LOK SATTA

People Power

Fight Against Corruption - What can Civil Society Do?

A LOK SATTA Presentation

27<sup>th</sup> October, 2002, RIM, Bangalore
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
Main causes of corruption

- State monopoly
- Faulty, high cost of elections
- Centralization of power
- Absence of accountability
- Unchecked discretion
- No fear of punishment
Campaign Expenses – Vicious Cycle

- Illegitimate expenses are often 5-10 times the ceiling or more
  (Assembly ceiling: Rs 6 lakhs
  Lok Sabha ceiling: Rs 15 lakhs)
- Every crore spent illegitimately
  ↓
  Rs 10 crore returns
  (to cover ROR, Interest, personal upkeep, supporters, family’s future, next election costs)
  ↓
  Rs 100 crore collected through bureaucracy
  (for every legislator, there are 2000 employees who need to collect ‘rent’)
  ↓
  people suffer ten times more.
  Payment extorted, on pain of delay, harassment, humiliation, anxiety and greater loss.
Key Governance Reforms Needed

- Comprehensive electoral reforms
- Empowerment of local governments
- Instruments of accountability
- Speedy and efficient justice
Electoral Reforms

• Process Improvements
  – Preventing polling irregularities
  – Arresting and reversing criminalization of politics
  – Checking abuse of unaccountable money power in elections

• System Improvements
  – Political party reform
  – Proportional representation
  – Direct election of Chief Executive at the State level with clear separation of powers
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
Instruments of Accountability

- Right to Information
- Independent crime investigation
- Independent appointment of constitutional functionaries
- Independent and effective anti-corruption agency
- Term limits for public office
- Strict penalties for abuse of office
- Citizen’s Charters
- Stakeholder empowerment
Judicial Reforms

- Limit writ jurisdiction
- Increase number of courts
- Local courts in local language (Gram Nyayalaya)
- Time bound justice
- Independent mechanism for judicial appointments
- Independent crime investigation
Approaches to Citizens’ Action

- Collective Informed Assertion
- Wide Dissemination of Information
- Effective Mass Communication
- Strategic Intervention
Lok Satta’s Experience – Peoples Watch

- Collective Informed Assertion
- People’s Charters
- Lok Satta as Platform
- Fight against corruption
- Fight for better delivery of public services
Lok Satta’s Experience – Swarajya

● Advocacy & Campaign for specific reform goals

● Choice of Goals
  – Locally achievable
  – No cost/low cost goals
  – Universally acceptable
  – Strategic goals opening many doors
Swarajya – Reform Goals

- Right to Information
- Citizens’ Charters
- Empowerment of Local Governments
- Empowerment of Stake Holders
- Universally accessible school education
- Speedy Justice through rural courts
- Toilet for every household
Lok Satta’s Experience – Election Watch

- Voter verification and registration
- Screening of candidates
- Know your candidates
- Common Platforms
- State-Level debates
- Training of volunteers
- Monitoring of polling process

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Lok Satta’s Experience – Election Watch

- Does not aim to affect the outcome
- Election time is ripe for awareness campaign
- Focus on remediable flaws
- Pressure on parties and candidates
- Idea of accountability
Impact of Lok Satta

- Citizen’s Charters – introduced in 9 departments by AP government
- 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
- Cessation of short delivery at petrol stations all over A.P. – benefit of Rs 1 crore / day
- Stakeholders’ empowerment – laws enacted in the State to constitute water user associations and school education committees
- Toilets for every household – largely on Lok Satta’s advocacy over 2 million toilets were built in the last 3 years
- Stopped enactment of a restrictive Societies Law and ensured passing of an enabling law (in collaboration with CDF)

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Impact of Lok Satta

- Several local successes
  - eg: Building regularization scheme - Kukatpally / Successful fight against central excise corruption in small industries in AP
- Creating awareness on Right to Information
- Election Watch – arresting growth of criminal elements in politics
  - eg: could influence selection of candidate for ZP chairperson in Kurnool district through public pressure
- Lok Satta’s advocacy made common electoral rolls for local, State and national elections a reality
- At State level, Tendered Vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repolls are ordered
- Lok Satta’s surveys influenced Election Commission to make post office nodal agency for voter registration

contd..
Impact of Lok Satta

- Lok Satta’s work led the movement for candidate disclosures
- Our advocacy of an alternative model for women’s representation has altered the national debate and is now widely accepted
- India’s leading movement for governance reforms
  - 30% popular base in A.P.
  - Nationally recognized as a credible, non-partisan, effective platform to fight corruption, and seek better governance
  - Acquired the potential to help build a national movement
What is Required to Build a Statewide Movement?

- A group of credible persons with excellent track record
- Deep insights into political and governance process
- An agenda that is acceptable to all segments
- Collective informed assertion on specific issues
- Fulltime commitment and professionalism
- Building a platform with brand image
What can Civil Society in Karnataka do?

Focus on four areas

– People’s Watch – fight against corruption and misgovernance
– Specific local goals of reform
– Election Watch
– National platform building
Questions to be Answered

- How do we build a nucleus for active citizenship in Karnataka?
- What are the goals and issues to be focused on at state level?
- What are the techniques of citizen assertion to be deployed?
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever did”

- Margaret Meade