

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

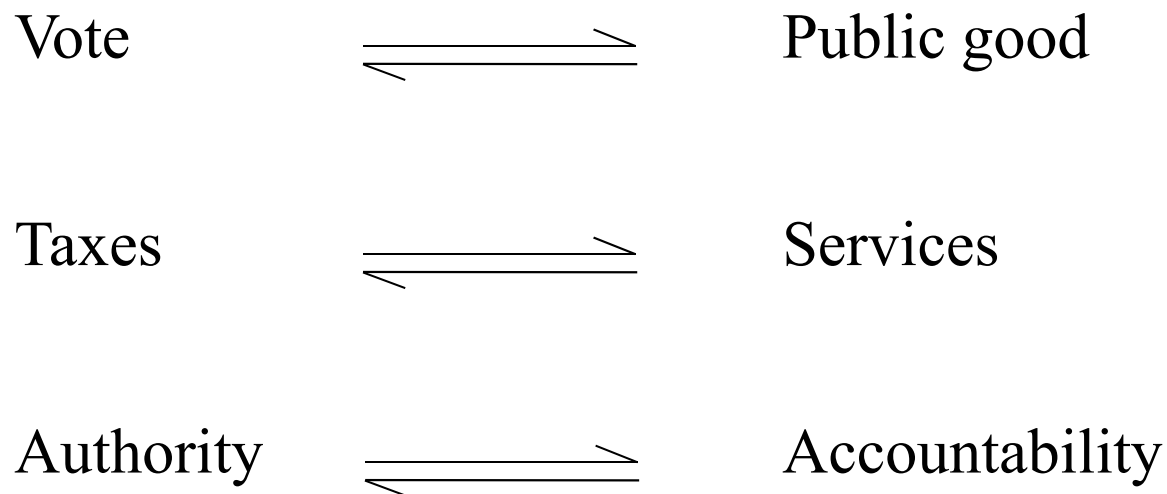
- Electoral reforms
- Empowerment of local governments
- Judicial reforms
- Instruments of accountability

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

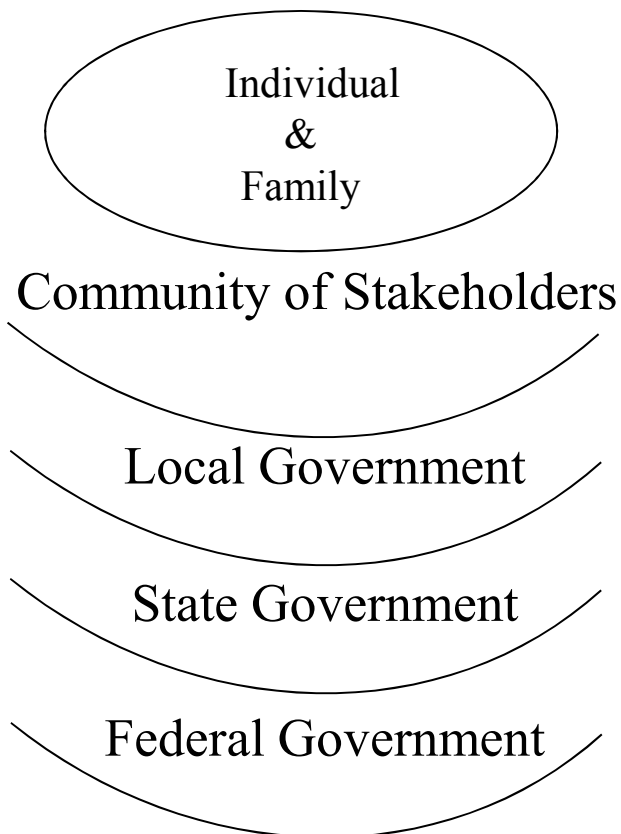


State vs Citizen

Strong state → authoritarianism

Weak state → anarchy

Citizen-centered enabling state



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...

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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

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Impact of LOK SATTA

- At State level, Tendered Vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repoll is ordered
- LOK SATTA's surveys influenced Election Commission to make post office nodal agency for voter registration.
- LOK SATTA'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