

LOK SATTA

People Power

People and Governance in the Future

19th August, 2002 - ASCI, Hyderabad

Crisis of Governance

- Increasing lawlessness
- Inefficient state apparatus
- Unresponsive bureaucracy
- Ineffective judicial system
- All pervasive corruption
- Criminalization of politics
- Money and muscle power in elections
- Political instability
- Erosion of legitimacy of authority

Key to Resolution

- Crisis is systemic
- Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
- Change of players not enough
- Change of rules of the game needed
- Values are not the issue
- Institutions are the key
- Resources are not a problem
- The way they are deployed is the key

Why is Governance Vital?

- Governments spend Rs. 1800 crores every day
- Out of 27 million organised workers, government employs 70%
- Fiscal deficit (Union and States) remains at 10 % GDP
- 50% Union tax revenues go towards interest payment

Is Money the issue?

Sanitation

- 140 million toilets needed
- Cost: Rs 35000 crores
- Equals just 20 days expenditure

School Education

- 1.6 million class rooms needed
- Capital cost : Rs 16,000 crores – 9 days govt. expenditure
- Recurring expenditure : Rs.8000 crores – 5 days govt. expenditure

In a Sane Democracy

- Political process should resolve the crisis
- Parties, elections and public office are the route to reform
- In India a vicious cycle operates

Failure of Political Process

- Parties
 - Autocratic and unaccountable
 - Repel the best
 - A problem, not solution
 - Choice - Tweedledom & Tweedledee
- Elections
 - Change of players
 - No change of rules of game
 - Criminalization
 - Money power
 - Flawed process
 - Electoral rolls (40% errors)
 - Bogus voting (22%)

Campaign Expenditure – Vicious Cycle

- Illegitimate expenses are often 5-10 times the ceiling or more

(Assembly ceiling: Rs 6 lakhs

Lok Sabha ceiling: Rs 15 lakhs)

- Every crore spent illegitimately



Rs 10 crore returns

(to cover ROR, Interest, personal upkeep, supporters, family's future, next election costs)



Rs 100 crore collected through bureaucracy

(for every legislator, there are 2000 employees who need to collect 'rent')



people suffer ten times more.

Payment extorted, on pain of delay, harassment, humiliation, anxiety and greater loss.

Irreducible Role of Government

- Public order
- Rule of law
- Justice
- School education
- Healthcare
- Infrastructure
- Natural resource development

What does the Citizen Expect?

- Justice
- Dignity
- Vertical mobility

Way out

- Assert people's sovereignty
- Fundamental democratic transformation
- People centered governance

Key Governance Reforms

- Comprehensive electoral reforms
- Empowerment of local governments
- Instruments of accountability
- Speedy and efficient justice

Electoral Reforms

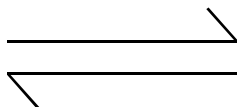
- Process Improvements
 - Preventing polling irregularities
 - Arresting and reversing criminalization of politics
 - Checking abuse of unaccountable money power in elections

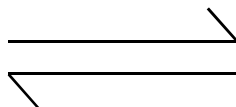
- System Improvements
 - Political party reform
 - Proportional representation
 - Direct election of Chief Executive at the State level with clear separation of powers

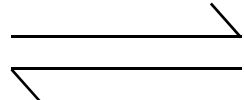
Empowerment of Local Governments

- Transfer of funds, functions and functionaries to local governments

- Link between

vote  public good

taxes  services

authority  accountability

Instruments of Accountability

- Right to Information
- Independent crime investigation
- Independent appointment of constitutional functionaries
- Independent and effective anti-corruption agency
- Term limits for public office
- Strict penalties for abuse of office
- Citizen's Charters
- Stakeholder empowerment

Judicial Reforms

- Limit writ jurisdiction
- Increase number of courts
- Local courts in local language (Gram Nyayalaya)
- Time bound justice
- Independent mechanism for judicial appointments
- Independent crime investigation

What can Civil Society do?

- When political process fails, the ball is with citizens, the ultimate sovereigns
- Local assertion
- State-level reforms
- National platform for larger reforms

What can Citizens do?

- Resist misgovernance
- Check corruption
- Influence public discourse
- Channel resources better
- Enforce better services
- Bring pressure for reforms

Approaches to Citizens' Action

- Collective, informed assertion
- Wide dissemination of information
- Effective mass communication
- Strategic intervention

Conditions for State-Wide movement

- A group of credible citizens with excellent track record
- Insights to political and governance process
- A practical agenda which unites all segments
- Professional, full-time, institutional approach

Citizens Initiatives – Lok Satta’s Experience

- People’s watch
- Election watch
- Swarajya
- Specific issue advocacy

Methods of Citizens' Action – People's Watch

- Collective informed assertion
- People's charter
- Lok Satta as platform
- Fight against corruption
- Fight for better delivery of public services

Methods of Citizens' Action – Swarajya

- Advocacy and campaign for specific reform goals
- Choice of goals
 - Locally achievable
 - No cost / low cost
 - Universally acceptable
 - Strategic goals opening many doors

Swarajya – Reform Goals

- Right to Information
- Citizen's Charters
- Empowerment of local governments
- Empowerment of stake holders
- Universally accessible school education
- Speedy justice through rural courts
- Toilet for every household

Methods of Citizens' Action – Election Watch

- Voter verification and registration
- Screening of candidates
- Know your candidates
- Common platforms
- State-level debates
- Training of volunteers
- Monitoring of polling process

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Methods of Citizens' Action – Election Watch

- Does not aim to affect the outcome
- Election time is ripe for awareness campaign
- Focus on remediable flaws
- Pressure on parties and candidates
- Idea of accountability

Impact of Lok Satta

- Citizen's Charters – introduced in 9 departments by AP government
 - State Electricity Board
 - Road Transport Corporation
 - Transport Department
 - Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board
 - Employment Exchanges
 - Commercial Taxes Department
 - Registration Department
- Citizen's Charter for Municipalities in A.P. – Lok Satta's creation – provides for compensation of Rs. 50/- day for delay in services – first in India

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Impact of Lok Satta

- Cessation of short delivery at petrol stations all over A.P. – benefit of Rs 1 crore / day
- Stakeholders' empowerment – laws enacted in the State to constitute water user associations and school education committees
- Toilets for every household – largely on Lok Satta's advocacy over 2 million toilets were built in the last 3 years
- Stopped enactment of a restrictive Societies Law and ensured passing of an enabling law (in collaboration with CDF)

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Impact of Lok Satta

- Several local successes
 - eg: Building regularization scheme - Kukatpally / Successful fight against central excise corruption in small industries in AP
- Creating awareness on Right to Information
- Election Watch – arresting growth of criminal elements in politics
 - eg: Could influence selection of candidate for ZP chairperson in Kurnool district through public pressure
- Lok Satta's advocacy made common electoral rolls for local, State and national elections a reality
- At State level, Tendered Vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repolls are ordered
- Lok Satta's surveys influenced Election Commission to make post office nodal agency for voter registration

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Impact of Lok Satta

- Lok Satta's work led to Delhi High Court judgment on criminal record of candidates
- Our advocacy of an alternative model for women's representation has altered the national debate and is now widely accepted
- India's leading movement for governance reforms
 - 20 % popular base in A.P.
 - Nationally recognized as a credible, non-partisan, effective platform to fight corruption, and seek better governance
 - Acquired the potential to help build a national movement