

LOK SATTA
People Power

Good Governance - Role of Civil Society

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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

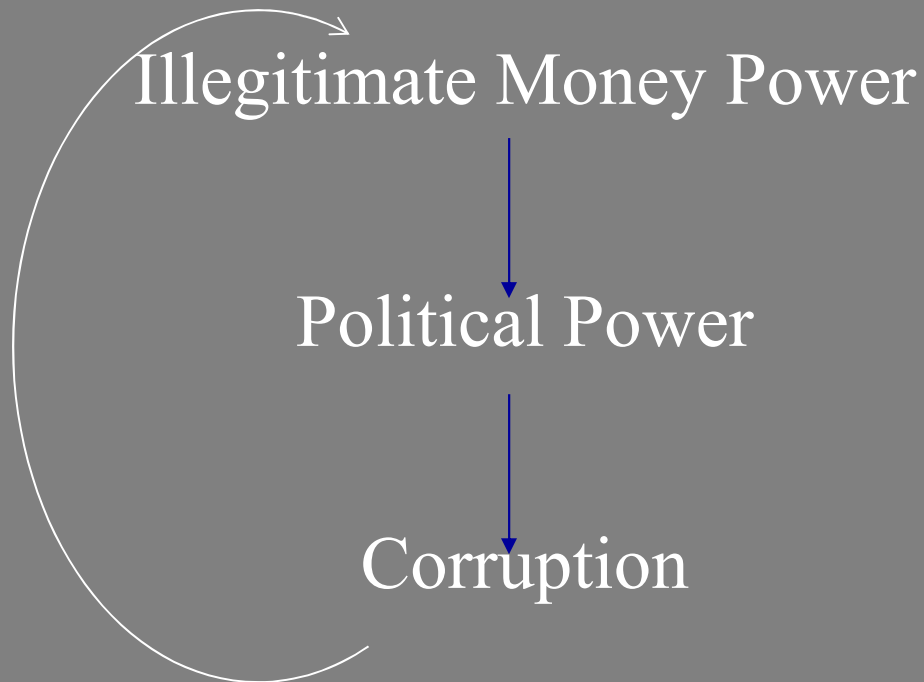
In a Sane Democracy

- Political process should resolve the crisis
- Parties, elections and public office are the route to reform
- In India a vicious cycle operates

Failure of Political Process

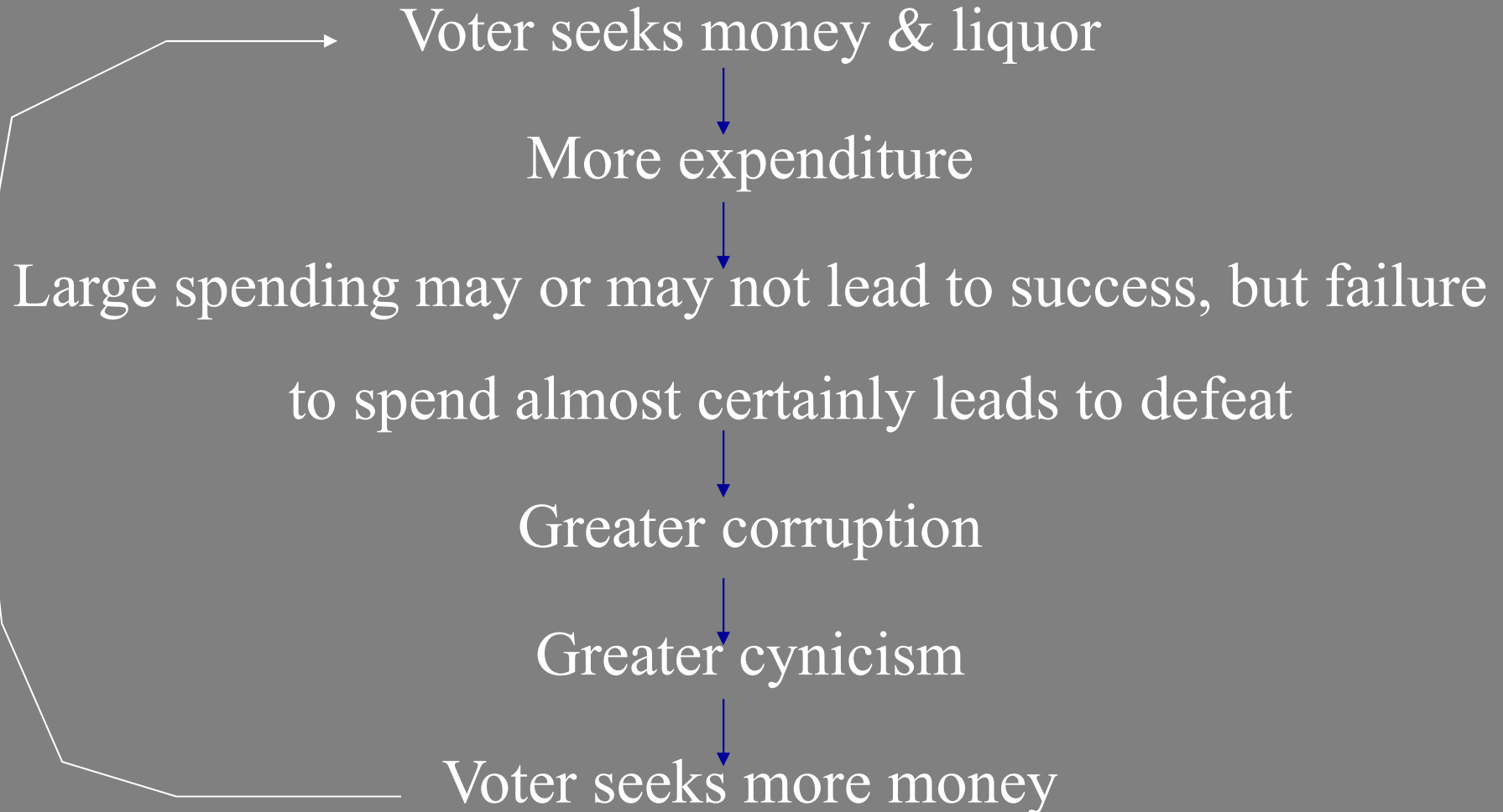
Interlocking vicious cycles

Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds



Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Most expenditure is to buy votes



Contd..

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

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

Contd..

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

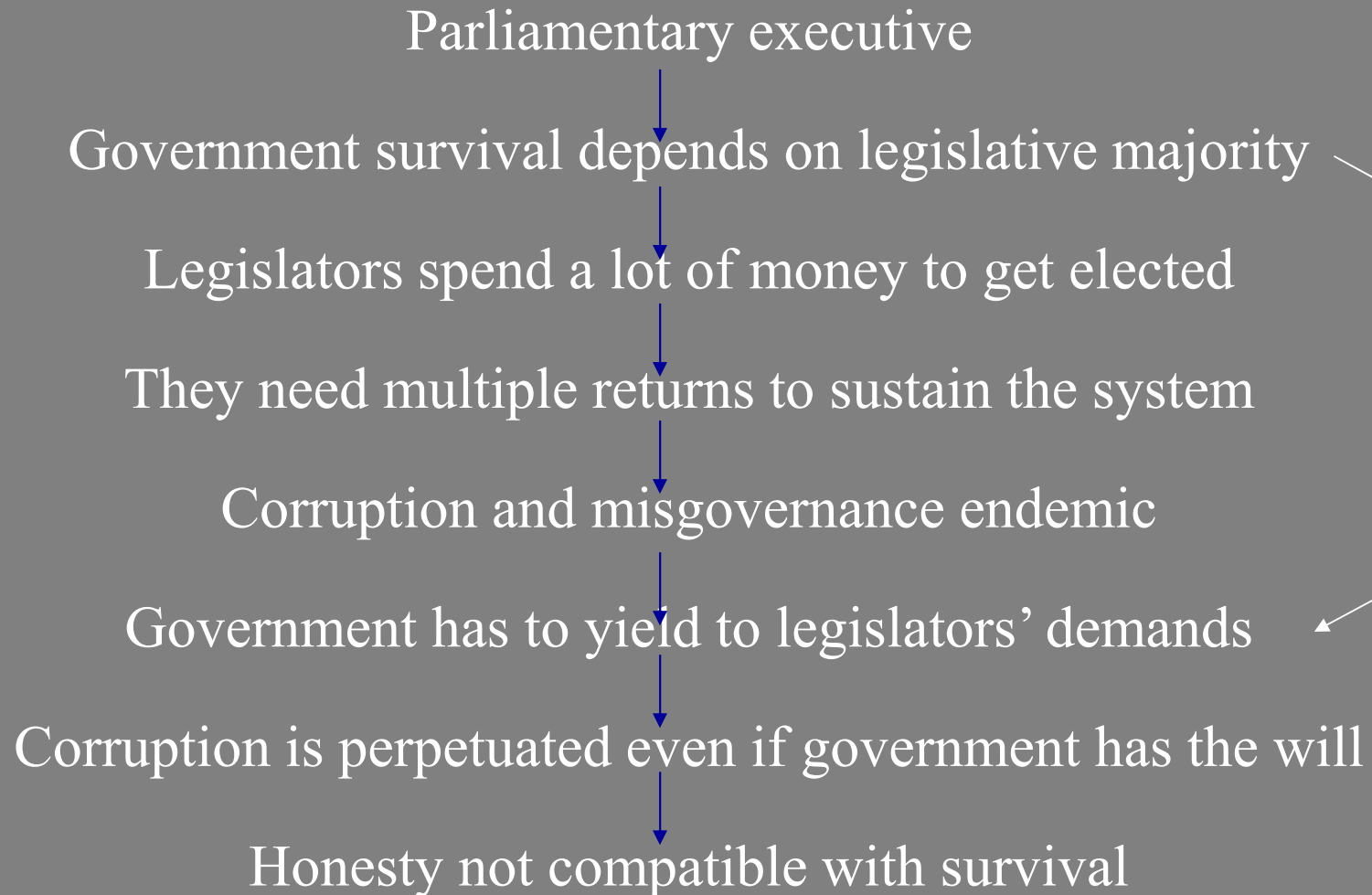
Deeper fiscal crisis

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

↓
Voters prefer other “winnable” parties

↓
Marginalization of reformers, and national parties

↓
Regionalization of polity & perpetuation of status quo

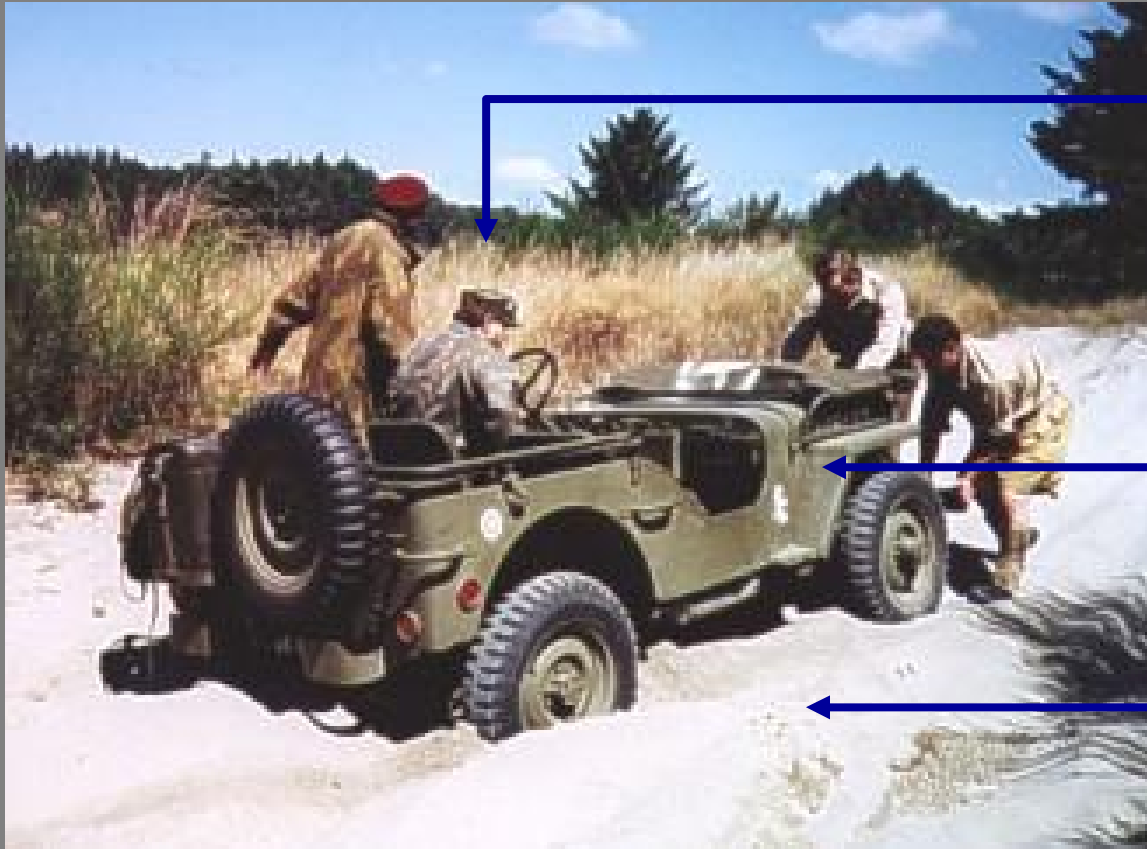
Way out

- Assert people's sovereignty
- Fundamental democratic transformation
- People centered governance

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)**

What can Civil Society do?

- When political process fails, the ball is with citizens, the ultimate sovereigns
- Local assertion
- State-level reforms
- National platform for larger reforms

What can Citizens do?

- Resist misgovernance
 - Check corruption
 - Influence public discourse
 - Channel resources better
 - Enforce better services
 - Bring pressure for reforms
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Approaches to Citizens' Action

- Collective, informed assertion
 - Wide dissemination of information
 - Effective mass communication
 - Strategic intervention
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Conditions for State-Wide movement

- A group of credible citizens with excellent track record
- Insights to political and governance process
- A practical agenda which unites all segments
- Professional, full-time, institutional approach

Citizens Initiatives – Lok Satta's Experience

- People's watch
- Election watch
- Swarajya
- Specific issue advocacy

Methods of Citizens' Action – People's Watch

- Collective informed assertion
- People's charter
- Lok Satta as platform
- Fight against corruption
- Fight for better delivery of public services

Methods of Citizens' Action – Swarajya

- Advocacy and campaign for specific reform goals
- Choice of goals
 - Locally achievable
 - No cost / low cost
 - Universally acceptable
 - Strategic goals opening many doors

Swarajya – 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

Methods of Citizens' Action – Election Watch

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

contd..

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
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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..

Contd..

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

Separation of Powers

- 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
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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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Window of Opportunity

- Deepening fiscal crisis
 - Citizen's disgust and concern
 - Unsustainable status quo
 - Relatively sound private economy
 - Demographic changes and rising expectations
 - Communications revolution
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Conditions for State-wide Movement

- A group of credible citizens with excellent track record
 - Insights to political and governance process
 - A practical agenda which unites all segments
 - Professional, full-time, institutional approach
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Approaches to National Campaign

- Identify reform groups and support
 - Focus on key goals and mobilize public opinion and bring pressure
eg: disclosure; funding; alternative model for women's representation; Post Office as nodal agency
 - National communication campaign
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National Communication Campaign

- What are the reforms needed and why
- What is there in it for me as a citizen
- How can I participate
- In all major languages
- Taking advantage of Radio and Cable TV penetration

Two Big Challenges

- How do we get media time (as public broadcasting service)
- What is the response capture mechanism (infrastructure of institutions)

Two Paths - Choice is Ours

German example vs USSR example

- Freedom enhancing
- Democratic
- Orderly
- Integrating
- Growth-oriented
- Tyrannical
- Chaotic
- Disintegrating
- Debilitating

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

- *Sun Tzu*