

By Sidharth Mishra



During the heydays of Anna Hazare agitation, two young faces started to appear on the television as the spokesperson for movement leader Arvind Kejriwal. One was doing article ship for chartered accountancy, and the second had left behind her job as a school teacher to be part of the movement.

The former was Raghav Chadda and the other Atishi Marlena. They in a way represented the Indian youth, who supported the movement to seek a change in the political system.

Last heard Chadha is likely to be interrogated in the Delhi liquor scam, which is alleged to have funded Aam Aadmi Party's poll campaign Punjab. Atishi on the other hand was seen justifying Arvind Kejriwal's desire to have Goddess Lakshmi's picture on the currency notes.

Atishi taking up the cudgels for having Goddess Lakshmi on the notes can well be said to be death irony. Why one says so because her initiation into politics was through her parents.

Both Marxist scholars of repute and teachers of political science at Delhi University. They were kind of iconic figures for those young minds seeking an initiation into Marxian philosophy.

Their commitment to the ideology was such that they gave a second name to their daughter Atishi, Marlena. Now Marlena was an acronym for Marx and Lenin.

Misuse of image of icons must stop as political optics

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Marlena, the child of Anna movement, 10 years down the line is demanding Goddess Lakshmi's picture on currency notes. Has she turned religious and taken to sainthood, or is it just another 'Diwali Dhamaka' for political gains?

Last year during Diwali, ahead of the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Kejriwal had frittered away tax payers' money to create Ram temple replica in a sports stadium in Delhi. Having lost miserably in Uttar Pradesh thereafter, prayers to Ram is now out of Kejriwal's 'to-do' list.

With Lakshmi being the lead Goddess for the trade-oriented Gujarati community, no wonder Kejriwal now has goddess of 'Aishwarya' (prosperity) on his priority list. The larger question is does our democracy give us the mandate to play with people's faith.

In the near decade long existence of Arvind Kejriwal in Indian politics, he has used optics to the maximal for gaining political dividends. He has hopped from Mahatma Gandhi to Lord Rama to Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar to Bhagat Singh to now Goddess Lakshmi.

Earlier, on the day Manish Sisodia, the Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, was summoned by the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI), his boss, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal compared him and his another jailed colleague Satyendra Jains to revolutionary freedom fighter Bhagat Singh.

In a post on the micro-blogging site Twitter, Kejriwal said that "jail bars and hanging noose could not deter Bhagat Singh's lofty intentions and that this (investigations into cases of corruption) was like second fight for freedom. Manish and Satyendra (who is in jail in a money laundering case) are today's Bhagat Singh."

Sisodia, who is emerging as main accused in multi-crore liquor scam, also did not leave any stone unturned to create the right optics for 'converting' an interrogation in a case corruption into that of political persecution. Sisodia went to CBI headquarters wearing Bhagat Singh's "basanti" (mustard) colour.

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Before that, with cameras clicking, Sisodia sought blessings of his mother and went to Mahatma Gandhi's Samadhi at Rajghat, as if on some great mission.

The question is whether we can accept such blatant misuse of the image of leaders who gave their life for our freedom or for that matter deities whom we pray to our spiritual salvation. Such attempts should be rejected not only by people's mandate but also prevented by putting a law in place.

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