



LOK SATTA
People Power

Indian Political Dynamics

Global Leadership Program for Boeing

September 23, 2005

401 Nirmal Towers, Dwarakapuri Colony, Punjagutta, Hyderabad – 500 082; Tel: 91 40 23352487;
Fax: 91 40 23350783; email: loksatta@satyam.net.in; url: www.loksatta.org

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

William Gladstone

Democracy – Myron Weiner’s Four Conditions

- Competitive elections
- Political freedoms for all
- Peaceful transfer of power and no retribution
- Real power with elected governments

Elements of Democracy

- Liberty
 - Self governance
 - Rule of law
 - Empowerment
 - Self-correcting mechanisms
-

Nature of Our Democracy

Genuine

- Elections
- Liberty
- Change of governments
- Political contention
- Independent judiciary

Contd..

Nature of Our Democracy

Deep rooted

- 1977 verdict
- Peaceful transfer of power
- Dalit and OBC empowerment
- Balanced federalism
- Local governments taking root

Contd..

Nature of Our Democracy

Stable

- Constitutional authorities
 - Strong bureaucracy
 - Tradition of neutrality of civil services
 - Impressive administrative infrastructure
 - Bipolarity in most states
 - Stable conditions at the Union level
 - Broad consensus on most policies
-

Free and Fair Elections

- Disaggregate volatility
 - Broadly reflective of public opinion
 - Ruling parties and powerful candidates do lose
 - Rejection vote common
 - Strength of Election Commission
 - No state-sponsored rigging
 - Neutrality of civil servants
 - Compensatory errors even when there are defects
-

Big Political Questions

Communal divide

- Transient
- System has resilience
- Bombay 1993 and 2003 are symbols of India
– not Gujarat 2002
- Judiciary is strong
- Civil society is vigorous
- Political process is safeguard

Contd..

Big Political Questions

Economic Reform

- Political consensus available
- Process irreversible
- Continuity of policy
- Stridency not to be confused with substance
- Young Indians (71% below 34 yrs of age) in favour of markets
- Rule of Law and sanctity of contracts - record is mixed
- Political games do cause delays
(eg. disinvestment)

Contd..

Big Political Questions

Regional divide

- North and East lagging behind South and West
- But problems not intractable
- Effective rule of law, population control and infrastructure will alter the scenario

Corruption

- Rooted in electoral funding problems
- Centralization
- Slow and tortuous judicial process
- Poor accountability systems

But Things are Improving

- Telecom sector
 - Railway freight
 - Improved highways – rapid execution
 - 5-6% growth still sustained
 - 20% of all judges removed in Maharashtra
 - Population control in Tamil Nadu, AP etc
 - Governance and control of corruption are on the agenda
 - States competing for investment and growth
 - Young people are ambitious, educated and hungry for success
-

Recent Political Reform Initiatives

- Disclosure of candidate details
- Political Funding Reform Law
- Changes in Rajya Sabha election
- Strong anti-defection provisions
- Limiting the size of the council of ministers
- Women's representation in legislatures
- Empowered local governments
- Balanced Federalism
- Improvements in voter registration etc.
- National Judicial Commission

Contd..

Recent Political Reform Initiatives

- Removal of corrupt judges
 - Right to Information Law
 - Citizen's charters with compensation for delays
 - E-governance and convergence of services
 - Reigning in bureaucracy
 - Fast track courts
 - Local courts for speedy justice
 - Procedural reform in Law
-

Window of Opportunity

- Demand for reform
 - Relatively sound private economy
 - Demographic changes
 - Large, skilled, young, low-cost manpower
 - Communications revolution
 - Improved transport
 - Power sector reforms in progress
 - Road blocks to growth being removed
 - Stable polity
 - Mature financial system
 - National mood upbeat
-

“Politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries”

- *Mahatma Gandhi*