LOK SATTA

People Power

The Road Less Traveled

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401 Nirmal Towers, Dwarakapuri Colony, Punjagutta, Hyderabad – 500 082; Tel: 91 40 23352487; Fax: 91 40 23350783; email: loksatta@satyam.net.in; url: www.loksatta.org
The purpose of a government is to make it easy for people to do good and difficult to do evil.

William Gladstone
Irreducible Role of State

- Rule of law
- Public order
- Justice
- Education
- Health care
- Infrastructure
- Natural resources development
- Social security
Governance at a Glance

- Governments spend Rs. 1800 crores every day
- Out of 27 million organised workers, government employs 70%
- Fiscal deficit (Union and States) remains at 10% GDP
- 50% Union tax revenues go towards interest payment
Is Money the Issue?

School Education

- 1.6 million classrooms needed
- Capital cost: Rs.16,000 crores – 9 days govt. expenditure
- Recurring expenditure: Rs.8000 crores – 5 days govt. expenditure

Sanitation

- 140 million toilets needed
- Cost: Rs 35000 crores
- Equals just 20 days expenditure
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

Interlocking vicious cycles
Inexhaustible demand for illegitimate funds

Illegitimate Money Power
Political Power
Corruption
Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Most expenditure is to buy votes

Voter seeks money & liquor

More expenditure

Large spending may or may not lead to success, but failure to spend almost certainly leads to defeat

Greater corruption

Greater cynicism

Voter seeks more money

Contd..
Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Rise of Political Fiefdoms

Need for money, caste and local clout

Parties are helpless in choice of candidates

Rise of political fiefdoms

Absence of internal party democracy

Competition among a few families in most constituencies

Oligopoly at constituency level

Contd..
Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Vote delinked from public good

Centralized polity

No matter who wins, people lose

Vote does not promote public good

Voter maximizes short term gain

Money, liquor, caste, emotion and anger become dominant

Vicious cycle is perpetuated

Contd..
Taxes delinked from services

Only 16% of GDP collected as taxes (union & states)

Fiscal deficits and crisis

Higher Taxes
Unacceptable because of corruption and poor services

Desubsidization
The poor do not see alternative benefits for the subsidies given up

Wage Reduction
Centralization and Art 311 preclude it

Deeper fiscal crisis

Poorer services and public goods

Perpetuation of poverty and backwardness
Interlocking Vicious Cycles

Political survival and honesty not compatible

Parliamentary executive

Government survival depends on legislative majority

Legislators spend a lot of money to get elected

They need multiple returns to sustain the system

Corruption and misgovernance endemic

Government has to yield to legislators’ demands

Corruption is perpetuated even if government has the will

Honesty not compatible with survival
What Ails Bureaucracy

- Life time security of bureaucracy
- Penchant for centralization and secrecy
- Lack of professionalism and specialized skills
- Absence of incentives for excellence
- No accountability
- Corruption and maladministration
Distortions of State Power

- Positive Power restricted
  Negative power unchecked

- All organs are dysfunctional

- A system of alibis
  Victims of vicious cycle

- Change of players
  No change in the rules of the game

- Political process ought to be the solution
  But has become the problem itself
Keys to Resolution

● Crisis is systemic
● Most players are victims of a vicious cycle
● Change of players not enough
● Change of rules of the game needed
● Institutions are the key
● Resources are not a problem
● The way they are deployed is the key
# Key Reforms

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Mission

To promote peaceful, democratic transformation of Indian governance process and enable India to achieve full potential through good governance.
The Track Which Impedes

- Players (drivers)
- Democratic Institutions (Engine)
- Railings / Track (political system)
Approaches to Citizens’ Action

- Collective informed assertion
- Wide dissemination of information
- Effective mass communication
- Strategic intervention
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
Methods of Citizens’ Action – Swarajya

- Advocacy and campaign for specific reform goals
- Choice of goals
  - Locally achievable
  - No cost / low cost
  - Universally acceptable
  - Strategic goals opening many doors
Swarajya – Reform Goals

- Right to Information
- Citizen’s 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

contd..
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

India’s leading civil society initiative

- About 30% support base in AP
- Known virtually in every village
- Could mobilize 10 million signatures for local government empowerment in AP alone
- Could organize people’s ballots with participation of one million citizens with 3 days’ notice in favour of disclosure of candidate details
Impact of LOK SATTA

Several local and state level successes

- 9 citizen’s charters in AP
- First charters providing for compensation of Rs 50 per day in select municipal services
- Cessation of short delivery at 1500 petrol stations – benefit of Rs 1 crore/day
- Stake-holder empowerment – laws enacted to constitute water users’ associations and school education committees
- Toilets for every household – Lok Satta’s advocacy resulted in a major initiative by the state
Impact of LOK SATTA

Several local and state level successes

– Stopped enactment of a restrictive societies law, and ensured passing of an enabling law in collaboration with CDF

– Curb corruption at micro level - building regularization; fight against central excise corruption in small industries sector; check on corruption in registration and transport dept. etc, in various places

– Awareness on right to information

– Focus on health care and school education reform

– Advocacy and drafting of a bill for local courts – likely to be enacted as law soon

– Successful advocacy for decentralized power distribution management

– Built effective tools for citizen action
Impact of LOK SATTA

Election related successes

- Election watch became a nation-wide instrument for non-partisan citizen engagement. Support to groups in TN, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, West Bengal and Chattisgarh

- Arrested growth of criminal elements in politics

- Could prevent election of a notorious faction leader with violent record from becoming a Zilla Parishad Chairman

- Common electoral rolls for local, state and national elections have become a reality

- In local elections, Tendered vote is now accepted as proof of rigging and repolls are ordered
Impact of LOK SATTA

National successes

– A National Campaign for Electoral and Governance Reforms is now in place

– The disclosure campaign led to institutionalization of disclosure of candidate details

– The alternative model for women’s representation has altered the national debate and is now widely accepted

– Post-office as a nodal agency for voter registration is close to reality

– Political funding reform is now in place, and a law has been enacted by Parliament
Resources

- Mostly Volunteer time, energy and credibility
- Support in kind (infrastructure, printing etc.)
- Skillful use of Media
- Limited cash support
- Limited funding for specific projects
- No foreign funding for now (as a policy)
National Scene - Recent Reform Initiatives

- Disclosure of candidate details
- Changes in Rajya Sabha Election
- Anti-defection Law changes
- Limiting the Size of Council of Ministers
- Women’s Reservation in legislatures
- Post office as nodal agency for voter registration
- National Judicial Commission
- Right to Information
- Political Funding law
Other Systemic Reforms Needed

- Proportional representation
- Direct election of chief executive in states
- Internal democracy in political parties
- Judicial and police reforms
- Independent and strong anti-corruption agency
Window of Opportunity

- Deepening fiscal crisis
- Citizen’s disgust and concern
- Unsustainable status quo
- Relatively sound private economy
- Demographic changes and rising expectations
- Communications revolution
Some Harbingers of Hope

- Tamil Nadu – literacy, population control and economic growth
- AP – population control
- Maharashtra – Control of judicial corruption
- Rajasthan – Rise from BIMARU status to middle-income level
National Communication Campaign

- What are the reforms needed and why
- What is there in it for me as a citizen
- How can I participate
- In all major languages
- Taking advantage of Radio and Cable TV penetration
Two Paths - Choice is Ours

German example vs USSR example

- Freedom enhancing
- Democratic
- Orderly
- Integrating
- Growth-oriented

- Tyrannical
- Chaotic
- Disintegrating
- Debilitating
“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat”

- Sun Tzu