreign words are meaningless – but this “block” certainly is meaningless. Or, it may be called by some other name – sircars or something else, and then a combination or a federation of tehsils, taluks or sircars into a district, and then a federation of districts into a State (this word State also has been misapplied to the Indian situation); then, a federation of the States into the whole nation; and if Government has to be taken down, this description that I have put before you would answer more or less the objective situation.

The sending down of Government from above to the people would mean that Government would go right up to the individual in the village, and the family, and the village, and the tehsil and the district and so on; and the distribution of powers as I was saying, the principle on which decentralization should take place was, as stated by Gandhiji in very simple terms: he said in each one of these circles, at each one of these levels, whichever way you look at it – if you look as it as a pyramid, well, you call it level – at each one of these levels, the people on those levels should have all the power necessary to do whatever they are competent to do. Competency would not only depend upon education, training, experience, etc. That would be a changing competency. They may be less competent to manage, let us say, education. Today and 5 years later, they might be 10 times more competent to manage it, but there is a limitation to competency by the size, by the scale itself. A primary community, for instance, urban or rural, might conceivably run a primary school, might even conceivably be able to run its own middle standard school, but I do not think a normal village community would be able to manage a high school for itself. A high school has to be run by a federation of primary communities. The block or the tehsil should do it. A tehsil cannot run a college but a district can run it; a district cannot run even a university, but a State can run a university; and likewise you can think of every other field of activity. The scale, the resources, the number of the people, the population, all these things would, more

or less, lay down definitely what could those people do. Of course technology might help to increase competency there and other things, but nonetheless the size will be an irremovable limitation. Now that limitation should be the principle on which there should be decentralization.

III

Turning to the practice of it in our country, you are all acquainted with the Panchayati Raj system which has born on 2nd October, 1959 in Rajasthan and has made great progress in the last couple of years, and it is said that by the middle or end of next year Panchayati Raj would cover the whole country. As you know that there are – this being a State subject – different legislations enacted and there are different States and there are different kinds of powers handed over and resources and so on and so forth. But I think there is an underlying current in all this legislation so that decentralization is concerned more with the implementation of development programmes rather than with the creation of fully democratic decentralized democratic communities. And I think this is natural. This is natural because Panchayati Raj was born out of the experiences of the community development programme when it was found that the expected public cooperation was somehow not forthcoming. As you know, a study team was appointed under Balvantray G. Mehta, which made that report, as a result of which this great step, I think, was taken, which was described by the Prime Minister as a political revolution. Whether it will actually result in a political revolution is yet to be seen. This is the handle on which you test the metal of Panchayati Raj; whether you are concerned merely with evoking the participation of the people in the programme of development or whether you are concerned basically in making the people self-governing – in giving self-government to the people. I have looked into the powers and functions that have been handed over to the gram panchayats, as the lowest ground level tier and then the next level, the panchayat samiti or the block committee or the block council, and to the district council or the zilla Parishad.

First of all, there seems to me to be confusion about what

powers are to be given to which of these three tiers. In some States it is said that the panchayat samiti, that is, the block council, should be made the unit of development, planning, and therefore it should be given the utmost possible importance, and the zilla parishad should be a coordinating body and within limits a kind of a supervisor: it might have some supervisory or advisory functions. In some States like Maharashtra, at least the newspaper report says so, the zilla parishad is being made all-important on the ground that both the village and the block are too small for the purposes of planned economic development. As I said, there is a confusion here. The question is not what powers should be given to whom. The principle, as I enunciated before you, is so simple that there should be no difficulty in applying it. None of these tiers is one above the other. It is not as if the block council is above the village council or the district council is above the block council, or the State Government is above all these three, and the Central Government is above all of them. There are certain activities, there are certain functions, there are certain powers, which in their very nature have to be performed by one or the other of these, should be performed by one or the other of these, and in those fields there should be no interference from above. For instance, management of external affairs, conduct of external affairs, must be its very nature be the function of the Central Government. If the external affairs are not entrusted to the State Government that does not mean that the State Government is under the Central Government. There is no question of "under". It is only a distribution of functions and powers according to a rational system, a natural system, very State cannot have its own army. Then it will not be a defence army, it will be something else. The army must be a central responsibility. If the Centre has Defence in its hands, it does not make it more important than the State, or more powerful. It is a function which is the function of the Centre.

There must be industries, particularly in our present conditions today, with the shortage of capital, technical personnel, with the landman ratio, with the rate of population growth that we have in our own country – this is all mathematical language, but I am sure you all understand. Each one of these has its own implications. With all these implications before us, it is quite conceivable that we should have some industries which may really, truly, be cottage

industries. That is, they could be run in the cottage of an individual family in the village. Now there is no need for such cottage industries to be in the province of the State or in the province of the Centre or in the province of the district. Province means jurisdiction. There may be some industries, on the other hand, which might be of a scale which may be a village scale industry. There would be very few such industries, I agree; but there may be some. There may be other industries, which might be of a scale that they could easily be block industries. The organization, the production, the marketing, the raw materials, all that, could be available within the block and could be managed by the block committee, either communally, that is, the block council might run its own industry as the Indian State runs it, or there may be cooperative societies for production, marketing, etc. Other industries there may be, which it would be impossible for a block to manage. They are of the size suited only to the district. And in my way of thinking, oh! for several years to come, I should say that 80 per cent of our industries should be within the district, block and town levels; 20 per cent in the State and the nation as a whole. A steel factory, for instance, I think, is beyond the resources of even a State Government today. Later on it may not be. I mean the States might become more prosperous. But just now, it is impossible for a State to invest two hundred crores in a steel mill. That is national industry. There should be co-ordination and that should be the basis on which powers should be distributed.

In practice, there is another problem that is coming. Powers are being given and it is being said that self-governing institutions are being created at three levels within certain spheres. But when you come to look at the resources that are being placed at their disposal, you find that they are entirely dependent on the higher spheres, for instance, the State Government. Now, these institutions must have their resources themselves, at least to run their administration – not for development – for development activities, even the national State has to borrow from outside. So the village also will need assistance for development from outside. But for its own village management, to run its government, the village panchayat, it should have its resources, and so should have the block, and so should have the district. But, now, when the question

is raised, what we are told is that, well, the village and the block and the district, they are all going to be given lakhs and lakhs of rupees and why are you people shouting about the resources to be reserved for them? The answer is, suppose, in this present structure that we have, all the revenues were paid by the people to the Central Government, all the revenues were Central revenues, and all the revenues were collected here, all taxes, everything; and the Central Government then distributed whatever share it thought proper in consultation with the State the share of that State, would the States be able to practise even this little limited autonomy that they have today that the Constitution gives them today? They would not. There would be a howl from all sides, and so you have a State resources placed at their disposal. These taxes are State taxes. These are Central. Of course, the Centre shares: that is true. But the fact that the States have command over their own resources, gives them a certain autonomy.

What about the village? Does the same principle not apply to the village? I am happy that some States like Gujarat, for instance, have decided to leave the entire land revenue in the hands of three institutions of Panchayati Raj, subject to what they call an equalization fund, into which we need not go, but which, I think, is very sound to have this equalization fund to help the poorer sections of the area through the villages, through the blocks, etc. cent per cent of the land revenue will be left to these institutions to be divided between the three tiers.

During the British rule, and all of us remember yet what used to happen then, Government meant law and order and revenue. That was what more or less the people understood by Government. There were revenue officers, revenue was collected and there was the Police. The Magistrate and the Police, these two, represented Government. Now, in all this decentralization, the administration of revenue, the administration of law and order is not being handed down. There is not enough trust in the capacity of the people to look after these things. We often compare our Constitution with western constitutions of western democracies, but if we examine a little closely the amount or the degree of centralization that we have, it is unimaginable. If you go into the field of administration with which I am not so well acquainted, but

I will speak a little about that also, so that this Institute might give a little thought to it, but I would like to emphasize this, that in powers also, the powers which are necessary for the purposes of development, the functions which are related to the needs of development, are being handed down. But what is known to, what is meant to the people by government, those powers and those functions are not being given to them. The *Karamchhari*, that is the lowest revenue officer, still has more power over the lives of the people than the *Mukhia* or *Sarpanch* or the *Pradhan* or *Pramukh*; and likewise with the constable, the head constable, the sub-Assistant Inspector of Police. In my State, Bihar, there has been developed a Gram Raksha Dal. I feel that this is the nucleus of a people's police force. But even though the Gram Raksha Dal is there, the law and order is entirely in the hands of the State, and the petty official of the State Government rules the roost.

IV

Regarding this administrative set-up that we have, there have been so many committees appointed here and elsewhere for the reform of the administrative system so that, among other things, there may be less delay, but as time passes, and as we become more and more democratic, the delays go on increasing, and I am afraid that these delays will kill democracy. Now there is decentralization and these three tiers are going to be created. Now supposing in the block a certain irrigation work has to be built, constructed, and supposing it costs Rs. 25,000 and supposing the law says that the panchayat samiti has no authority to sanction an expenditure above, let us say, Rs. 10,000 or Rs. 15,000. Then what will happen to these works? The panchayat samiti has made a plan which has come up from the village plan and it has done all the preliminaries. Now, for the sanction of this it has to go to the State Government, and then the State Government will take a decision, and then some Department will sit over that decision and check it up. The departments are given their allotments even then, after the Department has taken a decision that so much has to be spent for a certain project, it must go to Finance and Finance will sit over it, I do not know for how long. Then, there will be some

question. And then, the question will be answered, then the file will go back and forth and then may be the Chief Minister has to decide or the Cabinet has to decide. After a decision is taken, then somebody else will implement it, another department concerned, because it has not got the machinery to do it. If a road is to be built, or a hospital, then it must go to the Public Works Department, which has its own machinery, perhaps the slowest of all machineries that we have. I went the other day to Bodh Gaya. The B.D.O. came to see me and the doctor. We were discussing the medical services that a block provides for the people. The base hospital at the block headquarters is supposed to be a hospital with six beds for indoor patients. The doctor said that in 1958, six beds were sanctioned for the Bodh Gaya hospital and till July 1961, nothing had been done. And this is a block, this is not the usual departmental sort of administration. Now, that block will soon become a panchayat samiti. What will happen then? If this whole administration were not to be decentralized then the fact that there is the gram panchayat, the panchayat samiti and the zilla parishad will create more delay, and the people will suffer more. What will they do with that power? So this has to be closely examined and gone into.

Since I am on this subject, though it is not intimately connected with decentralization, I like to say that in my own experience as a social worker and the experience of my fellow-workers, and also as a result of my talks with senior administrative officers of the district levels, and even at the secretariat levels, I have found that the administration really is in the hands of Babus, and there is a 'Babu-dom' in existence. The man who receives two thousand rupees in salary, a file is put up before him on which a clerk, getting may be Rs. 150/- or Rs. 200/-, has put down the first note. This man is likely to be, I am not saying all of them are, but is likely to be somewhat small-minded and he is more interested in seeing that things are according to rules and so on and so forth, and he is also liable to unhealthy influences. Those influences are, whether it is bribery, whether it is caste, or whether it is something else, or some kind of influence, expressed in his note. This, of course, is not relevant to decentralization, but it is relevant to this whole problem of delay of which I spoke.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
INDRAPASTHA ESTATE NEW DELHI-2

AP 17 81 8 22.11.06

On the practical side of this question, there is the question of the civil service, of the control over civil servants who would be working under these or with these democratic institutions. This is an aspect of the question which has received the least attention so far, even less than the question of resources. I was just invited by the Select Committee of the Bihar Assembly which is dealing with the Bill on the Panchayati Raj set-up. There is no mention at all of this. As far as resources are concerned, there is hardly any mention of that either. Now what happens when you give them a civil personnel, an administrative personnel, and they have absolutely no control over that personnel: the control is in the hands of the State Government? There is likely to be a clash of wills of individuals; there is likely to be rivalry; there is likely to be indiscipline, irresponsibility and so on and so forth. Well, in Rajasthan the Act has given the Pradhan, that is, the Head, or the President of the block council, the power to send confidential reports to the Minister concerned about the Block Development Officer. In Bihar, when this suggestion was made, it was very stoutly opposed on the ground that the B.D.O. then would be entirely at the mercy of the Pradhan, who in Bihar is going to be called the Pramukh – the block council Chairman. Well, what is the concept then? What is the power of government that is being given to these levels?

I visited a commune in Yugoslavia. The whole committee had been called to meet us. I asked them: who appointed the agronomists whom they had. I think there were three of them. They said: "We appointed, the village committee, the commune committee, the people's committee: We did it." And they brought out the newspapers and they said: "Now, look at today's newspapers. There are so many advertisements put in by different village committees for so many trained persons; applications will come, some will be called for interview and it will be for us to choose." And I said: "Who will distribute them?" They said: "We. It is entirely in our hands. There are certain trade union limitations. We have to bear those in mind because we are a socialist country. But we have the authority to do that." Of course, authority does not mean to act whimsically. Now this will be something unheard of here! Rajasthan has taken some steps, and I think there is some proposal to establish a kind of a district public service commission

for recruitment as well as for control of the civil servants in the district, in which commission the institutions of decentralized democracy would also be represented. This is an important point.

V

This decentralization and this system of communal rule, of communal government, government by communities and federation of communities, as you know is going to be brought up only to the district level and beyond the district level we are going to continue with what is called parliamentary democracy. I have thought over this question. I have discussed it with friends. I do not know if I have been able to carry conviction to people. It seems to me that both these systems, these two systems, are unmixable like oil and water because they are based on two different principles: parliamentary democracy works everywhere in the world and it leads to centralization – it must be. There may be a federal structure in the United States or as we have in our country, there is the limit to decentralization that it will allow; and because ours is a vast country, and so is the United States, even this degree of decentralization does not go very far. Each one of our States would be like several other countries in the world. Parliamentary democracy is based on the individual voter. The individual voters is in the very nature of things unorganized. When the election day comes, the polling day, he swarms around the booth, casts his vote, momentarily some or few of them come together, and then again they disperse all over. That is the beginning and the end of the participation of the individual citizen, the individual voter. They have no manner or means of controlling either the selection of the representatives or the actions of the representatives after their selection. The only control they have is that in the next election if they do not work satisfactorily, conceivably the voters will not elect them again. That is merely theoretical. That is the indirect control that they have. Therefore, the trend is for the centre of gravity in parliamentary democracy to travel upwards. Who controls the representatives? If the representatives were controlled by the people down below, the centre of gravity would be there. If those who stood for an election were to be given their tickets by the

people, then also there would be a pull downwards. If the tickets are to be given at Chandigarh, at Bombay, at Delhi for Parliament, even for the Legislative Assembly, when there are quarrels they also run over here, asking for tickets. And this is not true of true of the Congress Party alone. It is true of every party. It need not be. There may be some methods found; the British Labour Party does have some kind of a method, in which the local constituency has a say. But it is after all a member of a certain party. There is a certain pull downwards, but then it is confined to the members of a particular party, which in the very nature of things, is very very centralized. Every party has its own high command. Everyone talks of the high command of the Congress, but every party has its own high command. And the selection of candidates as well as the conduct of the winning candidate, both these things are in the hands of those few people at the top who form the caucus of the leadership, the controlling machine at the top. In the Panchayati system, in the communal system, those who go to the block panchayat, that is, to the block council, they go there to represent not the "a" mass of voters. They go there representing the gram panchayats, the village council, which is an organized body, which meets; it takes decisions. The conduct of the representative of the village panchayat in the block council is always under review in the village council.

Likewise, the representative who goes above to the zilla parishad, he goes there not again as representing the people as particles of sand, as I call it. These disparate elements – you pick up a handful of sand, one particle has nothing to do with the other, just your fist or hand has brought them together. You open your hands, every particle spreads all over the ground. It is not an organic entity. But the village panchayat is, and the panchayat samiti, that is the block council is a representative of the block council in the district. Their representative is not free to act as he likes. He represents his block, and not only the 60,000 people of his block, this abstract concept of the people; he represents the *organized* people there, that is, the block council, and he is answerable to them. He will go to his block council, and he is asked how he has functioned. So there are controls below.

Parliamentary Democracy and Panchayati Raj, these are two unmixable elements, or theories or procedures, and one will dominate

the other, if not destroy, probably not, but destroy in essence and dominate generally. The stronger will dominate the weaker. In the nature of things the Central Government and the State Governments are stronger because they have got resources; and in this period of development the institutions lower down will be dependent upon them for their development – agricultural, industrial, educational, health – everything. They would depend upon their aid, and therefore these higher institutions will dominate over them; which means Parliamentary Democracy will dominate over panchayat democracy. It will not have a real chance. Therefore, I am saying that this principle should be extended upwards to the state and to Delhi, and the Lok Sabha should be linked up with the gram sabha, not only with the village panchayat which is an elected body, constituted may be of 10 or 9 or 11 persons, but the gram sabha, all the adult members of the village community. The Lok Sabha should be linked with it. That means every citizen is brought into the picture, but he is brought into the picture not as an inorganic particle of sand but as an organic cell of a living, shall I say, organism of a living body – the village community. The village community elects, the village community selects, the village community speaks, not every individual voter.

The unmixability of Panchayati Raj and Parliamentary Democracy – of course, this is not like an element of unmixability as between virtue and vice – I would like to put in this way, in this sort of very concentrated language: The system that rests on individual voters has invariably a tendency towards concentration of power at the top. The other system, the panchayat system or the communal system, tends towards dispersal of power. In the former, organized parties that are run from above by small and powerful elite, play the decisive role. In the latter, communities, and communal representative bodies working from below exert a decisive influence. In the former again, the representatives elected by the unorganized voters are not and cannot be under their control in the parliamentary system. In the latter, the electing bodies exercise a continuous influence over the representatives they send to the higher levels in the manner I have just described. In the former system, the people's participation is limited to casting of votes; in the latter there is direct participation of the whole people

through the gram sabha and fairly close participation through the higher representative body; in the former system, elections are expensive, in the latter just the opposite; the former requires a vast media of propaganda and involves unhealthy psychological and emotional excitement; in the latter these evils are reduced to the minimum which I think in the conditions of our country is a very very important factor; in the former most voters are more unlikely to understand the issues which are placed before them than in the latter in which the voters at each level are expected to be well acquainted with the problems that they have to deal with.

VI

Friends, these are the few observations that I thought I would place before you in my talk. Related to them is the question of economic decentralization. I briefly referred to it when I spoke of industries and the scale of industries. It is my feeling and I think it is also the feeling of Mr. S.K. Dey – I do not know how the Prime Minister feels about it or the Government of India – but it is my strong feeling that this experiment in Panchayati Raj, limited as it is, by the existence of these two other bodies, which represent a different system, the success of these Panchayati Raj institutions would be very severely limited, if alongside there did not take place economic decentralization also.

This is an idea which is not acceptable to the modern educated person. He might swallow, he might accept the idea of political decentralization, but economic decentralization immediately appears to the educated person to be reactionary, because he says this is the age of science and technology. I, on the other hand, believed that just because it is the age of science and technology, decentralization is easier today without sacrificing efficiency than it was 50 years ago or 25 years ago, without sacrificing efficiency. No one of us who believes in decentralization is wedded to any kind of technology, the charkha, the ghania, etc.! We do not worship material things. We are not materialists by any manner of ways. But the democratic values – we are talking only of the democratic values: I won't talk of the other values which are involved – would not be preserved, would not be developed unless the whole

economic structure also, the economic organization also were decentralized, and as I have said just now, as long as we were depending on thermal power, centralization was to some extent inevitable. After the birth of electricity, after the birth of atomic energy, after the development of technology, there is no need why we should be so enslaved to the large machines. Small machines could be made which would be per capita as productive as the large machines. However, that may be a debatable point; but for me it is a point which is full of encouragement because if we accept decentralization we need not remain poor; the standard of living of the people need not remain depressed. As we have all this thinking and experimentation going on in political decentralization, we should have also research and experimentation in this small technology.