

**By Sidharth Mishra**



The most unique and admirable aspect of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leadership is that it seldom displays black eyes even in the worse of poll bashing. The most recent example being the local body polls in Punjab.

On the day that Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government was celebrating completion of the first year of its second full-term, the results of the civic polls in Punjab came out, where AAP was placed a distant third behind the Congress and the Akali Dal. Expectedly, there was no acknowledgment by the AAP leadership of the humiliating defeat of being reduced from the position of the main opposition to that of third.

But within a few days it had bounced back with its Surat 'victory'. Though the critics have credited the Delhi's ruling party making debut in BJP's fortress to handing over the reigns to Patidar Anamat Andolan Samiti (PAAS), the fact remains that Arvind Kejriwal had the foresight to galvanise Patel votes, long disenchanted with BJP, in his party's favour.

What's more pertinent is that AAP decimated Congress in Surat, as it has done in Delhi. The defeat in Surat came despite PAAS founder-convenor Hardik Patel having joined the Congress some years back. No wonder Patel soon after the defeat, came out firing all cylinders at Congress leadership for not having utilised his services adequately.

There are bye-elections happening to municipal seats five seats in Delhi. Of these four were held by AAP and one by the BJP. The possibility of the repeat performance by both the parties is expected as the Congress in Delhi remains dormant with its present president Anil Chowdhary, despite the youth tag, has largely failed to stop the continuous loss of cadres.

A positive performance in Delhi would for certain enthuse the AAP leaders to go on another

## **AAP's Enthusiasm: Its Strength and its Weakness**

Written by Administrator

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media blitzkrieg claiming much larger political space than actually ceded to it, as it did recently releasing a map showing its pan-India presence. This enthusiasm is their both strength and weakness.

There is a lesson to be learnt from Punjab where despite the renewed push extending unwarranted hospitality to agitating farmers at Singhu border came a cropper. AAP's aggressive wooing emanated from the fact that during the last Lok Sabha polls in 2019, not only its seat count had come down from four to one but its vote share too shrunk from over 24 per cent in 2014 to just about seven per cent.

The 2021 Punjab civic polls refused to buck this trend for AAP despite its leadership including Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal leaving no stone unturned to pester agitating Punjab farmers at Singhu border.

This should alarm for AAP -- that while marching ahead in Gujarat there are also signs of losing on the territories where it failed to consolidate. It cannot just help itself by preying on the spoils of a decadent Congress in various states but build its own power base. The biggest gainer of the AAP's vote bank shift in Punjab has been the Congress, with Punjab returning to the old times of electoral contest between the Congress and the Akalis.

It's time for AAP leadership to introspect that their claims of achieving 'never before' development goals in the city doesn't have many takers outside Delhi. Those who closely follow state's politics, full-well understand that AAP's success story in the national capital is pinned on two factors – freebies and polarisation.

The Delhi Model of AAP should be propped by ideas of new politics rather than falling on 'time-tested' political stratagems and preying on moth-eaten state units of the Congress.

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