

## Aam Aadmi Returns – 7 Leadership Lessons from AAP & AK 49 (or AK 67)

By now there must have been case studies and books being, if not already, written on spectacular victory of AAP in just concluded Delhi election. Not willing to miss the bus, here is my (me too) humble take on what leadership means in current times when frustration is scaling new peaks with every passing day and trust of general public is at their possible lowest in those whom they have entrusted huge responsibilities with great expectations:

**Humility** – This is perhaps one of the most essential virtues for current and aspirational leaders. The era of aura and charisma is all but over and this is classically displayed by AK. Remember Modi got huge mandate when he was portrayed as Sevak & not Raja. Similarly, AK publicly and repeatedly admitted his mistakes during last his stint as CM and going national too fast. His generosity in thanking grassroots workers, admitting their sacrifices (MLAs got portfolios but these unnamed and unsung heroes have given up their livelihood for our cause), crediting his wife and close aids will be played and replayed for a long time at various corporates and business schools. Also, his personal invitation to every Delhite for swearing in ceremony saying it is not he but every Delhite is becoming the CM <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eYyVeTrQ1g> and warning to AAP leaders to stay away from arrogance by citing examples of BJP & Congress represent his practical humility.

**Daring in Adversity & Gracious in Victory** – When the odds were all stacked against him whether in forming a political party or quitting government or contesting against NaMo or being challenged by his very own colleagues, including Kiran Bedi, he stood firm and persevered for the cause he espoused facing ridicule of even so called rationale people, often being topic of several viral jokes over internet. Contrast this with his non confronting (read negativism) approach towards his opponents in Delhi Dialogue for Kiran Bedi, even to the extent of expressing his sympathy for her while comparing her with MMS, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkrwcZACbLU> or AAP's radio campaign on Thank You delhi or embracing three (sic) MLAs from BJP as their very own and you could only debate about the margin of victory and not the victory itself.

**Engage ALL Stakeholders** – In spite of being termed as representing only “*Rehdi Patri Wala*” voters, he took pains in personally connecting with each and every section of society, from youth to educated, old to business community (his master stroke on exploiting his *gotra* or naxalite remark, more on this later), girls to tech savvy GenY and on and on and on, the list is endless AND comprehensive as well as exhaustive. He touched a chord that resonated with EVERYONE (What will change for Common Man?) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VPXkqE9Zidc> in a powerful manner but without mincing any word.

**Putting Personal Credibility at Stake** – In spite of being termed as autocrat by some of his very own and close colleagues, he put his own skin in and this was reflected not only in “*Paanch Saal Kejriwal*” (in all fairness copied, even if inadvertently, from *Abki Bar Modi Sarkar*) but his own admission that HE is the biggest culprit in his own party and doesn't mind the tag of an anarchist. All this could, and indeed in the past had, gone wrong but he persisted, simply because he preferred (or so I hope and wish) the first bullet to hit him, and before anyone. This requires courage with a capital C and even his worst critiques would admit that he has it what it takes.

**Taking Challenge Head On** – He knew and perhaps chosen to be up against proverbial wall(s) when he took upon corruption and arrogance but did not blink when faced with resulting challenges and

threats. AAPs stated mission that they are not against any specific Vyakti (person) or Vyaktitava (party) but Vichardhara (philosophy) earned them many not so desirable tags but they not only persevered but propagated as well. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pO0dXSQedR8>

**Inspire** – Perhaps the biggest reason for his success is his ability to inspire the hitherto aloof youth and common man to politics. He instilled a sense of pride and purpose in the person(s) who believed that nothing can be done in this country and have reconciled to *Chalta Hai* attitude and as a way of life, and boy (only proverbial, gals definitely included), he did it with a sense of urgency and necessity, something of critical importance in today's VUCA world that lives on the instant culture, instant coffee, instant noodle, instant relationship, instant break up and, and, and. Given that it is sponsored and meant for publicity, it touches all the right chords when his doctor explores the treatment for an anarchist or says "kuch to hai Arvind main" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20hmuQtZpaQ> .

**Seize the Opportunity** – To quote Rajdeep Sardesai, while \*\* never misses an opportunity to miss an opportunity and \*\* wears his philosophy on his sleeve, AK in particular and AAP in general seized every opportunity that befallen in their way, or at times converted into one when there appeared to be none, else how would you explain his exploiting "Upadravi Gotra" & "Naxalite – go to jungle" episodes that have significantly turned him into a victim and connected him emotionally with the people who otherwise were not his fans. This is what the management schools term as converting crisis into opportunity and AK did convert many of these. Among many that have come to be symbolized with AAP now, perhaps the best gig was when NaMo picked up broom under the "Swachh Bharat" program, and with due respect and all good intentions, or AAP hijacking "Congress ka hath aam Aadmi ke sath". Alas, these were seized by AAP as adversaries becoming hypnotized or pulling the proverbial carpet underneath the feet.

**Empowerment & Accountability** – If I have to choose one, AK by not keeping ANY portfolio is THE message he has given to Delhi that while he believes in accountability and empowerment, make no mistakes about who the boss is. Also, he made it clear that while, unlike his last stint, he would focus on Delhi, his mission is beyond changing a local landscape and about bringing a paradigm shift in the way politics is practices and perceived in the country.

In the end, I cannot but wish him all the very best as he moves on to larger canvas and like to repeat what I have written on December 31 2013:

*"Expressly admitting of not being a fan of AAP, I sincerely pray for their success simply because they have given hopes to an entire generation and I better don't dare guess what if these are belied. It would be a catastrophe of unimaginable magnitude if it turns out to be a repeat of JP or VP movement."*

**PS:** To end on a humorous note, AAP's promise of **Free Wi-Fi** was misinterpreted by youth as **Free Wife** and no wonder they voted for him in mass. The old, or those not in sync (read *sanskratik*) did not because they were worried what would happen to their existing wives.