

By Sidharth Mishra



Earlier this week, what was always feared by the Delhi government officials, actually took place. Delhi's Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash was, if not assaulted, at least roughed up at Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's residence. The incident is alleged to have taken place in the presence of the Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. Some allege that the two MLAs roughed up the Chief Secretary Anshu Prakash after the CM and his deputy let loose a fusillade of invectives against the senior official.

After the matter became public, the AAP leadership issued a counter saying that Prakash had used casteist pejorative phrases for the MLAs. For those who know Prakash, it's very unlikely that he could use such language he is alleged to have.

The fact that Prakash went to the Chief Minister's residence to hear the grievances of the MLAs even after the office hour neutralises the allegation that he was indifferent to the issues being raised by the elected representatives. Having watched the functioning of the Delhi government ever since the Vidhan Sabha was restored in 1993, I do not recall of any Chief Secretary agreeing to attend such a meeting that too close to the midnight. The AAP leaders have also levelled the oft repeated charge of the Chief Secretary being an agent of the BJP. In fact the list of "BJP agents" in Delhi bureaucracy seems to be getting longer by the day — DM Spolia, KK Sharma, Anindo Majumdar, Dharampal, RK Verma, Keshav Chandra, MM Kutty, Shakuntala Gamlin, Archana Arora, Parimal Rai, Chetan Sanghvi and now Anshu Prakash.

It's another matter that all these officials formed part of the very efficient bureaucracy during the Congress rule under then Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit. Anshu Prakash as Managing Director of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) was responsible for the introduction of the fleet of the low-floor buses during the Commonwealth Games. Not a single bus has been added to the fleet since then. Except for Rajendra Kumar, who was principal secretary to Kejriwal, and is now cooling heels following a plethora of corruption charges there is not a single official who would have won appreciation of the Chief Minister. As soon as they flag some proposal, which is part of their job, they end up being in the list of "BJP agents".

When Dikshit became Chief Minister, she had S Reghunathan as her principal secretary. Till then S Reghunathan was seen to be very close to Dr Harsh Vardhan, the Education Minister in

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the previous BJP government. For near 10 years Reghunathan, first as Principal Secretary to the CM, and later as Delhi's Chief Secretary remained most powerful bureaucrat during Dikshit's reign.

In the beginning, he was not much popular among the MLAs, even Dikshit's personal aides. He had once mentioned to a group of reporters that his job was not be popular among the MLAs but insure effective implementation of government policies. However, he enjoyed confidence of the CM and never let her down.

Dikshit had this uncanny knack of getting the best out of the bureaucrats, so had Madanlal Khurana. Both Khurana and Dikshit managed to run the government efficiently despite having hardnosed bureaucrats like PK Dave and Vijay Kapoor as Lieutenant Governor. Both these officials were nominated by rival parties of the Chief Minister as during Khurana's time PV Narasimha Rao was Prime Minister and Kapoor was a nominee of Vajpayee Government.

Towards the middle of her third term, Dikshit handed over the crucial departments of Finance and Power to Shakti Sinha, the present Director of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. Sinha had worked as part of the personal staff of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, when he was the PM. He is also related to Vajpayee through marriage. But Dikshit did not see a "BJP agent" in him and decided to have him part of her team.

Her logic was that having been part of the PMO he must have helped so many from his service, and since some of them were now manning the PMO, when he would go with her government's files to them now they would certainly respond. That was a fine way of maintaining cordial Centre-State relationship.

In fact, Anshu Prakash was chosen by Dikshit to lead the DTC revamp despite the fact that he was part of Sushma Swaraj's team when she was a minister in the Vajpayee government. The group of officials, whom Kejriwal calls "BJP-agents", worked overtime to defend Dikshit government before the Shunglu Committee, which was appointed to investigate alleged corruption during the Commonwealth Games 2010.

The only time that the politician-official spat had threatened to turn into a street fight in past in Delhi was when the Congress-led Municipal Corporation had brought an impeachment motion

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against then Commissioner Rakesh Mehta. This was at the height of sealing drive unleashed on the orders of the Supreme Court. Tempers ran high but still there was no incidence of ugly fisticuffs.

Getting hysterical could be a good tool for activism but certainly not for governance. It's unfortunate that Kejriwal has failed to make use of the talent which he has in form of the officers of Delhi Government. He must realise they are officers of the government and not cadres of any political party. Their loyalty is to the government and not to the party that's in power.

(The writer is a senior journalist and political commentator)□

Courtesy : News18

<http://www.news18.com/news/india/opinion-kejriwal-co-must-understand-getting-hysterical-could-be-good-tool-for-activism-not-governance-1667307.html>

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