

**Yogesh Haribhau Kulkarni**

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Municipal elections are where democracy meets daily life: roads, water, schools, local budgets. Yet these elections often suffer from avoidable procedural failures that quietly distort outcomes.

One such failure in Maharashtra's municipal elections is what candidates and party workers commonly call the "AB form problem." In practice, this refers to party authorisation forms that decide which candidate gets a party symbol. These forms are not filled by candidates, yet errors, delays, internal party disputes, or opaque decisions often lead to last-minute rejection of symbols. When that happens, the impact is not administrative, it is electoral.

The deeper issue is not paperwork. It is process design.

Today, candidate nomination data, party authorization, and public disclosure exist in silos, partially online, largely paper-based, and with limited transparency. Voters rarely know why a candidate lost a symbol or whether a rejection was technical or political. Returning Officers are forced to adjudicate disputes under extreme time pressure, often with incomplete records.

In a detailed two-part blog I've just published on [Medium](#), I explore how this can be fixed without rewriting election law or introducing risky technology.

The proposal is straightforward: create a unified digital workflow where candidates pre-register and upload statutory disclosures, receive a unique Candidate ID, and political parties digitally/physically authorize candidates by mapping that ID to a ward. The system prevents duplicate nominations, creates a clear audit trail, and allows timely public visibility.

This is not theoretical. Elements of this already exist in India and are standard practice internationally, from online nomination systems in Indian states to secure digital election administration.

Fixing the so-called AB form fiasco is not about convenience. It is about transparency, fairness, trust in local democracy and the stomach ache one may get by swallowing the forms of a rival (??, read the news). 😊

Read the full two-part blog on Medium here: [link below]

I'd welcome feedback from election administrators, legal experts, party officials, and civic-tech practitioners.

State Election Commission Maharashtra Bharatiya Janata Party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Indian National Congress

