

KEJRIWAL AND AAP: THE ROAD AHEAD (1)

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The Aam Aadmi Party leader, Arvind Kejriwal took his oath as the Chief Minister Of Delhi on 16th February at the Ramlila Ground. This will be his third consecutive term as the national capital's CM. AAP had achieved a historic win in the Delhi Legislative Assembly elections, winning a total of 62 seats out of 70, while the Bhartiya Janta Party lagging far behind, won the remaining 8 seats. Kejriwal had contested from the New Delhi constituency, winning by a margin of over 21,000 votes. The oath-taking ceremony was held at the Ramlila Maidan, the same place where Kejriwal had participated in the 2011 Jan Lokpal Aandolan, spearheaded by Anna Hazare, against the rampant corruption in the country.

The common man politics has worked wonders so far for the Arvind Kejriwal led Aam Aadmi Party, with the masses following him unweariedly. As the party steps into its third consecutive term as the ruling party in the national capital, people have their hopes high from their elected common man. The question of the hour is whether the government would be working with the same principles and methods as it did during their previous term or does it needs constructed working? The party may have won by a major share in this year's Vidhan Sabha elections, but their winning seats have declined from 67 in the previous elections to 63 this time. The decreasing number may a lesson for the party in the next elections. Keeping that in mind, let's take an insight into what the government can and should work on in the following five years.

“Delhi A Two Crore Family” During his address after the oath-taking ceremony, Kejriwal thanked the citizens of Delhi and dedicated the victory to them. “Your son has taken the oath for the third time as Delhi chief minister. This is not my victory but yours,” Kejriwal told the crowd. He emphasized working for all the people of Delhi, no matter who did they vote for in the elections. “The two crore people of the national capital are my family,” he added. Going forward, he said that he had extended an invitation to Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of the country too, and hopes for his blessings in doing the best work for Delhi. Addressing the topic of the opposition parties' election campaign against AAP, he said: “We forgive our opponents for whatever remarks they made during poll campaign”. This

statement comes in the wake of what some would call a rather bitter political campaign by the BJP before the elections. Notably, the Election Commission had ordered campaign bans against Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Singh, two senior party leaders of the BJP, in violation of the Moral Code Of Conduct(MCC) and Representation of People's Act 1951. This was also taken into account by the Home Minister and one of the star campaigners for BJP in the elections, Amit Shah, who accepted that statements such as “golimaaro” and “India V Pakistan” should not have been made and may have very well cost them the elections.

The Freebies Angle after an overwhelming victory, the path ahead for the government might be a tricky one. One of the focal and decisive points the opposition and even some of the followers had accused Kejriwal and the government in the previous term was of “freebies politics”, including free electricity up to 200 units and free conveyance for women in the DTC buses. The government had cited Delhi being a revenue surplus state as the reason why it can afford the large scale concessions it provides. Although according to an official CAG financial report, a total loan amount of INR. 26,268.9 crores were currently outstanding as of March 31, 2018. Also, major losses were incurred by Delhi Transport Corporation; a total of INR 3,843.62 crore as per the latest finalized accounts of the corporation during the year 2017-18. The detailed report is available on the official website of the CAG www.cag.gov.in. In their official manifesto 2020, the Party promised the continuation of the free electricity up to 200 units and free water up to 20,000 liters for every household. Along with this, the free bus ride scheme will be made available to students along with women. Some sections of the society, especially the lower and middle class cherish these schemes as they provide a consistent relief to their financial conditions. However, some feel that along with giving an unfair advantage to a certain section of the society, these schemes also cost the government money that should otherwise be used in the other prominent sectors requiring immediate attention. Sliding everyone's opinions aside and keeping in mind the financial reports issues during the aftermath of all these schemes, a desperate question arises that is it really feasible for the government to carry on the concession it provides instead of utilizing that fund in the repayment of the humongous debts it has piled up over the years.

Women Safety And Security The safety concerns of women in the national capital are one of the most important fields that the government should focus on in the coming years. The government claims to have taken a significant number of steps in curbing the ever prevalent menace of harassment. According to the Delhi Commission for Women, the

number of cases dealt with has gone up from 20,000 during 2007-15 to 52,473 during 2015-18. The mobile helpline program has also witnessed an increase from 848 visits from 2007-15 to 43,497 during 2015-18. This comes as a welcome step among the citizens in the process of making the city safer for women and dealing with the reported crimes. However, all is not well as the party promises. One of the major steps promised in the previous manifesto by Kejriwal led AAP was the large scale establishment of street lights and CCTV cameras throughout Delhi. While these have been installed in some regions, a major part of Delhi still lacks these amenities, which has led to minimal curbing of the problems women face in public places.

Deployment of bus marshals in the DTC buses has also been an effective method in checking crimes, with various instances of the marshals saving women and children in need. CCTV on buses had also been promised, but as of now only 25 buses are running on the streets of Delhi with pre-installed cameras, GPS, hydraulic lifts for differently abled people and panic buttons. Moreover, these buses have been launched just a few months ago. Looking at the crime stats, the reported rape cases have increased from 702 in 2012 to 2,135 in 2018, a 202 percent jump. Molestation cases have also shown increasing numbers from 727 in 2012 to 3,134.

The government needs to make good on its promises for the betterment and safety of women and the public in general and stopping crimes. Along with these, the government also needs to work on the Mohalla Marshals promised in the Manifesto 2020. Safety and security of women in workplaces and public is not something that can be dealt with mere promises, and this definitely should be in the top priority list for the next five years. Apart from this, a whole lot of other pressing issues remain at bay, the rectification of which was assured, but the work is far from over.

The ever-dwindling air quality in Delhi has been a constant nuisance for the people of all age groups. Pollution masks are a common sight throughout the year and not just during the post-Diwali season. Even though the heavily planned “Odd-Even Scheme” of the AAP government was implemented heavily and twice even, various reports show that it failed to cause any substantial effect in the increased AQI of Delhi. What we need in the city is an all-year air purification plan instead of one just concentrating during the Diwali season. The Supreme Court Of India has already labeled Delhi a “gas chamber” and has questioned the government on whether it is doing everything in its power to curb the problem. A positive

change in the environment has been the increase in Delhi's green cover from around 20.2% in 2015 to 20.6% in 2017. However, the increase may seem slightly less effective because out of a total target of planting 32.5 lakh trees in 2018-19, only 26 lakh have actually been planted. Adding to this, a lot of trees have been felled in various regions for the development of housing projects and colonies. This has led to further debates on whether it is justified to go on a tree felling spree in the name of providing shelter and housing.

The other major achievement of the government in the previous term has been the launching of the first phase of doorstep delivery of 40 government services. A government's representative arrives at the residence of the citizens to assist them with the due formalities at a mere rate of INR 50. The 2020 manifesto of the party also included a clause regarding the introduction of doorstep delivery of ration. The party has also promised to continue pushing for the full statehood of Delhi.

The mandate is clear. The people of Delhi like Kejriwal and definitely support him. His politics have been called a refreshing wave in the ongoing mess and widespread turmoil in the Indian political scenario. Instead of focusing on extremist religion-based politics, Aam Aadmi Party has found a breakthrough in connecting with the people. What started as a protest against corruption has turned into a spree of victories for Arvind Kejriwal and team. However, when the Delhiites have elected him as the Chief Minister for the third straight time, the expectations have also risen. Some crave more sustainable and affordable pricing schemes of the various commodities and services, others are just looking for a cleaner, healthier Delhi. No matter the different wants of the people, what's common in all of them is the belief that the Chief Minister will prioritize them over petty politics and blame game which is otherwise rampant in Indian politics.

Summary : The Aam Aadmi Party leader, Arvind Kejriwal took his oath as the Chief Minister Of Delhi on February 16th at the Ramlila Ground for the third consecutive time. The party may have won by a majority in the elections, but their winning seats have declined from 67 in the previous term to 63 this time. The decreasing number may prove decisive in the next elections for the party. From elementary education to women's safety and security along with health and environment, the government has clearly worked for the masses and the mandate is concrete evidence alluding to that fact. However, the work done surely isn't enough, and the taxpayers certainly do deserve more. Although much needs to be done from better governance to a year-round clean and healthy environment, the government

might need to focus on some major sectors if it hopes to maintain the same level of support from the public in the coming years.

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