

# Preface



Reinhold Niebuhr, a noted American theologian with deep political insight, has said: "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible; but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary." However, for the very survival of the democracy (much more so in a developing country like ours), it is equally necessary to have a system of Government that can command the confidence of the people and provide for better governance.

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.

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 India, 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."

The dubious means of election funding, the criminalization of politics, the rampant corruption among bureaucrats and politicians, the absence of any in-built provisions that would compel our legislators to do the necessary homework on legislative matters, the frequent arbitrary changes of ministers, recurring stories of unstable governments both at the state and central levels, the failure of the existing system to bring forth leaders who could command people's confidence, the selection of candidates by all major political parties entirely at the whims of the party high command with

virtually no participation of people be it at the local, state or national level, all these have contributed to the loss of people's faith in the present system. 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.

Dr. J. K. Galbraith, eminent economist and former US Ambassador to India, had described Indian Democracy as a "functioning anarchy". The anarchical aspect of our polity to which Dr. Galbraith had made a pointed reference in his cryptic expression contains the potent seeds of a horrendous denouement, unless drastic remedial measures are taken to avert its downhill slide towards a cataclysmic explosion before it is too late.

While no system can be full proof, 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 far better option 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.

While adopting the basic features of the US model, we can include some of the novel features of the present Constitution of Germany, viz. law on regulating political parties, state funding of elections and mixed proportional representation for legislature in lieu of the present 'first past the post' system.

As witnessed, Parliamentary Democracy has led to mind-boggling scams such as 2G Spectrum, Coalgate and Commonwealth Games, etc. where even an honest Prime Minister, in the absence of an absolute majority in the Parliament, remains a helpless and mute spectator as he has to 'compromise in coalition politics' as candidly agreed by PM Manmohan Singh. On the other hand, a PM belonging to the ruling party having an absolute majority tends to behave in an autocratic manner. He enjoys far more powers than the President of USA, where even the members of his own party are in a position to provide required checks on the President because of the freedom and separation of Executive from the Legislature. We have invariably witnessed this spectacle time & again when the ruling party has had an absolute majority, during Nehru, Indira & Rajiv's tenure as well presently under BJP Govt. led by Narendra Modi. On the other hand, in case of coalition governments, the Prime Minister is often a helpless spectacle, unable to assert himself for fear of the very survival of his government.

Having watched the performance of the Governments, a product of the very Constitution framed by them, some of the leading members of the Constituent Assembly, including KM Munshi and R Venkataraman, had strongly felt the need to have a second look at the Constitution. Even Ambedkar himself had expressed his own frustration and changed his view and in September 1953, he spoke in Rajya Sabha, "Sir, my friends tell me that I have made the Constitution. But I am quite prepared to say that I shall be the first person to burn it out. I do not want it. It does not suit anybody."

As narrated in the book, many eminent persons from diverse walks of life have strongly advocated the Presidential System of democracy. Unfortunately, no organized and sincere efforts have been forthcoming in this regard.

My first book on the subject **Presidential System – A Better Alternative?** was published in 1979. In this, I highlighted certain positive advantages of a truly democratic presidential system with in-built checks and balances vis-a-vis our current parliamentary system. It received an encouraging response. Subsequently, I had authored **Quest for a Better Democratic Alternative**, which was published in 1994 and included a comparative study of more developed, mature and liberal democracies including the USA, Great Britain, Germany, France, Australia, Japan etc.. This book was also well received by discerning readers. Considering the happenings of last two decades, I have synthesized, revised and updated the contents of both the above in this volume.

There are many among us, from both the intellectual class and the common man, who have a tendency to look upon our Constitution as a sacred document. This mindset needs to be changed. In this regard, Thomas Jefferson who had played a pivotal role in framing of the US Constitution has aptly said “Some men look at constitutions with sanctimonious reverence and deem them... too sacred to be touched.” He further said that “Each generation has the right to choose for itself the form of government it believes the most promotive of its own happiness.”

Some of the illustrations in the book have been drawn by Vasant Halbe and included from my books published earlier on the subject. I have also included some of the cartoons of inimitable RK Laxman to make the subject livelier.

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