Democratic Revival – an Agenda for Action

Dr MCR HRD, Hyderabad- 10th Sept, 2013

by

Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan

Lok Satta / Foundation for Democratic Reforms
Flat No. 801 & 806, Srinivasa Towers, Beside ITC Kakatiya Hotel, Begumpet, Hyderabad – 500016 Tel: 91-40-23419949; fax: 23419948
email: drjploksatta@gmail.com
The purpose of a government is to make it easy for people to do good and difficult to do evil.

William Gladstone
Democracy – Myron Weiner’s Four Conditions

- Competitive elections
- Political freedoms for all
- Peaceful transfer of power and no retribution
- Real power with elected governments
Distortions of state power

- Positive Power restricted
  Negative Power unchecked

- State 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
Indian democracy is a work in progress

Policymakers have responded to emerging challenges:

• 73rd, 74th Amendments – Local Governments (1993)
• Voter registration and electoral process reforms (past 15 years)
• Mandatory disclosure of candidates antecedents (2003)
• Political funding reforms (2003)
• Strengthening anti-defection law (2003)
• Limiting size of cabinet (2003)
• Rajya Sabha elections reforms (2003)

Contd…
Policymakers have responded to emerging challenges:

- Right to Information (2005)
- Gram Nyayalayas Act (2009)
- 97th Amendment – Right to form Cooperatives (2012)

In the pipeline:

- Lokpal Bill
- Service Guarantee Bill
- Judicial Standards & Accountability Bill

Under consideration:

- National Judicial Commission
- Indian Judicial Service
The initial conditions...

1. Poor service delivery
   - bribes & red-tape
   - harassment & delays
   - influence peddling
   - No local leaders or local solutions
   - Systemic distortions not corrected
   - Links broken: Taxes↔Services, Vote ↔Public good
   - Authority ↔Accountability
   - Easy populism & wasteful use
   - Citizen & public servants roles reversed

2. Citizenship sense lacking
   - Elected leaders as ‘monarchs’
   - Legislators and party cadre should ‘somehow’ deliver
   - No link with taxes
   - No sense of public money, entitlement to public services

3. Over Centralization
Elected Legislator

- Money for votes
- Freebies, sops & doles
- Divisive politics

Mounting dissatisfaction

- Mounting corruption
- Political recruitments from dynasties, corrupt money bags

Burden on legislator & vast cadre network

- Even with best efforts, only 10% gets done

- Unsustainable sacrifice
- Ethical politics not sustainable

Good people marginalized in politics

Desperation of citizens

Vote as a lever
Consequences of Marginal Vote

- Decline of National Parties
- Rise of Sectarian Parties
- Fiscal Imbalance at the cost of Nation Building
- Reckless Populism
- Vote Buying
- Corruption

Marginal Vote