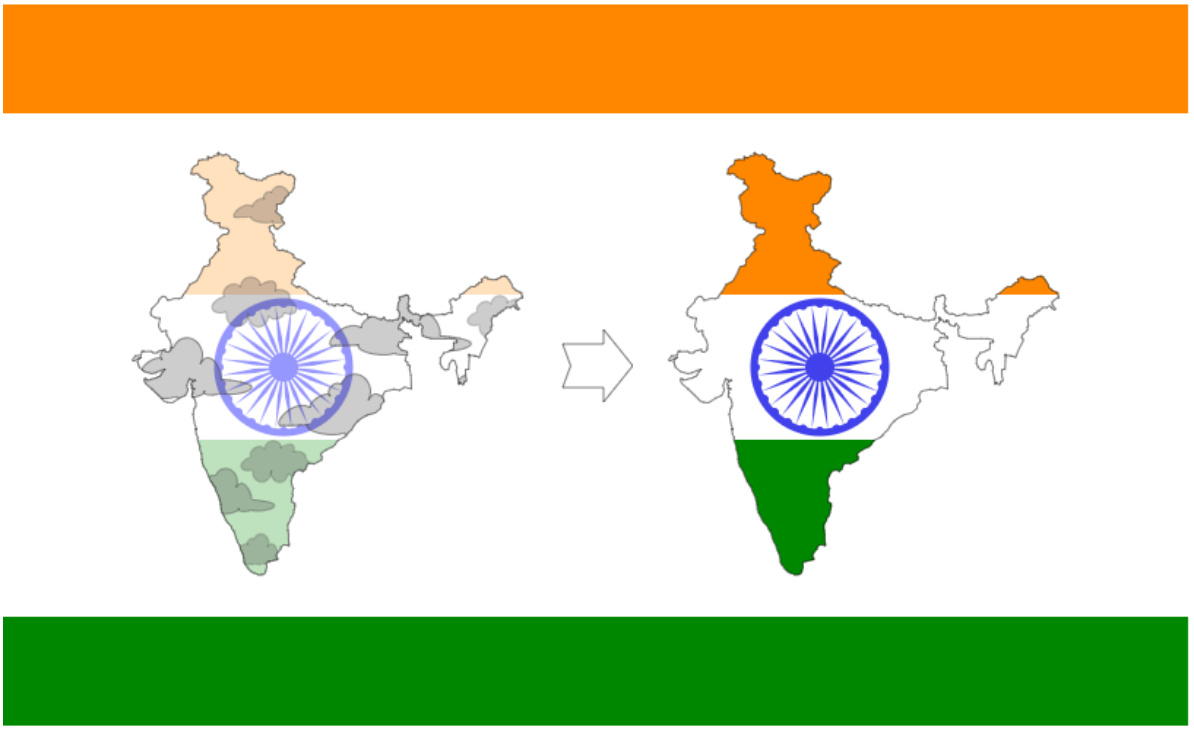
APS

Adaptive Political System



Thinking Beyond FPTP, PR, Parliamentary, and Presidential Systems: Reimagining Representation, Leadership, Governance, and Political Power

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Adaptive Political System

We want principled leaders in power who can keep institutions free from corruption and nepotism; yet we often end up electing leaders with criminal backgrounds or connections. We want to see leaders from our own communities in positions of power; yet we often elect leaders from the rich and influential sections, or their proxies, who treat us as vote banks. We want leaders who can develop important fields and sectors, and champion causes essential to national progress; yet we often send local leaders to national and state legislatures regardless of whether they possess the necessary vision. We—the unemployed youth, struggling farmers, sanitation workers, and many others—want leaders dedicated to our specific needs and concerns, yet we end up electing generic politicians who try to be "all things to all people."

We are facing a leadership crisis. We do not have the kind of leaders we truly want, or that the nation needs, at the top. The few good and exemplary leaders who rise to power despite all odds are simply not enough to carry the load; their vision is constrained and their values compromised at every step.

But why? Why do we elect leaders against our own intentions and interests? Because we have a vote, but not a system that allows us to cast it for the leaders we truly need.

Constituencies contain mixed electorates; leaders from influential or numerically dominant sections enjoy a natural advantage over others. Mixed electorates favor generic politicians who can appeal to everyone; leaders passionate about a specific field, sector, or community face a barrier to entry into politics. Fierce competition pushes candidates to outspend and outmaneuver their opponents; corrupt practices and criminal connections often become powerful advantages in raising and deploying funds with reduced risk of detection. Constituencies also localize elections; local politicians are elevated to national and state legislatures regardless of whether they possess a national or state-level vision, outlook, or appeal.

Our vote may decide which of the top two or three candidates gets elected. But who becomes one of those top two or three candidates is determined by these underlying factors.

There are several other issues as well. Political parties themselves often lack internal democracy, rewarding clout over talent. The winning candidate typically secures only around 35% of the vote, meaning that about 65% of voters—a large majority—are effectively misrepresented and feel alienated. The persistent mismatch between vote-share and seat-share distorts the mandate, unduly elevating one party while penalizing another. Anti-democratic, whip-based voting reduces legislation to a procedural formality, replacing genuine deliberation and issue-based decision-making. At a deeper level, there is sustained friction among the three branches of government—the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary—as well as chronic tensions among the three levels of administration—the center, the states, and local governments.

We are paying for this dysfunction in many ways. Expediency trumps ethics. Mediocrity supersedes excellence. Pride is increasingly tied to identities rather than achievements. Exploiting the system becomes more rewarding than contributing to it. A lack of broad-based representation breeds resentment, deepening social divisions. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen. From education to agriculture, key sectors suffer from the absence of

strong and visionary leadership. A growing number of people, including the patriotic, consider leaving the country at the earliest opportunity.

Like a chronically ill person, we curse, crawl, and limp through this state of dysfunction. But there is no point in frustration; we must think of a system that enables us to elect the kinds of leaders we actually want, and is free from friction and distortions.

In the 1990s, when our economy stood at the brink, we responded by opening it up, freeing it from the clutches of the License Raj, and unleashing entrepreneurship. We should do the same now with the political system. We must free it from the clutches of 'Constituency Raj' and unleash leadership. We should not be forced to choose between "two evils"; we need real choice. We need to remove the entry barriers to the kinds of leaders we want to elect.

Constituencies slice people with shared identities, ideals, aspirations, values, and goals into small fragments and force them to elect a common leader. We should liberate people from the cages of constituencies, so that they can come together and elect leaders from across the nation (or state, in state elections) whom they truly like.

Imagine every community, from traditional ones such as weavers, dhobis, and fishermen to emerging ones such as transport workers, migrant labourers, sports enthusiasts, and environmental advocates, able to elect leaders of their own. Imagine every caste within the SC and ST classifications, as well as within classifications such as BC, OBC, and EBC, able to elect leaders of its own.

In fact, voters should be able to support multiple leaders—one known for integrity, another for vision, another dedicated to the development of their community, and so on.

Imagine a woman from an agricultural family, for example, able to elect one leader focused on farmers' issues, another on women's empowerment, another from her community, and yet another focused on local infrastructure such as sanitation or transport. Similarly, imagine a teacher from a Dalit community who is also Divyang, able to support one leader dedicated to the upliftment of Dalits, another for the advancement of education, and yet another for the concerns of Divyangs.

What we essentially should do is ***delocalize elections*** and ***pluralize representation***. Delocalization enables leaders with national vision to build pan-India voter bases, and those with state-level vision to build statewide voter bases. They would no longer need to engage in constant turf wars for local dominance with one another or with local leaders. Local leaders with a focus on local development would, in turn, be freed from pressures exerted by state and national-level legislators. The three-tier system of governance would then function as originally envisioned.

Leaders passionate about specific fields, sectors, or communities could attract voter support directly, without having to join political parties or compromise their independence. Legislation would, in effect, become issue-based rather than whip-driven.

We can institute such a delocalized and pluralized representation system, easily giving each voter multiple votes—say, a dozen—and allowing them to distribute those votes among three, four, or more candidates in any proportion. The current EVM-based process does not support nationwide ballots or multi-vote distribution. But we can design better Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs) taking advantage of now widely known and available technologies like QR codes and touchscreens.

We can rank the leaders by their vote count and declare the 'top 543' elected to Lok Sabha and a corresponding number of them to Vidhan Sabhas in state elections. Within the legislature, the voting power of the members would be proportional to the total number of votes they received from the public. We call this Proportional Voting Power (PVP).

With delocalization and pluralization, we are in fact establishing a future-proof Adaptive Political System (APS). In a rapidly changing world, old professions fade and transform while new ones emerge. People are constantly regrouping, formally and informally, around shifting combinations of interests, concerns, and aspirations. APS enables voters to elect the exact mix of leaders they need at any given time: the principled, the visionary, the capable, the committed, and others who meet their evolving criteria.

Those who advocate proportional representation (PR) over FPTP, or a presidential system over a parliamentary one, as a solution to some of these problems may find a more comprehensive, powerful, and liberating alternative in APS.

APS, however, does not address the electoral and representational issues unique to the third tier of governance: local bodies. To address these issues and further widen representation, we introduce a complementary model called the 'Inculot' model specifically for local bodies, which we elaborate later.

In the following sections, we explore the full implications and transformative power of APS, the details of a new AVM-based voting process, and the Inculot model.

The Transformation

Leadership, Unleashed

The economic reforms of 1991 unleashed the entrepreneurial spirit of India, which had been unable to breathe under the weight of the License Raj. APS seeks to do the same for the spirit of leadership. There are many leaders in society who dream big for India and for various sections of society, but they are constrained by what may be called *Party Raj*.

The pathways to power are all but monopolized by political parties. It is nearly impossible for aspiring leaders to come to power, unless they join an established political party—a choice that demands they surrender their independence, toe an outdated or compromised ideology, blindly defend the deeds of all party bosses past and present, and tone down their vision to fit the party's agenda and their creativity to fit the party's modus operandi.

Under APS, aspiring leaders can bypass this entire structural overhead. We live in an era where digital connectivity allows independent voices to organically amass millions of followers based purely on ideas they champion. If selfless leaders could cross language and regional barriers to rally a nation in the pre-independence era without technology, a sincere leader can effortlessly do the same today.

Leaders passionate about issues—from quality education for all children to preventing religious rituals from polluting water bodies; from ensuring proper support for weavers and potters to addressing the concerns of migrant labor; from developing sectors like sports and tourism to ensuring clean toilets in trains—can not only build followers but also mobilize networks of volunteers that reach people beyond social media.

What APS allows such passionate leaders to do is immeasurable. It enables them to convert followers from across the nation (or state) into durable pan-India (or statewide) voter bases. They do not have to pretend to be "all things to all people," as politicians do today. Instead of being constrained by and hiding behind the smokescreens of manifestos, they can be upfront and direct about what they are truly passionate about—the specific communities, causes, or fields. They can build genuine, lasting, organic, and direct bonds with people who can relate to the same—unfiltered and undiluted by the heavy intermediaries of the current system, namely political parties. They do not need to expend their energies on internal or external political maneuvering, typical of political parties.

Candidates under APS do not have to fight other candidates directly. They do not have to worry about every single vote tipping the balance between victory and defeat. No one will fall off the "top 543" list due to minor fluctuations in support, unless they happen to be at the very bottom of that list. Just as savvy entrepreneurs focus on building and keeping their customer base happy and loyal, committed leaders can build and sustain their voter bases over time.

Voters, too, can be confident that leaders they genuinely support will remain in power, unaffected by drifting party fortunes or shifting political winds. Leaders and voters can work together on long-term solutions instead of offering and settling for short-term inducements and appeasements.

Parties, Obsolete

Many people do not realize that political parties are not constitutional entities. They are merely "associations" recognized under the Representation of the People Act. The Constitution itself contains only limited references to political parties, primarily in connection with the anti-defection provisions—an instance of parties seeking constitutional support to compensate for their inability to keep their own flock together.

We rarely pause to realize that our current system effectively outsources the destiny of the nation to private entities. These political parties are frequently unstable, prone to factionalism, sometimes crippled by ideological rigidity, and other times rudderless from a vague or compromised one—weighed down by historic baggage and hijacked by dynastic politics. We would never entrust the construction of even a school building to an organization plagued by such systemic internal chaos; why, then, do we outsource the governance of our entire civilization to them?

Under the APS model, political parties would gradually become obsolete. Leaders capable of building their own voter bases would find little reason to surrender their independence to political parties, subscribe to often outdated or compromised ideologies and questionable agendas, and operate within rigid party power structures.

Even if parties continue to exist, they would remain what they legally are—associations under the Representation of the People Act. Their role, however, could evolve into something closer to chambers of commerce, film institutes, professional guilds, or sports academies: identifying, mentoring, grooming, and supporting aspiring leaders rather than controlling them or directly contesting elections.

Parties—if they continue to exist—would become "less political." Instead of struggling to identify one candidate for every constituency based on caste equations, religious arithmetic, factional balancing, and local power structures, they could simply publish nationwide—or statewide, in state elections—"endorsed lists" of candidates comprising leaders from diverse communities, professions, ideological strands, and social backgrounds.

Such endorsed lists would also ease many of the internal pressures political parties currently face. Parties would no longer have to make painful choices between established leaders and young entrants, between moderates and more hardline voices, or between embracing and distancing themselves from dynasty politics. Nor would they need to alienate one internal faction through candidate selection and then spend energy managing the resulting dissent.

Instead, parties could simply include all viable leaders in their endorsed lists and allow party supporters—along with the wider electorate—to decide who is truly worthy of support. In fact, party supporters or wider electorate can even vote for a candidate party has not included on the endorsed list, if they so choose. In many ways, APS would implicitly compensate for the absence of meaningful internal party democracy, a criticism parties often face for good reason.

Endorsed lists would also significantly widen voter choice. Party supporters would no longer be compelled to support a single local candidate imposed upon them within a constituency, regardless of whether they personally trust or admire that individual. Instead, they could support any leader on the endorsed list whom they genuinely believe in. This would

benefit parties as well, since supporter votes would no longer be lost merely because of resentment toward one particular candidate.

APS would also free political parties—if they continue to exist—from the seat-share and vote-share distortions of the current system, where even a small swing in vote percentage can dramatically alter a party's legislative strength. Under APS, every leader with a substantial voter base would secure representation, regardless of how votes are distributed elsewhere. Through Proportional Voting Power (PVP), the aggregate vote counts of all elected leaders would translate into proportionate voting power within the legislature. In practice, therefore, APS would also function as a form of proportional representation.

Voters, Empowered

With universal adult franchise, we have given everyone the right to vote, but the design of the voting process has significantly reduced the effective power of that vote, breeding cynicism. People have given up the hope that they can change anything with their vote. They consider the worth of their vote to be so low that they are willing to exchange it for simple inducements or appeasements, to get at least "something" out of their "valuable" vote. Multiple systemic issues contribute to this sad state of affairs.

First, voters' choices are limited to the candidates contesting in their constituency. Those who do not like any of the candidates may vote for NOTA, but it makes no real difference.

Second, for fear of their vote going to waste, voters often choose a candidate likely to win—usually one fielded by a major political party. Voter choice is thus reduced to what is often called the "lesser of two evils."

Third, the voter faces a three-in-one dilemma, as the vote for the party, the prime ministerial (or chief ministerial, in state elections) candidate, and the local candidate are collapsed into a single choice. Voters who agree with one or two, but not all three, have no mechanism to express that distinction.

Furthermore, the winning candidate represents all voters in the constituency, including those who voted against them and those who did not vote at all. Typically, winners secure only around 35% of the vote, forcing the remaining 65%—the actual majority—to accept a representative they did not choose. As this pattern repeats nationwide, election after election, the country effectively ends up under a form of perpetual minority rule, leaving more citizens feeling misrepresented than represented.

All these issues make the assertion that "the vote is sacred or powerful" feel hollow. APS, free from these issues, restores the meaning, power, and sacredness of the vote. Under this system, voters can choose leaders whom they truly trust to serve their community, or to champion a cause, or to lead a field, with little fear of their vote going to waste. Most voters are likely to see some, if not all, of their preferred leaders elected. Voters may be partially represented, but never misrepresented, under APS: no leader they did not actively support can claim their mandate.

In fact, APS gives voters a completely new sense of empowerment—one that has been unimaginable since the dawn of independence. Voters are no longer forced to pin all their hopes on a single party or its prime ministerial face, tasking them with a vague promise to deliver "all things to all people." They no longer have to risk a party supreme leader becoming a slave to ideological dogma or opportunistic maneuvering just for political survival.

Instead, citizens can directly choose specific leaders who capture their imagination, holding them accountable for specific promises. They can finally begin to feel the true power of their vote — as clearly as that of a rupee in their hand, which they can spend on what they precisely want, rather than exchanging it for something that is probable at best, harmful at the worst.

Vices, Reduced

Corruption and criminality, as deeply embarrassing and widely detested as they are, remain firmly entrenched in the political system. Politics today has largely been reduced to an arena for those who can raise and distribute enormous sums of money during elections, only to recover them through corruption once in power. This reality has become so normalized that voters and political commentators alike sympathize with politicians for their predicament; anyone critical of this cycle is often dismissed as naïve, idealistic, or out of touch.

Little do people realize how damaging the consequences truly are. This systemic rot has driven principled leaders entirely away from public life—precisely the individuals we need to keep the system clean and functioning as designed.

APS addresses this crisis in two powerful ways. First, as leaders build direct, long-term relationships with voters, their bond moves beyond the culture of short-term inducements and appeasements. In fact, the historic culture of voters voluntarily supporting worthy leaders through small, clean contributions may return. Leaders would neither have to spend ruinous sums nor "recover" them while in power, nor will they need to collude with shadowy financiers before elections and reward them with corrupt policy favors afterward.

Second, APS allows voters who value ethics to collectively pool their support and lift principled leaders into power. Their presence, even in a small proportion initially, will fundamentally alter the aura of the political atmosphere. People listen, and wrongdoers hesitate to transgress, when authenticity is fortified with authority. Even in small numbers, such leaders can exert immense moral pressure within legislatures. Pushing back against institutional decay will be the natural instinct of these independent leaders. Authenticity backed by constitutional authority changes the entire room; wrongdoers hesitate when they know they cannot buy or bully an independent representative. Once voters witness the sheer disruptive power of an uncompromised leader in parliament, they will naturally pool their votes to elect more of them. Imagine a legislature anchored by a hundred T.N. Seshans.

Another deeply frustrating phenomenon of our times is the overwhelming deluge of political propaganda across traditional and social media. Political parties constantly attack one another, relentlessly smearing rival leaders past and present. Gullible netizens are targeted with toxic conspiracy theories and character assassination campaigns. Social, cultural, and even spiritual figures are routinely turned into villains by competing factions of influencers, to the point that younger generations are left with no one to admire or look up to as role models.

Under APS, this hostile landscape changes completely. Leaders would, first of all, have little reason to demonize others. Even if they do, it would only backfire. Criticizing one another would not be appreciated by the voters who could have supported both. "Shared voters" and overlapping voter bases act as natural checks on these demonizing tendencies.

Finally, APS fundamentally transforms the psychology of the voter. The current system forces voters to make an agonizing, binary choice. And to justify their choice, they double down election after election, quite often supporting a degenerated party and taking pride in

not deserting it in bad times. This is the exact opposite of what people are supposed to do in a vibrant democracy: constantly search for the best of the best leaders. APS breaks this toxic cycle. It relieves voters from the artificial "either-or" trap. The same everyday discernment and rationality that people naturally use to pick the finest fruits from a fruit vendor can finally find its true expression at the polling booth.

The Representation

All Sections, Represented

Democracy is not just about everyone having a vote; as importantly, it is about everyone being represented at the table. India is a strong and healthy democracy because it successfully delivers the former through the universal adult franchise. However, India—as do many other nations—is *not* a strong and healthy democracy because it fails to deliver the latter.

Elections are staggeringly expensive. Hence, the wealthy, the influential, and their proxies find disproportionate representation, creating widespread resentment and disillusionment. Furthermore, which communities find representation depends entirely on the vote-banks of the winning party. This forces communities into engaging in bitter proxy wars through political parties—leaving society set against itself.

The current system forces all communities within a constituency to elect a single leader. That leader can obviously belong to only one community—usually an influential or dominant one—and not all of them, forcing the others to constantly settle for being represented by someone not their own. The reserved constituencies make it worse; all communities are forced to elect a candidate exclusively from SC or ST communities, which is essentially anti-democratic. Even the communities within the SC and ST classifications are not happy with this arrangement, as the party nominations routinely go to the more advanced among them. Furthermore, suffering from the ‘proxy candidates’ syndrome, these communities have not seen even a fraction of the progress in seven decades that these measures were originally expected to deliver within a single decade.

Mechanistic fixes like gender quotas or expanded caste reservations fail to solve the underlying disease: the proxy problem. Just as SC and ST reserved seats are frequently captured by proxies of dominant local elites, gender quotas risk giving rise to an informal "Association of Husbands of Women Legislators," where actual power is wielded from behind the curtain. APS bypasses this entirely. Through delocalized representation, it allows women, sub-castes, and minority occupational groups to pool their votes nationally and elect authentic, unmediated leaders of their own choosing.

How about conducting a caste-based census and carving out reserved constituencies for every single caste to ensure representation for all sections of society? That would mean forcing the electorate in every constituency to choose candidates of one specific community. What about separate electorates for each community, so that everyone can choose their own representative? There are two issues with this too: one, every community would perpetually complain that their numbers were undercounted; and two, arranging unique ballots for every single group would be a logistical nightmare.

More seriously, whichever of these two routes we take—reserved constituencies or separate electorates—we end up permanently freezing our political system into a rigid caste framework. This is the exact opposite of what we ultimately want to achieve: a caste-free and secular society. Furthermore, what about the voters who are actively caste-averse, casteless, or non-religious today? Do we force them into separate electorates too, essentially turning "no caste" into just another caste?

We are caught in the whirlpools of unfortunate implemented solutions that are not working and contemplated solutions that are equally problematic. To clear our minds, we should look straight into the question at hand, which is plain and simple: ensuring representation for everyone. In fact, we should ask a deeper associated question: what does it mean to be "represented at the table"? Do people want their identity to be represented, their profession to be represented, or their aspirations, values, and customs to be represented?

In the true spirit of democracy, we must leave this question to be answered by the people themselves. It should not be answered by a Gandhi, a Nehru, a Patel, or an Ambedkar, and certainly not by any ideologue, activist, or career politician who will say and do anything for the sake of votes.

This is precisely what we achieve under the APS: letting the voters, everywhere, in every single election, decide for themselves what matters most to them at that time and through whom they want to be represented. APS completely bypasses the complexities of reserved constituencies, separate electorates, and caste censuses, establishing a simple, straightforward solution that completely eliminates the risk of freezing our political system into a permanent caste framework, ever.

One might ask: Are 543 legislators enough to represent all diverse identities, aspirations, and goals? Certainly not. We should increase the number to some 3,000, if not to some 2,000, or at least 1,000. This is not a bizarrely large number as it might seem. To put it in perspective, the UK, with a population of a little over 6.5 crore, has 650 MPs. At that rate, India, with a population of 140 crore, should have 14,000 representatives. But, in reality, a thousand should be enough. Under APS, increasing the 543 to 1,000 is a simple matter of declaring the "top 1,000" instead of the "top 543" ((and a similar increase in Vidhan Sabhas)- all without the complexity of waiting for census or drawing constituency boundaries.

The magic of APS is that large groups take up only one or two seats with high Proportional Voting Power (PVP), leaving the remaining seats open for smaller groups. Related, "too tiny" groups can organically group together to find a single representative—a dynamic that is left entirely to the voters themselves and to the leaders who can convince them to come together.

Furthermore, as people elect multiple leaders, the same voters may find themselves represented by a leader with large PVP, another leader with medium PVP, and yet another leader with small PVP simultaneously. Consider our earlier example of a woman from an agricultural family: she would be represented simultaneously by a high-PVP leader championing women's rights, a medium-PVP leader dedicated to farmers' issues, and a small-PVP leader committed to her specific community.

We will discuss the detailed dynamics of legislation with a mix of high, medium, and low PVP members in a later section.

Leadership, Emphasized

To save ourselves from the vagaries of nature, we developed complex irrigation systems with artificial reservoirs and canals. While they undoubtedly served their intended purpose, they also brought unintended, severe side effects to our natural ecology. The exact same is true of modern democracy. While it successfully improved political stability, continuity, and predictability compared to the feudal systems of the past, it has introduced a toxic, unintended side effect to our social ecology.

Human beings naturally need leaders, and in any healthy society, those leaders emerge organically. This is an ancient social mechanism that India—which was a 90% agrarian society until very recently—instinctively understands. Every community and every village has historically relied on its elders. Depending on the time and the need, it could be one, two, or a few trusted individuals. Among them, a hierarchy forms naturally, driven by mutual respect rather than state enforcement.

We see this same organic phenomenon playing out today in everyday life: in homeowners' associations, temple committees, and localized groups. Consider an activity as simple as cricket. The players emerge naturally; they discover their roles as batsmen or bowlers based on their inherent interest and skill. Captains rise to lead based on merit, and they willingly yield to others when the time comes. Very minimal, procedural apparatus is required to help the process.

Democracy with periodic elections disrupts this organic process and the organic relationship between people and leaders, completely altering the dynamics among the "elders." Gaining votes takes precedence over leading people. Those who can truly lead can easily lose by a few votes—sometimes by a substantial margin—due to various factors, such as changing political winds, to others.

As a result, the electorate never truly knows what kind of persona will occupy the seat next. Deeply respected social leaders, many a time, choose to stay completely away from the electoral fray, leaving the vacuum to be filled by individuals who are strictly chasing power, profit, and prestige. In short: majoritarian democracy has weakened social leadership, and contentious, hyper-partisan elections have hollowed out our political leadership.

It is time to look squarely into these issues. Although "representation" is treated as the grand philosophical foundation of democratic governance, what people truly want and need on the ground is leadership. They want leaders who can clearly articulate their needs, someone they can turn to with their daily grievances, someone they can depend on during emergencies, and someone they genuinely want to see as organizers and chief guests at their celebrations.

People naturally perceive their leaders through such a large, expansive frame. Yet, democracy frames them narrowly as mere political representatives, and the parliamentary system further reduces them to simple "legislators." Leaders find it hard to meet these varying expectations, from the expansive to the restrictive. Think of one crucial difference: "legislators" can never speak outside of what the constitution says, whereas we want people's leaders to openly talk about the flaws and issues of the constitution itself, when needed. A society should never be a prisoner of the governance framework it has chosen; it must retain the freedom to redefine the framework whenever necessary.

Consider the word Parliament. It originates from the French verb parler—which literally means "to talk" or "to speak." True leadership, however, is much more than mere talking. Think of the term Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA); it defines a leader entirely in terms of their mechanical membership in a political branch. We should take a broader perspective. We, as a people, should elect our leaders for our own sake—to lead us, guide us, stand by and with us in bad times, and celebrate with us in good times. A seat at the legislative table to discuss national policy should be a natural extension of that leadership, not the sum total of their existence.

To enliven this spirit, we can take a definitive structural step. Let us rechristen the Lok Sabha as the Lok Naayak Sabha, or the People's Leaders Council—or Leadership Council for short. We should similarly rechristen the Vidhan Sabhas as Jan Naayak Sabhas. We can qualify them when needed as the National Leadership Council and State Leadership Councils.

We should shift from the mere technical "elect and represent" paradigm to an organic "respect and expect" paradigm. Let the people and leaders help grow a spirit and culture of leadership that is beyond politics. Let us refill the social leadership that has been vacuumed out.

Public Will, Reflected

Democracy delivers on its promise only when the imagination of leaders and the imagination of the public converge and find expression in policies and laws—just as an economy delivers on its promise when the imagination of entrepreneurs and the imagination of consumers converge to shape products and services. The greater that imagination, and the deeper that convergence, the more profound the resulting policies, laws, products, and services become.

Today, the primary mechanism meant to facilitate this convergence between leaders and citizens—the party manifesto—is a remarkably blunt instrument. Top leaders, often distanced from ordinary people and insulated by echo chambers, easily lose touch with the public pulse. They may comprehend the macro picture while completely missing local realities. Local leaders, on the other hand, may understand the micro-narrative but lack a grasp of the broader national context. With multiple layers of party bureaucracy and communication separating the two, the public will is routinely lost in translation. Any nuance that actually bubbles to the top is an exception, never the rule.

The weaker the connection between leadership and genuine public sentiment, the more vulnerable manifestos and ultimate policies become to extraneous, sideways influences. Ideologies, media narratives, the personal whims of top bosses, appeasement politics, populist pressures, vested interests, activist agendas, and political pundits' "magic formulas" all rush into the vacuum, pretending to be the definitive path to winning an election or taking the nation forward.

Furthermore, because manifestos are legally non-binding, parties take all the liberty to pack them with sweeping promises designed primarily to lure voters rather than to be sincerely implemented. This is compounded by the fact that almost no one—including the candidates and party workers themselves, let alone the average voter—actually reads these documents in full. Only a handful of loud, headline-catching promises ever enter the public consciousness.

Manifestos force an "all-or-nothing" choice on voters. They have no option but to accept an entire bundle, including proposals they completely disagree with, just for the sake of the few they favor. Consequently, no one truly knows which specific policies the public actually supported, or how intensely. Political parties cannot decipher which items in their manifesto contributed to their victory or defeat. Yet, the winning party still claims a total, sweeping mandate for its entire document, allowing any vocal politician to push through a niche agenda under the guise of full public support. APS unpacks this bundle. Because leaders run on distinct, targeted domains, a citizen's vote becomes a precise, mathematical signature of support for a specific vision.

By rendering rigid political parties obsolete, or transforming them into simple endorsing entities, APS dissolves the thick fog of party politics that separates the voter from the policy. Leaders, in this system, no longer have to pretend to be all things to all people—unlike in the current system where they must appeal to people of wildly varied identities, aspirations, and concerns within an arbitrary geographic constituency. Instead, under APS, they build their voter bases by dedicating themselves exclusively to specific communities, causes, or fields. This ensures a far deeper understanding and a hyper-targeted focus. Both leaders and voters can collaborate by engaging the rational side of their brains, rather than being swept away by collective emotional hysteria. No longer will voters have to suffer the frustration of dealing with a candidate who has limited power, and an all-powerful party they can never reach.

Parties, if they continue to exist, would no longer need to construct artificial manifestos. The diversity of candidates on their "endorsed lists" and their specific priorities would organically speak to what the party stands for. Voters, too, by voting for specific leaders, can indicate precisely what they are backing; no longer would they have to grant an implicit, blind assent to an entire bundle of policies.

The vote counts of individual leaders would become a precise, mathematical measure of public support for specific priorities, concerns, and ideas. No longer would leaders, governments, ideologues, activists, or analysts have to grope in the dark while trying to shape national policy. Everyone—from citizens to legislators—would be able to clearly see the boulders and pebbles resting at the bottom of the lake of public opinion.

In particular, these transparent vote counts would reveal exactly how many people genuinely prioritize narrow identities such as caste, religion, gender, or language. Only metrics that accurately reflect public sentiment can expose the hollowness of much of the divisive rhetoric that currently dominates political and activist discourse.

Under the current system, issues that are not taken up by the major political parties remain unaddressed indefinitely. People who are dissatisfied with the dominant parties may hope for a new party to emerge to take up those issues. But how realistic is it for an entirely new political party to emerge from scratch and successfully come to power? Even if it does, how fundamentally different would it truly be from the existing ones?

Under APS, by contrast, it is highly unlikely that issues concerning any legitimate community, cause, or field would go unheard. One leader or another is bound to take them up—whether out of genuine passion or simply to develop or expand their own voter bases. Furthermore, if and when leaders fall short on delivering their promises, voters can simply elect another leader in their place; they do not have to wait for a whole new party to emerge.

The Legislation

Pluralistic Legislation

Legislation in India today is far from its constitutional ideal. Nearly 99% of all legislation is sponsored by the executive branch rather than by the legislature itself—a deep, ironic reversal of roles in a parliamentary democracy. Private Member Bills (PMBs), which individual legislators are constitutionally empowered to introduce, remain the exception rather than the rule.

Governance in a democratic nation should itself function democratically, with multiple elected leaders independently weighing the distinct merits of every single piece of legislation. However, when governance is effectively outsourced to private entities called political parties, the hierarchical structure of those parties begins to overshadow the constitutional vision of separation of powers.

The top leaders of the ruling party, acting in their capacity as cabinet ministers, propose legislation. The second-tier leaders, occupying the benches of the legislature, merely pass it by blindly following the party whip. Whatever bill or motion the ruling high command introduces in the Lok Sabha gets passed mechanically. The same story plays out in the Rajya Sabha whenever the ruling party commands a majority there. Parliamentary debates have increasingly devolved into scripted theater—hollow opportunities for exchanging partisan barbs rather than engaging in genuine deliberation. Opposition parties, in turn, feel compelled to reflexively oppose almost everything the government proposes, regardless of merit, as though their primary responsibility is to simply to justify the label of "the opposition."

In sharp contrast, under APS, leaders backed by their own distinct voter bases would enjoy the unconstrained independence to debate every issue on its own objective merits. The conventional, hostile ruling-versus-opposition dichotomy would simply dissolve. Every legislator would function as an independent agent, each representing the precise concerns shared by a specific segment of the population, making the legislature a true Lok Naayak Sabha. Leaders with higher vote counts and larger Proportional Voting Powers (PVP) would naturally anchor broad, macro-level national issues, while leaders with smaller vote counts could bring specialized, granular concerns directly into the legislative hall. Under this design, Private Member Bills would naturally become the primary vehicle of mainstream legislation rather than a rare exception.

Though the PVPs of individual legislators may vary widely, every piece of legislation would, counterintuitively, have an equal chance of being sponsored and passed on its pure merits under APS. This is because legislators would remain largely neutral toward bills concerning domains outside their specific focus. Most specialized, non-contentious bills under APS are likely to pass with near-unanimity, while those complex bills that genuinely require wider societal debate would naturally receive broader, multi-perspective attention.

One may wonder whether legislators commanding exceptionally high PVPs could effectively "bully" the assembly and unilaterally block vital legislation. In practice, however, the system introduces a natural mathematical equilibrium. The combined PVP of the legislators with the second- and third-highest support would routinely match or exceed that of the single most powerful legislator, creating organic, fluid counterweights within the chamber.

There will, of course, be complex situations where one critical cause intersects with another—for instance, a massive infrastructure project that carries severe environmental implications. Under the current system, such multi-domain issues instantly become toxic political flashpoints. Regardless of whether the ruling party prioritizes infrastructure or conservation, the opposition reflexively digs in its heels, escalating the matter into a rigid ideological war.

Under APS, however, these intersections would become matters of systematic collaboration rather than partisan confrontation. The specific legislators representing the affected infrastructure and environmental domains would work together to negotiate a balanced, data-driven compromise, while the remaining legislators, being neutral, would evaluate the final outcome independently on its objective merits. Policy-making would finally be the true art of convincing the voters in the field and co-leaders in the decision-making bodies, exactly how it should be in a democracy.

Furthermore, under APS, legislators' voter bases are highly likely to overlap. Legislators may frequently "share" individual citizens, who would expect their chosen leaders to collaborate constructively rather than fight destructively. This introduces a profoundly different—and far healthier—societal expectation than the current model, where fanatic supporters of ruling and opposition factions expect their respective leaders to dig in their heels and politically annihilate the other side.

Ultimately, under APS, legislatures would debate and vote on each issue on its own standalone merits—much like a bench of independent judges delivering judgments on individual cases, without differences in legal opinion ever turning into personal or political rivalry among the judges themselves. Legislatures under APS would finally function as united, collaborative bodies representing the collective will of the people, rather than permanently divided houses reflecting the manufactured rifts of political parties.

Empowered Legislatures

Our Constitution, like many others, establishes three independent branches of government—the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary—and explicitly makes the Executive responsible to the lower houses of the legislatures through Articles 75(3) and 164(2). In other words, the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabhas are fundamentally designed to hold the executive branch accountable.

But this profound check-and-balance exists largely only in theory. In practice, as already noted, party hierarchies completely overshadow the constitutional separation of powers. How can we realistically expect second-tier leaders sitting in the legislature to honestly question a powerful executive dominated by the absolute top-tier bosses of their own party? Even on the rare occasions they do speak out, the public perceives it merely as an internal party fissure rather than a healthy, principled exercise of democratic oversight.

As a result, the heavy responsibility of questioning the government falls almost entirely on the opposition benches. But here too lies an insurmountable conflict of interest. As fierce political rivals, why should opposition parties be expected to assess the ruling party with any shred of objectivity? Is it not akin to asking the plaintiff or the defendant to act as the judge? How can a player competing on the tennis court act simultaneously as the objective referee?

Furthermore, even if and when the opposition happens to expose real failures or executive misconduct, what can it realistically do about it, lacking the necessary strength in the legislature? In effect, ruling-party legislators won't, and opposition legislators can't hold the executive accountable. The "no-confidence" motion becomes absolutely pointless; the ruling party will never sponsor a no-confidence motion against a Prime Minister or Chief Minister of its own rank, while motions brought by opposition parties are structurally doomed to fail.

Consequently, under the current system, even a leader wholly unworthy of heading the government can stubbornly hold onto power indefinitely, simply by maintaining a tight grip on the party. Under APS, by contrast, a house of independent legislators could restore the full, original power of the no-confidence motion, using it decisively whenever needed without fear or favor.

Being independent, with no obligation or fealty to a party, legislators under APS would be able to elect a broadly acceptable head of government—a statesman or woman in the mold of an Atal Bihari Vajpayee or a P.V. Narasimha Rao, instead of elevating a party supremo as the executive head—and would remain perfectly positioned to put the no-confidence motion to good use when needed.

Furthermore, legislators under the APS model, with deep insights into the needs and concerns of specific communities, causes, sectors, or fields, would be able to audit the functioning of related government departments and public institutions at a far more granular, rigorous level with immense credibility and insight.

Under APS, the legislature would finally be able to provide the close, meaningful, authentic, objective, and effective supervision of the executive that the Constitution envisages.

The Administration

Center, State, Local Trio

India is a vast and profoundly diverse country. Accordingly, our constitutional framework establishes a clear, three-tier administrative structure consisting of the Center, the States, and local bodies. However, constituency-based elections and party hierarchies have been creating problems for the intended functioning of this three-tier structure.

Currently, local leaders from constituencies, who may not even be known to people a couple of constituencies away, are routinely elevated to national and state legislatures, regardless of whether they possess the macro-level vision, spirit, outlook, or wide appeal that those high chambers demand. Parties sometimes try to address this issue by using the Rajya Sabha as a conduit to bring leaders who are experts in niche areas to fill cabinet positions. While they should be commended for doing the right thing, the system should not be forgiven for forcing them to do it in a roundabout manner. Such alternate measures can only improve the situation by so much.

This severe lack of strong, sustained leadership at the top is a primary reason for India's sluggish progress across vital sectors, from agriculture and manufacturing to education, sports, and tourism. Today, there are few, if any, widely recognized "star leaders" dedicated to these critical fields—figures who have captured the public imagination or even occupied a space in public memory. Contrast this with an arena like cricket, where a steady stream of iconic, world-class leaders has continuously advanced the sport. The paucity of committed, domain-focused star leaders in public life cripples macro-level policy execution, leaving critical national sectors trapped in erratic development or outright stagnation.

At the same time, local development is also suffering for two reasons. First, neither the people nor the parties and leaders themselves are clear on who is responsible for what. Leaders at any level can find themselves politically penalized for the mismanagement of issues outside their statutory purview by others. Second, MPs and MLAs compete among themselves, as well as with local leaders, in turf wars, each trying to establish their dominance. Power hierarchy overshadows the constitutional separation of powers. Local leaders try to please their party bosses turned MLAs and MPs, yielding to them and undermining their own statutory power. MPs and MLAs routinely intervene in the functioning of local bodies willy-nilly, abusing the power derived from the party hierarchy.

APS addresses these issues by decoupling national and state concerns and leadership from each other, and from local concerns and leadership. Under this system, MPs and MLAs focus exclusively on communities, causes, professions, sectors, or fields at the national and state levels. They are neither tied to a specific local area nor responsible for managing it. Leaders with national vision, spirit, and appeal rise to the national level, while those with state-level vision and appeal rise to the state level under APS, leaving local bodies to be led by those committed to local development.

District-level leaders would work with collectors, municipal-level leaders with municipal commissioners, and village-level leaders with village development officers, as they are meant to, without interference from MPs and MLAs.

Center-State Relationships

The Constitution defines the Lok Sabha as the House of the People and the Rajya Sabha as the Council of States. In principle, this means that members of the Lok Sabha are representatives of the people as a whole, working on macro national issues that concern people from the entire nation as a whole, rather than acting as agents of individual states. In practice, however, this vital distinction often becomes blurred, as states tend to view all MPs from their territory—in the Lok Sabha as well as the Rajya Sabha—simply as their deputies at the Center. If every MP primarily champions the localized interests of their respective state, then who truly represents the concerns of the nation as a whole?

The emergence of regional parties, though entirely legitimate in a democracy, has also had an adverse impact on Center–State relationships and national priorities. Legislators from regional parties find themselves caught in a struggle between their fealty to their regional parties, and the interests of specific states, and their constitutional call to function as symbols and custodians of national identity and integrity.

At the same time, national parties that make inroads into and gain power in the states do their own share of damage to Center–State relationships, however unwittingly. They routinely undermine the pride and independence of those states, with state cabinet ministers frequently running to New Delhi even for relatively simple decisions. Both these tendencies, in one form or another, have been hurting the nation, the states, and the relationships between them since Independence.

APS substantially alleviates this problem. Under this system, members of the Lok Sabha, by virtue of their pan-India voter bases spanning multiple states, acquire a truly national identity that transcends their regional backgrounds, much like the leaders of the independence movement once did. Free from the distractions of such conflicts of interest, and no longer viewed as state deputies, they can fully focus on what they are elected for—to represent the shared concerns, aspirations, and other goals of a pan-India voter base.

This does not mean that the interests or importance of the states would be ignored or diminished at the national level. The Rajya Sabha would continue to represent the interests of the states, just as it does today, even under APS.

In fact, it may be worth considering renaming the Rajya Sabha as the Rajya Pratinidhi Sabha, just as we earlier discussed renaming the Lok Sabha as the Lok Nayak Sabha. Such descriptive names would help establish clearer, non-overlapping expectations for the two bodies. This would enable even ordinary citizens to better understand their distinct roles, bring greater clarity to public discourse, and even aid judicial interpretation in matters relating to Center–State relationships.

Delimitation Issues, Resolved

There is a serious issue, dubbed as the "delimitation issue," that is heating up the political debate these days. This is about states with larger populations gaining greater representation in the Lok Sabha, while states that successfully controlled their population growth see their relative representation decline, feeling punished for doing the right thing. Within the framework of the current system, there is no truly fair mechanism to resolve this tension.

As noted, the Lok Sabha is meant to represent people, not states. However, this nuance gets lost because of the localized representation driven by constituency-based elections. There is no easy way to get people, especially motivated regional party leaders, to see it.

APS renders this entire discussion irrelevant and its concerns moot. Under this system, voter bases and representation are no longer localized. Lok Sabha members, with their pan-India voter bases, no longer represent a single state or constituency. Leaders from states with lower population growth and higher economic growth can attract support from voters in states with higher population growth and lower economic growth, and vice versa.

Leaders elected to the Lok Sabha, the national body, will truly acquire a "national" identity with pan-India voter bases. No state can claim, mistake, or project them as its exclusive representatives. APS elegantly synchronizes the ground realities with the constitutional vision.

Nominated Members and Special Constituencies

APS also offers an opportunity to address two structurally ad hoc and anomalous provisions associated with the “upper” houses of our legislatures.

First, at present, the Rajya Sabha and the Vidhan Parishads (Legislative Councils) contain provisions for the nomination of eminent personalities from fields such as art, sports, literature, science, and social service. Under APS, however, such artificial nomination mechanisms would no longer be necessary. Voters who are passionate about fields such as art, sports, literature, science, or social service could simply allocate some of their votes to eminent individuals from those domains and help elect them directly to the lower houses.

The nominated seats in the Rajya Sabha could therefore be transferred to the Lok Sabha. Similarly, the nominated seats in the Vidhan Parishads could be transferred to the Vidhan Sabhas.

Second, the current structure also contains special constituencies reserved exclusively for graduates and teachers to elect representatives to the Vidhan Parishads. These separate constituencies could likewise be abolished and their seats transferred to the Vidhan Sabhas, since both graduates and teachers would be fully capable of electing their own representatives directly under the domain-based architecture of APS.

In fact, the existing special treatment accorded to graduates and teachers fundamentally violates the democratic principle of equality. Why should these two specific sections of the population receive institutional privileges denied to every other important profession or social group—such as medical professionals, legal practitioners, journalists, farmers, artisans, entrepreneurs, and countless others?

APS corrects this imbalance inherently by extending fair, direct, and equal representation to all professions, fields, communities, and causes without exception, since it enables every group in society to elect leaders of its own.

Inculot Model for Local Bodies

APS is primarily designed for national and state elections. Local body elections, however, are fundamentally different in character and remain inherently local in nature. Delocalized representation therefore does not make much sense at the municipal, village, and ward levels. Yet some of the underlying problems remain the same.

At present, it is extremely difficult for ordinary individuals to get elected even to local bodies without spending substantial amounts of money, making political power inaccessible even at the lowest levels to people from modest backgrounds and means. Just as in state and national legislatures, many sections of society remain poorly represented in local institutions as well. Reservations are not a foolproof answer either, as reserved seats are often captured by proxies of the rich and influential.

To address these issues, we propose a new electoral framework for local bodies called the Inculot Model. “Inculot” is a coined term combining the words *incumbent* and *lottery*. Conceptually, it is a modified form of what political science describes as the *sortition* model.

Under the Inculot Model, incumbents would not secure re-election merely by obtaining the highest number of votes—a feat incumbents could achieve by fragmenting the opposition. Instead, an incumbent must cross a clear performance threshold: they must secure a higher overall vote percentage than they did in the previous election, proving that the public truly wants them back. If the incumbent fails to meet this benchmark, they are disqualified, and a new leader is selected by lottery from among the top three remaining candidates.

The underlying philosophy is simple: one may depend partly on chance to gain power, but one must demonstrate performance to retain it.

This model addresses several persistent problems in local politics.

First, candidates would no longer need to chase every marginal vote through excessive spending, coercion, or aggressive tactics, since the final outcome among the leading challengers would partly depend on lottery. For the same reason, vote-bank politics and polarization would become far less reliable pathways to power.

Second, the influence of money, muscle power, inherited privilege, and entrenched social dominance would be significantly reduced, since any candidate capable of securing enough support to reach the top three would stand an equal chance of victory.

Third, anyone seeking to maintain influence or continued access to power would have greater incentive to maintain good relationships with all potential contenders, rather than attempting to dominate them through bitter electoral conflict. This could significantly improve the overall political atmosphere, which often damages the social fabric of rural communities.

Fourth, leaders from smaller or less dominant communities would stand on far more equal footing with candidates backed by numerically or socially dominant groups. Likewise, capable but modest individuals would stand a realistic chance alongside more aggressive or politically entrenched contenders.

Fifth, contestants would be spared the lasting stigma of outright electoral defeat—an especially important consideration in close-knit local communities. This could reduce the tendency of candidates to gamble away personal fortunes, intensify social hostilities, or resort to intimidation and brute force merely to avoid humiliation at the polls.

The Big Payoff

Continuity and Stability

Democracy is just a means, not the end. Instead of worshipping it, we must attune it to our needs. Our real goal is a peaceful and prosperous nation, where everyone can breathe freedom and lead a fulfilling life. While the state cannot make society what it is not, it plays a substantial role in making it what it is. The role of a well-designed and well-functioning state in providing the continuity and stability necessary for society to navigate its civilizational journey cannot be undermined.

Predictable and reliable governance is essential for people to plan their lives—from schooling to retirement, for entrepreneurs to build businesses, and for nations to enter into bilateral and multilateral treaties and agreements. No one should have to worry about a policy that works well disappearing overnight. Nor should people have to wait too long for failing policies to be replaced. Yet, these foundational basics are routinely compromised under the current political system. Let us dig deeper.

Currently, as already noted, we have grown used to outsourcing our governance to political parties. This means their uncertainties, weaknesses, and life cycles directly impact governance and the course of the nation. At a high level, the political landscape today oscillates between three scenarios, which may be called the "one-two-many" syndrome: at times, the system is dominated by a single party; at other times, by two major parties; and at yet others, by a collection of many smaller parties; each stubbornly persisting for decades.

A single dominant party can provide stability, provided its leadership is competent and the party remains coherent. Otherwise, such "stability" is merely raw continuity, often doling out poor governance and possibly plagued with unchecked power, leaving voters with little choice but to keep re-electing the same entity—rendering the elections meaningless and the vote worthless.

When no single party dominates, coalition governments emerge—fragile, short-lived, and prone to sudden collapse. Just as families struggle under an incapable head of the household, societies and nations suffer under the weak and unstable governance delivered by struggling coalitions. Once again, voters become mere spectators, with little they can meaningfully do to correct the course.

The most common scenario, however, is that of two major parties alternating power between them. In theory, this should work well, with each party competing to raise the standards of governance. In practice, however, they rarely do. Uncertain about the verdict of the people in the next election, and desperate to attain and retain power, they indulge in vote-bank politics, inflame sectarian divisions, peddle populist schemes, and abandon their predecessors' programs midway, disrupting governance in the process. Not only do they make governance weak, but they also tear at the social fabric. Yet again, voters are left with limited options; the best they can do is throw out the incumbent and re-install the very party they had rejected in the previous election.

When this two-party system takes hold, people begin to perceive governance as a mere tug-of-war between rival camps. They indulge in predicting the winning horse, to the point of completely neglecting what that horse actually does or does not do for them, the nation, or

society. Taking sides, vocal sections give a clean chit to the party they root for. Pointing out misdeeds and misgovernance, or even highlighting achievements of any party meets with instant resistance. Instead of being the bulls that work hard for us, political figures become the sacred cows that someone defends. Hence, there is a widespread reluctance among the public to engage in any conversation on the topic of politics. Ironically and unfortunately, it has become a mark of wisdom to talk the least about what matters most.

What should have ideally been a healthy rivalry in proving their worth in governing the nation or state turns into bitter, divisive acrimony under the two-party system. The ruling party uses the state machinery to harass the opposition, while the opposition seeks to embarrass the government through the media, and by mobilizing disgruntled or resentful groups. In fact, the very notion of an "opposition" is unfortunate. Why would people put their trust in one political party to rule and another merely to oppose it? Isn't every elected leader, regardless of party affiliation, ultimately a chosen representative of the people and should collaborate with others to contribute to good governance?

All that the voters can do in the two-party scenario is either renew the incumbent or reinstall the other party they rejected in the previous election. When the incumbent is renewed, not only the well-performing leaders but also the questionable ones, along with all the party's policies—both good and bad—get renewed. Conversely, when the incumbent is replaced, not only the non-performing leaders but also the highly capable ones, and effective policies alongside the ineffective ones, are thrown out.

APS puts an end to this mess. It eliminates the "one-two-many" syndrome altogether, which makes voters feel powerless and leaves the progress of the country at the mercy of the fortunes and stability of political parties. Instead, it allows voters to directly and constantly tap into all available political and leadership talent, just as the economic reforms of 1991 allowed the economy to tap into all available entrepreneurial and innovative talent.

Under APS, people do not renew or remove entire parties. Rather, they pick and choose which individual leaders are worthy of renewal and which are not. Under APS, leaders build deeper, lasting relationships with voters, creating enduring voter bases—which means the chances of capable leaders failing to get re-elected are low. So, for the most part, the Lok Sabha before the elections and after the elections would look more or less the same—not only guaranteeing continuity and stability, but also the same or better quality of leadership. There will be no drama as to who gets elected, and no trauma related to a change of guard. Elections will become a simple act of thankfully retiring those who begin to fall short of expectations, renewing all reasonable and star performers, and filling vacancies with new, promising blood.

Individuals and businesses can be confident that good policies will remain securely in place, bad ones will be replaced, and gaps will be filled with meaningful new ones, because of this continuity under APS; Continuity and stability are not decorative add-ons; they are intrinsic to the architecture of APS. Furthermore, APS completely cleans out the political coloring from the progress of the nation and society. If institutions like ISRO, the IITs, and the Military can be free of political coloring, why not the entire nation?

The Implementation

A New Voting Process

APS requires a fundamentally different voting process—one capable of presenting potentially thousands of candidates from across an entire nation or state, while still allowing voters to quickly identify the few leaders they trust most and distribute multiple votes among them with ease.

In many ways, the challenge resembles the one modern e-commerce platforms have already solved: enabling people to effortlessly navigate lakhs of options and select only the few they truly want. But voting, of course, demands an even simpler experience—one that is seamless, intuitive, accessible, and foolproof for an average voter.

The current Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) were never designed for this kind of electoral system. APS therefore requires a new generation of Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs), built specifically to support pluralized and delocalized representation while incorporating robust security and verifiability mechanisms such as VVPAT. Fortunately, such systems can now be designed by leveraging technologies that have become both widely available and deeply familiar to ordinary citizens—particularly QR codes and touchscreens.

A major difference in this new voting process is that voters would carry not only their Voter Identification Card, but also the Leader Identification Cards of the leaders they wish to support. Let us explain.

The existing mechanism of election symbols is poorly suited for APS. It is neither practical to create thousands of visually distinct symbols nor feasible for voters to efficiently browse through them at polling stations. APS therefore replaces election symbols altogether with what may be called Leader Identification Cards, or simply Leader Cards.

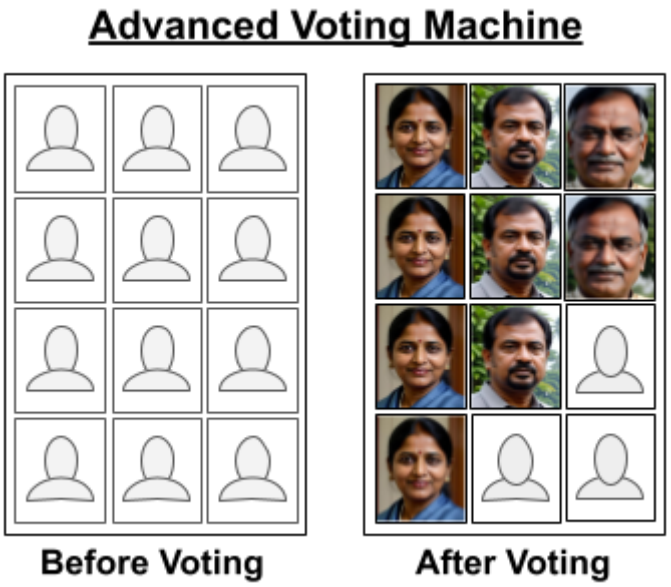


Instead of symbols, the Election Commission of India (ECI) would assign each candidate a unique Leader Identification Number (LIN). Candidates would then design their own Leader Cards displaying essential details such as their photograph, name, date of birth, LIN, party affiliation (if any), and a QR code, somewhat like the sample shown here.

These cards could be distributed physically at public meetings and events, as well as digitally through websites, messaging platforms, and social media. Voters could also request them through text or WhatsApp messages to candidates or the ECI, download them from websites, or print them free of cost at local e-Seva centres.

During the weeks and months leading up to the election, voters would naturally accumulate the Leader Cards of the leaders they trust, much like people today collect business cards or contact details through one means or another.

At the polling booth, the AVM touchscreen would display twelve voting slots arranged in a 3×4 grid, with each slot representing one vote. A voter would select a slot by tapping the touchscreen, scan the QR code on a Leader Card, and instantly see the candidate's photograph appear on the screen as confirmation. The process could then be repeated until all votes are allocated.



Mistakes could easily be corrected by reselecting a slot and rescanning the intended Leader Card. The image on the right, for example, shows a voter allocating four votes to one leader, three to another, and two to a third, while leaving three votes uncast—a perfectly valid choice.

To ensure familiarity with AVMs, polling stations could provide dummy AVMs for practice, while mobile applications could allow voters to simulate the process in advance from home. Dummy AVMs could also be installed at e-Seva centres and other public locations. Tech-savvy family members, volunteers, and election workers could help less familiar voters practice using the system, ensuring that citizens of all ages and backgrounds are comfortable with it.

Television channels could also demonstrate AVM usage during election coverage, while instructional videos could periodically play at railway stations, bus stations, and other public venues. Movie halls, restaurants, and commercial spaces with touchscreens could even run AVM simulators as a form of public engagement.

AVMs could also provide an additional interface tailored to the mobile-savvy younger generation. Such voters would not even need to carry physical Leader Cards. Instead, they could directly search for candidates on the AVM using the candidate's name, phone number, or LIN and allocate votes digitally. The experience would resemble selecting products on an e-commerce platform and specifying quantities before checkout. In fact, the ECI could even conduct a nationwide design competition to develop interfaces more intuitive and elegant than the simple 3×4 grid proposed here.

Vote Anywhere

AVMs would be identical throughout the country or state, as each one would contain the same complete list of candidates from across the nation or state. Combining this uniformity with the voter identification methods already developed for Remote Voting Machines (RVMs), APS could effectively usher in a new era of "delocalized" voting, just as it delocalizes representation itself.

This would enable migrant workers, nomadic tribes, and anyone away from their native place for any reason to vote from wherever they are. Furthermore, delocalized voting could also strengthen voter privacy and anonymity. Instead of voting only at a designated local polling station, voters could choose to cast their ballots from another station in a different part of town or village, free from pressure, scrutiny, and prying eyes.

Implementation Roadmap

As fundamental a shift as the APS and Inculot models are, they are not difficult to implement. In fact, they make the political process simpler rather than more complex. However, because they are entirely new ideas—just as democracy itself once was—they require a clear path forward for implementation.

The adaptive nature, delocalized representation, and pluralistic representation where the true value of APS lies can come across as too abstract for many. Instead, people might quickly fixate on what changes concretely: the disappearance of traditional constituencies and political parties.

But perceptive leaders—both outside the system and inside it, who currently find it hard to breathe under the stifling culture of party command—will see the immense value in this shift. Only when the most reputed among them speak up for this reform will the public become enthusiastic about this new system.

Above all, people are bound to ask: has this been implemented anywhere else? The answer is no, because like UPI, it is a brand-new innovation. It is an opportunity for India to leapfrog ahead, leading the way for many other democracies that increasingly look up to us.

However, to allay public apprehensions, we should introduce APS and Inculot gradually. Both models should be piloted in two or three willing states first, preferably with different political parties in power. The systems can then be refined based on these practical experiences and implemented in other states in phases, before finally being adopted for national elections.

APS, of course, requires a few constitutional amendments. Specifically, changes would be needed to Article 81 (Composition of the House of the People) to remove the current state-wise population proportionality requirement [Article 81(2)(a)] and the system of territorial constituencies [Article 81(2)(b)]. It would also require changing the provisions for nominated members [Article 80(1)(a) and 80(3)] and revoking the changes made to accommodate the Anti-Defection Law, including the 10th Schedule. Constitutional experts can draft these amendments in parallel while we wait for the public to warm up to the idea and for the Government of India to take action.

Finally, a discussion about renaming the Lok Sabha (House of the People) as the Lok Naayak Sabha (People’s Leadership Council), and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) as the Rajya Pratinidhi Sabha (States' Representatives Council), could serve as an excellent starting point to trigger a much larger, vital conversation about APS and Inculot.

Additional Payoffs

Contesting from Multiple Constituencies

The current system permits a strange anomaly: high-profile politicians contesting from multiple geographic seats simultaneously, only to resign from all but one after winning. This triggers entirely unnecessary, expensive by-elections. Under APS, this theater becomes redundant. A leader with widespread geographic appeal simply consolidates their cross-regional popularity into a singular, powerful nationwide (or statewide, in assembly elections) voter base.

No By-Elections

Under the current system, costly by-elections must be conducted to fill vacancies whenever a legislator resigns, is disqualified, or passes away. There is no such need under APS. The system simply refers back to the original master ranking list, and the next candidate in line—such as the 544th candidate for the Lok Sabha—is automatically elevated to fill the legislative vacancy.

Uniform AVMs

Under the current system, the Election Commission must customize, verify, and lock separate EVMs for each constituency. Under APS, however, all AVMs would be identical across the entire nation or state, as each machine would contain the complete list of candidates from everywhere. They would be significantly easier to manufacture, configure, test, operate, secure, and monitor.