

LOK SATTA



People Power

National seminar on “People Oriented Administrative Reforms”

Mumbai

4th November, 2000

Swarajya

The real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused

- Mahatma Gandhi

Crisis of Governance

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

Key to Resolution

- Crisis encompasses all organs of state
 - Executive
 - Legislature
 - Judiciary
- Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
 - Politicians
 - Bureaucrats
 - Judiciary
 - Citizens
- Change in the rules of the game
- Not merely a change of players
- Focus on governance processes
- Not on contentious policy debates

Why is Governance Vital?

- Government spends Rs. 1600 crores every day
- Out of 27 million organised workers, government employs 70%
- Fiscal deficit (Union and States) has reached 10% GDP
- 50% Union tax revenues go toward interest payment

Is Money the Issue?

- **Sanitation**

- 140 million toilets needed
- Cost: Rs 35000 crores
- Equals just 24 days' expenditure

- **School Education**

- 1.2 million class rooms needed
- Cost : Rs 12,000 crores capital
- Rs 6,000 crores recurrent
- Equals 8 days expenditure - capital
- 4 days expenditure - recurrent

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%)

Dangerously stable equilibrium

- **Elections - a case study - Andhra Pradesh : 1999**

Expenses of parties : Rs 600 crores

— Returns to Politicians :

ROI	}	Rs 3000 crores
risk		
future		
personal		

— Actual extortion from citizens :

- rent-seeking at every level : Rs 30,000 crore
- harassment to ensure compliance - ten times

— Conformity :

- best option individually
- worst option societally

Way Out

- People's sovereignty
- Fundamental democratic transformation

Can economic reforms deliver

- Smaller and more focussed government will help
- But government still has large role

Irreducible role of government

- Law and order
- Justice
- Rule of law
- School education
- Primary health care
- Basic infrastructure

Citizens' initiatives - Guiding principles

- Freedom
- Self-governance
- Empowerment
- Rule of law
- Self-correcting institutions

Need of the Hour

- **Informed Citizenry with the capacity to**
 - resist mis-governance
 - check corruption
 - influence public discourse
 - channelize resources
 - enforce better services

All these require information

People's watch for public services

- Collective — **Lok Satta**
- Informed — People's Charter and training
- Assertion — Specific Campaigns
 - Local
 - State -wide

Lok Satta's People's Charter

- **Success of people's watch in AP**

Case Studies:

- Petrol bunks
- Registration department

Government's response

- **Citizen's Charters**
 - APSEB
 - APSRTC
 - Transport Department
 - Water Board
 - Employment Exchanges
 - Commercial Tax Department
 - Registration Department
 - MCH
 - Municipalities

Half - hearted and inadequate.

Still a first important step.

Election Watch

Verification of electoral rolls

Why ?

- Ordinary Citizens easily understand it
- Locally achievable
- Law is perfect - implementation defective
- Electoral rolls affect quality of elections & governance

Logistics

- Procedure — Election Watch manual
- Electoral Rolls — Supplied by Lok Satta
- Application forms — supplied by Lok Satta

Results so far

- **Estimated errors:**

 - About 40% in urban areas

 - About 10% in rural areas

- **About 10 Lakh Corrections through Lok Satta efforts**

 - 6,00 000 additions

 - 4,00,000 Deletions

Pre screening of candidates

- Legal position
- Criteria we adopted
- Election Watch Screening Committee
- Post Box No.100
- Public awareness campaign
- Communication to parties
- Cross-checking and screening
- Making lists public
- Local government draft Legislation
- Impact

Information lacunae - screening

- Government / Public records
- Police
- Ambiguity

Election Watch results

- **High Credibility**
 - Narasaraopet
- **Setting agenda**
 - Creminilasation
 - Money power
 - Electoral rolls
- Reduction in rigging
- Greater middle class participation
- Focus on governance goals
- Accountability to people.

Swarajya — Local goals

- Citizens's Charters
- Empowerment of Local governments
- Empowerment of Stakeholders
 - Parents (Schools)
 - water users (Irrigation)
 - Producers (markets)
 - Consumers (Fair Price shops)
- Right to information
- Rural courts for speedy justice
- Access to school education
- Toilets for every household

Successes in Swarajya

- Citizen's Charters
- A law empowering parents
(school education committees)
- A law empowering water users
(water users' societies)
- Toilets for every household as state policy
(15 lakh toilets built over the last 2 years)
- Local government electoral reforms
(partially accomplishes)

Local Governance

Votes \rightleftharpoons Welfare

Taxes \rightleftharpoons Services

Authority \rightleftharpoons Accountability

Why do people vote badly? Why don't people pay taxes?

Votes \rightleftharpoons Welfare

Taxes \rightleftharpoons Services

Authority \rightleftharpoons Accountability

Freedom of Information Bill - 2000

- **Defects:**

- Local governments ignored
- Political parties not included
- No penalties for noncompliance
- No external appeal
- No protection to whistle blowers.

Right to Information

- **Future Agenda:**

- Electoral reforms
- Local governance
- Stake-holders empowerment
- Subsidiarity
- Accountability Instruments
- Citizens Charters
- Independent crime investigation
- Speedy justice through rural courts

Concern To Action

- **Obstacles:**

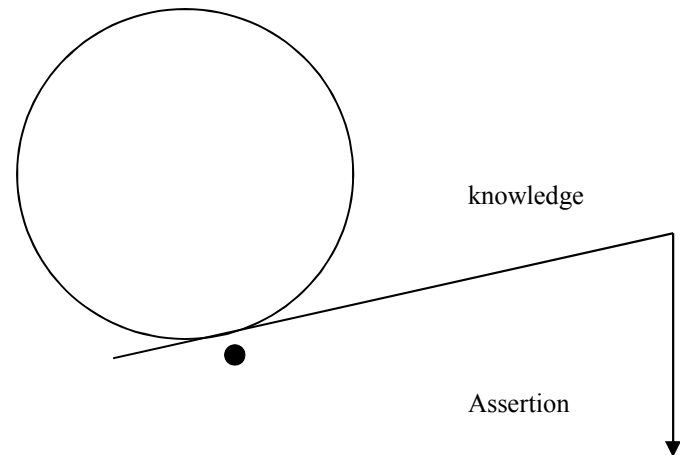
- Ignorance
- Fear
- Inhibition
- Lack of common platform

- **Requirements:**

- Trust
- Sense of equality
- Common fate
- credible common platform
- Knowledge

Keys to action

- Day to Day personal relevance
- Tangible, easy action
- Precise knowledge guiding action
- Meticulous preparation
- Wide dissemination
- High Credibility



Citizenship

- **Active:**

Votes \rightleftharpoons Welfare

Taxes \rightleftharpoons Services

Authority \rightleftharpoons Accountability

- **Passive:**

— Legal plunder

— Constitutional brigandage

— Anonymous tyranny

Window of Opportunity

- Impending fiscal collapse
- Citizens' disgust
- Unsustainable status-quo
- Relatively sound private economy
- Communications revolution
- Satellite television
- Rising expectations

Two paths to future

- **German example**

- -enhancing
- Democratic
- Orderly
- Integrating

- **USSR Example**

- Tyrannical
- Chaotic
- Disintegrating