LOK SATTA

People Power

Role Sharing and Collaboration between Governments and NGOs in National Development

November 8, 2002, New Delhi
“Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever did”

Margaret Mead
Voluntarism in India

Two fountainheads

- Charity (paramartha)
- Service (seva)

More an extension of religion
What is Missing

- A sense of common fate
- Trust in people’s capacity
- Sense of equality
Early Voluntarism

- Enlightened Christian missionaries (Religious)
- Ramakrishna Mission (Religious)
- Tagore’s Sriniketan in Bengal (Rural Development)
- Spencer Hatch of YMCA (Martandam, Kerala) (Rural Development)
Voluntarism and Social Transformation

- Raja Rammohan Roy (Women’s upliftment)
- Ishwarchand Vidyasagar (Women’s upliftment)
- Dayanand Saraswati (Religious reform and education)
- Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (Religious reform and education)
- Mahatma Jyotiba Phule (Fight against caste)
- Ramaswamy Naicker (Tamilnadu)
- Narayana Guru (Kerala)
- Panduranga Sastry Athavale (Swadhyaya movement)
Gandhian Voluntary Action

- Ambulance corps in South Africa (Boer war)
- Champaran – political struggle combined with constructive action
- Basic education
- Harijan welfare and removal of untouchability
- Sanitation
- Leprosy eradication (HLNS)
- Handlooms and Handicrafts
Post-Independence India

Government support to Gandhian concepts and Institutions

eg:

- Harijan Seva Sangh
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission
- Khadi and Village Industries Board
- Sarvodaya movement
- Bhoodan Movement
Voluntarism with Professional Inputs

- Bunker Roy – SWRC (Tilonia)
- Dr Anil Sadgopal – Hoshangabad education project
- Dr R S Arole – Healthcare, Maharashtra
- ASHA - Education
- Rajendra Singh – Watershed development
- Anna Hazare - Watershed development
Voluntarism and Social Activism

• Left wing movements (eg: Rythu kuli sangham)

• Labour movements (Sankar Guha – Neogy)

• Environmental movements (Narmada Bachao Andolan)

• Religious revival movements (Hindu & Muslim organizations)
State and NGOs

1947-1970s: State collaboration
1970s-80s: JP movement (confrontation)
1990s: Development work
  - collaboration
  - collusion

Ideological activism
  - adversarial
  - collusion

Governance reform
  - adversarial
  - limited collaboration
State’s Felters

- Clampdown during emergency
- Attempts to stifle voluntary societies through over-regulation
- Not enough incentive for contributions (limited tax exemption)
- FCRA as a means of corruption and control
- State support tainted by corruption
## Governance and Human Rights
### Three key goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>State Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Dignity</td>
<td>Freedom from child labour, drudgery, hunger and public defecation</td>
<td>Strong policies, Effective laws, Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessible justice</td>
<td>Local courts, fair processes, just compensation for rights violations, and speedy resolution</td>
<td>Rule of Law, Local Courts, Judge-population ratio, Procedural changes, Accent on rights of poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities for vertical mobility</td>
<td>School education, primary healthcare, basic amenities - water</td>
<td>Resource allocation, Sensible policies, Effective delivery systems, Accountability, Decentralization</td>
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## Political Process vs Civil Society

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<th>Nature of Society</th>
<th>Role of Political Process</th>
<th>Role of Civil Society</th>
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<td>Solution</td>
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<td>Problem</td>
<td>Movement for Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dictatorships</td>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>Movement for Democracy</td>
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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
Distortions of State Power

- Positive power restricted
  Negative power unchecked

- All organs are dysfunctional

- Crisis is systemic

- Political process ought to be the solution
  But has become the problem itself
Flawed Political Process

- Institutional rigidities
- System of alibis
- Change of players vs rules of the game
- Honesty & survival not compatible
- Over-centralization

Vote \/Public good
Taxes \/Services
Authority \/Accountability

- Incapacity to institutionalize innovations
# Flawed Democracies - Elections

<table>
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<th>Macro perspectives</th>
<th>Micro perspectives</th>
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<td>Disaggregate volatility</td>
<td>Oligopoly of parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadly reflective of public opinion</td>
<td>Local voting irregularities and fraud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruling parties &amp; powerful candidates are voted out</td>
<td>Only players change, no change in rules of game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection vote common</td>
<td>Issues and candidate merits are largely irrelevant</td>
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</table>
What is Wrong with Electoral Process?

- Illegitimate and unaccounted money power (10-50 times legal ceiling)
- Criminalization of politics (700/4072)
- Voting irregularities
- Caste and divisive impulses
<table>
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<th>Key Reforms</th>
<th>Funding</th>
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<td>Electoral reforms</td>
<td>Criminalization</td>
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<td>Voting irregularities</td>
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<td>Electoral system</td>
<td>Proportional Representation</td>
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<td>Separation of Powers</td>
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<td>Decentralization</td>
<td>Local Governments</td>
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<td>Rule of Law</td>
<td>Judicial reforms</td>
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<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Right to information</td>
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<td>Citizens’ charters</td>
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<td>Independent crime investigation</td>
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Civil Society’s Role

- Mobilize people for reforms
  - Local
  - National

- Strengthen democratic processes

- Adversarial and collaborative
Illustrations of Engagement

- Election Watch - Non partisan activism impact on criminalization (facilitatory + exposure)
- Candidate disclosures - Adversarial activism
- Right to information - Advocacy and mass mobilization
- Funding reform - Collaborative activism
Approaches to Citizens’ Activism

- Collective informed assertion
- Wide dissemination of information
- Effective mass communication
- Strategic intervention
Dangers of Status Quo

- Fiscal collapse
- Anarchy
- Authoritarianism
- Balkanization
- Unfulfilled potential
- Avoidable suffering
Future of Voluntarism

- Public service contractor (education, health care, slum resettlement etc.)
- Collaborator with state (community participation, watershed development etc.)
- Social innovators (new technologies, organizations and services)
- Social critics and policy advocates (child labour, environment etc.)
- Building civil society institutions (electoral reform, right to information, decentralization, police and judicial reform etc.)
Key Requirements

- Inspiration
- Leadership
- Legitimacy
- Funding
- Linkages
State’s Role in Future

- Rule of Law
- Public Order
- Justice
- Education
- Health care
- Infrastructure
- Natural resources development
Civil Society’s Role

- Make the state do its job
- Take charge of areas un-addressed by state and market
- Assert people’s sovereignty and community control
- Build a framework for social cohesion and a sense of common fate
“The punishment suffered by the wise who refuse to take part in the government, is to suffer under the government of bad men.”

Plato