

Presidential Democracy

India's Dire Need for Better Governance



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Democracy has been popularly defined as a rule of the people, for the people and by the people. In the situation that has prevailed in the country, our flawed democracy might as well be redefined by replacing the word 'people' with the word 'politicians', i.e. "of the politicians, for the politicians and by the politicians."

There is an ever-increasing frustration and discontent among the people against the present political system on account of its several drawbacks and, as a result, the very faith of the people in the efficacy and

sanctity of our current democratic set-up has been seriously undermined. It is an admitted fact that our existing system has spawned an obnoxious breed of self-seeking politicians jostling for power for personal gains in utter disregard of the interests and welfare of the people at large.

Here at last is a book in a layman's language which tells all about the Presidential System of democracy – a more efficient, less corrupt and better alternative to our Parliamentary System. Our present system has encouraged large-scale defections, bred widespread corruption and left administration of the country entirely in the hands of power-hungry politicians. It is time to have a second- look at it.

Written in a lucid language and embellished with several humorous illustrations, the book is sure to prove of immense interest and value to the constitutional experts as well as general intelligentsia of the country.

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The book highlights in detail the basic flaws and adverse consequences of our parliamentary model through relevant comparisons with governments and Constitution of other liberal democracies of the world. The basic flaws are summarized in various chapters viz:

- Mushrooming of language, caste, regional and communal political parties
- Frequent toppling of governments
- President elected as head of the nation but virtually a rubber-stamp
- Alienation of unrepresented majority
- Unholy electoral alliances
- Unprincipled vote bank politics
- Extreme opportunism
- Criminalization of politics
- Ministerial incompetence
- Bloated ministries to accommodate greedy legislators
- Ministerial corruption
- Legislation voted on party lines rather than on merit
- The party whip resulting in depriving of freedom for legislators to involve in the law-making process

- Dominance of party high command in deciding everything from selection of party candidates for Legislature to cabinet formation including chief minister at the state level
- Misuse of governor's role
- Pseudo federalism
- Very little involvement of people in selection of local candidates, right from municipal council to parliament
- Inefficient judiciary resulting in abnormal delays in delivering justice
- Lack of promotion of leadership qualities
- Principal of checks and balances among the three wings (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) only on paper

While no system can be foolproof or a panacea for all the flaws, Based on the study and analysis of mature and liberal democracies of several countries including USA, Germany, Britain, France and Australia, Japan & others, a truly democratic Presidential System with certain modifications would be a lot more suitable than our present parliamentary system for better governance of the country. The several advantages of the system viz – its stable character, direct induction of top professionals in the cabinet, separation of Executive from the Legislature and lesser emphasis on the party system, providing more freedom to the members of legislature, including absence of the party whip on legislative matters – are too vital to be ignored. The system of direct elections adopted under the Presidential system, right from the Mayor's post as Executive head of government at the city level, election of Governors as Executive heads at the State level and election of Senators (the members of upper house by the entire state), has made it easier for better and deserving personalities to be fittingly groomed for higher level leadership. Our present system of electing a namesake Mayor or having a CM decided by the party bosses based in Delhi has led to a situation wherein we have miserably failed to produce leaders at the grassroots level. The direct election of the President/Governor/Mayor as the Executive head of government at the national/state/city level respectively also provides a clear choice to the voter to elect an MP, M.L.A. or even a local Councillor who need not belong to the same party as that of the Executive head of the government.

The primary system of elections allowing the party members to elect the candidates in their constituency at all levels, right from local government to the President at the national level, is another novel

feature of the American system. Our present system of selection of candidates has left the choice of candidates to the party bosses and virtually led to dictatorship within the party. The deserving candidates' being left out has been one of the root causes of degeneration of our major political parties.

Comparison is also given of various models of Presidential System including the checks and balances required to be incorporated to prevent it from degenerating into autocracy.

After having witnessed the performance of the Westminster model, some of the very people who had played a pivotal role in framing the Constitution had second thoughts. They include apart from Dr. Ambedkar, Ex Presidents of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad, R. Venkataraman and K. M. Munshi who had also changed his mind and whole-heartedly endorsed the Parliamentary system, also changed mind in favour of Presidential democracy. Many eminent people from all walks of life have also time and again endorsed a truly democratic Presidential system as a better alternative than our present model of the Parliamentary system. This long list as mentioned in this book includes legal luminary and ex-Ambassador to USA Nani Palkhivala, doyen of Indian industrialists J. R. D. Tata, ex-Chief Minister of Gujarat Babubhai Patel, former Union Cabinet Minister Chimanbhai Mehta, ex-Chief Minister of Karnataka R. K. Hegde, veteran journalist and ex-MP Kuldeep Nayar, eminent civil servant and former Ambassador to USA and UK B. K. Nehru, veteran journalist Khushwant Singh, eminent journalist and former Cabinet Minister Arun Shourie and many others. Their comments and observations are covered in detail by the author.

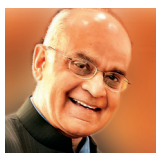
The author has also recommended Electoral Reforms incorporated in present German Constitution viz. mixed proportional representation, state funding of elections and law on political parties which would help strengthen Indian polity. In concluding chapters, he has described the changes which we could incorporate while adopting presidential democracy to suit our needs and possible roadmap to bring about the necessary change in the political system.

We suggest Readers to view link on You Tube “Why India Needs Presidential Democracy” Part I link <https://youtu.be/JztIJX-Z18> and Part II link https://youtu.be/g-m5_pbbwG8 and PowerPoint presentation on our website www.presidentialdemocracy.org



“I really enjoyed the discussion we had on your views..... and analysis of the Presidential System. Frankly, after listening to your meticulous analysis of the comparative merits, I must say I am veering around to your view..... I am convinced that your objective is a pure one and is not aimed at pursuit of any political gains but to the promotion of a nationalist ideology. I am pleasantly amazed that our country still has persons like you. You have no personal ambitions in the matter. It is indeed gratifying that a highly qualified Engineer and Technologist like you should be taking such great interest in promoting a larger national cause. You have taken up this agenda of political reforms with no other expectation than good of the country at large.”

Shri M. N. Venkatachaliah
*Former Chief Justice of India and Chairman
Constitutional Reforms Committee, Govt. of India, 2002*



Your lifetime of work for the cause of bringing the presidential system to India is an important contribution to the future of our country. You have given this mission your best for a very long time. I am touched and encouraged... Please don't give up hope... You are (a) source of inspiration...

Shri Bhanu Dhamija
Author of 'Why India Needs The Presidential System'

Some Opinions (on Author's earlier book)



“I am happy to find in your book such well documented and argued support for a proposal which I have advocated for many years.”

Shri J. R. D. Tata
Eminent Industrialist



“My own personal opinion that a success of any system, be it parliamentary or presidential, ultimately depends on the people who will operate it, has changed after having read your book... Your book is bound to contribute a great deal in moulding the public opinion in this regard.”

Shri Babubhai Patel
Ex -Chief Minister of Gujarat

About the Author, Shri Jashwant Mehta:



The author is an Architect and Consulting Engineer by profession, holding post-graduate degree in Civil Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, USA. He has also been active in the real estate, construction and hospitality industries.

Like many other perceptive individuals in India, being disenchanted with the existing political system because of its unsatisfactory and dismal performance owing to its inherent shortcomings, he undertook an in-depth study of the underlying causes and also an intensive study and the workings of Governments and Constitutions of the liberal democracies of the world, such as USA, UK, Germany and France among others. This led to his firm conclusion that a truly democratic presidential system with suitable modifications will be immensely beneficial for the country and has written extensively on the subject. His books viz. '*Presidential System – A Better Alternative?*' and '*Quest for a Better Democratic Alternative*', have been widely acclaimed as making a substantive contribution to the debate on the issue. He is Founder/Convenor of Forum for Presidential Democracy.

Apart from his abiding passion for the evolution of a better democratic system, he is also involved in social and charitable activities, especially the prevention and cure of blindness. He is Founder Member and Ex-President of Eye Bank Association of India and the Managing Trustee of Eye Bank Coordination and Research Centre, Mumbai. He has been honoured by International Federation of Eye Banks and Eye Bank Association of India for his pioneering role in promoting eye donation and eye banking in India. He is also recipient of Dr. M. C. Nahata Rashtriya Netra Suraksha Puraskar awarded by The National Society for the Prevention of Blindness.

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