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better

DEMOCRACY

A concept paper



KRISHNA SHARMA

eElections

A New Election Model
For a Better Democracy

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

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దేశమును ప్రేమించుమన్నా
మంచి అన్నది పెంచుమన్నా !
వట్టిమాటలు కట్టిపెట్టోయ్
గట్టిమేల్ తలపెట్టవోయ్ !

గురజాడ అప్పారావు

Dear brother,
Love thy country
And promote goodness!
Shun empty talk
And commence good work
At once!

Gurajada Apparao

Introduction

1. Democracy is about *people governing themselves through their trusted and chosen leaders*. The current elections and representation system is not an ideal, but a constrained implementation of this core principle. It happened to be the best possible system under the limitations of the era in which it was designed, when there were no phones, Internet or television and communicating and commuting across lands was difficult. Now that we are living in a different era, with mobile phones in almost everyone's hand, Aadhaar Card system in place, e-Seva centers open across the country, and Internet and Information Technologies well-established, we can and *should* consider designing a better system and replace the current system with it. In this concept paper, we propose one such new system of elections, i.e., an election model, called **eElections**.

2. Before we describe the eElections model, we will briefly mention a few of the major ill-consequences of the current constrained system. In this system, leaders and parties can continue in power for five years, even if they happened to lose the trust of voters along the way. Voters have to vote to the two or three leaders 'short-listed' for them by political parties. A vote to any other leader whom they trust or to NOTA, is essentially a wasted vote. A political party which gains slightly more (or less) percentage of votes can gain a very high (or low) percentage of seats, misrepresenting the will of the people. Voters who have not voted for the winning candidate (determined by the FPTP[1] criterion) are forced to be represented by that candidate, even though they did not trust him or her to begin with. This system turns leadership and representation into a zero-sum game. One leader's gain is another leader's loss. It promotes rivalries and polarization, necessitates cheap and crooked tricks and playing with the emotions of the voters. It rewards political parties and political leaders who focus on the short-term rather than statesman who focus on the long term.

3. There are many other issues like these, that undermine the principles of democracy in many ways. They also make the experience of the election process constrained and difficult for everyone, the voters, minorities, leaders, political parties, governments and even the Election Commission, in many ways. In the rest of the paper, we will present the eElections model and describe how it resolves these *seemingly unresolvable* issues, how it relieves us from the many constraints, and how it can be implemented in a phased manner.

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1 See the Hand Book on Electoral System Design prepared by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), available at: https://www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/electoral-system-design-new-international-idea-handbook for the meaning of terms like FPTP (First Past The Post - i.e., candidate with maximum votes wins) and description of many concepts related to election models that are in vogue around the world.

eElections Model

4. In this proposed eElections model, there would be no once-in-a-five-years elections, no geography-based constituencies, and voters would have multiple votes. Leaders, in this proposed model, can register themselves as candidates with the Election Commission on any day of their choice. Voters can distribute and redistribute their votes at any time to multiple leaders of their choice from anywhere in the country/state, in any proportion, using a Mobile App or at an e-Seva center (or some such facility set up or approved by the Election Commission of India).

5. The Election Commission publishes the vote count in favor of every registered leader every day, called Leader Vote Count (LVC), with the help of the computer systems, keeping 'who voted for whom' as a secret. The LVC of the registered leaders can change every day as voters distribute and redistribute their votes.

6. Every leader whose vote count raises and stays above a set Qualifying Vote Count (QVC) continuously for one hundred days is deemed as 'elected' leader, and whose vote count falls and stays below QVC continuously for one hundred days is deemed as 'unelected'. Since there are no once-in-five-year elections, elected leaders stay in power as long as their vote count stays above QVC, be it a few years or a few decades. In other words, they are elected for 'Indefinite Terms'.

7. The legislatures (Lok Sabha at the Center and Vidhana Sabha at the States), which we propose to be renamed as *Leadership Councils*, will be permanent in this model, and will never get dissolved. Only the members will keep changing depending on who gets elected and unelected and when.

8. We call the voters who vote for a particular leader as the Trust Base of that leader. Trust Bases can be spread across the country/state like the constituencies of the upper houses, in this model. Based on the issues a given leader chooses to address, and causes one chooses to champion, one's Trust Base can be thinly spread across the country/state, or can be concentrated in a specific area. Because of multiple votes, a voter can be part of the Trust Bases of multiple leaders at the same time. Leaders with larger Trust Bases, which can grow to as high as tens of times of the value of QVC, will have higher voting power in the Leadership Councils.

9. We propose that the 'multiple' votes be set as *twelve* votes per voter. The rationale is as follows: Voters can be expected to follow one or two or three or four leaders at the most, at any given time, as tracking too many leaders closely would be impractical. The number *twelve* gives the flexibility for the voters to distribute their

votes in *equal* as well as *unequal* proportions to two to four leaders. There is no sanctity other than this simple math for the number twelve.

10. The size of the Leadership Councils is not fixed, in this proposed model. It varies based on the distribution pattern of the votes by the electorate. However, the upper limit to the size of the Leadership Councils can be controlled by setting the value of the QVC appropriately. QVC set, for example, as 0.5% of the electorate, will yield a *maximum* of 200 elected leaders, set as 0.2% of the electorate, will yield a *maximum* of 500 elected leaders, set as 0.1% of the electorate will yield a *maximum* of 1000 elected leaders, and so on. This number can be set or changed by the Parliament by amending the Constitution or by passing a law.

11. The rationale for renaming legislatures as Leadership Councils is as follows. The role of legislatures in Indian democracy is more than making legislation. Legislatures are also responsible for electing the Executive and overseeing it. The members of the legislatures also serve as part of the Executive in the form of ministers, chairmen of the government bodies, corporations, etc. Plus, they also serve as the elders and leaders of the communities, responding to their needs, issues, causes, concerns and emergencies. The term 'legislature' does not describe the full scope and role of the leaders, either in theory or in practice. Hence it is appropriate to call the Lok Sabha and Vidhana Sabhas as National *Leadership* Council (NLC), and State Leadership Councils (SLC) respectively, and their members as National MLCs and State MLCs[2]. It is always good if the terminology can represent as much of the breadth, depth and spirit of the role as possible.

12. In summary, the proposed model involves the following changes.

Geography-based constituencies	→	Trust Bases
Once-in-five-years elections	→	Anytime Voting
Single vote per voter	→	Multiple Votes
Maximum votes (FPTP)	→	Qualifying Votes
Fixed terms	→	Indefinite Terms
Finite-Term Legislatures	→	Permanent Councils

2 The State MLC (Member of Leadership Council) terminology conflicts with the current use, of Members of the Legislative Councils (Vidhana Parishad). Suggestions are invited to solve this conflict elegantly.

Consideration

13. This eElections model is presented for the everyone's serious consideration, i.e., that of the people, political leaders, political parties, intellectuals, and the government of India. We urge them to keep the following considerations in mind while assessing this model.

14. Just as eBanking made banking easier for the consumers, businesses, banks and governments, but could not address problems like financial scams, misappropriations, bankruptcies, and so on, which has their roots elsewhere, eElections will make election and representation easier and better in many ways for the voters, leaders, political parties and governments, but cannot solve the social and political ills, which have their roots elsewhere, in history, culture, fallibility of human nature and the limitations of the democracy itself. Hence, we urge everyone to evaluate this model on not how it fares in addressing the complete list of social and political ills, but on how it addresses the many problems of the current model and brings many benefits to the voters, leaders, parties, governments and democracy.

15. Many people think election reforms in terms of curtailing corruption, barring the entry of criminals into power, reducing the role of money in politics, curtailing the demagoguery that divides people in the name of caste, religion, language, etc. These evils are real and should be addressed. But no one has been smart enough to find an answer to these problems. Any measures put in place to solve these problems are easily outwitted in many ways by the smarter people.

16. The eElections model is not designed to solve such intractable problems, but to bring improvements that are feasible and that would be welcomed by everyone. Just because we can't accomplish everything, we should not stop from accomplishing what is feasible. Hence, we urge everyone to evaluate this model in terms of what it could accomplish rather than what it cannot. What this model accomplishes, is , by no means, trivial.

17. First and foremost, it gives more leaders for the voters to choose from, and more voters for the leaders to choose from, by replacing the Constituencies with Trust Bases. With Anytime Voting, it gives expression to the changing will of the voters, and ability for the leaders to attract the attention of voters any time. By removing direct contest between leaders, it increases the chances of principled leaders getting into power without using demagoguery. With Trust Bases that spread across the country or state, it helps all the minorities represented in proportion to their true numbers. We request everyone to evaluate this model in terms of such improvements, the full list of which we will describe in detail in the later sections.

Implementation

18. The implementation of this model should be considered from two perspectives, one, social and leagal, and two technical. We will describe both of them here, albeit, in the context of democracy in India, though this model is applicable to democracies everywhere in the world.

Social and Leagal

19. The implementation of this eElections model entails a significant change to the Constitution. Hence we suggest that the Government of India set up an all-party forum, or a committee of experts, similar to Kasturirangan committee that drafted the NEP-2020, to examine this model thoroughly and enhance or modify it as needed, and draft a robust legal framework to implement it, taking the help of eminent national and international political scientists, thinkers, forums for democracy, political science consultants, and experts in constitutional law.

20. We recommend that this model be piloted in two states to begin with, one where the political party in power at the center is in power, and another where a different political party is in power, and then be implemented in other states in a phased manner and finally at the center.

Technical

21. India is technological advanced and has the technological expertise and experience needed to implement a system of this kind. It is the same technology that is behind the electronic banking, e-commerce systems, Aadhaar Card system, etc. We can easily put sophisticated systems in place to count and publish the vote counts of all the registered candidate every day, while maintaining the secrecy of 'who voted for whom'. Needless to say, Government ought to put such systems in place before transitioning to the eElections model.

22. The voter's experience, either with a Mobile App or at the e-Seva center should be simple. In this day and age, in which even a three-year-old is able to operate a mobile phone, designing such simple and easy interface for the voters is not at all difficult. We show here one possible way of making it simple.

23. Quite obviously, the Election Commission of India can be expected to issue an Id number for each registered leader. The leaders can then create their own, what can be called as 'Leader Cards', in which they provide a photo of themselves, their name, their Id number, their date of birth and a QR code that can be scanned. The front and back of a 'Leader Card' can look somewhat like this:

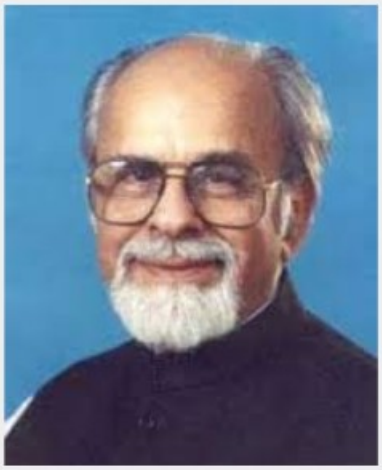
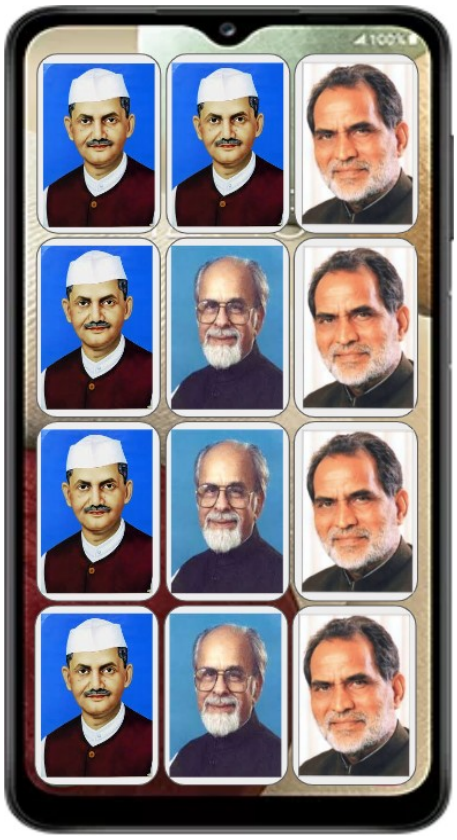


Figure 1:
Leader Card Front - Sample



Figure 2:
Leader Card Back - Sample

24. The Mobile App screen, or the eSeva computer screen can look somewhat like the one shown in the picture here. It will have a 3x4 grid, representing the twelve votes of the voter. The sample here shows an example of a voter distributing five votes to one leader, four votes to a second leader and three voters to a third leader. (We chose, with due respect and regards, the pictures of lesser known former Prime Ministers of India for the sake of illustration.)



25. Any voter registered with the Election Commission can download and open the App and authenticate into it with one's fingerprint and OTP. The first time voter would then see a screen with twelve boxes with no pictures. A voter who has already distributed one's votes, would see the faces of the leaders to whom one distributed the votes.

26. One can then press any of the twelve boxes, blank or already filled with the picture of a leader, and scan the QR code on the 'leader card' of the leader whom

one want to give one's vote. If one wants to give the second vote also to the same leader, one would press another box and scan the same leader's card again. If one wants to give the third vote to a different leader, one would press a third box and scan the 'leader card' of another leader. He can fill or change all the twelve boxes, in the same manner.

27. Those who do not have or cannot operate Mobile Phone can do the same at an e-Seva center or another facility approved or set up by the Election Commission of India. Proper measures, of course, should be taken to maintain the secrecy, just as it is done in an election booth in the current system.

28. No one should be allowed to change the votes, either on Mobile App or at e-Seva center, without fingerprint and OTP, or similar measures established by the Election Commission.

Better Democracy

29. The eElections model elevates the functioning of democracy to a new and higher lever. It solves many of the major and minor issues of the current model and brings new benefits which are hitherto thought to be difficult or impossible to achieve. The framers of the current system have settled upon once-in-a-five-years elections because too frequent elections would lead to instability and elections too far apart would undermine accountability. With the eElections model, we can guarantee both stability and accountability at the same time. Permanent Councils ensure stability and Anytime Voting ensures accountability. In addition, the Anytime Voting, Multiple Votes and Trust Bases add to the flexibility. Voters are no more confined to the leaders short-listed for them by the political parties. They can give their votes to any of the thousands of registered leaders. Leaders also can seek support of the voters from anywhere in the country/state. Let us look into these and other benefits closely.

30. The once-in-a-five-years-elections of the current model actually creates an asymmetric relationship between leaders and voters. The leaders get to decide the fate of the voters every single day, but voters get to decide the fate of the leaders only once in five years. Voters do not know what leaders would do, and leaders do not know what voters think of them, till the next election. There is no mechanism for voters to express their disapproval or even approval of the policies or actions or performance of the leaders and the governments on a *regular* basis. Voters have to accept or reject the policies and actions of the leaders and parties as a whole. This asymmetry would be a thing of the past with Anytime Voting. Voters can show their approval or disapproval of the performance and actions of the leaders by redistributing their votes any time. If more voters like the performance and actions of the leaders, the size of their Trust Bases goes up. Otherwise, it goes down.

31. In the current model, even though there are many capable, knowledgeable, innovative, honest and committed leaders in the society, the voters are forced to choose from just two or three candidates, shortlisted for them by the political parties, based on such factors as the candidates' money power, muscle power, party loyalty, and ability to win the election by hook or crook. This means that the candidate's have to meet the parties' criteria before they meet the voters' criteria. They have to be more loyal to their party than to the voters. A vote for anyone other than those shortlisted candidates, essentially, becomes a wasted vote. People often have to vote the same leaders and parties into power whom they have rejected in the previous election, for lack of other viable choices. The eElections, with the Trust Bases feature addresses this problem and gives the voters access to all the leaders in the society.

32. In the current model, with the geography-based constituencies, winning candidates are forced to represent the voters who did not vote for them, i.e., did not put trust in them, and the voters have to let the leaders who they did not trust to begin with, represent them. No leader is a Mahatma and no one will be able to treat the voters who voted for him/her and the voters who did not, in the same way. This creates an uneasy relationship between the voters and the leaders. There should be no such 'forced marriages' between the voters and leaders in an ideal democracy. The eElections model addresses this issue with the Trust Bases feature. In eElections model, a leader represents only the voters who explicitly chose him or her as their leader, i.e., members of his or her Trust Base. By letting the leaders represent only the voters in their Trust Base, and never someone who did not vote for them, it guarantees a strong and healthy relationship between the leaders and the electorate, which is a cornerstone of democracy.

33. In the current model, just a few votes can push a bad leader who uses all kinds of tricks and demagoguery into power and leave a good, principled and straightforward, leader by the wayside. This means that the voters not only have to put up with the bad leader but also lose the benefit of being served by a good leader. This is completely undesirable. We may not be able to avoid bad leaders, but should not have to leave the good leaders by the wayside. In the eElections model, a good leader who can build a good enough Trust Base can get into power as easily as a bad leader can.

34. Democracy, in theory, is the rule of majority. But with the current election model, it almost always, ends up being a minority rule, the very opposite of what we expect. And, this is how it happens. Considering the fact that only about 70% of voters turn out in the elections and the polled votes are split between two or three candidates, the winning candidates typically receive only thirty to forty percent of the votes of the total electorate. This means, on average, on any given day, sixty to seventy percent of the voters do not have a leader that they trust, in power. This completely contradicts the spirit of democracy, of people governing themselves through trusted leaders. The new model remedies this with the Multiple Votes and Qualifying Votes features. In this model voters distribute their votes to multiple leaders and hence the likelihood of voters seeing at least one of their trusted leaders in power, representing them, is near 100 percent. This means, not just a majority, but nearly one hundred percent of voters would have representation in the Leadership Councils in the eElections model. What better can we ask in a democracy?

35. In the current model, a minority of swing voters can determine the outcome of an election, wielding a disproportionately higher level of influence in public life. In that sense also, FPTP can result in an indirect minority rule. The eElections model

rectifies this problem with the Trust Bases and Qualifying Votes. In this model, no leader loses the election *because* someone else got slightly more votes, of the swing voters. Swing voters would have no effect on any leader who can maintain the size of his or her Trust Base comfortably above QVC.

36. No wise person puts all of one's money in one bank, or in one stock, or in one property. Similarly, no voter should put all of one's trust in one leader. No leader is infallible. But, the current election model, with the one-vote-per-voter feature, forces each voter to put all of one's trust in only one leader. The eElections model solves this problem with Multiple Votes. Voters would no longer have to choose one leader over the others. They can distribute votes to multiple leaders, as and when they like.

37. Many voters abstain from voting in the current model when they think the chances of their preferred leader winning is low. They think their vote could go 'waste'. In the eElections model, with the Multiple Votes feature, the voter no more have to focus only on one leader or have to choose from the two or three 'short-listed' leaders. It is near one hundred percent likely that at least one of the candidates of their liking will be in power, if not all. Thus this model encourages, rather than discourages, every voter to participate in the democratic process. This benefit alone should serve as a strong reason to adopt the eElections model as quickly as possible.

38. The election of one leader, in the current model, implies the rejection of all the other leaders; at least that is how the winning leader portrays the results. But in reality, a voter may not have a huge preference regarding one leader over the other, and may have the same disposition towards two or more leaders. The eElections model, with the Multiple Votes feature, allows the voters to express such equal or near equal disposition towards multiple leaders elegantly. Single vote increases the tendencies for polarization, as everyone is pressed to choose one leader, and Multiple Votes decreases the tendencies for polarization, because one can patronize more than one leader.

39. In the current model, a leader loses to another leader. In the eElections model, a leader loses for lack of the ability to attract a sizable Trust Base and not because he got fewer votes than the others. It is no more a zero-sum game. The current model sets one leader against another in a fight. The eElections model sets a target for each leader to achieve. Thus, it discourages leaders from the demagoguery of polarizing the people, on the lines of ideology religion, caste etc. They can no more ask for 'all' the votes, but only a 'share' of the votes of voters. They cannot win the hearts of the voters, if they speak negatively about the other choices of the voters.

40. Currently, the population distribution among constituencies is not even. Some constituencies have 1.5 to 2 times that of the population of some other constituencies.

As a result, the leader of one constituency represents a large number of people, while another leader in another constituency represents only a small number of people. Neither of these situations is desirable. This problem will not get corrected until a census is taken and the boundaries of the constituencies are redrawn, which happens very rarely. The eElections model, with the Trust Bases feature, makes this a mute point. There would be no need to redraw the boundaries in the eElections model as there are no constituencies to begin with. Leaders represent exactly as many voters as there are in their respective Trust Bases.

41. In the current model, because the leaders are guaranteed power for five years, they can easily turn their backs on the voters after the election. They can promise one thing before the elections and pursue altogether something else after the elections with impunity. The eElections model, with the Anytime Voting feature, curtails this kind of behavior, as the voters can withdraw their support whenever they see leaders deviating from their promised policies and professed principles.

42. In the current model, we expect the *media, activists, and the opposition*, to act as watchdogs of the governments. But there are three problems with this expectation. Firstly, it leads to polarization as the watchdogs try to oppose everything the ruling party says or does, to establish and substantiate their own identity. Secondly, the watchdogs do not wield real power over the government, and their voice can be easily ignored. Thirdly, there is no guarantee that the watchdogs themselves do not pursue their own agendas, which may not reflect what people want. In the eElections model, with Anytime Voting, voters themselves play the role of the watchdogs. They can withdraw their support to the leaders who are not addressing their needs and concerns properly, and increase support to the leaders who are addressing their needs and concerns, constantly and officially. This helps the leaders get in direct touch with the voters, rather than depending on the media to gauge the public opinion.

43. In the current model, voters have to resort to media posts, online petitions, street demonstrations and protests to express their displeasure or disapproval of the actions of leaders. This leads to violence and disruption of life, both for the protesters and for the general public. Organizing such protests and demonstrations, and sustaining them for a long time is not easy. In most cases, the protesters run out of energy and the protests die down before they achieve their intended goal. The eElections model, with Anytime Voting, removes the need for such ineffective petitions, demonstrations, protests, and unnecessary violence and disturbances. It enables voters to simply withdraw their votes from the non-performing or questionable leaders and give them to other or new leaders. In other words, a

sophisticated and inexpensive 'recall' process is built into the eElections model, which is also called ‘Constructive Vote of No Confidence’ in the political science circles[3].

44. In the current model, the winning leader is expected to address each and every issue, need, and concern of the people of the constituency. This is not an easy task by any means. It is impossible for one person to have the required understanding and passion for all the issues. Many issues may not get adequate attention and some may get no attention at all. The eElections model, with the Multiple Votes feature, solves this problem elegantly. Consider the situation of a farmer from a minority community and say his or her concerns about civic amenities, farming and those issues pertaining to the specific minority community. In the eElections model, he or she can distribute the multiple votes to three different leaders, who are good at addressing those three issues respectively. And thus the eElections model draws more *experts* into power rather than merely the generic politicians. This is nothing short of a dream achievement that would pay dividends forever. This incentivizes the political parties also to bring *experts* into power rather than generic politicians.

45. In the current model, parties fight the election on one or two of the 'hot' issues. Voters get swayed by them and ignore other issues of their concern. Whereas, in the eElections model, with the Anytime Voting, there is no pressure on the voters to decide everything on one single election day, and live with the consequences for five years. They can think about issues that are important to them at their own convenience and pace, and then distribute votes to the leaders who addresses those issues. This is no small a paradigm shift. With the Anytime Voting, the eElections model promotes rational and thoughtful decisions, unlike the current model, which forces the voters to make a decision in an emotionally charged election season.

46. The eElections model also addresses a key, but less noticed, gap in the current model. Consider the situation of a bill that is good for the country as a whole, which requires a certain sacrifice from the constituency. The Constitution assumes that the MLA/MP would focus on the interests of the country as a whole. But the voters assume that the MLA/MP would focus on the interests of the constituency. These two contradictory assumptions put any conscientious MLA/MP in a bind. And there is no clear cut ethical stand that one can take. In the eElections model, there are no constituencies. There is no national vs. local interests conflict. A leader whose Trust Base is localized gives preference to local interests over national interests, and a leader whose Trust Base spans the country or multiple regions gives preference to the national interests over the local interests.

47. In the current model, programs and projects started by the governments face uncertainty every five years. A new government belonging to a different party would

3 See https://www.jstor.org/stable/26160090

have few incentives to continue the programs and projects started by the previous government. They do not want do anything that the previous government may take credit for. Investments made by the previous government in the programs and projects could simply go waste. This is a loss of national resources and impedes national progress. The eElections model solves this problem. Because there are no once-in-five-year elections, there would be no such abrupt change of governments and hence no abrupt end to any program. Every program will take its natural course, either to evolve into something better and bigger or to peter out.

48. The eElections model, with the Trust Bases feature, engenders a long lasting association and an organic bond between leaders and voters. Voters would not let go a good leader who understands their needs, issues and concerns well. Where as, in the current model, any leader, no matter how deeply one understands the issues, can lose the next election and thus the bond between him or her and the voters can get broken. Long-lasting associations between leaders and voters are essential for devising long-lasting solutions.

49. The long-lasting association and the organic bond allows the leaders to be candid and honest with the voters about the intricacies of the issues. They don't have to promise Utopian solutions. They don't have to focus on emotionally appealing solutions. They can educate the voters about the pros and cons of the possible solutions. In the current model, the 'generic' politicians would not normally have the required depth on any issue to educate the people. Further, no matter what solution a leader proposes out of one's limited understanding, there would be more people who oppose it than support it, as leaders in the current model get only 35% to 40% of the votes, on an average.

50. What are the most important issues for the voters? How to prioritize them? Leaders, voters, and even the analysts find it hard to answer this question. Leaders can easily go wrong in guessing the priorities of the voters, both during the election campaigns and during budget allocations. The eElections model removes any such ambiguity. Trust Bases are formed based on issues, needs and concerns. And hence, they are a clear indication of what issues are important to whom, and to how many of them. This makes budget allocations and policy decisions easier.

Benefits for the Political Parties

51. Political parties, in the current system, have to go through a tedious, challenging and expensive process to stay in politics and win the elections. Everything from selecting the candidates to raising funds to attracting voter base to keeping them loyal, involves a lot of time, effort and money. Even with all of that, the results, at the end, remain uncertain. The eElections model removes all of this complexity and uncertainty. With the Trust Bases, it gives a path for any political party to develop itself slowly and steadily in a methodical manner. With Anytime Voting, party leaders can rise to power at any time without having to wait till the next election.

52. In the current election model, a party or leader can lose an election all of a sudden. There would be no such abrupt fall in the eElection model. The party and leaders would know whose Trust base is growing and whose is shrinking, based on the LVC published by the Election Commission. They will have the opportunity to take action and change course as needed, before the LVC falls below QVC.

53. In the current model parties have to field only one leader per constituency, and the voters have to vote for or against that one leader. What if the voters like the particular political party but not the candidate fielded by the party in their constituency? In the current model, if not all, some might choose to vote for the candidate of another party. That would be a loss for the particular political party. The new model gives a better option to the parties to keep those voters. The parties no more have to field candidates constituency by constituency. They can declare an endorsed list of candidates. Suppose the QVC is set to yield 500 leaders. The parties can create a list of endorsed candidates that is two to four times bigger. Voters who are loyal to the party can then vote to *any one* of those 1000 to 2000 candidates. Voters would have a large pool of leaders to choose from. They don't have to vote for candidates of other party. Thus the eElections model helps every political party retain all its loyal and even marginally loyal voters.

54. Endorsing a large list of candidates also gives two more great advantages to the parties. One, it relives the political parties from the difficult exercise of picking the candidates, i.e., giving the 'tickets'. Parties can just endorse all the potential and worthy candidates and then challenge them to build their own Trust Bases. It can let the leaders grow or fall based on their own strength and merit. Two, this indirectly, compensates for the lack of internal democracy in the political parties. The leaders in the large list of candidates have to compete against each other to attract the voters. In stead of the party 'high command' taking the responsibility to decide who the best leaders are, it can let the voters decide who the best leaders are.

55. In the current model, candidates who are not popular among the voters can also win an election, based on the popularity of the party and the party chief. Such leaders, whom the voters do not like, can erode the popularity and credibility of the party and party chief in the long run. The ‘large list of endorsed candidates’ solves this problem completely. Voters do not have to vote for a leader they do not like, just for the sake of staying loyal to the party.

56. This eElections model also provides an elegant answer to another question that proved to be very difficult to answer for a long time, in spite of a lot of debate, constitutional provisions and amendments, and supreme court rulings. The question is, should a leader who switches from one political party to the other, lose his/her seat? In the eElections model the decision is made by the voters. If the voters feel that the switch is done for wrong reasons, they can simply withdraw their votes from the particular leader. If they think that the switch is done for right reasons, they do not have to do anything. In the true spirit of democracy, it lets the voters be the judges.

Benefits for the Leaders

57. The eElections model increases *the ease of doing politics*. Any leader with good ideas and ability to connect to people, can immediately register one's candidacy and become an Elected Leader in a matter of weeks, with his or her followers and supporters forming a Trust Base. There is no need to wait for the next elections. There is no need for getting any political party's endorsement. There is no need to defeat others in the election. It is similar to starting a business, which anyone can do any time, if one has the ideas and potential customer base. No leader who enjoys the support of a sizable number of Voters can ever be driven out of power in the eElections model. Every leader who enjoys enough support among the voters gets a seat at the table of decision making.

58. In the current model, voters do not vote for new or independent, or service-oriented candidates because they are afraid that their vote would go 'waste'. In the eElections model, with the Multiple Votes feature, voters can 'keep the old as well as try the new' leaders, by distributing some of their votes to the established candidates and some to the emerging and alternate leaders. Thus, the eElections model makes it easier for new blood to flow into politics.

59. In the current model, a candidate who gets even one vote less than his immediate rival loses the election. This makes the elections very contentious. Every candidate is forced to fight tooth and nail to snatch every single vote from the opponents. They resort to making false promises, taking populist stances, appealing to the base emotions of voters, and so on, to gain every single possible vote. The conscientious and principled leaders have no choice but to resort to similar techniques if they want to win the election. One is forced to employ foul means keeping one's own principles aside. In the eElections model, candidates do not contest against each other. They do not have to fight tooth and nail for the same votes. Each one can develop a Trust Base of one's own, at one's own pace. Since the Trust Base could be spread across the entire country, no two candidates have to fight for the vote of the same voters in a specific constituency.

60. In the current model, the incumbent leaders are never sure of getting the party ticket and winning the next election. This uncertainty propels them to focus more on the next election than on the people's issues. It incentivizes them to make hay while the sun shines. They cannot take a long-term stand on any issue. In the eElections model, they can stick to their stand on any issue and can stay in power as long as they can retain the confidence of their respective Trust Bases, by working on their concerns, issues and needs.

61. In the current model, there is no good mechanism for the leaders to gain feedback on their performance from the voters. They have to depend on other sources like opinion polls, approval ratings, etc., which are neither conducted regularly nor reliable. Whereas in the eElections model, the changes in the sizes of the Trust Bases, which can be monitored daily, serve as instant and accurate feedback to the leaders about their performance. They can immediately put efforts to re-connect with the voters if the see their Trust Bases shrinking.

Benefits for the Voters

62. In the current model, every voter has one vote to cast for one leader. But there is a problem with this model. What if the voter finds two leaders to be equally capable or worthy? The current model forces the voter to drop one of the leaders arbitrarily and choose the other. But, it would be interpreted as if the voter did not like the other leader, which is not true. In other words, the current model does not help the voter express one's mind truthfully.

63. In the current model, young people attaining the voting age, i.e., turning eighteen, right after the day of the election, have to wait till the next election, i.e., till the age of twenty-three, to exercise their right to vote for the first time. In the eElections model, with the Anytime Voting, there will be no such delay for eligible voters. They can register themselves as voters at an election office as soon as they attain the voting age, and distribute their votes to the candidates of their liking on the very same day.

64. In the current model, people who are away from home for work or business or pleasure or pilgrimage, have to disrupt their plans, to come back to their home polling station on the election day to cast their vote. The other alternative is to use the postal ballot, which is a cumbersome process and is not familiar and available to all the voters. In the eElections model, there are no polling stations or election dates. Voters can distribute or redistribute their votes anytime and from anywhere using a Mobile App or at an e-Seva center.

65. In the current model, voters who happen to migrate from one place to another because of marriage or job or business, have to give up their voting rights at the old place in order to establish voting rights in the new place. In the eElections model, there is no such need, as anyone from anywhere can vote for any candidate from anywhere in the country. Further, they can do the same at the state level too. They can give some of their state level votes to the leaders of the new state, and some to the leaders of the old state. This make sense especially for people who have business, property, culture, family, etc. interests in more than one state.

66. In the current model, there is no good solution for the nomadic tribes to vote, as they don't have a 'native place' or 'residential address' as all the others do. It is difficult for them to exercise their voting privilege. It is a problem for the voters as well as for the leaders and the Election Commission. This problem is elegantly solved in the eElections model, as anyone can distribute their votes to any candidate from anywhere at an e-Seva center or using mobile App.

67. In the current model, we do not have a good solution for Indian citizens who happen to be abroad for various reasons at the time of elections, to vote. The eElections model solves that problem also. They can distribute their votes at any time using Internet or Mobile App or at the nearby Indian Consulate, as approved and established by the election commission.

Benefits for the Minorities

68. In the current model, small, poor, and powerless communities hardly have any representation. Ideally, they should have seats in proportion to their numbers. The current model tries to address this problem by reserving certain constituencies for SC, ST, and women candidates. This solution, however, is flawed, for three reasons. One, the minority leader from the reserved constituencies cannot be expected to represent the voters of the other majority and minority communities faithfully. Two, the leader cannot represent the minority communities that live in the other constituencies, and thus the minorities in the other constituencies go without representation. Three, it is not possible to create a reserved constituency for every type of minority, and hence many minorities go without representation.

69. The eElections model affords an ideal solution to this problem. Minorities of every kind, from all over the country, can form Trust Bases and elect leaders who focus on their particular needs and issues. No minority, whose size exceeds QVC goes unrepresented in the eElections model. All the plurality of the country, whether it is based on language, culture, religion, caste will be proportionally represented in the eElections model.

70. There are other minorities also besides social minorities, who often go unnoticed. Those minorities are not based on Issues, problems, ideas, dreams that pertain to only a small percentage of people, such as handicapped people, or people of any specific trade or craft. They would never find good enough champions in the current model, as they form only a small minority in any given constituency. But they could be sizable in number when combined across all the constituencies. The eElections model, with the Trust Bases feature brings all such thinly spread minorities together, so that they can have their voices heard and their issues addressed.

General Benefits

71. In the current model, candidates, parties, and governments incur huge expenses every five years. Whereas in the eElections model, there are no elections, and hence there are no such huge expenses for anyone.

72. In the current model, normal public life gets disrupted in the election season, which sometimes lasts for almost six months before the election. There is no such disruption in the eElections model, as there is no ‘election season’ to begin with.

73. In the current model, resources are drawn from many government departments during the election season, disrupting their normal function. There is no

such need in the eElections model. The workload on the election offices will be mostly uniform all round the year.

74. In the current model, leaders are allowed to contest from more than one constituency. A candidate who wins in more than one constituency, has to resign from all the constituencies but one. Bye-elections need to be conducted in those constituencies, which is an added expense to the candidates, to the parties, and to the government as well. In the eElections model, there are no constituencies, and hence someone contesting from more than one constituency becomes a moot point. A leader can have his or her Trust Base spread over all the places where he or she has support.

75. In the current model, elections have to be postponed if a natural disaster like floods or pandemic strikes. In the eElections model, no such issue arises as there are no elections to begin with. The voters can continue to distribute and redistribute their votes, whenever and wherever connectivity is available or wherever the e-Seva centers are open.

76. In the eElections model, Aadhaar cards can be used for voter identification. There is no need to go through the cumbersome, error-prone and sometimes contentious exercise of preparing the voter lists.

77. In the current model, we take many measures in vain to ensure that one voter votes only once and no voter impersonates the other. There is no scope for such mischief in the eElections model, and also no need for that ink mark on the finger.

Clarifications

1. Doesn't 'anytime voting' cause leadership churn and lead to instability and volatility in the governments?

Actually, it does not, for two reasons. One, the individual leaders may come and go, but the councils stay permanent. Two, voters do not change their chosen leaders willy-nilly every day, just because they can do so. An average voter would actually try to pick a couple of good leaders and stick with them, just as he or she is likely to pick a servant maid or driver or priest or guru or doctor or tailor or barber and sticks with them. We see that even in the current model, where most voters tend to stay loyal to the same party and leader even for decades.

2. Does this model pass the 'common man' test, i.e., could this be too complicated for the average voter?

First, we will make a general comment and then discuss whether this model passes the 'common man' test.

The general comment is that, democracy itself fails the 'common man' test. Democracy assumes that the voter can understand the complex social and economic issues, can assess the capabilities and character of the contesting politicians and the implications of the policies put forward by them, and makes prudent choices. A common man is, of course, not capable of performing such a complex job. But it didn't stop us from choosing democracy. We adopted democracy anyway because we believe it is better than any other form of government, in spite of its imperfections. Similarly, we should not reject the eElections model, even if it has some imperfections, because it brings many benefits and solves many problems.

From the voters perspective, the eElections model process is nothing but 'occasional redistribution of votes'. The voter in this model knows he or she has twelve votes. And all that he or she has to do is give a couple of them to one leader, and a couple more to another leader and so on. Conceptually it is as simple as distributing a dozen bananas to a couple of children, or distributing one's own pocket money or salary or wages or profits to various categories of expenses. 'Common man' understands these kind of 'distribution' tasks innately. The eElections model does not demand any more sophisticated skills than that.

The mechanism of distribution, however, can be a little complex, but that can be ameliorated through various methods. Those who are sophisticated enough to use smartphones or computers can distribute their votes as easily as they operate the UPI

Apps for banking. Those who are not comfortable with technology, can redistribute votes at an election office (which can be an e-Seva center or post office, etc), with assistance, if needed. Leaders can distribute a 'leader card', with their photo, name and a QR code, to their potential voters, which can be scanned by a mobile App or at an e-Seva center, making the voting process easy. Even roadside vegetable vendors are familiar, now a days, with QR codes. There is no need even for the allocation of election symbols for the parties or independents any more.

Further, we will have the opportunity to identify any quirks in the process iron them out, during the initial implementation of the model in the one or two states, before it is implemented widely in all the states and at the center.

3. Why do we need to change the model established by the eminent members of the constituent assembly?

We are not changing, but improving. The members of the constituent assembly defined the first version. We are defining the next version. When the technology allows us to do things better or do better things, we must go for it. The members of the constituent assembly, if they were to come alive, would only be happy to see us make the democracy even better. They gave us the best model possible in those days of no Internet, no television channels, no mobile phones and no social media, and when commuting and communicating across lands was difficult. Had they had the benefit of these advances at that time, they would have surely implemented this kind of eElections right then itself.

4. Some people are already talking about 'digital democracies', where voters vote on policy decisions directly, without needing leaders. Why can't we go to it directly?

This is a fair question. 'Voting on policies' is a good idea, but only when two conditions are met: 1) the number of policies are few and do not require a lot of subject knowledge. 2) the role of leaders is limited to policy-making.

But these conditions do not match the reality. First, the number of policy decisions are neither few nor simple. Many of them are nuanced involving intricate issues with long ranging implications. Second, the role of leaders is not limited to policy making. As the term 'leader', implies, they 'lead' people, by bringing them together, by bringing up new and sometimes bold ideas, by rising up to the demands of emergency situations, by helping people to navigate through the systems, by defending people when they are abused by the systems, and so on.

Even in a 'digital democracy' you cannot but expect the emergence of 'opinion leaders', who could be talk show hosts, media personalities or celebrities, who would sway people's opinion for or against a given policy. In other words, 'digital democracy'

promotes ‘unofficial leaders’, who cannot be held accountable for anything. Rather, a better option is to make them official and hold them accountable. That is what the eElections model does, much more so than the current model.

5. What are the advantages of giving higher voting power in the legislature to leaders with larger Trust Bases?

This feature enhances the spirit of democracy. Leaders derive their power in a democracy from the trust the voters keep in them. Leaders with larger Trust Bases represent more people and their vote on legislation represents the voice of that many voters. Ten lakh voters, for example, can choose just one leader to represent them, in stead of five leaders or ten leaders, if they so wish. This does not violate the spirit of democracy in any way, and it just adds a flavor of ‘direct elections’.

6. Would this eElections model require amendments to the constitution?

Yes, it does. It would only be a surprise if a change of this significance would not require amendments to constitution. But, that is what the amendments are for, to keep the constitution up with the changing times and to make the democracy work better.

Articles 81, 82, 83, 325[4] of the constitution, for sure, needs to be amended, to implement the eElections model. It is up to the constitutional experts to weigh in and draft all the major and minor amendments needed.

In any case, surely, this model has to be reviewed thoroughly by constitutional experts and should be accepted by all the major political parties, before a bill to implement this model is introduced in the Parliament.

4 Digital copy of the Indian constitution in English can be found at: https://www.iitk.ac.in/wc/data/coi-4March2016.pdf