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DEMOCRACY



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eElections

For a Better Democracy

A Concept Paper
for the consideration of
the People and Leaders of India

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eElections

1. Political system in India is plagued by numerous issues, including the widely discussed ones like corruption, criminality, and upper caste dominance, and the occasionally discussed ones like dynasty rule, issues with FPTP, etc. Our democracy, public life and country's development have been suffering because of these issues, and a solution remains elusive.

2. But now, with the power of digital-age technologies at our disposal—something the framers of the Constitution did not have back in the day—we have the opportunity to design a better alternative to address these long-standing issues. In this paper, we propose a novel electoral system called eElections, which does exactly that. This system tackles many of the challenges, constraints, and limitations faced by voters, leaders, political parties, and the Election Commission. Specifically, it creates a level playing field enabling honest and dedicated leaders to reenter politics—leaders who have all but given up hope of entering and surviving politics in the current system. Furthermore, the eElections system enhances the democratic process in several significant ways, which we will explore in detail.

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3. Before diving into the details, a few words about myself: My name is Krishna Sharma. I was born and raised in Kavur, Palnadu District, Andhra Pradesh. I am a gold medalist from the University of Hyderabad, where I earned my M.Sc. in Mathematics in 1980. My professional background is in information technology. I worked at ECIL, Hyderabad, until 1989 and then continued my career in the USA, serving as a systems engineer and architect in various companies until I took voluntary retirement in 2018. My passion lies in addressing social issues that affect large populations, and one of my key interests is improving the political system. This paper is a result of that pursuit.

The Problem

4. Criminality, corruption, graft, nepotism, extortion, etc., have been rising in the political system with every election, not only eroding our confidence in democracy but also leading to the deterioration of institutions like judiciary, revenue, police, education, and healthcare. They are also stifling economic progress, to the extent the small, medium, and even large businesses need political backing and favors for their survival. The practice of politicians distributing cash to voters – and voters not only accepting it, but also expecting it – has become an embarrassing and shameful norm in many parts of the country.

5. Political parties have no choice but to field candidates who can outspend and outmaneuver their opponents. Money and muscle power have sadly become essential tools for political campaigns. The ability to raise, spend, and distribute funds without getting caught has become a prized skill in politics. Democracy, being a "numbers game", has driven parties to embrace unchecked demagoguery, rely on divisive rhetoric, cultivate vote banks through doles and appeasement, and form unholy alliances. Independent and honest politicians have all but lost hope of entering and survivng in the political arena.

6. This being the state of affairs for decades, people got used to and became numb to the stench of corruption and criminality in politics. No more do they believe in or hope for honesty in politics. Elections often feel like an exercise in choosing between the lesser of two evils. A vote for any candidate other than the ones fielded by the top two or three parties has essentiallly become a "wasted" vote.

7. The current system of territorial constituencies reduces the elections to Lok Sabha, a national body, into ‘local contests’. Politicians who grew up developing local clout, involved in local factions and fights, and harassing the local businesses and social groups for support, etc., have a better chance of winning the local contests and becoming members of Lok Sabha, rather than politicians who grew up dreaming about developing and serving the country as a whole, which should be the right qualification to enter Lok Sabha, a national body. A good majority of the members of the Lok Sabha lack perspective on broader national issues, seriously impacting the development of a nation as a whole as well as its integrity.

8. In this system, voters from diverse socioeconomic segments—representing various identities such as castes and religions, professions like farming, weaving, carpentry, construction, and teaching, and interests such as sustainable development, environmental protection, and national integrity—are grouped into a single electoral college. Their concerns, needs, and priorities are vastly different. How can any politician be expected to possess a deep understanding of, or genuine dedication to, the unique issues of each socioeconomic group? As a result, politicians often resort to trying to be "all things to all people," delivering contradictory messages to satisfy everyone. This approach fosters "jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none" politicians, rather than leaders with true expertise or commitment to the specific needs of any one group—let alone those

passionate about emerging sectors like sports, tourism, education, healthcare, or technology. The lack of knowledgeable and dedicated leadership at the top is a key reason India has fallen behind in many critical areas.

9. Democracy demands and constitution intends “level playing field” for all candidates. But the territorial constituencies, with "mixed-segment electorate" give an edge to the upper castes who have the clout, money, and muscle power to run strong campaigns, over the other castes that lack these advantages. Even after seven decades of independence, many sections of society remain underrepresented in legislatures compared to their population size. Growing frustration over the lack of fair representaton is fueling demands for such complex measures as caste-based censuses and the sub-classification of Scheduled Castes.

10. In the territorial constituencies system, winning candidates typically secure only 35% to 40% of the total electorate's vote in their respective constituencies. This means they represent only a minority of the voters, not the majority. Since this is the case in nearly every election and constituency, the country is effectively under minority rule most of the time—violating a core principle of democracy, a phenomenon we often overlook.

11. Furthermore, the winning candidates are expected to represent not only those who voted for them but also those who did not. It’s a kind of "forced marriage." Why would voters want to be represented by leaders they neither liked nor trusted in the first place? How can they feel comfortable approaching the leaders they did not vote for, with their concerns and needs? And would those leaders be truly noble enough to treat those who voted for them and those who did not, equally?

12. By giving only one vote per voter, the current system forces voters to select only one candidate belonging to one party, fostering binary thinking and polarization. A vote for a party is often interpreted, whether intended or not, as total support for that party and a complete rejection of the others. In reality, majoirty of the voters are party-neutral, but the current system does not provide a mechanism for them to express the same.

13. Political parties fiercely attack and relentlessly demonize each other before elections, and these hostilities don’t end once the elections are over. They carry into the legislatures, where the ruling party focuses on harassing the opposition parties, and the opposition parties on portraying every policy and initiative of the ruling party in a negative light. As a result, legislative debates become, at best, rhetorical and, at worst, acrimonious, offering more entertainment than substantive solutions to voters. The very term "opposition party" is unfortunate. We shouldn’t elect one party to govern us and another to oppose it—it doesn’t make sense. Such terminology only serves to legitimize acrimony instead of fostering constructive collaboration among elected representatives from different parties.

14. Before elections, political parties present their positions and policies on various issues in their manifestos. However, these manifestos are often shaped by party

ideologies and the agenda and idiosyncrasies of top leadership, easily missing the issues that matter most to voters and emphasizing those that do not. Moreover, manifestos present voters with an "all or nothing" choice, offering them no mechanism to indicate which policies or positions they support and which they do not. Consequently, voters could end up backing policies and positions that hurt their own interests, regardless of which party they choose to vote for.

15. The winning party is left with no choice but to assume that the voters support every policy and postion outlined in their manifestos. As a result, it could end up vigorously pursuing the least-favored policies while neglecting the most favored ones. This disconnect between the public expectations and the government actions could not only steer the nation—or the state, in the case of state elections—in the wrong direction but also damage the party's chances of reelection.

16. There is also one other subtle issue with the current system. Political parties often field strong candidates against strong candidates and average candidates against average candidates of the other parties. No matter who wins, half of the strong politicians are eliminated from power while half of the average candidates are placed in power, weakening the overall composition of the legislatures by that much. The quality of the legislative debates suffers to the extent the legislatures lack strong voices. History bears witness to many good parliamentarians defeated, depriving the legislative process of their much-needed voices.

17. There was a time when political parties upheld "internal democracy" by holding elections to choose their leaders. This practice, which could have curbed issues like dynastic politics and nepotism, has gradually disappeared, burdened by challenges such as maintaining membership, preventing infiltration, and conducting regular internal elections. Without these democratic processes, parties risk promoting leaders and nominating candidates who are resented by their own cadres, resulting in a lack of enthusiasm during campaigns and potential electoral defeat. History bears witness to numerous instances of political parties losing seats by nominating candidates who lacked support not only among the electorate but also within their own ranks.

18. In this system, political parties can lose a significant number of seats with only a small drop in vote share, resulting in a distorted representation of their true support among the electorate. This is why some political pundits advocate replacing the current First Past the Post (FPTP) system with Proportional Representation (PR).

19. In this system, wealthier, less populous states resent the larger number of representatives from poorer, more populous states in the parliament. The delimitation commission, responsible for addressing such issues, is struggling to find solutions. Left unaddressed, this resentment could escalate into an serious political issue.

The Solution

20. All of these problems, and others we will discuss later, can be resolved—some entirely and others to a significant extent—by making two fundamental changes to the political system: 1) replacing the existing territorial constituencies system and the associated First Past the Post (FPTP) method with a '**top rankers**' system, and 2) replacing the one-vote-per-voter system to **multiple-votes-per-voter** system.

21. With these changes, neither voters nor candidates would be tied to any specific constituency, as constituencies would no longer exist. Candidates can seek votes from voters across the entire country (or state, in the case of state elections) rather than in a small geographic area called constituency. Voters can cast their ballots for leaders from anywhere in the nation (or state, in the case of state elections), rather than only for those contesting in their constituency.

22. Voters can distribute their multiple votes to multiple leaders who are dedicating to addressing their various needs, issues and concerns, in equal or unequal proportions as they choose. The multiple votes could be set as 10, 12, 20, or so—large enough for voters to distribute among two, three, four, or more candidates in equal or unequal proportions, yet small enough to be manageable.

23. In this system, candidates will be ranked based on the total number of votes they receive nationwide, referred to as their ‘vote-count.’ The top 543 rankers will be declared elected to the Lok Sabha. A similar process will be applied for state elections, with the required number of top-rankers being declared elected to fill the seats of the state legislatures. In this system, elected leaders represent only the voters who voted for them, unlike in the current system where winning candidates represent all voters in their respective constituencies, including those who did not vote for them.

24. The current voting system, which relies on election symbols and Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), is not equipped to handle multiple votes per voter or provide access to thousands of candidates nationwide (or hundreds in state legislature elections) for every voter in every polling booth. To overcome these limitations, we propose replacing them with what we call 'leader cards' and Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs), leveraging modern electronic technologies such as QR codes and touchscreens, the specifics of which we will discuss later. We will refer to this "electronic age” voting system as the *eElections* system.

25. In the current system, members of legislatures represent roughly the same number of voters from their respective constituencies, and thus enjoy equal voting power on the legislative floors. However, in the eElections system, members' vote counts can vary widely depending on the size of their voter base. Therefore, equal voting power would be unfair to both the legislators and the voters they represent. To address this, we will introduce a "weighted voting" system, where the vote-counts of the members in favor or againgst any bill, resolution, or motion will be added up instead of taking simple head count.

26. In this system, political parties do not field candidates in individual constituencies. Instead, they release a nation-wide (or state-wide, for state elections) 'endorsed list' of candidates. Voters who wish to support a party could allocate all or some of their votes to one, two, three, or more candidates from the party's endorsed list. Party-neutral voters can distribute votes to candidates on the endorsed lists of multiple parties and to independents.

27. The differences between the current system and eElections system, in summary, are:

Current System	**eElections System**
Territorial constituencies with FPTP	Top-rankers
One vote per voter	Multiple votes per voter
Head count on the legislative floors	Weighted Voting
Constituency-wise 'tickets'	Endorsed Lists
Eelected leaders represent entire electorate of a constituency	Elected leaders represent only those who voted for them
Election Symbols	Leader Cards
EVM (Electronic Voting Machines)	AVM (Advanced Voting Machines)

The Benefits

28. Let us now explore how eElections address various issues in our political system. The elimination of territorial constituencies transforms the dynamics entirely. Candidates must shift their focus from securing votes in a local constituency to seeking support from across the nation (or state, in state elections) to earn a place among the top-rankers list.

29. Voters would no longer be stuck between reelecting the incumbents and electing the challenger who could be the same candidate they rejected in the previous election cycle. They would not have to keep switching between two equally unworthy candidates, election after election. The eElections system frees voters from this 'binary thinking' by offering hundreds, or even thousands, of candidates to choose from. By offering multiple votes and the ability to elect multiple leaders, the system instills a 'plurality thinking' mindset among voters, which is a cornerstone of genuine democracy.

30. With no territorial constituencies, contests would no longer be local, rendering local clout, involvement in factions, influence over local businesses, and the and the advantages of belonging to an upper caste largely irrelevant. Distributing money and other enticements would become less practical, as potential voters would be spread across the entire nation (or state in state elections). This shift would naturally reduce criminality and corruption.

31. Candidates would no longer need to win over voters from *diverse* identities, professions, and interests within a constituency or pretend to be "all things to all people". Instead, they can focus on a specific identity, profession, or cause they are truly passionate about, attract voters belonging to that identity or profession or interested in that cause from across the nation (or state in the case of state elections), and thus build large enough ‘voter base’ of their own, to ultimately secure a place in the top-rankers list. Candidates, for example, can dedicate themselves to a specific community, caste, or religion, or to a profession like farming, weaving, carpentry, transportation, or teaching. They can also focus on causes such as eradicating corruption, developing infrastructure, improving education and healthcare, promoting renewable resources and energy, or addressing the needs of specific population segments such as women, third gender or Divyangs.

32. Voters, with their multiple votes, can elect multiple leaders, each committed to one or another of their interests. For example, a woman from an agricultural family might distribute some of her votes to a leader focused on farmers' issues, some to a leader dedicated to women's issues, and the rest to a leader committed to the concerns of her caste. Similarly, a teacher who is also a Divyang could distribute some votes to a leader focused on education, some to another dedicated to Divyangs' issues, and the remainder to a leader committed to the betterment of his community.

33. Voters can, in fact, use the multiple choices and multiple votes to improve the health and quality of political system in imaginative ways. For instance, they can give

some of their votes to established leaders to benefit from their experience and wisdom, and give some to emerging leaders to encourage fresh perspectives and energy. They can also split their votes between party-affiliated candidates and independents, supporting both.

34. In the current system, winning candidates typically receive only 35% to 40% of the electorate's votes, meaning a large portion of voters do not support them. Even the votes they do secure are not always earned on their own merit; many are gained due to party affiliation. A significant portion are also 'negative votes,' where voters choose the candidate simply to oppose another. Additionally, many votes come from people of different identities who vote for the candidate out of a lack of options. As a result, the percentage of voters who genuinely like and trust the winning candidates is quite small, possibly only 10% to 20% of the total electorate.

35. This means there is no trusted, open, and honest relationship between the majority of the voters and the winning candidates. Voters find it inconvenient to approach the leaders whom they did not vote for or reluctantly voted for. Gaining the attention of leaders to their specific needs and concerns is difficult, as the leaders attention is thinly spread across multiple identities and interests. Candidates cannot openly discuss the pros and cons of any issue, policy, or proposal with voters with whom they do not enjoy a trusted relationship. As a result, candidates resort to short-term populist solutions, which voters accept helplessly.

36. In contrast, in the eElections sytem, there would be no negative votes at all. Voters do not have to vote for a candidate becasue they do not like the other candidate. They can vote for only those leaders whom they truly like and trust. The attention of the elected leaders is not divided among the needs and concerns of various identities or professions or many causes, as they focus on only one identity or interest. Winning candidates represent only those who voted for them. There would be no "forced marriages" between voters and leaders—only "love marriages", so to speak. The affinity and trust between candidates and voters, which are cornerstones of democracy, would be strong. Voters would have leaders they can truly count on, and leaders would have voters whose support they can rely on.

37. By being open about their commitment to a specific population segment or cause from the beginning, leaders can engage in legislative debates with genuine honesty. They can firmly root every argument they present and every vote they cast on bills, resolutions, or motions on the legislative floors in their dedication to that specific segment or cause, thereby making their positions traceable and transparent. This contrasts sharply with the current system, where votes on the legislative floor are often constrained by party ideologies, directives from higher-ups, narrow parochial interests, and swayed by shifting political winds.

38. In the current system, leaders are at the mercy of political parties for their survival and for a "ticket" in every election. In contrast, the eElections system allows politicians to develop their own "voter base" through dedication and commitment to the issues of a specific identities and interests. Political parties would seek out these

candidates rather than the other way around. Candidates with their own voter bases can express independent voices without needing to align with party leadership and ideology on every issue. Voters naturally gravitate toward and remain loyal to leaders with strong, independent voices. In the current system, voters can never be sure whether their favorite leader will receive party nomination or win the election. However, in the eElections system, they can vote for their preferred leader regardless of whether that leader is on a political party's endorsed list or contesting as an independent.

39. Principled voters, who deeply care about a clean political system and would elect only honest leaders if given the chance, are currently fragmented into small minorities in each constituency. In the eElections system, they could unite from across the nation, forming a sizable voting bloc capable of placing a considerable number of honest leaders on the top-rankers list. Even other voters, out of conscience, would likely allocate one or two of their votes to honest candidates, further increasing the representation of such leaders in the legislatures. Political parties would consequently be compelled to include at least some principled and honest candidates on their endorsed lists, if only to attract the votes of these principled and conscientious voters.

40. Even a small percentage of honest members in legislatures can change the tone of legislative debates. Their votes would serve as the crucial 'deciding' votes on contentious issues. Principled leaders would vote purely based on the merits of the issues at hand, without yielding to political pressures or succumbing to enticements of any sort. They would command the respect of not only their own party members but also that of others, influencing them to think beyond parochial interests.

41. In the current system, criminality, corruption, and nepotism do not stop with politics; they spill into all public institutions. Similarly, the polarized debates between political parties, both in legislatures and outside, seep into the media, which is supposed to remain objective and neutral. We need to change this from the inside out and from the top down. We need to ensure that honest, genuine, and strong leaders are consistently at the helm of affairs. Their sustained presence at the top would provide them with the opportunity to clean up the system. That is what the eElections system ensures.

42. The presence of multiple castes, unique to our country, poses a complex challenge. On one hand, there is widespread condemnation of casteism in politics; on the other, there is a push for official recognition of castes to ensure fair representation through measures like 'reserved' constituencies and caste-based censuses. However, these measures effectively perpetuate the existence of castes rather than eliminate them.

43. Moreover, they do not guarantee fair representation, as it might seem on the surface. Voters of all castes in reserved constituencies must elect SC or ST candidates and be represented by them, while SC and ST voters in general constituencies must elect candidates from other castes and be represented by them. Furthermore, there are several castes and sub-castes within the SC and ST classification. Some of them feel discriminated against as nominations in the reserved constituencies often go to the most influential caste among them, leading to a growing demand for SC subclassification.

44. Caste-based censuses do not serve the intended purpose either, in the territorial constituencies system. They would only necessitate the creation of more 'reserved constituencies' for all castes, forcing voters in those constituencies to elect leaders from a particular caste. Moreover, lost in the debates of fair representation for all castes, we overlook the fact that most voters are not caste-oriented. Many voters are actually caste-indifferent, or even caste-averse. Even those who value and take pride in their caste often prefer to keep it separate from politics. Caste-based censuses and reserved constituencies force all such voters to become caste-oriented, the very opposite of what we want to see happen.

45. The eElections system offers a straightforward solution to this issue. It allows caste-oriented voters to elect leaders from their own caste or those dedicated to their caste's interests, while enabling 'caste-free' voters to choose leaders based on other criteria. With growing education, urbanization, and inter-caste marriages, the percentage of caste-free voters will only increase. Moreover, with multiple votes, most voters would allocate just a few votes based on caste and the rest on other priorities. The eElections system accurately reflects the true extent of caste-based interest in society and automatically adapts to its diminishing presence over time.

* * *

46. Political parties are integral to democracies worldwide, and India is no exception. Their aim and dream is to lock specific segments of the population as vote banks. However, a significant portion of the Indian electorate is pragmatic, ideology-indifferent and party-neutral. Given the chance, they would not put "all their eggs in one basket," and the eElections system enables them to do so with "multiple votes". Voters can distribute their votes among candidates from different parties as they see fit. Political parties can no longer expect to receive all the votes of any voter. They have to "share" voters with other parties.

47. In this "voter-sharing" system, the common practice of bashing and demonizing rival parties could backfire, alienating voters who may also support those other parties. Parties that engage in such attacks risk losing votes rather than gaining them. Instead, political parties would need to adopt a more cooperative approach, similar to banks, which expect their customers to have accounts with other banks and therefore "share" them. Banks don't criticize each other but instead compete by offering better services and greater accessibility. With voter-sharing, political parties would have to take a similar approach; shift focus from criticising each other to fielding candidates who are dedicated, approachable and responsive to voters’s needs.

48. Also, party-neutral voters, who distribute votes to leaders from multiple parties, would naturally expect them to collaborate in legislatures regardless of party affiliation, much like voters today expect MPs from the same state to work together despite party differences. This expectation would foster more substantive and less acrimonious debates, and reduce ‘party-line voting’ in the legislatures, which is nothing short of a dream come true, given the current state of affairs.

49. This system also relieves political parties of certain significant burdens. They no longer have to risk fielding ‘wrong’ candidates resented by party cadres and supporters, which could ultimately result in losing a seat. They can include all the candidates who have the potential to win on their endorsed lists, and let the voters decide who is worthy. Parties can include both the established leaders and emerging leaders, without having to choose one over the other. Additionally, parties are spared the hassle of finding strong candidates in every constituency. Instead, they can enlist ‘strong’ candidates from anywhere in the nation (or state, in the case of state elections), much like they currently do when selecting candidates for upper legislative houses. Voters, in any case, are free to vote for anyone, including leaders not on the endorsed lists. Parties would benefit regardless of which candidates on the endorsed lists are ultimately elected.

50. In this system, parties are relieved of the burden of preparing a manifesto. The candidates they select for the 'endorsed list' inherently reflect the party's values and priorities. Voters are no longer limited by the 'all or nothing' choice presented by a traditional manifesto; instead, they can indicate which issues are most important to them by voting for candidates who are dedicated to those specific issues. The vote counts received by various candidates provide a clear indication of what matters most and least to the voters, leaving little room for disconnect between voters’ expectations and parties’ perceptions.

51. Political parties face another significant dilemma in the current system. On one hand, they need to field candidates from various socio-economic segments to attract a broad spectrum of voters. On the other hand, they feel compelled to field candidates from upper castes, as they can only typically bring the necessary money and muscle power to run a strong campaign. In the eElections system, all that the parties have to do is find candidates from diverse socioeconomic segments, and their voter bases will automatically cover all the voters.

52. In the current territorial constituency system, a candidate who falls just a few votes short of the leading candidate loses the entire election. Even those who voted for him or her are represented by the winning candidate from the other party, which is not fair. However, in the eElections system, all the candidates who garner roughly the same number of votes would make it to the top-rankers list, or none would, depending on their vote-counts. This has two significant benefits. One, olitical parties gain representation in legislatures in proportion to their overall vote share. The votes garnered by its candidates would never go waste, because of the parties of the other candidates gaining slightly more voters. Thus the eElections system effectively works as a Proportional Representation (PR) system. Two, the system would not drop off half the strong candidates and pick up half the average candidates, as it happens in the current system. All the strong candidates, i.e., those with higher vote-counts would make it to the top-rankers list before the average ones can.

53. However, if a political party lists too many candidates on its endorsed lists, the votes it gains could be spread too thinly across the many candidates, reducing the chances of them securing a place in the top-rankers list. But political parties would be

smart enough to minimize the the number of candidates on the endorsed lists to maximize their individual vote-counts, and hence the chances of more of them making it to the top-rankers list.

54. In the current system, political parties are caught between the burden of conducting internal elections to provide a fair chance for all aspirants to rise through the ranks and the negative consequences of avoiding them, such as being prone to "dynasty rule," nepotism, and the risk of losing potentially high-capable leaders. Avoiding internal elections not only leads to discontent within the party but also damages its public image, raising concerns about fairness and transparency. All these issues would become moot in the eElections system. Parties can put whomever they choose on their endorsed lists, but only those who are liked by both the party cadres and the general voters will ultimately rise to power.

55. The size of the current Lok Sabha was fixed at 543 back in the early 1970s based on the population of the country at that time. But since then, the population has increased three fold, but the size of the Lok Sabha was not. There are calls to increase it at least to 1000 members. But there are political, and adminstrative complexities involved in doing so. We need to take census and draw new boundaries. None of that is needed in the eElections system. It is simply a matter of declaring top 1000 rankers as elected, rather than the top 543 rankers. The same is applicable to the legislatures of every state.

56. As demographics shift and people migrate, particularly from rural to urban areas, it becomes necessary to redraw constituency boundaries. But this involves the complexityy of taking census and redrawing boundaries. This becomes a mute point in the eElections system, as there are no constituencies.

57. The eElections system also solves the problem of less populous but wealthier states resenting the higher representation of the more populous but poorer states. The voters from everywhere are open to the candidates from everywhere, and hence represent voters from multiple states. In fact, candidates from wealthier states could have an advantage in attracting voters from poorer states by sharing the techniques and strategies that brought prosperity to their regions. This creates a win-win scenario for both the leaders of richer states and the voters of poorer states, while contributing to the overall development of the economy.

58. In the eElections system, there is no need for NOTA, as there are hundreds and even thousands of candidates to choose from for the voters. There is also no need for by-elections in this system. If and when a member of the legislature resigns or dies, the candidate who got the 544th rank can be declared as elected to Lok Sabha, and the same thing can be done in the case of state legislatures.

59. The weighted-voting method on the legislative floors brings benefits to the voters and political parties as well. It doesn’t matter how many leaders a voter segment such as Divyangs or farmers or voters of a particular caste, etc. elects. Regardless of whether they elect two or five or ten leaders, the combined vote counts of the leaders would be the same, and the weighted voting guarantees that they are fairly represented.

60. Similarly, political parties would not need to worry about the number of candidates they place on their endorsed lists due to the weighted-voting system. They could choose to endorse just one hundred candidates and have all the votes concentrated on those candidates, or they could endorse two hundred candidates, allowing the votes to be spread more thinly among them. The total aggregate of the vote counts—which is what truly matters in weighted voting—would remain the same.

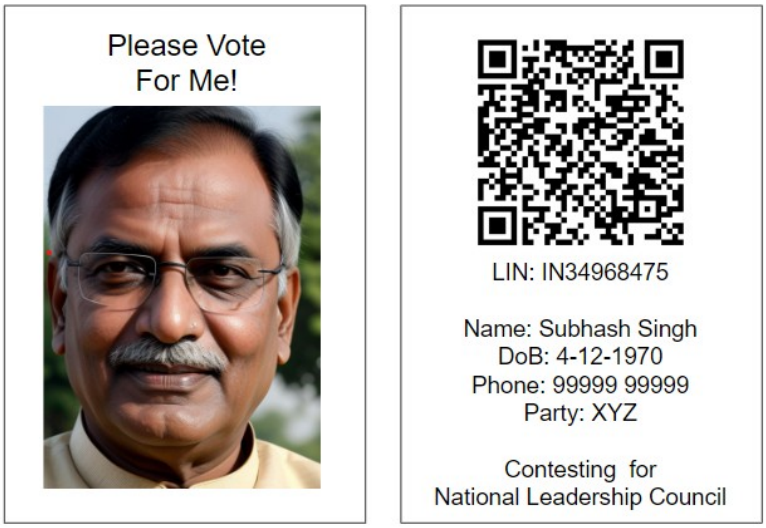
The Technology

61. In the eElections system, instead of assigning traditional election symbols, the Election Commission would assign a unique LIN (Leader Identification Number) to each candidate. Alternately, the election commission could decide to use Aadhaar card numbers of the leaders as LINs.

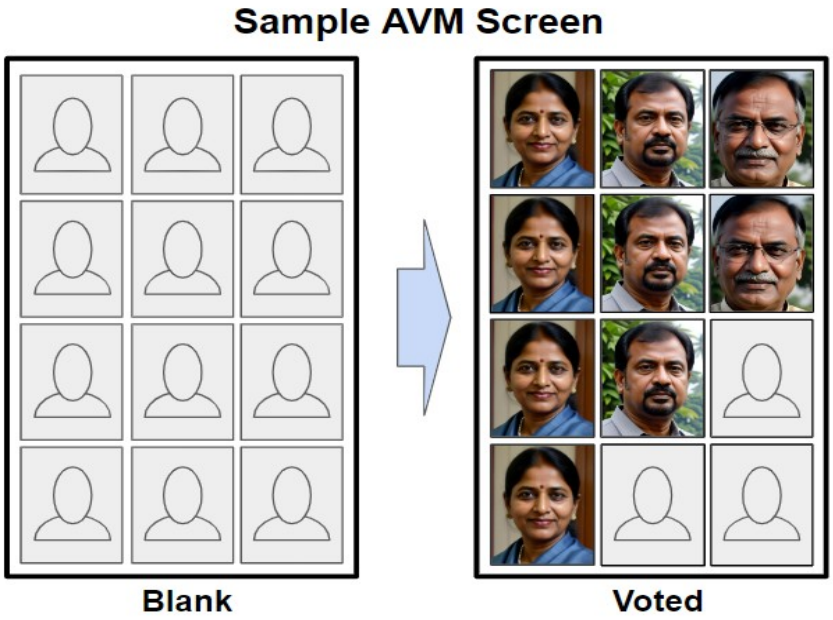
62. Candidates would create their own ‘leader cards’ with their respective pictures, names, dates of birth, LIN, party affiliation, and other details along with a QR code. They would distribute their leader cards to their potential voters in paper form at political events and in electronic form through social media and on websites. Voters can also obtain the leader cards by sending an SMS or making a phone call to the candidates or by getting them printed for free at any e-Seva centre.

63. A leader card, resembling an ID card, would look somewhat like the one shown in the image below:

Sample Leader Card



64. Voters would bring the leader cards of all their chosen candidates to the polling booth. Instead of traditional Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), polling booths will be equipped with Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs). These AVMs will contain comprehensive information about all candidates from across the country (or state for state elections). The AVMs will feature a touchscreen displaying a 3x4 grid filled with blank faces, representing the twelve votes a voter can cast, as shown in the left side of the image in the next page. (Alternatively, if each voter is allocated 20 votes, the grid could be adjusted to a 4x5 layout.)



65. To begin voting, the voter would touch one of the boxes on the AVM screen, which would be highlighted with a border to indicate that it has been activated. Next, the voter would scan the QR code from a leader card into the AVM. The face of the corresponding candidate will then appear in the activated box, confirming that the vote has been assigned to that candidate. Voters can also search in for their preferred candidates by name, date of birth, and phone number, instead of scanning the QR code, if they choose to. Voters can continue this process by touching each box in turn and scanning the QR codes of the same or different leaders until they complete casting all twelve votes. If a mistake is made during the voting process, voters can easily correct it by reactivating the box or boxes and scanning the 'correct' leader cards again.

66. The right side of the above image shows an example of the screen after voting. In this example, the voter gave four votes to one leader, three to another leader, two to yet another leader and left three boxes blank, i.e., ‘un-voted’, which is also a legitimate option. The voter would finally press a ‘SUBMIT’ button to confirm one’s choices. Polling stations would also be equipped with ‘dummy AVMs’ on which voters can practice casting the multiple votes, before heading to the polling booth. The election commission could also release a mobile app on which voters can ‘practice’ the multiple votes, ahead of the actual election. This would help them familiarize themselves with the process and ensure that they feel confident when it's time to vote.

67. By using the ‘voter identification methods’ developed for the RVMs, the Election Commission can allow the voters to vote at any polling station across the country, as every AVM everywhere would have the information on all candidates from all over the country. This means voters who are away from their native place need not travel back to their place of residence on the election day to cast their vote. This is especially useful for the migrant labor, business travellers, and nomadic tribes. RVMs would be no longer needed once AVMs are implemented.

The Road Map

68. Implementing a change of this magnitude to the political system requires broad consensus. But, given the current political atmosphere, if the ruling party proposes the eElections system, opposition parties are likely to oppose it simply for the sake of opposing it, and vice versa. To circumvent this challenge, an all-party forum—similar to constituent assembly—should be established to review, refine, and endorse the eElections system.

69. Political scientists could be invited to facilitate and moderate these discussions, while constitutional lawyers should be tasked with drafting the necessary amendments to the constitution for implementation. Subsequently, the parliament should pass the required bills and amend the constitution as needed.

70. It would be prudent to initially implement this system in four or five states—both large and small—across different regions of the country, where various political parties are in power. Based on the experiences gained during this phase, the system can be refined and fine-tuned before being expanded to other states and eventually implemented at the national level.

Start the Discussion

71. We must seize the opportunity that electronic-age technologies present to implement a better alternative. Politicians, judges, civil servants—both current and retired—should earnestly engage in discussions about the eElections system and advocate for its implementation among those in power. Just as we revolutionized the banking sector with UPI, we must transform our political system with eElections.

72. Political parties and leaders in our country hold philosophers, thinkers, and intellectuals—who are neutral, apolitical, and genuinely committed to the long-term interests of the nation—in high regard, particularly concerning systemic changes. Therefore, political scientists from various universities, citizens' forums for democracy across the country, and individuals who are actively engaged in improving our democracy should take the initiative to lead discussions on eElections.

73. Political science departments in various universities are well-positioned to take the initial steps, by engaging these thinkers in their conferences and inspiring young minds in their classrooms.

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