

**LOK SATTA**

*People Power*

**Presentation to Consumer Groups**

**Jan 27, 2003, Hyderabad**

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

**Margaret Mead**

## **Mission**

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

# Consumer vs Citizen

- Consumer is a citizen too
  - Government enjoys a monopoly over public goods and services
  - Citizens own the government – not merely consumers of public services
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# Crisis of Governance

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

- 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

## Can Economic Reforms alone Deliver?

- Smaller and more focused government will help
- But government still has a significant role to play

# Why is Governance Vital?

- The government spends Rs. 1800 crores everyday
  - Government employs 70% of the 27 million organized employees
  - Fiscal deficit (Union and States) - 10% of GDP
  - 50 % union tax revenues - interest payment
  - Only 5 % of GDP spent on health, education and social security
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# Is Money the Issue?

## Sanitation

- 140 million toilets needed
- Cost: Rs 35000 crores
- Equals just 20 days expenditure

## School Education

- 1.6 million class rooms needed
  - Capital cost : Rs 16,000 crores – 9 days govt. expenditure
  - Recurring expenditure : Rs.8000 crores – 5 days govt. expenditure
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# 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

- Parties
    - Autocratic and unaccountable
    - Repel the best
    - A problem, not solution
    - Choice - Tweedledom & Tweedledee
  - Elections
    - Change of players
    - No change of rules of game
    - Criminalization
    - Money power
    - Flawed process
      - Electoral rolls (40% errors)
      - Bogus voting (22%)
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# Campaign Expenditure – 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.

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# Irreducible Role of Government

- Law and Order
  - Justice
  - Rule of Law
  - School education
  - Primary healthcare
  - Basic infrastructure
  - National resource development
  - Social security
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# What does the Citizen Expect?

- Justice
- Dignity
- Vertical mobility

# Way out

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

# Key Governance Reforms

- 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
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# Empowerment of Local Governments

- Transfer of funds, functions and functionaries to local governments
- Link between

vote  public good

taxes  services

authority  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
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# 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
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# 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

# 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

- People's watch
- Swarajya
- Election watch
- 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

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## Methods of Citizens' Action – 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 in A.P. - 9 departments
- A compensation of Rs.50/day for delay in services – first time in India
- Short delivery at petrol stations all over A.P. – benefit of Rs. 1 crore/day
- Toilets for every household – over 2 million toilets were built in the last 3 years
- Several local successes
  - eg: Building regularization scheme - Kukatpally /
  - Successful fight against central excise corruption in small industries in AP

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## Impact of LOK SATTA

- Stakeholders' empowerment – laws enacted in the State to constitute water user associations and school education committees
- Influenced public discourse on power reforms in A.P.
- Awareness of Right to Information
- Stopped enactment of a restrictive Societies Law and ensured passing of an enabling law (in collaboration with CDF)
- Our advocacy, as part of Forum for Democratic Reforms, of an alternative mode for women's representation has altered the national debate and is now accepted across the spectrum



## Impact of LOK SATTA

- 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

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## Impact of LOK SATTA

- EC accepts in principle to make post office nodal agency for voter registration
- Advocacy for political funding reform – a bill is now before parliament
- Election watch in several states

## Impact of LOK SATTA

- EW work in AP was the basis for movement for candidate disclosures
- 30-35% passive support in AP
- National Campaign for Electoral Reforms (NCER)
- Credible platform for national network

## Major Current Activities in A.P.

- Mobilizing 100,000 active citizens as watchdogs and activists
- Advocacy for Right to Information Legislation
- Expansion of Citizen's Charters
- Empowerment of local governments

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## Major Current Activities in A.P.

- Advocacy of legislation for Gram Nyayalays
  - Police reforms at state level
  - Focus on delivery of school education and public health
  - New stake-holder empowerment laws
    - Marketing committees
    - Empowering ward committees
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# Major Activities at National level

- Advocacy for political funding reform
  - Advocacy for regulation of political parties
  - Changes in voter registration procedure – post offices as nodal agency
  - Measures to curb polling irregularities
  - A series of national workshops (for 1000 activists) on active citizenship
  - Proportional representation and separation of powers
  - National platform for governance reforms
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# How to Build a State Wide 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
  - Full time commitment and professionalism
  - Building a platform with a brand image
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# Road Map to Reforms

- Specific reforms in 3-4 key states
- Building of state-wide movements in key states
- Creation of national platform
- National campaign for a few specific goals



# Resources

- Mostly volunteer time, energy and credibility
- Support in kind (infrastructure, printing etc.)
- Skillful use of media
- Limited cash support
- Limited funding for specific projects
- No foreign funding for now (as a policy)

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

**Plato**