

By Sidharth Mishra



Delhi's deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia was in Dehradun earlier this week to engage Uttarakhand's education minister Madan Kaushik into a debate. Somedays back he had traveled to Lucknow to engage his Uttar Pradesh counterpart in a similar discussion.

Since the beginning of the last month, the leadership of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the ruling outfit in Delhi, has all of a sudden started to visit different states going to polls in the next year or so and throwing muck on the ruling establishments there.

It started with one of its prominent legislators inviting the power minister of Goa for a debate on electricity tariff. Then its second most prominent leader, the Deputy Chief Minister of national Capital, Manish Sisodia started hopping between Lucknow, Haldwani and Dehradun tom-tomming the Delhi model of governance and throwing gauntlets at his counterparts in the two states.

It's another prominent legislator Atishi Marlena was in Gujarat unveiling party's plans to contest, first the local body polls and then the state assembly polls. In Delhi, as written in these columns earlier, they have been working overtime to woo agitating farmers laying siege of the national Capital.

AAP leaders have also traveled to Punjab promising 'legal' help for cases booked against the agitating farmers. Punjab too goes to polls in just about a year's time and its one state, outside Delhi, where AAP has a reasonable presence. Why such rush to visit the capitals outside their own state?

A close analysis of the moves would show that other than Punjab, AAP neither has presence,

nor history or a real time intention to gain power in the aforementioned states, also adding Assam to the list, which are going to polls over a period of one to two years. Then why such sudden and aggressive campaign when the national Capital has its own cup of misery full and waiting to spillover.

This is not the first time that such an effort is being made. Its attempt at expanding its base beyond Delhi and Punjab by contesting the 2017 Goa assembly polls with much fanfare, thinking it could replicate its Delhi poll campaign model in another small state, met with great disappointment as it failed to even open its account. One of the main reasons for party's defeat in Goa was the fall of the façade of the AAP being an anti-graft crusader party.

Some also blame disproportionate media coverage to AAP during the Goa polls leading to an unrealistic expectation of a major show by the party, which neither had any organization or cadre in the state. It's Goa dream once again turned into a nightmare when it could win just one of the 20 seats it contested in the local body polls in 2020.

It's aggressive wooing of agitating Punjab voters emanates from fact that during the last Lok Sabha polls in 2019, not only its seat count came down from four to one but its vote-share too shrunk from over 24 percent in 2014 to just about seven percent. The biggest gainer in the vote bank shift in Punjab has been the Congress.

AAP's political ascendance so far has been propelled by poaching on the Congress votes. The party which ruled Delhi for 15 years at stretch, suddenly lost its votes to the AAP in the three consecutive assembly polls on 2013, 2015 and 2020, unable to open its account in 2015 and 2020. Intriguingly despite being in power in Delhi, in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls AAP was pushed to third position behind the BJP and the Congress. However, six months later AAP was back in the saddle after the assembly polls and Congress back to zero. How and why, this happened has been discussed in these columns earlier.

Now coming to the states of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, where AAP is making aggressive moves once again to make its presence felt. It must be noted that it's not the first time that AAP is trying to break into the poll scene of these states.

Soon after resigning as Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal, still enjoying the 'unblemished'

AAP's Debate Blitzkrieg Targeted at Getting into Poll Panel's National Party List

Written by Administrator

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image of anti-graft crusader, had lead party's campaign in UP during the 2014 Lok Sabha polls with himself contesting against BJP's then prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi. Party's then other two prominent faces – Kumar Vishwas and Shazia Ilmi, had contested Amethi and Ghaziabad seats respectively.

However, their attempt to enter Parliament on the high tide of popularity of Anna Hazare movement had come a cropper logging less than one percent of popular vote in Uttar Pradesh and just about one percent in Uttarakhand. Thereafter, in 2017 Punjab assembly polls despite a media hype, their performance was much below expectations with their almost 25 candidates losing deposit and the party managing to win just 20 seats in the 117-seat strong house.

However, now with return to power in Delhi, the party is out again shopping in the states which go to the polls over the next two years. And the real target may not be winning majority in the assembly polls but to gain the national party status before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

AAP continues to be a state party and to get the national party status before 2024, the AAP has to be recognized as a state party in at least four states by securing a minimum of 6% votes in each, and what better way to create buzz in states going to polls and garner some votes, which as of now looks to be quite an insurmountable task.

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