National seminar on “People Oriented Administrative Reforms”

Mumbai

4th November, 2000
Swarajya

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

- Mahatma Gandhi
Crisis of Governance

- Criminalization of politics
- Money and muscle power in elections
- Over centralization
- Competitive populism
- Political instability
- Erosion of legitimacy of authority

- Increasing lawlessness
- Inefficient state apparatus
- Unresponsive bureaucracy
- Ineffective judicial system
- All pervasive corruption
- Marginalization of citizens
Key to Resolution

• Crisis encompasses all organs of state
  — Executive
  — Legislature
  — Judiciary

• Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
  — Politicians
  — Bureaucrats
  — Judiciary
  — Citizens

• Change in the rules of the game
• Not merely a change of players
• Focus on governance processes
• Not on contentious policy debates
Why is Governance Vital?

- Government spends Rs. 1600 crores every day
- Out of 27 million organised workers, government employs 70%
- Fiscal deficit (Union and States) has reached 10% GDP
- 50% Union tax revenues go toward interest payment
Is Money the Issue?

- **Sanitation**
  - 140 million toilets needed
  - Cost: Rs 35000 crores
  - Equals just 24 days' expenditure

- **School Education**
  - 1.2 million class rooms needed
  - Cost: Rs 12,000 crores capital
  - Rs 6,000 crores recurrent
  - Equals 8 days expenditure - capital
  - 4 days expenditure - recurrent
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%)
Dangerously stable equilibrium

- Elections - a case study - Andhra Pradesh : 1999

Expenses of parties : Rs 600 crores
— Returns to Politicians :
  
  - ROI
  - risk Rs 3000 crores
  - future
  - personal

— Actual extortion from citizens :
  - rent-seeking at every level : Rs 30,000 crore
  - harassment to ensure compliance - ten times

— Conformity :
  - best option individually
  - worst option societally
Way Out

- People’s sovereignty
- Fundamental democratic transformation
Can economic reforms deliver

• Smaller and more focussed government will help

• But government still has large role
Irreducible role of government

• Law and order
• Justice
• Rule of law
• School education
• Primary health care
• Basic infrastructure
Citizens’ initiatives - Guiding principles

- Freedom
- Self-governance
- Empowerment
- Rule of law
- Self-correcting institutions
Need of the Hour

- Informed Citizenry with the capacity to
  - resist mis-governance
  - check corruption
  - influence public discourse
  - channelize resources
  - enforce better services

All these require information
People's watch for public services

- Collective — **Lok Satta**
- Informed — People's Charter and training
- Assertion — Specific Campaigns
  - Local
  - State -wide
Lok Satta's People's Charter

- Success of people's watch in AP

Case Studies:
- Petrol bunks
- Registration department
Government's response

- Citizen's Charters
  - APSEB
  - APSRTC
  - Transport Department
  - Water Board
  - Employment Exchanges
  - Commercial Tax Department
  - Registration Department
  - MCH
  - Municipalities

Half - hearted and inadequate.
Still a first important step.
Election Watch

Verification of electoral rolls
Why?

— Ordinary Citizens easily understand it
— Locally achievable
— Law is perfect - implementation defective
— Electoral rolls affect quality of elections & governance
Logistics

- Procedure — Election Watch manual
- Electoral Rolls — Supplied by Lok Satta
- Application forms — supplied by Lok Satta
Results so far

- **Estimated errors:**
  - About 40% in urban areas
  - About 10% in rural areas

- **About 10 Lakh Corrections through Lok Satta efforts**
  - 6,00,000 additions
  - 4,00,000 Deletions
Pre screening of candidates

- Legal position
- Criteria we adopted
- Election Watch Screening Committee
- Post Box No.100
- Public awareness campaign
- Communication to parties
- Cross-checking and screening
- Making lists public
- Local government draft Legislation
- Impact
Information lacunae - screening

- Government / Public records
- Police
- Ambiguity
Election Watch results

- **High Credibility**
  - Narasaraopet

- **Setting agenda**
  - Creminilasation
  - Money power
  - Electoral rolls

- Reduction in rigging

- Greater middle class participation

- Focus on governance goals

- Accountability to people.
Swarajya — Local goals

— Citizens’s Charters
— Empowerment of Local governments
— Empowerment of Stakeholders
  - Parents (Schools)
  - water users (Irrigation)
  - Producers (markets)
  - Consumers (Fair Price shops)
— Right to information
— Rural courts for speedy justice
— Access to school education
— Toilets for every household
Successes in Swarajya

— Citizen’s Charters
— A law empowering parents
  (school education committees)
— A law empowering water users
  (water users’ societies)
— Toilets for every household as state policy
  (15 lakh toilets built over the last 2 years)
— Local government electoral reforms
  (partially accomplishes)
Local Governance

Votes $\iff$ Welfare

Taxes $\iff$ Services

Authority $\iff$ Accountability
Why do people vote badly?
Why don't people pay taxes?

Votes ↔ Welfare

Taxes ↔ Services

Authority ↔ Accountability
Freedom of Information Bill - 2000

- **Defects:**
  - Local governments ignored
  - Political parties not included
  - No penalties for noncompliance
  - No external appeal
  - No protection to whistle blowers.
Right to Information

• Future Agenda:
  – Electoral reforms
  – Local governance
  – Stake-holders empowerment
  – Subsidiarity
  – Accountability Instruments
  – Citizens Charters
  – Independent crime investigation
  – Speedy justice through rural courts
Concern To Action

- **Obstacles:**
  - Ignorance
  - Fear
  - Inhibition
  - Lack of common platform

- **Requirements:**
  - Trust
  - Sense of equality
  - Common fate
  - Credible common platform
  - Knowledge
Keys to action

- Day to Day personal relevance
- Tangible, easy action
- Precise knowledge guiding action
- Meticulous preparation
- Wide dissemination
- High Credibility
Citizenship

• Active:
  - Votes
  - Taxes
  - Authority

• Passive:
  - Welfare
  - Services
  - Accountability
  - Legal plunder
  - Constitutional brigandage
  - Anonymous tyranny
Window of Opportunity

- Impending fiscal collapse
- Citizens' disgust
- Unsustainable status-quo
- Relatively sound private economy
- Communications revolution
- Satellite television
- Rising expectations
Two paths to future

- **German example**
  - Enhancing
  - Democratic
  - Orderly
  - Integrating

- **USSR Example**
  - Tyrannical
  - Chaotic
  - Disintegrating