Right to Information and People’s Charter

Workshop on Strengthening Civil Society’s Role in Development in Orissa

2nd March, 2002, CYSD, Bhubaneshwar
True Swaraj

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

- Gandhiji
Citizens’ Initiatives – Guiding Principles

- Freedom
- Self-Governance
- Empowerment
- Rule of Law
- Self-correcting institutions and Instruments of Accountability
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
What is Right to Information

In the Indian context:

- Right to have access to information
- Right to be informed
Right to Information

On all matters involving exercise of public authority:

- Public money & utilization
- Laws and enforcement
- Policies and decisions
- Employees
- Delivery of services
Key Features of Lok Satta’s Draft Bill

- Provision for periodic reporting
- Proactive disclosure provision
- Reasonable time-frame
- Reasonable fee
- Automatic appeal in case of refusal
- Independent appellate process

contd..
Key Features of Lok Satta’s Draft Bill

- Penalties for non-compliance
- Clearly defined minimum exemptions
- Access to information available to legislature
- Placing all refusals before the legislature and the public
- Protection for public interest disclosures
- Strictly limited to – State subjects (list II of 7th Schedule)
People’s Charter – 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
Citizens’ Charters – Andhra Experience

- 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
Empowerment of Local Governments

- Transfer of funds, functions and functionaries to local governments

- Link between

  vote \[\rightarrow\] public good

  taxes \[\rightarrow\] services

  authority \[\rightarrow\] accountability
Stake Holder Empowerment

- Water Users Associations
- School Education Committees
- Ward Committees
Speedy Justice

- Limit writ jurisdiction
- Increase number of courts
- Local courts in local language (Gram Nyayalaya)
- Time bound justice
- Independent crime investigation
A Toilet for Every Household

- 70% households have no sanitation
- Average cost no more than Rs.3000
- SEBs annual losses are more than cost of toilets for all households
- A crash programme in 5 years with people’s participation
“The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to live under the government of bad men”

- Plato