

PRESIDENTIAL DEMOCRACY - CHECKS & BALANCES

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The half-hearted debate began during Mrs. Gandhi's regime. However, it never took on meaningful shape on account of fear in the minds of the intellectuals as well as Opposition leaders that a cictatorial type of presidential system might be imposed, without the necessary checks and balances.

It was rather unfortunate that the suggestion for a change came from persons like A.R. Antulay and Vasant Sathe who had strongly supported Mrs Gandhi's emergency rule.

A deeper analysis will reveal that a truly democratic presidential system with in-built checks and balances, similar to the American Pattern, could be immensely beneficial to the country.

Its basic characteristics would be - separation of the executive (i.e. ministers) from the legislature (giving more scope to the nation's best intellectual talent to be inducted directly into the decision-making process); lesser emphasis on the party system allowing total freedom to all members of the legislature to vote on any issue irrespective of party lines; thorough spadework involving legislations; and, above all, restricting the President's tenure to a maximum of two terms (most states have also imposed the same restriction on the governor's tenure) thus preventing the perpetuation of "dynastic" rule practiced so often in the guise of democracy.

The big question is: Will our present breed of politicians really allow such a change? For a large majority of them the current set-up has proved a bonanza.