INTRODUCTION

"Democracy", as R. M. MacIver observes, "is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining, who should govern and broadly, to what ends."¹

The issue of 'ends' highlights the philosophical part of democracy. Philosophy, no doubt, has a tone of universality, but as democracy is related to 'demos' or people, national boundaries are naturally created. Since the people of one country are different from those of other countries in tradition, culture and social composition, the process of development of democracy all over the world is not uniform. Modern democracy developed first in Europe having its root in Greeko-Roman philosophy. But democracy in India is no less old than that of Europe, although its character was different. It is in this background the present dissertation is prepared.

India is not merely a plural society, her plurality is unique in nature. The plurality is multi-dimensional. India is described as a subcontinent not only for geographical reasons but also for socio-cultural reasons. She has a rich heritage, a history of glorious tradition. It is a country which has been invaded again and again, but she never invaded. Though vanquished, the victors could not rob her of the rich heritage. India remains as ever a multi-dimensional plural society. "...known throughout the world as a spiritual land, where the search for the spirit or the self has been the uppermost in the minds of those who have inhabited this land since the dawn of civilization."² The inhabitants were known as Aryas who would constantly "...search for Light of illumination i.e. knowledge, and that is why they are described in the Vedas as 'ārya' jyotiragrā' i.e., these Aryas always kept the Light before them to guide them in all their activities in the world. Nothing was done blindly or ignorantly by them in this world of matter. The spirit was always their guiding light."³ It is this spirit which gave a unique shape to the plurality of Indian society.

The mosaic of Indian society is cemented by the spirit of culture. So India is unity in diversity. This description of unity in diversity is not a mere rhetoric. To
comprehend the essence of this rhetoric one needs to have genuine Indianness. Westerners cannot understand the Indianness of Indian culture, because they approach issues purely from materialistic point of view. It is not that the Indian tradition abhors the matter. Had it been so, ancient India could not attain glory in different fields of science. However, the men of science in India did never ignore spirituality. It was because of successive invasions by the outsiders Indianness lost its progressive fervour and took shelter in the shell of superstitions for survival. Sectarianism raised its head sometimes in the name of religion, sometimes in the form of social taboos. Religion lost its spiritual universality and was turned into communal rituals. Priests of different communities became the interpreters of religion and they thereby created an atmosphere of communal intolerance resulting in frequent acts of violence. Most of the rulers of the time fuelled the communal tension instead of fusing it. The face of India thus became unIndian.

But the vitals of life of an age-old country like India can not die : they remain alive in the blood and veins of the common people who may be Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Brahmin, non-Brahmin or Harijan. They may be illiterate but not irreligious, inhuman. Sree Ramakrishna-Swami Vivekananda wanted to serve them as the living God (Jiva Sevā Ishvara Sevā). Swami Vivekananda said that religion cannot be practised in empty stomach. So he preached and practised for food first, then education and religion at last. Alleviation of poverty is the primary need to be followed by education which involves hearing, reading, thinking and meditating. Thus the learners would begin to look inward, to realise the spirit in them. Advaita Vedantist Vivekananda said that the more we would be able to realise the ‘self’, the more we would feel the one in all and all in one. Herein lies the fountainhead of Indian democracy, nay Indian Society.

But the contemporary Indian politicians cannot understand anything beyond vote. To them, vote is the other name of democracy. Thus the Indian life is led to degeneration. JP had been painfully observing this degeneration and took recourse to various methods to check this drift. But the degeneration is all pervasive. So in mid nineteen seventies he gave a call for total revolution.
However, JP's mission could not advance much because of his protracted illness and death. With his demise ended the discussion of the philosophy of democracy in our country. Regular discussions and discourse of the philosophical background of democracy in the context of our national tradition and social composition can alone help in developing the type of democracy that suits India. This was the work done by Gandhi, Subhas, M. N. Roy and JP. Astounding development in science, technology and electronics have brought in changes in societal relations and world order. As we are living today under globalisation, so all talks of bringing back autarchic village panchayati days are mere idle discourse. However at the same time it cannot be ignored that it is in the autarchic administration wherein lies the root of decentralization that marks the Indian society. India, as ever, is a communitarian society with a patriarch. Gandhi and JP rightly emphasised on Panchayati order for maintaining segmental cohesion. But the Constitution provides for parliamentary democracy at all levels of the polity. In these five decades time no attempt has been made to synchronize the Westminster type of democracy with the traditional Indian society. As a result a political culture worthy of its name has not developed. But political culture is the backbone of a political system. Since parliamentary system has been allowed to permeate the whole political system of the country decentralization and people's participation have become mere slogans. This gap between the system and the people is creating tensions. This tension inspires thinking minds to search out sustainable remedies.

Notes and References
3. Ibid.