



Expansion of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Beyond Delhi

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Abstract: The “rise” of regional political parties seems to be an eternal theme on the Indian political scene. Indeed, it has become a standard trope of Indian political analysis to deluge readers with excited descriptions of India’s fragmented party system and the multiplicity of local parties that appear to crop up like weeds after a monsoon rain. Observers also like to note the continued decline of India’s two genuinely national parties, the Indian National Congress and the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP)². In India the need for citizen-oriented parties are being felt for quite some time due to the growing gap between politicians, major political parties and the common people. This disconnect has been observed from Panchayat to parliament. The distance between the existing major or state political parties and the common people owes to lack of transparency, political opportunism, lack of vision and rampant corruption. In Delhi political sphere the uncommon rise of a common man’s party since 2013, surprised political analyst. The party’s populist promises have impacted different classes, particularly upper middle and lower middle class which look towards the party with freebies of day to day needs. AAP is also a byproduct of Anna Hazare’s social movement for Lok Pal and India against corruption.

Keywords: By-product, Freebies, Party system, Siromani Akali Dal (SAD), Aam Aadmi Party, Bharatiya Janta Party, Politics,

I. INTRODUCTION

The birth of Aam Aadmi Party (Common Man’s Party) on 26 November 2012 was a spectacular event in the history of Indian politics. The announcement to form a political party on 2 October 2012 and its inauguration on 26 November 2012 were historic, coinciding with the dates of birthday of Mahatma Gandhi and adoption of India’s constitution respectively¹, in March 2013 “it was registered as a political party by the Election Commission of India² and Jharoo (bloom) is allotted election symbol. Its emergence on the Indian political system marks the rise of a new phenomenon in party politics in contemporary India, Aiming to provide a political alternative of existing parties ensuring clean politics, good governance and corruption free India, it has received attention from political observers, analysts, thinkers, civil society, organisations, the media and the informed citizenry across the country.

The political landscape in Delhi began changing from Anna Hazare’s Jan Lokpal Bill and anti-corruption movement in 2011. Ironically, Arvind Kejriwal, Kiran Bedi and Santosh Hegde were key figures in this movement but Arvind Kejriwal parted away³ with Anna and movement turned to launch a political party with Munish Sisodia, Prashant Bhushan, Shaziailmi, Kumar Vishwas, Gopal Rai, Sanjay Singh and Yogendra Yadav in 2012, before launching a political party, Arvind Kejriwal acted as a social activist, he founded many societies, NGO’s aiming at the welfare of the poor people and reforming the governing patterns of government.

In 2013, Delhi assembly election AAP has won 28 seats out of 70. The AAP victory was spectacular considering the fact that it is a new party, formed very recently, just after the Anna movement. In the conditions of rapid fall and disappearance of the traditional congress the AAP and Kejriwal have been seen as the alternative, after an initial hesitation the Aam Aadmi Party decided to form a minority government with outside support of the Congress left party, but after 49 days Arvind Kejriwal took decision to quit from the government.⁴

However, running a minority government is never an easy proportion and Kejriwal AAP soon realised that they needed a majority in order to fulfil its popular promised made in its election manifesto. The failure of being able to do something compelled Kejriwal to resign on February 14, 2014 hoping that the Delhi election will be held along with the General election, which was due in May, but Modi government decided to extend the president’s rule in Delhi for one year. In

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²<https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/11/13/complicated-rise-of-india-s-regional-parties-pub-53585>



2014 General election Kejriwal decided to fight against BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi from Varanasi, with a declaration that Varanasi will be developed as the spiritual capital of the world and hence it will get the status of a holy city,⁵ but he lost that election with a big margin.

In Delhi Assembly election 2015 has thrown up a surprising result with the AAP's bloom sweeping off the BJP and wiping out the congress. For the first time ever a non-congress and non-BJP government has been elected with thumping majority. The vote share of the winning party (AAP) has been the highest ever 54.3 percent and the winning margin 21.5 percent with 67 seats out of 70m, it was an uncommon rise of a common man's party and the congress party has not been able to win a single seat for the first time since independence. The apprehension is broadly based on the voting pattern of the past few elections.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha election the BJP got a 46.40 percent vote share, while the congress got 15.10 percent and the AAP got 32.90 percent. In the 2015 Assembly election in Delhi, the AAP's vote share rose for 54.3 percent and the Congress to 9.7 percent, two year later, the BJP swept Delhi's Municipal election with 36 percent votes against Congress 21 percent and AAP's 26 percent.⁶ According to these figures, the Delhi electorate had different yard sticks for Lok Sabha and assembly elections, and hence there was no question of the BJP replicating the Lok Sabha (May 2019) with vote percentage of 56.58 and all seven seats, but February 2020 Delhi's assembly election, electorate gave 62 of the 70 seats to the AAP with 53.57 percent vote, just five seats short of its 2015, assembly election. The BJP improved its tally marginally from three seats in 2015 to eight seats with 38.51 percent vote and the Congress which had ruled the state for three consecutive terms from 1998 to 2013, drew a blank just as it did in the 2015 assembly election with 4.26 percent vote.⁷

II. MOVEMENT CONVERTED INTO POLITICAL PARTY

Before launching a political party Arvind Kejriwal acted as a social activist founded many societies with himself and others, aiming at the welfare of the common people, and reforming the government patterns. There were many crusaders with a cause and Arvind Kejriwal winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Emergent leadership in recognition of his involvement in the grassroots level movement, "Parivartan" with Manish Sisodia had resigned from the government service.⁸ Later on he joined RTI movement with Aruna Roy, he also co-founded Kabir and the PCRf the other societies to serve the common people. Further, he founded India Against Corruption (IAC) with Anna Hazare, N Santosh Hegde, Prashant Bhusan, Kiran Bedi, Manish Sisodia. In 2011, Arvind Kejriwal joined Anna Hazare's Fast at Janter Mantar and continued with his efforts till he left ways with Anna to launch a political party with Yogendra Yadav, Manish Sisodia, Prashant Bhusan, Shazia IImi, Kumar Vishwas, Gopal Rai in 2012. Arvind Kejriwal and Anna Hazare had successfully created a rare movement of national awakening about IAC and Lok Pal, the urgent need for reforms in governance. IAC became an activist AAP which then became an angry AAP.⁹ In 2014, the Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal decided to sit on a dharna in the heart of the capital.¹⁰

Converting from Mass movement to a political party the AAP has established support base which includes member of the upper middle, lower middle class, and urban poor living particularly in small houses including slums. It is an uncommon rise of a common man's party, the common man has started feeling empowered the idealism of the Anna Hazare anti corruption movement has been compromised by the harsh realities of electoral politics. Anna always used to say that politics is dirty, but Kejriwal and other activists stress that if we want to clean the system, then we have to enter the dirty politics. After some time Kejriwal's reluctance to build a second line of leadership has meant that the AAP is still burdened, like many regional outfits with the one leader show tag.¹¹ Kejriwal running AAP in an autocratic manner. Among the leaders who left or were shown the door were Kumar Vishwas, Yogendra Yadav, Anand Kumar, Prashant Bhusan, Ashutosh, Ashish Khetan and H.S. Phoolka many had been Kejriwal colleagues since the movement of Lok Pal and India Against Corruption (IAC) days.¹² Its not just that the Kejriwal has stressed the party away from being a collegium of consensual decision making to a self censoring autocracy nor it is that movement borne out of an anti-corruption agitation gave a little over 50 per cent of its tickets to candidates with criminal records. He did not hesitate to give tickets to candidate who had come to his party from the Congress. But should a seven year old party give up on its idealism so quickly.¹³ In 2012, Kejriwal launched AAP against Congress corruption and a year later went on to form a minority government in Delhi with the outside support of the Congress the very party whose "corrupt" government's at the centre and Delhi he had been agitating against corruption. It was a short lived engagement, and was the first indication that Kejriwal was ready to make compromise to seek political power.



Delhi's outsized influence on the national polity upsets people outside the city. Arvind Kejriwal's emphatic victory in 2020 assembly election is seen by many political analysts as yet another opportunity for him to emerge AAP on the national sphere, even though Delhi has only 14 million voters and seven members of Parliament. The AAP's launched a national wide campaign for rashtraniirman (nation building) on February 11, 2020, immediately after the Delhi election result were announced¹⁴ with a target of 1 crore membership throughout India. The AAP has so far contested six polls in the capital two Lok Sabha, three assembly and one Municipal election, but this was the first time Kejriwal involved a professional strategist in the form of Prashant Kishor and his agency I-PAC. This has previously worked on campaigns for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh and West-Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee.

Delhi is the gateway to the recognition of the AAP nationally and internationally¹⁶ and this time Kejriwal won because he convinced Delhi's voters that his priority is the establishment of a Welfare state.¹⁷ Delhi is not even a full-fledged state and its Chief Minister is actually a glorified Mayor. As the party in power at the centre, the BJP was already in control of key department like the Police, land authorities and bureaucratic appointment's Kejriwal could be no more than an irritant at worst.¹⁸ He has, more or less, managed to do that in his five year term in India's most high profile, yet numerically less consequential state.¹⁹

III. FOCUS ON PUBLIC DEMAND AND PERFORMANCE

The AAP focus is on the Arvind Kejriwal government's achievements, especially in sectors such as woman security, water, electricity, public health, education and free transport for women. A second consecutive land slide victory in Delhi assembly election C.M. Kejriwal said the victory indicated the birth of a new politics in India the politics of welfare and performance. Before assembly election Kejriwal made at least a dozen announcements like bus rides free for women on DTC buses, free public WiFi service and raising auto and taxi fares.²⁰

The Aam Aadmi Party glorified its achievement especially in education and health care, government schools have registered a pass percentage of 94.24 in class 12 CBSE examination 3.5 percent points higher than private schools. Many citizen of Delhi now prefer the efficient Mohalla Clinic to the long queue for overpriced doctor consultation at private hospital.²¹ Political analysts say Kejriwal freebies schemes targeting the lowest economic strata paid him rich dividends. Sheila Dikshit Former Chief Minister focused on building good infrastructure which appealed to the middle class of Delhi, but Kejriwal freebies diffused focus on other priority sectors such as infrastructure. Due to freebies the share of Delhi Transport Corporation expansion declined from 17 percent in 2013-14 to 10 percent in 2018-19, but freebies won voters trust of governance.²²

The challenge before Kejriwal will be how to sustain this freebies and subsidy culture in the absence of capital formation and investments. Sheila Dikshit former Chief Minister could do so well for 10 years (2003-2013) because she could save 20,000 crores in subsidy payments due to the privatisation of electricity supply. This cushion is no more available.²³ Political thinkers and analyst criticised the Kejriwal government over the subsidies, saying it was providing the facilities merely for political gains, he signalled that air pollution, sanitation, transport and water supply will top his future priorities. On this Kejriwal has correctly read the capital city's mood,²⁴ he know the value and importance of WHEE-water, health, electricity education. Spread this shimple WHEE model to as many places as you can. He is also an efficient CEO, who-convinced, Delhi voters.²⁵ On free WHEE Kejriwal said nature has ensured every valuable thing in the world is free, be it mother's love, father's blessings or Shraavan Kumar's dedication. So Kejriwal loves his people and hence this love is free²⁶ for all it does not matter for whom you voted in these elections.²⁷ He also defended his government's record in facilitating pilgrimage for senior citizens.²⁸

In 2020 assembly election Delhi is not a particularly significant battle ground, but BJP has chosen to make it so, to be sure BJP has improved its vote share and has improved its tally. But a five seat increment in an election involving an incumbent government and Amit Shah is nothing to feel even marginally satisfied about.²⁹ AAP was greatly helped by Congress, belying BJP's hopes of a triangular contest in Delhi, but BJP's relentless demonisation of Congress may have led Congress to conclude that its first priority was stopping BJP, even at the cost of sliding into irrelevance in one more state.³⁰ On completely collapse of Congress, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath said that AAP's resounding victory in the Delhi election indicates the start of rejection of BJP in the country,³¹ it has been out of power in the capital for 21 years now.



The Congress really lent AAP a helping hand, by contesting seats, though it knew it didn't stand a chance and so splitting the anti-lotus votes. We couldn't have had a better ally than a grand old party, which should be renamed grand absolute party.³² The minorities in Delhi, who had traditionally voted the Congress, switched their allegiance to the AAP strategically in order to ensure the defeat of the BJP in Delhi. The AAP took the place of the Congress as the rallying point for the anti-BJP vote. If Congress had not totally rolled over, BJP may well have done much better in a three way contest.³³ The contest was between the AAP and the BJP, the battle was so bipolar and the voting pattern so decisive that 63 of the 68 Congress candidates forfeited their deposits. For a party that had ruled Delhi uninterrupted for 15 years, this was a major setback.³⁴

AAP focused its campaign on issues such as freebies, bijli-sadak-pani, health the BJP campaign central around issues such as the citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC) the national population Register (NPR), article 370 construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya triple talak and Modi's government common people related schemes,³⁵ BJP has a membership of 62.28 lakh in Delhi, but only 35.6 lakh polled in its favour, party used its biggest weapon of polarization to consolidate the Hindu vote bank but not enough to overcome the consolidation on the basis of delivery, work and counter polarisation³⁶ clearly, a huge majority of Hindus had preferred the AAP, which was sought to be painted as pro-Pakistan and anti-Hindu by the BJP and its associates in the Sangh Parivar.³⁷ In the past one decade, the rise of the BJP has also increased the value or currency of Hindu voters in the country. Remember the time when political leaders would queue up before the Shahi Imam for Muslim votes. Non BJP parties are also now vying for Hindu voters with Gotra, Janaeus, kundly and Hanuman Chalisa.³⁸

Mandal Movement Chiefs LaluYadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav fought Hindutva by deploying cast against a Monolithic Hindu identity. In an urban milieu like Delhi where caste is irrelevant, Hindutva is best fought by joining the debate who is the better Hindu? Is the humble muffler clad Hanuman bhaktJanaeus wear who swears by real development not a better Hindu than the saffron tilak, kalava wore people.

IV. EXPANSION OF AAP BEYOND DELHI

In 2022, assembly elections Punjab voters rejected the oldest two parties the Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal and brought in Aam Aadmi Party. The scale of AAP's resounding victory the highest ever tally of 92 out of the 117 assembly seats with a 42.5% vote share reflects the frustration of voters against the congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal [39]. The growth of the AAP is significant. Kejriwal won three elections, one after the other. The AAP is not only occupying the congress's space, it is also posing a challenge to regional parties[40]. In this election 2022 assembly poll AAP registered a vote share of 42% in Punjab, 6.77% in Goa, 3.4% in Utrakhand and .03% in Uttar Pradesh. It shows the AAP's footprint in states where the BJP and the congress are in direct competition in North and West India. AAP's Punjab affairs co-incharge Raghav Chadha said, "In the coming days AAP will become a national force the party will emerge as the national and natural replacement of congress. AAP will next seek to eat in to the congress's base in Gujarat and emerge as the primary opposition in state elections scheduled for later this year[41].

AAP freebies such as Rs 1000 to every woman appealed to the poor, while its Delhi Model health care, opened Mohalla clinics improved standards in government schools and reduced water and power bills. AAP put so much of change, "IK MOKKA (one chance) and traditional party's history of "loot" into voters ears its suppressed the rivals sales pitch, communal, class and caste factors superseded. In Punjab the congress plan of playing up the caste factor by first installing a Dalit Chief Minister CharanJeet Singh Channy. It was first for the state, but the party could get only five totals of 34 reserved seats in Punjab. The *Akali* Dal has won one reserved seat and rests of all have gone to AAP. According to census 2011 the total population of Dalit was 31.94%[42]. The congress was marred by internal strife and SAD was still struggling to regain its traditional vote share. AAP promised to weed out liquor, drug Mafia, from the Punjab and it retained its stronghold Malwa region, which was also the Centre stage of the farmers agitation against the center's[43] and Pujnab voters catapulted the AAP to an enormous win reposing faith in the party's pitch of badlav (change) helped by its CM pick Bhagwant Mann. Even though politicians from across party lines made believer to Sirsa based DeraSachaSauda, the organization failed to make an impact on the elections and was diluted by the AAP wave. Even though the *Dera* had not declared open support to any particular party but it was considered that, it had asked its followers to vote for BJP and SAD candidates. The clout of the Dera could be sensed from the fact that Gurmeet Ram Rahim close relative Harminder Singh Jassi succeeded in getting only 12575 votes while contested as an independent candidate from TalwandiSaba[44].



The satirist turned – politician has been the party's best bet with his oratory skill resonating with voters beyond the party strong hold in Malwa region, where it won 66 of the 69 seats. It was believed that the party would not have it easy in Doaba, but there too it won 10 of the 23 seats. In Majha, the party emerged victorious in 16 of the 25 seats, indicating that the AAP tsunami was across Punjab, sinking all political stalwarts.

Never before four have Chief Ministers (three former and one sitting) and two deputy Chief Ministers (one former and one sitting) lost in Punjab elections. Parkash Singh Badal, Captain Amarinder Singh, Rajinder Kaur Bhatl, and Charanjit Singh Channi are the loosing CMs and Sukhbir Singh Badal and O.P. Soni the losing deputies and they all lost to Aam Aadmi Party[45]. The biggest bonus from the massive landslide in Punjab is that the tag of AAP being the B-team of the BJP will start wearing this. It was fine to allege that in Hindu dominated areas of Delhi or elsewhere, AAP was beneficial to the BJP as it took away votes that would have gone to the congress and regional parties[46]. The AAP is away from the recognition as a national party. For recognition a political party is accorded a national status when it secure at least 6% of the total vote share in four or more states during a Lok Sabha or state assembly election. AAP is away from this status. It is only in December when Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh go to elections the AAP may get another chance to win national party status.

At present the pol body recognizes BJP, Congress, TMC, Communist Party of India (Marxist) communist party of India (CPI), Bahujan Smaj Party (BSP), and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) as national party[47].

V. CONCLUSION

The politics of AAP is transformational. The voter of Delhi and Punjab have given more than two third majority for AAP and its supremo Arvind Kejriwal to provide a corruption-free, charges free, tax free, welfare-oriented government and more freebies in future.

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