

LOK SATTA
People Power

Civil Society and Strengthening of Democracy
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**“Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed
individuals can change the world.
Indeed it is the only thing that ever did.”**

- Margaret Mead

Governance and Human Rights

Three Key Goals

Goals	Components	State Action
Human Dignity	Freedom from: child labour, drudgery, hunger, public defecation	Strong policies Effective laws Resources
Accessible justice	Local courts, fair processes, just compensation for rights violations, and speedy resolution	Rule of Law, Local Courts, Judge-population ratio, Procedural changes, Accent on rights of poor
Opportunities for vertical mobility	School education, primary healthcare, basic amenities – water	Resource allocation, Sensible policies, Effective delivery systems, Accountability, Decentralization

Flawed Political Process

Institutional rigidities

System of alibis

Change of players vs. rules of the game

Honesty & survival not compatible

Over-centralization



Incapacity to institutionalize innovations

Flawed Democracies - Elections

Macro perspectives	Micro perspectives
Disaggregate volatility	Oligopoly of parties
Broadly reflective of public opinion	Local voting irregularities and fraud
Ruling parties & powerful candidates are voted out	Only players change, no change in rules of game
Rejection vote common	Issues and candidate merits are largely irrelevant

Political Parties vs. Societies

Political Parties	Societies
Monopoly or oligopoly	Free choice
Represent history, memories, aspirations of millions	Mere organisations of convenience
Seek power over all people	Pursue members' collective goals
Cannot be easily formed or built	Can be formed and dissolved at will
People and members have no realistic alternatives	Members have multiple options
Vehicles for political participation of citizens	Vehicles for voluntary pursuit of individual/group goals

Key Reforms

Process reforms	Funding
	Criminalization
	Voting irregularities
Systemic reforms	Proportional Representation
	Separation of Powers
Decentralization	Local Governments
Rule of Law	Judicial reforms
Accountability	Right to information
	Citizens' charters
	Independent crime investigation

Civil Society's Role

- Mobilize people for reforms
 - Local
 - National
- Strengthen democratic processes
- Adversarial and collaborative

Civil Society's Role

- Make the state do its job
- Take charge of areas un-addressed by state and market
- Assert people's sovereignty and community control
- Build a framework for social cohesion and a sense of common fate

Role of Civil Society & Legitimacy

Three Key Issues:

- Democratic Process vs. Policy Advocacy
- Methods of Engagement
- Internal Functioning

1. Democratic Process vs. Policy Advocacy

- Policy evolution is a legitimate function of political process
- Parties are meant for interest aggregation
- CSOs involved in democracy movements should focus on process issues.
- CSOs may have views on policies, and may even lend voice. But they cannot insist on a particular policy.
- But, Constitutionalism, rule of law and democratic process are non-negotiable

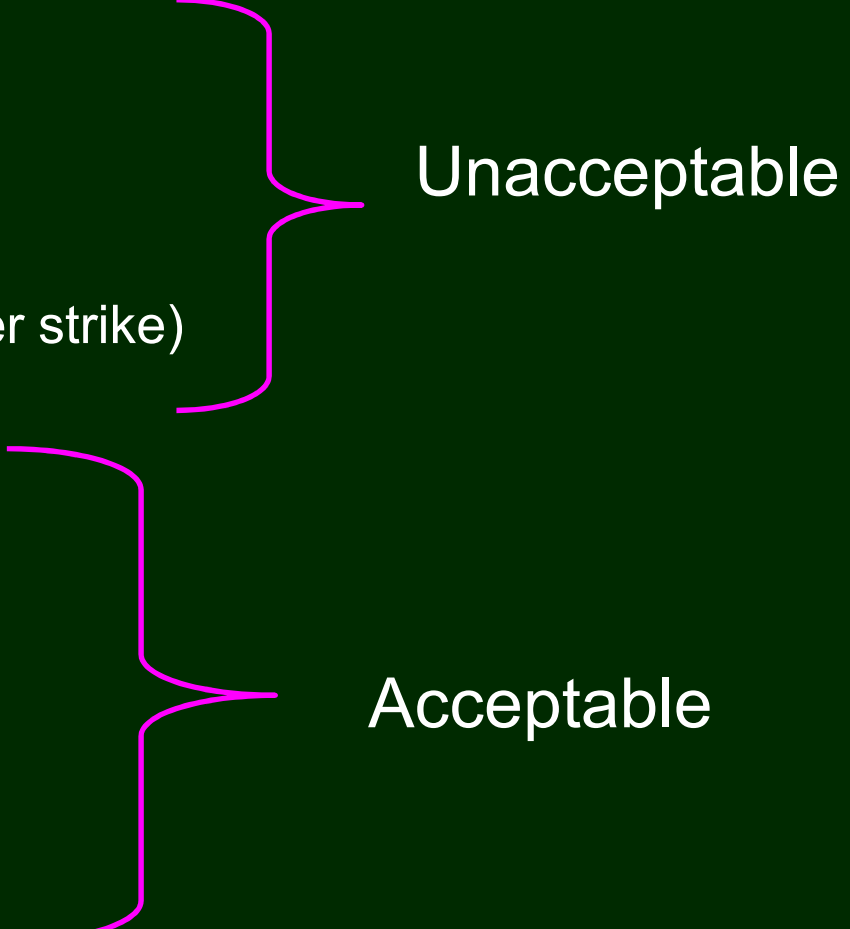
2. Methods of Engagement

Political Process vs. Civil Society

Nature of Society	Role of Political Process	Role of Civil Society
Mature Democracies	Solution	Specific Advocacy
Flawed Democracies	Problem	Movement for Reform
Dictatorships	Non-existent	Movement for Democracy

2. Methods of Engagement (contd.)

In societies with basic tools of democracy

- Obstructionism
 - Violence
 - Arousing passions
 - Emotional blackmail (eg: hunger strike)
- Unacceptable
- Reasoned public debate
 - People's mobilization
 - Marshalling facts
 - Logical Analysis
 - Negotiation and persuasion
- Acceptable
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3. Internal Functioning

- Democratic Structure
- Participative decision making
- Non-partisan approach
- Transparent funding
- Accountability mechanisms
- Voluntary code of conduct
- Disclosure and Transparent
- Funding: Democracy movement may best avoid government support and foreign funding
- Negotiation and interaction with government and parties are both necessary and desirable

Approaches to Citizens' Activism

Lok Satta's experience

- Election Watch – Non partisan activism impact on criminalization (facilitatory + exposure)
- Candidate disclosure – Adversarial activism
- Right to information – Advocacy and mass mobilization
- Funding reform – Collaborative activism

Approaches to Citizens' Activism

Lok Satta's experience

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

Future of Voluntarism

- Public service contractor (education, health care, slum resettlement etc.)
- Collaborator with state (community participation, watershed development etc.)
- Social innovators (new technologies, organizations and services)
- Social critics and policy advocates (child labour, environment etc.)
- Building civil society institutions (electoral reform, right to information, decentralization, police and judicial reform etc.)

Key Requirements

- Inspiration
- Leadership
- Legitimacy
- Funding
- Linkages

“The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to suffer under the government of bad men.”

- *Plato*