

LOK SATTA
People Power

Deepening Democracy – Agenda for Reform

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

William Gladstone

Macro Perspective of Indian Polity

- Disaggregate volatility
- Broadly reflective of public opinion
- Ruling parties and powerful candidates do lose
- Rejection/Negative vote pretty common

Micro Perspective of Indian Polity

- Money power dominant
 - Criminalization rampant
 - Voting irregularities frequent
 - People take money to vote
 - Caste and divisive impulses are prominent
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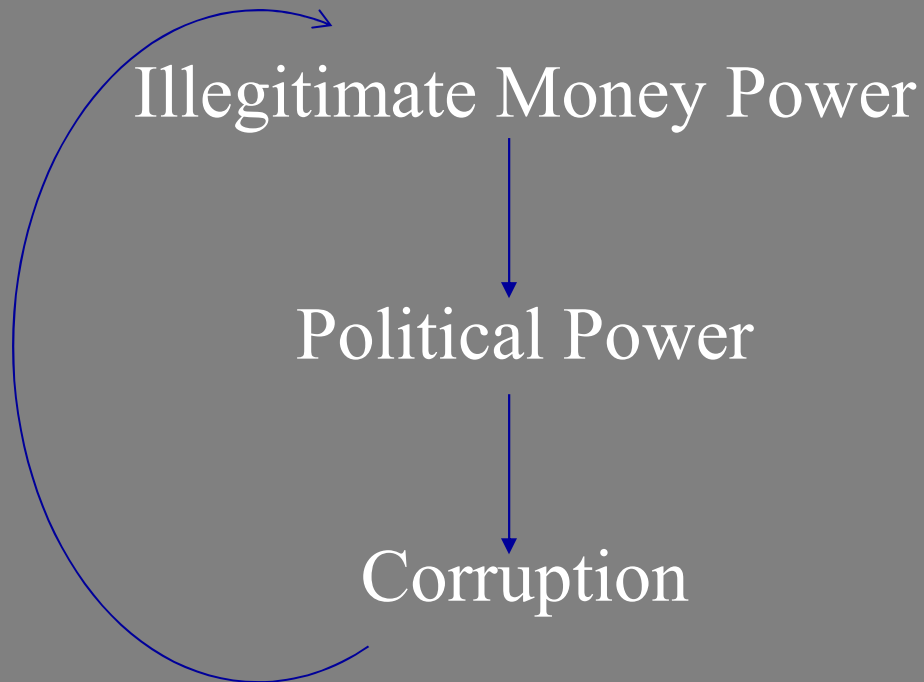
How is Democracy Surviving?

- A system of compensatory errors (competing distortions neutralize each other)
 - Strength of Election Commission
 - Tradition of neutrality of officials
 - Pre-polling process scrupulously fair (nominations, ballot papers, appointment of polling officials etc.)
 - Post-polling process - completely non-partisan (transport, storage and counting of ballots and declaration of results)
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Failure of Political Process

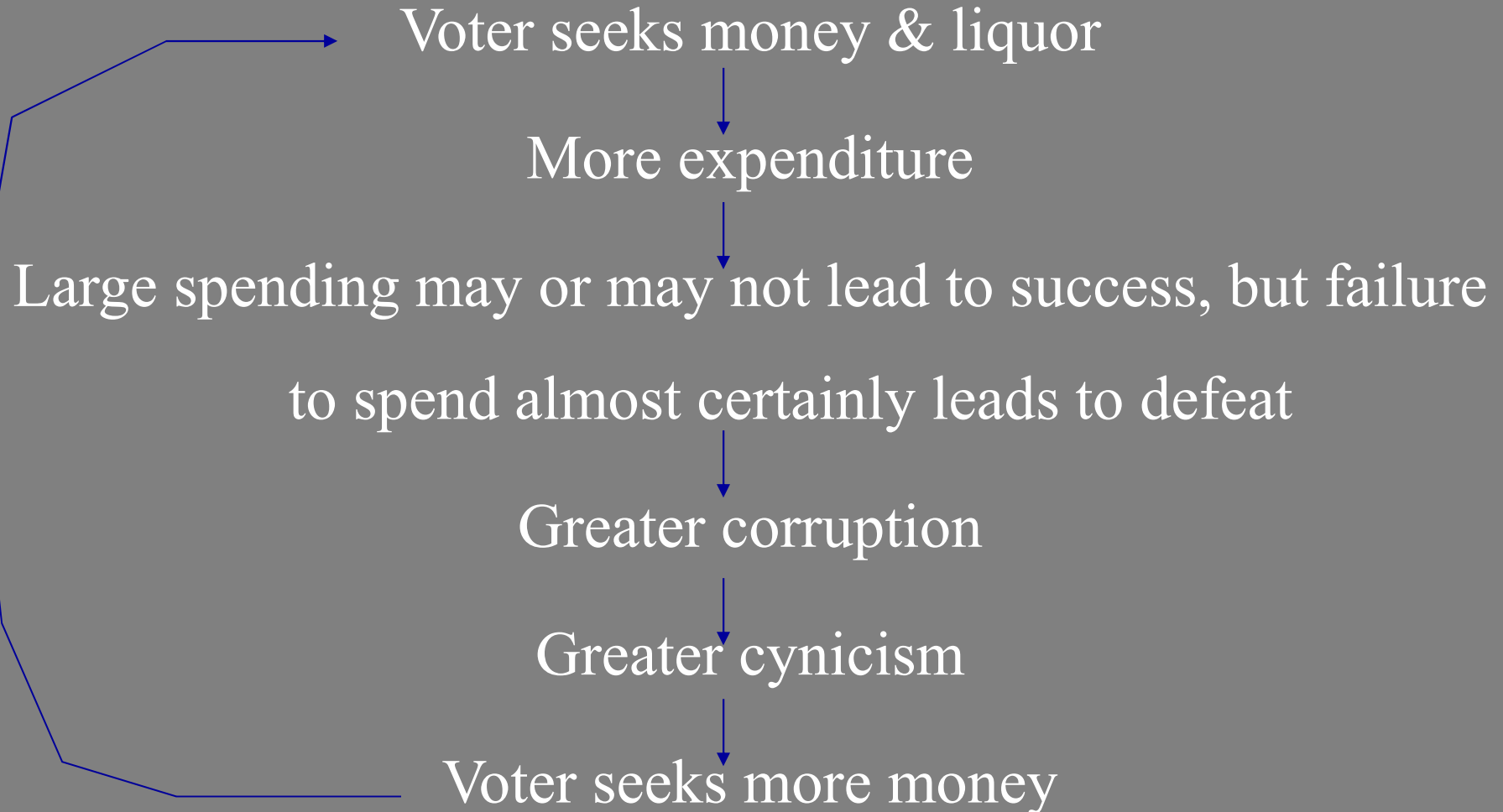
Interlocking vicious cycles

Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds



Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Most expenditure is to buy votes



Contd..

Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Rise of political fiefdoms

Need for money, caste and local clout

↓
Parties are helpless in choice of candidates

↓
Rise of political fiefdoms

↓
Absence of internal party democracy

↓
Competition among a few families in most constituencies

↓
Oligopoly at constituency level

Contd..

Vote delinked from public good

Centralized polity



No matter who wins, people lose



Vote does not promote public good



Voter maximizes short term gain



Money, liquor, caste, emotion and anger become dominant



Vicious cycle is perpetuated

Interlocking Vicious Cycles Taxes delinked from services

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

Fiscal deficits and crisis

Higher Taxes

↓
Unacceptable because
of corruption and poor
services

Desubsidization

↓
The poor do not see
alternative benefits for
the subsidies given up

Wage Reduction

↓
Centralization and Art
311 preclude it

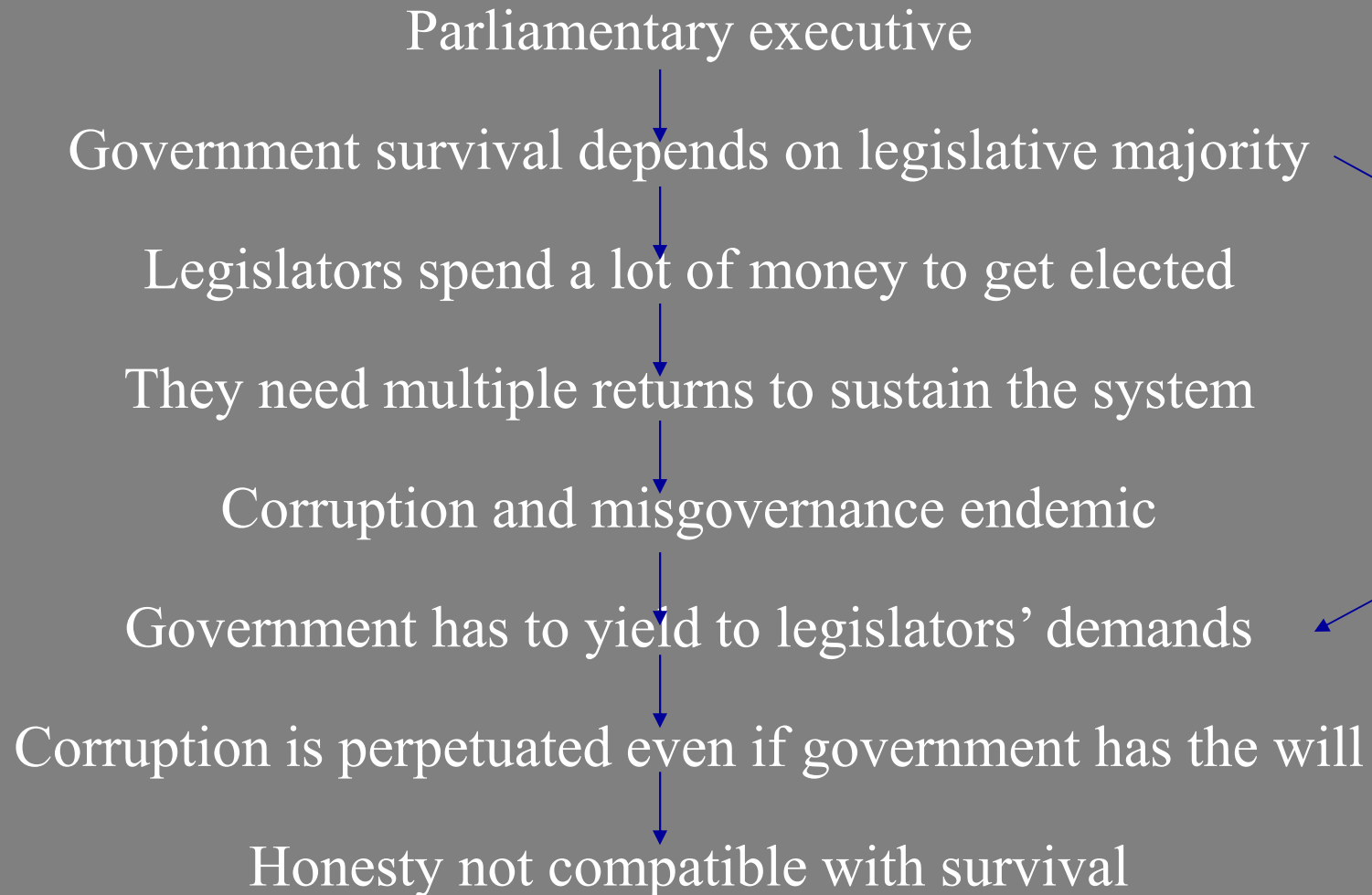
↓
Deeper fiscal crisis

↓
Poorer services and public goods

↓
Perpetuation of poverty and backwardness

Contd..

Political survival and honesty not compatible



Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Social Divisions Exacerbated

FPTP

↓
Scattered minorities unrepresented

↓
Marginalization and Ghettoization

↓
Strategic voting and vote bank politics

↓
Obscurantists become interlocutors drowning voices of
reason and modernity

↓
Politicians pander fundamentalists

↓
Counter mobilization of other groups based on primordial
loyalties

↓
Communal polarization and strife

Competence and integrity excluded

FPTP



Need for money power and caste clout



Honest and decent elements have little chance



Bad public policy and incompetent governance



Deepening crisis

Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Oligopoly of parties

FPTP

Only a high threshold of voting ensures victory

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

Significant but scattered support pays no electoral dividends

Reform groups below threshold have no chance of winning

Voters prefer other “winnable” parties

Marginalization of reformers and oligopoly of parties

Status quo continues

Contd..

Representational Distortions

FPTP



Women & deprived sections not represented



Reservation with rotation is arbitrary and leads to proxies



Perpetuation of dominance of traditional groups



Representational illegitimacy

What Ails Bureaucracy

- Life time security of bureaucracy
 - Penchant for centralization and secrecy
 - Lack of professionalism and specialized skills
 - Absence of incentives for excellence
 - No accountability
 - Corruption and maladministration
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Distortions of State Power

- Positive Power restricted
Negative power unchecked
 - All organs are dysfunctional
 - A system of alibis
Victims of vicious cycle
 - Change of players
No change in the rules of the game
 - Political process ought to be the solution
But has become the problem itself
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Keys 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
 - Institutions are the key
 - Resources are not a problem
 - The way they are deployed is the key
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Key Reforms

Electoral reforms	Funding
	Criminalization
	Voting irregularities
Electoral system	Proportional representation
	Separation of powers
Decentralization	Local governments
Rule of law	Judicial reforms
Accountability	Right to information
	Citizens' charters
	Independent crime investigation

The Track Which Impedes



Players (drivers)

**Democratic
Institutions (Engine)**

**Railings / Track
(political system)**

Recent Political Reform Initiatives

- Disclosure of candidate details
- Political Funding Law
- Changes in Rajya Sabha election

Reforms in the Pipeline / Floundering

- Post office as nodal agency for voter registration
- Anti-defection law changes
- Limiting the size of Council of Ministers
- National Judicial Commission
- Right to Information
- Women's reservation in Legislatures

Key Systemic Reforms

- **Proportional Representation**
- **Clear separation of powers**
- **Political party regulation**

Proportional Representation

- Gives representation to scattered minorities and reform groups
- A party's image and platform, not local clout and money power, matter
- Incentive to buy votes in a constituency will disappear
- Genuine competition among political groups and ideas

Contd..

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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

Problems of Proportional Representation

Problem

- Political fragmentation in a plural society
- Party bosses will be autocratic
- Link between voters and legislator is snapped

Solution

- Reasonable threshold level
- Democratization of parties and choice of candidates
- 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
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Districting

- Nation as single electoral district – Netherlands and Israel
- 22 Nations – smaller districts
- Districting needed for democratic choice of party candidates; and to facilitate voters' knowledge of candidates
- Model for India: A ten member district

Electoral Formula

Highest-averages methods

- d' Hondt
- “pure” Sainte-Lague
- “Modified” Sainte-Lague

Largest-remainders methods

- Hare quota
- Droop quota

Model for India:

- LR - Hare quota method

- Step 1: Obtain quota : $\text{Total votes polled} \div \text{No. of seats}$
 - Step 2: Decide party seats : $\text{Total party votes} \div \text{quota}$
 - Step 3: Un-allotted seats go to parties with largest remainders
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Tiers for Distribution of Seats

- A second tier to reduce distortions in allocation of seats in first tier
 - A simple model: remainders from local districts pooled at the higher tier
 - Seats allocated to parties on the basis of pooled remainders
 - Unallocated seats due to a party will go to those electoral districts with the highest remainder, and the next candidate in the party list in the district will be elected
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Distribution of Seats by the LR - *Hara quota* Method

Total Number of valid votes polled : 130,010; Number of seats to be allocated : 12

Votes required per seat (Quota) : $130,000 / 12 = 10834$.

Party	Votes	Quota	Quotient	Seats won
Blues	57000	10834	5.260	5
Whites	26000	10834	2.400 ^a	3
Reds	25950	10834	2.395	2
Greens	12000	10834	1.110	1
Yellows	6010	10834	0.550 ^a	1
Pinks	3050	10834	0.280	0
Total	130,010		10+(2) ^b	12

a. Seats going to the parties with the largest remainders.

b. Total number of seats allocated through largest remainders.

(Source: Andre Blais and Louis Massicotte: 'Electoral Systems' in Lawrence Leduc etl 'Comparing Democracies Election and Voting in Global Perspective' Sage, London 1996, Table 2.2,p.59)

Distribution of Seats in the Second Tier

Total number of seats unallocated in all districts: 12

Party	Total of Remainders in all Districts	Seats Allocated
Blues	3.81	$3 + 1^a = 4$
Whites	2.05	$2 + 0 = 2$
Reds	2.67	$2 + 0 = 2$
Greens	1.78	$1 + 1^a = 1$
Yellows	0.96	$0 + 1^a = 1$
Pinks	0.73	$0 + 1^a = 1$
Total	12	$8 + 4^a = 12$

a: Seats allocated on the basis of Largest Remainder

Distribution of Seats in a Party Among Districts

Blues Party's allocation in the second tier : 04.00; Number of districts 10.00

Total remainder for the second tier 03.81

District No.	Remainder in the quotient	Allocation of additional seats
1	0.32	0
2	0.78 ^a	1
3	0.12	0
4	0.56 ^a	1
5	0.24	0
6	0.08	0
7	0.38	0
8	0.69 ^a	1
9	0.16	0
10	0.48 ^a	1
Total	3.81	4

^a: Seats allocated on the basis of Largest Remainder

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

Sample Distribution of Seats in Mixed Compensatory PR System

Number of Seats to be distributed: 31

SL No.	Party	No. of Votes	No. Seats won in Constituencies
1	A	18,900	9
2	B	12,900	4
3	C	1,900	2
4	D	3,200	1
Total		36,900	16

Number of seats as per PR system: -

Party A: -	$18,900 \times 31 / 36,900$	=	15.878	= 15+1	= 16
Party B: -	$12,900 \times 31 / 36,900$	=	10.837	= 10+1	= 11
Party C: -	$1,900 \times 31 / 36,900$	=	1.596	= 1+0	= 1
Party D: -	$3,200 \times 31 / 36,900$	=	2.688	= 2+1	= 3

Sample Distribution of Seats in Mixed Compensatory PR System

Final composition of legislature from the State

SL No.	Party	No. Eligible under PR System	No. of Seats won in Constituencies	Balance No. drawn from party	Total No. of Legislators
1	A	16	9	7	16
2	B	11	4	7	11

Strength of legislature (original)	=	31
“Overhang Seat” added	=	01
(Party "C" won 2 Constituency seats against eligibility of one)	-----	
New strength of legislature	=	32
	=====	

Other Reforms

- Direct election of head of government at State and local levels
 - 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
 - Honest leaders can survive in public office
 - There will be checks and balances to prevent abuse of office
-

Other Reforms

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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“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat ”

- *Sun Tzu*