LOK SATTA

People Power

Right to Information

Godrej Hall – LV Prasad Eye Institute

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens 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
Irreducible Role of Government

- Public order
- Justice
- Rule of law
- School education
- Primary healthcare
- Basic infrastructure
- Natural resource development
Is Money the Issue?

- The Governments spend Rs. 1800 crores everyday – AP govt spends 100 Crores each day.

  **Sanitation**

- 40 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
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
Keys to Good Governance

- Citizen-centered governance
- Efficient and focused government
- Accountability
Distortions of Power

- Positive power restricted
- Negative power unchecked
- All organs are dysfunctional
- Elections only change players
- No change in the rules of the game
- Authority delinked from accountability
- Alibis for non-performance
- Good behaviour not rewarded
- Bad behaviour not punished
- Honesty and political power increasingly incompatible
The purpose of a government is to make it easy for people to do good and difficult to do evil.

Gladstone
Keys to Resolution

- Change of players not enough, a change in rules of the game needed
- Values are not the issue, institutions are the key
- Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
- Resources are not a problem, the way they are deployed is the key
Our Key Governance Reforms Goals

- Electoral reforms
- Empowerment of local governments
- Judicial reforms
- Instruments of accountability
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
Decentralization

Vote $\leftrightarrow$ Public good

Taxes $\leftrightarrow$ Services

Authority $\leftrightarrow$ Accountability
State vs Citizen

Strong state → authoritarianism
Weak state → anarchy

Citizen-centered enabling state

- Community of Stakeholders
  - Local Government
  - State Government
  - Federal Government
  - Individual & Family
Speedy Justice

- Limit writ jurisdiction
- Increase number of courts
- Local courts in local language
- Time bound justice
- Independent crime investigation
Instruments of Accountability

- Right to Information
- Independent Crime Investigation
- Independent appointment of Constitutional Functionaries
- Independent and effective anti-corruption agency
- Term limits for elective office
- Strict penalties for abuse of office
- Citizen’s Charters
- Stakeholder empowerment
- Empowerment of citizens
The real Swaraj will come
not by the acquisition of authority by a few,
but by the acquisition of the capacity by all
to resist authority when abused

Gandhiji
What can Citizens do? / Need of the Hour

- Resist misgovernance
- Check corruption
- Influence public discourse
- Channel resources better
- Enforce better services
- Bring pressure for reforms
- All of the above need information
Approaches to Citizens’ Action

- Collective, informed assertion
- Wide dissemination of information
- Effective mass communication
- Strategic intervention
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
Swarajya – Reform Goals

- Right to information
- Citizen’s charters
- Empowerment of local governments
- Empowerment of stakeholders
- Universally accessible school education
- Speedy justice through local 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
- Pressure on parties and candidates
- Idea of accountability
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
- Toilets for every household – largely on LOK SATTA’s advocacy over 2 million toilets were built in the last 3 years

Contd...
Impact of LOK SATTA

- 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
- Creating awareness on Right to Information
- 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

Contd...
Impact of LOK SATTAN

- At State level, Tendered Vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repoll is ordered
- LOK SATTAN’s surveys influenced Election Commission to make post office nodal agency for voter registration.
- LOK SATTAN’s work led to Delhi High Court judgment on criminal record of candidates.
- Our advocacy of an alternative model for women’s representation has altered the national debate and is now widely accepted.
- India’s leading movement for governance reforms.
- Spearheading the National Campaign for Electoral Reforms eg., the recent candidate disclosures issues.
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
- Advocacy of legislation for local courts
- Police reforms at state level
- Focus on delivery of school education and public health
- New stake-holder empowerment laws
  - Marketing committees
  - Empowering ward committees
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
- Election Watch in other States
- A series of national workshops (for 1000 activists) on active citizenship
- Alliances & national platform for electoral governance reforms
The woods are lovely dark and deep
but I have promises to keep
and miles to go before I sleep
miles to go before I sleep

Robert Frost