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DEMOCRACY



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. The core principle of democracy is *people governing themselves through their trusted and chosen leaders*. The current elections and representation system is a considerable compromise of this principle because of the many practical constraints under which it was designed at the time of framing the constitution.

2. The current system trades flexibility and accountability for stability. Political parties and leaders can continue in power for five years even if they happen to lose the trust of the voters along the way. Voters cannot hold them accountable till the day of next elections. Voters who did not vote for the winning candidate are forced to let that candidate, whom they did not vote to begin with, represent them. Political parties, many a time, win or lose a significant percentage of seats for losing or winning a small percentage of votes, skewing the will of the people. With the winning candidate typically gaining less than 40% of the votes, what prevails is minority rule, not majority rule, contradicting another core principle of democracy. Minorities are not represented in proportion to their numbers, in spite of reserved constituencies. Leaders who can win the elections by hook or crook rise into power and leaders who do not compromise principles and ethics fade into oblivion.

3. We can address all these issues, and many others faced by voters, leaders, political parties and governments, by taking advantage of advances in communication and information technologies that free us from the constraints under which the current system is designed. We can design a new model that provides great flexibility and robust accountability without sacrificing stability, and rather enhancing it. In this concept paper, we propose one such model, called eElections. This model involves six fundamental changes and four symbolic changes as follows:

Fundamental Changes

Once-in-five-years elections	→	Anytime Voting
Single vote per voter	→	Multiple Votes
Maximum votes (FPTP[1])	→	Qualifying Votes
Geography-based constituencies	→	Trust Bases
Fixed terms	→	Indefinite Terms
Finite-Term Legislatures	→	Permanent Councils

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) and description of many concepts related to election models that are in vogue around the world.

Symbolic Changes

Lok Sabha	→	National Leadership Council (NLC)
MP	→	National MLC
Vidhan Sabha	→	State Leadership Councils (SLC)
MLA	→	State MLC

4. We will describe the rationale behind these changes, their meaning and how they address various issues that pertain to the voters, leaders, political parties, governments, election commission and democracy in the later sections of this paper.

* * *

5. We humbly present this model to the people, to the thinkers and intellectuals interested in public affairs, to the political parties, and to the government of India for their serious consideration.

6. We suggest that the Government of India set up an all-party forum, inviting all political parties, and eminent national and international political scientists, thinkers and political science consultants, to examine this model thoroughly and enhance or modify it as needed, and give their assent to it.

7. 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.

* * *

8. We would like to be honest and emphasize that this model, by no means, is a panacea for all the social and political ills, which have their roots in history, culture, fallibility of human nature and the limitations of the democracy itself. However, it is presented with the confidence that this model, which provides more incentives to collaborate than to polarize, will bring people who seriously seek to cure those ills come together easily and quickly.

9. We are cognizant of the fact that there are many other electoral reforms like this proposed by other individuals and civic forums. We notice that most of them keep their focus on barring the entry of bad leaders into power. With this model, we take a different approach. We focus, rather, on facilitating the entry of good leaders into power. The idea is that once good leaders get a seat at the table, things will start changing for the better automatically.

* * *

10. This paper is written for the context of democracy in India, but the model itself is generic and universal enough that it can be adopted by any democracy in the world that has sophisticated enough digital infrastructure.

The eElections Model

11. In this section we will describe the motivation for the eElections model and the rationale for and meaning of the four symbolic changes and six fundamental changes and how they address the key issues of the current model.

Symbolic Changes

12. 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, at the ground level, the members 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, both in theory and in practice. Hence it is appropriate to call the Parliament and Legislatures as Leadership Councils, and their members as MLCs. This is the rationale for the symbolic changes. It is always good if the terminology can represent as much of the breadth, depth and spirit of the role as possible.

Periodic Elections to Anytime Voting

13. Democracy is about people governing themselves through their elected representatives. Governments should be in power only as long as they enjoy the confidence of the people. The provision of no-confidence motion reflects this principle, with which the MPs or MLAs can bring-down a government which they deem as unfit to rule[2], at any time.

14. How about a similar no-confidence motion by voters against the elected leaders, i.e., MPs and MLAs, who are not performing well, have broken promises or are ethically compromised? There is no provision to 'recall' such leaders before their term expires. The reason is implementing such provision amounts to conducting an election again, which is a huge exercise. Also, there is no good answer to the questions of how and when to trigger such recall process, and how to elect a new leader in the place of the leader who is recalled.

15. But, with the advances in technology in this electronic age, we can now implement such a 'replace a non-performing leader with a new leader any time' easily. We call it Anytime Voting. We can let the voters change their vote from a non-

2 See https://www.jstor.org/stable/26160090 for a debate on no-confidence motion, accountability vs. stability

performing leader to another leader at any time using a mobile phone app, or through an e-Seva center, or any similar mechanism established by election commission. This is possible if we can keep a record of who voted for whom, and give the ability to change it anytime, and maintain the secrecy of it. With the electronic age technology, implementing this is as simple as implementing Demat accounts.

Single Vote to Multiple Votes

16. Currently, 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.

17. There is nothing preventing us from giving multiple votes to each voter which one can distribute to multiple leaders, in equal or unequal proportion, except its difficulty in implementation. Not so any more, since it can be easily implemented with the the modern technology. At anytime, a voter can distribute his multiple votes via a mobile app or at an e-seva center. It is as simple as allocating one's money in multiple funds in a Demat account, or distributing a dozen bananas to three or four children. Multiple votes give the opportunity to the voters to rank the leaders, rather than choosing only one of them and implicitly rejecting all others. Picking up top two or three leaders you like is easy, than figuring out who is the best of all, as there are so many parameters to judge a leader.

18. We suggest fixing the *multiple* votes as *twelve* votes, as that is the smallest number which gives enough flexibility to distribute votes equally or unequally to one or two or three or four leaders, without the voter having to do a lot of math. With twelve votes, the voter will be able to distribute to as many as twelve leaders, which should be plenty. There is nothing sacrosanct about the number *twelve* beyond this. Any other higher number would works well too, albeit, with slight increase in the complexity of math.

Maximum Votes to Qualifying Votes

19. In today's election model, a leader who gets a few votes less than the other leader loses the election because of the maximum votes (FPTP) criterion. The voters who voted for that leader are forced to accept the winning leader, someone whom they did not like to begin with, as their elected leader. This contradicts the principle of democracy of people governing themselves through their 'chosen' leaders. But there

is not much we could do about this in the paper age. But with the use of technology, we can correct this problem. We can do so by changing the winning criteria from maximum votes to minimum 'qualifying' votes. We can declare any leader who garners enough votes, which we call qualifying number of votes (QNV), as 'elected'.

20. This means there are no winners or losers, in this new model. There are only qualified leaders. This is a paradigm shift. It removes the tension of competition to a great degree. Any leader who can attract votes above QNV will be declared 'elected'. If we choose the QNV reasonably low enough, every leader who is popular enough among the voters will become 'elected'. Does this mean there would more than one elected leader from the same constituency? Let's answer this question with the next change.

Geography-based constituencies to Trust Bases

21. In today's election model, we have geography-based constituencies. But are they essential to a democracy? No, they are not. They are just a convenient way of ensuring that everyone from everywhere participates in the democratic process through a leader who is locally accessible. We can accomplish the same objective in an even better way, by discarding the concept of constituencies. We can let the voters distribute their votes to any leader from anywhere who responds to their needs, addresses their issues, and stands by them and for them as needed.

22. In this new model, we call all the voters who give their votes to a specific leader the Trust Base of the leader. Since the voters can distribute their votes to leaders from anywhere, the Trust Bases can be spread across the country, similar to the constituencies of the upper houses of the legislature. This change turns the entire country (or state) into a single constituency. This kind of practice is not new. It is in place in countries such as South Africa[3], and we use it for our own upper house of the legislatures.

23. Since the voters can distribute their votes to multiple leaders, they can be part of Trust Bases of multiple leaders at the same time. This means there is more than one leader to represent the voter. Voters are thus better represented in this model than in the current model.

24. In the current model, with fixed number of constituencies, the number of members of a legislatures are also fixed, at the Center or in any given state. In the new model, it will be variable and depends the what QNV is set as, and how many leaders gain more votes than QNV. If the QNV set, for example, as 1% of the

3 See 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.

electorate, it will yield a maximum of 100 elected leaders; and, if set as 0.2% , will yield a maximum of 500 elected leaders, and so on.

25. The size of the Trust Bases of the popular leaders can grow very large. Leaders with larger Trust Bases will have proportionally higher voting power in the leadership councils, just as holders of large quantities of stock have higher voting power on the boards of public traded companies.

Fixed terms to Indefinite Terms

26. In this new model, the election commission, with the help of the computer systems, calculates and publishes the size of the Trust Base of every registered leader every day. And leaders stay in power as long as the size of their respective Trust Bases stay above QNV. In other words, there are no fixed-length terms in the new model. The terms are indefinite. In the current model, leaders last in power anywhere from a single term to five or six terms also. The same is true in the new model. A leader could last in power for as little as one or two years or as many as twenty to thirty years or more. In the current model, as well as in the new model, it all depends on whether the leader enjoys the trust of the voters. The benefit in the new model is that there is no need for the leaders to go for elections every five years. The size of the Trust Bases, on any given day, reflect whether the leaders enjoys the support of the voters or not.

27. As voters redistribute their voters, the number of votes of each leader can go up or down every single day. Whenever the votes rise above the QNV, the leader becomes 'elected'. Whenever the votes fall below the QNV, the leader would be 'unelected'. However, there is an issue with this. What if the number of votes of a leader hovers right about the QNV, rising a few votes above QNV one day and falling below it the next day? The leader would be elected one day and unelected the next day. This kind of volatility is not desirable. We can address this easily by establishing a 'ninety day' criterion. A leader is considered 'elected' only when the number of votes rises and stays above QNV for ninety days continuously. Similarly, a leader is considered 'unelected' when the number of votes falls and stays below QNV for ninety days continuously.

Finite-Term Legislatures to Permanent Councils

28. With Anytime Voting, which is essentially anytime redistribution of the votes, and with the absence of once-in-a-five-years elections, each leader gets 'elected' and 'unelected' independent of one another. Leaders will not get 'elected' or 'unelected' all at the same time. Hence the corollary is that the legislatures can now become

permanent, like the upper houses of the legislatures. This gives a far better stability and continuity to the governments than the current system, which causes uncertainty every five years.

29. During normal times we can expect a small percentage of leaders, say one to two percent, getting 'elected' and 'unelected' every month, leaving the majority untouched. Only when there are social upheavals of one kind or other, we may see more than thirty or forty or fifty percent of leaders get 'unelected' and 'elected'. Yet, the Councils will have continuity. This is not a problem, because that is how a democracy is supposed to work.

* * *

30. With these changes we strike a beautiful balance between accountability and stability. Voters can hold a leader accountable every single day, but at the same time enjoy permanency of the Councils which are important for the stability and continuity.

Three Simple Steps

31. The changes described above may seem too many and complicated, but their implementation is certainly not. It consists just three simple steps as follows.

32. The **leaders** who aspire to get elected to the leadership councils declare their candidacy by registering themselves with the election commission. They can do so at any time without having to wait till the next election, as there are no once-in-a-five-years elections in this model.

33. Any **eligible voter** can distribute and redistribute their votes at anytime and from anywhere, at their will and convenience, to any one leader or multiple leaders, in any proportion, using a mobile App or at an e-Seva center, or using any other mechanism established by the election commission.

34. The **Election commission** publishes the number of votes in favor of each and every registered candidate every day, maintaining, however, secrecy about who gave votes to whom, indicating who the 'elected' leaders on a given day and are, and are not.

* * *

35. Now that we have completed describing the new model in detail, we will describe how this model improves the democracy in many ways and how it benefits the political parties, the leaders, the voters, the minorities and the election commission as well.

Better Democracy

36. 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. There is also no mechanism to express approval or disapproval of each individual policy or action. Voters have to accept or reject the policies and actions of the leaders and parties as a whole. The new model, with the Anytime Voting feature, addresses this asymmetry. Voters can show their approval or disapproval by redistributing their votes any time.

37. 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 new model, with the Trust Bases feature addresses this problem and gives the voters access to all the leaders in the society.

38. 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 new model, with the Trust Bases, addresses this issue. In this model, a leader represents only the voters who explicitly chose him or her as their leader, who are called 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, the new model guarantees a strong, healthy trust-based relationship between the leader and the electorate, which is a cornerstone of democracy.

39. 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 new model, a good leader who can build a good enough Trust Base can get into power as easily as a bad leader can.

40. 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. What better can we ask in a democracy?

41. 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 new model rectifies this problem with the Trust Bases and Qualifying Votes. In the new 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 QNV.

42. 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 new 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.

43. 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 new 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 the new model encourages, rather than discourages, every voter to participate in the democratic process. This benefit alone should serve as a strong reason to adopt this new model as quickly as possible.

44. 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 new 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.

45. In the current model, a leader loses to another leader. In the new 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 new 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.

46. 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 new model, with the Trust Bases feature, makes this a mute point. A There would be no need to redraw the boundaries in the new model as there are no constituencies to begin with. Leaders represent exactly as many voters as there are in their respective Trust Bases.

47. 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 new 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.

48. 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 new 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.

49. 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 new 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 this new model, which is also called ‘Constructive Vote of No Confidence’ in the political science circles[4].

50. 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 new 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 new 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 new model draws more *experts* into power rather

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

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.

51. 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 new 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 new model promotes rational and thoughtful decisions, unlike the current model, which forces the voters to make a decision in an emotionally charged election season.

52. The new 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 new 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.

53. 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 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 new 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.

54. The new 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 divising long-lasting solutions.

55. 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.

56. What are the most important issues for the voters? How to prioritize them? Leaders, voters, and even the analysts find it hard to answer the question. Leaders can easily go wrong in guessing the priorities of the voters, both during the election campaigns and during budget allocations. The new 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

57. In the current model, elections are like a gamble for every political party. Even after spending enormous amounts of energy and money, the outcome is uncertain. The new model removes this uncertainty, as the Trust Bases of each individual leader of the political party grow and shrink gradually and independently. The political parties and the individual leaders can correct their course if they see their Trust Bases shrinking, and prevent them from falling below QNV. No party, in this new model, will ever be routed out of power overnight.

58. Voters who like a particular political party but not the candidate fielded by the party face a tough choice in the current model. They may choose to vote for the candidate of another party, which would be a loss for the particular political party. There would be no such loss to a political party in the new model. Voters who want to be loyal to the party can always find another leader of the party to distribute their votes to. Thus this model helps the parties retain all their loyal voters.

59. In the current model, political parties are forced to choose a candidate who can win the election by hook or crook. They have to go through the difficult political exercise of giving 'tickets' and 'funding' the candidates. In the new model, parties can simply endorse a large number of candidates who have the potential to win, and let the voters decide who among them are worthy. Parties, thus, will know which of their candidates are truly trusted by the voters. This also addresses the issue of lack of internal democracy in the political parties.

60. 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. In the new model, only candidates who have enough Trust Base will win. The party gets to develop genuine and long-lasting roots into the Trust Bases of its candidates through them. Thus the party gets a deeper understanding of the needs, issues, and opinions of the voters, based on the candidates chosen by the voters.

61. Should a leader, who switches from one political party to the other, lose his/her seat? There has been a lot of debate, constitutional provisions and amendments, and supreme court rulings on this question, but none of them is satisfactory. This new model answers this question elegantly. The voters can simply withdraw their votes to the particular leader if they feel that the switch was done for wrong reasons. They do not have to do anything if they feel that the switch was done for right reasons. In the true spirit of democracy, it lets the voters be the judges.

Benefits for the Leaders

62. The new 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 this new model. Every leader who enjoys enough support among the voters gets a seat at the table of decision making.

63. 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 new 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 new model makes it easier for new blood to flow into politics.

64. 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 new 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.

65. 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 new 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.

66. 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 new 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

67. 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 new 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.

68. 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 new 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.

69. 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 new 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.

70. 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 new model, as anyone can distribute their votes to any candidate from anywhere at an e-Seva center or using mobile App.

71. 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 new 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

72. 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.

73. The new 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 QNV goes unrepresented in the new model. All the plurality of the country, whether it is based on language, culture, religion, caste will be proportionally represented in the new model.

74. 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 new 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

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

76. 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 new model, as there is no 'election season' to begin with.

77. 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 new model. The workload on the election offices will be mostly uniform all round the year.

78. 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 this new 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.

79. In the current model, elections have to be postponed if a natural disaster like floods or pandemic strikes. In the new 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.

80. In the new 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.

81. 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 new 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 this new model, even if it has some imperfections, because it brings many benefits and solves many problems.

From the voters perspective, the new 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. This new 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 this new 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 new 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[5] of the constitution, for sure, needs to be amended, yo implement this new 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.

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