



20<sup>th</sup> March 2026

To  
The Chief Election Commissioner  
Election Commission of India  
Nirvachan Sadan  
New Delhi – 110001

**Subject: Challenges Faced by Persons with Visual Impairment – Appeal to introduce audio enabled VVPAT System in all polling booths for the upcoming state assembly elections.**

Nethrodaya is a social service institution founded in 2002 by a visually impaired and has been recognized as the Best Institution by the Government of Tamil Nadu for its outstanding service to the visually impaired community. It has also been conferred with the National Award by the Hon'ble President of India for its dedicated service to the visually impaired. For the past 24 years, Nethrodaya has been serving thousands of underprivileged visually impaired beneficiaries, making a significant impact on their lives through its sustained commitment and support.

Persons with visual impairments encounter several challenges while voting at polling booths. A primary concern is the lack of assistive devices, such as audio-enabled Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), which restricts their independent participation. This raises serious concerns regarding privacy and autonomy, as visually impaired voters are often compelled to rely on others to cast their vote, thereby compromising the secrecy of the ballot. Additionally, accessible and independent voting options remain limited.

Another significant issue is the inadequate implementation of existing policies. Although laws and provisions supporting accessible voting are in place, they are not consistently or effectively enforced at the ground level across all polling booths. In summary, despite ongoing efforts in India, considerable gaps persist in infrastructure, awareness, and inclusive practices related to accessible voting for persons with visual impairments.

**Inaccessible VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail):**

The VVPAT system is an important feature introduced in India's electronic voting process to enhance transparency, trust, and accountability. However, it remains inaccessible to visually impaired voters, as it relies entirely on visual verification of a printed slip.

While VVPAT strengthens transparency, it does not ensure inclusivity due to the following reasons:

- **Inaccessibility for Visually Impaired Voters:**  
VVPAT relies on a visual printing mechanism that cannot be accessed by blind or low-vision voters.
- **Short Display Time:**  
The 7-second display duration may be insufficient for elderly voters or those with cognitive disabilities.

- **Lack of Audio Feedback:**  
There is no audio confirmation of the candidate's name, party, or symbol, thereby excluding visually impaired, illiterate, elderly voters from verifying their vote.
- **Difficult Visibility and Placement:**  
Fixed positioning may make it difficult for wheelchair users to view the slip.
- **Absence of Tactile Features:**  
The system does not support touch-based verification.
- **Dependence on Assistance:**  
Many visually impaired voters must depend on others, compromising both secrecy and independence.

Thus, the current VVPAT system assumes that all voters can visually perceive and quickly comprehend the printed slip, which is not always the case.

### **Audio VVPAT: A Proposed Solution**

Audio VVPAT is an enhanced system designed to make voting more accessible and inclusive.

Audio VVPAT provides an audio confirmation of the selected candidate after a vote is cast, instead of relying solely on visual verification. The voter casts their vote using the EVM. The system plays an audio message (e.g., "You have voted for Candidate X, Party Y, Symbol Z") through headphones.

**Key Features of the Audio VVPAT is that it ensures Headphone based output to maintain secrecy. It has multilingual support, adjustable volume control and optional activation by the voter.**

**The benefits of the audio VVPAT is that it** Enables independent verification for visually impaired, elderly, illiterate, mobility-impaired, and other print-disabled voters  
Enhances accessibility and inclusivity  
Preserves secrecy of the vote and  
Increases voter confidence and trust in the electoral process

### **Constitutional and Legal Provisions**

The Constitution of India lays a strong foundation for equal participation in voting rights through several key provisions. Article 14 ensures equality before the law, meaning that every citizen is treated equally in the electoral process including persons with disabilities. Article 15 reinforces this principle by explicitly prohibiting discrimination on grounds such as religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth and disability thereby ensuring that all individuals have an equal opportunity to participate in voting process. Additionally, Article 324 establishes the Election Commission of India as an independent authority responsible for overseeing and conducting free and fair elections, which helps safeguard the integrity of the voting process and ensures that every citizen including person with disabilities can exercise their voting rights without discrimination. Together, these articles uphold the principle of equal and inclusive democratic participation.

Voting is a statutory right governed by, The Representation of the People Act, 1950 & The Representation of the People Act, 1951.

## **Special Provisions for Persons with Disabilities**

India has undertaken several measures to promote inclusive elections:

- Accessible polling stations with ramps and wheelchairs
- Braille-enabled EVMs
- Assistance by companions or trained volunteers
- Awareness and outreach initiatives

Further, Section 11 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 mandates:

*"The Election Commission of India and the State Election Commissions shall ensure that all polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and that all materials related to the electoral process are easily understandable and accessible to them."*

Despite these provisions, significant limitations remain—particularly with respect to VVPAT accessibility—thereby undermining both statutory mandates and constitutional guarantees

India has made noteworthy progress in promoting inclusive elections. However, challenges such as inadequate assistive technology, concerns regarding privacy, and weak implementation of policies continue to persist. While VVPAT enhances transparency, it falls short in addressing accessibility requirements.

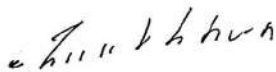
Innovations such as Audio VVPAT, coupled with robust implementation of existing legal provisions, are essential to ensure truly inclusive, independent, and accessible voting for all citizens including persons with disabilities.

In light of the above, we respectfully urge the Chief Election Commissioner of India and Chief Electoral Officer of Tamil Nadu, to take immediate steps to ensure inclusive voting by installing audio-enabled VVPAT systems integrated with EVMs across all polling booths in Tamil Nadu for the upcoming Assembly elections scheduled on 23rd April 2026.

We look forward to your prompt and positive action. Failing which, we shall be constrained to seek appropriate legal remedies before the competent court of law.

Thanking you.

For **Nethrodaya**



**C. Govindakrishnan**  
**Founder**  
**National Awardee**  
**Best Social Worker Awardee, TN**

CC : The Chief Electoral Officer, Govt. of TN