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eElections

Electronic Age
Election Model
For a Better Democracy

A concept paper



KRISHNA SHARMA

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Election Model
For a Better Democracy

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

KRISHNA SHARMA
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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

Overview

1. Advances in technology such as the Internet and mobile phones have put a lot of power in our hands. We have been using it well to improve many areas of life, such as banking, reservations, shopping, etc. Why not we use the same power to reverse the falling standards in politics and make democracy work better?

2. Things have now come to such a pass that the voters not only fall for enticements and vote on the lines of caste or religion but even sell their votes brazenly in the open. Leaders not only use all sorts of demagoguery, cover their criminal activities, abuse power to amass wealth, and change parties after getting elected, but also buy votes brazenly in the open. Parties fight and demonize each other not only before the elections, but also after the elections as the ruling and opposition parties.

3. Where are these negative tendencies and techniques coming from? Are there no good voters or leaders left? Far from it. There are many voters who take their vote seriously and consider it sacred. There are many leaders who take their role seriously, and really want to do something good for the society.

4. But where are they? In the high-stakes gamble called once-in-five-year elections, they are pushed into the background. Parties cannot gamble their future giving tickets to leaders who are idealistic and do not have the muscle or money power to win the very expensive and contentious elections by hook or crook.

5. How did it come to be this? Well, what law empowers, the process can disempower. The good things that law intends to happen can be negated by a poorly designed or constrained process, pushing the good leaders into the background and pulling the unscrupulous leaders into the foreground, setting unprincipled voters as example to principled voters, rather than the other way around.

6. Can we do something about it? Yes, by replacing the high-stakes, contentious, expensive, emotionally-charged, once-in-a-five-years elections, abrupt changes in government, followed by five years of helplessness, with a smooth and simple process, which on a *regular* basis puts promising leaders into power, purges ill-performing leaders from power, and retains well-performing leaders in power for longer periods.

7. Parties should be able to groom leaders slowly and steadily rather than pick the candidates expediently at the time of elections. Leaders should gain power based on how much they can connect with voters and how well they can address the issues, rather than on how much money and muscle power they have. Voters should be able to choose leaders from a wider list of choices, evaluate them continuously, and increase or decrease their support at any time based on performance.

8. Parliament should function like a company with five hundred and odd employees, as a permanent body with new blood flowing in, good blood continuing and problematic blood drained all the time on a regular basis. There should be no ruling or opposition parties. Voters do not elect the leaders and parties to demonize and fight with each other perennially, and eventually polarizing the society. They want all the elected leaders to work together and find good solutions. Collaboration among the leaders of the parties and independent leaders should be the norm, not an exception. This is the kind of new system we need.

9. But, can we implement such a system in reality? True, such a system has not been feasible hitherto. But not any more. We now have the power of technology in our hands. We can enable any voter to walk into an election office or e-Seva center or use a mobile app to choose or change his or her leader of choice at any time. And we can let the system keep a count of how many voters voted for any given leader at any given time. We can declare any leader whose vote count rises above a certain threshold as elected, and whose vote count falls below the threshold as unelected.

10. These simple changes will give the ideal system that we want. But we don't have to stop there. Technology enables us do more, like discarding the geographically-bounded constituencies, and opening up leaders from anywhere to voters from anywhere and vice vice versa. We can let parties publish a nationwide list of endorsed candidates instead of fielding one candidate per constituency. We can let voters vote for anyone on the lists endorsed by the parties, or anyone who is contesting as an independent. We can let leaders seek votes from any voter from anywhere who can relate to their message and who can put trust in their leadership.

11. This change will usher in an entirely new era of strong relationship between leaders and voters, and a sophisticated form of democratic representation. Minorities, such as physically handicapped persons or those belonging to a specific ethnic group, for example, who might be thinly spread all over the country can elect a leader of their own who understand their issues and is passionate and committed to address them. They do not have to depend on a generic politician to represent them, who has to focus on so many other issues of all the other voters.

12. In the current system, a leader represents all the voters in one's constituency, regardless of whom they voted for. It means leaders have to serve the voters who did not vote for them, and voters have to accept leaders whom they did not vote for. The new system completely gets rid of this awkward arrangement. Leaders represent only those who voted for them, i.e., put 'trust' in them. To emphasize this strong 'trust' based relationship between voters and leaders, we call all the voters who voted for a leader as the leader's 'Trust Base', which can be spread across the country. Nation-wide Trust Bases replace geographically-bounded constituencies.

13. Further, using the power of technology, we can also give multiple votes for each voter, which the voter can give to more than one leader. Let the voter pick multiple leaders in stead of just one. This change makes democracy even better, in a significant manner.

14. What if, for example, a woman voter from an agricultural family wants to vote for a leader who is passionate about agricultural issues and for another leader who is passionate about women's issues? What if a voter do not want to favor any one political party, but wants to pick one good leader from one party and another good leader from another political party and yet another good leader who is running as an independent? The multiple votes feature enables the voters to do so.

15. Further, by giving enough, say twelve, votes to each voter, we can let the voters give their votes to two or three or four or as many as twelve leaders, in *equal or unequal* proportions, as they like. In other words, the voters can be part of the Trust Bases of multiple leaders at the same time.

* * *

16. This new system, with permanent bodies, any time voting, nation-wide trust bases and multiple votes, which we will call the 'eElections' model, addresses many issues, solves many problems, and ameliorates many inconveniences, major and minor, that are of concern to various stakeholders, the political parties, leaders, voters, minorities and even the Election Commission. Before we proceed to describe them in detail later, we will highlight a couple of them here.

17. The current, constituency-based, system promotes 'jack of all and master of none' type of leaders, as they have to address all issues and needs of all voters. This, in practice, really means no issue gets serious and in-depth attention. And that is what has been happening for decades, and no wonder, we do not see true progress in many critical areas like education, agriculture, healthcare, etc.

18. We see someone with no basic knowledge of education becoming education minister and someone with no basic knowledge of agriculture becoming agriculture minister, and so on. With Trust Bases and multiple votes, things will change. They enable voters to pick leaders who are good at solving specific issues. Consequently, we shall see each area of concern getting enough focus.

19. In the current system, a political party can gain or lose disproportionately higher number of seats because of a slightly higher or lower margin in the percentage of votes. One party would gain an undue advantage, and another suffer an unfair disadvantage. It misrepresents the people's will. With Trust Bases, the slightly lower or higher margin of votes is of no consequence, as long as the leaders' Trust Bases are

comfortably above the threshold. This means, political parties will have representation that closely mirrors their true popularity among voters.

20. In the current system, an incumbent leader has the fear of losing power overnight on the election day, because a small change in the percentage of votes can tip the election one way or the other. Losing an election also means one have to be out of power for full five years.

21. In the eElections model, no leader loses power all of a sudden. One would know whether one's Trust Base is growing or shrinking on a daily basis. One will have ample warning before the size of one's Trust Base falls below the threshold. One will have time to take the necessary steps to reconnect with the voters and reverse the trend. A leader who is dear to voters would never lose power in this model.

* * *

22. There are a couple of things we need to clarify, upfront, about this model. One may wonder, whether anytime voting would cause a lot of churn in the leadership and hence instability in the parliament or government. There is no need for such apprehension. In fact it reduces the volatility and increases the stability. Just because they can change the leaders anytime, voters are not going to change their leaders every single day. Do people change their doctors, servant-maids, banks, mobile carriers every day, just because they can? No. People's natural tendency is to find a good option and stick with it, even if there are a few issues. Even in the current system, many voters stick to the same party or same leader for decades.

23. One may also wonder whether this new system will change the role of parliament or its relationship with the government (Executive). The answer is no. Government will still be answerable to the parliament, as it is now. Parliament can change the government at any time by bringing a no-confidence motion against it and installing a new government, as and when needed, just as it does now. Members of parliament would continue to serve as part of the government as they do now, in the form of ministers, etc. The only change is to the voting power of each member. Members with larger Trust Bases will enjoy higher voting power in this model.

* * *

24. We have thus far discussed eElections in the context of the electing leaders at the national level, to the parliament. But everything we discussed applies to electing leaders at the state level also.

25. And also, since we are proposing big changes any way, we might as well make improvements to certain terminology that is in vogue today. We suggest calling the Lok Sabha as *National Leadership Council* and the Vidhan Sabhas (Sasana

Sabhas) in the states as *State Leadership Councils*. The rationale is as follows: Firstly, the term Lok Sabha is a misnomer. The Lok Sabha is not composed of Lok (people), but their leaders. Secondly, we use two different names 'Lok Sabha' and 'Vidhan Sabha' at the center and state respectively, though they perform the same function. Thirdly, we refer to parliament and Vidhana Sabha as legislatures, to distinguish from the other branches of government, the Executive and Judiciary. But the function of 'legislatures' in India is not limited to legislation. Legislatures are responsible for electing the governments (Executive), overseeing the governments and their members also serve as part of the Executive in the form of ministers, chairmen of the government bodies, corporations, etc. Fourthly, the elected leaders, in practice, also serve as the elders and leaders of the communities, responding to their needs, issues, causes, concerns and emergencies. Thus the term 'legislature' does not describe the full scope and role of the leaders, either in theory or in practice. Hence the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas are better called, generically, as *Leadership Councils*, and their members can be called National MLCs and State MLCs, respectively. It is always good for the terminology to represent as much of the breadth, depth, spirit, power and responsibilities of the bodies and the members as possible.

* * *

26. In summary, eElections model proposes the following changes:

Finite-Term Legislatures	→	Permanent Councils
Once-in-five-years elections	→	Anytime Voting
Geographically-based Constituencies	→	Nation-wide Trust Bases
Single vote per voter	→	Multiple Votes per Voter

27. Without a doubt, the eElections model proposed here is a significant departure from the current model. Hence it should undergo thorough scrutiny of the experts in law, constitution and political science. Government of India should appoint a committee of experts from all areas, from various parts of the country as well as guest experts from other countries and international bodies, to examine this proposed model thoroughly and draft a robust bill for the parliament to enact. Election commission should educate and get the 'buy in' upfront from all the political parties, politicians and voters before the bill is officially adopted.

28. We recommend that this model is implemented in a phased manner, rather than all at one time, at the national and state level. It should 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 then finally at the center.

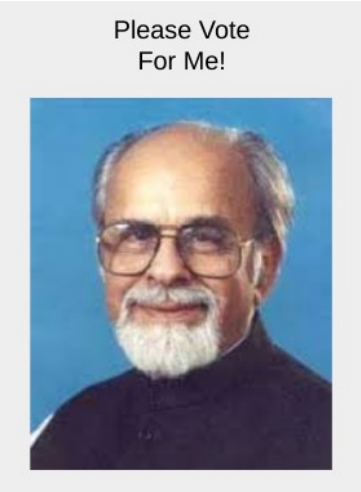
Mechanics

29. Having provided the overview of the eElections model in the previous section, let us now describe the mechanics of the eElections model now.

30. First of all, the Election Commission of India should put in place a comprehensive, secure and military-grade information technology infrastructure similar to that behind systems like eBanking and Aadhaar card, which we will call 'eElections' system. The system should enable the leaders to register as candidates, and voters to register themselves and distribute or redistribute their twelve votes to leaders of their choice. It should publishes the vote count of every registered leaders on a daily basis.

31. Any leader interested in being elected can register oneself as a candidate at any time with the Election Commission, through the eElections system. The system issues an identification number for each registered leader. The leaders can then create their own, what can be called as 'Leader Cards', in which they provide a photo of themselves, their name, their Id number, their date of birth and a QR code that can be scanned. There is no need for 'election symbols' in this model.

32. The leader, then can distribute the leader cards to the voters during the election campaign. The front and back of a 'Leader Card' can look somewhat like the picture show below. (We chose, with due respect and regards, we chose the picture of lesser known former Prime Ministers of India, Inder Kumar Gujral, for the sake of illustration).

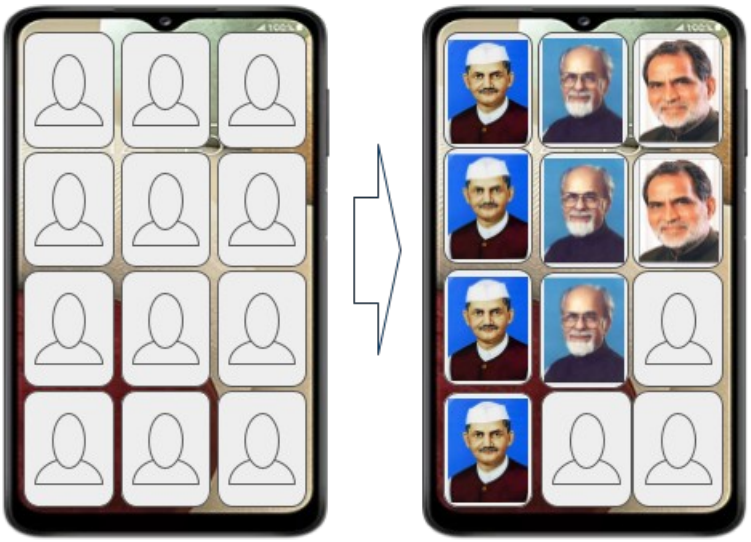




33. Political parties will publish a nationwide list of candidates they endorse. There is no more giving 'tickets' by constituency.

34. The Election Commission should build a mobile application as part of the ‘eElections’ system using which voters should be able view, distribute or redistribute their votes at any time. The application may use either Aadhaar Card or Voter Card for identification, and biometrics or OTP for authentication. For the benefit of the voters who cannot or do not want to use mobile apps, the same functionality should be made available everywhere through e-Seva centers or kiosks (probably stationed at post offices).

35. The screen on the mobile app or the kiosk or the e-Seva app can look somewhat like the images shown below. The image on the left shows a 3x4 grid with blank faces, as it appears to a first time voter. The image on the right shows the same 3x4 grid for a voter who has already given four votes to one leader, three votes to a second leader and two voters to a third leader, leaving three votes unallocated. (We chose, with due respect and regards, the pictures of lesser known former Prime Ministers of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Inder Kumar Gujral and Chandrasekhar, for the sake of illustration.)



36. The voter can then press any of the twelve boxes, blank or already filled with the picture of a leader, and scan the QR code on the ‘leader card’ of the leader whom one want to give one’s vote. If one wants to give the second vote also to the same leader, one would press another box and scan the same leader’s card again. If one wants to give the third vote to a different leader, one would press a third box and scan the ‘leader card’ of another leader. One can fill or change all the twelve boxes, in the same manner, or one can leave some of them blank.

37. The Election Commission should publish the vote count in favor of every registered leader every day, called Leader Vote Count (LVC), with the help of the computer systems, keeping ‘who voted for whom’ as a secret. The LVC of the

registered leaders can change every day as voters distribute and redistribute their votes.

38. Every leader whose vote count rises and stays above a set threshold, which we call Qualifying Vote Count (QVC), continuously for one hundred days is deemed as 'elected' member of the parliament, and whose vote count falls and stays below QVC continuously for one hundred days is deemed as 'unelected'.

39. The size of the Leadership Councils, unlike that of today's Lok Sabha, can vary in this model, based on the vote distribution pattern of the voters. But the maximum that it can grow is determined by the value of the QVC. QVC set, for example, as 0.5% of the electorate (times twelve, to adjust for the multiple votes), will yield a *maximum* of 200 elected leaders, set as 0.2% of the electorate, will yield a *maximum* of 500 elected leaders, set as 0.1% of the electorate will yield a *maximum* of 1000 elected leaders, and so on. This number can be set by the election commission, after framing the required guidelines.

Better Democracy

40. In this section we describe how the eElections model makes our democracy better.

41. The once-in-a-five-years-elections of the current model 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 after getting elected, and leaders do not know what voters think of them, till the next election. There is no mechanism for voters to express their approval or disapproval of the individual policies or actions or performance of the leaders and the governments on a *regular* basis. The leaders and parties are left to *guess* why people voted them into power or out of power. In the eElections model, voters by withdrawing votes or giving additional votes at anytime can express their approval or disapproval of any policy or action. The shrinking or growing size of Trust Bases serves as a conversation between the leaders and the voters.

42. There are many capable, knowledgeable, innovative, honest and committed leaders in the society. But we don't see their names on the ballot paper. But not everyone has the money power, muscle power, party loyalty, and ability to win the election by hook or crook. Candidates 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 to survive politically. 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 Trust Bases feature addresses this serious problem of stifled voters' choices. It makes it much easier and gives a fairly good chance for any worthy, visionary, capable, hardworking and passionate leader to slowly build up a Trust Base of his or her own.

43. In the current model, with the geography-based constituencies, winning candidates are forced to represent the voters who did not vote for them, i.e., did not put trust in them, and the voters have to let the leaders who they did not trust to begin with, represent them. No leader is a Mahatma and no one will be able to treat the voters who voted for him/her and the voters who did not, in the same way. This creates an uneasy relationship between the voters and the leaders. There should be no such 'forced marriages' between the voters and leaders in an ideal democracy. The eElections model addresses this issue with the Trust Bases feature. In eElections model, a leader represents only the voters who explicitly chose him or her as their leader, i.e., members of his or her Trust Base. By letting the leaders represent only the

voters in their Trust Base, and never someone who did not vote for them, it guarantees a strong and healthy relationship between the leaders and the electorate, which is a cornerstone of democracy.

44. 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. With nation-wide Trust Bases, a good leader can build one's own Trust Base as easily as a bad leader can, as there is not need to compete directly with any other leader. Elections will not be a zero-sum game any more.

45. Even if we assume that all are good leaders, we have to leave half of them behind, in the current system. When two leaders get about the same number of votes they must be almost equally capable. But we can choose only one of them but not both. In the new model, that would not be the case. Every leader whose Trust Base is above the threshold is in power. A strong leader without power inevitably becomes a negative force, maligning the leaders in power justly or unjustly. In the new model, all strong leaders are in power, and it is up to them how they organize, work together, collaborate or play politics.

46. 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. That will never be the case in the eElections model. Every voter can distribute one's votes to multiple leaders, and at least one of those leaders can be expected to be in power. This means nearly one hundred percent of voters would have representation in the Leadership Councils through one leader or other. What better can we ask in a democracy?

47. In the current model, as noted previously, elections are a zero-sum game. The outcome of the election is often determined by a minority of swing voters. If a small minority can play its cards well, it can determine the outcome of an election and there by enjoy a disproportionately higher level of influence in public life, resulting in an indirect minority rule. The eElections model rectifies this problem with the Trust

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

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

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

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

51. Currently, the population distribution among constituencies is not even. Some constituencies have 1.5 to 2 times that of the population of some other constituencies. As a result, the leader of one constituency represents a large number of people, while another leader in another constituency represents only a small number of people. Neither of these situations is desirable. This problem will not get corrected until a census is taken and the boundaries of the constituencies are redrawn, which happens very rarely. The eElections model, with the Trust Bases feature, makes this a mute point. There would be no need to redraw the boundaries in the eElections model as there are no constituencies to begin with. Leaders represent exactly as many voters as there are in their respective Trust Bases.

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

53. In the current model, voters have to resort to media posts, online petitions, street demonstrations and protests to express their displeasure or disapproval of the actions of leaders. This leads to violence and disruption of life, both for the protesters and for the general public. Organizing such protests and demonstrations, and sustaining them for a long time is not easy. In most cases, the protesters run out of energy and the protests die down before they achieve their intended goal. The eElections model, with Anytime Voting, removes the need for such ineffective petitions, demonstrations, protests, and unnecessary violence and disturbances. It enables voters to simply withdraw their votes from the non-performing or questionable leaders and give them to other or new leaders. In other words, a sophisticated and inexpensive 'recall' process is built into the eElections model, which is also called ‘Constructive Vote of No Confidence’ in the political science circles[1].

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

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

a dream achievement that would pay dividends forever. This incentivizes the political parties also to bring *experts* into power rather than generic politicians.

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

56. The eElections model also addresses a key, but less noticed, gap in the current model. Consider the situation of a bill that is good for the country as a whole, which requires a certain sacrifice from the constituency. The Constitution assumes that the MLA/MP would focus on the interests of the country as a whole. But the voters assume that the MLA/MP would focus on the interests of the constituency. These two contradictory assumptions put any conscientious MLA/MP in a bind. And there is no clear cut ethical stand that one can take. In the eElections model, the leaders have to spell out what they stand for and what they would focus on, upfront, in order to attract a Trust Base, and hence can focus on the same after election, without any contradiction.

57. 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 to do anything that the previous government may take credit for. Investments made by the previous government in the programs and projects could simply go waste. This is a loss of national resources and impedes national progress. The eElections model solves this problem. Because there are no once-in-five-year elections, there would be no such abrupt change of governments and hence no abrupt end to any program. Every program will take its natural course, either to evolve into something better and bigger or to peter out.

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

broken. Long-lasting associations between leaders and voters are essential for devising long-lasting solutions.

59. 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.

60. What are the most important issues for the voters? How to prioritize them? Parties, leaders, voters, and even the analysts find it hard to answer this question. Leaders and parties can easily go wrong in guessing the priorities of the voters, both during the election campaigns and during budget allocations. Parties, not knowing what issues the voters truly care for, try to canvas on a couple of 'hot' issues, sometimes pushing even fringe issues to the center of the stage. This could be as much due to demagoguery as it could be due to honest lack of information.

61. Trust Bases solve this critical issue elegantly. Leaders do not have to pretend to be 'jack of all' to be elected. They can project their true selves and spell out the issues they are going to focus on. The job of the political party is no more to find an emotive issue for campaigning, but to make sure that the leaders of their party as a whole cover all the issues. That ensures voter loyalty for the political parties, and gives the assurance for the voters that their issues will be addressed. The same clarity around the issues helps budget allocations also. Currently governments struggle to appeal to every section of the people during budget allocations, but without knowing the relative importance of the various issues for the voters. No such guess work is needed any more, as the Trust Bases serve as clear indications of the issues of importance to the voters.

62. Democracy works better when the majority of the people are political-party neutral. If not, the society will be politically polarized and swing voters, effectively, determine the outcomes. There is nothing wrong in voters considering party-affiliation of the leader as one of the factors, but it should not be the only factor. The current model, with one vote per voter forces the voter to choose one party or the other on the election day. It puts the neutral voters in a very difficult situation. Once the voter makes the difficult choice and votes for the leader of one party, he or she is effectively supporting only one party, though that is not what one intends. This problem is

elegantly solved by the eElection model with the multiple votes. Voters, if they like, can choose leaders from multiple parties, whom they like.

63. The multiple votes model reduces political polarization in one other way also. The leaders, in this model, have to accept the fact that the voters are unlikely to give all of their votes them. They have to appeal to the voters to give as many votes as possible, rather than trying to 'convert' or 'convince' the voter to switch parties. In the business world, no supermarket, for example, can demand the customers to buy all their groceries from them exclusively. Businesses have to do 'customer-sharing' with other supermarkets, corner stores, online stores and so on. The eElec tion model forces the leaders and parties to learn the healthy habit of 'voter-sharing'. They have to share the voter with the other political parties and independent candidates.

Benefits for the Political Parties

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

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

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

67. In the current model, candidates who are not popular among the voters can also win an election, based on the popularity of the party and the party chief. Such leaders, whom the voters do not like, can erode the popularity and credibility of the party and party chief in the long run. The 'large list of endorsed candidates' solves this

problem completely. Voters do not have to vote for a leader they do not like, just for the sake of staying loyal to the party.

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

Benefits for the Leaders

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

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

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

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

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

Benefits for the Voters

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

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

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

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

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

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

80. It is not very uncommon for voters to doubt whether they have voted for the candidate they wanted to vote, or to someone else by mistake. There is no mechanism to verify whom they voted for, after leaving the polling both. None of that ambiguity exists in the eElections model. Using Mobile App or kiosk or at the e-Seva center they see anytime the list of leaders whom they have voted for. They can also change the leaders or the distribution of votes among the leaders, if they had happened to make a mistake.

Benefits for the Minorities

81. 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.

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

83. There are other minorities also besides social minorities, who often go unnoticed, 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. They have to depend on a generic politician for representation. But they could be sizable in number when combined across all the constituencies. The Trust Bases will bring all such thinly spread minorities together, so that they can, together, find a leader who works on their respective needs, issues, concerns and problems.

General Benefits

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

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

86. In the current model, resources are drawn from many government departments during the election season, disrupting their normal function. There is no such need in the eElections model. The workload on the election offices will be mostly uniform all round the year.

87. 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. Elections need to be conducted again in those constituencies, which is an added expense to the candidates, to the parties, and to the government as well. There are no constituencies in the eElections model 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.

88. In the current model, elections have to be postponed if a natural disaster like floods or pandemic strikes. No such issue arises in the eElections model with the anytime voting. The voters can continue to distribute and redistribute their votes, whenever and wherever connectivity is available for the mobile phones to work, or wherever the e-Seva centers could be open.

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

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

91. In the eElections model obviates the need for the election symbols for the parties or independents, and eliminates the complexities involved in issuing and maintaining them. It provides a much better solution with the 'leader cards'.

Clarifications

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

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[2] of the constitution, we think, needs to be amended, to implement the eElections model. But, 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.

2. 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. But its limitations or crippling the spirit of the democracy, as we have noted right at the beginning of this paper. Had they had the benefit of these advances at that time, they would have surely implemented this kind of eElections right then itself.

3. Could the eElections model be too complicated for the average voter?

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. Can an average voter truly perform such a complex job? Obviously not. But it didn't stop us from choosing democracy. We adopted democracy anyway because we believe it is better than any other form of government, in spite of its imperfections. Similarly, we should not reject the eElections model, even if it has some imperfections, because it brings many benefits and solves many problems.

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

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

The mechanism of distribution, however, can be a bit 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 of a trusted family member or confidant, if needed, just as it happens in the election booths even today.

The 'leader cards' with the leader's photo and the QR codes make the voting process easy. Thanks to UPI, QR codes are now familiar even to a roadside vegetable vendor and their customers.

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. We need leaders for two reasons. First, the number of policy decisions are neither few nor simple. Many of them are nuanced involving intricate issues with long ranging implications. Just as we trust a doctor for making the right medical decisions, we need to trust a leader for making the right policy decisions.

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’ we are bound to depend on some experts, or opinion leaders, such as talk show hosts, media personalities, and celebrities. As such they can sway people’s opinion for or against a given policy. In other words, ‘digital democracy’ promotes ‘unofficial leaders’, who cannot be held accountable for anything. Rather, a better option is to make them official and hold them accountable. That is what the eElections model does, much more so than the current model.

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

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

Debates

92. In addition to and independently of the eElections, we should think of bringing the *parliamentary debates* also into electronic age. In this electronic age, there is no need for the members of the parliament to gather physically in one expensive place, and fight for a time slot to express their views. With the power of technology, they should be able to implement what we call 'eDebates', allowing the members to express and record their views, opinions and comments in as much detail as they want, without the limitation of time and without ever being shouted down by others.

93. The intention of the debates in the parliament is three fold. 1) Every member should be able to express his views about the proposed bill 2) All the members should be able to hear the views of all the other members. 3) Every member should be able to cast one's vote for or against the bill.

94. All these objectives can be met much easily and elegantly with eDebates. The mechanics are very easy to implement. First, we need to establish a robust bill registry. Every bill sponsored by anyone as per the procedure should be listed on that registry. Members of parliament should be given a deadline to post their views and comments on the bill, in text or video format. Members should be able to record their 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down' for the bill. Members should be given the ability to update or change their comments or vote at anytime before the deadline. Technology wise, this is no different from what we do in social media posts, blogs and vlogs.

95. With eDebates, members need not have to fight for getting floor time. No one can shout down the other. No member need to cut short what they want to say because of limitation of available time. Every member can give as detailed a response as they like. They should be able to give even links to any reference material they want.

96. Certain guidelines and code of conduct can be set to make the comments meaningful and respectful. For example, members can be prohibited from commenting on the comments of the other members, or from using any sort of 'unparliamentary' language, and so on.

97. Currently discussions on bills are limited to a few hours, for want of time. With eDebates there needs to be no such limitation, and the discussions can be allowed to go even for months. The more sensitive or controversial a bill is, the more discussion it needs. We need the emotions on such issues to cool down. Nothing is as good as time in cooling down emotions.

98. With, eDabates people can read or watch the comments of any member on any bill at any time. Anyone should be able to search any time for the comments of any member or any bill with the name of the member, title or date or key words of the bill. A translation wing should be set up to translate the text, and to 'sub-title' or 'voice-over' the bills and comments.

99. Democracy will function better if people actually pay attention to the views and opinions of the leaders, especially those expressed in support or opposition of the bills. Once the eDebates registry is established, people will start referring to the bills and comments in public and private discussions, which puts the right kind of pressure on the members of the parliament to word their comments carefully.

100. Every child in every school should be introduced to the eDebates registry, just as they are introduced to the national anthem. This will bring immense change in the culture of democratic participation. It is enough even if half or one-third of the children catch on to the eDebates. If one out of two or three people refer to eDabates registry in their regular conversations, the others would come to know about it automatically.

101. We recommend that the eDebates are is implemented in a phased manner, just as eElections. eDebates should 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 then finally at the center.

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102. India may not be the pioneer in digital technology. But it definitely is, in putting digital technology into the service of people. The UPI system and the Aadhaar Card system, implemented by India, are the envy of the entire world today. We proved ourselves to be the leaders in using digital technology. Why not do the same with eDebates and eElections?