



Research Foundation for Governance: in India

Democracy Within and Without

Report on inner-party democracy in political parties

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

“All those who have meditated the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the power of their youth.”

- Aristotle

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● Democracy Within and Without

Contents

Foreword.....	4
Author's note.....	5
Executive summary.....	8
1. Introduction.....	10
2. What is Inner Party Democracy, and how does it work?.....	12
2.1 Why democracy matters.....	12
2.2 How Inner Party Democracy functions in practice.....	14
2.3 Open candidate and leader selection.....	18
2.4 Closed candidate and leader selection.....	21
3. Political parties in India today.....	24
3.1 Indian National Congress.....	25
3.2 Bhartiya Janata Party.....	31
3.3 Reality Check.....	35
4. Recommendations.....	39
4.1 Direct Leadership selection.....	39
4.2 Candidate selection with the power of Veto.....	41
4.3 Legal enforcement of reforms.....	43
4.4 Create Space for Debate and Dissent.....	45
4.5 Amend the Anti-Defection law.....	45
5. Conclusion.....	47
Works cited/Endnotes.....	49
List of abbreviations.....	54

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

Foreword

It is a matter of immense pride for me to write this introduction to the report on inner-party democracy in political parties of the Research Foundation for Governance: in India (RFGI).

RFGI has always believed in the potential of youth to change the negative connotations around words such as ‘politics’ and ‘governance’. However, after many interactions with people from different spheres we noticed that very often citizens are unaware of some of the simplest aspects of India's political processes. Particularly, there is a very limited awareness regarding functioning of political parties, which are primary vehicles for participation in any democracy. Because political parties are so important, it is imperative that citizens be informed about them. We have compiled this report on "Inner-Party Democracy" which describes how political parties function, the role and the right of the members, their appointments and the transparency within the parties.

There is still a long way to go for us. As Jawaharlal Nehru said on the eve of Indian independence:

“We have hard work ahead. There is no resting for any one of us till we redeem our pledge in full, till we make all the people of India what destiny intended them to be.”

However, at the RFGI, we believe that every endeavour has a start. Even though it might just be a drop in the vast ocean, that drop very often becomes an affirmative drop – with the power to change the

● Democracy Within and Without

entire ocean. It is to this power of *that drop* that we dedicate this report. Let it become the change it wishes to see!

I would like to end this forward by expressing sincere gratitude to those remarkable individuals who have constantly encouraged and supported RFGI.

Kanan Dhru

Founder & Managing Director, RFGI

Authors' Note

When I joined the project, I realized how difficult the task would be to make an attempt at breaking through the outer shells of political parties and getting an insider's perspective, especially for a foreigner to this great country. However, I found myself overwhelmed with input from all angles and sections of society. Everywhere we went, people seemed eager to inform us about the theory and practice of Indian politics. Everybody realized the importance of the issue we were working on.

In working on this project, I have gained an immense wealth of experience and knowledge about Indian society, politics and culture. I would like to thank all the people who have helped shaping this report to what it is today.

Ramiro A.E. Gomes Monteiro: *co-author & RFGI intern*

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

Working on "Democracy Within and Without" with RFGI has been an incredible experience. As a foreign student long fascinated by Indian politics and society, being able to study such a vitally important contemporary issue has been very exciting and very informative. I will return to Canada with a far better understanding of Indian politics and the broader role of political parties in a democracy.

More work on this topic is needed. Nonetheless I believe we have produced a thorough study of the central problems facing political parties in India. It is my sincere hope that this report can spur interest in further study and further conversation about how best to structure India's democracy, and I hope that our arguments convince many that reform must take place.

Joshua J.M. Stark: *co-author & RFGI intern*

*We would like to thank Arvind Giriraj, Prashant Mishra and Balashri Jalgar for their research support. A special thanks to Ms. Rosa van der Tas, Vibhav Verlekar, Kelly Dhru and Prof. William Nunes for their insights and critical analysis.

● Democracy Within and Without

Limitation

RFGI is a non-party, neutral organization. This report is not aimed at comparing parties or passing judgements on whether a political party is internally more democratic than any other, but rather tries to set up a benchmark for all stakeholders to move towards.

In this report, we are focusing on the two major parties of India: Indian National Congress (Congress) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The study focuses on the state of Gujarat, where the Foundation is based.

Methodology Adopted

The methodology adopted is primarily empirical as the team has visited the Regional Head Offices of the political parties and has interacted with members, office-bearers, student activists, high ranking officials and retired members for the purpose of this study. The team has also incorporated insights gained during interaction with relevant academicians and persons well-versed with functioning of the political parties.

The report is also analytical. We have tried to analyze the existing literature in this field and collected secondary data sources and information on the major outline parameters such as leadership and candidate selection while creating a hypothesis and project methodology underlining these points. Though our interviews were limited to Gujarat, Congress and the BJP we believe that our research and our conclusions have a broader relevance.

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

Executive Summary

Political parties can have internal decision making processes that are democratic or undemocratic. Members could be given a say or party elites could be given total power over choosing party leaders and choosing candidates for elections. Democratic processes within political parties are beneficial for many of the same reasons that democracy is beneficial within a state: it promotes accountability through elections, it allows members to have their views better represented and it encourages politicians to compete for access to power. Inner-party democracy (IPD) is practiced in a variety of ways around the world, providing many possible models for other countries to adopt.

Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party both are discussed in detail. Both have hierarchically structured internal decision making processes. Our research and interviews about the internal processes in political parties across India suggests that there are many problems, some of which could be addressed through use of IPD. During our research it became clear that it is difficult to remove party leaders, there is little discussion or consultation with ordinary members when setting the party agenda, young politicians find it difficult to climb the ranks and gain influence, and the influence of family connections remains powerful.

To help combat these issues, RFGI suggests several reforms. Party members should directly elect their leaders. This will encourage accountability and give members a larger voice within the party. Party members should also be able to influence candidate selection

● **Democracy Within and Without**

through use of a veto or 'no-confidence' vote. This will allow them to prevent irregularities of the nomination system while still enabling the party elites to make strategic decisions. Elected representatives should be able to dissent from their party openly, and parties should hold meetings more regularly and encourage open dialogue within the party. India should adopt laws that govern political parties to help give these reforms legal standing.

Democracy requires more than just institutions. It also requires that people use those institutions in good faith, and believe in them. It requires that individuals encourage substantial debate, allow for dissent, and seek compromise rather than misuse power. Nonetheless, democratic institutions are important because they enable such individuals to pursue changes. Democratizing India's political parties is an important step towards improving Indian politics as a whole.

1. Introduction

In an election voters have a choice. They can choose from a variety of candidates. Some from national political parties, some from more local political parties, and some who are independent. However, many important decisions are made without any voter input even before the elections begin. The candidates that will contest from each constituency have already been chosen and thus the choices that are available to voters on election day are already decided. Voters have a choice, but the limits of that choice are set without the voters' consent.

Who chooses which candidates contest elections? The political parties decide who will be on their ticket in a given constituency. Let us ask a further question: *who* in the party makes these decisions, and how are these decisions made?

There are various practices used by political parties the world-over. In some, party leaders make these decisions unilaterally. In others, decisions are made by a vote among party members, or even by a vote among the general public. In sum, these internal decisions can be made democratically or undemocratically.

The presence or absence of democracy within a party - or inner-party democracy - is the subject of this report. The most direct indicators of democracy within a party are the processes by which political parties make important decisions. For instance, candidate selection - which was discussed above - and leadership selection: the process by which a party chooses its leaders and office bearers,

● Democracy Within and Without

whether national, state, or local. However IPD also refers to more intangible aspects of democracy – open and substantial debate, free dissent, and respect for the views of others. Through our discussion of IPD, we address each of these components.

This report is important not just for academic interest, but due to the depressing state of the ground realities. The Indian political system is commonly perceived as corrupt and autocratic. Transparency International, an organization that measures perceptions of corruption across the world, ranks Indian corruption as 3.4 out of 10, where 0 is the most corrupt – roughly between China (3.6) and Albania (3.2).¹ According to a recent article in the *Washington Post*, one fourth of the 540 members of the Lok Sabha were facing criminal charges in 2008. These charges include embezzlement, human trafficking, rape and murder.² An unpublished report by Democracy Connect (2008) surveyed 74 office bearers of the youth wing of an unnamed major political party in India. They found a party structure rife with favouritism, casteism, preference for family dynasties, and violence. The majority of interviewees stated there was a need for inner-party democracy.

These problems can not be ameliorated through inner-party democracy alone. Nonetheless, real, substantial IPD is absolutely necessary for modern political parties. Not just to reduce corruption, but to bring the many benefits of democracy to political parties.

2. What is IPD, and how does it work?

2.1 Why Democracy Matters

Political parties are the primary vehicle for participation in a democracy.³ Political parties connect the public with government by organizing members, informing the public, and transforming society's demands into policy solutions.⁴ The vast majority of our Members of Parliaments and Prime Ministers were elected through their involvement in a political party, and it is these people who set policy and affect the future of the country. Furthermore, citizens often vote not just for the individual who is contesting but also for the party they represent. If we are concerned for our democracy as a whole, we must be concerned with the internal workings of political parties. One of the most important measures of the internal workings of a political party is how democratically it functions.

The general principles that underlie democracy and the benefits it provides to society also apply on a smaller scale to political parties. In the broadest sense, democracy allows citizens to influence their government. Periodic elections allow citizens to elect a government according to their own beliefs, and then to elect someone else if they believe that the previous government has been ineffective. This is called **participation** - democracy allows ordinary citizens to participate in the governance of their country.⁵ However in most democracies citizens are not given a choice on all policy matters - indeed, it would be impractical to ask every citizen for their opinion

● Democracy Within and Without

every time the government wanted to alter trade policy or change a law. Instead, citizens elect representatives who are tasked with advocating their interests to the national government. Thus to change a law or alter trade policy, a bill must be accepted by the majority of these representatives – the Lok Sabha, for instance. This is the second element of democracy – **representation**.⁶ This ensures that people's particular interests are looked after, and it ensures that the government can function legitimately without having to ask voters for their opinion on every decision. However, voters do not choose their representatives at random. Various candidates from different political parties compete for votes. This **competition** is the third element of democracy.⁷ It ensures that voters have a choice, and encourages politicians to better themselves in order to gain a larger share of the vote and win the election.

These benefits can also be gained within political parties. Just as participation in national elections allows citizens to hold their leaders accountable, democracy within a party allows members to hold their leaders accountable. Similarly, officeholders in political parties can represent the interests of the members who elected them, and competition for party leadership can bring in new ideas, challenge old ones, and encourage meaningful debate about party policy.

Lastly, IPD can be particularly important for certain constituencies which tend to consistently vote for a particular party. For instance, a particular constituency is always won by the **BJP** by a wide margin.

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

In such a constituency, the party that will control the seat is almost certain – the only thing left to decide is which candidate will be put forward by that party and claim the seat. Candidate selection is even more important in these cases because it is this process within the party that is effectively deciding which individual wins that constituency.⁸

2.2 How IPD functions in practice

The benefits of IPD must be evaluated within the context of its specific use. It is hazardous to generalize about the consequences of IPD because there is a multitude of ways in which it can be implemented. Unlike a state, where citizenship provides a broad standard for inclusion into any democratic process, political parties are voluntary organizations with fluid memberships. It is easy to join or leave a party, and different members have different levels of participation. Thus democracy within a political party can vary tremendously depending on how the electorate – the group of individuals who have a vote – is defined. Only paying members could be allowed to vote, or only members who have been in the party for a certain period of time, or only certain ranks within the party. A political party could go even further and open itself up by allowing the general public – whether they are party members or not – to influence party decisions.

Besides defining the electorate, the subject of the election must also be specified. Most often IPD is used for two processes: candidate

● Democracy Within and Without

selection and leadership selection. Candidate selection refers to the process used by a political party to decide which candidates will contest an election. Leadership selection is the process by which a political party chooses its leaders and office bearers. Party leaders are those within the party who wield significant power, such as national presidents or local leaders within a constituency.

Even these two processes allow for a great deal of variation. The electorate could be able to choose anyone as a candidate, or they could choose from only a small list of possible candidates selected by the party besides nomination. Similarly, leadership candidates could be restricted to allow only certain individuals to run for office.

Unsurprisingly, parties around the world have employed IPD in very different ways, and many continue to experiment with new methods.⁹ For example, an RFGI survey found that in the D66 party of the Netherlands, a member is able to request an ‘intermediate congress’ at any time to put forward a motion to sack any office bearer. This allows the membership to hold their officials accountable.¹⁰

In other cases, certain types of IPD are less useful and the party becomes more centralized. The Green Party in Germany found after several years of experience that only a handful of supporters ended up attending most ‘all-delegates meetings’ and has thus preferred to conduct its business through delegate conventions instead. And in many emerging economies a single person tends to

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

dominate political parties decision to the point where prevents any type of IPD. Sometimes internal elections become impossible to hold. The KMT in Taiwan tried unsuccessfully to organise elections to choose contesting candidates and ultimately had to provide for a significant role for the local party factions in decision-making of the party.

In some political parties, members are given a strong role and their opinions are taken seriously. In the Ecologists Green Party of Greece, for instance, those who disagree with the party's decision often voice their dissent publicly.¹⁰

Despite the importance of a legal framework for parties in some countries, in others democratic processes are followed in spite of no legal provisions expecting them to operate in a certain way. For instance, even though not mandated by law political parties in Argentina have consistently preferred conducting elections for candidate selection.

One of the central ways of measuring the degree of inclusiveness within parties is by determining who decides the policies and electoral promises of the party. Are these decisions taken by party elites or are all party-members consulted? At times, even though representative structures exist on paper, influential party leaders dominate decision-making. Some parties in the world have developed a “corporatist,” or group-based, style of internal representation, in which leaders of interested constituencies have

● Democracy Within and Without

privileged positions within the party. Delegates from these groups (such as church or trade union networks) sit in party councils and act on behalf of their supporters. Members of the represented groups are sometimes considered to be indirectly enrolled in the party as a result of such representation.¹¹ Examples of parties adopting this practice are Sweden's Social Democrats, the Austrian People's Party, and Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party, amongst others.

The Constitutions of the countries stipulate how political parties should manage themselves. Interestingly, except briefly in the 10th Schedule, there is no mention of political parties in the Constitution of India. Many developing countries such as Liberia, Nigeria and Nepal have used their Constitutions to micromanage party organisations and behaviours. In Syria, the Constitution stipulates that the only party in the country shall be Socialistic Bath Party. In Netherlands, Poland, Ivory Coast, Italy, Algeria and Senegal, the constitution ban parties which refer to use of force, foreign control or promote social biases.

The preceding examples describe a wide variety of uses of IPD. The following section focuses on a smaller number of them in order to demonstrate in detail how IPD can range from very open and inclusive to very closed and restricted. The American primary system for determining presidential candidates and the leadership selection process within Canadian political parties demonstrate open or inclusive examples of IPD. Leadership selection in the UK and

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

candidate selection in Norway demonstrate more closed or restricted systems of IPD.

2.3 Open candidate and leader selection

Systems of IPD that enable a large and diverse group of people to participate and that limit the power of party elites can be described as “open” systems. These party elites could be national leaders, powerful state leaders, members of parliament for that party, or high-ranking advisors and officials. As discussed above, candidate selection and leadership selection are the primary ways IPD is used within a party, and both of these can use open systems. It is important to note, however, that a political party can have an open candidate selection process alongside a restricted leadership selection, and vice versa. We will discuss the open systems together (and later, the restricted systems together) because they share certain features, not because they are necessarily found in the same party.

Open candidate selection might function like the primary system in the United States. In the US the two primary political parties (Republicans and Democrats) each decide on their presidential candidate through a series of elections within each state. The details are complex, but in general each state's citizens vote to decide which candidate should represent the Republicans, and which should represent the Democrats. In some states all citizens are allowed to vote for each party's candidate, in others only registered members of

● Democracy Within and Without

the Republican Party can vote for that party's candidate, and only registered members of the Democratic Party can vote for their candidate. After all the elections have been conducted, the candidates with the most number of votes represent their parties in the presidential election.¹² In essence, this is a very open system of candidate selection: voters are the primary force in determining candidates.

Selection of party leadership can also be done through an open democratic process. For instance, both the Liberal and Conservative parties of Canada select leaders according to a modified 'one member, one vote' system. In both parties, each constituency is afforded 100 points which are divided among the candidates depending on how members in that constituency vote. For example, if a constituency votes 60% for candidate A and 40% for candidate B, then candidate A gets 60 points and candidate B gets 40 points. The national leader of the party is the candidate who first achieves a majority of points across the entire country.¹³ This is an open system as well, because the votes of the general membership are what determine the leader of the party.

However, these open systems can have significant drawbacks. Open candidate selection, such as in the American case, can weaken the party. If voters are directly choosing candidates, the political party is no longer necessary as an intermediary between voter and candidate. The party is less able to remain cohesive in its vision and ideology, since candidates will be chosen purely on voters

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

preferences rather than to accord with party policy.¹⁴ This may appear to be more democratic and therefore more beneficial – parties are now more “in tune” with what the population desires. But in practice it is a problem, because the number of ideological options available to voters shrinks in size. If every party allows its' candidates to be chosen by the general population, then all candidates chosen will be roughly similar in ideology. For example if 60% of all voters favour candidates who support prohibition and are from a particular community, then voters will consistently elect such a candidate for any party. This is a problem for the 40% that oppose prohibition, since there is no longer a party that can resist the majority opinion and select candidates who represent the minority position.

Both these systems become problematic since they open up candidate selection and leadership selection to nearly anyone. Once again, this may seem at first a good thing for democracy, but in practice it can be detrimental because anyone can take part whether or not they have a sincere interest in leading the party or governing the nation. There have been instances of this occurring in the past. For example, in an American candidate selection process and a Canadian leadership selection process, individuals with no connection to the party or experience in government ran for a ticket in order to bring attention to one particular issue. In the 2000 Republican presidential primaries, a man named Gary Bauer ran on a single issue – abortion – in order to demonstrate the power of the anti-abortion lobby.¹⁵ In the Canadian Progressive-Conservative

● Democracy Within and Without

party leadership convention, a rural farmer – David Orchard – ran for party leadership with the sole aim of overturning the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).¹⁶ Both of these episodes attracted public derision and harmed the party's image. As Bauer and Orchard intended, the public focus shifted away from electing a good party leader to the spectacle of 'outsiders' crusading on a single issue and taking on the party establishment.

2.4 Closed candidate and leader selection

A closed or restricted IPD system is one in which the party elites retain considerable influence over internal elections, and the general membership has little influence.

Party leadership selection in the UK is one such 'restricted' system. Since 1997, the UK Conservative party has given its general membership the final vote between two candidates for party leadership. However, the two candidates are always selected by Conservative Members of Parliament (MPs), which allows leading party members to tightly control the leadership options available to general members.¹⁷ The other dominant party in the UK, the Labour party, uses a system whereby Labour MPs, constituency associations and affiliated unions all have a one-third vote for party leader.¹⁸ Both systems are notable in that they represent a half-way point between absolute control and open leadership selection. In the Conservative party model, the party elites still have the ability to determine the two potential candidates, and in the Labour party

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

model, party elites still have a one-third vote for party leadership.

Candidate selection methods can be similarly restricted. In Norway, for example, voters are presented with a list of candidates from each party alongside the ballot.¹⁹ The list shows the order in which the party would prefer to see candidates elected, and every voter is allowed to make alterations to this list by crossing off certain candidates. Thus if a majority of voters cross off the top name on a party's candidate list, and that party goes on to win the election, then the second candidate listed will be elected rather than the first. This system enables the party to retain significant control over which candidates are elected. Only the party can propose candidates and it requires significant effort by the voters to alter the order of preferences. In fact, voters in Norway have never successfully changed the ranking.²⁰

These more restricted systems of IPD create high barriers to entry. This does lower the chance that the process will be hijacked by someone campaigning on a single issue, as we saw in the American and Canadian cases above. It also allows the party to retain control of its ideology and policy. However, these barriers also prevent serious candidates from outside the party elite from becoming more involved in the party. Individuals trying to bring new ideas and new groups into the party will find it more difficult to do so when the elites control the party tightly. Furthermore, these barriers may promote the idea that the party is closed to newcomers, and potential members may choose to join a different party where they

● **Democracy Within and Without**

have a larger voice in choosing candidates and leaders.

These examples are useful in illustrating the great variety of IPD. Parties can be very open, or more restricted, and there are harms and benefits with both. It is important to keep in mind that 'open' political party systems do not necessarily always mean a better democracy within the country. A democracy within a state does not depend on many “little” democracies within it – i.e. in political parties – but rather on the functioning of the whole political system in an overall democratic fashion. What we must look for is how the structure of a party impacts the political situation as a whole, rather than just measure the situation within the party itself. In other words, democratic institutions may not always result in democratic outcomes. A future India with more democratic political parties will only be more democratic as a whole if leaders are actually accountable to their constituents, if corruption is exposed, if substantial discussion takes place about important policy decisions, if ordinary citizens feel that their concerns are addressed by local and national governments, and so much more. Democratic structures within a party may contribute to this, but they do not guarantee it.

3. Political parties in India today

In India, political parties are of two types: National level parties and state level parties. National parties are those which are recognised by

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

the Election Commission in four or more states. Indian National Congress, Bhartiya Janata Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party, Communist Party of India, Communist Party of India (Marxist) are examples of National parties. State parties or regional parties are political parties which participate in different elections but only within one state. For example Shiv Sena participates only in Maharashtra, Telegu Desam in Andhra Pradesh, Akali Dal in Punjab or Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu. Some states can have more than one state party. In addition to these parties, statistics of the Election Commission show that there are 730 registered unrecognised political parties in India as of October 2005.

All political parties that contest elections have some kind of organisation and internal decision making processes in place. In some parties, this organisation can be very formal, whereas in others some aspects of the party may be unregulated or informal. To better understand the internal decision making of the parties in India, it is helpful to take a closer look at parties' organisational options. This section will detail what the constitutions of each party prescribe for membership, organizational structure, leadership and candidate selection. There is, however, a gap between what the Constitutions contain and how the parties operate in practice. This difference between theory and implementation will be discussed in the second part of this section. The third part will compare the reality with some of the concepts of inner party democracy.

● Democracy Within and Without

3.1 The Indian National Congress Party

Membership

Congress has two types of membership:

1 - Primary Membership: any person above the age of 18 years who accepts the Party's objective, pays the subscription fee (Rs. 3.00) and is not a member of any other political party, can be a primary member.²¹ They are required to be 21 years of age or above, habitually wear khadi, abstain from alcohol and intoxicants, and not practice untouchability.

2 - Active Membership: these are members who have been primary members for two consecutive years and take on a larger role in the party.

Classifying members in this way differentiates them into a base group of primary members and a group of active members who are eligible for elections for certain positions and have the right to vote at higher levels where active membership is required.

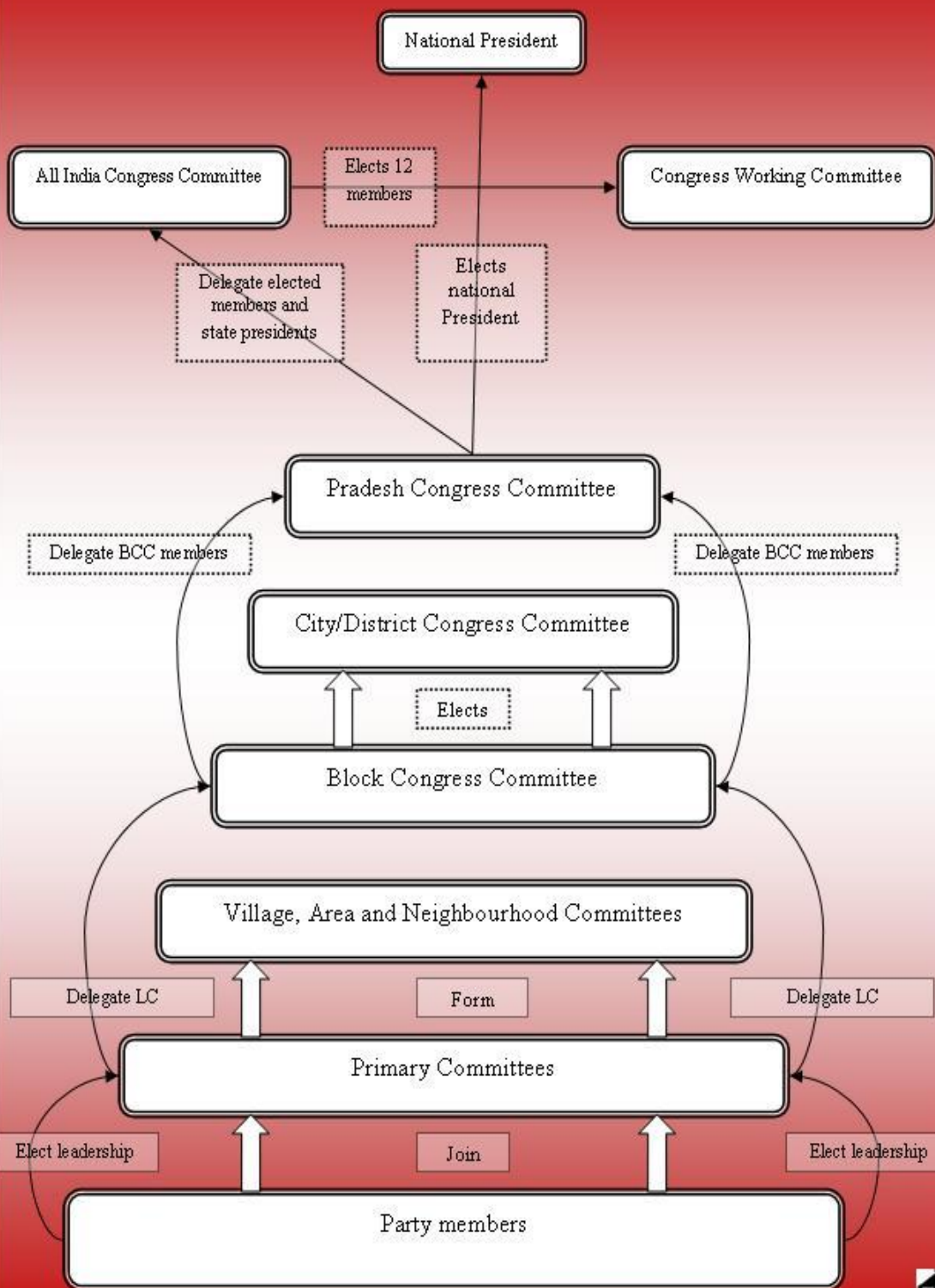
Party Structure

Congress is organized into five main committees. These are groups of party members that together organise, create and implement party policies. Most committees have various sub-committees, such

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

as executive or working committees, that have specific tasks that run the organisation on the corresponding level.

Most committees select delegates and presidents that can represent them in the higher committees. Therefore, the system works in a successive manner, building up from a large base group (i.e. the lower committees) to a more concentrated group (i.e. the higher committees), until we reach the highest level of committee.



A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

The basic unit of Congress is the **Primary Committee (PC)**. The leadership of the Primary Committees is elected by party members from the particular constituency and its general membership is composed of all active and non-active members from that region. Multiple Primary Committees can form Village, Area or Neighbourhood Committees. All of these committees are subordinate to the **Block Congress Committees (BCC)** who are composed of the presidents of the PCs within a particular jurisdiction and of individuals who are 'co-opted'.²² Next are the **District/City Congress Committees (DCC)**, whose members are elected by secret ballot by the Block Congress Committee.²³ The **Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC)**, which functions at the State or Union Territory level, consists of delegates from the BCCs that reside or have their business in a particular state. The delegates are elected by way of secret ballot if the BCC feels it is necessary. Certain minority and special interest groups are co-opted.²⁴

On the national level, Congress functions through two main bodies: the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and the All India Congress Committee (AICC). The **Congress Working Committee** is the most important executive body of Congress and is composed of the President, the leader of Congress in Parliament, and 23 other members who are appointed by the President and elected by the AICC.²⁵ ²⁶ It is here that the most important national decision making is done when it comes to political and executive issues. Finally, the **All India Congress Committee** is the national and central assembly of Congress and is composed of various groups. Some of the members include all former presidents that remain

● Democracy Within and Without

active, all the presidents of PCCs, Congress leaders from various levels of government and co-opted groups. Additionally, the PCC and Lok Sabha members elect from amongst themselves a certain number of representatives, and the CWC selects certain other individuals to join the AICC.²⁷ In sum, the AICC includes hundreds of senior leaders from various levels of government. Besides the five committees listed above, Congress also functions through various affiliated organisations and party organs like the Indian National Youth Congress and the National Students Union of India.

As the diagramme illustrates, this is an incredibly complex structure. The party is organized around a multitude of committees, each with different responsibilities, and many of the highest committees are chaired or run by the same party elites. As we will see shortly, BJP's structure is similarly complex.

Indian Youth Congress (IYC)

Beginning in Punjab and then Gujarat, the IYC has made alterations to its organizational structure and the process by which it elects committees and other officeholders within the party.²⁸ In the new system, all registered members are able to vote to select their constituency's committee. The candidate with the greatest number of votes becomes president, the candidate with the second most number of votes becomes vice president, and so forth.²⁹ The elections are monitored by the Foundation for Advanced Management Elections (FAME).

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

The IYC elections were conducted in Gujarat in March 2009, and though there were allegations of vote tampering and intimidation tactics they appear to have been a success.³⁰ Membership drives leading up to elections are now underway in Rajasthan, UP, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jarkhand, Tripura and Haryana.³¹ Senior Congress officials have stated that the idea is being considered seriously, but that changes would begin at earliest sometime after July - once the currently ongoing elections are complete and Sonia Gandhi is re-elected as party leader.³²

In interviews with local politicians and party members, individuals stated that it will take a lot of time for the national Congress to adopt democratic reforms, although they are on track to do so. They also stated that the youth are strongly attracted to these ideas.³³ RFGI had the opportunity to talk to members of the NSUI who were involved in the recent IYC elections in Gujarat.³⁴ There were 16 positions up for election. Large membership drives were the primary method of campaigning - by signing up people to the party who support them, they were able to get more votes. Those with family background in politics had the advantage of having party workers who know how to run a campaign.

● Democracy Within and Without

3.2 Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

Membership

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also works with primary and active memberships.

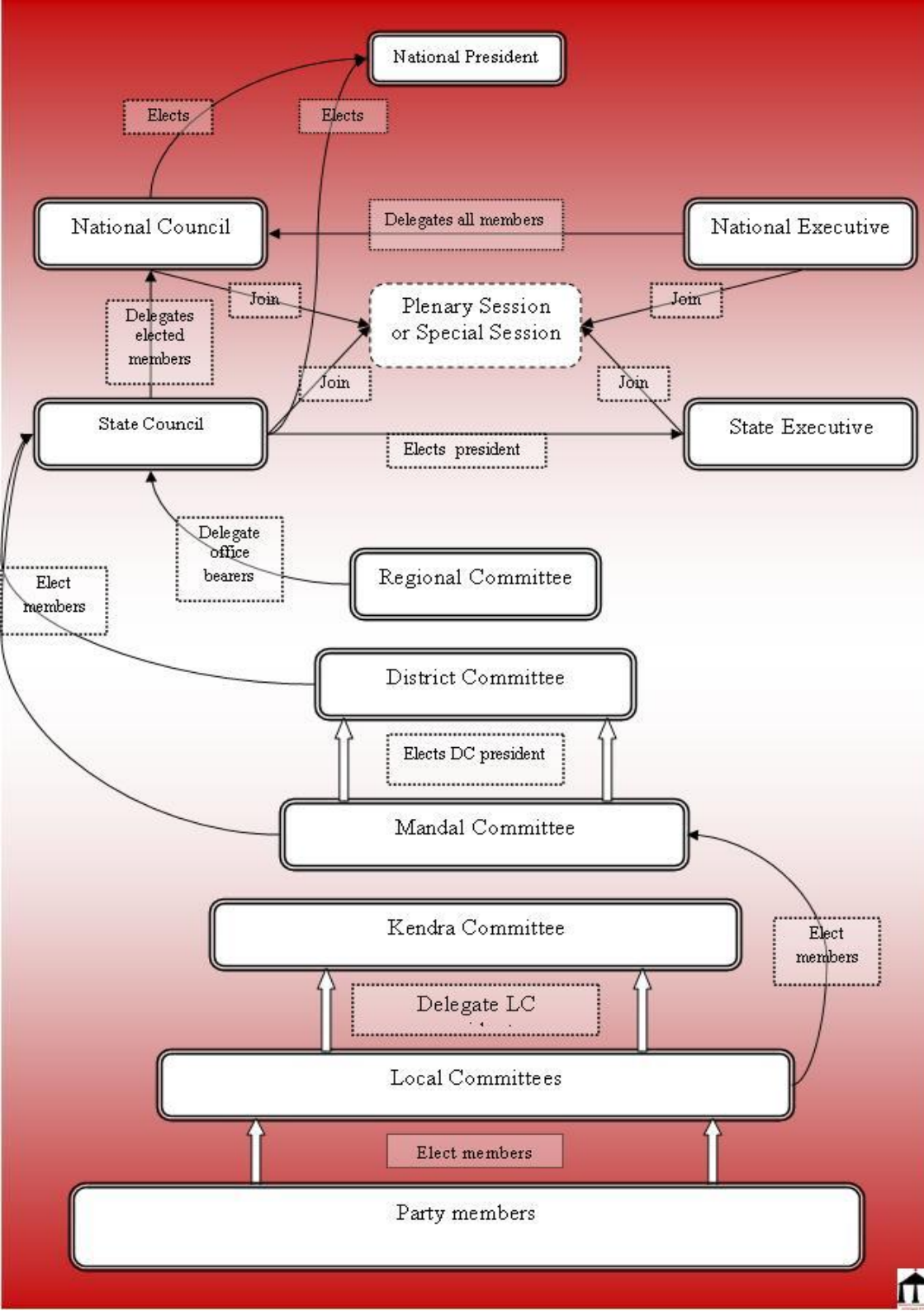
1 - Primary Membership: any Indian citizen of the age of 18 years or above who accepts the aims and philosophy of the party can be a primary member provided he is not a member of any other political party.

2 - Active Membership: here a member is required to have membership for not less than 3 years, deposit an amount of Rs.100/- , participate in party programmes including agitational programmes and subscribe to the party magazine.

Only active members can participate in elections of the Mandal Committee or join higher committees.

Party Structure

The BJP also uses the method of ascending representation. See figure 2 for the diagramme.



● Democracy Within and Without

At the bottom level, there are **Local Committees (LC)**. The members of the party elect the members for a LC, and these in turn elect a president for the LC. Second is the **Kendra Committee (KC)**. Several LC's can together form a KC under the regulations provided by the state. The KC's are composed of the presidents of the LC's and the president of a Mandal will nominate one person from his executive committee to be the Convener of the KC. Next up is the **Mandal Committee (MC)**, which is composed of members that the LC members have elected. Special reservations are made for the ST/SC's in the party's constitution. From this level and up, only active members can be members and eligible for contesting elections. The Mandal Committee is followed by the **District Committee (DC)**, which is headed by a president that is elected by the members of the MC's. Any ten members of the district's electoral college can propose a candidate for the position of DC president.³⁵ The members of the DC are nominated by its president. The **Regional Committees (RC)** succeed the district level. The National Executive can set up RC's for certain areas within a State (e.g. metropolitan areas). On the state level, BJP functions through two bodies: State Councils and State Executives. The **State Councils** are composed out of the members that are elected by the DCs, ten percent of party legislators that are elected by all the members of the legislative party, ten percent of party parliament members from the state and others.³⁶ **States Executives** have presidents that are elected by a section of members of the State Council.³⁷

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

On the national level, the party functions through three main bodies: the National Council, the National Executive and the Plenary or Special Session of the Party.

The **National Council** consists of elected members from the State Councils, 10 percent of the party members of parliament that are elected by all the party members of parliament, all former national presidents, all state presidents and leaders of the party in Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and others. The **National Executive** includes the national president and no more than 80 other members that are nominated by the president.³⁸ Also, the National Executive must have at least 25 percent of its total number composed of new members each term. At least three years of membership is required to join, however, the president can make exemptions in special circumstances. The party also organizes through the **plenary** and **special sessions**. The plenary sessions are normally held once a year with all members of the national and state councils and all the party members in parliament and legislature attending. It is headed by the national president. If the national executive deems necessary, or if at least 1/3rd of the members of the national council requests it, the president convenes a special session in which all members of the national council are included.

Once again, this is an incredibly complex organizational structure. There are many committees at many different levels all of which have particular authority over certain matters. It is not surprising that so few Indian citizens feel like they understand the workings of the

● Democracy Within and Without

major political parties. It should be noted that the constitutions of both BJP and Congress are largely silent on candidate selection methods – no process is described, and thus there is no official standard for how these parties choose their candidates. Nonetheless, as the following section will show, there is a consistent pattern in how these parties choose their candidates.

3.3 Reality Check

The party structures discussed above in detail outline the established practices and processes of decision-making within the parties. However, there are large variations between what is set out in the Constitutions and what actually takes place in reality.

Interviews with various officials from political parties provided us with an insider perspective on their internal functioning. Various committees and council do exist but the decision-making power rests in the hands of a few party-elites. For both leadership and candidate selection, an observer is sent to the States to gather information and statistics on the constituencies. At the same time, the observer will consult local, panchayat and district leaders to form a small list of possible candidates that will be submitted to the State level leadership, who presents it to a higher national authority. They, in turn, will present one name to the central leadership and the final decisions on the candidate list are made by the national parliamentary board.

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

This method sometimes varies. For instance, the national leadership will not necessarily choose every candidate across the nation for all levels of elections, but may play a direct role in choosing many of them. Nonetheless it is a very centralized system that diminishes the influence of other committees within the party not to mention the thousands of members who have little or no say in the matter. In the words of Professor Jagdeep S. Chhokar from Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, who is also the founder of the Association for Democratic Reforms and the National Election Watch:

‘The practice of “central observers” going to states to “oversee” the so-called election of the leader of state legislature party who is to be the chief minister and all the legislators invariably unanimously authorizing the central leadership of the party to “select”, “nominate” or “appoint” the chief minister – which happens in all the parties – is nothing short of a travesty of democracy.’³⁹

This sentiment was shared by an experienced political journalist who stated that ‘Organizational elections are not real, high command will pick the people’. It is clear that the role of members does not include input into major party decisions. Decisions are made by a select group of people at the highest levels. In theory, meetings of committees can offer an opportunity for members to ventilate their ideas, concepts and criticisms to realize a dialogue between higher and lower levels. In reality, these meetings do not provide the forum that they are supposed to. There is rarely any

● Democracy Within and Without

involvement of the younger members. Information dissemination has a one way direction; from top to bottom, therefore there is no actual dialogue between higher ranking officials and members.

The model used for leadership and candidate selection is problematic because power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of individuals. Similarly problematic are the reasons for the decisions they make. Candidates and leaders are often chosen as a result of cynical political calculation or, even worse, as a result of outright corruption.

For example even though the party constitutions stress the importance of avoiding caste or religion based politics, most parties embrace it in candidate selection. Caste based politics dominate the way tickets are distributed. In practice, selection of candidates on the basis of their caste is the safest way to ensure support from certain groups of voters. Therefore, political parties will always put forward candidates of a specific religion or caste in certain constituencies in order to improve their chances in the election. Distinctions made on the bases of caste, religion or status form a danger to the merit based system that should be in place. Secondly, political parties must also be sure to include among all of their candidates at least one candidate from certain groups - whether those are influential families, caste groups, professions, or others - in order to satisfy all of those who support them and want to see one of their own nominated.

Even when caste does not play a role, there are other crude political calculations. The larger parties in Gujarat are divided by factions

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

within the party. These factions compete against one another and during an election the various constituencies are divided among these factions. Thus, which candidates are selected depends on which faction internal to the party controls those seats, since they will want to nominate individuals from within their faction⁴⁰.

In other cases there is outright corruption. For example, during every round of state and national elections there are media reports of nominees having to pay large amounts of cash for nomination. In 2008, a prominent party leader disclosed that party tickets had been up for sale in recent elections and that other tickets in various states had been offered to relatives of party officials.⁴¹ Leaders in another prominent party who were denied tickets also came out with information regarding similar scandals.⁴² In some instances, inexperienced people outside the political parties (for example, Bollywood celebrities) were approached to enter in contests for their image, status and the amount of media attention they received.⁴³ This sidelines more capable and dedicated politicians seeking the same positions, and causes discontent within the party.

How do Congress and BJP compare to the international examples discussed earlier? Both Congress and BJP use highly restricted methods of candidate and leadership selection. Power is centralized in the hands of a small number of party elites. In both cases national presidents are elected by other party elites, rather than by ordinary members. Candidate selection is carried out with input from local leaders, but the final choice is almost always made by smaller, national executive bodies. Ordinary members elect only the lowest

● **Democracy Within and Without**

level of committee and have little voice in the national affairs of the party. As discussed near the beginning of this report, these restrictive systems allow the party to retain significant control over its ideology and message. But they also prevent new ideas and new people from entering the party and climbing the ranks.

4. Recommendations

Considering the diversity of issues that political parties have to face, there is no single model of ‘inner-party democracy’. It would ultimately be up to the party leaders and the party members to consider and implement the practices that they think fit.

4.1 Direct Leadership Selection

Each member of the party should vote to select their local leaders, state leaders, and national president. Why directly? Because it increases the ability of the general membership to hold their leaders accountable. Under most current systems of party leadership selection in India, a series of ascending committees vote for leaders and eventually select the national leadership. This makes it very difficult for the general membership to vote out a national party leader. For example, in either of the parties we discussed there are a long series of ascending committees. Members elect the bottom level committee, who in turn elect the committee above them, and

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

so forth, until the national president is elected by a small group of committees or representatives.

The only way for the general membership to vote out a president would be for general members across the country to elect individuals to their local committees all the way up until high-level committees are elected who are willing to vote out the president. This is highly unlikely – how could the members be sure that the officials at any level of committee would actually vote out the President? Even then, each committee is composed of not only elected members but also many others, including former high ranking officials and former committee members, many of whom are able to vote in the committee and are not accountable to the general membership. This current system lacks transparency and does not allow for members to have much say in the leadership selection. However, if members are able to vote directly for their party leadership it would be far easier for them to hold those leaders accountable. A simple majority of members would be enough to remove a president, since no longer are the members' votes mediated by a long succession of ascending committees.

This accountability is important and necessary. It would force national presidents to consider the views of their party members. Party leaders who had been ineffective leaders of the party could be removed. Party members could counter the influence of party elites and reduce the power of political dynasties. It is particularly important that the president be accountable, since they have so much control over party affairs. It would force accountability from

● **Democracy Within and Without**

other levels of the party – for instance, if party members demanded the removal of a corrupt officeholder the president often has the power to remove such a person. They would only do so, however, if there is pressure from general members. In sum, directly electing party leaders is an obvious and powerful way to encourage accountability within political parties.

4.2 Candidate Selection with a power of Veto

Candidate selection is complex. As discussed above, there are many strategic calculations that determine which candidates are chosen to contest elections from the party. Sometimes, party prefers a candidate of a certain section of the community to contest from a specific constituency so that local voters can be attracted. Factions within the party itself compete for the ability to put forward their own candidates in certain constituencies. Support groups – whether family, caste or profession – expect to be rewarded by putting some of their own up candidates for election.

This is a highly complex set of decisions, and it raises particular problems for democratic candidate selection. These strategic calculations can be implemented when decided by a few individuals, but voters at large are unlikely to be able to consider what is in the best interests of the party. Can all the members of the party weigh the advantages and disadvantages of placing candidates of different castes in particular constituencies, and can they coordinate their voting to ensure that some groups are not over or

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

underrepresented? Can the membership base of a party be able to make these highly strategic decisions through simple elections?

A party that carefully chooses its candidates has a better chance of winning the elections, and allowing members to vote to select candidates makes it less likely that decisions will be strategically optimal. However, there are other ways of ensuring that some democratic accountability exists while not destroying the ability of a political party to make strategic decisions.

Party members should be able to veto certain candidates by calling for a 'no-confidence' vote. Parties can be required to announce the candidates on their ticket one month before the election, and if the membership was particularly opposed to any particular candidate, they could mobilize to remove that candidate. If 10% of the state members sign a petition stating that they wanted a candidate removed, a no confidence vote would be held, at which point 60% of members would have to oppose the candidate for them to be removed from the ticket.⁴⁴

Though it is far from an actual election, this plan does have many benefits. Firstly, it allows the membership to wield influence over the party elites. In cases where a candidate is extremely objectionable - because of a criminal record, or if the person is ill-qualified, or for any other reason, members can actually remove him/her from the ticket and compel the party to nominate a new candidate. This way, the individual power of each party member is increased.

● **Democracy Within and Without**

Secondly, even when it isn't used, the potential to vote out a candidate forces the party leadership to consider the preferences of the membership. Because the membership now has the power to derail certain candidates, the elites will always consider whether this is likely and adjust their decisions as necessary.

4.3 Legal enforcement of reforms

Besides reforming the internal decision making processes like candidate selection and leadership selection there are many other actions that should be taken in order to encourage inner-party democracy. Other organizations have in the past made many recommendations in order to promote IPD. National Election Watch (NEW) and the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) developed the following recommendations:

1. There is an urgent need for a comprehensive bill to regulate political parties. An excellent draft for this has already been prepared by the Law Commission. Such a Bill needs to be passed by parliament.
2. There is a need to make it mandatory for all recognized registered political parties to have democratically elected bodies and their functioning, including their financial status, should be transparent and known to all.
3. Since it has been made mandatory for all candidates to make their financial status public, the political parties should also be called upon to regularly file statements of their assets and liabilities, which should also be made public.

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

4. Political parties and candidates should declare their sources of funds well before elections so that voters can make an informed choice.

As mentioned in the NEW/ADR recommendations, the Law Commission of India has also discussed the need for legal regulation of political parties. The 170th Law Commission made explicit note of the lack of regulation of Indian political parties: “Whether by design or by omission, our Constitution does not provide for the constitution and working of political parties, though they are at the heart of a parliamentary democracy. A parliamentary democracy without political parties is inconceivable. Yet, the constitution [...] does not even speak of political parties.”⁴⁵

The report goes on to discuss the German law on political parties, which extensively regulates political parties in that country. The law lays out the role of parties within the country as a whole, regulates how parties accept new members, outlines how parties must be structured internally, requires regular elections of executives, regulates arbitration measures, and much more.⁴⁶

A similar law should be adopted in India that would force political parties to accept some measure of accountability, transparency and democracy. Particularly, we hope that this law would enforce our above recommendations regarding leadership and candidate selection. While given the state of our legal system it would be naive to think that a law would necessarily force political parties to change themselves, such a law would contribute to the process of

● **Democracy Within and Without**

democratizing India's political parties. First, it makes citizens aware that political parties can function differently - that they can be accountable, that they can be transparent and open to new ideas, and that these things can be achieved through democratic structures. Second, it would allow for legal action against political parties who did not abide by the law. Even if law is not a definite solution, it is one more method that can be used to pressure political parties into reforming themselves.

4.4 Create space for debate and dissent

Having open discussions within parties can prevent factionalism and fragmentation. Since 1969, Congress has had five major splits creating numerous parties. The Janata Party, the forerunner of BJP, has had countless splits resulting in 24 different parties.⁴⁷ If members are restricted in their capacity to express and share their own ideas, two options are left: keep silent or leave the party. Many have argued that the lack of discussion, debate, and equal representation of views have contributed to this fragmentation and factionalism.

4.5 Amend the Anti-Defection law

One of the largest legal problems for substantive inner party democracy - including debate and free dissent - is the Tenth Schedule, added to the constitution in 1985.⁴⁸ Popularly known as the Anti-Defection law, it prevents elected members of a legislature (whether that is state or national) from defecting to another party or

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

voting against an order of their party.⁴⁹ The problematic part of this law is the latter provision. It means that all members of a party must vote exactly how they are told to vote by the national party leadership, or face being removed from the legislature. It prevents substantive debate or dissent regarding legislation, since elected members of parliament are forced to function as an automatic vote for their party rather than as a representative of citizens who elected them. For example, if a member of the Lok Sabha thought that a piece of legislation would be harmful to his or her constituents, they would be forced to either vote for it or lose their seat in the legislature. This is not only unfair, but it impinges upon one of the basic features of democracy - representation - by disallowing elected members of parliament from representing their constituents. In the true democratic spirit, party-members should be allowed to publicly dissent, and the clause relating to dissent in the Tenth Schedule be amended to this effect. .

● Democracy Within and Without

Conclusion

“The spirit of democracy is not a mechanical thing to be adjusted by abolition of forms. It requires change of heart”

- M. Gandhi

This report began by asking a simple question: what is inner-party democracy? To answer this question we examined the idea of democracy and applied this to political parties, which led us to the two primary institutions within a political party that could be democratic: leadership and candidate selection. We then assessed the current status of two primary political parties in India, and developed some recommendations that describe how all Indian parties could move towards more democratic internal processes.

However, democracy is not defined solely by institutions, but also by attitudes and behaviours. Open and substantial debate, constructive criticism, accountability, transparency and free dissent are often described as being important aspects of democracy alongside simple institutions. Elections matter, but only if there are real issues at stake, people take their vote seriously, and party leaders do not just buy their supporters. Institutions - no matter how democratic - are only as effective as the people who use them.

At first this may seem to suggest that institutional reforms are meaningless. Indeed, this sentiment is all too common today. But to believe such a thing would be to deny reality. Indian citizens are visibly and widely dismayed with the state of their political parties,

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

and there are high levels of support for reforms that increase democracy. During the production of this report the response from the public at large was overwhelming. Everyone recognizes political parties are flawed, and there is a real desire for change. However, there are more hearts and minds to change. The youth, in particular, must be aware of the state of our political system and what they can do to improve it.

Changing hearts and minds is best left up to Indian citizens. Politicians must be aware of the problems, and must know that Indian citizens demand reform. But when those hearts and minds are changed, there must be institutions available that encourage and reward these new types of thinking. A new generation of Indians will have a hard time demanding accountability from their leaders if there are no processes within the party that allow for such changes. A new generation of politicians will find it difficult to be transparent and accountable when the old systems that encourage this counter-productive behaviour remain in place.

Thus we come to a deeper truth. Institutions are meaningless without sincere participation, but real change in government is very difficult without institutions that channel the participation of citizens. We must not only encourage the youth to care about politics, we must provide them with the means to turn their opinions into actions. We often say that the youth are the future of the country, that they will build a better India. But they require more than a blueprint – they require the proper tools. Inner-party democracy is a powerful tool, and we hope that the next generation may wield it.

● Democracy Within and Without

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 - 5 Gideon Rahat, “Which Candidate Selection Method is More Democratic?” UC Irvine: Center for the Study of Democracy (2008): 3.
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 - 7 *Ibid.*
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 - 9 http://www.ndi.org/files/1951_polpart_scarrow_110105.pdf
 - 10 *Ibid.*
 - 11 Thomas Poguntke, “Party Organisations,” in Jan van Deth, ed., *Comparative Politics: The Problem of Equivalence* (London: Routledge, 1998), 156–79.
 - 12 Project Smart Vote, *How Does the Primary Process Work?* (http://www.votesmart.org/election_president_how_primary_works.php) (February 2 2010).
 - 13 Constitution of the Liberal Party of Canada (available at: <http://www.liberal.ca/pdf/docs/lpc-2009-constitution-en.pdf>) and Constitution of the Conservative Party of Canada (available at: <http://www.conservative.ca/EN/4684/>).

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

- 14 Paul Pennings & Reuven Y. Hazan, “Democratizing Candidate Selection: Causes and Consequences” *Party Politics*, 7:3 (2001): 271.
- 15 *Ibid*, 326.
- 16 *Ibid*, 335.
- 17 Lawrence LeDuc, “Democratizing Party Leadership Selection” *Party Politics*, 7:3 (2001): 324.
- 18 *Ibid*.
- 19 Pennings & Hazan, 270.
- 20 Henry Valen, “Norway: Decentralization and Group Representation” in Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh, ed., *Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective: The Secret Garden of Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1988), 210-235.
- 21 Constitution of Indian National Congress as amended by the AICC Meeting at Delhi on 18th of December, 1998 and as further amended on 24th May, 2002).
- 22 Co-opted members can be found at various levels throughout the organisation. In most cases they include minority groups that are not adequately represented and persons with special skills or experience. Article XIV of the party’s constitution states that ‘The Working Committee and the Executive Committee at Pradesh and lower levels may co-opt up to 15% of the total membership of the AICC, PCC and other lower Committees concerned as per rules prescribed by the Working Committee. The Co-opted members at the AICC, PCC and lower levels shall not exercise any voting right in any organisational election nor shall they contest any election in the organisation; however, no person who is a co-opted member shall be debarred for that reason from seeking election to full membership of any Committee in the normal manner.
- 23 The DCC includes former presidents still active in the party, members of state legislature, co-opted groups and other important party officials such as: all active ex-Presidents of the DCC that have completed a term of 365 days, members of the PCC who reside in or have been elected from the district and Presidents of the Block Congress Committee (provided that they shall not be eligible to become either President or Secretary of the DCC). Furthermore, active members of the Central and State Legislature Congress Parties, active leaders of the Congress parties in Municipal Corporations, Municipalities and District Boards/Zila Parishads or Janpads who are from the District are also included. Finally, there is a group of members who are co-opted by the DCC Executive

● Democracy Within and Without

- 24 Furthermore, the party's constitution states that the following groups also make up the PCC: active former presidents of the PCC that have completed a full year term, AICC members that live in the region, members that are elected by the Congress Legislature Party and members co-opted by the PCC Executive from special elements not adequately represented and others in accordance with the rules prescribed by the Working Committee. The INC also makes special reservations for minorities and groups that are perceived as having not enough representation. Groups like trade unions, women, minorities such as the ST/SC's (scheduled tribes and castes), Indian Youth Congress and the National Students' Union of India (NSUI) are co-opted by the Executive of the PCC. Also, the party looks out to recruit members with special knowledge or experience in areas like social science and arts.
- 25 Of the 23 members of the Congress Working Committee, 11 are appointed by the President and 12 are elected by the AICC.
- 26 Constitution of Indian National Congress as amended by the AICC Meeting at Delhi on 18th of December, 1998 and as further amended on 24th May, 2002) and Common Cause India, *Study of internal functioning of political parties*, 1 February 2010, <http://www.commoncauseindia.org/CurrentIssues/1PoliticalProcessreforms/InternalDemocracyinPoliticalParties/STUDYOFINTERNALFUNCTIONINGOFPOLPARTIES.pdf>
- 27 The Lok Sabha selects 15 members to the AICC. The Congress Working Committee selects from special elements not adequately represented and others.
- 28 D K Singh, 'Rahul Takes Congress to Panchayat Level,' *Indian Express*, June 4 2009 <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/rahul-takes-youth-congress-to-panchayat-level/470840/0>
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 'Youth Congress Election Disrupted,' *Times of India*, April 1 2009. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/Youth-Congress-election-disrupted/articleshow/4341722.cms>
- 31 Indian Youth Congress, <http://www.iyc.in/sns/> (January 26, 2010)
- 32 Aarthi Ramachandran, 'Rahul's Intra-Party Democracy Ideas Set Cong Thinking,' *The Economic Times*, January 19 2010. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics/nation/Rahuls-intra-party-democracy-ideas-set-Cong-thinking/articleshow/5475161.cms>

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

- 33 Senior Congress Party Workers, personal interview conducted on Wednesday January 20 2010 at Congress HQ, Ahmedabad
- 34 Former members of NSUI, personal interview conducted on February 8 2010 at RFGI office.
- 35 Article XV : District Committee of the BJP Constitution states: ‘The President shall be elected by the members of all the elected Mandal Committees. Any ten members of the District electoral college should jointly propose any active member for the post of District President, but such proposal should come from at least 1/3 of the elected Mandals. The President will nominate other members of the committee giving due representation to the geographical, professional social and organisational spread.’
- 36 Others include: former presidents that remain active in the party, presidents of the lower committees, members of state legislature and specific groups.
- 37 The president of the State Executive is chosen by a section of the State Council members. According to Article XVI these are the members that are elected by the District Units, 10% of party legislators and 10% of Party Parliament members from the state.
- 38 Reservations for women and ST/SC groups are made.
- 39 Chhokar, Jagdeep S., “End this Hegemony of High Command,” *GovernanceNow*, January 26, 2010, 28
- 40 Krishnakant Vakharia, February 11 2010.
- 41 Venkitesh Ramakrishnan, “Ticket Troubles,” *Frontline* Volume 25 - Issue 24 : Nov. 22-Dec. 05, 2008
<http://www.thehindu.com/fline/fl2524/stories/20081205252402500.htm>
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 *Celebrities in politics: A step towards the degeneration of politics?*
<http://www.indian-elections.com/national-issues/celebrities-pin-politics.html>
- 44 These numbers are obviously mere suggestions. However a low-bar to call an election and a high-bar to remove a candidate are important for both guaranteeing that this measure can actually be used, but that it is not abused.
- 45 170th Law Commission of India, Chapter IV: German Law on Political Parties
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 Chhokar, Jagdeep S., ‘*End this Hegemony of High Command*’, in *GovernanceNow*, January 26, 2010

● Democracy Within and Without

- 48 Krishnadas Rajagopal, “Anti-Defection Law,” *Indian Express*, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/antidefection-law/339606/> February 12 2010.
- 49 Constitution of India, Articles 102(2) and 191(2), p349.

List of abbreviations

ADR - Association for Democratic Reforms

BJP - Bharatiya Janata Party

FAME - Foundation for Advanced Management Elections

A report on inner-party democracy in political parties ●

IIM - Indian Institute of Management

INC - Indian National Congress Party

IYC - Indian National Youth Congress

IPD - Inner Party Democracy

MP - Member of Parliament

NAFTA - North American Free Trade Agreement

NEW- National Election Watch

NSUI - National Students Union of India

RFGI - Research Foundation for Governance in India

UK - The United Kingdom

US - The United States of America

Indian National Congress committees (in hierarchical order)

AICC - The All India Congress Committee

CWC - The Congress Working Committee

PCC - Pradesh Congress Committees

DCC - District/City Congress Committees

● Democracy Within and Without

BCC - Block Congress Committee

PC - Primary Committee

Bharatiya Janata Party committees (in hierarchical order)

PS or SS - The Plenary or Special Session

NC - The National Council

NE - The National Executive

SC - State Councils

SE - State Executives

RC - Regional Committees

DC - District Committees

MC - Mandal Committees

GK - Gram/Shahari Kendra

LC - Local Committees