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FOR A
better
DEMOCRACY



KRISHNA SHARMA

eElections

For a Better Democracy

A Concept Paper
for the consideration of
the People and Leaders 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

eElections

1. In this paper, we propose a new election system called 'eElections', which, if adopted, would bring dramatic and much needed improvements to the functioning of our political system and democracy in many ways as outlined below.

Fair Representation

- Ensure fair representation for all identities such as castes, communities, religions, genders, and for that matter, for any population segment that shares a common interest, in proportion to their numbers.

Better Leaders

- Filter-out criminal and corrupt elements from political system and filter-in honest, matured, visionary, passionate and dedicated leaders with national spirit and appeal.

Better Relationships

- Promote honest and clear communication among the three stakeholders of the political system, the voters, the leaders, and the parties, and reduce the need for the parties and leaders to play games with people's emotions and needs.

Political Parties

- Compensate for the lack of internal democracy in parties and thereby address issues like the prevalence of dynasty rule.
- Ensure seats for all parties directly in proportion to the votes received by them.

Better Democracy

- Create better 'checks and balances'. i.e., 'watchdog' systems, promote plurality of political opinion, enable independent voices, and foster collaboration among the elected leaders across the party lines.

1. The key difference between the current system and the eElections system is that in eElections system there are no territorial constituencies, and voters from anywhere in the country can vote for any candidate from anywhere in the country, and candidates from anywhere in the country can solicit the votes of voters from anywhere in the country. Political parties, instead of fielding one candidate per

constituency, would release a nationwide 'endorsed list' of candidates. Voters who want to vote for a party can vote for any candidate on the endorsed list. Voters who vote for a particular leader are called his or her 'Voter Base'.

2. Another key difference between the current system and the eElections system is that the current system gives one vote per voter, whereas the eElections system gives multiple, say *twelve*, votes per voter, which they can distribute to one, two, three or so, up to twelve candidates in equal or inequal proportion. By distributing votes to multiple leaders, voters can belong to voter bases of multiple leaders simultaneously.

3. The candidates, in this system, are ranked by the size of their voter bases, as reflected in the vote counts received by them, and top-rankers method is used to declare the winners, i.e., the 'top543' rankers will be declared as elected, 543 being the number of seats in Lok Sabha.

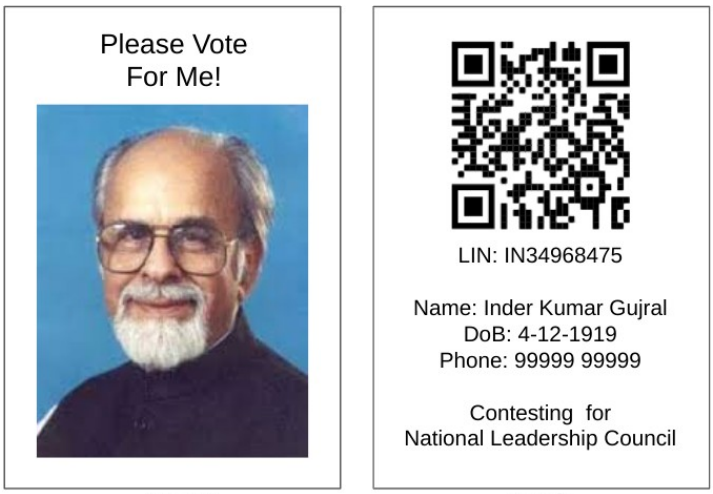
4. Since the members of Lok Sabha, in this system, represent voter bases that vary in size, their voting power on the floor of the Lok Sabha also varies correspondingly. The speaker of the Lok Sabha would use the aggregate of the members' vote counts in stead of simple head count, in favor or against any bill, resolution, motion, etc. We call this 'weighted voting'.

* * *

5. To facilitate voters from everywhere vote for any of the candidates from anywhere, the ECI (Election Commission of India) has to upgrade the EVMs (electronic voting machines), which can only accommodate a couple of hundred candidates, to what we call FVMs (flexible voting machines) which can accommodate tens of thousands of candidates. Instead of allocating 'election symbols' for the candidates, which would be impractical for tens of thousands of candidates, it can use what we call 'leader cards'.

6. In this system, the ECI issues a LIN (Leader Identification Number) to every candidate instead of an election symbol. The candidates would then create their own 'leader cards' with their respective pictures, names, dates of birth, LIN, party affiliation, and other details and a QR code. A leader card would look somewhat like the one shown in the image below. (We used the picture of lesser known former Prime Ministers of India, Inder Kumar Gujral, with due respect and regards, for the sake of illustration).

Sample Leader Card



Front **Back**

7. The leaders would distribute their leader cards to their potential voters in physical form at political events or in electronic form through social media and by publishing them on various websites. Voters can obtain the leader cards also by sending an SMS or making a phone call to the office of any leader, and requesting his or her leader card. They can also get the leader card of any leader printed for free at any e-Seva centre.

8. The voters would take the 'leader cards' of their chosen leaders to the polling station and scan the QR codes into a scanner attached to the FVM. Upon scanning, the pictures of the leaders would appear on the FVM screen as a confirmation of the votes in a 3x4 grid format, as shown in the image below.

Sample FVM Screen



Blank **Voted**

9. The left side of this image shows an example of the screen before voting, with blank faces. The right side of this image show an example of the screen after voting, with the voter giving four votes to one leader, three to another leader, two to yet another leader and three left 'un-voted', which is also a legitimate option. (For the sake of illustration, in this image, we depicted, with due respect and regards, the pictures of lesser known former Prime Ministers of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Inder Kumar Gujral and Chandrasekhar). The FVM would also have usual safe guards like VVPAT, etc., as the EVMs do now, to create audit trails and to make them tamper proof.

10. With FVMs, RVMs (Remote Voting Machines) become a moot point. RVMs are meant to enable voters who are away from home, even in a different state, to vote, without having to travel back to their native place at the election time. FVMs make that job simpler, as the information about every candidate from every part of the country would already be in every FVM. The work done by the ECI for RVMs regarding the issue of remote voter identification, be it by Aadhaar Cards or Voter Cards or something else can be leveraged in building the FVM system.

11. In summary, the eElections system entails the following changes:

Current System	→	**eElections System**
Territorial constituencies	→	Voter bases
One vote per voter	→	Multiple votes per voter
FPTP (First Past the Post)	→	Top-rankers method
Election symbols	→	Leader cards
EVM (electronic voting machines)	→	FVM (flexible voting machines)
Manifestos	→	Endorsed Lists

12. Now we will describe how these changes improve the political system and make our democracy better in many ways.

Fair Representation

13. A key principle of democracy is fair representation for all socio-cultural-economic segments of the population. In the context of India, it means fair representation for people of all identities, i.e., castes, communities, religions, regions, languages, and so on. With education, urbanization, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, we are also seeing decrease in the affinity to caste, religion and other identities. Caste-less, religion-less, caste-indifferent, religion-indifferent, etc. population is increasing. They too deserve fair representation. They may not have any identity-based affinity, but may have professional or other kind of affinities. For example, farmers, migrant labour, Divyangs, teachers, etc. share concerns that cross

the lines of many identities such as language, religion and caste. They too should have fair representation. In short, people of all identities and interests should have fair representation in proportion to their numbers.

14. But the current system, which is based on 'territorial constituencies', is not setup for fair representation. It combines people of all castes and all socio-economic levels in to one electoral pool, and forces them to elect one leader. That means, people of multiple identities are forced to represented by a leader of one particular identity or interest. No matter who that leader is and however genuine he or she is, cannot treat all the identities equally and the people of all identities would not have the same trust in that leader.

15. And for obvious reasons, that leader would come from the rich and powerful sections of the society, i.e., upper castes, as they only have the clout and resources to enter and survive in politics. As a consequence, the political space is dominated by the upper castes. Other communities hardly see their representatives in the political space. Even the SC and ST candidates in the 'reserved constituencies' are essentially the 'faces' selected by the upper caste leaders who actually wield the power from behind the scenes. As a result, even the reserved constituencies are dominated by the upper castes, indirectly. Further, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, and recently Khansi Ram, opined that the 'reserved constituencies' are not an effective solution for SC, ST representation, as the candidates have to represent the interests of all the communities of the constituencies and not just their own. This argument hold good for all identities.

16. eElections lets the voters vote for any leader of their choice from anywhere in the country, which means, SC voters can elect SC leaders, BCs can elect BC leaders, OBCs, OBC leaders, FCs, FC leaders and so on. In fact, even subcastes within SCs, BCs and FCs, also can vote for their own candidate, without the need for SC classification. Voters without affinity for identities but share a common interest, can vote for leaders dedicated to their specific interest.

17. Further, with multiple votes, eElections system enables the voters with multiple identities or interests choose multiple leaders. A farmer from a particular caste, for example, can distribute his votes to one leader of his own caste and another who is dedicated to farmers' issues. His wife could distribute votes to one leader who is dedicated to farmers' issues and another who focuses on women's issues. A teacher who also happened to be a Divyang can similarly choose one leader dedicated to education system, and another leader dedicated to Divyangs' issues. An elderly person who is also interested in preserving environment and cultural heritage, may choose

one leader who focuses on the issues of elderly persons, another leader who focuses on climate issues, and yet another who focuses on cultural heritage.

18. Thus eElections system caters to a wide variety of identities and interests, that too, without any need to take identity-based or interest-based census, and without maintaining 'separate electorates'. This system also automatically adopts to changing demographics, such as increase or decrease in the population of any identity or interest.

* * *

19. The current system has representation issues that go beyond identities and interests. This system makes the winning candidate the representative of the entire population of the constituency, which means it forces the leaders to represent voters who did not vote for them and forces the voters to be represented by a candidate not chosen by them. It is an uneasy 'forced marriage'. There is no such issue in the eElections system. In this system, the elected leaders represent only the voters who voted for them, i.e., their voter bases. No voter is ever represented by a candidate not chosen by him or her, and no leader ever represents voters who did not vote for him or her.

20. Furthermore, since the winning candidate typically gets only 30% to 35% of the total electorate, the system forces 65% to 70% of the voters, i.e., a majority, to accept a candidate voted by 30% to 35% of the voters, a minority, as their represenative. With this happening almost all the time in all the constituencies, the entire country is under minority rule all the time, in a sense. This problem does at all arise at all in the eElections system, as no one is represented by a leader for whom one did not vote.

* * *

21. There is a certain scenario in the eElections system that can possibly yield a different kind of minority rule situation. This scenario occurs when the aggregate of the vote counts of the top 543 candidates happened to be less than half of the total votes of all the voters combined. To address this issue, all we have to do is to switch from the 'fixed number of seats' to *adaptive* number of seats. If the aggregate vote counts of the top 543 candidates happens to be below half of the total votes of all the voters, we would declare the top 544, or 555, or more candidates as needed to make sure their aggregate vote count exceeds half of the total votes of all the voters. With this provision, eElections system *guarantees* majority rule all the time.

22. This increase number of Lok Sabha seats should not be of a big concern. First of all, there is no sanctity to the 543 number. It is a made up number set in 1977

based on 1971 census. Population has more than doubled since then. The number should have been increased at least to 1,000 to accommodate for the population growth. But we haven't yet done that exercise, because of the issues involved in taking the census and redrawing the boundaries, and even more so because there is no significant gain in it for any political party. So even if we have to declare not just 555, but some 600 or 700 or 800 or even 1000 leaders as elected to ensure majority rule, we will still be in line with the leader-voters ratio set in 1977.

23. There is another kind of potential representation issue, but it is covered by 'weighted voting'. Suppose there are two communities of the same size and one happened to elect ten leaders of their community and the other happened to elect only five leaders. If we use the current, 'head count' method in favour or against at bill, motion or resolution, the first community would have ten votes, and the second only five votes, which is unfair for the communities. There is no such issue in the eElections system because of 'weighted voting'. It ensures same exact voting power in the Lok Sabha for both the communities.

* * *

24. The constituency boundaries and the whole concept of delimitation also becomes a moot point in this eElections system, as there are no territorial constituencies. There is no need for adjusting constituency boundaries to accommodate for demographic changes. The delimiting commission itself can be disbanded if we switch to eElections system.

Better Leaders

25. Nature being what it is, produces leaders of all kinds and stripes. Some grow up, even as adolescents and young people, dreaming about developing the nation, serving the society and so on. Some grow up dreaming about becoming powerful, gaining influence and position. But who comes into power depends on two filters, the system filter and the people filter. System influences whose name appears on the ballot and people determine who among them should be in power. The current system is more conducive for leaders with muscle power and money power, and less so for honest, principled and genuine leaders. Let us understand how it is so, and how the voter bases system switches it the other way around.

26. The current system, with territorial constituencies, reduced the elections to Lok Sabha, a national body, into local contests, making 'local clout' more important than 'national spirit' in winning an election. A leader who grew up dreaming about national development, but did not focus on developing local clout, or not born into a rich and powerful family, is automatically filtered out by this system. On the other

hand, a leader who is involved in local fights, factions and made a name for oneself in the local area, but have no sense of national development, national integrity, and larger issues of the society is filtered in by the system. This weakness of the territorial constituencies system was not evident in the early days of independence, as most of the leaders in those days had the required national spirit, vision and appeal by virtue of participating in the independence movement. But later as the absence of nationally spirited and nationally recognized leaders in the Lok Sabha became evident, the prime ministers turned to Rajya Sabha to fill their cabinets. But the problem with the Rajya Sabha members is they do not have a direct mandate from the people.

27. Voter bases system resolves this issue completely. It filters in leaders who can develop pan-India voter bases, and filters out leaders who have nothing more than local clout to offer. Only leaders capable of spotting issues that are important to voters of various identities and interests from across the nation and are dedicated to address them can convince the voters and form large voter bases. Leaders who only have local clout cannot compete with such leaders in developing large pan-India databases, and hence get filtered out automatically. The longer we continue with the territorial constituencies, the longer we would suffer from this double damage of filtering in the wrong leaders and filtering out the right leaders. The sooner we adopt eElections, the sooner we will see leaders of national spirit and vision and appeal at the helm of the affairs.

* * *

28. The territorial constituencies system sets the candidates against each other in a direct, neck to neck, competition. The candidates, and the parties that nominate them, do not generally have much to differentiate from each other. Parties try to push ideologies to win the voters, but they make little sense to the average voter. In desperation, they resort to all kinds of techniques including bribing the voters, a.k.a., 'vote buying', to woo the voters. They need to raise and distribute a lot of money, and that to under the radar of the ECI. Parties also have no choice but to recruit corrupt and criminal elements who can run these 'underground enterprises' without getting caught by the ECI. Even the least-principled leaders are filtered out in this process, even before entering the fray.

29. The eElections system reverses this trend. Techniques like 'vote buying', become infeasible and impractical in attracting pan-India voter bases. Principled leaders, dedicated to the cause of any particular identity or interest, can attract the votes of the voters of that identity and interest without having to resort to such dirty techniques. Thus the voter bases system rewards leaders who use fair means of 'convincing' voters, instead of those who use dirty tricks to 'woo' the voters.

30. Still the need for raising funds for building and managing the party and for running campaigns does not come to zero. Parties and leaders have too still raise large sums of funds even in this system. But the problem is that they have to return the favors to the donors. There are only two ways to do it – one, with favorable laws and programs, which breeds 'legal corruption', or two, by bending and mending the laws and programs in their favor, which breeds 'illegal corruption'. There is no escape from this unfortunate predicament in a democracy, even for the most principled leaders. Leaders and parties, hence, have no option but to 'do bad to do good', as democracy doesn't provide any other fair, clean and practical means to fund the political parties and campaigns.

31. Voters understand this predicament of the leaders and parties. They do not expect the leaders and parties to spend their own money and serve them for free. All they do is look for leaders who 'eat the least and do the most'. But the problem with the current system it pre-selects the leaders who can 'raise and distribute the most funds', and thus preempts the voters from selecting a leader who fits the 'eat the least and do the most' criteria. Voter bases system frees the voters from this predicament. It basically increases the choices from two or three candidates to hundreds and even thousands of the candidates, enabling the voters pick the leaders who fit the 'eats the least and does the most' criteria.

* * *

32. There is one other issue too in the current system, because of which mediocre leaders get into power while some of the best leaders are left on the way side, and this is how it happens. Parties field top talented candidates against top talented candidates, and mediocre ones against the mediocre ones in various constituencies. No matter who wins the election, half of the top political talent will be dropped by the system, and half of the mediocre talent will be sucked into power. History has witnessed the loss of great parliamentarians many a time, because of this reason. Voters could choose only one parliamentarians in any given constituency, and had to let the other go. A nation that wastes its top talent, in any field is bound to suffer by that much. The eElections system, with the top-rankers method solves this problem entirely. It never drops one highly talented leader for the sake of another highly talented leader. All highly talented leaders, as judged by the sizes of their voter bases, are picked by the system before the others are.

Better Relationships

33. In the eElections system, parties do not field candidates by constituency, as there are no constituencies. Rather they would scourge for leaders with national spirit

and appeal from everywhere, and declare them as their official candidates. We call them the 'endorsed list' of candidates. Parties attract voters from every socio-economic-cultural segment by choosing candidates dedicated to diverse identities and interests.

34. In this system, the candidates on the endorsed list essentially define what a party stands for. As such, the parties need not develop a separate manifesto. Manifesto, anyway, is a crude instrument. It is a bundle of policies that reflect the party ideology, the party bosses' sense of people's expectations and the games party wants to play with the emotions and needs of people. They often do not represent what really people want and need. The is true of the manifestos of all parties. Voters vote for parties not because of they are convinced with the manifestos but because they have no choice but to pick one of them, regardless of how bad they are.

35. Further, manifestos are an 'all of nothing' options for the voters. Voters cannot specify which parts of the manifesto they like and which they do not, and by how much. As a consequence, voters end up signing for even things they do not like in a given manifesto. The 'endorsed lists' gets the voters out of this predicament. By choosing specific leaders on the endorsed lists, voters can clearly express what they exactly care for and what they do not care about.

36. Parties can not only go wrong in drafting the manifesto before the elections, but also in interpreting the relative support among the voters for each part of the manifesto, after getting elected. Starting with a manifesto that is off-base and then interpreting the priorities wrong after winning the election can be deadly for the parties. It is one of the major reasons why parties lose power. eElections saves the parties from this fate. First of all, there is no need to develop a manifesto that could be out of touch with people's expectations, in this system. Secondly, they can clearly tell what issues are important to them and by how much, based on the vote counts received by the candidates on the endorsed list.

37. Manifestos are also not easy for the leaders to deal with. Leaders have to support the manifesto of the party in its entirety even if they are not convinced, in order to get the party ticket. eElections system frees leaders from this predicament, as there is no manifesto in the first place. There is no need for leaders to align with anything developed by anyone else including the party bosses. They can simply focus on what they are passionate about. By being open and honest about their passion, they can attract both parties and voters. Parties seek them because they would add to the diversity of their endorsed lists. Voters vote for them because of their very dedication to an identity or interest.

* * *

38. In the current system leaders and parties are never sure whether the voters vote for them again, and voters are never sure whether their favourite leader or party will continue in power. Everyone lives with uncertainty. Chance plays a bigger role than ability and dedication. The winning party is never sure how much of their success owes to its policies, how much to the negative votes and how much to the charisma of the party bosses. Even the leaders are never sure how many votes they got were actually strong votes they themselves earned, how many were votes to the party and how many were negative votes. None of such uncertainty and ambiguity exists in the eElections system. There are no negative votes in this 'voter bases' system, every single vote is a positive vote.

39. As if all this complexity is not enough, the territorial constituency system, as noted earlier, makes the winners represent 100% of the electorate even though they might have got only 30% or 35% of the total votes. By doing so, it basically pushes 65% to 70% of the voters into a bad, 'trustless marriages' with the elected candidates. It is not a comfortable situation for either the voters or the leaders. How can a leader treat voters who did not vote for him or her, on par with the voters who did? How can a voter, in good conscience, approach a leader that one did not vote for? The current system is built on the assumption that politicians and voters are dry souls without any emotion. The eElections system eliminates these kind of 'trustless marriages' altogether. There are only 'trust-based marriages' in this system. In fact, the 'voter bases' can be called 'trust bases'.

40. The 'trust-based marriages' between the voters and leaders are crucial building blocks of democracy. They give the voters the confidence that the elected leaders truly work in their best interest. They are sure the leaders are not playing games and tricks with them. Leaders too, can be honest with the voters about what is reasonably achievable and in what time frame, what are the pros and cons of various programs and policies, what is good for them in the long term and what sacrifices are necessary in the short term, and so on. They don't have to sweet-coat anything for the fear of losing a relationship. Voter bases fosters trust based relationships among all the three stakeholders, the parties, the leaders and the voters.

Political Parties

41. One of the major complaints against the current political system is 'dynasty rule'. But more generically, the complaint is about the lack of internal democracy in political parties, which also causes other issues. Dissenters can make the party dysfunctional, leaderless and directionless. Old guard, unwilling to share power with new blood, may be reluctant to give a chance to new talent. A new leader may emerge from nowhere and hijack a party, side-lining matured and experienced leaders.

42. The problem with internal democracy, more precisely internal elections, is that they are not easy to conduct. There is a lot of complexity and expense in managing party membership, conducting elections, guarding against adversaries from infiltrating into the party membership and so on. This is the reason why political parties have given up on the idea of internal elections. Internal elections, if made mandatory, can be a huge burden on emerging political parties, so much so, that they may never take off the ground under such burden, which is not good for the vibrancy of the political system.

43. 'Endorsed lists' of the eElections system provides a better and 'free' alternative to the internal elections. Voters who like a particularity political party, by distributing their votes to various leaders from the 'endorsed lists', can determine which leaders of the party are worthy and which are not, regardless of whether the leadera are young or old, emerging or experienced, related to a previous leaders or not.

* * *

44. In the current system, a political party can lose a large percentage of seats for losing a small percentage of votes, and can gain a large percentage of seats for gaining a small percentage of votes. The percentage of seats do not reflect the true support that the party enjoys among voters. In the 'voter bases' system, the true support for every party among the voters is reflected in the vote counts of the leaders, which in turn is reflected on the floor of the parliament through 'weighted voting'.

45. However, if a political party puts too many candidates on its endorsed list, the votes of the party loyal voters could get thinly distributed among them, and none of the leaders may rise to the top-rankers list. As a result, a party which has three hundred candidates on its endorsed list could have more leaders in the top-rankers list than another party which has six hundred candidates on its endorsed list, leading to disproportional representation.

46. But political parties would be smart enough to detect this issue and would address it by putting just enough candidates on the endorsed lists to cover the diversity of identities and interests, but not too many to allow the votes to get thinly distributed. With this strategy played by every party, parites are guaranteed voting power in the Lok Sabha directly in proportion to the votes they received.

Better Democracy

47. The most embarrassing thing in our democracy, next only to the increase in criminality and corruption, is the lack of decency in parliamentary debates. Members shout at each other, make objectionable remarks that needs to be purged from the records, and get into even fist fights at times. How do we address this issue? How can

we get to productive, honest, respectful and matured debates in the parliament? To answer this question, we need to dig a little deeper into dynamics of political parties and nature of democracy.

48. In a pure and simple form of democracy, people elect leaders, and expect them to collaborate with each other to provide good governance. But in reality, the elected leaders belong to different political parties who have fought a bitter fight in the hustings and have no love lost for each other. Having fought on different manifestos, behind which could lie diagonally opposite ideologies, irreconcilable visions, and vote banks that resent each other, how can and why would the parties collaborate? One of the shortcomings of democracy is precisely this. It puts the power in the hands of the party which gets the majority seats, but doesn't define the role of other parties in governance. So, they continue to do what they did before the elections, keep fighting with the ruling party.

49. Further, in our folly, we call all the parties other than the one that got the majority as 'opposition' parties, as if we expect them to 'oppose' everything that the ruling party says and does. Why do we elect one party to rule and elect another parties to 'oppose' it? It doesn't make sense. What can these 'opposition' parties achieve without the needed majority, anyway? Can they stop the ruling party from passing a bill?

50. Or is it that we want the other parties to play the role of 'watchdogs'? If so, it is better to call them 'watchdog' parties, giving them a positive role, rather than calling them 'opposition', which is a negative role. But, wait, don't we have already another watchdog mechanism in place? Don't we expect the legislature to be the watchdog over the executive? Is executive not answerable to the legislature? So, which watchdog system, 'legislature over executive', or 'opposition parties over ruling party', did the constitution intend? Certainly not the later, for there is not even a mention of political parties in the constitution, except in the verbiage added for implementing the anti-defection laws. Furthermore minority parties can only bark but not bite, as they do not have majority in the parliament.

51. Partisan politics make neither of the watchdog systems work. 'Opposition parties over ruling party' does not work because opposition parties do not have the required majority to pass any bill or resolution or motion that they sponsor, or stop any bill or resolution or motion that the ruling party sponsors. Essentially, opposition parties can bark, but cannot bite. 'Legislature over executive' does not work, because why would the majority party move any motion against the executive that belong to the same party?

52. So the only solution to make the legislature work as a watchdog over the executive is to shed partisan-politics. The discussions and debates should be issue-based, not party-based. Leaders should voice their independent opinion all the time. The 'voter bases' systems pushes the political system in this direction. Leaders in this system can gain votes based more on their honest dedication to identities and interests, than on loyalty to a party. Any leader who is honest and gains votes based on one's own strength would obviously be able to voice one's independent opinion. Honest leaders would prefer losing the voter base and the power, rather than giving up their convictions. They would firmly stand for what they believe in rather than yielding to the wishes of a political party or its bosses. They would not bury themselves in corrupt practices in the first place to be susceptible for blackmailing later. Regardless of which party they belong to, they would be able to objectively discuss any issue at hand without fear or favour.

* * *

53. The 'multiple votes per voter' construct also fosters the non-partisan culture in a couple of ways. The current 'one over per voter' system pushes the people themselves towards binary-thinking. Even voters who do not have a great preference for one party over the other, are forced to pick one party over the other. Voters also psychologically made to think that party-loyalty is a virtue. With multiple votes this culture would change. Majority of voters are actually party neutral. Multiple votes encourages the party-neutral, non-binary thinking among other voters too. Given a chance, no one wants to put all their eggs in one basket, and that is what precisely the eElections system enables.

54. 'Multiple votes' also engenders a new phenomenon that can be called 'voter sharing' by the political parties. With 'multiple votes', political parties cannot expect to get all the votes of any voter, but only some. This means that they have to 'share the voter' with other parties. This pushes the political parties to be more respectful than critical about other parties. Parties that excessively criticize or demonize the other parties could in fact irk the voters who give due consideration also for the other parties. By irking them, parties would only get lesser share of the voter's votes instead of a bigger share.

55. 'Voter sharing' is similar to 'customer sharing' by the banks. Customers maintain multiple accounts with multiple banks and banks have to share the customer with other banks. Banks that share customers do not bash or criticise each other. Banks also collaborate with each other making inter-bank money transfers as smooth as possible. They compete and collaborate with each other simultaneously. 'Multiple votes', i..e, 'voter sharing', brings the same cordial dynamics to political field.

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56. The ‘Voter sharing’, incidentally, also works as an anti-dote to polarization. Propensity for polarization is a major birth defect of democracy. Democracy puts anyone who gets 51% of the vote in power. That means a party need not strive to reach out to 100% of the electorate to gain power. All it has to do is develop vote banks that add up to a little over half of the electorate. In fact to please its vote banks it can even turn antagonistic to the other half of the population. Thus a party which openly and vocally works against the interests of almost half the population can also gain power in democracy and oppress them.

57. Of course, obviously, another party would pick up that other half of the electorate as its vote bank. The two parties together thus can set one half of the population against the other half, creating a permanent social wedge. As a result the entire population resents each other perpetually. The ‘voter sharing’ feature is the anti-dote for this birth defect of the democracy. The party-neutral voters who gives some of their votes to one party and some to the others, would not turn into the vote bank of any party. Parties also, cannot antagonize any particular demographic, as they can get some minor share of their votes even if not the major share.

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58. In fact, to promote non-partisan politics, we should move towards ‘all party’ governments. This can be done by constitutionally requiring every political party that gets over 15% of the vote or so, to participate in the government. No party should be given the luxury of staying outside of the government and throwing irresponsible allegations, as there is no mechanism to hold it accountable. This setup would make it even more easier for the members of all parties in the legislature objectively hold the executive accountable.

59. We should not have to worry about ‘all party’ governments collapsing with internal fights. Politicians know better than anyone that there are no permanent enemies or friends in politics. If we expect them to collaborate they will collaborate. If we expect them to ‘oppose’ each other, they will oppose each other. Parties collaborate all the time if necessary. We have seen this in parties forming coalitions before the elections and forming coalition governments after the election.

60. ‘All party’ governments also address one of the vexing issues of the political system, the ‘party defections’, i.e., leaders who got elected on the ticket of one of the ‘opposition’ parties join the ruling party. With ‘all party’ governments, there would be no such need for the leaders to defect. They are in power regardless of which party they belong to.

Implementation

61. Though we described this 'voter bases' system in the context of elections to Lok Sabha, it is equally applicable to the elections to state legislatures. For that matter, it can be used for elections to any democratically elected body with multiple members, even one as simple as a home owners association.

62. We suggest that the 'voter bases' system is implemented in *two to five states ruled by different political parties*, to begin with. We would then gain a broader perspective on how various voters, leaders and parties adapt themselves to this new system. The system can then be refined further based on such experience. Then, it could be implemented gradually in all other states, and finally at the national level.

63. The development of FVMs is fairly trivial exercise, given the advances in the digital technology. All it takes is storing the information of all the candidates from all over the country, which would only a be a couple of megabytes, the size of an average video shared in a social media. In fact, it is a much simpler exercise administratively and technically to make FVMs that are identical all over the country than EVMs that differ from constituency to constituency.

eElections – Advanced

64. We have seen how moving from territorial constituencies to voter bases brings in significant improvements to our political system and makes our democracy work better in many ways. But we do not have to stop there. We can make it even better, by replacing the 'five year elections cycle', with what we call 'continuous assessment'. With this, voters assess the performance of the leaders continuously and increase or decrease their support to the leaders based on their performance, by redistributing their votes to a new set of leaders or to the same leaders in a different proportion at any time they like.

65. To implement continuous assessment, the ECI would have to develop much advanced and 'on line' versions of FVMs, which we would call AVMs (Anytime voting machine). The ECI would have to develop and make the AVMs available everywhere, such as at all e-Seva centres or post offices or national banks or at any place where Aadhaar Card services are provided.

66. There would be no election dates, election season or polling stations in this system. Voters would simply walk to an AVM on any day and anywhere in the country and would identify themselves with Aadhaar cards or Voter Id cards, authenticate themselves with OTP or biometrics. The AVM would show them the leaders they have previously chosen if any, or blank faces in the 3x4 grid. The voters can press on any one of the boxes in the 3x4 grid, and scan the Leader Card of another leader to whom they want to give the vote. Upon scanning, the box will show the picture of the new leader, replacing the picture of the old leader, as a confirmation of changing the vote. The voters, thus can redistribute some or all of their votes as they desire. AVMs would update the vote counts of the leaders instantly whenever a voter redistributes one's votes.

67. To prevent emotionally unstable individuals from redistributing the votes compulsively, or juveniles redistributing their votes playfully, too often, we put a measure is called 'one week gap' rule. With this rule, voters would not be allowed to redistribute their votes within one week of the previous redistribution. This measure also reduces the daily load on the computer systems.

68. * * *

69. AVMs are much more sophisticated than FVMs. They should have the capability to show the voters whom they have voted, but prevent the leaders or parties from seeing who have voted for them. This can be accomplished by using encrypted keys and with certain complex internal logic. Hence the AVM system requires highly advanced use of technology, than even the back bone of the UPI and Aadhaar card

systems. Technology has advanced enough to build such a system. It might just take a few years.

70. To allay the fears of any kind of possible manipulation of votes, every political party and every independent citizen forum should be given electronic access to 'audit' this system, at any time. Continuos and independent auditing capabilities should be made integral part of the system, to thwart any type of electronic fraud by anyone. Of course, we cannot think of a world in which electronic systems are completely free from hacking and viruses. We just have to build the sophisticated recovery methods to restore the system quickly. That is what the banks everywhere in the world do to safeguard the integrity and secrecy of financial transactions all over the world. The financial world has suffered from many a hacking attack in the past, recovered from them, and made the computer systems that much secure after each attack. but they never gave up on the use of technology just because of its susceptibility to manipulation and hacking. The AVM system should be built and maintained with the same spirit.

* * *

71. As voters distribute and redistribute their votes, the vote counts of the leaders change constantly, and will be updated by the ECI on its website for the everyone to see. As the vote counts of the leaders change, the 'top 543' rankers also change continuously, i.e, every day or even multiple times a day. This means some leaders, especially at the bottom of the list, can get elected and unelected each day. This, which we call this 'bottom volatility', is obviously undesirable. To address this issue, we incorporate a measure that we call 'quarterly refresh' rule. With this rule, the top-rankers list is refreshed only once in every quarter, i.e., once in three months, and not every day or every minute. Vote counts will keep changing every minute as voters redistribute their votes, but the top-rankers list will not be refreshed immediately. Also, the average vote counts of the leaders over the past three months would be used to determine the top-rankers list, so that a single day fluctuation in the vote counts would not adversely affect the prospects of a leader getting elected.

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72. The elected leaders would have an indefinite term in this system, as there are no 'five year' elections. There is no fixed time limit at the end of which they lose the membership of Lok Sabha. They can lose power at any 'quarterly refresh', if their vote counts fall enough, but can last in power for years and even decades, if their vote counts rise and stay stable enough to keep them in the top-rankers list.

73. With no five year term limit for the members, the Lok Sabha will be a permanent house like Rajya Sabha, with membership slightly changing every three

months. It will never get dissolved. However, the term of the government (executive) would continue to be five years as it is now. Governments that lose the confidence of the Lok Sabha can be removed sooner from power with a 'no confidence' motion, as is the case now.

74. In summary, implementing 'continuous assessment' system entails the following changes:

Current System	→	**eElections System**
Five year election cycle	→	Continuous assessment
Five year term for members	→	Indefinite terms for members
Five year term for Lok Sabha	→	Permanent Lok Sabha

75. We will now discus the improvements the 'continuous assessment' system brings in to the political system.

Fair Representation

76. Voter Bases guarantee fair representation for people of all identities and interests, as has already noted. But the demographics keep changing, as young people attain the voting age, as old people die, as people become caste-less, religion-less, etc., with education and urbanization, and as people's interests and professions change over time. In the current 'five year election cycle' system, the demographics do not reflect in the political system until the next election. The AVM based system resolves this problem. People can change their leaders, i.e., redistribute their votes, whenever their identities or interests change. Young people can distribute their votes right on the day they attain the voting age, instead of having to wait till the next election day, which could be five years away. Thus, the demographic changes get reflected in the vote counts of the leaders and parties immediately.

Better Leaders

77. 'Voter bases' system, as already noted, increases the choice of leaders for the voters, letting them pick the best of the best leaders. The 'continuous assessment' system makes it even better. If the voters find that the leaders are not as honest and dedicated as they thought, they can remove them from power immediately, than wait for five years, and redistribute those votes to another leader who is consistently honest, or to a new and promising leader. In other words this system lets the voters try many leaders in a matter of a couple of years and settle on the best of best leaders. Dishonest and non-performing leaders, thus, are constantly and quickly removed from power in this system within one or two quarterly refreshes.

Better Relationships

78. As discussed earlier, unlike the manifestos, endorsed lists help the leaders honestly present what they are passionate about, and voters, by voting for them, express what is important for them clearly. But still, there is a possibility that leaders may miscommunicate, intentionally or unintentionally, what they stand for and what they are dedicated to. Voters can misunderstand what the leaders said, and give them an opportunity, only to regret later. Leaders and parties, once in power, drift away from what they said before the elections, intentionally or unintentionally. Things can go in the wrong direction and the gap between the leaders and voters widen for five full years. Leaders and parties may not know about it and voters cannot do anything about it.

79. The 'continuous assessment' system, solves this problem. Voters can withdraw their votes from the leaders whenever they see them drifting away from their expectations. The redistribution of votes is a powerful mechanism for the voters to constantly communicate their expectations and provide feedback to the leaders and parties on their actions, policies and behaviour, on a regular basis. No more voters have to feel helpless for five years. No more parties and leaders need to be in the dark about what people think and want.

Political Parties

80. The main goal of political parties is to gain and retain power. In the current system, both have become a gamble. There is nothing that an incumbent party can do to retain the power for sure. There is nothing that the other parties can do to gain power for sure. Their strategies are almost like throwing stones in the dark, hoping to hit the target. All of this uncertainty will be gone with the 'continuous assessment' system, which turns Lok Sabha in to a permanent house. No party loses power all of a sudden. No party gains power all of a sudden. Parties need not go through the exercise of expensive and uncertain elections every five years.

81. Every party has equal chance to continuously attract leaders who can grow their voter bases, at any time. It is similar to companies, banks etc. devising strategies to gain more market share. Any party that can come up with smarter strategies to attract leaders and voters will see the rewards immediately in the increased vote counts. The continuous assessment system thus works as 'continuous improvement' system for the parties, and for the leaders.

82. This system also helps parties retain strong leaders and shed off weak leaders constantly. Whom to recruit, whom to retain, whom to promote, etc., would no more be challenging questions for the parties. The changing vote counts of the leaders answer those questions for them.

83. Even the issue of 'party defections' would not be as serious as it is now. First of all, this system attracts principled leaders and hence there would not be too many defections. Second of all, if we move to the culture of 'all party' governments, there would be no need for leaders of the 'opposition' parties to defect to the ruling party, as already noted. Third, in this system, voters can 'punish' the defecting leaders immediately by withdrawing the votes from them, if they feel the leaders defected for wrong reasons.

Better Democracy

84. Indian democracy, with adult franchise, gives voting power to every adult. But every adult is not equally capable of understanding the consequences of one's vote. The vote of a political journalist who covered the ins and outs of the politics for decades is counted the same as the vote of someone who would exchange one's vote for a liquor bottle. The five year election system also pushes the voters to take a decision in a highly charged environment, in which emotionally sensitive and spurious issues dominate.

85. The 'continuous assessment' solves this problem. There are no election seasons and emotionally charged environment in this system, in the first place. Voters can take their own time to identify worthy leaders. Their hands are not tied for five years after distributing their votes. They can reflect on their choices and redistribute their votes to a different set of leaders at any time they want. They can choose and change leaders just as they do servant-maids, drivers, doctors, employers, vegetable vendors, scooter mechanics, and so on, at any time. They can start with choosing a couple of leaders who are reasonably known, and then change them if they are not performing well or when better ones are found or when their interests or needs change.

86. In the current 'five year election cycle' model, leaders decide the fate of people every single day, but voters get to decide the fate of the leaders only once in five years. It is an unfair asymmetric relationship. The 'continuous assessment' system, essentially, corrects this anomaly. In a true democracy, voters are the masters and leaders are the servants. The current system limits the power of the voters in choosing and changing their servants. They feel more helpless than empowered, leading to cynicism and apathy. The 'continuous assessment' system makes the voters actually 'feel the power' they are entitled to in a democracy.

87. In the current system, people have to participate in protests or rallies to show their disapproval or approval of any policy or action of the government. But they are time and resource consuming and cannot be organized on every single issue. Even when organized, they do not sustain beyond a few days, as people have to to go on

with their daily lives. Further they also cause disruption to public life. Also, politicians, activists, etc., hijack the rallies and protests to further their own agenda. The protests and rallies would neither be needed nor would have any value in the continuous assessment system, as voters can show their approval or disapproval directly and clearly by redistributing their voters.

88. The continuous assessment system also enables the voters to *enforce* collaboration among parties. The party-neutral voters, who distribute their votes to multiple parties, naturally expect those leaders to collaborate across the party lines. If they do not, such voters can 'punish' them by withdrawing their votes from them.

89. The AVMs solve one other minor, but important problem. Some voters, in the current system, come out of the polling booth wondering whether they have voted for the candidate they actually intended to vote or have voted to someone else by mistake. They do not have any mechanism to verify their vote. There would be no such problem in this AVM based system. They can go to any AVM at any time, and can see whom they have voted for.

90. The job of ECI also becomes easier with the 'continuous assessment' system. Currently they have to borrow resources from other government departments to conduct the elections. The ECI become extremely busy during the election season and would have very little work to do in between. With the 'continuous assessment' system, the work load will be spread evenly over the course of the year, like it is for any other government department. There would be no need to draw on the resources of other departments, or disrupt their function.

Implementation

91. The continuous assessment system requires more complex technology than the voter bases system, as noted already. Hence it is better implemented as 'Phase 2', rather than along with the voter bases system.

92. Just as voter bases system, the 'continuous assessment' system also can be implemented not only at national level, but at the state level. It is also better implemented in *two to five states ruled by different political parties*, to begin with. We would then gain a broader perspective on how various voters, leaders and parties adapt themselves to this new system. The system can then be refined further based on such experience. Then, it could be implemented gradually in all other states, and finally at the national level.

Additional Thoughts

Party-less system

93. We discussed about moving towards 'all party' system, so that the legislature can truly perform the watchdog function over the executive and the members can have issue-based debates and voting, rather than partisan debates and voting. Once such culture takes roots, there is no need even for the political parties to exist. Political parties hardly add any positive value to the democracy, but bring in significant negatives. They try to push the rivalry among themselves into the society and pit people against one another. They recruit rival factions, identities etc. in the villages, and make those divisions permanent. They subscribe to ideologies that make the future a prisoner of the past. They bring pre-election rivalries into the legislature and make it dysfunctional. By demanding party-line voting (whip), they smother independent voices and eliminate open debates.

94. With endorsed lists and voter bases, we promote leaders with independent voices, and consequently bring down the partisan voting, and prevent pre-election rivalry from spilling into legislation and governance. With multiple votes and continuous assessment, the voters can enforce the collaboration by withdrawing votes from non-collaborating leaders. With 'all party' system, we can bring down the rivalry to near zero as everyone is forced to share the responsibility rather than fight.

95. The party-less system works just like any other institution, like a college, school, department, business, court, etc. The head of the institution is chosen by a committee. There are no 'parties' that constantly fight. eElections brings the same dynamics to the political system. Lok Sabha is the committee which chooses and changes the head of the executive (prime minister). This is the exact simple framework intended by the constitution. The constitution has no mention of political parties, except for the verbiage added to implement the anti-defection laws, which are also not needed in the eElections system.

96. Needless to say, party-less system also brings down the role of money in politics and hence corruption. Much of the corruption in political system today rises from the need to raise the huge amount of funds to maintain the party, running the campaigns, doing favors to the donors, etc. We want to leave this thought about moving to party-less system to the readers.

eDebates and eVoting

97. Is there a value in members physically meeting in the parliament Bhavan in this electronic age of remote work (work from home), tele-medicine, etc.? Once upon

a time, it was necessary for the members of parliament to meet in one place to discuss issues, hear what each other's have to say, and to finally vote by verbal confirmation or by a show of hands. With partisan voting, these debates have become a mockery of democracy. No leaders can convince the other leaders to change their minds. No one changes their mind after any debate. Furthermore, the debates are very time consuming. It is practically impossible to allocate reasonable amount of time for all the hundreds of the members to speak on each issue.

98. All those debates, if at all, are serving only one purpose, a chance for the members to record their opinion on a given issue. This can be done much easily and in a better manner by using digital technologies. Question answer sessions and discussions can be conducted on-line. Members can submit their questions digitally and governments can respond to them digitally. Bills, resolutions, motions, etc., can also be posted on line. And the members can also vote on them on-line, i.e., eVoting.

99. Official comments can be posted by the members in not only text format, but also in audio or video format, on any bill or resolution. Every member can do it from wherever they are. They do not have to be in the parliament or even in Delhi. The hundreds of members can do all it simultaneously, without having to 'wait for their turn', without being interrupted by other members, without any time constraints. Members can post their comments in any language, and it can be translated into all other languages, to be made available for all the other leaders and people to see.

100. In these days of social media, even the least educated are familiar with on-line posts and comments, and hence members should not have any difficulty in switching to the eDebates. The eDebates also bring the benefit of 'searchability'. Any bill, question, answer, comment or votes can be searched by anyone at any time. Voters who want to know more about a particular leader can search all the votes and comments of that leader readily.

Merging Rajya Sabha with Lok Sabha

101. Rajya Sabha is an interesting construct in Indian democracy. It was created to mimic the 'House of Lords' of the UK and 'Senate' of the USA, with no clear and useful purpose. It never served any purpose explicitly. Its purpose has been under question right from the days of framing the constitution. *People across the country have no expectations of it*. It has just been serving as a lodge to house the less noisy and 'safe' party veterans, who do not have local clout to get elected to Lok Sabha. Sometimes, parties, embarrassingly so, simply put the seats on Rajya Sabha on 'sale' and give it to the highest bidder, some rich person with craving for the prestige associated with being a member of the parliament.

102. We propose that the Rajya Sabha, and their counter parts in the states, the Vidhan Parishads, are disbanded completely, once and for all. But there are some arguments in favor of the existence and continuance of Rajya Sabha. Let us examine and respond to them.

103. One argument is that Rajya Sabha is permanent in nature and hence provides certain sort of stability and continuity. With 'continuous assessment', the Lok Sabha also will be permanent and gives the same needed stability and continuity. Another argument is that Rajya Sabha has the advantage of housing eminent personalities from arts, sciences, sports, literature, etc. But as noted earlier, eElections lets people elect any person of their interest. Sportspeople from across the nation can elect a sportsperson, artists from across the nation can elect an artists and so on, to Lok Sabha.

104. The third argument in favour of Rajya Sabha is that its members bring maturity to the discussions. But this is only in theory. In practice, Rajya Sabha members also vote along party lines. We have not seen a single instance in the history of independent India, where Rajya Sabha made a substantial and decisive difference to any piece of legislation or to any policy. The objective of maturity, in fact, is met by the Lok Sabha in an even better manner in the eElections system, as some of its members would certainly sustain their voter bases for a long time and hence serve as Lok Sabha members for a long time, and hence add their mature voices to the debates. Furthermore, enjoying the support of their own voter base, such long-tenured members can voice their opinions from a position of stability and independence.

105. The fourth argument in favour of Rajya Sabha is that it represents the interests of the states. This is also only in theory. In practice, members from a state hardly speak in a single voice about the interests of the states. Members from the same state, belonging to different parties differ from each other about the states' interests, and try to push only the agenda of their respective parties. In the eElections system, we would have nationally spirited leaders from all over the country, i.e., from all the states. They would, anyway represent the state interests as well.

106. The fifth argument, which is more substantial than all the others, in favour of Rajya Sabha is that it acts as a second check on legislation, so that no significant piece of legislation is rushed through in a hurry, at the heat of a moment. This objective can be accomplished in Lok Sabha itself by introducing what we call 'two-pass legislation'. Under this method, every bill would be voted twice. There will be second voting on every bill after forty-five days of the first voting. Emotions that run high in favour or against a particular piece of legislation would generally calm down after the first voting. The gap of forty-five days before the second voting gives enough

time for the supporters as well as the opponents of the legislation to ponder on the issues further and reconsider their views and positions.

107. And more importantly, the two-pass legislation gives an opportunity for the people to voice their opinion of the legislation. If they do not like a bill that just got passed, they can withdraw their votes to the members who voted for the bill. If they like the bill, they can withdraw their votes from the members who voted against the bill. That will send a message to the leaders about whether they are in sync with people's expectations or not. This 'two pass' system lets the people voice their opinions on each and every individual bill.

108. Disbanding Rajya Sabha also frees up resources. The facilities, salaries, perks, pensions, etc., that are given to Rajya Sabha members can be recovered and be given to the members of Lok Sabha, whose size cam be increased to 1000 members, to keep up with the increase of population.

Small states

109. India is a large and populous country. Some of its states are larger than many countries in the world, in area or in population or in both. Many thinkershave been advocating for dividing them into smaller states, so that they can grow better and faster. A recent book titled 'Bharat: India 2.0' delves into this subject in depth. Its author, Dr. Gautam Desiraju suggests that the number of states should be increased to seventy-five along socio-cultural-economic lines. He shows how small states brings the people and leadership closer to each other and how they help every part of India develop better and faster.

Let's Lead

110. One may wonder whether any thing like eElections is implemented anywhere in the world. This question is better answered with another question: Do we want to be a leader or a follower? Did we implement Aadhaar Cards or UPI following the lead of other countries? Certainly not. We conceived them and implemented them on our own, and became the envy of the world. We can and should do the same in implementing the 'digital democracy'. It would be a matter of pride for us to be the first ones to bring democracy into the digital age.

111. As already noted, eElections can be used for elections to any body. Hence it can be used by any country that has a progressive and flexible mindset and is open to depart from the old systems.

112. So let us lead and set an example for the world to follow!