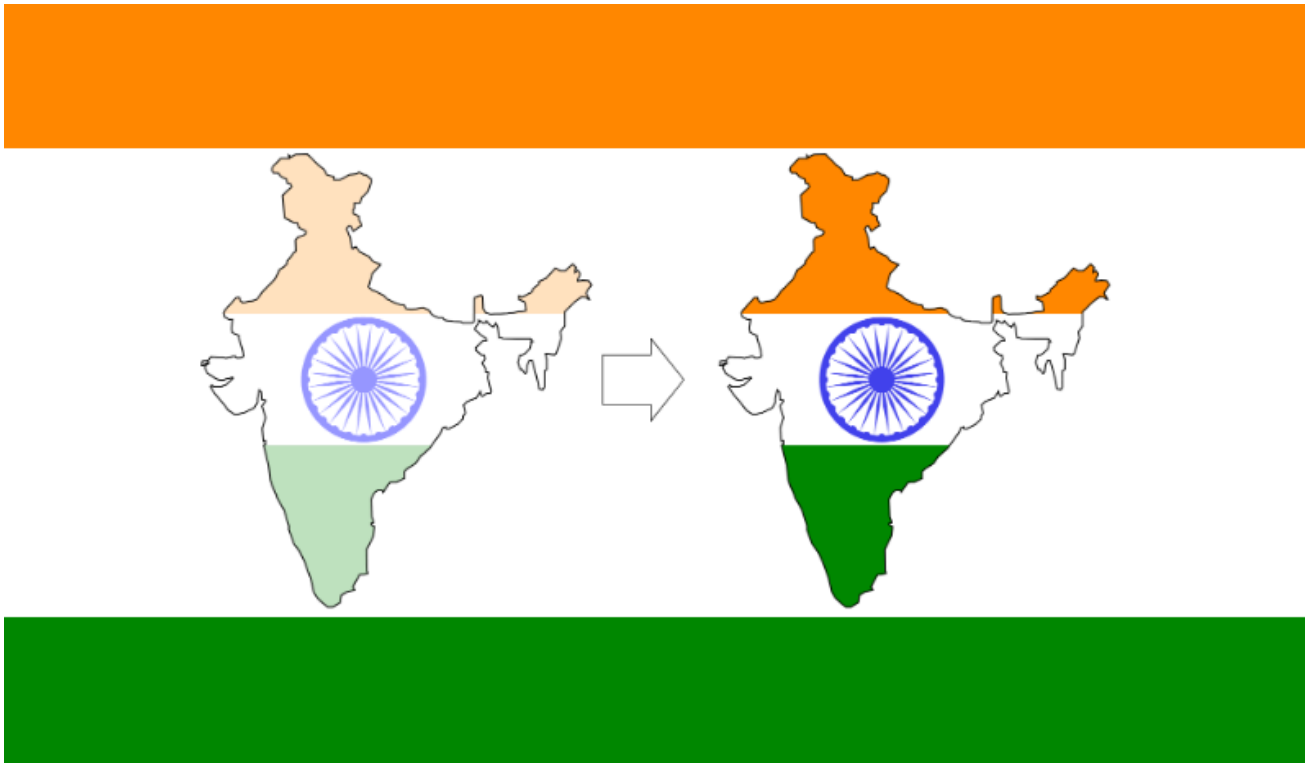
Reset India

With Two Key Reforms to the Political System

For Exponential Growth, Fair Representation,
Rebuilding Democracy and Restoring Ethics



Key Elements

LCCF Model | Multiple Votes | Top Rankers | Proportional Voting Power |
Endorsed Lists | Shared Voters | Issue-Based Governance | Private Bills |
Advanced Voting Machines | Varishth Sabha | Online Legislatures | Leadership Councils

Introduction

We too can achieve the kind of phenomenal progress China made in just a few decades, if we do what they did—a hard reset of the system. We have done this twice before: first at the time of independence, when we embraced public-sector enterprises to drive our economy, and then in the early 1990s, when we have unleashed the power of private enterprise and foreign direct investment. Yet our progress has remained largely linear, not exponential—held back by deep-rooted issues in our political system.

To trigger exponential growth, we need a hard reset of our political system, which over time, has steadily deteriorated, with corruption, freebies, cash, liquor, and other inducements becoming its operating principles, and sectarian passions around caste, religion, region, and even our own heritage have become its driving forces. Whatever the linear progress we have made so far is not because of our political leadership, but in spite of it.

India is not the same as China. We are a nation of multiple languages, cultures, and subcultures—often referred to as castes, using a Portuguese term—each with its own view of affluence and austerity, education and wealth, profit and charity, involvement and detachment. India's culture is the collective sum of all these communities. Yet there is something that binds us at the core: we can easily relate to one another, no matter which part of India we come from.

For India to progress, every one of these communities must progress. Each carries its own potential, aspirations, ethics, and has contributions of its own to make to the society at large. Under the heat of industrialization, these communities have begun to melt and flow into new vistas, taking new shapes, evaporating into new clouds that rain new solutions.

But our political system is dampening this natural process instead of accelerating it. That is what we need to change. That is the hard reset India now requires. We need leaders who can kindle fire in every **community** to express itself, lead every established and emerging **field** to new heights, and champion every **cause** that reflects our aspirations, values, and culture.

And we must do this while staying true to the democratic system we adopted and have grown comfortable with—regular elections, peaceful transfer of power, and a framework that has served us well in accommodating our diversity and plurality. We must earnestly save it from frequent violations and steady dilution, and rebuild it. This forms the second part of the hard reset we need.

The first part can be accomplished by abolishing the archaic leadership-by-constituency model and its accompanying first-past-the-post (FPTP) method. In its place, we should establish a **leadership-by-cause, community, and field** (LCCF) model—an evolved and flexible form of proportional representation, which we describe shortly.

This LCCF model addresses many of the deep-rooted ills plaguing our democracy and rebuilds it on firmer, more inclusive foundations, as we shall see. In addition, we should strengthen the autonomy of non-political constitutional offices such as the President of India and the Chief Election Commissioner of India. We can accomplish this by entrusting their appointments to a non-political collegium called the **Varishth Sabha**, which we will describe later.

LCCF Model

The problem with the current leadership-by-constituency model is that it compels parties to field local strongmen rather than principled leaders with a national or state-level vision, passionate about various causes, the development of diverse communities, and the growth of the many fields essential for the country's all-round progress. Candidates from 'upper castes', those backed by criminal networks, or those with entrenched business interests dominate state and national legislatures, regardless of whether they possess the imagination and outlook these bodies require, thereby denying fair representation to other sections of society.

Compounding this distortion is the FPTP system, which pits leaders and parties against one another in a zero-sum contest. Parties demonize each other, inflame sectarian passions around caste, religion, region, and heritage to build vote banks, and deploy increasingly unethical methods to capture every possible vote. FPTP inherently produces a severe mismatch between vote share and seat share, skewing the people's mandate. With winning candidates typically securing only about 35 percent of the vote, the remaining 65 percent—a clear majority—end up being "represented" by leaders they did not choose, fueling voter apathy, disillusionment, and disengagement.

We can put an end to these issues and distortions by abolishing the archaic leadership-by-constituency model—and the very concept of constituency-based elections—that has pushed us into a decades-long spiral of declining values and shrinking vision. Instead, we would allow voters with shared concerns and issues to come together across the nation (or across a state, in the case of assembly elections) to elect leaders of their choice. Leaders, in turn, would build their voter bases around the causes, communities, and fields they are genuinely passionate about.

To enable this, we propose a system of multiple votes, which voters can cast for multiple leaders—those dedicated to the causes of their interest, the communities they belong to, and the fields they care about. A woman from an agricultural family, for instance, could choose one leader who champions farmers' issues, another who works for women's empowerment, a third focused on her community, and a fourth dedicated to controlling inflation. Similarly, a Dalit teacher who is also a Divyang could distribute votes to a leader dedicated to the issues of Dalits, another working to improve education, a third championing Divyang issues, a fourth focused on national defense, and a fifth whom he personally admires for integrity and values.

With this reform, every cause—from cleaning our surroundings (Swachh Bharat) to cleaning up institutionalized corruption; from ensuring equality before the law to securing the nation against internal and external threats—would have leaders in power who advance it, every community—SCs, STs and their sub-castes, BCs, OBCs, and beyond—would gain representation in proportion to their numbers, without the need for complex sub-classification of SC/ST groups, caste- or religion-based census exercises, or additional reserved constituencies for OBCs or EBCs, all of which would risk locking the political system into a caste framework for eternity, and every field—from the farms that feed us to the laboratories that innovate, from the markets that generate jobs to the front lines that defend us, from the roads that keep us moving to the ethics that keep us together—would find leadership that works for its progress.

In this system, leaders are ranked by the total number of votes they receive, and the top-ranking individuals are declared elected—543 to the Lok Sabha, and a proportional number to each Vidhan Sabha. Each leader's voting power in the legislature is proportional to the votes they receive, a principle we call **Proportional Voting Power (PVP)**.

Political parties, instead of fielding candidates by constituency, would publish nationwide (or state-wide) "endorsed lists" of candidates. Voters who wish to support a particular party may vote for any leader on its endorsed list. Voters who wish to support multiple parties can distribute their multiple votes among the best leaders from multiple parties.

The All-Round Transformation

In this LCCF model, every voter would see at least one or two leaders they genuinely support in power—unlike in the current system, where they often end up voting for candidates fielded by major parties out of fear that their vote might be "wasted," and then potentially get represented by the winning candidate they did not vote for.

Every cause, community and field—no matter how small—would find a genuine champion. No issue can be exaggerated or ignored, because the vote counts of leaders dedicated to those causes provide a transparent measure of their relative importance.

Leaders can be upfront about their convictions, policies, and solutions, and receive explicit support for them from voters. They no longer need to pretend to be all things to all people, as the constituency model forces them to, nor operate through hidden agendas, as often happens today. Voters can hold leaders accountable for specific outcomes on specific issues. Leaders can no longer blame their poor performance on ideologies, manifestos, or the leadership of their parties.

Political parties, meanwhile, no longer need to struggle to find the "right" candidate in every constituency or manage internal dissent. They can include all potential candidates on their endorsed lists and let voters choose whomever they prefer—including leaders outside those lists. LCCF model allows parties to capture all their "party votes" through one candidate or another. Legislative voting power will align with the actual support they enjoy among voters, thanks to PVP.

This reform strikes nepotism and party clout at their root while compensating for the lack of internal democracy within parties. Parties may include whomever they wish on their lists, but it is ultimately the voters who determine which leaders are truly worthy.

Parties also no longer need elaborate manifestos crafted to balance ideology, top leaders' whims, the sensitivities of loyal voter bases, and appeals to swing voters. The candidates on their endorsed lists themselves become a clear and transparent statement of what the parties stand for. Voters, in turn, can express support for specific policies by voting for specific leaders, rather than granting blanket approval to entire manifestos, which are likely to include at least a few items they do not agree with.

Most voters prefer one party only slightly over another, yet the single-vote system blocks them from expressing such nuance. A single vote is treated as a full endorsement of one party and total rejection of all others—a crude form of democracy. The proposed model offers finer

control: voters can distribute multiple votes among leaders from different parties in proportions of their choosing, accurately signaling the level of support they wish to give each.

The single-vote system also fuels polarization, as voters indolently cling to the same party election after election, seeing little reason to shift from one flawed option to another. In doing so, they reward parties irrespective of agenda, ideology, leadership quality, or performance—allowing a small fraction of swing voters to determine who holds power. By contrast, multiple votes encourage people to evaluate leaders—and parties—on merit, as democracy intends.

This model eliminates the need to deploy dirty tricks to squeeze out every last vote, because no one loses an election simply because someone else gets a few more votes. Every leader from every party with a sufficiently large voter base gets elected.

Leaders who maintain genuine relationships with their voter bases can win repeatedly without worrying about party tickets or the fluctuating electoral fortunes of political parties. Voters too can see their preferred leaders remain in power rather than being sidelined by internal party politics or the vagaries of swing-vote politics. Leaders and voters can finally discuss long-term solutions instead of being trapped in the cycle of inducements and appeasements.

The Constitution's vision of a three-tier administration—national, state, and local—would finally be realized in both spirit and practice. Leaders focused on national issues would build pan-India voter bases and serve in the Lok Sabha, those passionate about state issues would build voter bases across their respective states and serve in the Vidhan Sabhas, and those focused on local issues would serve in local bodies. No longer would they clash with each other for local dominance, and state and national policies would no longer be held hostage to local political compulsions.

From Party-Centric Politics to Issue-Based Governance

With multiple votes—and voters supporting multiple parties—parties must learn to "share" voters instead of monopolizing them. Exclusive vote banks become a thing of the past. The distinction between ruling and opposition parties blurs. Demonizing rivals would backfire, alienating voters who support multiple parties. Civility in politics would be restored.

Backed by their own voter bases, leaders no longer need to bow to party pressures or abide by the "party whip," an inherently anti-democratic practice. They can express their convictions freely, without fear or favor. Legislative debates and votes become truly issue-based, as it should be in a healthy democracy.

Freed from party control, legislators could elect leaders they genuinely trust as heads of government, regardless of party affiliation, and replace them if performance falls short. The nation and states would increasingly see broadly accepted leaders—like Atal Bihari Vajpayee or P. V. Narasimha Rao—at the helm. The era of "one-man shows" would be over. Aspirants for top posts would focus on building broad-based acceptance rather than dominating a party, purging rivals, surrounding themselves with sycophants, maintaining cadres, making unholy alliances, or resort to large-scale corruption to raise funds for party operations.

Parties, which are **extra-constitutional entities**—a fact many are unaware of—may even **diminish in prominence**, their role shrinking into something akin to a **facilitative body** (like a chamber of commerce): supporting members rather than controlling them.

Single-party dominance drifting toward dictatorship, rival parties oscillating in power to undo good policies or outdo populist measures, and weak, fragmented parties causing political instability—all become things of the past. No longer would parties infiltrate educational institutions to disrupt academic environments, or extend into villages to deepen local rivalries. Scattered local tensions would no longer be aggregated into state- or national-level fault lines.

With this reform, the political system would work like the business world. Just as entrepreneurs rise from every background by spotting unmet needs and delivering solutions, leaders can rise from any background by identifying the concerns of different communities and building their own voter bases—without wasting energy on building party clout or local influence, seeking the blessings of party bosses, or needing extraordinary money and muscle power to outdo the opponents.

Putting the provision of Private Bills to better use, any member can advance proposals for addressing any issue or concern—large or small—by convincing fellow legislators of their fairness and merit.

Leaders dedicated to particular fields, ideals, and communities also provide focused, informed oversight of the ministries and institutions connected to those domains. This brings expertise, accountability, and continuity to governance.

Simple Solution for Delimitation and other Issues

Concerns about populous states dominating the Lok Sabha—the longstanding delimitation issue—become irrelevant under this system, since members would no longer represent a single state or territory. Their voter bases could potentially span multiple states, both populous and less populous. Just as the national cricket team is composed of the best players from across the country at any given time, the Lok Sabha would consist of the most favored leaders nationwide, decoupled from regional identities. The interests of the states, however, would continue to be safeguarded by the Rajya Sabha, whose members represent the states exactly as the Constitution intended.

The odd provision that allows a leader to contest from multiple constituencies, and also the need to conduct by-elections when such a leader wins from multiple constituencies and resigns from one, becomes irrelevant in this model. Such leaders with support from multiple regions would obviously consolidate their support into one single voter base. In fact, there is no need for by-elections at all in this system. Any vacancy arising out of the death, disqualification, or resignation of a member can be filled by declaring the next highest-ranked candidate (for example, the 544th for the Lok Sabha) as elected.

Expanding the Lok Sabha—from 543 to, say, 1,000 seats to reflect population growth—would be straightforward under this model: simply declare the top 1,000 leaders elected instead of the top 543. The same principle could be applied seamlessly to Vidhan Sabhas.

Voting Process

The current voting process, based on election symbols and Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), cannot support the LCCF model—one that requires listing hundreds or even thousands of candidates from across a state or the nation on the ballot. This can be addressed by replacing election symbols with Leader Cards and EVMs with Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs), which retain robust security features of the EVMs like the VVPAT, while adding touchscreens, QR code scanners, and the capacity to manage the details of a large number of candidates.

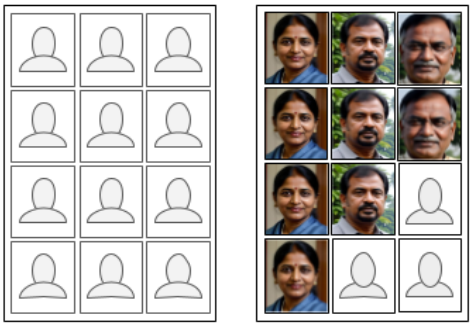
The Election Commission of India (ECI) would assign every registered leader a unique Leader Identification Number (LIN), instead of allocating election symbols. Candidates would create their own Leader Cards containing their photograph, name, date of birth, LIN, party affiliation (if any), and a QR code—distributing them to voters physically at political events and digitally via websites, social media, and other channels. A sample Leader Card is shown on the right. Voters would collect the Leader Cards of their preferred leaders in the months and weeks leading up to the election day and carry them to polling stations on election day.

Sample Leader Card



At the booth, the AVM screen would display multiple boxes—say, twelve—each representing one vote. Voters would tap a box, scan the QR code of their chosen candidate, and see the candidate's face on-screen as confirmation. This process would be repeated until all votes are cast. Voters could distribute votes across different candidates, including giving multiple votes to a single leader if desired. Mistakes could be corrected by rescanning the intended Leader Card. A sample screen on the right shows a voter allocating four votes to one leader, three to another, two to a third, and leaving three votes uncast—a legitimate option.

Advanced Voting Machine



To familiarize voters with the new system, polling stations would provide dummy AVMs for practice, and a mobile app would allow advanced simulation. Tech-savvy family members or election volunteers can assist voters to ensure that everyone, regardless of age or background, is comfortable using the system.

Implementation

A fundamental reform like this should obviously be tested before full adoption. It can first be piloted in one or two willing states, refined based on real-world experience, and then expanded to other states and eventually to the national level. Just as it took a cycle or two for the Indian populace to become fully familiar with democracy when it was first introduced, this model too will need a few cycles for voters and leaders to become conversant with it and experience its full benefits.

Varishth Sabha

To empower the non-political offices—such as the President, Election Commissioner of India, Chief Justice of India, and the Governor of the Reserve Bank— with the autonomy they need to safeguard the democracy, we propose establishing a non-political collegium, called Varishth Sabha and make it responsible for electing the office holders of these offices.

This body would be composed of individuals with distinguished experience in public affairs, aged between 65 and 75, drawn from four independent streams of public service:

- **Former legislators** with at least eight years of service in the Lok Sabha or a Vidhan Sabha.
- **Retired judges** with at least three years of service in the Supreme Court or High Courts.
- **Former High Commissioners or Ambassadors** of India with at least five years of service representing the nation abroad.
- **Distinguished citizens** who received Padma awards at least six years prior.

Membership to this Sabha would be entirely voluntary. Members must relinquish any prior party affiliations, swear under oath to refrain from any political activity for life, and would be permanently barred from holding any political office, even after the age of 75.

Additional Reforms

While we are at it, there are two additional, simpler reforms worth considering—both relatively easy to implement and beneficial to our political system in their own ways.

e-Legislatures

Today, legislative sessions have become largely ceremonial and theatrical — consuming vast amounts of time and public resources without meaningful debate or outcomes. Hardly anyone changes their opinions or votes based on the debates.

Let us replace them with a transparent online platform, where legislators can share opinions, proposals, and questions in text, audio, or video form — all open to public viewing and searchable by AI tools for analysis, summarization, and fact-checking.

Such a system would turn legislatures from arenas of spectacle into spaces of substance — enabling every citizen to observe, understand, and engage with the democratic process.

Leadership Councils

The responsibilities of legislatures extend far beyond lawmaking. Their members elect and supervise the executive, ensure accountability, serve on committees, respond to crises and emergencies, and lead public celebrations. To reflect this broader and more dignified role, we propose renaming Lok Sabha as **National Leadership Council** and Vidhan Sabhas as **State Leadership Councils**.

Leading the World

We embraced democracy as our political system in the middle of the twentieth century, following the lead of the world's veteran democracies. Since then, we have traveled a remarkable distance to stand tall as the largest and most vibrant democracy on Earth. Elections are held regularly. Voters from every corner of the nation participate freely in local, state, and national polls. Power transitions smoothly, peacefully, and predictably at every level — a living testament to our democratic maturity.

The world now studies our experience, admires our resilience, and learns from our journey, recognizing India's rightful place in global democratic leadership. Lead we must, for many democracies remain trapped in archaic models, too polarized and divided to find the consensus required to liberate themselves.

The LCCF model is to politics what UPI is to financial transactions. Just as inventing and implementing UPI accelerated our economic progress, implementing the LCCF model and the Varishth Sabha would transform our political system, accelerate our all-round progress, and reset our democratic journey. In doing so, India would set an example for other democracies to free themselves from archaic models.

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