

LOK SATTA
People Power

Politics, Service Delivery and Citizen 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

Can Economic Reforms Alone Deliver?

- Smaller and more focused government will help
- But government still has a large role

Irreducible Role of State as 'Service Provider'

- Public Order
- Justice
- Rule of Law
- School Education
- Primary Healthcare
- Basic Infrastructure
- Natural Resource Development
- Social security

Why are Public Services not delivered properly ?

Service Provider Route:

Weak 'Client Power'

- Oppressive power of employees
- Socialist Mindset:
Employee as benefactor
Client as recipient
- High degree of centralization
- Lack of Information, Transparency and Accountability

Political Route:

Weak 'Client Voice'

- In a sane democracy, political process should bring relief and reform
- Parties, elections and public office should reform service delivery
- In India, politicians are 'victims' of vicious, inter-linking cycles !

Citizen weak before both Service Provider and Politician

Role of Citizens in Improving Service Delivery

- Collective, informed assertion
- **Strengthen Client Power (Short Route of Accountability) :**
Advocacy and pressure for specific accountability instruments.
Right to Information (RTI) and Citizen's Charters.
- **Strengthen Client Voice (Longer Route of Accountability) :**
Struggle for genuine governance reforms

Client *Power Route* : Improving Service Delivery

- Convergence of Services and Public-Private partnership.
eg: *e-seva*
- Focus on citizen friendly, simple models.
eg: Post office for voter registration and Passports
- Transparency Laws – Right to Information
- Citizen's Charters with penalties for non-performance
(only in areas with no supply constraints)
- Decentralization
- Innovative tools to curb corruption and improve quality
eg: False Claims Act

Citizen's role in Advocacy and Collective Action

Client *Power* Route : Stakeholder empowerment

- Stake-holding de-linked from Power
- Stakeholders will have greater interest in quality and efficacy of service
- Applicable in areas with clearly identifiable stakeholders such as farmers using irrigation facilities(WUA), parents sending children to schools (SEC), farmers in markets, etc.
- Stake-holders can become powerful drivers for change
- Stake-holders have reason to improve service as they benefit from it

Citizen's role via stakeholder group

But, Stakeholder Empowerment has its own issues !

Politicians' Difficulties

Water User's Associations

Being land owners, beneficiaries have higher awareness

Short-term dividend

Completed Government has a small bureaucracy to contend with

School Education Committees

Many of the parents are illiterate

Long-term dividend

Vast and powerful unions to contend with. The teachers unions control the election machinery.

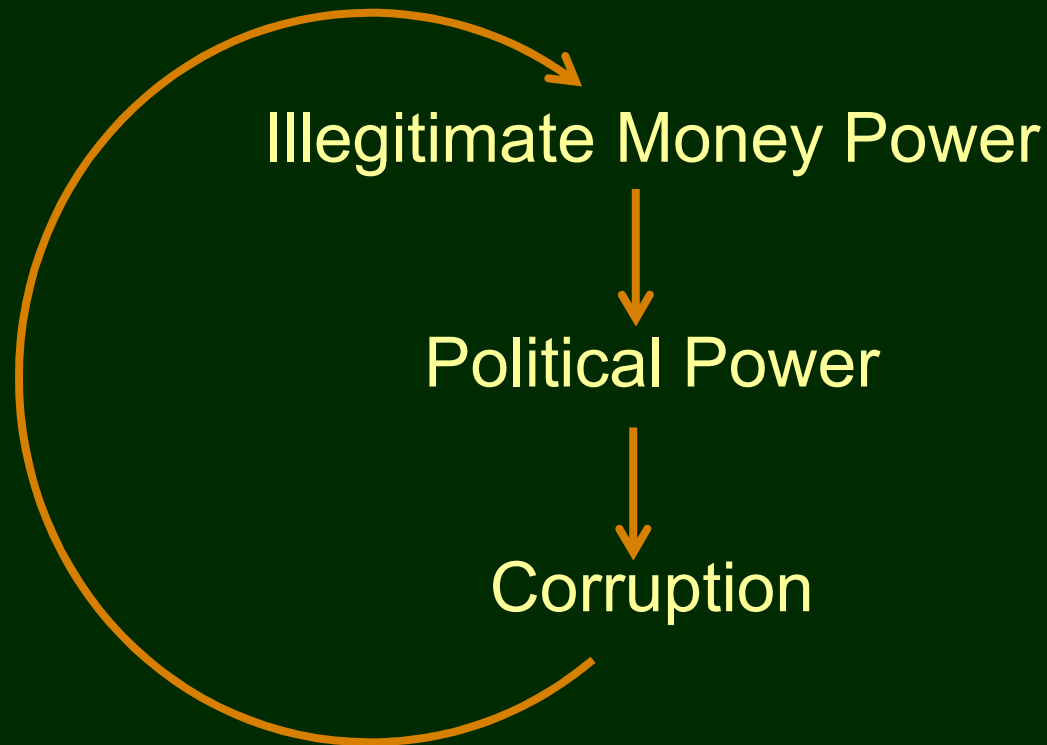
Eg: rumored that they helped the opposition congress party in AP, making the ruling TDP pay a steep political price; Shanta Kumar in HP voted out in 1998

You cannot empower a weak group overnight !

Politicians have genuine difficulties in ushering change in some areas.

Client Voice Route : Why is it weak in India?

Vicious Cycle 1: Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds



Client Voice Route : Why is it weak in India?

Vicious Cycle 2: High election expenditures

Illegitimate expenses are often 5-10 times the ceiling or more

For every crore spent illegitimately, Rs. 10 crore in return
(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.

Service delivery suffers – no incentive for politicians to usher in change

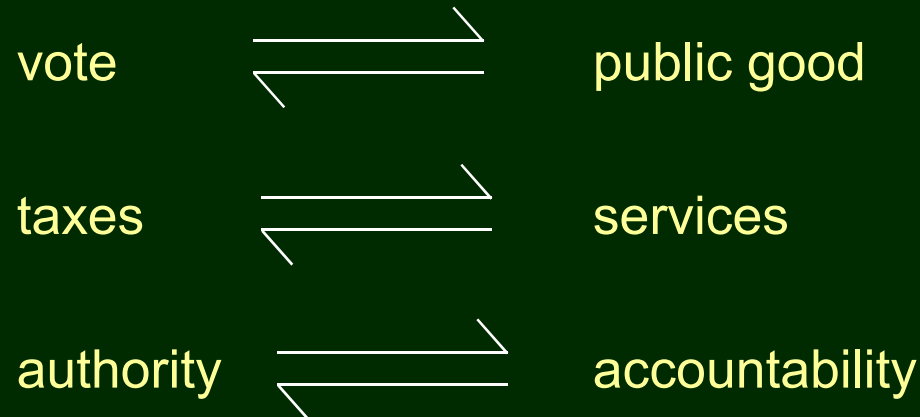
Client Voice Route : Key Reforms Required

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| | Funding |
| Electoral Reforms | Criminalization |
| | Voting irregularities |
| | Proportional Representation |
| Electoral system | Direct election of head of government at state level |
| | Regulation of Political Parties |
| Decentralization | Local Governments |
| Rule of Law | Judicial Reforms |
| | Right to Information |
| Accountability | Citizens' Charters |
| | Independent Crime Investigation |

One Key Reform (example)

Role of Local Government Empowerment

- Fragments bureaucracy and strengthens community
- Generates demand from citizens for better service delivery
- Easier to curb corruption at the local level
- Establishes link between



- Greater resource mobilization possible

**Local Governments strengthen both Client *Power* and *Voice*
But, their empowerment politically painful !**

Key Reforms Required : 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

“The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to suffer under the government of bad men.”

Plato

