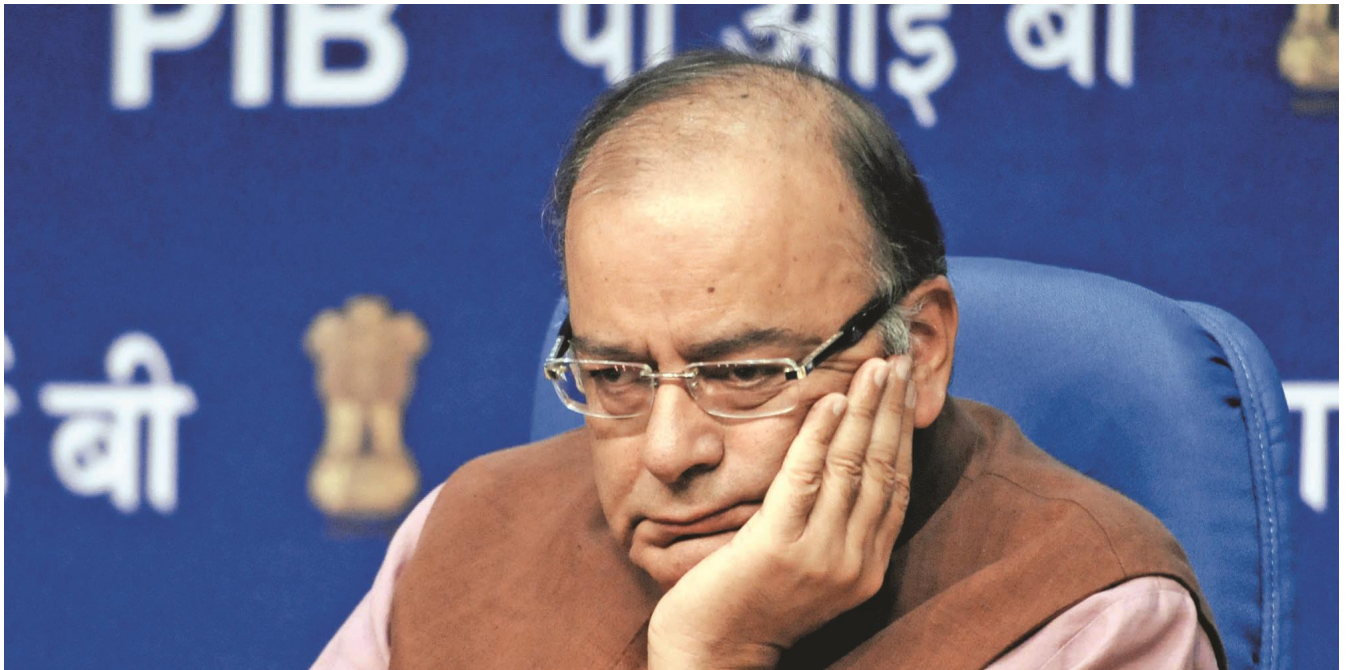


By Sidharth Mishra



My heart goes out to Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. I for certain don't doubt his integrity. But that certainly does not absolve the Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) of allegations pertaining to financial and administrative irregularities. DDCA elections in the city are among the most intensely fought polls. I personally know of several friends and acquaintances, who possess no talent whatsoever related to the game of cricket, strive for a toehold in the organisation. They all have but one common streak -- they are all wealthy people, mostly in real estate business. Being in the business of property, however, doesn't make a man (or for that matter a woman) necessarily evil. Going by the same dictum, being in the business of property doesn't make a person talented enough to administer cricket in the national capital. I also believe that politicians do not always play an evil role in the promotion of a game. It's for certain that if there wasn't an Arun Jaitley at the helm of affairs in DDCA, a revamped Feroz Shah Kotla Cricket Stadium stadium would never have come up.

But Jaitley preferred the glib-talking business persons over several sportsmen, sports journalists, sports teachers in schools and colleges and for that matter sports loving bureaucrats as his companions in the cricket body. He must have had good reasons for it. Bureaucrats and sportspersons too are not always known for administering a sports body well. But then as a public personality, he should have paid heed to the Bard of Avon, who wrote – Caesar's wife should be above suspicion.

These lines were made famous for the first time in the Indian political context by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who had recited them when he decided to ditch his mentor PV

Paying price for patronage

Written by Administrator

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Narasimha Rao after the latter's government fell following the defeat of the Congress in 1996 polls. It's another matter that Rao did not reply saying "Et tu Manmohan". But the wily politician from Andhra Pradesh must have felt like a betrayed Caesar in William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar.

Jaitley is one of the best orators we have in our country today, be it the court room or the floor of Parliament. His excellent arguments are often punctuated with most appropriate idioms. Therefore, one wonders that in the matters of DDCA, how he missed the idiom, "A man is known by the company he keeps". Jaitley's friends and supporters in the DDCA are not people of much stature who can today stand guarantee for him as he fights one of the toughest political battles of his life.

Jaitley's close friends claim that the Finance Minister's durbar is like Lord Shiva's barat (marriage procession) with people of every hue and colour present. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had too at one time enjoyed Jaitley's patronage. No wonder in December 2011 Jaitley had joined a fasting Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Sanjay Singh and Kumar Vishwas to protest against the move by the UPA government to bring what they called a "watered down" Lokpal Bill.

The fate of Lokpal Bill both at the Centre and in Delhi, and worse, the state that the leader of Lokpal Bill movement, Anna Hazare, finds himself in makes it very clear that Jaitley went to Jantar Mantar that day, much against the advice of many of his party colleagues, because he saw Kejriwal as one from his stable. To find out what led to the fallout between both leaders and made Kejriwal go hammer and tongs against Jaitley would make for a grim news copy.

In October 2012, when Arvind Kejriwal had brought a series of charges against the then BJP president Nitin Gadkari, it went around in Chinese whispers that the fallout was more down to an intra-party struggle than the current Delhi Chief Minister's own initiative. Suffice to say, these charges were instrumental in denying Gadkari a second term as BJP president.

Earlier this year you reporter had asked Gadkari at a television programme about the identity of the person, who had pointed out to him at the party leadership's meeting that Kejriwal's charges had caused much embarrassment to the party. Though Gadkari affirmed that he was asked such a question, to which he had replied by offering his resignation, he refused to name the questioner.

No wonder that today, when Jaitley is being attacked vehemently by his rivals, the current heavyweights within the party, have decided to hold their horses. The older lot have taken an adversarial position. Those who gave company to Jaitley at Patiala House court when he went there to record his statement are much junior in hierarchy, lacking the public base to provide

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due weight to the leader to draw the balance his way.

Today's notebook, however, in no way seeks to be a swan song of Jaitley's very effective political career. Jaitley has friends beyond the BJP, who should see that he sails through this crisis. Kejriwal would have realised by now that he has had not much support on the matter from the opposition benches other than that from the Congress.

Leaders beyond the Congress and BJP, who went firing all cylinders when the Delhi secretariat was raided by the CBI, have so far kept quiet. In private, they have in fact, even gone to the extent of giving Jaitley a clean chit. That should be some consolation for one of the finest brains in politics. But then Jaitley too has to learn to play the game with a straight bat.

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