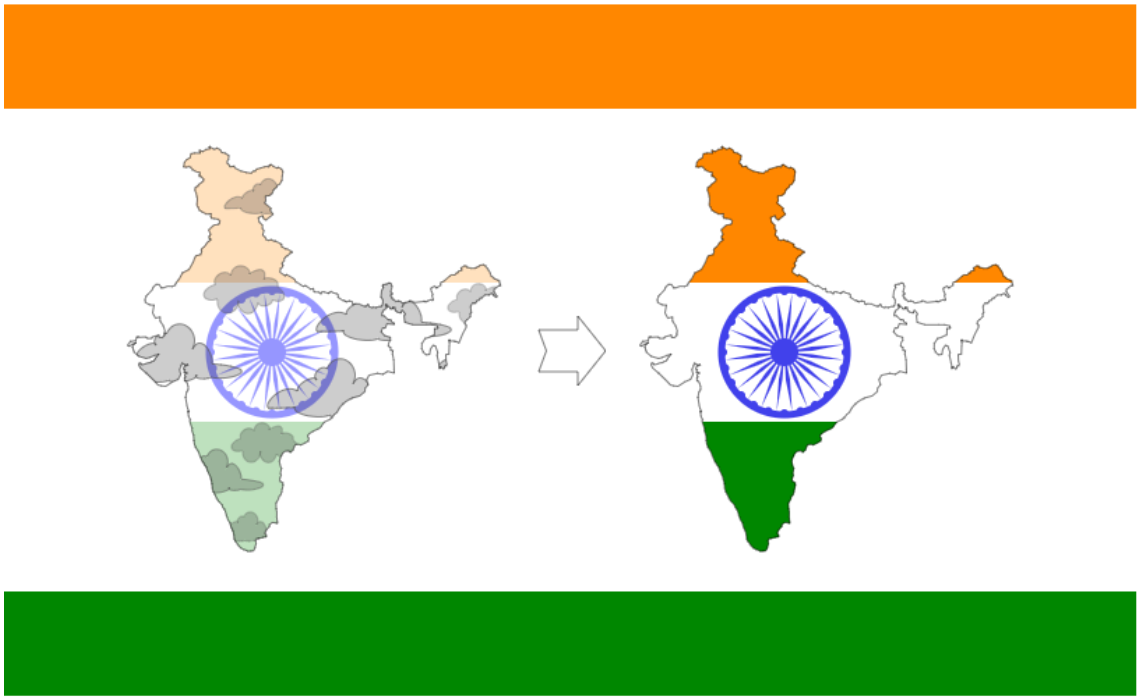
EPIC Reforms

Electoral, Political, Institutional and Constitutional Reforms.



For Cleaner Politics, Better Governance,
Broad-based Representation
And Accelerated Development.

Thinking Beyond FPTP and PR,
Parliamentary, and Presidential Systems.

Introduction

It is easy to slide into cynicism, to blame the attitude and behavior of leaders and voters for our out-of-control political system, or simply go with the flow—compromising our own ethics and using back doors out of sheer exhaustion.

But history, fortunately, offers hope and inspiration, reminding us of a simple but powerful truth: it is the system, not the people, that determines outcomes.

The people of China were the same before 1978 and after 1978; yet a change in the system set the country on a completely different trajectory. The people of India were the same before and after 1991; yet a bold set of economic reforms unleashed our entrepreneurial energy and changed the nation forever.

We can achieve a similar transformation in politics and governance by adopting better systems.

In the sections that follow, we will examine the underlying issues, explore structural flaws, and consider a set of systemic innovations:

- Adaptive Political System (APS) for state and national elections
- Inculot Model for local body elections
- Varishth Parishad to safeguard the autonomy of constitutional offices

These innovations are world firsts, like UPI. India, the world's largest pluralistic democracy, with regular elections and peaceful transfers of power despite immense complexity, already holds the world's imagination. It is time we build on that foundation and take the lead from here—helping ourselves, and setting an example for the world to follow.

In addition, we will also examine:

- Strengthening the Preamble with a clearer sense of national mission and collective purpose
- Establishing a clean separation of powers among the three branches of government

With that context in place, let us begin the discussion.

Part I

Adaptive Political System For National And State Legislatures

The Issues

Today, corruption and nepotism have seeped deep into politics and governance, undermining institutions and slowing national progress. Those who are supposed to keep corruption and nepotism in check are often the offenders themselves. Divisive rhetoric and polarizing policies are poisoning society. Those who are supposed to unite the nation and maintain social peace themselves inflame sectarian passions, pitting people against one another, for mere political gains.

The system, which is supposed to draw the best political and leadership talent into positions of power, has itself been keeping them out, however unwittingly. Principled leaders cannot break into politics because their fair campaigning methods are no match for the power of money and muscle that dominates political campaigns. Visionary leaders cannot enter the Lok Sabha without local clout, nor can they enter the Rajya Sabha without political clout. Leaders from underprivileged sections of society find it nearly impossible to rise to positions of power on their own merit, except as proxies of the rich and powerful who dominate the system.

That the executive is answerable to the legislature is true only in theory. In practice, the ruling party in the legislature does not hold the executive accountable because they belong to the same party, while the opposition cannot, lacking the numbers. Partisan debates and voting prevail over issue-based debates and merit-based legislation in the legislatures. Chronic tension between the executive, the judiciary, and the other independent offices of government, and between the Centre and the states, turns governance into a rough ride.

People want government jobs while shunning government schools. With failing education, our demographic dividend risks becoming a demographic burden very soon. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Many, up and down the socioeconomic spectrum, are ready to emigrate to other countries at the first opportunity. Even modest goals, such as clean public spaces and water bodies, remain elusive.

Structural Problems

These outcomes are not random. They are the direct result of structural issues in the current system, which is centered on three key constructs: constituencies, first-past-the-post elections, and political parties.

Constituencies divide communities across the nation and the states into small fragments, preventing them from electing their own leaders and securing proper representation. They create mixed electorates that naturally favor the rich and the powerful. Other sections of society rarely see their own leaders in positions of power.

Constituencies also reduce elections to the national and state legislatures to local contests. Local strongmen fill these bodies regardless of whether they possess the vision, outlook, or

appeal required to serve at those levels. India's progress in many sectors since independence has been slower than it could have been because of the lack of consistent and competent leadership at the top.

FPTP turns elections into fierce contests. Fair methods give way to foul tactics. Raising and distributing funds before elections, recovering those expenses many times over afterward, and returning favors once in power have become the norm, breeding corruption and unholy alliances. The problem assumes Himalayan proportions at the party level. Leaders with principles are often driven out before they can even enter the system. Voters are left choosing between two "evils."

Electing political parties amounts to outsourcing the governance of the nation and the states to private entities that prioritize their own survival over good governance. They offer a wholesale deal. We must accept bad local leaders for the sake of a good leader at the top, or a bad leader at the top for the sake of good local candidates; bad ideologies for the sake of good leaders, and bad leaders for the sake of good ideologies. Once elected, we have no meaningful control over what they do for the next five years.

Political parties have all but monopolized the path to power. It is nearly impossible for an aspiring leader to rise without joining one, surrendering independence, and toeing the party line. Because parties themselves lack internal democracy, building and sustaining party clout becomes essential for political success—and often even for political survival. Today, power is 70% politics and 30% leadership.

A party with 300 legislators does not bring 300 minds to generate ideas and 300 pairs of eyes to scrutinize issues; it functions instead as one mouth and 299 echoes. The result is a tremendous waste of the nation's political talent. What meaningful outcomes can be expected from parties that structurally stifle talent?

Party rivalries often descend into acrimony that spills onto the floor of the legislatures. Opposition parties treat it as their solemn obligation to oppose everything the government proposes, regardless of merit. The ruling party, meanwhile, uses enforcement agencies to pressure opposition leaders into submission, just as it does its own in other ways.

The Constitution (Articles 75(3) and 164(2)) makes the executive answerable to the legislatures. But the prevailing party culture undermines this crucial safeguard. Members of the ruling party seldom hold the executive accountable because it belongs to their own party, while opposition members cannot do so because they lack the numbers.

Party culture also suppresses plurality of opinion. Party-line voting reduces legislative debates to a farce and voting itself to a mere formality. Under powerful party supremos who become executive heads, cabinet deliberations and approvals often become little more than rituals.

At a broader level, even majority rule—a foundational democratic principle—is compromised under this Constituency–FPTP–Party Raj. Winning candidates and parties typically secure only around 35 percent of the electorate's vote. The remaining 65 percent—a clear majority—must accept leaders and parties they did not support and may even have voted against. Repeated across the country, this produces what is effectively perpetual minority rule, a reality that even many analysts fail to highlight. Lacking genuine broad-based support, governments often hesitate to propose or enforce bold policies.

The Solution

In 1991, we turned things around in the economic sphere by giving up the "License Raj." Entrepreneurship was unleashed, and consumer choice expanded dramatically. From waiting in line for a single Bajaj Chetak or Royal Enfield, we moved to having dozens of makes and models to choose from. From one or two manufacturers monopolizing the market, we moved to dozens of entrepreneurs innovating and competing.

To bring about a similarly dramatic transformation in politics, we must do the same with the current Constituency–FPTP–Party Raj: dismantle it. In its place, we propose a new, forward-looking system called the **Adaptive Political System (APS)**, designed to adapt to changing issues, shifting demographics, and emerging sectors and fields. No one can foresee the future, but we can prepare for it by building adaptability into our political system.

APS is built around two fundamental reforms: ***Delocalization*** and ***Pluralization*** of leadership and representation. Delocalization removes existing constituency boundaries, creating an open political space where leaders and voters can find one another and connect. Pluralization introduces a new democratic construct with enormous transformative potential—perhaps a first in the history of democracy—by enabling voters to elect multiple leaders to represent their diverse interests.

The blueprint of APS is simple and straightforward:

1. Every ballot across the nation (or state, in state elections) is identical, listing all candidates contesting from across the nation (or state).
2. Every voter is given multiple votes (twelve, in our proposal), which they may distribute among one, two, three, four or more leaders in any proportion.
3. Candidates are ranked by the total votes they receive, and the top 543 are elected to the Lok Sabha, with corresponding numbers elected to the Vidhan Sabhas in state elections.
4. On the floor of the legislatures, each elected member's voting power is proportional to the number of votes they receive from the electorate. We call this Proportional Voting Power (PVP).

In place of today's Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), APS uses a new class of voting machines called Advanced Voting Machines (AVMs) to enable voters to distribute multiple votes among multiple candidates. Their design and operation are explained in detail later.

The Transformation

APS, through Delocalization, unleashes dormant political leadership just as the 1991 reforms unleashed dormant entrepreneurship. It brings the dynamic nature of the business world into politics. Just as anyone from anywhere in the country can start a business that serves specific socioeconomic segments or the general population, any political leader—passionate about the development of their community, a cause, or a field that people across communities care about—can attract voters from across the nation (or state) and build a pan-India (or statewide) voter base. Aspiring leaders no longer need to join a political party, surrender independence, or toe a party line simply to get elected.

Voters from diverse communities across the nation (or state, in state elections), freed from the confines of constituencies, can come together to elect leaders of their choice. Various caste

groups under SC, ST, and other classifications such as BC, OBC, and EBC, as well as communities defined by religious Sampradayas and denominations, could elect leaders of their own without the need for reserved constituencies or a caste-based census.

Not only traditional occupational groups such as weavers, potters, dhobis, and fishermen, but also newer groups such as transportation workers, migrant laborers, and media professionals can elect leaders who represent them. In fact, any group with shared aspirations or concerns—such as sports enthusiasts or environmental activists—can send leaders of their own into positions of power.

Moreover, people do not care only about the advancement of their community, but also about their profession and broader public concerns such as corruption, sanitation, pollution, and national development. Pluralization enables voters to identify and elect multiple leaders they trust to address the multiple concerns.

Under APS, a woman from an agricultural family can elect one leader focused on farmers' issues, another on women's empowerment, another from her community, and yet another focused on local infrastructure such as sanitation or transport. Similarly, a teacher from a Dalit community who is also Divyang can distribute votes among leaders dedicated to Dalit upliftment, education, and disability-related concerns.

Voters and leaders can bond through shared interests and concerns, developing long-term, enduring relationships under APS. No reasonably performing leader has to fear sudden loss of power or falling out of the "top 543" list in the next election. Likewise, voters do not have to worry about their preferred leaders losing power due to shifting political winds or party fortunes. These enduring relationships allow both sides to focus on long-term solutions. Votes would no longer be traded for inducements or appeasements, and campaign expenses would fall significantly, creating a more level playing field.

With Delocalization, leaders with national-level vision would be elected to the Lok Sabha, and those with state-level vision to the Vidhan Sabhas, bringing the appropriate level of expertise and perspective to each body, while leaving local governance to leaders focused on local development. Turf wars over local dominance would diminish. MPs and MLAs would no longer undermine the statutory powers of local bodies or interfere in their functioning through party influence.

With Pluralization, voters would gradually move away from habitually or reflexively supporting the same leader or party regardless of performance. Instead, they would become accustomed to objectively evaluating and supporting the best leaders—even across multiple parties—based on who best serves their interests. That is precisely how democracy is meant to function. Democracy is supposed to weaken blind loyalties and fanaticism, yet the party system often abets them. By reducing voter choice to just two or three rigid alternatives, it forces an either-or decision that inevitably polarizes the electorate. By restoring genuine choice to voters, APS serves as an antidote to this toxic tendency.

With Delocalization, political parties themselves may gradually disappear, as leaders are able to reach voters directly and build independent support bases. With them would gradually disappear much of today's divisive rhetoric, vote-bank politics, and partisan polarization.

The division between "treasury benches" and "opposition benches" in legislatures would also disappear. Legislatures would function instead as "leadership councils" with representation

from every section of society. Being independent, with no obligation or fealty to a party, legislators would be able to elect broadly acceptable leaders—statesmen and stateswomen in the mold of Atal Bihari Vajpayee or P. V. Narasimha Rao—as heads of government.

APS gives real force to Articles 75(3) and 164(2) of the Constitution. Legislators, backed by their own voter bases, would be able to hold the executive accountable without fear or favor. Furthermore, each of them—dedicated to specific causes, communities, or fields—would be able to closely scrutinize the executive departments and institutions relevant to their areas of focus.

Elected members could use the "Private Member Bill" provision to sponsor legislation related to the communities, causes, or fields they represent. All concerns of the people—major or minor, affecting small or large sections of the population—would receive attention in the legislature. Leaders, as the true art of politics demands, would only need to convince voters of their vision before the election and their fellow legislators afterward to make it a reality, instead of wasting their energy on political posturing.

Under APS, all concerns of people, major and minor, across communities would find representation, as at least one leader would be attentive to each issue and capable of introducing relevant legislation.

Bills that do not affect other causes, communities, or fields would likely pass unanimously. Bills that do—such as infrastructure projects affecting the environment—would require collaboration among the relevant representatives. The collaboration would be cordial, as none of the involved representatives can afford to alienate the voters they share.

Contentions of this kind would no longer become partisan flashpoints, as they often do under the current system, where legislative and public debate is divided along party lines. Instead, under APS, discussions would be confined to the relevant members, while others would remain neutral and evaluate proposals and objections objectively.

Because of Proportional Voting Power (PVP), some members would naturally hold greater voting strength in the legislature than others. While one might wonder whether members with higher PVP could dominate the house, the math itself provides a check: the combined PVP of the second- and third-ranked legislators would often match or exceed that of the single most powerful member, acting as a built-in counterweight.

The biggest benefit of APS is that it empowers citizens who are vexed with corruption, criminality, and nepotism to send principled leaders into the legislatures to deal with these vices decisively. In fact, almost every voter can be expected to give one or two votes specifically to leaders known for absolute integrity and the strict enforcement of law. Imagine how dramatically the landscape would transform if there were a hundred, or even fifty, T. N. Seshans in power!

APS also addresses one of the most contentious issues of our time: delimitation. States that successfully controlled population growth would have less representation in the Lok Sabha relative to states that did not. This is not only a source of resentment but also fundamentally unfair. APS renders the entire debate—and indeed the issue itself—largely moot. Under APS, aspirants to the Lok Sabha would build pan-India voter bases spanning states with both high and low population growth. Lok Sabha members would no longer belong to any single state.

Under APS, the Lok Sabha would truly become a House of the People—or, more accurately, a House of the People's Leaders: a **Lok Nayak Sabha**. Meanwhile, the Rajya Sabha would continue as the **Rajya Pratinidhi Sabha**, representing the distinct interests of the states. Indeed, it would be well worth officially renaming both Houses to reflect these constitutional roles more faithfully.

It is also worth considering the abolition of nominated seats in the Rajya Sabha, while increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha by the same number. APS already enables people interested in fields such as the arts, sports, science, and culture to elect eminent personalities from those fields directly. A similar reform could be adopted in states with bicameral legislatures.

Likewise, APS also eliminates the need for separate constituencies for graduates and teachers in the states. Both groups, like all others, would be fully capable of electing leaders of their own. Their reserved seats in the Vidhan Parishads could therefore be abolished, with a corresponding increase in the strength of the Vidhan Sabhas.

The ultimate payoff of APS is continuity and stability in governance. Under the current system, uncertainty every five years over which party will come to power—and whether existing policies will continue—discourages long-term investment and weakens economic growth. Under APS, no reasonably performing leader would fall off the "top 543" list. Consequently, the composition of the legislatures would remain largely stable from one election to the next. Governments would therefore be less prone to abrupt policy reversals, the discontinuation of successful programs, or the abandonment of projects midway through implementation.

Elections under APS would simply become opportunities to replace underperforming leaders with more promising ones, rather than high-stakes contests for political parties and recurring sources of uncertainty for citizens, businesses, and the nation.

The Implementation

To enable voters to distribute votes among multiple leaders from thousands of candidates on the ballot, APS draws inspiration from e-commerce platforms, which provide an intuitive experience for users in quickly finding the two or three products they need from thousands of options. However, voting requires a far simpler and more foolproof experience for the average voter. We achieve this by replacing election symbols with **Leader Cards**, and EVMs with **AVMs (Advanced Voting Machines)**.



Instead of election symbols, the Election Commission of India (ECI), under APS, would assign each candidate a unique Leader Identification Number (LIN). Candidates would then design their own Leader Cards (similar to visiting cards), displaying essential details such as

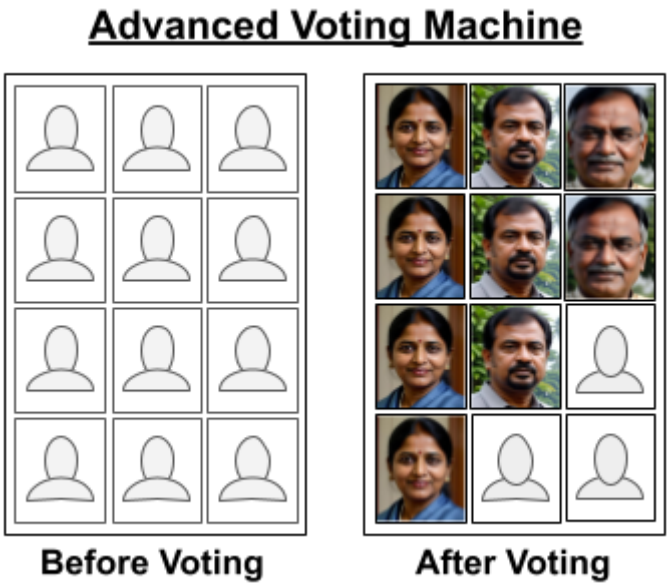
photograph, name, date of birth, LIN, party affiliation (if any), and a QR code, as shown in the sample.

Leaders would distribute these cards physically at public meetings and events, through volunteers, and digitally via websites and social media.

Voters could also obtain printed copies free of cost at local e-Seva centers, download them online, or request delivery by sending an SMS or WhatsApp message to the candidate or the ECI in the weeks and months leading up to election day.

On polling day, voters would carry their Leader Cards along with their voter ID to the booth. The AVM would feature a touchscreen with twelve empty slots arranged in a 3×4 grid, each slot representing one vote. A voter would select a slot, scan the QR code on a Leader Card, and instantly see the candidate's photograph displayed as confirmation. Voters would repeat this process until all votes are allocated. Mistakes could be corrected by reselecting a slot and rescanning the intended Leader Card.

The image here shows a voter allocating four votes to one leader, three to another, and two to a third, while leaving three votes uncast—a valid choice.



To ensure familiarity with AVMs, polling stations would provide dummy machines for practice, and mobile applications would allow voters to simulate the process in advance. Dummy AVMs could also be installed at e-Seva centers and other public locations. Tech-savvy family members, volunteers, and election workers could assist those less familiar with the system, ensuring accessibility across all age groups and backgrounds.

The ECI and others could create instructional videos explaining the AVM-based voting process and post them on social media. Television channels could also broadcast these videos as a public service, while increasing viewer engagement. The same content could be displayed in public spaces such as railway stations and bus stations. Cinema halls, restaurants, and other establishments could also play these videos on their digital displays to inform and engage their customers.

AVMs would also include an interface tailored for mobile-savvy younger voters, closer in experience to e-commerce platforms, where candidates can be searched by name, LIN, or phone number, and votes cast directly.

Delocalized Voting

Since AVMs would be identical across the country or state—each containing the full list of candidates—APS enables delocalized voting. ECI can let voters vote at any polling station in the nation (or state in state elections) using voter authentication systems already developed for Remote Voting Machines (RVMs).

This would significantly benefit migrant workers, nomadic communities, and others living away from their primary residence for work or other purposes. Even voters who are in their native place could choose to cast their ballots at a polling station a few kilometers away from home to avoid potential pressure or influence from local political actors and prying eyes.

Part II

Inculot Model for Local Bodies

APS is designed to improve the political and governance structure at the national and state levels. Politics and governance at local bodies too need improvement to broaden representation and accessibility to power for all communities. For this, we propose a new electoral model called the Inculot Model. “Inculot” is a coined term combining the words *incumbent* and *lottery*.

Under the Inculot Model, incumbents would not secure re-election merely by obtaining the highest number of votes—a feat incumbents could achieve by fragmenting the opposition. Hence we impose an additional condition under this model, that they must secure a higher overall vote percentage than they did in the previous election, proving that the public truly wants them back. If the incumbent fails to meet this benchmark, they are disqualified, and a new leader is selected by lottery from among the top three remaining candidates.

The underlying philosophy of this model is straightforward: Chance will favor individuals from all communities with leadership qualities, and demonstrated performance assures reelection. This model addresses several persistent problems in local politics.

First, candidates would no longer need to chase every marginal vote through excessive spending, coercion, or aggressive tactics, since the final outcome among the leading challengers would depend on the lottery. For the same reason, vote-bank politics and polarization lose their leverage and appeal.

Second, the influence of money, muscle power, inherited privilege, and entrenched social dominance would be significantly reduced, since any candidate capable of securing enough support to reach the top three would stand an equal chance of victory.

Third, anyone seeking to maintain influence or continued access to power would have greater incentive to maintain good relationships with all potential contenders, rather than attempting to dominate them through bitter electoral conflict. This could significantly improve the overall political atmosphere, which often damages the social fabric of rural communities.

Fourth, leaders from smaller or less dominant communities would stand on far more equal footing with candidates backed by numerically or socially dominant groups. Likewise, capable but modest individuals would stand a realistic chance alongside more aggressive or politically entrenched contenders.

Fifth, contestants would be spared the lasting stigma of outright electoral defeat—an especially important consideration in close-knit local communities. This could reduce the tendency of candidates to gamble away personal fortunes, intensify social hostilities, or resort to intimidation and brute force merely to avoid humiliation at the polls.

Part III

Constitutional and Institutional Reforms for Addressing Broader Issues

This section is under construction.
The full version will be available soon, at
reformbharat.org/epic-reforms.

This section will discuss deeper issues beyond APS and Inculot:

- Mechanisms to preserve the independence of offices such as the President of India and the Chief Election Commissioner, ensuring that they remain genuinely powerful and apolitical. We need a clearer separation between the legislature and the executive.
- A steward of the Constitution—an individual or institution dedicated to preserving the spirit of the Constitution, continually upgrading it to fill gaps as and when they are discovered, and, when necessary, acting as a trusted arbiter in disputes among the branches of government.
- A symbolic figure, custodian, and voice for the soul of the nation—larger and more enduring than the political system or the machinery of governance.
- Reframing the Preamble of our Constitution to offer a more inspiring and motivating mission for the nation—one that helps us overcome the challenges we face today and seize the opportunities that tomorrow presents, rather than merely highlighting the basics. Ensuring the basics without setting a higher goal and purpose is like ploughing a farm without sowing seeds for a crop, allowing weeds to take over—which is precisely what the country has been suffering from since independence.