LOK SATTA PARTY
New Politics for the New Generation

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

William Gladstone

Democratic Reform Agenda – Major Steps Forward

- Mandatory disclosure of candidate details
- Significant devolution of powers to local governments in AP
- Post Office for voter registration accepted and implemented (starting with AP)
- Anti-defection law
- Limiting the size of Council of Ministers
- Changes in Rajya Sabha election
- Progressive law on political funding
- Local Courts Law enacted (Gram Nyayalaya 2008/09)
- National Judicial Commission in pipeline

Is This Enough?

- Some of the reforms are in the right direction, but are not enough

- Systemic deficiencies in all spheres of governance left untouched

- If they are not addressed immediately, will undermine the unity of the nation and severely cripple the economic growth
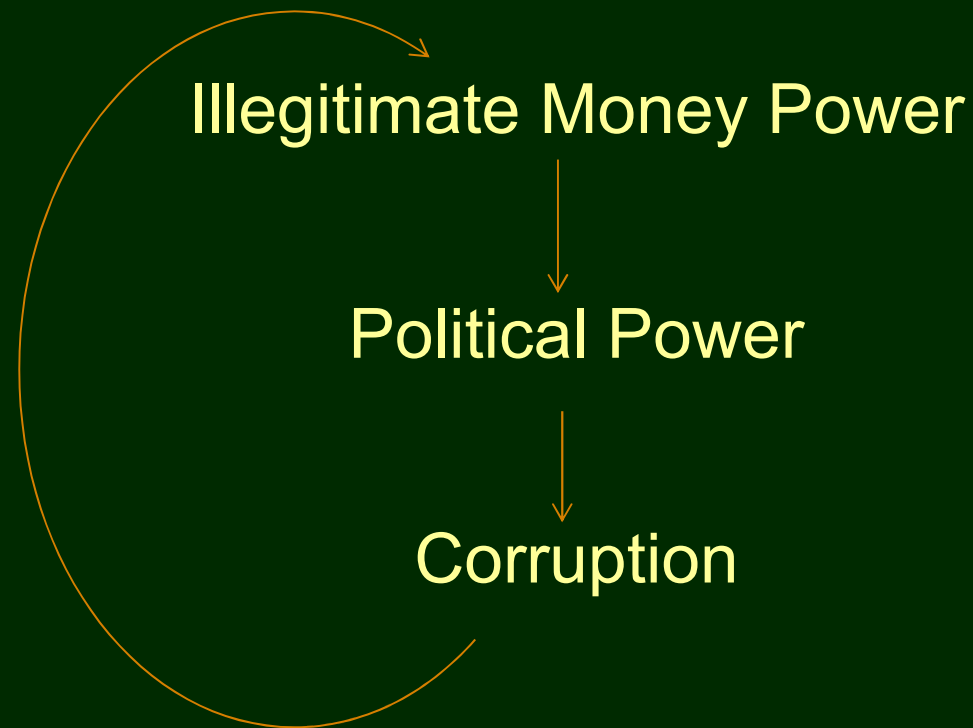
Shifting Nature of Corruption

- Inexhaustible appetite for illegitimate funds

  - Telgi stamp scam

  - Satyendra Kumar Dubey's murder

  - CAT exam papers' leak

  - Warrant against President Kalam and Chief Justice VN Khare

  - CGHS scam

System Caught in a Vicious Cycle

- Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds

- Most expenditure incurred for vote buying

- Rise of political fiefdoms

- Vote delinked from public good

- Taxes delinked from services

- Political survival and honesty incompatible

- Social divisions exacerbated

- Competence and integrity excluded

- National parties marginalized

Inexhaustible Demand for Illegitimate Funds

Illegitimate Money Power

Political Power

Corruption

Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Most expenditure is to buy votes

Voter seeks money & liquor

More expenditure

Large spending may or may not lead to success, but failure to spend almost certainly leads to defeat

Greater corruption

Greater cynicism

Voter seeks more money

Contd..
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Rise of Political Fiefdoms

Need for money, caste and local clout

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Parties are helpless in choice of candidates

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Rise of political fiefdoms

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Absence of internal party democracy

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Competition among a few families in most constituencies

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Oligopoly at constituency level

Vote Delinked from Public Good

Centralized polity

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No matter who wins, people lose

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Vote does not promote public good

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Voter maximizes short term gain

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Money, liquor, caste, emotion and anger become dominant

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Vicious cycle is perpetuated

Taxes Delinked from Services

Only 16 % of GDP collected as taxes (union & states)

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Fiscal deficits and crisis

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Higher Taxes	Desubsidization	Wage Reduction
↓	↓	↓
Unacceptable because of corruption and poor services	The poor do not see alternative benefits for the subsidies given up	Centralization and Art 311 preclude it

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Deeper fiscal crisis

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Poorer services and public goods

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Perpetuation of poverty and backwardness

Contd..

Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Political survival and honesty not compatible

Parliamentary executive

Government survival depends on legislative majority

Legislators spend a lot of money to get elected

They need multiple returns to sustain the system

Corruption and misgovernance endemic

Government has to yield to legislators' demands

Corruption is perpetuated even if government has the will

Honesty not compatible with survival

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Social Divisions Exacerbated

FPTP

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Scattered minorities unrepresented

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Marginalization and Ghettoization

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Strategic voting and vote bank politics

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Obscurantists become interlocutors drowning voices of reason and modernity

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Politicians pander fundamentalists

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Counter mobilization of other groups based on primordial loyalties

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Communal polarization and strife

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Competence and Integrity Excluded

FPTP

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Need for money power and caste clout

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Honest and decent elements have little chance

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Bad public policy and incompetent governance

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Deepening crisis

Oligopoly of Parties

FPTP

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Only a high threshold of voting ensures victory

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Parties with 35 - 50% vote, or social groups with local dominance get elected

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Significant but scattered support pays no electoral dividends

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Reform groups below threshold have no chance of winning

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Voters prefer other "winnable" parties

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Marginalization of reformers and oligopoly of parties

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Status quo continues

Representational Distortions

FPTP

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Women & deprived sections not represented

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Reservation with rotation is arbitrary and leads to proxies

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Perpetuation of dominance of traditional groups

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Representational illegitimacy

Key Reforms

Electoral Reforms	Funding
	Criminalization
	Voting irregularities
Electoral system	Proportional Representation
	Direct election of head of government at state level
	Regulation of Political Parties
Decentralization	Local Governments
Rule of Law	Judicial Reforms
Accountability	Right to Information
	Citizens' Charters
	Independent Crime Investigation

Defective Electoral Rolls

- 1999 Sample Surveys: 15% errors in villages

  40% errors in towns.

- 2004 Sample Surveys: 5.25% errors in villages

  12.15% errors in towns.

Simple Solution – Post Offices

- Post office as Permanent Nodal Agency for registration (Implementation started in 2008 with AP)

  - Voters list on display

  - Sale of electoral rolls

  - Statutory forms supply

  - Verification of applications by postman

  - Registration / deletion / correction

  - Provision for appeal

  - Home delivery of Voter ID Card !

Recent Developments – Post Office as Nodal Agency - Current Status

Implementation started with Hyderabad city after decade long campaign

- As on today 2.75 lakh applications received
- 2 – 3 lakh more expected by March
- To be expanded from Hyderabad to entire State
- Should be expanded to the whole of India in 2009
- Convenience for citizens; source of revenue for Postal Department

What Needs to be Done

- Effectively implement program in all delivery Post Offices in the country

- Launch massive campaign on television about this landmark facility

- Backend integration of processes for continual updation of voter rolls

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Local Governments

- Creation of District Governments; Direct election of 'Dist Prime Minister'; Dist cabinet; DM/ Collector as secretary

- True devolution of Funds, Functions and Functionaries; Dist budgets

- City Governments:

  - Direct election of Mayors

  - Empowered Ward committees, Area Sabhas – Effective participatory governments

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Police and Judicial Reforms – What needs to be done

- Crime Investigation free from unwarranted political interference; modern forensic labs
- Creation of specialised, local police forces – routine law & order, traffic, etc..; abolition of orderly system
- Establishment of Local Courts – Implementation of Gram Nyayalayas Act (enacted in Dec 2008)
- Independent district prosecution headed by a judge
- Establishment of special courts against corruption
- Creation of All India Judicial Service
- National Judicial Commission for appointments and removal of judges of higher courts (in place of Art 124)

Political Party Regulation

Membership

- Free, open and voluntary
- Uniform, objective conditions / no restrictions
- No arbitrary expulsion
- Due process for disciplinary action

Leadership choice

- By regular, periodic, free and secret ballot
- Opportunity to challenge leadership through formal procedures with no risk of being penalised

Choice of candidates

- By members at constituency level through secret ballot
- By elected delegates through secret ballot
- Central leadership cannot nominate candidates

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Direct Election of
Head of Government in States

- No one can buy a whole state electorate

- Image and agenda of leader will be decisive

- With separation of powers, there will be no incentive to overspend for legislative office

- At state level, there is no fear of authoritarianism as Union government, Election Commission, Supreme Court etc., will act as checks

- Once survival of the executive for a fixed term is guaranteed, there will be no need for compromise and corruption

Proportional Representation

- Competent and honest persons can be inducted into the cabinet

- Incentive to buy votes in a constituency will disappear

- Interests of local candidate will run counter to party's need to maximise overall vote

- Will give representation to small parties, scattered minorities and legitimate reform groups, forcing change

- Voting will be based on party image and agenda, not local expenditure

- Ignored sections will find voice and get representation

- A party's image and platform, not local clout and money power, matter

- Genuine competition among political groups and ideas

Proportional Representation

- Fair reconciliation of social and political groups

- No 'wasted' votes

- Disenchanted sections will find 'voice'

- Political fiefdoms will disappear

- Political process will get into a virtuous cycle

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Problems of Proportional Representation

Problem	Solution
• Political fragmentation in a plural society	• Reasonable threshold level
• Party bosses will be autocratic	• Democratization of parties and choice of candidates
• Link between voters and legislator is snapped	• Mixed system combining Proportional Representation with FPTP

A Suggested Model for India

- Mixed, compensatory Proportional Representation

- A threshold of, say 10% vote in a major state for Proportional Representation

- State as a unit for representation

Five Major Issues in PR

- Districting or territorial unit for PR application

- Electoral formula for distribution of seats

- Tiers for distribution of seats

- Threshold requirement for seat allocation

- Method of selection of party candidates

Threshold Requirement

- Necessary to prevent fragmentation in a caste-ridden society

- Must be high enough to force interest aggregation and promote ideology-driven politics

- Must be low enough to allow real competition to entrenched parties and force reform

- Must take into account current political realities

- Must suit our diversity

A model: - 10% of valid votes polled in a major state

          - suitably higher thresholds in smaller states

Selection of Party Candidates

- PR enhances the power of party bosses

- Party list becomes the basis of election

- The order of appearance in party list is critical

- Unlike in FPTP, a simple, list-based PR does not allow voters to judge candidates

- Democratic selection of candidates on the list, and their priority of election is critical

A model: - List will be for each electoral district

  (of say 10 seats)

  - Elected delegates of the party will select
  candidates and their order through secret
  ballot – district wise

Mixed System

- Suitable for India

- 50% seats filled through FPTP system.

- Balance seats filled such that final composition reflects voting percentages of each party – compensatory PR

- Parties with less than 10% vote will be disqualified, and the qualifying parties will share the 50% seats

- Independents, or candidates of small parties (below threshold) may be elected through FPTP. In such cases, those seats will be extra, and supernumerary seats will be created to accommodate them

FPTP – Catch 22 for National Parties

- Large National Parties (Congress and BJP) are getting marginalized in large States.

- As their seat share falls below vote share, voters desert them.

- If they forge local alliances, their political base is eroded where they do not contest.

- If they do not forge alliances, they cannot lead the Union government.

- Political fragmentation is the inevitable consequence

Why Should Regional Parties Seek Reform?

- P R will ensure greater voice in states/Union when they are in opposition.

- Sub-regional, single caste-based parties will be discouraged with threshold requirement.

- Direct election in States will ensure stable government, freedom from Delhi's pin-pricks, and better delivery.

- P R generally helps large national parties. Direct election in states helps regional parties. A grand national bargain is possible.

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How will These Reforms Help?

Vicious Cycle	Solution

Vicious Cycle

- Illegitimate money power leading to political power and corruption

- Voter seeks money and liquor

Solution

- Decentralization

   (Vote ⇌ Public good)

- Direct election (No incentive to 'buy' legislative office)

- PR (marginal vote not critical)

- Demand Side: Decentralization
- Supply side: Direct election PR

How will These Reforms Help?

Vicious Cycle	Solution

Vicious Cycle

- Rise of political fiefdoms

- Vote delinked from public good

Solution

- PR: Marginal vote not critical
- Direct election: Legislator has no 'disguised executive' role
- Party democracy: members can act as check

- Decentralization

  Vote ⟶ Public good
  Taxes ⟶ Services
  Authority ⟶ Accountability

- Direct election executive is unencumbered

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How will These Reforms Help?

Vicious Cycle

- Deepening fiscal crisis

- Political survival and honesty incompatible
- Under-representation of scattered minorities and growing polarization

Solution

- Decentralization

  Taxes ⇌ Services

  Authority ⇌ Accountability
- Direct election: executive free from vested interests (in states)

- Direct election: Separation of powers with institutional checks
- PR: Each group has representation
- No wasted votes

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How will These Reforms Help?

Vicious Cycle

- Competence and integrity excluded

- National parties and reform parties marginalized

Solution

- PR: Multi-member constituencies; marginal vote unimportant

- Direct election:
  - Appeal across the state decisive
  - Cabinet from outside legislature

- PR: Gives representation once the party crossed a threshold

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What will Decentralization Address?

- Illegitimate money power in elections

- Vote buying

- Vote delinked from public good

- Fiscal crisis

What will Direct Election Address

- Illegitimate money power and corruption (supply side)
- Voter seeking money (demand side)
- Rise of political fiefdoms (Legislative office and local clout have no bearing on executive)
- Vote delinked from public good (executive unencumbered)
- Deepening fiscal crisis (free from vested interests)
- Political dynasties (term limitations)
- Honesty and survival incompatible (survival depends on people's mandate alone)
- Competence and integrity excluded (State wide appeal matters. Cabinet from outside legislature)

What will PR Address

- Illegitimate money power in elections (supply side)

- Voter seeks money and liquor (supply side)

- Political fiefdoms (marginal vote not critical)

- Representational distortions (Vote share, not local concentration, matters. No wasted votes)

- Competence and integrity excluded (decent candidates can win in list system)

- National parties/ reform parties marginalised (vote share gives representation - not constituency victory alone)

What will Party Democracy Address

- Rise of political fiefdoms: Members decide candidates

- Honest and competent candidates will be able to win nomination

- Political dynasties will vanish

- Political process will gain legitimacy

How will Direct Election, PR and Party Democracy go together

- PR leads to fragmented legislature. Direct election will ensure stable executive independent of legislature

- PR has the propensity to make party leadership more powerful. Party democracy gives power to members preventing arbitrary choices.

- Pure PR leads to small, caste-based parties. Reasonable vote threshold requirements will eliminate the danger

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What will the System Look Like?

- Citizens have two votes - one for a candidate in the constituency; one for the party of their choice.

- Party vote determines overall seat share. The party gets seats allocated from the list (Its seat share less seats elected in constituencies)

- In states, citizens directly elect the head of state, who forms a cabinet of his choice, and has a fixed term. There will be term limitations.

- Citizens vote for a party based on its image, platform and the slate of candidates presented in the local electoral district (say, 5-10 seats)

"**Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat**"

- Sun Tzu