

Clash of paper tigers with political foxes

Written by Administrator

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By Sidharth Mishra



Ever since Anna Hazare plonked himself at Jantar Mantar in April 2011 to launch the anti-corruption agitation, I had no doubt that the whole movement was playing with the implicit aim of garnering TRP ratings and its spectacle was promptly lapped up by the media. If hectoring anchors have ensured that a rape accused was lynched in Nagaland, their preachy avatars have also played a part in the Aam Aadmi Party's ascension to Delhi's high offices.

With intellectuals-turned-media personalities-taking on the responsibility of playing ideologue of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the media's role has understandably become one of paramount importance. Media as a campaign propellant for any political party is most welcome. When in government, however, the party in power cannot see the media's role to be any other than one of intrusion.

With several AAP leaders, who are paper tigers at best, party leader Arvind Kejriwal's policy of imposing restrictions on mediapersons seems to be part of his larger policy to purge the party of these media-made personalities and rule through the mandate of people, which he believes he has received.

Sympathisers of AAP rebels Yogendra Yadav and Prashant Bhushan would find succour in the word purge, as it has a milestone status in Marxian history. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev on February 25, 1956 presented a report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Khrushchev's speech was sharply critical of the reign of deceased General Secretary and Premier Joseph Stalin, particularly with respect to the purges in the Communist Party. Khrushchev charged Stalin with fostering a personality cult.

The supporters of Arvind Kejriwal may charge me of unfairly comparing their leader with Joseph Stalin. Instead of addressing the charge directly, I would prefer going back to Soviet history, especially Lenin's Testament.

Soviet Union founder Vladimir Lenin in his last days, while bed-ridden, had drafted a note calling for the restructuring of the Communist Party.

He went to the extent of removing Stalin as General Secretary of party's central committee.

Due to illness, Lenin could not deliver the document and after his death his wife passed it on to the party. The testament was read out but it failed to have the effect, which Lenin had wanted. Stalin went onto consolidate his position within the party.

Leaders and ideologues of several mass movements fail to reconcile their idealism to the demands of governance. If we have the example of Lenin in the Soviet Union, in our very own country we have the example of Mahatma Gandhi. The father of the nation wanted the Congress to be dissolved after Independence. The chasm between the Mahatma and his followers became

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sharper when his prot could not accommodate his ideals as Fundamental Rights of the people in the Constitution. As lip service, however, these ideals were accorded a place in the Directive Principles of State Policy. Similarly many years after Lenin's death, when Nikita Khrushchev presented his report to the party's 20th Congress, the claim to take the party back to Leninism was very overt. This desire to return to Leninism was spurred by the fact that Khrushchev was engaged in a bitter struggle with Stalinists like Vyacheslav Molotov and Georgy Malenkov to wrest control of the Communist Party. Coming back to the struggle within AAP, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has politically, if not morally, emerged stronger from his party's National Executive meeting last week. The meeting, following bitter deliberations and a vote, ended in Kejriwal's two principal detractors, Prashant Bhushan and Yogendra Yadav being removed from the prestigious Political Affairs Committee. The dissident section of the party has correctly projected the expulsions as the failure of the current leadership to entertain divergent views. Bhushan had objected to tickets being given to a dozen candidates and wrote to the party's internal Lokpal on the issue. The Lokpal, while upholding the decision in respect of ten nominees, asked the AAP leadership to change the names of two. Despite the projection of despotism, however, the move can be seen as politically prudent from the point of view of Arvind Kejriwal, who has sent a clear message to the rank and file that he is the supreme leader. For a man who has just entered the office of Chief Minister with the onerous burden of many promises to fulfil, removing a critical ideologue as part of the team was deemed politically expedient. After expulsion, criticisms from Yadav and Bhushan would be seen as those of rivals and not that of quarrelling comrades, thus giving a much needed buffer to the government from a public inquisition. Given his quest for power, Arvind Kejriwal is no Mahatma Gandhi. He has, however, certainly taken some great tips from the politics of India's sharpest politician. In the post- Lok Sabha debacle, when fighting broke out, Kejriwal found his way to Tihar jail by not applying for bail in a defamation case. By doing this he managed to save himself from engaging directly with his detractors. This time around he has gone in solitude at a naturopathy clinic down south, to return only after the metaphorical hail of brickbats has, hopefully, subsided.

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