

**LOK SATTA PARTY**

*New Politics for the New Generation*

## Political Reforms – The Agenda for Action

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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

# Nature of Our Democracy

## Genuine

- Elections
- Liberty
- Change of governments
- Political contention
- Independent judiciary

Contd..

Contd..

## Nature of Our Democracy

Deep rooted

- 1977 verdict
- Peaceful transfer of power
- Dalit and OBC empowerment
- Balanced federalism
- Local governments taking root

Contd..

## Nature of Our Democracy

### Stable

- Constitutional authorities
- Strong bureaucracy
- Tradition of neutrality of civil services
- Impressive administrative infrastructure
- Bipolarity in most states
- Stable conditions at the Union level
- Broad consensus on most policies

# Free and Fair Elections

- Disaggregate volatility
- Broadly reflective of public opinion
- Ruling parties and powerful candidates do lose
- Rejection vote common
- Strength of Election Commission
- No state-sponsored rigging
- Neutrality of civil servants
- Compensatory errors even when there are defects

# Keys to Resolution

- Crisis is systemic
- Most players/politicians 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



# Primacy of Politics

- To vilify politicians for the prevalent state of affairs is a knee-jerk reaction to a complex crisis that our democracy is facing
- There is no substitute to politics
- Politicians perform the two most complex tasks
  - Bridging the gulf between limited resources and unlimited wants
  - Harmoniously reconciling the conflicting interests of contending groups
- All this might result in misplaced faith in un-elected bodies

# Vilification of Politicians – Distortions

- Increase revulsion among middle classes
- Isolation of honest and competent politicians
- Failure to recruit fresh talent
- Bureaucratic inertia and negativism

# Vilification of Politicians – Distortions

- Usurpation of political turf by judiciary and other institutions
- Failure of rational public discourse
- Short-term populism
- Persistent anti-incumbency
- Good performance of individual legislators not rewarded

# Politicians and Reform Process

- There is a need for a comprehensive look at our political system
- The governance crisis is not limited to our political process alone
- Our bureaucracy and judiciary too have glaring inadequacies
- Any reform has to begin with the political process
  - Every election is a mandate for peaceful transformation
  - Politicians should drive change in other segments of state

# Political and Governance Reforms - What happened so far...

## Milestones

- Mandatory disclosure of electoral candidate details
- Political funding law reform (2003) enables transparent and legal contribution to parties
- Size of Council of Ministers limited (91<sup>st</sup> Constitutional Amendment)
- Tightening of anti-defection provisions in Constitution
- Right to Information Act (2005)

# Political and Governance Reforms - What happened so far...

## Milestones (Contd..)

- Citizen's Charters introduced in India
- Gram Nyayalayas law enacted (2008)
- National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)
- Procedural reforms in Indirect Taxation
- Voter roll-improvements reduce errors (from 44% to 12% in urban areas)
- Post Offices nodal centres for easy, permanent and universal voter registration

# Is This Enough?

- Some of the accomplishments are historic, but are not enough
- Systemic deficiencies in all spheres of governance left untouched
- If they are not addressed immediately, will undermine the unity of the nation and severely cripple economic growth
- Possible only through a truly New Culture of Politics

# Crisis of Governance

- Inefficient state apparatus
- Unresponsive bureaucracy
- Ineffective judicial system
- Increasing lawlessness
- All-pervasive corruption
- Criminalization of politics
- Money and muscle power in elections
- Political instability
- Erosion of legitimacy of authority



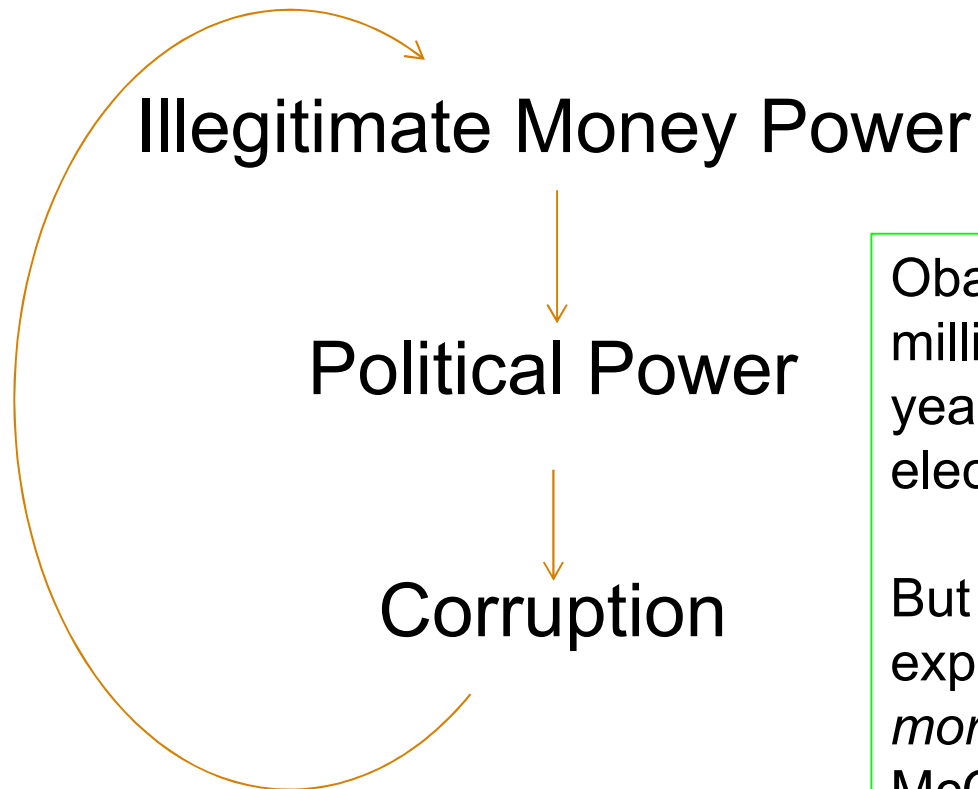
# Shifting Nature of Corruption

- Inexhaustible appetite for illegitimate funds
  - Telgi stamp scam
  - Satyendra Kumar Dubey's murder
  - CAT exam papers' leak
  - Warrant against President Kalam and Chief Justice VN Khare
  - CGHS scam

# But, system caught in vicious cycles

- Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds
- Most expenditure incurred for vote buying
- Rise of political fiefdoms
- Vote de-linked from public good
- Political survival and honesty becoming incompatible
- Social divisions exacerbated

# Inexhaustible Demand for Illegitimate Funds



Obama & McCain spent a record \$ 866 million for 2008 US elections – over two years, for all primaries and the national election.

But our traditional parties' election expenditure in AP alone, (in PPP terms), is *more than four times* the total Obama-McCain campaign expenditure.

*Who said Indian elections come cheap?*

# Most Expenditure is to Buy Votes

Voter seeks money & liquor

More expenditure

Large spending may or may not lead to success, but failure to spend almost certainly leads to defeat

Greater corruption

Greater cynicism

Voter seeks more money

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 De-linked 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

## Political Survival and Honesty becoming incompatible

Parliamentary executive

Government survival depends on legislative majority

Legislators spend a lot of money to get elected

They need multiple returns to sustain the system

Corruption and misgovernance endemic

Government has to yield to legislators' demands

Corruption is perpetuated even if government has the will

Honesty not compatible with survival

## Social Divisions Exacerbated

Scattered minorities unrepresented



Marginalization and ghettoization



Strategic voting and vote bank politics



Obscurantists become interlocutors drowning voices of reason and modernity



Politicians pander to fundamentalists



Counter mobilization of other groups based on primordial loyalties



Communal polarization and strife



# 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

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

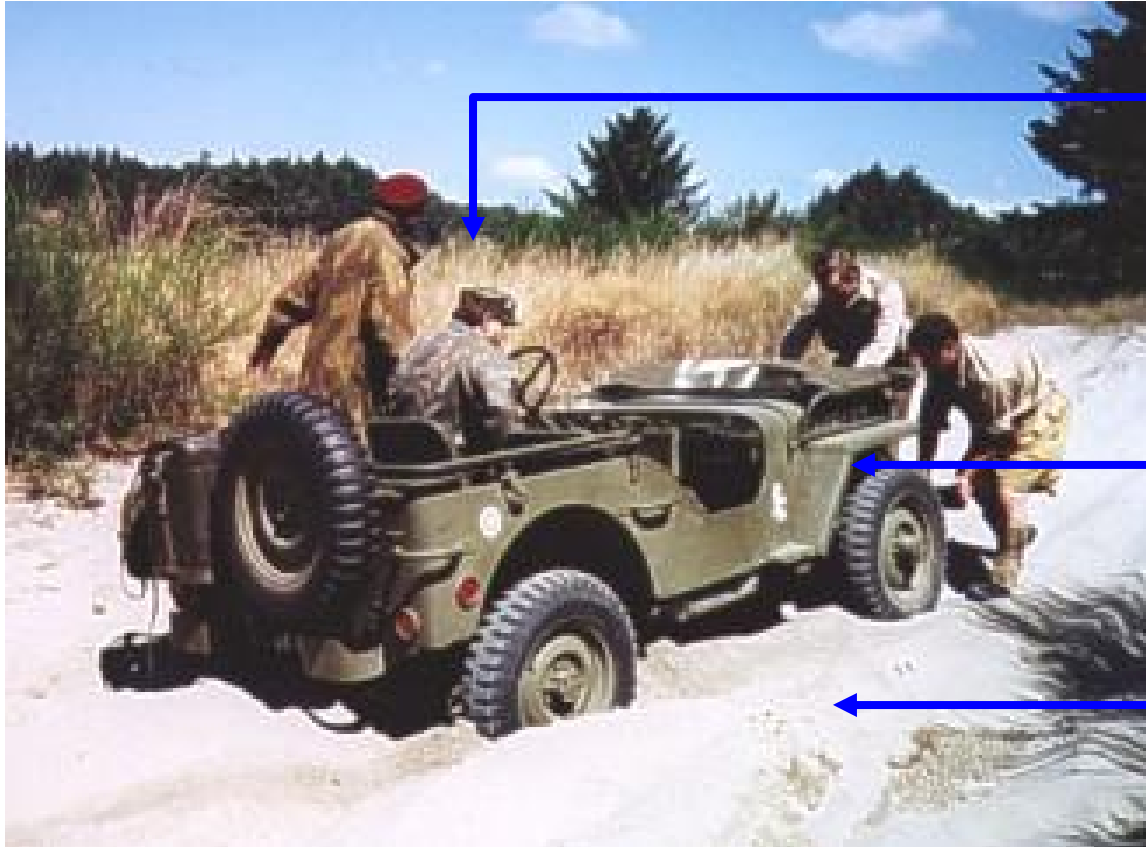
# What Ails Bureaucracy

- 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

# 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)**

# Key Electoral Reforms Needed

Shift from FPTP to Proportional Representation / Preferential Voting

- Every vote counts – seats proportional to votes obtained
- Voting will be based on party image and agenda; incentive to buy votes will disappear
- No wasted votes, disenfranchised sections will find voice, representation to scattered minorities and reform groups
- Political fiefdoms will disappear
- Political process will get into a virtuous cycle - genuine competition among political groups and ideas; space for competent and honest leaders
- Preferential voting rewards the best parties and candidates – no fear of wasted vote

# Political Party Regulation

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Membership           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Free, open and voluntary</li><li>• Uniform, objective conditions / no restrictions</li><li>• No arbitrary expulsion</li><li>• Due process for disciplinary action</li></ul>   |
| Leadership choice    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By regular, periodic, free and secret ballot</li><li>• Opportunity to challenge leadership through formal procedures with no risk of being penalised</li></ul>                |
| Choice of candidates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• By members at constituency level through secret ballot</li><li>• By elected delegates through secret ballot</li><li>• Central leadership cannot nominate candidates</li></ul> |

# Direct Election of Head of Government in States

- 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
- Once survival of the executive for a fixed term is guaranteed, there will be no need for compromise and corruption



# What will Decentralization Address?

- Illegitimate money power in elections
- Vote buying
- Vote delinked from public good
- Fiscal crisis

# Opportunities for Change

- Growing young population
- Thirst for change
- Economic growth and present crisis
- Communications revolution
- Nation has great leaders, opinion makers and change-makers in several fields
- *Convergence of these forces and trends needed*
- *Change by design is within reach; the window opportunity exists; but we need to act quickly*

# Change by Default or by Design

- Change is inevitable when status quo is unsustainable
- But we need 'desirable' change – not 'any' change
- If change is by default, it could lead to anarchy, disintegration or authoritarianism by invitation. Eg: 1991 – USSR
- Change by design is necessary and possible

# Two Paths - Choice is Ours

German example

- Freedom enhancing
- Democratic
- Orderly
- Integrating
- Growth-oriented

vs USSR example

- Tyrannical
- Chaotic
- Disintegrating
- Debilitating

“Politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries”

- ***Mahatma Gandhi***

