Open Elections

For A

Better Democracy

Open Elections

For a Better Democracy

Krishna Sharma, NRI

Author's Profile

Name	Krishna Sharma
From	Kavur, Palnadu Dist, AP
Education	M.Sc. (Mathematics and Computer Science) From University of Hyderabad, 1980 Gold Medalist
Career	Software Engineer / Architect 1981-1989: ECIL, Hyderabad 1989-2018: USA
Expertise	Architecting innovative solutions
Passion	Finding solutions for social issues
Current Work	Two concept papers 'Open Elections' for Better Democracy Common 'lipi' and 'code' for Indian languages Two Books Time to Dismantle the Education System Architecture of HomoSapiens
Contact	krishnadvr@gmail.com Ph: 97018 76024

Contents

- Issues with the current political / electoral system
- Current incorrect and ineffective solutions

- Open Elections - proposed comprehensive solution
- Open Elections - mechanics

- Benefits for Voters, Leaders and Parties
- Benefits for Democracy and the Nation / states
- Benefits for the Government of India and the Election Commission

- Suggested Implementation Roadmap

Issues with the Current System

No place for honest and principled leaders*

- Dominance of money power, muscle power, nepotism, criminality, and even vote buying drive them away

Lack of fair representation

- For many sections of the society
- Delimitation issues

Mixed-segment constituencies

- Generic, “all things to all people” politicians
- Not conducive for leaders with passion for a particular cause or issue

Limited choices and dilemmas

- Choice limited to two party-chosen candidates
- Vote for any other candidate is a ‘wasted vote’
- “All or nothing” manifestos
- Vote for whom? - candidate, party or prime/chief ministerial candidate?

Forced marriages and Perpetual Minority Rule

- Positive votes - only a small percentage of voters actually like the elected leader
- Lack of trust between leaders and the rest of voters
- Perpetual minority rule

Voter apathy / cynicism

- Tolerance to corruption, vote buying, etc.

Lack of national outlook

- Local clout over national vision
- Conflict of interest:
  Local interests or national interests?
- National unity, integrity and development at risk

Local Bodies rendered ineffective

- MLAs overshadow Local Bodies
- Negates three-tier structure,
  ideas of local governance and
  decentralization of power

Challenges of political parties

- ‘Wrong’ candidates can lead to losses,
  parties may even lose majority
- Lack of Internal Party Elections, Sycophancy
- Seat share not equal to vote share

Hostility instead of competition

- Political parties constantly attacks on each other
- ‘Opposition’* party - opposing everything regardless of merit is the sacred duty
- Party in power harasses the other parties
- Polarization - people take sides

Leadership leak

- Good leaders, who differ with party high-command, are pushed out
- Good leaders can lose just by few votes

** Democracy requires elections. Elections require Campaigning. Campaigning requires Money and Demagoguery. But these factors are beyond all reasonable limits now.*

** Why do we elect one party to govern us, and another to oppose it?*

Current Solutions - Incorrect and Ineffective

Solution	**Issues with the solution**
Curbing criminality	Enacting strict laws, circumvented in many ways
Level playing field	Limits on campaign contributions and spending, circumvented in many ways
NOTA	No practical benefit, expect expressing frustration
Reserved constituencies	Representation issues addressed *only for* SC and ST communities Most candidates are 'proxy' candidates Non-SC and Non-ST voters forced to elect SC and ST candidates Not a satisfactory solution even for the sub-castes within SCs and STs
Caste-based census	Questionable accuracy - no one will be happy, even if accurate Leads to more reserved constituencies Leads to caste-based system; castes will live forever Caste-free voters, who are growing, forced to be part of caste-based system

No solution for the rest of the issues

Open Elections: Comprehensive Solution

We opened up the economy in the 1990s

Transforming a bankrupt and deteriorating economy into a vibrant and flourishing economy

We should, similarly, open up the political system

and change its course from a deteriorating political system to a vibrant political system

1. Open up all voters to all leaders, all leaders to all voters
   - By retiring the concept of territorial constituencies
   - Let voters choose any leader of their choice from anywhere
   - Let leaders build their own voter bases attracting voters from everywhere
   - Both at the National Level and State Level
2. Give multiple votes, say twelve, for each voter
   - Let voters distribute their votes to multiple leaders, in any proportion
     - Who they trust are committed to their multiple interests
   - Leaders 'share the voter' with other leaders, parties with other parties
3. Change the terminology (Optional)
   - Lok Sabha - National Leadership Council
   - Vidhana Sabha - State Leadership Council
   - Because the roles and responsibilities of members of legislatures are beyond legislating

Open Elections: Detail

Fundamental Tenet

Conforms to the fundamental tenet of '**Representational Democracy'**

- People govern themselves through their elected leaders
- This can be facilitated in many ways
  - By dividing the electorate into territorial constituencies
  - With special constituencies like 'teachers' and 'graduates'
- 'Open Elections' is just another way
  - Increases the voters' choices, without dividing the electorate on any basis

Innovative Methods

1. 'Top-Rankers' method
   - Leaders ranked by vote-count; top 543 rankers declared elected
   - A different number in each state in the case of state elections
2. 'Weighted Voting' on the floor of legislatures
   - To account for the variation in the vote-counts of elected leaders
3. 'Endorsed Lists' instead of fielding candidates by constituency
   - Voters choose whom they like from endorsed list
4. Only 'love marriages'
   - Elected leaders represent only those who vote for them
   - Makes 'representational democracy' even better

Open Elections: The Mechanics

Leader Cards



Vote For
Bharat Kumari

Front

LIN: IN34968475

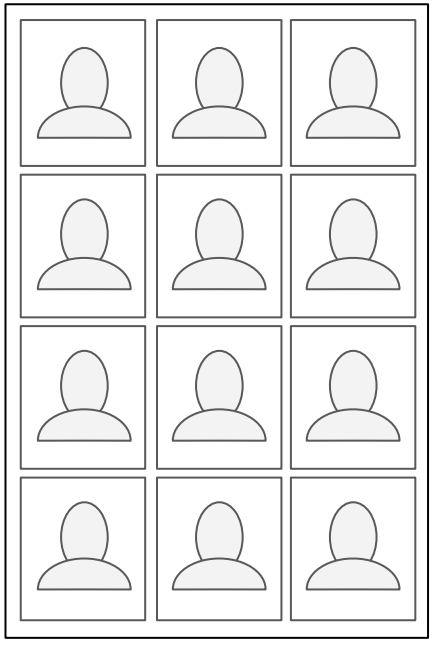
Name: Bharat Kumari
DoB: 10-10-1970
Phone: XXXXX XXXXX
Party: XYP

Contesting for
National Leadership Council

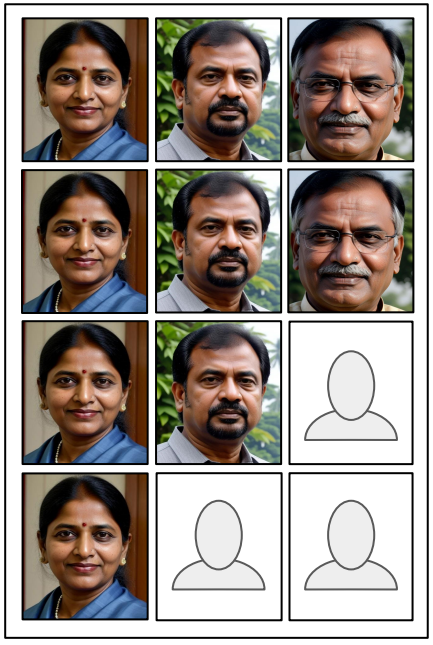
Back

- Election Commission issues LIN (Leadership Identification Number to leaders instead of election symbols
- Leaders create their own ‘Leader Cards’ and distribute to voters in paper and electronic form
- Voters obtain Leaders Cards of their chosen leaders well before the polling date

Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs)



Before Voting



After Voting

- Polling booths equipped with AVMs instead of EVMs and RVMs
  - With the same security and VVPAT
- Voters take Leader Cards to the polling booth and scan them into the AVM
  - Dummy AVMs installed at every polling station for practice

Benefits for Voters

- Huge increase in voter choices
  - No need to alternate between the same two candidates election after election
- Only ‘love marriages’
  - Voters are never represented by leaders whom they do not like or trust
  - High degree of trust between leaders and voters
- Leaders of choice in power
  - At least one or two leaders of choice in power, whom they can approach rightfully
- Fewer ‘wasted’ votes, if any
  - Voters can always find a candidate who is likely to win and committed to their interests
- Not all eggs in one basket
  - Each voter can choose multiple leaders and multiple parties
- More power with multiple votes
  - Retain established and matured leaders
  - Encourage emerging, promising leaders
  - Support multiple parties and independents
- Voters with common interests come together
  - Territorial constituencies slices people of common interests into small chunks
- Multiple leaders for multiple interests
  - Special interests - caste, religion, divyangs, gender, etc.
  - Professional interests - farmers, weavers, teachers, construction workers, etc.
  - General interests - infrastructure, healthcare, climate, trade laws, taxes, etc.
- Beyond caste-based voting
  - Caste-oriented as well as caste-free voters can choose leaders of their choice
  - Adjusts to changing demographics, due to urbanization and inter-caste marriages
  - No need for caste census or SC classification
- ‘Anywhere Voting’
  - Vote at any polling station anywhere;
  - no need to travel back to home polling station; Beneficial for nomadic tribes
  - Increased anonymity

Benefits for Leaders

- Honest leaders can return to political field
  - With the votes of principled voters
  - Every voter, out of conscience, would give one or two votes to honest leaders
- Leaders can dedicate themselves honestly to a field of their passion and interest
  - Find enough voters from across the country / state with the same interests
- Deeper and lasting connection with voters
  - With genuine and firm commitment
  - No need for demagoguery
  - Vote-buying / enticements infeasible, with voters spread thin across the country / state
  - Campaigns can be run on smaller budgets
- Direct Relationship with voters
  - Build one's own loyal voter base
  - Less dependency on party support and tickets;
  - No need to compromise one's values, positions to align with party ideology
- Immune to small changes in vote percentage
  - No risk of loss due to someone else getting slightly more number of votes
  - No risk of 'triangular' contests or 'rebel leaders' adversely affecting the outcome

Benefits for Political Parties

- 'Wrong Candidate' risk eliminated
  - Endorsed lists give flexibility in selecting candidates
  - No need to worry about local equations of each and every single constituency
  - Rebel leaders do not adversely impact the chances of others
- Retain Party-loyal voters
  - Party-loyal voters have multiple candidates on the endorsed list to choose from
- No need for internal party elections
  - Party loyal voters and general voters decide who is worthy and who is not
- Parties survive even when they lack strong leadership at the top
  - As leaders can develop their own roots into the electorate
- Easy to diversify candidates
  - No need to depend on the clout of 'upper caste' candidates;
  - Include leaders from every caste and community in the Endorsed List
  - No need to field 'generic' politicians who can be 'all things to all people'
  - Include leaders of every skill, expertise and interest in the Endorsed List
- No need for 'manifestos'
  - The endorsed list itself speaks for the party policies and positions
- Campaigning becomes relatively easy
  - No need to worry about local factors, dynamics and equations in every constituency
  - Leaders, with their voter bases, will do the heavy lifting of attracting voters
- Guaranteed proportional representation
  - No loss of seats due to small margins or triangular contests
  - No 'dead votes', that doesn't contribute to representation in the legislatures

Benefits for the Nation

- Promotes national spirit
  - Favors leaders with national vision, outlook and appeal than local clout
  - A sense of oneness for voters who share common interests from across the nation
  - Similar spirit at the state-level
- Promotes three-tier structure intended by the constitution
  - Clear division of responsibilities between national, state and local leaders
  - Decentralization of power
- Adapts to demographic shifts
  - Unaffected by changes in demographics due to urbanization and migration
  - Ensures fair representation regardless of castes merging and becoming extinct
  - Ensures fair representation for emerging and receding professions in proportion to their numbers
- No delimitation issues
  - No need to redraw boundaries to ensure constituencies are of equal size
  - Leaders from wealthier states/regions can attract voters from poorer states/regions and bring their success formulas with them
- Incidental but significant benefits
  - No complexity of overlapping constituency boundaries vs. district boundaries
  - No provision or need for candidates to contest from multiple constituencies
  - No need for ‘by-elections’
    544th on the ‘top rankers’ would be declared elected when a member resigns or dies
  - Easy to increase the seats in legislatures, say from 543 to 1000

Better Democracy

- Guaranteed Fair Representation
  - Guaranteed for people of all identities and interests and political parties
  - Weighted voting guarantees proportional representation regardless of the number of elected candidates
- Better voter-leader relationships
  - Only ‘positive’ votes and love marriages, no forced marriages
- No minority rule
  - Voters are represented by only chosen leaders
- Responsive Governments
  - Voters hold down the leaders to ground realities
- Enhanced Democratic spirit
  - From binary-thinking to broad-thinking; from polarization to plurality
- Honesty and Sincerity
  - Interest and identity based alignment - less need for demagoguery
  - Politicians and parties can be more honest with voters
- Corruption and criminality comes down
  - Local corruption and criminality comes down with the elimination of territorial constituencies
  - High level corruption tackled by new watchdog - honest leaders
- Cordial relationships between political parties
  - Less hostility, more cordial relationships among political parties - because of voter sharing
- No ‘leadership leak’
  - Leaders who get approximately the same number of votes will all be elected, no one loses to the other
- Enhanced voter participation
  - Because of Interest based voting, Love marriages and Anywhere voting
  - MIddle class apathy will come down, participation will increase

Open Elections: Suggested Roadmap

1. GoI and ECI should call for an all-party forum
    - To work out the details
    - Political Scientists and retired judges should be invited to facilitate the discussions
2. Initial implementation in three or four states
    - Of different sizes
    - In different parts of the country
    - With different parties in power
    - Refine based on the experience
3. Gradual rollout to all states and the centre

Thank You!

For Details:

openel.in

Download the latest version of this slide deck from:
https://openel.in/pub/cnt/oel/OpenElectionsOverview.pdf

White Paper:
https://openel.in/pub/cnt/oel/OpenElections.pdf