

Rancorous fallout of Anna's stir

Written by Administrator

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Anti-corruption movement degenerated into vitriolic slugfest, writes Sidharth Mishra □



Delhi once again is going to stand witness to a process of decisive political churning. In three days from now the city-state of Delhi would go to polls after witnessing a most vicious campaign which has largely been built on false promises, despicable allegations and equally contemptible counter-allegations. These polls are a culmination of the social stirring which started in April 2011 as the crusader against corruption from Maharashtra, a former army driver, Anna Hazare took centre-stage.

The two protagonists of this movement which swayed the city and not the nation as the television media wanted us to believe at that time, are today pitched in a close fight levelling ignominious charges bereft of basic social etiquettes. Having followed politics from a very young age and as a journalist for past two decades I am unable to recall so much vitriol being poured in poll campaign as had happened in the past two-three years.

The true nature of Anna Hazare's campaign would take some time to unravel. Though it was initially bolstered by the network of the organisations affiliated to the Sangh Parivar, it had presence of Arvind Kejriwal who had interned under social activists like Aruna Roy, Shekhar Singh and Medha Patkar. These left-leaning social sector entrepreneurs enjoyed patronage of no less a person than Sonia Gandhi, the most powerful politician in the country for 10 years.

It was a strategic and tactical mistake on the part of the Sangh Parivar that having arranged for the gun and the gun-powder for launching an attack on the Congress, it allowed Kejriwal to hold the trigger. That Kejriwal managed to walk away with the gun and ammunition was Sangh Parivar's failure as it allowed somebody without moorings in its ideology to stand taller than its own cadres, which had formed the backbone of the Anna stir. A similar mistake is being committed by the party now in foisting Kiran Bedi as its chief ministerial candidate.

Aided and abetted by a TRP (television rating point)-hungry media, desperate to cook stories from a live event, we then witnessed what I had called them in notebooks then as Celluloid Movement, National Disorder and Kolaveri Di Movement. Witnessing the polls campaign today I feel vindicated about my observations then.

Celluloid Movement

Some of the editors who went on eugolise the movement at that point of time are today sitting on the either side of the political divide, some are fulltime with the Aam Aadmi Party, others are doing proxy for the BJP. Anna's movement nevertheless managed to bring to the display that the journalists often harbour political ambition in the garb of objective journalism. These 'objectives' helped script a movement largely for a role for themselves as 'social changers.'

That the movement was indication of a general disorder engulfing the nation was to prove right with Kejriwal himself claiming at one point of time that he was an anarchist and did not mind to sit on a dharna on the Rajpath ahead of the Republic Day function. It's another matter that today he accepts that it was a mistake on his part to have first run the 49-day-long government like an activist and then abandoned it. Today he says he is ready to make amends.

Kolaveri Di character

Some may point out that the fallout of the movement is the founding of the AAP, which has come to stay in Indian politics. Well the founding of the AAP itself negated the very spirit of the movement. The song, Why this Kolaveri Di, bereft of any meaningful lyrics, harped on traditional folk rhythm and went viral on social networking sites in November 2011 as soon as it was released, coinciding with the heydays of Anna movement.

Where is Kolaveri Di today on the popularity charts? Somewhere close to where the Jan Lokpal Bill movement lies. If the song in Tanglish [a mixture of Tamil and English] was bereft of any meaningful lyrics, so was Anna Hazare's movement, without any ideological moorings. They did not have an agenda. Team Anna, in the end, turned out to be a comity of self-seekers promoting their individual agendas, so evident now in the contest between its two protagonists – Arvind Kejwriwal and Kiran Bedi.

Arvind Kejriwal's newly-acquired close aide Ashutosh has often compared Anna's movement with that of the

Sampoorn Kranti Andolan

(Total Revolution Movement) of Jayaprakash Narayan. That Anna is no match to JP is best illustrated in the fact that the former despite the desire to once again gain centre-stage remains consigned to the backyards of Ralegan Siddhi, whereas the later despite skipping a successful anti-Emergency political movement kept away from a political position. JP's movement was spread across a much wider canvass, incorporated a much bigger agenda and

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enjoyed a much wider support-base.

The similarity between JP's and Anna's movements could be seen in the degeneration of idealism, which had propelled both the movements and the bitter political rivalry amongst its committed cadres later in their lives. It took an extreme ideological right turn by the BJP during the Ramjanambhoomi Movement in the 1990s to force a wide chasm among the rank and file of the JP movement. In the case of Anna Hazare's spectacle, its followers have had a bitter parting even before the fire of the movement's pyre has cooled down.

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