

**VOTE INDIA**  
IT IS TIME.

## **The National Campaign for Political Reforms - Why ?**

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The purpose of a government is to make it easy for  
people to do good and difficult to do evil

**William Gladstone**

# Democratic Reform Agenda in 2003 – 04

## Major Steps Forward

- Mandatory disclosure of candidate details
- Post office for voter registration accepted in principle
- Anti-defection law
- Limiting the size of council of ministers
- Changes in Rajya Sabha election
- Progressive law on political funding

# Is This Enough?

- Some of the reforms are in the right direction, but are not enough
- Systemic deficiencies in all spheres of governance are left untouched
- If not addressed immediately, they will undermine the unity of the nation and severely cripple the economic growth

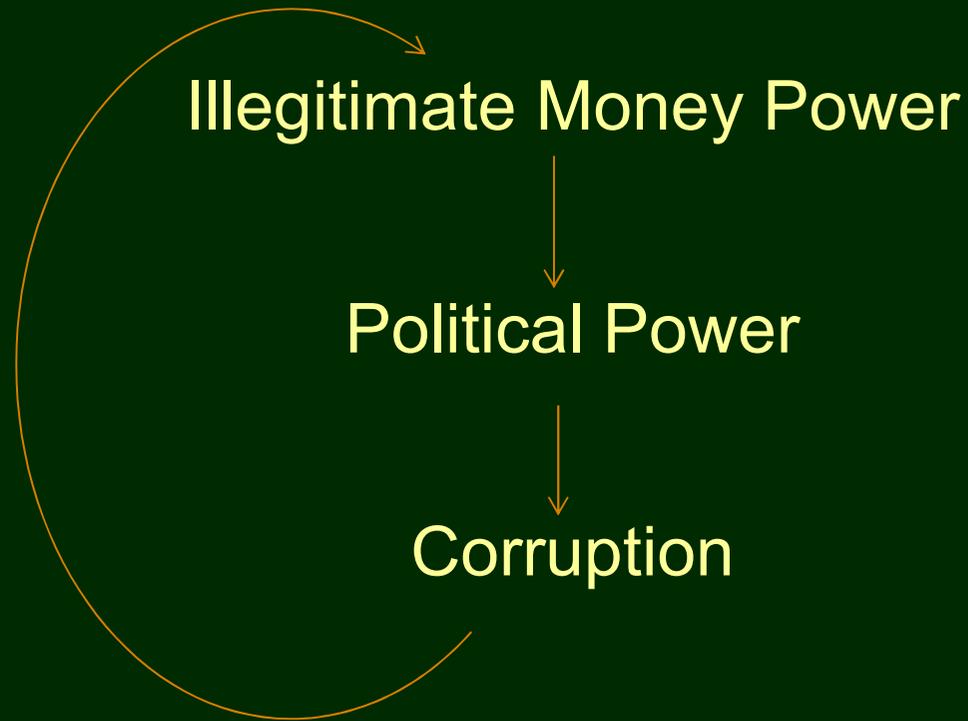
# Shifting Nature of Corruption

- Inexhaustible appetite for illegitimate funds
  - Telgi stamp scam
  - Satyendra Kumar Dubey's murder
  - CAT exam papers' leak
  - Warrant against President Kalam and Chief Justice VN Khare
  - CGHS scam

# System Caught in a Vicious Cycle

- Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds
- Most expenditure incurred for vote buying
- Rise of political fiefdoms
- Vote delinked from public good
- Taxes delinked from services
- Political survival and honesty incompatible
- Social divisions exacerbated
- Competence and integrity excluded
- National parties marginalized

# Inexhaustible Demand for Illegitimate Funds



# Most Expenditure is to Buy Votes

Voter seeks money & liquor

More expenditure

Large spending may or may not lead to success, but failure to spend almost certainly leads to defeat

Greater corruption

Greater cynicism

Voter seeks more money

# Rise of Political Fiefdoms

Need for money, caste and local clout



Parties are helpless in choice of candidates



Rise of political fiefdoms



Absence of internal party democracy



Competition among a few families in most constituencies



Oligopoly at constituency level

# Vote Delinked from Public Good

Centralized polity



No matter who wins, people lose



Vote does not promote public good



Voter maximizes short term gain



Money, liquor, caste, emotion and anger become dominant



Vicious cycle is perpetuated

# Political Survival and Honesty not Compatible

Parliamentary executive

Government survival depends on legislative majority

Legislators spend a lot of money to get elected

They need multiple returns to sustain the system

Corruption and misgovernance endemic

Government has to yield to legislators' demands

Corruption is perpetuated even if government has the will

Honesty not compatible with survival

# Social Divisions Exacerbated

FPTP

↓  
Scattered minorities unrepresented

↓  
Marginalization and ghettoization

↓  
Strategic voting and vote bank politics

↓  
Obscurantists become interlocutors drowning voices of reason and modernity

↓  
Politicians pander to fundamentalists

↓  
Counter mobilization of other groups based on primordial loyalties

↓  
Communal polarization and strife



# Competence and Integrity Excluded

FPTP



Need for money power and caste clout



Honest and decent elements have little chance



Bad public policy and incompetent governance



Deepening crisis

# Oligopoly of Parties

FPTP

↓  
Only a high threshold of voting ensures victory

↓  
Parties with 35 - 50% vote, or social groups with local dominance  
get elected

↓  
Significant but scattered support pays no electoral dividends

↓  
Reform groups below threshold have no chance of winning

↓  
Voters prefer other “winnable” parties

↓  
Marginalization of reformers and oligopoly of parties

↓  
Status quo continues

# Representational Distortions

FPTP



Women & deprived sections not represented



Reservation with rotation is arbitrary and leads to proxies



Perpetuation of dominance of traditional groups



Representational illegitimacy

# Key Reforms

<b>Electoral process</b>	Funding
	Criminalization
	Voting irregularities
<b>Electoral system</b>	Proportional Representation
	Direct election of head of government at state level
	Regulation of Political Parties
<b>Decentralization</b>	Local Governments
<b>Rule of Law</b>	Judicial Reforms
<b>Accountability</b>	Right to Information
	Citizens' Charters
	Independent Crime Investigation

# Proportional Representation

- Competent and honest persons can be inducted into the cabinet
- Incentive to buy votes in a constituency will disappear
- Interests of local candidate will run counter to party's need to maximise overall vote
- Will give representation to small parties, scattered minorities and legitimate reform groups, forcing change
- Voting will be based on party image and agenda, not local expenditure
- Ignored sections will find voice and get representation
- A party's image and platform, not local clout and money power, matter
- Genuine competition among political groups and ideas

# Proportional Representation

- Fair reconciliation of social and political groups
- No 'wasted' votes
- Disenchanted sections will find 'voice'
- Political fiefdoms will disappear
- Political process will get into a virtuous cycle

# Concerns & Solutions

## Proportional Representation

### Problem

- Political fragmentation in a plural society
- Party bosses will be autocratic
- Link between voters and legislator is snapped

### Solution

- Reasonable threshold level
- Democratization of parties and choice of candidates
- Mixed system combining Proportional Representation with FPTP

# Direct Election of Head of Government in States

- No one can buy a whole state electorate
- Image and agenda of leader will be decisive
- With separation of powers, there will be no incentive to overspend for legislative office
- At state level, there is no fear of authoritarianism as Union government, Election Commission, Supreme Court etc., will act as checks
- Once survival of the executive for a fixed term is guaranteed, there will be no need for compromise and corruption

# Political Party Regulation

## Membership

- Free, open and voluntary
- Uniform, objective conditions / no restrictions
- No arbitrary expulsion
- Due process for disciplinary action

## Leadership choice

- By regular, periodic, free and secret ballot
- Opportunity to challenge leadership through formal procedures with no risk of being penalized

## Choice of candidates

- By members at constituency level through secret ballot
- By elected delegates through secret ballot
- Central leadership cannot nominate candidates

# A Suggested Model for India

- Mixed, compensatory Proportional Representation
- A threshold of, say 10% vote in a major state for Proportional Representation
- State as a unit for representation

# What will PR Address

- Illegitimate money power in elections (supply side)
- Voter seeks money and liquor (supply side)
- Political fiefdoms (marginal vote not critical)
- Representational distortions (Vote share, not local concentration, matters. No wasted votes)
- Competence and integrity excluded (decent candidates can win in list system)
- National parties/ reform parties marginalised (vote share gives representation – not constituency victory alone)

# What will Direct Election Address

- Illegitimate money power and corruption (supply side)
- Voter seeking money (demand side)
- Rise of political fiefdoms (Legislative office and local clout have no bearing on executive)
- Vote delinked from public good (executive unencumbered)
- Deepening fiscal crisis (free from vested interests)
- Political dynasties (term limitations)
- Honesty and survival incompatible (survival depends on people's mandate alone)
- Competence and integrity excluded (State wide appeal matters. Cabinet from outside legislature)

# What will Party Democracy Address

- Rise of political fiefdoms: Members decide candidates
- Honest and competent candidates will be able to win nomination
- Political dynasties will vanish
- Political process will gain legitimacy

# How will Direct Election, PR and Party Democracy Go Together

- PR leads to fragmented legislature. Direct election will ensure stable executive independent of legislature
- PR has the propensity to make party leadership more powerful. Party democracy gives power to members preventing arbitrary choices
- Pure PR leads to small, caste-based parties. Reasonable vote threshold requirements will eliminate the danger

# What will the System Look Like?

- Citizens have two votes - one for a candidate in the constituency; one for the party of their choice
- Party vote determines overall seat share. The party gets seats allocated from the list (Its seat share less seats elected in constituencies)
- In states, citizens directly elect the head of state, who forms a cabinet of his choice, and has a fixed term. There will be term limitations
- Citizens vote for a party based on its image, platform and the slate of candidates presented in the local electoral district (say, 5-10 seats)

# How Would This Reform Work in Real Life?

## Goa

- PR would have ensured automatic filling of vacancies on resignation
- Direct election of CM would have prevented fall of any government once elected

## Jharkhand

- PR would have given space for reform-minded, honest candidates and parties
- Independents would have been far less relevant
- Direct election would have ensured stable and honest government

# How Would This Reform Work in Real Life?

## Bihar

- PR would have given better choices to people – criminals of one party would not be substituted by criminals of another party
- The constituency for clean politics and competent governance would have been harnessed effectively
- Direct election would have ensured clean and stable government

## Haryana

- Direct election would have prevented destabilization efforts after the mandate.
- Democratic choice of candidates would have given greater cohesion to parties and enhanced legitimacy

# Time for a Grand Bargain

- PR would enhance the political viability of national parties
  - Only three major states now witness a direct competition for power between Congress and BJP
  - Out of the six largest states in India, in only one state
    - AP – the two major national parties are leading contenders for power
  - PR with a 10 % vote threshold will make national parties relevant everywhere

# Time for a Grand Bargain

- Direct election would protect the interests of regional parties
  - Locally dominant party can be sure of forming a stable government without depending on other parties
  - Nominated governors will not be able to undermine people's mandate
  - Fear of dismissal or dissent will not undermine the quality of governance
- PR + Direct elections in states is a viable and effective combination
- It is a win-win situation for all parties



- **VOTEINDIA** is a non-partisan people's movement for political reforms
- **VOTEINDIA** provides the necessary platform for citizen participation
- **VOTEINDIA** Campaign is concerned about changing the rules of the game and not about change of players

# Who are Behind VOTEINDIA?

The initial constituents of the National Core Group include well-known civil society initiatives such as

- Lok Satta (Andhra Pradesh)
- Janaagraha (Bangalore, Karnataka)
- Catalyst Trust (Chennai, Tamil Nadu)
- Concerned Citizens (Kolkata)
- Lok Satta chapters in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- Leading citizens from other states

# Where is it Being Launched?

In the initial phase the Campaign will be rooted in ten cities and surrounding states

- Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Lucknow, Patna, and Jaipur

In the later phases the campaign will be expanded across the whole country

# What are the Key Goals?

- Change from FPTP to PR system of elections
  - to ensure fairer representation
  - better choice of candidates, and
  - prevent fragmentation of our polity
- Direct election of the heads of government (at the state level) by the people, so that such a government
  - will be accountable to the people
  - will not be under pressure from MLAs for survival
  - has in-built checks to prevent abuse of office
- Democratic functioning of political parties with member-control and internal elections

# Are these Goals Sufficient?

- No. But political reform is at the heart of the governance reform
- Other necessary reforms
  - Decentralization of power
  - Judicial reforms
  - Accountability measures like right to information

# What will be the Activities?

- The campaign will mobilize public support through various activities and campaigns aimed at specific reforms, greater accountability and better democracy.
- Public education and people mobilization.
- Local and region-specific campaigns involving extensive citizen participation
  - for example, CIVIL, led by Janaagraha
- A national campaign towards citizen friendly reforms in Central Excise and Customs

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat ”

- *Sun Tzu*

