CHAPTER 7

THE CRITIQUE OF DEMOCRACY

Bajaji's role regarding the question of democracy in India has been that of a socratic ' gad-fly', in that he remained an enlightened critic of politics in India. His concept of democracy as a form of government and as a form of power is very close to that of the Western liberal democracy. But this does not mean that his concept can fit exactly into the democracy that is practised in the West. We are more certain of his antagonism to the neo-liberal types of democracy and it is this feature of his thought that creates a tendency to classify him as one who believes in the Western liberal type of democracy. An analysis of the dimensions of democracy will reveal the generally accepted variants of democracy and also how far Bajaji is removed from such a wider concept of democracy. His acceptance of liberalism is such that he is not prepared to accept any variant of democracy other than the liberal type of democracy. The mixed form of democratic socialism with its totalitarian tendencies comes under heavy attack by Bajaji. He pleads with a strong voice the need for minimizing the spread of governmental control over issues which can be locally controlled without depending upon a strong and totalitarian centre.
7.1 Liberal democracy

Democracy in the original sense meant rule by the common people, the plebeians. At that time the definition had a greater significance in terms of class conflict, for democracy was an approximation to the rule by the lower classes or in other words, a rule of number. From this point of view, it was considered to be low in the scale of efficiency by the upper classes who felt that they had greater 'nobility' in them to rule the lower classes. Plato's denunciation of democracy is based on a qualitative criterion and perhaps Plato was right in his times, for the concept of social awareness was not widespread among his people. Even Hill had a similar opinion, for he went to the extent of minimizing the possible domination of the working classes. The Industrial Revolution with its free market created an atmosphere of choice in politics. On the lines of choosing a commodity in a free market economy, the liberal society chose democracy from among other forms that were available. In other words, liberalism in the West preceded the choice towards democratic rule. It is from this point of view that thinkers like Huxley and others place the Western society in a different category among the democracies that are functioning.

Democracy is not just what is represented by the West, but it has different variants between the extreme type
of the non-liberal type of democracy that is practiced in the Soviet Union and the liberal type represented in the West. The wide range of types available make it difficult to define the limits of democracy which can be seen from a statement made by Russell:

The word 'democracy' has become ambiguous. East of the Alps it means military dictatorship of a minority enforced by arbitrary police power. West of the Alps its meaning is less definite, but broadly speaking it means 'even distribution of ultimate political power among all adults except lunatics, criminals and pests.' This is not a precise definition, because of the word 'ultimate.'

In order to expound and analyze Bajaji's concept of democracy it is also necessary to compare it with what is accepted among contemporary scholars as to the range of democracy. In this context the theoretical approach made by Kepherson is taken as a reference frame work to locate the relative position of Bajaji's concept in the world of democracy.

Kepherson brings three basic patterns of democracy showing the basic nature of these types. Liberal democracy, as available in the Western society, with scope for wide choice, has certain characteristics which are different from the non-liberal types practiced either in the communist countries or in the third world. The Western type of

democracy 'combines a large measure of individual liberty with a fair approximation to majority rule'. Macpherson says that democracy is a system by which people can be governed, that is, made to do things they would not otherwise do, and made to refrain from doing things they otherwise might do. More than this it is a system of government in which certain relations among the people and government are maintained, both directly and indirectly through the right to property. A third factor is that liberal-democracy is prevalent where the societies are predominantly capitalist. Rajaji expresses a similar opinion regarding democratic rule. "Democracy is a form of government in which the people as a whole have effective power and control over affairs. The people may exercise this power directly or through elected agents under a free electoral system." 2

The non-liberal type of democracy represented by the Soviet Union has a historical claim to democracy in that, it arose out of class war against the liberal capitalist society and state. The working class created by capitalism was to liberate itself by taking political power. The moral concept of liberating the oppressed classes evolved by Marx was democratic in that it agrees with the earlier notion of democracy, as the rule by the

people. It is from this point of view that Mackechnie includes the Soviet form as also a form of democracy, but only with a historical claim to be called a democracy. Almost all dictatorships have a democratic history to begin with and only later do they change into different types. The change that was brought about in the Soviet Union has been analysed by Mackechnie and Anaji, more or less on similar lines, and the inclusion of a study of a non-liberal type of democracy for comparison serves as a model in pointing out to us as to how democracies change into oligarchies. Let us first take up how Mackechnie looks at the change brought about in Soviet Union and then follow it up by what Anaji says in this connection.

Capitalism was sufficiently old when the society turned democratic in the West. On the other hand the proletarian revolution came in Russia when capitalism was just a few decades old in that country, in which the proletariat was still a small minority in a sea of peasants. Lenin in 1901 argued that a class-conscious minority of working class would form the vanguard and convert the rest to their views. The first communist revolution was made by a vanguard in the name of a whole class and the Soviet state was formed, run by the vanguard, that is, a highly-knit centrally controlled communist party ruled the country. With low levels
of production the vanguard could not achieve what was aimed at. The majority of peasants was still backward and the stewardship of the vanguard continued, thereby moving away from the Marxist concept of democracy. Instead of being a class democracy it became a rule by the vanguard. Political philosophers since the time of Plato faced the same problem of identifying a person or group of persons who could be entrusted with the responsibility of ruling the country. This problem of selecting the right group is equally important even in a society where the majority is supposed to rule. Whether it is Plato's guardian class or Rousseau's charismatic leader or Lenin's vanguard, there is no guarantee that the leaders would use their power only for the good of the society. To expect that the individual would confer himself would be out of question, according to the socialists, for the individual who has been debased by the previous society will not yield himself to the new ideals on a voluntary basis. The claim of the collectivists is that the individual in such societies should not be taken as a unit for reform and that it is the collectivity which should be treated for the malady. The vanguard with its elite group played the role of assuming all authority in defining and prescribing the 'welfare' schemes in Soviet Russia. Entering the ranks of the Soviet party and coming up in the hierarchy involves a strenuous effort on the part of
the individual and as the majority with average ambition and capacity was left behind to be ruled by the elite groups.

The process of how a typical model of a democratic beginning changed into an oligarchy has been analysed on a historical basis in the case of Russia. It is necessary, therefore, to study a non-liberal type of democracy like that of Russia to derive a conceptual picture of how the various shades of such a development can be predicted in the case of the third world. While Kaepplerman gives a historical case, Majaaji gives a theoretical picture of how such changes will take place irrespective of ideologies, which can be seen from the following passage:

"The exploitation of the wealthy and powerful resulted in men trying the opposite way, viz., state-central of all life under the dictatorship of the 'proletariat'. But the 'proletariat' cannot itself dictate—except during brief periods of disorder—it hands over the dictation to individuals of their choice, and their dictatorship soon becomes intolerable tyranny and extinction of freedom, taking civilization back to slavery."

Majaaji's analysis of the transition, irrespective of any 'ism', is sociological and not just historical, for such an analysis provides a framework for the study of any revolutionary reaction to the existing order. The non-liberal democracy of the underdeveloped countries is a category.

that comes in between the two varieties mentioned so far. While democracy in the West was preceded by liberalism, class conflict and class hatred preceded democracy in Soviet Russia. In the third world colonialism preceded revolution and the enemy to be fought is an outsider and not a part of the same society, which forms the new government. Here also the vanguard continues with the charisma acquired out of its early patriotism in winning freedom. The post-independent government is often a non-communist government, for the struggle before independence is to drive a foreigner and not a particular class of the same society. The task of rebuilding the country from shambles is enormous and the new democracies aim at high levels of production for which a high premium is placed on individual freedom. Opposition in such countries amounts to treason and freedom of the press is sufficiently limited to catering to the requirements of the party in control.

Thus in a newly-independent underdeveloped country there are strong inherent pressures against a liberal-democratic system. The pressures militate not only against a competitive party system but also against the maintenance of realistic civil liberties. Freedom of speech and publication, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, are under the same sort of pressure as is freedom of association. 4

Macpherson says that the claim of the one-party democracy lies on the proposition that there is in these countries a general will, which can express itself through, and probably only through, a single party. A similar view is expressed by Rajaji on such one-party dictatorships which claim to represent the general will of the people. The following passage is an expression of his attitude to such a claim:

Constitutions refusing freedom of action to all but a single party (which has seized power) are not democracies. But communist parties claim that the governments of Soviet Russia and China are democracies. The claim is put forward not only by communists but also by several rulers in Africa and elsewhere. They argue that democratic government can be run by a single party, under a system by which no other party but the one in power can legally exist. This is based on the plausible ground that opposition views are expressed and considered at the meetings of the party in power. There may, for some time, be just government in this system but it is not democracy. It is an oligarchy—government by a few who control all power. 3

Rajaji cites the case of some of the 'guided democracies' of Asia like Indonesia and 'General Ayub's Pakistan' to justify his claim. From the point of view of the pattern of change that takes place in countries following release from foreign rule, the Indian case can be classified as one that fits into the third category mentioned by

Macpherson. Although there is some similarity between Macpherson and Rajaji in the analysis and exposition of the oligarchic tendency of the newly formed states of the Afro-Asian type, Rajaji shows certain characteristic features of his own in his explanation. While Macpherson seems to be tender-minded in accepting the communist type and third world type as democratic, Rajaji is not prepared to recognize them as democracies and declares them as oligarchies. Macpherson considers that the third world type of democracy is an inevitable phenomenon. But how? Rajaji differs from such compromises with actual prevalence. Rajaji feels that a fair trial should be given to the individualistic approach of liberalizing democracy on Western lines. In an underdeveloped country the degree of social awareness is limited and so, claims Macpherson, a single party democracy takes over. The situation leads to a conflict namely, if the state is made all powerful it becomes a hindrance and if the individual is trusted he tries to exploit because all are not fully educated or have the necessary equipment to understand the importance of social co-operation. Rajaji, with his faith in the principle of jamaa, says that reform should start with the individual through moral appeal and not by mass formulae or indoctrination.
7.2 Democratic socialism

Socialism which was considered to be entirely antagonistic to capitalism and liberal society in the past began to be accepted in milder forms by the efforts of Fabians who believed in an enlightened form of co-operation avoiding the horrors of class war. *The Acquisitive Society* published by Toynbee in 1921, attracted the English socialists in that it does not preach anything hostile to religion. Attlee, the Labour Leader, became the Prime Minister of England (1945-51) giving a new twist to English history bringing socialism to power. This can be attributed to the non-belligerent attitude of English socialists to religion—something that cannot be thought of by the capitalist in America. Attlee has observed that there were probably more texts from the Bible enunciated from Socialist platforms than from those of all other parties. It is possible in Britain for a person to declare himself a Communist and for millions of catholics to support the Labour Party. The writings of Sidney Webb, Toynbee, Laski and a host of others were responsible for developing socialist thought in an acceptable form in the British soil despite their conservatism and love of freedom.

The British socialist does not rest on materialism, atheism or class war. Toynbee defines industry as 'nothing more mysterious than a body of men associated in various
degrees of competition and co-operation to win their livelihood by providing service which it requires." However, under capitalist system of industry and wealth, 'futileless' property has come into existence. This property has become a power and becomes tyrannical. There are two principles which should guide industry according to Furney. The first principle is that industry should be subordinated to society. The second principle states that the government should be in the hands of persons who will be responsible to those who directed and governed them providing for economic freedom. In a way it comes closer to the Gandhian concept by providing freedom to the individual in a moral atmosphere provided by a responsible set of administrators. According to democratic socialism, as conceived by the English, communism is a betrayal of true socialism and a subversion of true Marxism. Despite all the ideals and social awareness of a higher degree the question of drawing a line between individual freedom and public welfare in controversial within the frame work of democratic socialism even in England where the concept of democratic socialism originated.

The concept of democratic socialism adopted in India, according to Rajaji, is socialism with the veil of democracy and a mere combining of two terms. It tries to reconcile
freedom and equality, which operate at two levels in actual politics. Freedom will mean choice and free market economy and equality will mean thwarting freedom of the individual to suit the requirements of socialism. Anjaji is unable to accept the happy combination of democracy and socialism as envisaged by the English democratic socialists even at the theoretical level. The very association of the term socialism, for Anjaji, means collectivism, state capitalism and state control by demagogues who de achieve their aim deifying the concept of public welfare. If they fail they would resort to blaming people when they do not like as anti-social. Alleged such as, "No one must profit from the misfortunes of others," are conveniently used to paint any one as an anti-social element if he does not subscribe to the wishes of the party bosses. While individuals try to improve by qualitative means, the collectivist ideal tries to depend upon the quantitative approach of the statisticians, who supply necessary figures. Anjaji refers to the \textit{Śākṣastra} which says that man has a right to work and free himself from misery through work. While socialism seeks to promote the welfare of the people, the free market economy depends upon human motivation to work for his own benefit. Democratic socialism draws people to enslave them and is a contradiction in terms. "Democratic socialism is a contradiction in terms. Socialism means
the end of individual freedom and of democracy. 6

Democratic appeals and building up socialistic ideals, according to Rajaji, drift towards statism. Statism brings the necessary controls with it and makes the whole scheme different from what it promises to be. Indian socialism has neither raised production nor achieved equal distribution but only benefited a few who could gain influence through devious means. Rajaji's concept is that of the British Liberal party and he subscribes to what Burke or Mill said in improving the quality of democracy. With this background Rajaji finds it difficult to accept the Indian form of democratic socialism, a hybrid which does not deserve the name, according to Rajaji.

Whether democratic socialism is liked or not, India, being a newly formed country, followed the way that is typical of the third world politics with its attendant totalitarianism. While Macpherson would consider it as a form of democracy differing only in degree from that of the liberal type of democracy, Rajaji calls it 'totalitarianism,' for Rajaji's concept is based on qualitative criteria. "The verbal jugglery of prefixing to socialism a deceptive adjective and calling it 'democratic socialism' can make no

difference to the substance of the matter."

7.3 Totalitarianism—Bureaucracy

Najaji's criticism of totalitarianism presents a general theory as well as an application of his views to the Indian condition. "Long before Lord Acton said it, Kautilya wrote bahubhi chittam vikaroti (power corrupts mind). This cause-and-effect phenomenon therefore was observed in India long ago. Things have not improved since then. Power continues to corrupt!"

As a liberalist he felt that concentration of power leads to remote control which develops the ego of the bureaucrat to an enormous degree. Plato himself accepted that his guardian class was in no way immune to the corrupt tendencies which gather around the administrator in course of time. Najaji's analysis of totalitarianism can be brought under the following heads:

(i) Tyranny of the centre over the states and majority rule,
(ii) Tyranny of the centre over the individual,
(iii) Party dictatorship and
(iv) Officialsdom.

The categories mentioned are conceptually different, but they appear in mixed form and identifying a certain situation

as belonging to a particular category or other is difficult.

As for the tyranny of the centre over the states, Bajaji says, that the centre has reserved for itself all the important portfolios leaving local administration to the states. Large sums of money are collected and spent by the centre gaining more control by its capacity thus acquired for employing more agencies. Only the majorities are represented properly and by their strength of numbers the states lose their individuality.

The history of the language issue and the evolution of State finances furnish ample proof of this withering away of the principle of federation and the installation of monolithic in its place. State budgets have become a pretense. State governments now live on grants and for the rest act as bill collectors on behalf the Planning Commission. 9

The centre has a convenient way of commanding integrity at the cost of the individuality of the states. The different members of the states sit as voiceless members before the more powerful groups of the centre. Bajaji calls this as 'steam roller' unity which is achieved by reducing variations into uniformation. It may be interesting to note that Aristotle also advanced a similar charge against Plato's political unity achieved by collective uniform training.

As for the tyranny of the centre over the individual, from the point of view of economics, it has been discussed in chapter three. State control includes exclusive trading privileges over permits or licenses or quotas, for import or for production or distribution, which regulates the consumer's behaviour. Added to the control of economic behaviour, nationalization of education, Rajaji says, is more dangerous to the development of children in a free atmosphere and education becomes a tool for propaganda. "Freedom is an illusion if the State is raised to the level of the final owner of all things and master of all activities and the citizen only a tool in the employ of the State." 10

Party tyranny, according to Rajaji, is the most powerful, for it is capable of eroding the free atmosphere of the State. Policies are decided behind the closed doors of the party meetings and the state becomes a tool in the hands of party elite.

Monarchical tyranny has a natural termination but party tyranny has no such termination, because corporate organisations enjoying power continuously attract fresh and greedy recruits and the organisations live for ever, even when the senior section or those forming them quarrel and retire. 11

Party members control members of the Parliament and stay behind to watch how the people react. It is the men who sit in the parliament who have to face the public and not the party men who control from behind. Whether a member should contest or not is decided by the party, irrespective of moral standards and public service. The party bosses care more for the retention of their image of public good, for the party acquires a separate will of its own, which may disagree with general interest of the people as a whole.

A 'deaf government' and a 'dumb people', as Maja observed, are a fertile soil for the development of a strong bureaucracy. But bureaucracy is a kind of malady which troubles bigger organisations. The system of officials with their systems for meticulous work produces a system of delays than a foolproof system. Even if some enthusiastic official wants to cut the delay it is mis-understood and the official learns not to unnecessarily try innovations or short cuts which involve him in more trouble than being appreciated for his work. A contemporary sociologist makes the following observation regarding the malady of bureaucracy:

Civil service rules designed to prevent political purges and patronage make it impossible even for well-motivated people to do a good job—prevents efficient and innovative action by public officials, in contrast to the flexibility of action in the
private sector... The reward system is heavily biased against risks of innovation compared with that of profit-making enterprises—the bureaucratic innovator who fails is crucified, while successful innovation has little pay off. 12

Apart from lack of incentive for innovation and simplification of work, the civil servant, at times, shares certain secrets, which lead to suppression of information for the good of the country. He is tempted to utilise this privilege to hide behind a cover of rules so that the citizen is kept in ignorance and made a victim of inordinate delay. A contemporary American thinker made a study of such situations (as the secret missions involved in the Vietnam War) and makes the following remark as to how bureaucracy comes into existence:

Occasionally secrecy may be invoked to cover up a bureaucratic blunder. It may also be used to conceal crookedness, favouritism and outright corruption in the letting of government contracts. 13

As for the Indian form, it does not differ from what is experienced abroad and intellectuals have been exposing this malady as something chronic and acute. One of the scholars on bureaucracy refers to the Indian form of officialdom as follows:

The Indian bureaucracy has no tradition to serve the people; their only concern is to keep up


administrative uniformity and maintain neat and tidy files. The humanity is lost in the maintenance of records, building up arguments for or against, writing notes, spinning ideas in vacuo. 14

Rajaji calls the officials in India as a new ‘Kamindari system’, which aims in keeping the uninformed citizen under threat and exploit him to the maximum extent. Although bureaucracy is criticised by Rajaji, it is difficult to get rid of this problem. It is a by-product of big organisations, as unwanted and as indispensable as the drainage system in a big city. Both have their own odour which cannot be avoided. Citizens are equally responsible for making the system corrupt as much as the officials. Ethically Rajaji deplores a corrupt official hierarchy, but empirically speaking, as a social phenomenon, corruption is partly caused by the citizens who think of their personal demands as more important than social causes. At times lack of courage on the part of the citizens is equally responsible for a corrupt system.

7.4 Minimum Government:

Rajaji’s ideal of democracy is based on minimum control by the government, maximum freedom of the individual and a society which has faith in co-operation. "A stable democracy and a strong opposition party to be faced daily by the ruling party are essential for democracy and good government and to keep the defence forces confined to

their legitimate functions." 15

To achieve the ideal, Rajaji expects statesmen to assume the responsibility of educating and guiding the people and not to be mere politicians who are occupied in conserving their popularity for future power. He quotes Michael Oakshott, who succeeded Laski in the London School of Economics, as one who defines good government as follows:

"Government is a specific and limited activity —namely, provision and custody of general rules of conduct, which are understood, not as plans for imposing substantive activities, but as instruments enabling people to pursue the activities of their own choosing with the minimum of frustration, and therefore something that it is appropriate to be conservative about." 16

Rajaji believes in a federal form of national government to break the 'monolithism' of the centre which weakens the states. This is possible if we dissolve the oligarchy which came into existence by a historical victory through the dynamism of early leaders and still continued because of the old faith people have in a strong centre. Rajaji's concept of a federal form of government and freedom of the citizen can be derived from 'Gandhiji's paradoxical statement that Swaraj rests on the citizen's power to resist authority.'

Najafi strengthens the case for a healthy political opposition from Edmund Burke's address to the sheriffs of Bristol, a part of which runs as follows:

Liberty must be limited in order to be possessed. The degree of restraint it is impossible in any case to settle precisely. But it ought to be the constant aim of every wise public counsel to find out by cautious experiment, and rational cool endeavours, with how little, not how much of this restraint, the community can subsist. 17

Burke's emphasis is upon how little and not how much restraint should be imposed upon the people. But a strong one-party government having tasted power cannot give up its power to buy, control and employ. The opposition being weak cannot express its views and even the people will not be ready to believe the opposition owing to lack of efficient means of communication to enlighten the public.

Najafi is of the opinion that 'great governments can benefit by criticism, without which they are bound to deteriorate in self-complacency and unchecked self-will'. A strong opposition and freedom of the press should go together so that democracy does not remain 'one-footed'.

The concept of preserving unity in the midst of diversity is possible when a two-party system prevails. "A real two-party system would alone furnish the healthy opportunity for beneficial argument. There would be no cacophony but meaningless dilution if we cut the dividing membrane." 18

One party democracy, Rajaji considers is like a donkey with the whole load placed in one bundle. But the two-party system would steady the movements of the polity just as the donkey moves with stability when the load is distributed in two panniers. Liberty does not terminate with elections but should continue even after elections, which is a sign of healthy opposition and political progress.

Having evolved his concept of a government with minimum restraint on the people and a healthy opposition, Rajaji goes further to show how the representation ought to be if it should be healthy. Rajaji feels that there is no balanced representation of all the sections. His lament is that even under a foreign rule the various sections of people engaged in different activities were represented properly and that after independence such a system has been efficiently dropped in favour of professional politicians.

A scheme of proportional representation in legislatures, which may not be too complicated for execution in a large country like ours, is therefore not to be ruled out as has been done so far, resulting in a black-out of important sections of public opinion. 19

Healthy representation brings a free interplay of numbers drawn from industry, commerce and labour, whose views are equally important, for it should be noted that the legislature is not a 'consumers' union', but the system

which represents a reciprocal interaction between the governing and the governed.

Bajaj recommends a change in the pattern in the conduct of elections in order to stop the evil of the powerful influence exerted by big financiers who control parties. This is possible if the dependence on finance is eliminated, which will allow even poor people to contest in elections. Secondly, the education of voters through 'libel and slander' can be minimized if the state takes over some of the work done by the parties before the conduct of elections. Campaigning by the contestants should stop a week before elections. To prevent the influence of the party in power from prejudicing public opinion, Bajaji suggests that the ministers should resign from their respective offices six months prior to the conduct of elections. The government during this period can be placed in the hands of a caretaker-government under the leadership of the Union President assisted by officials from the civil service. As a form of minimizing expenditure the system should be run on the lines of collecting data for census. The government should prepare the voters list and ballot boxes should be circulated round for the collection of votes, under the control of officials through mobile polling booths.

Bajaji warns the voters to exercise their choice in favour of people with character and not in favour of people who make empty promises or those who can merely display power and wealth.