



LOK SATTA

People Power

Overview

Meeting with Ms Archana Nambiar
3rd November, 2004, Hyderabad

Mission

To promote peaceful, democratic transformation of Indian Governance process and enable India to achieve full potential through good governance

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

William Gladstone

What is Lok Satta

A non-partisan people's movement for political and governance reforms

Lok Satta's Structure

Primary Units (3714)



Intermediary Units (520)



District Units (23)



Apex Unit

Lok Satta's Structure

- Grassroots people's movement (more than 100,000 members)
- Democratically elected leadership
- Decentralized operation
- Presence in all 23 districts and 70% of mandals
- 35% reach in AP
- Powerful voice on behalf of civil society

Who Support us?

- Contributions from supporters
- Does not accept non-Indian contributions, including any multi-lateral institutional support
- Volunteer driven – thousands of full-time activists
- Does not accept government funding

Key Premises

- Crisis is systemic
- Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
- Change of players not enough
- Change of rules of the game needed
- Values are not the issue
- Institutions are the key
- Resources are not a problem
- The way they are deployed is the key
- Focus on governance process and not on contentious policies

Lok Satta's Approach

- Non-Partisan and Pro-Political
- Advocacy of specific, practical and acceptable reforms
- Stress on Institutional Reform
- Constructive engagement with government and political parties
- Seek change in the rules of the game – not players
- Adopt best practices from across the world
- Optimistic movement
- Democracy is the only ideology

Guiding Principles

- Freedom
- Self-Governance
- Empowerment
- Rule of Law
- Self-Correcting mechanisms

Core Philosophy

- People are true sovereigns
- Public servants should be accountable to people
- Governance should be citizen-centered
- Collective informed assertion of public will

Constituency

- General Public
 - Inclusive
 - Accommodating core concerns
 - Shorn of ideology except democracy
- Opinion makers
- Decision makers

Lok Satta's Goals

- 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

Impact of AP Election Watch 1999

- Successfully prevented entry of new candidates with criminal record
- Placed the issue of criminalization of politics and the larger electoral reform agenda firmly on the centre-stage of political discourse.
- Lok Satta's EW work formed the basis for the successful litigation by ADR which led to the judgment on candidate disclosures.

Activities Undertaken in APEW 2004:

- Campaign against criminalization
- Media campaign
- Voter awareness drives
- Common Platforms
- Voter registration and voter roll surveys

Campaign Against Criminalization

- 1999 Election Watch – Post Nomination
- No significant impact on the voting behaviour as local factors such as caste etc. play a major role
- 2004 Election Watch – Pre Nomination
- Aim: To restrain political parties from nominating persons with criminal background.
- Problem: Identifying probable candidates.

Identifying the Probable Candidates – Criminal Antecedents:

- 1600 potential candidates from major political parties were identified
- 150 were candidates suspected of having a criminal/corrupt record.
- 74 candidates with some record of alleged criminal behaviour were placed before the committee.
- The committee deleted 23 names
- Final list of 51 prospective candidates with a criminal record.
- Acquittals - 13, 38 – cases pending , convicted and sentenced by a court of law, Rowdy sheeters or history sheeters

Criminal Candidates – Party Affiliation

Party	No. of Candidates
TDP	25
Congress (INC)	23
BJP	1
TRS	1
Ind.	1
Total	51

Impact

- Out of the 51 potential candidates only 29 were nominated
- Out of 29, only 11 candidates were elected
- Generated a fierce debate in the state and for almost 3 weeks the entire political discourse was centered around this issue
- Political parties were forced to ditch certain candidates due to the intense public pressure and media focus.
- But still some of the truly established candidates who have struck deep political roots continued to remain in the fray as the parties cannot contest in those constituencies without them

Common Platforms:

- Between the candidates of major parties.
- Very popular at the local level
- Assembly – 122
- Lok Sabha – 15

At the state level

- Former Home Minister Sri. Devender Goud of TDP
- Finance Minister Sri Rosaiah of Congress
- The debate was televised live throughout Andhra Pradesh

Defective Electoral Rolls

- 1999 Sample Surveys: 15% errors in villages
40% errors in towns.
- 2004 Sample Surveys: 5.25% errors in villages
12.15% errors in towns.

Recent Developments – Post Office as Nodal Agency

- Post office
 - Display of electoral rolls
 - Receiving of applications
 - Ascertaining residential address
- Modalities
 - Designated officer in all delivery offices
 - Forms supplied
 - Forms received only from the citizen or family member
 - No bulk applications
 - Checking report by post office (address)

What More Needs to be Done

- Permanent Mechanism at post offices
 - Display and Sale of Electoral Rolls
 - Voter registration on application at Post offices
 - Assist EC in revision of Electoral Rolls on permanent basis
 - Access, Transparency and appeal to check abuses
 - Mass communication campaign for Public education

Lok Satta – Funding Reform Law

- Recent Developments
 - The Sept 2003 amendments are far-reaching. India has one of the best funding laws.
- Key provisions
 - Full tax exemption to donors (individual or corporates)
 - Mandatory disclosure of all contributions of Rs 20,000 or more
 - Free air time on all electronic media – private or public – to recognized parties and candidates.
 - Removal of loopholes under sec 77 of RPA

Funding Law – Unfinished Agenda

- Free media time not implemented as rules are not framed
- No incentive to disclose, except tax exemption to donor. Severe penalties on donor for non-disclosure will be salutary. No donor will risk jail term for undisclosed contributions.
- Compulsory statutory auditing of party accounts must be provided for
- Election Commission to be the final authority for determination of compliance

Empowerment of Local Governments

- Transfer of funds, functions and functionaries to local governments

- Link between

vote \rightleftharpoons public good

taxes \rightleftharpoons services

authority \rightleftharpoons accountability

Lok Satta's Effort For Empowerment of LSGs

- Formation of Federation For Empowerment of Local Governments (FELG)
- One Crore-Signature Campaign
- Cabinet Committee invites Lok Satta
- Dialogue with Union Government
- Training for Elected Representatives of LSGs

Instruments of Accountability

- Right to Information
- Independent crime investigation
- Independent and effective anti-corruption agency
- Strict penalties for abuse of office
- Citizen's Charters
- Stakeholder empowerment

Judicial Reforms

- Increase number of courts
- Local courts in local language (Gram Nyayalaya)
- Time bound justice
- National Judicial Commission
- Independent crime investigation
- All India Judicial Service

Lok Satta's Methods of Intervention

- People's watch
- Election watch
- Swarajya
- People's Ballot / Signature Campaign
- Specific issue advocacy

Approaches to Citizens' Action

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

Lok Satta as a Platform

- Citizens encouraged to use Lok Satta as a platform
- Fight corruption
- Demand better delivery of services
- Work for specific reform goals

Keys to Action

- Goals should be of local relevance
- Locally achievable
- No cost / low cost
- Universally acceptable
- Strategic goals opening many doors

Impact of LOK SATTA

- Citizen's Charters – introduced in 9 departments by AP government
- Citizen's Charter for Municipalities in AP – 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

Impact of LOK SATTA

- 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)
- Several local successes
- eg: Building regularization scheme - Kukatpally / Successful fight against central excise corruption in small industries in AP

Impact of LOK SATTA

- LOK SATTA created wide public awareness on the necessity for a Right to Information law in the state to increase transparency in government.
- 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

Impact of LOK SATTA

- At State level, Tendered Vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repoll is ordered
- Altered the nature of debate on power sector reforms. Our proposal for micro privatization of distribution is accepted and adopted by the state government. LOK SATTA has emerged as one of the most authoritative and authentic voices on power sector reforms in the country.

Impact of LOK SATTA

- Emerged as a powerful advocate for genuine decentralization and empowerment of local governments.
- LOK SATTA emerged as a powerful civil society platform to give voice to people's concerns.
- LOK SATTA is the largest people's movement in AP reaching out to almost 35% of the state's population.

Lok Satta's Strength

- Clarity of goals
- Non-partisan and pro-political approach
- Target institutions not individuals
- Strategic interventions
- Full-time professional work
- Committed army of volunteers

Key Systemic Reforms

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

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

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

- *Margaret Meade*