

LOK SATTA

People Power

Presentation made to Sri PV Shenoi

February 17th, 2002

Lok Satta, Hyderabad

Mission

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

Why is Governance Vital?

- Governments spend Rs. 1800 crores every day
- Out of 27 million organised workers, government employs 70%
- Fiscal deficit (Union and States) has reached 10% of GDP
- 50% Union tax revenues go towards interest payment
- Only 5 % of GDP spent on Health, Education and Social Security

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

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

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%)

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.

(Extortion, harassment, humiliation, pain of delay, anxiety of greater loss)

Can Economic Reforms Alone 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

What Does the Citizen Expect?

- Justice
- Dignity
- Vertical mobility

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

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

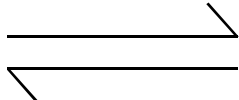
Electoral Reforms

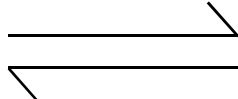
- Process Improvements
 - Preventing polling irregularities
 - Arresting and reversing criminalization of politics
 - Checking abuse of unaccountable money power in elections

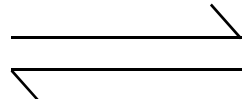
- System Improvements
 - Political party reform
 - Proportional representation
 - Direct election of Chief Executive at the State level with clear separation of powers

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

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

Why No Action So Far

- Ignorance
- Fear
- Inhibition (elitism)
- Lack of common platform

How Can We Overcome

- Trust
- Sense of equality
- Common fate
- Knowledge
- Credible common platform

Keys to Action

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

Approaches to Citizens' Action

- Collective Informed Assertion
- Wide Dissemination of Information
- Effective Mass Communication
- Strategic Intervention

Methods of Citizens' Action – Peoples Watch

- Collective Informed Assertion
- People's Charters
- Lok Satta as Platform
- Fight against corruption
- Fight for better delivery of public services

Methods of Citizens' Action – Swarajya

- Advocacy & Campaign for specific reform goals
- Choice of Goals
 - Locally achievable
 - No cost/low cost goals
 - Universally acceptable
 - Strategic goals opening many doors

Swarajya – Reform Goals

- Right to Information
- Citizens' 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 – introduced in 9 departments by AP government

- State Electricity Board
- Road Transport Corporation
- Transport Department
- Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board
- Employment Exchanges
- Commercial Taxes Department
- Registration Department

Citizen's Charter for Municipalities in A.P. – Lok Satta's creation – provides for compensation of Rs. 50/- day for delay in services – first in India

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Impact of Lok Satta

- 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
- Stopped enactment of a restrictive Societies Law and ensured passing of an enabling law (in collaboration with CDF)

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Impact of Lok Satta

- 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
- At State level, Tendered Vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repolls are ordered
- Lok Satta's surveys influenced Election Commission to make post office nodal agency for voter registration

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Impact of Lok Satta

- 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
 - 20 % popular base in A.P.
 - Nationally recognized as a credible, non-partisan, effective platform to fight corruption, and seek better governance
 - Acquired the potential to help build a national movement

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
- Hyderabad city Election Watch
- 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 Tamilnadu, W.Bengal, Maharashtra and U.P.
- A series of national workshops (for 1000 activists) on active citizenship
- Alliances & national platform for governance reforms – Karnataka, Gujarat, M.P., Orissa and Delhi

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
- Fulltime commitment and professionalism
- Building a platform with brand image

Dangers of Status Quo

- Fiscal collapse
- Anarchy
- Authoritarianism
- Balkanization
- Unfulfilled potential
- Avoidable suffering

Window of Opportunity

- Economic, social & political convulsions preparing the ground
 - Impending fiscal collapse
 - Citizens' disgust / Concern
 - Unsustainable status-quo
 - Relatively sound private economy
 - Communications revolution & satellite television
 - Rising expectations
 - Political instability

Two Paths – Choice is Ours

- **German example** vs • **USSR Example**
 - Freedom-enhancing
 - Democratic
 - Orderly
 - Integrating
- Tyrannical
 - Chaotic
 - Disintegrating