RESET POLITICS

Why India must change how it elects its leaders

The Crisis

Over the decades, sectarianism, nepotism, and corruption have seeped deep into our political system. Money power, muscle power, and family legacy play a greater role in political survival and success than ever before. Leaders guided by vision and principle have gradually stepped away, unwilling to compromise their ethics.

Every public institution has, over time, been polluted by the same vices. Principled individuals have grown accustomed to helplessly watching unscrupulous actors erode institutional integrity from within. Exploitation yields greater rewards than contribution. Expediency routinely triumphs over ethics and excellence. Backdoors work more reliably than front gates. Trust in public institutions has steadily declined. Many of us are so disillusioned that we are ready to emigrate to countries where systems function as they should. How did it come to this? What happened to the dreams of the early independence era — the dream of building a Mahan Bharat?

Mahan Bharat

We drove out the British oppressor to liberate ourselves when we gained independence. Yet the momentum of the "oppressor versus oppressed" narrative did not leave with colonial rule. Instead, it persisted—and, over time, deepened. We became so accustomed to viewing society through this lens that we began searching for new pairs of oppressor and oppressed, framing nearly every social challenge in these terms. As the saying goes, when all we have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.

Even before independence, the Hindu majority was framed as the potential oppressor and the Muslim minority as the oppressed. The result was Partition. Did that make minorities safer or more prosperous in the subcontinent? Clearly not. Yet the addiction to this narrative continues. The majority is still cast as inherently oppressive, and the minority as perpetually oppressed—even decades after Partition.

But bigger and smaller, powerful and less powerful, are features of nature itself. We call this biodiversity and respect it. In a forest, the strong and the weak coexist symbiotically. Human diversity operates in much the same way. Everything that is larger or more powerful is not inherently oppressive or dangerous. Men may, on average, be physically stronger than women; that does not make men natural oppressors. If that were true, loving marriages, healthy families, and nurturing fathers would be statistical impossibilities. Likewise, a numerical majority does not automatically equate to oppression. If it did, there would be no constitutional provisions protecting minorities. Nor does power automatically imply exploitation; if it did, laws protecting Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would never have emerged from within the same society.

Oppression, exploitation, and bullying are human vices—not attributes of any caste, creed, gender, religion, or class. Just as laziness or selfishness can be found across humanity, so too can these darker traits. The poor may exploit the poor, just as the rich may exploit the rich. Men exploit men, women exploit women, siblings exploit siblings.

We must therefore move beyond sectarian thinking—in politics as well as in reform. No vice should be allowed to take root and flourish behind the power of the strong or find shelter behind the protections rightly granted to the weak. Each of us must commit to managing the weeds in our own backyard—whether in a palace or a hutment.

Only when we join hands to align ourselves firmly with virtue and resolutely against vice do we establish the moral foundation necessary to build a Mahan Bharat—and the backbone to sustain it. And only when we identify and aggregate the good in all—the good that pursues ethics and excellence, peace and prosperity; the good that strengthens institutions, recognizes contribution, and calls out exploitation wherever it appears—can we truly realize that vision.

Preamble of the constitution

But how do we eliminate vices? First, by being realistic: they can never be fully eliminated, just as weeds cannot be. Our focus must therefore shift from elimination to management. Second, by recognizing that even weed management is not an end in itself, but a subordinate task within the larger effort of raising a healthy crop. Third, by understanding that growing a good crop season after season is often the most effective way to manage weeds—rather than waiting for them to vanish entirely before planting anything at all.

This is precisely where the Preamble went off course. It was drafted at a time when our dreams were overshadowed by reactionary fears. As a result, its focus fell entirely on "weed management"—eliminating injustice, curbing inequality, and securing freedoms—rather than on laying the foundation for realizing our dreams, pursuing our aspirations, and living our values, both collective and individual.

Instead of declaring, "WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity," in bombastic, opinion-laden weed-management terms, the Preamble could have simply, humbly, and inspiringly stated what we are truly after: "We, the People of India, adopt this Constitutional framework to help us realize our INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE DREAMS, pursue our INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ASPIRATIONS, and live our INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE VALUES."

The goals of justice, liberty, and equality—the principle that we must "live and let live," and the responsibility to respect and support one another—are all implicitly contained within such a framing.

A positive, aspirational positioning like this would prepare every child of our dear nation to look forward to a purposeful and rewarding future, and empower every adult to pursue it with dignity and vigor. It would encourage us to focus on our individual and collective dreams, aspirations, and values across multiple levels and dimensions: 1) from family to neighborhood, village, district, state, and nation; 2) from family to caste, religious community, and civilizational identity; and 3) from profession, craft, art, and trade to enterprise, industry, sector, and field—dimensions we will explore in greater depth later.

Organization and Leadership

One could argue that focusing on Justice, Liberty, and Equality might be just enough to achieve individual aspirations, realize individual dreams, and live individual values. But collective progress requires much more. That is where the focus on a functional framework, i.e., the structure and processes, becomes critical.

To pursue anything collectively, we need to be organized, and a leadership that brings us together, articulates what we want, points to possibilities, builds bridges to other groups, and reassures us in times of adversity. This is precisely what we are missing today.

Fractured into minorities within each constituency, people of shared dreams, aspirations, and values across the nation and states are unable to elect leaders who focus on them. Instead, they are forced to choose generic local politicians who play it safe, pretending to be all things to all people, and prime-ministerial or chief-ministerial candidates who offer manifestos bundling a mix of naive, high-sounding, and utopian policies — many of which are clearly impractical, sectarian, and easily opposed by a sizable majority.

Neither the winning party can identify which policies or positions actually contributed to their electoral success, nor can the losing party determine which of theirs contributed to defeat. Unable to gauge which policies and proposals people genuinely support and to what degree, leaders, when devising policy, rely largely on gut instincts about public preferences. They tend to address issues and crises with knee-jerk remedies, tackle complex problems with simplistic solutions that can even be counterproductive, while rhetorically claiming a full mandate for the entire manifesto and for whatever they choose to implement.

Instead of being guided by true popular opinion, leaders are often influenced by vote-bank demands, promises made to appease majority and minority sections, outdated ideologies, untested ideas, vested interests, vocal groups, political financiers, quixotic activists, ill-motivated NGOs, and foreign agencies that leverage them.

Voters shoot in the dark when electing leaders, and leaders do the same when devising policies and programs. This is the most serious problem we face today, yet it often goes unnoticed, obscured by the smoke of corruption, nepotism, sectarianism, and other distractions.

If we can build a framework that allows leaders to clearly articulate what they stand for, and enables voters to express what they truly want at a higher and more granular level, leaders would no longer have to shoot in the dark. They would implement what people actually desire, as no one would want to risk losing public support. In this way, our collective dreams, aspirations, and values could be realized both accurately and at an accelerated pace.

Communities, Causes, Fields and More

To better understand our shared aspirations, let us restate them in practical terms by expanding the three dimensions mentioned earlier.

First — from family to neighbourhood to village to district to state to nation: The Constitution is designed primarily to cover these levels through what is commonly known as the three-tier administrative structure. We will return to this discussion in a later section.

Second — from family to caste to religious community to civilizational identity: The Constitution, unfortunately, shied away from this dimension — though it is vital and

characteristic of India. What defines India is its vibrant diversity of cultures and subcultures, with all their regional variations, none constituting more than a small fraction of the population. Our society can be aptly described as a "minority-plurality" society. We are known for "unity in diversity." Yet the terms "plurality" and "diversity" do not appear anywhere in the Constitution. (The term "diversity" appears only in a special context added by the 42nd Amendment.) The closest the Constitution comes to engaging this dimension is through reserved constituencies and the formal recognition of religious minorities.

Yet by administratively grouping thousands of castes, sects, and regional variations into a handful of broad categories—Hindus, Muslims, Christians, SCs, STs, BCs, OBCs, and so on—the framework has flattened the unique identities of countless communities, diluting their dignity, aspirations, values, and customs, and pushing many into a constant clamour for recognition.

The result is a heavy price—both in hindered development and vulnerability to sectarian politics. By permanently dubbing some as "Backward Classes," how can we ever make them "Forward"? By permanently dubbing some as "Forward Castes," how do we uplift the poorer among them? Certain "Backward Classes" in the south are richer and more powerful than certain "Forward Classes" in the north. Many Goldsmiths categorized as OBCs are wealthier than many Baniyas, Brahmins, or Rajputs categorized as Forward Castes. Similarly, why should communities devoted to village and local deities be seen as inferior to those praying to Puranic gods, or those following abstract spiritual traditions? Why should monotheism constantly badger polytheism? Why should atheism badger theism or vice versa? How does compressing these varied identities into a few rigid classifications help any of them?

We must abandon this fixation with broad labeling and classification. Every community, small or big, should thrive and let others thrive. Each community should celebrate itself and move forward with initiative. No community should be begging others to treat it as equal. Each must declare itself equal—and treat others as equal. Self-pride begins from within; it cannot be conferred by decree.

In fact, of late, leaders are emerging across the country within every community —including among the third gender—encouraging their respective communities to take pride in themselves. This is a powerful and positive trend. We must give them space in the political system—not to seek doles or patronage, but to act as champions of their people's aspirations and customs, advancing them through their own initiative. Promoting the right spirit does far more for social development than allocating a few crore rupees ever could.

The privileges presently framed in terms of religious minorities should be recast to apply to all self-identified communities. That would be the broadest and most honest way to express the diversity of aspirations across the country.

It is unfortunate that we have not shaken off the pre-independence habit of looking outward for freedom and privilege. Independence restored the freedom for self-development to individuals and communities alike. Yet too often we reduce it to merely replacing British rulers with Indian rulers. When communities internalize their freedom and take initiative into their own hands, they flourish. And when each community flourishes, the nation—the sum total of them—flourishes, regaining the vitality it once enjoyed, as recorded by travelers from civilizations to the East and West.

Growth cannot be propelled by entitlement, which breeds dependency. Only awakened self-confidence unleashes advancement. Every community must undertake its own SWOT analysis—to borrow a term from management science—honestly assessing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and charting its path forward.

Third — from profession, craft, art, and trade to enterprise to industry to sector to field: While communities arise from cultural and religious roots, camaraderie also emerges from shared professions and economic pursuits. Farmers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, retailers, real estate professionals, bankers, and information technology workers — each shaping fields vital to our society and economy — need leadership just as communities do. India's slow progress in many fields, from agriculture to education, from sports to tourism, is attributable in no small measure to the absence of competent and consistent leadership at the highest levels.

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In the past, when the village economy was dominant, cultural and occupational identities were often intertwined. Today they are increasingly decoupled — the former forming the warp and the latter the weft of the social fabric. Each of us therefore participates in at least two independent collectives of shared aspirations, however formal and informal they are. The suggested revision to the Preamble seeks to capture this fuller picture — the aspirations woven across both warp and weft, which the Constitution understandably could not fully address in the immediate aftermath of Partition, preoccupied with assuring protection for "religious minorities".

But decades have passed since then. We should now be able to see more clearly. It is only by lighting a fire under the thousands of communities that form the warp and the hundreds of fields that form the weft that we can truly advance as a country. That, in turn, requires an explicit emphasis on leadership. Yet, strikingly, the very words "leader" or "leadership" do not appear anywhere in the Constitution, except once in the Tenth Schedule in a narrow technical sense.

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This social fabric does not exist in a vacuum. It operates within a physical, economic, and political environment. Our infrastructure, forests, rivers, borders, women's liberation, and macroeconomic stability, etc. demand stewardship. Many activists and visionaries are passionate about such causes. They should not have to merely protest in the streets, flood social media, or deliberate endlessly in academia to be heard. They should be able to step into leadership roles and advance those causes constructively.

Furthermore, there are also collectives defined less by shared aspirations and more by shared needs — such as Divyangs and nomadic tribes. They too require leadership to address those concerns.

In summary, we must recast our Constitution around Leadership by Community, Cause, Field, and more — LCCF+ — to allow the full diversity of India to express itself and thrive.

LCCF+ Electoral Model

Whether or not we immediately recast the terminology of the Constitution, we should lose no time in promoting leadership that advances communities, causes, fields, and more. That is

the only way to accelerate growth and move beyond the sectarian politics that are tearing the nation apart.

For this we propose switching to a new electoral model called, well, LCCF+ Model, which calls for two fundamental reforms: 1) Abolish territorial constituencies, enabling people with shared aspirations, who are now fragmented into small chunks in each constituency, to flock and fly together, electing their own leaders. 2) Grant multiple votes to each voter, which they can distribute to multiple leaders in any proportion that are dedicated to their multiple aspirations.

A woman from an agricultural family, for instance, could distribute her votes among several leaders: one championing farmers' issues, another working for women's empowerment, a third focused on her community, and a fourth dedicated to controlling inflation — allocating her votes in whatever proportion she deems appropriate. Similarly, a Dalit teacher who is also a Divyang could support one leader dedicated to Dalit concerns, another to education, a third advocating for Divyang issues, a fourth focused on national defense, and a fifth admired for integrity and values. The possibilities are endless.

Leaders would be ranked by total votes received, and the top 543 would be declared elected to the Lok Sabha. A corresponding number would be elected to the Vidhan Sabhas in state elections. Their voting strength on the floor of the House would vary in proportion to their vote count — a principle that may be termed Proportional Voting Power (PVP).

The Transformation

Under the current system, every leader and every party must pretend to represent every interest simultaneously—wearing a cap at a mosque on Fridays, a tilak at a temple on Saturdays, and a suit at a church on Sundays. Behind the scenes, they engage in sectarian politics to build vote banks necessary for entering the corridors of power. We might think this is their preference, but it is actually their predicament. Constituencies force them to be "all things to all people," while party culture compels them to pander to specific vote banks.

The LCCF+ model frees leaders from this predicament. Instead of joining a party, struggling for a ticket, and fighting for every marginal vote in a constituency, leaders can attract voters from across the nation (or the state, in state elections) based on their open and genuine dedication to a specific community—currently classified as SC, ST, BC, OBC, and others—or to a particular cause, such as environmental protection or women's empowerment, or to a specific field, such as agriculture, education, science and technology, tourism, or sports—much like scientists, professors, and entrepreneurs build credibility in their own fields.

Relationships tied to specific aspirations and values, and centered on concrete policies and positions—against which voters can hold leaders accountable—stand in stark contrast to the current practice of endorsing vague and broad manifestos, some of which may actually run counter to voters' preferences and much of which may never be implemented.

Leaders, in this model, can build long-lasting voter bases of their own, earning the trust of voters through their commitment to shared aspirations and demonstrated leadership. Elections would become renewals of trust rather than contests fought afresh against new or old opponents. Leaders who meet voters' expectations can be confident of returning to power, and voters can be confident that their preferred leaders will remain in place—without political factors or shifting winds disrupting their relationship.

Such long-lasting voter bases encourage leaders to invest ever more energy in understanding people's aspirations, needs, and concerns more deeply day by day, instead of chasing greener pastures elsewhere in the political landscape. They encourage leaders to propose bolder and genuinely lasting solutions, rather than the token inducements and appeasements that dominate the current system.

Large collective interests, such as agriculture, may be represented by multiple leaders, while smaller interests may coalesce around a single representative. Yet no community, cause, or field—however large or small—would remain unrepresented. Each would have a dedicated leader. This stands in sharp contrast to the present scenario, in which major or controversial issues dominate public discourse, while many others wait years, or even decades, for serious attention.

Knowing that someone in the nation's or state's capital genuinely cares about one's specific aspirations and needs—free from political pressures, obligations, or constraints—would give every voter a profound sense of reassurance. It would restore the faith in democracy, the Constitution, and the future that the current system has nearly erased.

Terminology

Even before we recast the entire "religious minority" articles of the Constitution into "minority-plurality" terminology, we can highlight the spirit of leadership through selective changes in terminology. In doing so, let us examine a few key terms used in the Constitution and often in public discourse.

Consider the term "Parliament", which is bland, uninspiring, and unmotivating. It comes from the French parler, meaning "to speak," and broadly denotes debating. It describes a process, not a purpose. Similarly, the term "Legislature" is meaningful but incomplete: it reduces the role to lawmaking, ignoring another critical responsibility—electing and supervising the executive. Moreover, it is unclear why we use two separate terms—"Parliament" at the national level and "Legislature" at the state level—for essentially the same function.

The term Lok Sabha, or "House of the People," is far more meaningful. It emphasizes the people, not merely a function or procedure. Yet, to be precise, it is not a house of people in general—it is a house of the people's leaders. To highlight this leadership aspect and call it what it truly is, we should rename it Lok Nayak Sabha, or People's Leadership Council, because leadership, not mere deliberation, is its defining purpose.

Likewise, a more precise term for the Rajya Sabha would be Rajya Pratinidhi Sabha, or States' Representatives Council. This clarifies its real function: representing the interests of states within the Union. It also dispels the widespread misconception that the Rajya Sabha is some kind of "council of elders," which it is not. We should also stop casually using the terms "upper house" for Rajya Sabha and "lower house" for Lok Sabha—they are not part of the Constitution.

This new terminology immediately emphasizes the contrast between leadership and representation and sharpens the philosophical foundation of the two houses. Representation means articulating the interests of those represented—states, in the case of the Rajya Sabha. Leadership, however, is something higher: it is not merely echoing prevailing opinions. It is about helping people reflect on what they ought to aspire toward and pointing them to

possibilities. A true leader does not simply mirror public sentiment but refines and channels it toward long-term progress. Just as LCCF+ puts "leadership" front and center, the term Lok Nayak Sabha further highlights it.

At the state level, the Vidhan Sabha performs the same essential function as the Lok Sabha: it is also a council of the people's leaders. It too should be called Lok Nayak Sabha. To distinguish between the two, we may refer to the national body as Rashtriya Lok Nayak Sabha (National People's Leadership Council) and the state bodies as State Lok Nayak Sabhas (State People's Leadership Councils). The acronyms NPLC and SPLC may be used for precision. "Lok Nayak Sabha" would serve as the generic term for both.

Better Legislation

The LCCF+ model transforms the entire dynamics of legislation. In the current system, progress on many issues remains stalled—particularly those that can be easily politicized. Major matters such as agricultural reforms, or even seemingly minor concerns like stray dog management, can quickly become political flashpoints. Legislation today is often ad hoc, influenced by extraneous factors, as discussed earlier.

Under the LCCF+ model, every community, cause, field, and interest would have leaders fully devoted to it, in constant contact with the voters for whom it matters. Before any bill or policy is introduced, these leaders would test it with their voter base—ensuring it reflects real needs and leaving almost no room for political friction or controversy.

In the current system, bills are proposed almost entirely by the executive rather than the legislature—an ironic role reversal. This occurs because the top leadership of political parties, which drafts manifestos, essentially becomes the executive, while other legislators, typically second-tier leaders, vote as directed by party whips. Under LCCF+, every leader is independent and an expert in a specific community, cause, or field. They can sponsor their own 'private bills,' rooted in public opinion—a provision that would shift from rare use to a mainstream mechanism for legislation.

Each piece of legislation would be objectively evaluated in this model, as leaders dedicated to different communities, causes, or fields would remain neutral toward bills outside their domain. Any bill can succeed as long as the sponsor convinces at least half the legislature of its merit. After all, isn't this the true art of politics—convincing voters of one's stance before the election, and persuading fellow leaders afterward?

In this model, a legislator need not have a large PVP to get a bill passed, as long as they can convince others of its merit. This represents a significant and desirable shift in legislation, creating a level playing field for leaders with PVPs of all sizes. Furthermore, because bills are vetted with voter bases in advance, most would pass unanimously, without ruffling political feathers or causing public resentment.

Conflicts between bills are inevitable, as leaders devoted to different communities, causes, or fields may disagree. For example, a leader focused on environmental protection might have reservations about certain infrastructure proposals. Yet both represent legitimate goals, backed by their respective voter bases. In such cases, democratic decision-making calls for reasoned compromise. Under the LCCF+ model, voter bases often overlap, creating "shared voters." Any attempt by leaders to dig in their heels or demonize one another would backfire, as it would go against the expectations of these shared voters who respect both sides. This inherent feature of

the model nudges leaders toward constructive negotiation and collaboration. Contrast this with the current system, where legislation proposed by the ruling party is instinctively opposed by the opposition, and vice versa, regardless of the bill's merits.

Some leaders will naturally have large Proportional Voting Power (PVP) due to extensive voter bases, in this model. One might wonder: wouldn't they dominate legislation? Not necessarily. The combined PVP of other leaders—second- and third-highest, for instance—would likely match or exceed that of the top PVP leader. This creates a natural balance of influence, ensuring that no single leader can unilaterally determine the outcome of any piece of legislation.

In essence, unlike the current system, where leaders shoot in the dark, uncertain of what people truly want, the LCCF+ model narrows the gap between public opinion and legislation to near zero—a transformative shift that is currently unimaginable.

Legislature Oversight of the Executive

Under LCCF+, not only is legislation transformed, but so are the dynamics between the legislature and the executive. Leaders, independent and backed by their own voter bases, can elect a leader with genuine broad-based support—like PVNR or Vajpayee—rather than simply a party chief. With real political independence, they can also remove elected executive chiefs through no-confidence motions without fear or favor, turning the legislature into a true watchdog over the executive.

The concept of no-confidence motion itself could be refined to allow the removal of individual cabinet members instead of taking down the entire government. This would compel the chief executive to appoint ministers who are broadly acceptable, rather than stacking the cabinet with personal 'yes-men.' It restores real meaning to 'cabinet approval,' which today is largely a formality.

With stable voter bases and independent recognition, legislators would no longer need to crave ministerial posts for political 'success.' If they choose to take up a position, they bring grounded expertise to the role. If they do not, they still retain the power and credibility to hold ministers, departments, and institutions accountable—ensuring oversight that is informed, effective, connected to the people, and executed at a higher, more granular level.

"Less Political" Parties

With constituencies abolished, leaders able to develop their own voter bases, and the executive elected by broad-based support rather than party affiliation, political parties may disappear altogether under this model, as we have presumed so far. But it is worth examining their nature, functions, and potential future under LCCF+.

Electing a party is effectively outsourcing governance of the country or state to a private entity with its own agenda—an entity that may place its own survival above the nation's interest when push comes to shove—not entirely different in spirit from handing power to the British in the past. A party can even squander a country's or state's finances for its own political survival or for the personal gain of its leaders. Why must governance be contracted out wholesale, only to rely on opposition parties to act as watchdogs—which, lacking numbers, can often only bark but not bite?

Leaders pay a price from the outset for political survival and hoped-for success within this party culture. They must obey superiors, control subordinates, pander to the egos of other leaders, engage in vote-bank politics, defend past and present party actions, and carry forward party ideology—even when it is outdated or unjust. To keep the flock under control, parties often smother plurality of opinion, an essential ingredient of democracy. A strong top leader can turn the entire party into a personal fiefdom, creating a de facto one-man show.

Parties are essentially vehicles through which top leaders and local leaders connect. Local leaders benefit from the popularity of top leaders, while top leaders benefit from the local clout of local leaders. This arrangement is purely about political convenience rather than national development, which often turns into a post-election unholy alliance: top leaders overlook the misdeeds of local leaders, and in return, local leaders overlook the misdeeds of top leaders. Corruption at higher levels is condoned in exchange for condoning corruption at the local level. Furthermore, local leaders often have little to contribute to the broader national vision that national institutions require.

None of this party-politicking is necessary under LCCF+. Leaders can connect directly with voters and be transparent about what they stand for. Genuine dedication becomes the primary ingredient of political success rather than party-politicking—an earth-and-heaven difference.

Even prime-ministerial or chief-ministerial aspirants would no longer need to play internal party politics to rise through the ranks, drag the weight of a party, cultivate vote banks, resort to sectarian appeals, raise massive funds, or manage warring factions. All they would need to do is demonstrate statesmanship and build broad-based reputations as neutral and trustworthy leaders—as figures like Vajpayee and PVNR once did.

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If parties survive under LCCF+, they will do so only by attracting leaders representing diverse communities, causes, and fields. They would no longer be controlling entities. Rather, they would evolve into collaborative platforms—similar to chambers of commerce, film institutes, or sports academies—grooming and supporting aspiring leaders rather than controlling them or contesting elections directly.

Even if parties continue to function as organized entities, they would become “less political.” They would no longer struggle to field candidates in every constituency to satisfy caste, religious, and factional arithmetic. Instead, parties could publish nationwide (or statewide, in state elections) “endorsed lists” of candidates that include likely-to-win leaders from various communities, ideological strands, and social backgrounds. They could include established leaders, emerging visionaries, moderate and even extreme voices—without alienating anyone. They could even include the near and dear of past leaders, if they so choose. Ultimately, however, it would be party supporters and the broader electorate who decide who among them is worthy. The “endorsed lists” mechanism compensates for the lack of internal party elections and acts as a natural curb on dynasty politics.

Endorsed lists also expand voter choice. Today, voters who wish to support a party but dislike its fielded candidate face a dilemma. Under LCCF+, endorsed lists would allow voters to select leaders of their choice from the party’s endorsed list—thereby expressing support for the party while still exercising individual judgment.

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In fact, with multiple votes, voters would select the best candidates across parties—and, of course, independents as well—thereby raising the overall quality of elected leadership. Furthermore, under this model, no party can monopolize or polarize voters because of overlapping voter bases and the presence of "shared voters." Parties cannot easily demonize one another, as doing so would risk alienating voters who hold sympathies across the spectrum. Political rivalries would remain competitive without hardening into permanent hostilities.

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The current system also suffers from the seat-share–vote-share mismatch problem: a small swing in vote percentage can dramatically alter a party's fate. Such cut-throat competition drives parties to outspend and outmaneuver their rivals, leading to an excessive role for money power and muscle power in politics. The LCCF+ model, with endorsed lists and Proportional Voting Power (PVP), guarantees that party support on the ground is more faithfully reflected in the legislature. LCCF+ would effectively function as an inherently Proportional Representation (PR) model.

Restoring the Power of the 'vote'

To truly appreciate the power of the LCCF+ model, we must compare it with the current system in one crucial respect: the power of the vote. In the existing model, the power of the vote is eroded in several ways that are neither widely understood nor adequately debated. Yet this erosion silently fuels public cynicism and helps explain why some voters are willing to trade their vote for small incentives such as cash or liquor.

First, the vote in the current system is effectively a three-in-one vote. With a single ballot, the voter simultaneously chooses a local candidate, a political party, and a prime-ministerial or chief-ministerial aspirant. But what if a voter likes the party but not its top leader? Or likes the top leader but not the local candidate? Or approves of one or two of the three, but not all? In such cases, the voter ends up supporting one or two options they do not truly endorse. The vote thus becomes partially negative—one is compelled to make a choice that runs against one's own preferences.

Second, what if a voter does not like the candidates fielded by any major political party? Voting for any other candidate is essentially a "wasted" vote—an inherent and well-known issue with the FPTP system. As a result, voters feel pressured to choose among candidates they may not genuinely prefer. The power of the vote is silently eroded.

Third, many voters repeatedly support the same party—even when it is not performing well—due to inertia; loyalty to party, caste, or religion; embarrassment about switching allegiance; or even guilt about "deserting" a party during difficult times. Instead of functioning as a tool to continually seek the best leadership, the vote becomes influenced by virtues turned into vices under party culture and FPTP.

Fourth, by voting for a party, citizens implicitly endorse its entire manifesto—including policies they may disagree with. When the party later implements those policies, it claims a full mandate. This is when voters often repent: "Why did I vote for this leader or party?"

Fifth, what happens when the candidate a voter supports loses the election? The voter is then represented by the winning candidate—someone they may not have voted for, or may even have opposed. The vote fails to express what it was intended to express: disapproval of the winning candidate. Once again, the power of the vote is weakened.

In addition to these multiple dilutions and distortions of the vote, the winning candidate typically secures around 35% of the vote, while the remaining 65%—a majority—are represented by a candidate chosen by a minority. With this pattern repeating across elections and constituencies, the nation effectively experiences recurring minority rule. What is the point of an electoral process that cannot reliably produce majority-backed representation in a democracy?

All these issues, unsurprisingly, engender cynicism among voters. That is why many readily sell their "powerless vote" for quick cash or liquor. Only a small percentage of voters—those strongly aligned with a particular ideology or identity—ever get to see leaders, parties, and manifestos they fully support. Yet even they remain helpless when their chosen candidate or party loses and another officially claims their mandate.

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The LCCF+ model implicitly addresses all these distortions and restores the "power of the vote". There is no three-in-one dilemma. Voters are not forced to simultaneously choose a local candidate, a party, and a head of government. They do not have to choose candidates from "major political parties" merely to prevent their vote from going to waste. The responsibility for selecting a prime-ministerial or chief-ministerial leader shifts to the elected legislators, who hold the power to remove them if they do not perform well—without waiting five years.

Multiple votes free voters from the loyalty trap. Selecting capable leaders from multiple parties would become the norm—precisely the condition required to realize the full democratic power vested in the people. Overlapping voter bases would naturally check vote-bank politics and reduce polarization.

Most importantly, under this model, voters are represented only by leaders they voted for and who win election. Never are voters represented by leaders they did not choose. They may experience partial or even no representation if their preferred candidates fail to win—but never misrepresentation. The vote is never turned against the voter's own expressed preference, as happens under the current system.

The LCCF+ model is designed not only to elevate leadership and encourage genuine dedication, but also to address critical issues of the current system like this erosion of the power of the vote itself.

Social Justice

The upliftment of socially and economically weaker sections—social justice—has been a concern of reformers even during the decades leading to independence. While the issue is by no means trivial, reformers became fixated on what proved to be a simplistic solution—the only tool they could conceive within the newly adopted democratic framework: political representation, which under the Poona Pact of 1932 took the form of reserved constituencies.

Originally expected to deliver results within a decade, this solution has proven ineffective even after seven decades, with weaker sections largely remaining in the same position. Worse, it produced serious side effects: weaker sections lost decades hoping political representation would "do the magic," instead of taking initiative to improve their own circumstances; sectarian politics preempted the focus on genuine development and poverty alleviation; selfishness across groups and distrust among communities increased, fueling social disharmony; and politicians have begun demanding the same ineffective solution for their own communities,

motivated more by personal political advancement than by genuine concern for their development.

The LCCF+ model offers a simpler, fairer, and more elegant solution—without these side effects. All communities—not just SCs and STs, but also those classified as BC, OBC, and others who are currently fragmented across constituencies—can unite under this model, liberated from constituency cages. They can elect leaders of their own in proportion to their numbers, without having to struggle for representation and without relying on fallible—and often contested—caste-based censuses. More importantly, they can elect leaders they genuinely trust to serve them, instead of settling for party-nominated candidates who often serve as proxies of the powerful.

Reserved constituencies and caste-oriented politics assume that everyone is obsessed with caste. In reality, each caste contains as many caste-averse individuals as caste-conscious ones, with the majority somewhere in between. LCCF+ is designed to serve this full spectrum seamlessly: casteist voters may cast all their votes for caste leaders; caste-averse voters none; and others may distribute some to caste leaders and the rest to candidates dedicated to their broader aspirations, interests, and concerns.

Political solutions for social problems are often like the tail wagging the dog. They rarely resolve the underlying issues and frequently result in frustration and lost decades. Worse still, they sometimes entrench what they aim to eliminate. The modern FC, OBC, BC, SC, ST classifications ironically impose a hierarchy—the very opposite of equality—on castes, precisely the flaw we criticize in Manu's hierarchical Varna system. Even more dangerously, reserved constituencies and caste censuses freeze the political system into a caste framework, institutionalizing the very caste structure we claim we want to transcend.

LCCF+ shifts the focus from identities to progress, and from representation to leadership. When leadership is placed at the forefront of the political system, with all collective aspirations embedded in the constitution's preamble, the nation will thrive automatically—regardless of whether identities endure or dissolve, a process already under way through urbanization and intercaste marriages.

Continuity and stability

Even an underperforming company would hesitate to completely shake up its leadership unless absolutely necessary. Yet that is precisely what we do—almost nonchalantly—when changing governments. We have little sense of how the vagaries of the political landscape, the outcome of each election, and the uncertain performance of every government constantly place the nation on a roller coaster, thwarting continuity and stability.

Political landscapes currently fall into three broad patterns—the "one-two-many" problem: a single dominant party, two dominant parties, or multiple parties. A single dominant party can deliver stability, but only if the leader is competent; otherwise, continuity comes at the cost of poor governance and unchecked power. Two dominant parties could ideally drive an upward cycle of better governance, with each competing to raise standards—but more often, they spiral downward. Desperate to win and retain power, they indulge in vote-bank politics, inflame sectarian divisions, offer populist freebies, and undo their predecessors' policies, abandoning projects and programs midstream. When no party dominates, coalition governments emerge—fragile, short-lived, and prone to collapse. Which pattern prevails at any given

time—within a state or across the nation—is purely a matter of luck. That over a billion brains must allow chance to rule the course of the nation is shameful.

The LCCF+ model resolves this predicament. Leaders in this system get elected repeatedly, supported by enduring voter bases. Easily over two-thirds of them can be expected to return to power in each election, ensuring both continuity and stability. Elections themselves take on a completely new character under this model: no longer would they be a game of dice; rather they become a periodic exercise in retaining the good leaders and removing the non-performers. Election outcomes are no longer swayed by political winds, party tickets, controversial issues, or emotive slogans—as is often the case today.

The LCCF+ model smoothens the one-two-many political landscape by reducing the overbearing significance of political parties. It makes the outcome of each election and the performance of each government more predictable, while ensuring that the country's top political talent—the best available leadership—remains in power. In doing so, it preserves not only continuity and stability, but also quality and plurality, as discussed earlier.

Three-Tier-Administration

Another significant implicit benefit of the LCCF+ model is that it brings a clean separation of powers between the three tiers of administration, the Centre, States, and the local bodies.

First, under the LCCF+ model, Lok Sabha members are not tied to any single state, because their pan-India voter bases span multiple states. They assume a national identity, rising above regional affiliations—much like leaders during the independence movement. The same principle applies at the state level: Vidhan Sabha members assume a state-level identity, rising above purely local considerations.

Currently, Lok Sabha members are often perceived as representatives of their respective states, which goes against the spirit of the Constitution. The Constitution defines the Lok Sabha as the "House of the People" and the Rajya Sabha as the "Council of States." Under the LCCF+ model, with Lok Sabha members deriving legitimacy from pan-India voter bases, the distinction between the two Houses becomes sharper and more faithful to constitutional intent.

Because the LCCF+ model allows people of all professions and interests to elect their own leaders directly, there would be no need for the nominated seats in the Rajya Sabha. These nominated seats could be abolished, and the strength of the Lok Sabha increased by the same number. Similarly, the special constituencies of the Vidhan Parishads could be abolished, and the seats in the Vidhan Sabhas correspondingly increased. Graduates and teachers, for whom these constituencies were created, would be able to elect their preferred leaders directly to the Vidhan Sabhas under LCCF+. Moreover, it is inherently inequitable that only teachers and graduates enjoy special representation, while other professions—such as doctors, lawyers, journalists, and countless others—do not. LCCF+ expands this representational ability to every profession without exception.

With leaders' pan-India voter bases spanning multiple states, the contentious delimitation debate—where economically prosperous but less populous states fear domination by more populous states—becomes moot. Leaders from less populous states can attract voters from more populous states, rising above their regional identities.

Under LCCF+, leaders with national vision, spirit, and appeal rise to the national level; leaders with state-level vision and appeal rise to the state level; and local bodies are led by those

with genuinely local vision. No longer would individuals unknown beyond their constituencies occupy national or state-level offices. Nor would national and state-level leaders engage in local turf wars to dominate local politics.

Local development suffers today because MPs and MLAs—who do not have statutory authority or responsibility for local development—interfere in the functioning of local bodies using party clout. It becomes a situation of "neither I can do it, nor will I let you do it." Local leaders remain party functionaries rather than genuine, independent leaders of their neighborhoods, villages, and districts—carrying the authority, responsibility, and dignity those positions are meant to command.

The LCCF+ model ends this murky overlap by completely decoupling national and state politics from local governance. District-level leaders would be free to work with collectors, municipal-level leaders with municipal commissioners, and village-level leaders with village development officers. All three tiers would be institutionally strengthened under this model, bringing governance closer to the constitutional spirit of the distribution of powers.

Inculot Model

To further strengthen the functioning of local bodies, ensure fair representation for all sections of the population, and counter the influence of money and muscle power, we propose a simple modification to the electoral process in local bodies, which we call the Inculot Model. Inculot is a coined term combining incumbent and lottery.

Under the current model, the incumbent is re-elected if he or she secures the highest number of votes. However, it is entirely possible for an incumbent to win despite receiving a lower percentage of votes than in the previous election—particularly in triangular or multi-cornered contests, which can be tactically encouraged to split the vote of a strong challenger.

Under the Inculot Model, the incumbent would be declared re-elected only if two conditions are met: first, he or she secures the highest number of votes; and second, he or she improves upon their previous vote share in percentage terms. If either condition is not met, a new leader would be selected by lottery from among the top three candidates, excluding the incumbent. In essence, gaining office requires a baseline level of support combined with chance; retaining office requires demonstrable performance.

The Inculot Model offers several advantages over the current system. Aspirants no longer need to chase every marginal vote through excessive spending or aggressive tactics. Vote-bank politics and polarization cease to be reliable pathways to power. The influence of money, muscle power, inherited privilege, or social dominance is significantly reduced. Vote-splitting strategies lose their tactical value. Leaders from smaller or less dominant communities stand on equal footing with those from dominant groups. Capable but modest candidates stand an equal chance alongside more assertive or aggressive contenders. At the same time, contestants are spared the lasting stigma of outright defeat—an especially important consideration in close-knit communities.

A New Voting Process

It is time to address a lingering question that may arise in the minds of readers: How would the LCCF+ model function at the booth level? How would voters identify their preferred

leaders on a ballot that could potentially contain thousands of names? Would casting multiple votes confuse the average voter?

These are genuine concerns. Accordingly, we design an entirely new voting process—simple, intuitive, and foolproof—leveraging today's ubiquitous digital technologies.

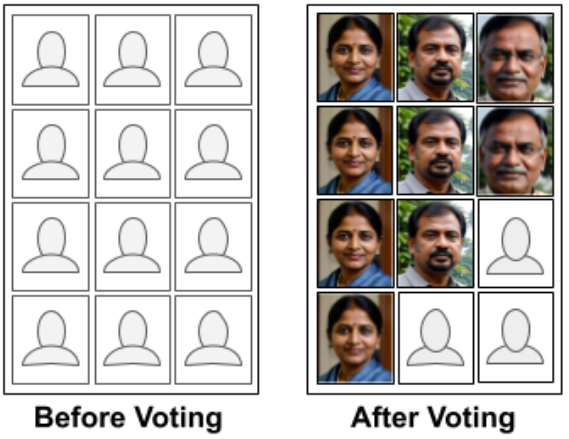
Two challenges must be addressed upfront. First, the current election symbol mechanism would not work when thousands of candidates appear on the ballot. Second, existing Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) cannot handle more than 384 candidates. To overcome these limitations, we propose replacing election symbols with Leader Cards containing QR codes, and replacing EVMs with Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs) equipped with touchscreens.

Under this model, instead of allocating election symbols, the Election Commission of India (ECI) would assign each contestant a unique Leader Identification Number (LIN). Candidates would design their own Leader Cards displaying their photograph, name, date of birth, LIN, party affiliation (if any), and a QR code, which might look somewhat like the image on the next page.

Sample Leader Card



Advanced Voting Machine



Leaders would distribute these cards physically at political events and digitally through websites, social media platforms, and other communication channels. Voters could also obtain Leader Cards by making a phone call or sending an SMS to candidates, political parties, or the ECI, or have them printed free of cost at e-Seva centers. In the months and weeks leading up to election day, voters would collect the Leader Cards of their preferred leaders and carry them to the polling station.

At the booth, the AVM touch screen would display twelve boxes arranged in a 3×4 grid, each representing one vote—assuming that twelve votes are allotted to each voter. Alternatively, a 4×5 grid could be used, granting twenty votes per voter.

A voter would tap a box, scan the QR code on the chosen Leader Card, and see the leader's photograph appear on the screen as confirmation. This process would be repeated until all votes are cast. Voters could allocate multiple votes to a single leader if they wish, or leave some votes uncast if they prefer. Mistakes could be corrected by rescanning the intended Leader Card. For example, a voter might allocate four votes to one leader, three to another, two to a third, and leave three votes uncast—each a valid choice.

To ensure familiarity and ease of use, polling stations would provide dummy AVMs for practice, and mobile applications would allow voters to simulate the process in advance. Dummy AVMs could also be installed at e-Seva centers. Tech-savvy family members or trained

election volunteers could assist voters, ensuring that individuals of all ages and backgrounds are comfortable with the system.

Finally, by leveraging voter identification mechanisms developed for Remote Voting Machines (RVMs), voters could be freed from the need to travel to their hometowns to cast their ballots. Since the names of all candidates nationwide would be available in every AVM, voting could be facilitated from any location. This would greatly benefit migrant workers, nomadic communities, traveling professionals, and others—enhancing participation and deepening democratic inclusion.

Varishth Parishad

The LCCF+ model goes a long way toward reducing political influence over governance, progress, and national stability. To reinforce this shift, we must also decouple key apolitical offices—such as the President of India, the Chief Election Commissioner, the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and the head of the Enforcement Directorate—from active politics.

Today, the independence of these offices is heavily compromised, as their appointees are often chosen by the very political actors they are meant to oversee. To correct this, we propose entrusting these appointments to a non-political collegium, which we call the Varishth Parishad. This body would comprise individuals with substantial public service experience but no ongoing interest in active politics, drawn from four independent streams: (1) former legislators with at least eight years of cumulative service in the Lok Sabha or state assemblies, (2) retired judges with a minimum of three years' service in the Supreme Court or High Courts, (3) former High Commissioners and Ambassadors with at least five years representing India abroad, and (4) distinguished citizens who received Padma awards at least six years prior.

Membership in the Varishth Parishad would be entirely voluntary. Members must be between 65 and 75 years of age, relinquish any prior party affiliations, swear an oath to abstain from all political activity for life, and be permanently barred from holding any political office—even after age 75. Any transgression would be punishable by law, including imprisonment.

This mechanism ensures the autonomy and institutional independence that these apolitical offices require to safeguard democracy and maintain the balance of power effectively.

Summary

Here we summarize all the proposed changes to the political system:

Structural

- LCCF+ (Leadership by Community, Cause, Field and More) Model for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha Elections
- Inculot Model for Local Body Elections
- Varishth Parishad for appointing apolitical offices
- Refining no-confidence motion to remove individual cabinet members

Directional

- Improve the preamble to support aspirational India
- Rename Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas as Lok Nayak Sabhas, and Rajya Sabha as Rajya Pratinidhi Sabha
- Decouple 'minority privileges' from religious context, and extend them to all self-identified communities

Implementation

The reforms suggested in this essay set a new tone and infuse new vigor into India's progress, yet they are independent of each other and can be implemented so.

The LCCF+ model and Inculot models can be introduced gradually, instead of all at once. They can be piloted in two or three willing states first, preferably with different political parties in power. Both models can then be refined based on the experiences and implemented in every other state in phases. LCCF+ model can eventually be implemented in the national elections.

Just as it took a cycle or two for the Indian voter to become fully familiar with democracy when it was first introduced, this model too will need one or two cycles for voters and leaders to become conversant with it and experience its full benefits.

With these changes, India would be a leader in pioneering electoral innovation. India already enjoys the reputation for conducting elections regularly and for peaceful transfer of power every five years. With progress in implementing such initiatives as UPI, the world has begun to look up to India in certain ways. The world is watching what we do and how we do it. With these reforms to our political system, we would not only help ourselves, but also lead the world by example.

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