

“On the occasion of the release of Sri. Jashwant Mehta’s book ‘Presidential Democracy – India’s Dire Need for Better Governance’ I convey to him my heartiest congratulations and good-wishes. This is not mere function for the release of a book. The occasion, in a nontrivial sense celebrates the yet surviving vitality in our public-life to rethink important issues touching the survival of our nation as a vibrant democracy. Sri Jashwant Mehta is, indeed, a ‘one man army’ leading an important crusade for cleansing the mess we have made of our political life. Everyone who knows anything knows that our political leaders could not have mismanaged the nation’s affair better! The important message of Sri. Jashwant Mehta’s book and indeed his whole life’s work is the need to restructure our political and democratic destiny. There are still men like him around who are passionate about values in public life and are willing to walk that extra mile.

Democratic systems are not self-executing. Democracy involves hardship of the unceasing responsibility of every citizen. There can be no democracy if the entire people do not take a continuous and considered part in public life. Justice Frank Furter said that there is no office in the land more important than that of being a ‘citizen’.

We have unfortunately equated the idea of ‘democracy’ as a ‘product’ and ‘elections’ as the process. The idea of majority rule has no justification by reason of its ethical superiority. It is based on the sheer necessity of recognizing the weight of numbers. The idea of its ethical superiority is an assumed fiction.

Sri. Jashwant Mehta has made out a strong case for reviewing our basic notions of the suitability of the parliamentary system. He has made a strong pitch for the Presidential System. The case for the former was that it makes for greater accountability, though less in stability and that India needs greater accountability on the part of its governments. Sri Mehta's arguments have a compelling appeal.

The true tribute we owe to Sri Jashwant Mehta is to initiate a strong non-governmental debate among scholars, politicians, Journalists - and laymen as well - to rethink our political systems and our political destiny. It should be crowd-funded. The debate should include also reforming the present dismal state of the electoral system. Eminent leaders and opinion makers present here must herald such an initiative for wide public debate. Political parties which care for our common future must take this issue seriously.

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