

**By Sidharth Mishra**



Revolutions eat their children, goes the famous saying. This maxim was very effectively used by one of the founders of political journalism, Jacques Mallet du Pan while writing pamphlets during the French Revolution, in support of the Royalists. Time may have come to use the famous phrase with context to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which was born out of Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption movement and has since then devoured several of its founding members.

The latest farce in this context was played out in the Delhi Legislative Assembly, where a motion moved to provide succour to the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots ended up demanding stripping late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian award bestowed by Government of India. It led to a skirmish among the different factions of the ruling party inside the house, it played out on their WhatsApp group and later spilled over into the news columns.

This was followed by the frantic calls being made by the party's crisis managers to the media houses, 'clarifying' that the resolution 'adopted' was not in harmony with party's official line and that it was personal opinion of a particular legislator. This explanation was unjustifiable rather indefensible as Delhi Assembly has over 90 percent of seats occupied by the AAP members, and the resolution could be their doing alone, and alone. They certainly this time around cannot blame Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the act of their legislators.

Why should a party which feted a reporter who misused his journalistic license gaining access to Congress party briefing and throwing shoe at country's then Home Minister P Chidambaram, denouncing party ticket to Sajjan Kumar and Jagdish Tytler, be so apologetic about a resolution damning the anti-Sikh riots in the harshest of terms. The Sikh victims of Delhi riots have all these years have been represented in their legal cases by lawyer HS Phoolka, who incidentally is an AAP legislator in Punjab Assembly and for some time even held the position of the leader

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of opposition in the house. Then why this reservation about the Rajiv Gandhi reference in the resolution.

Let's refer to another famous phrase -- running with the hare, hunting with the hounds. That's what the AAP leadership is attempting, placating the divergent views within its rank and file even as it makes a desperate attempt to board an anti-BJP bandwagon to survive in the rough and tumble of politics with the high tide of Anna Hazare movement, riding which they came to power, having receded beyond recognition. However, the party's squally cadre, so far applauded for all their acts of aggression, at times unbecoming of members of legislature, may not adhere to a party line with which it doesn't concur with.

The resolution farce must have created a dilemma in the minds of the pro-alliance advocates within the Congress that will an agreement with Messer Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia filter down to likes of MLAs Somnath Bharti and Jarnail Singh, or for that matter would it be palatable to Mr HS Phoolka. What guarantees does Kejriwal-Sisodia combine have that in the event of an alliance, these hardliners would not enter the contest under a different banner and festoon.

Present Delhi Congress president Ajay Maken has so far held steadfast to his position of no alliance with the Congress. Former Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit, who was seen to be pro-alliance, has left it to the wisdom of the party high command. Thus, there are not very many backers for a Congress-AAP alliance at the level of Delhi Congress.

A closer to reality analysis of Delhi would show that for 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the Congress has credible probable candidates on five of the seven seats – Sandeep Dikshit in East Delhi, JP Agarwal in North-East Delhi, Kapil Sibal in Chandni Chowk, Ajay Maken in New Delhi, and Mahabal Mishra in West Delhi (all former MPs).

In the reserved constituency of North-West Delhi, the party in fact has problem of plenty with at least three several term former MLAs – Jai Kishan, Raj Kumar Chouhan and Surendra Kumar in the race. The only seat which is lacking in a 'natural claimant' is South Delhi, with former MP Sajjan Kumar facing prolonged incarceration in the anti-Sikh riot case.

Will the Congress high command be able to contain the ambition and aspirations of these

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leaders, unlikely. Of them only Kapil Sibal is said to be somewhat amenable to the idea of alliance and that is largely due to his alienation with the local leadership. He may prefer to contest a safer seat than Chandni Chowk, which is presently represented by Union Environment Minister Harshvardhan.

Within the AAP leadership the worry is that in the face of a poor performance in 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the party government in Delhi would have a premature demise falling under the weight of dissidence and disruption. They could be out of power before the scheduled assembly election in 2020.

Kejriwal is hoping that going against the tide of cadre sentiment, the Congress high command may still align with it as it did in 2013 to make him Chief Minister for the first time. But then the Congress paid a heavy price for it by getting almost wiped out from city's political terrain. Having regained some ground after four years of struggle, will the Congress commit itself again to similar alliance? Time would tell.

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