Chapter 2

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From India Against Corruption to the Aam Aadmi Party: Social Movements, Political Parties and Citizen Engagement in India

Introduction

Anna Hazare, a well-known social activist, began a hunger strike in New Delhi in April 2011 to pressure the Indian Government to enact a strong and effective Lokpal (Federal Ombudsman) Act in order to root out corruption from the country, in response to the exposure of unprecedented financial scams and corruption.[1]

Public trust in the government specifically and the political class in general seemed to be at an all-time low, which drew an impassioned response to Hazare's fast, prompting the largest popular protest in India in recent memory. Thousands descended on the site of the fast in New Delhi in his support, leading some to call it 'India's Tahrir Square' (Rajalakshmi 2011). Social media facilitated a huge outpouring of support for Hazare's cause, the dominant tone of which was an anguished tirade against corruption. According to an editorial in *The Indian Express:*

> By now, it's been compared to Tahrir, to 1968, even to Woodstock. For those who have never experienced the energy of a mass movement, the Anna Hazare-led movement over the Lokpal bill feels like catharsis, like revolution, a tidal wave that will sweep away the entire venal political class and replace it with those who feel their pain. What connects this crowd of ex-servicemen, yoga enthusiasts, auto-rickshaw unions, candle-light vigilantes, actors and corporate big shots and students? That they all feel let down, in different ways, by the political apparatus, and they are mad as hell (2011).

These protests brought to the fore fundamental debates on the nature, practice and institutions of representative parliamentary democracy in contemporary India. The intensification of these debates in the following months eventually led to the formation of a new political party—the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP, or the "Common Man's Party")—in November 2012.

Against this background, this chapter analyses the process that led to the metamorphosis of a popular movement into a political party; assesses the pressing debate on the relationship between citizens, social movements and political parties; and makes recommendations on how relevant actors can deepen this complex and increasingly contentious relationship.

The movement

The origins of efforts to create a constitutional entity with the power to investigate corruption at the highest levels of government (including the prime minister, Cabinet and parliamentarians) can be traced back as far as 1968. Bills to establish the office of a federal ombudsman were introduced in parliament by various governments ten times from 1968 to 2008, but none became law. During this time, anti-corruption campaigners and activists regularly articulated the need for such an office.

In October 2010, the most recent version of the bill under consideration by the government was leaked to the media. The draft drew the ire of many activists and anti-corruption campaigners, who saw the government's draft bill as insincere. Civil society activists of different hues and predilections soon coalesced under a loose umbrella coalition called India Against Corruption (IAC) to pressure the government to strengthen and enact a law. A two-pronged strategy was adopted. First, an alternative bill was drafted with the support of well-known legal luminaries who were part of the movement. Second, public opinion and support were mobilized around the alternative draft by reaching out using the media (especially social media) and organizing large rallies and meetings across the country.

Anna Hazare, a diminutive 74-year-old man of humble origins, soon became the face of the movement. His, some would say carefully crafted, Gandhian persona and tactics of fasting and prayer drew the masses in vast numbers. Hazare was supported by a clutch of activists and professionals who became known popularly as Team Anna.[2] They

included Arvind Kejriwal, a civil-servant-turned-activist, and Prashant Bhushan, a Supreme Court lawyer known for espousing public causes, leading some to conclude that Kejriwal was the driving force behind the movement (Laul 2012).

The alternative draft bill proposed by the group soon became known as the Jan Lokpal bill ('People's Ombudsman' bill), a term that possessed a multiplicity of meanings suggesting not only that it was a bill that had been drafted by 'the people' as opposed to the government or parliament, but also that it would establish an ombudsman who would be *of* and *for* the people. While it is beyond the remit of this chapter to carry out a detailed comparative analysis of the two drafts—and other drafts proposed by other actors—it should be noted that a key difference lay in the jurisdiction of the ombudsman envisaged in the two bills.[3] Critically, investigating the prime minister, Cabinet, parliamentarians and the judiciary fell unequivocally within the jurisdiction of the ombudsman in the Jan Lokpal bill, while this was not the case in the government version. The political class was widely perceived as corrupt to the core, and to consider itself above the law. Thus, the idea of a strong ombudsman resonated very strongly with the public mood.

At this juncture, as Anna Hazare launched his fast to demand the formation of a joint drafting committee comprised of government representatives and civil society actors, the fundamental tensions rose to the surface. This conflict affected not only the proximate context of the movement, but also the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party.

The battle lines

On 8 April 2011, three days into Anna Hazare's fast, the ruling Congress Party held a public media briefing in which the party spokesperson questioned the basis of Hazare's demand that members of civil society should sit on a legislative drafting committee: 'I am not for the moment going into the very important question: who represents civil society? Do you represent civil society? Does he represent civil society? Do two out of those 20 people at India Gate represent or those 200 represent civil society? Who decides and how to decide?' (Singhvi 2011). A response to his polemical question was published in a popular news magazine soon after:

> You asked the oft repeated question that the corrupt are wont to ask, viz:

'Who represents the civil society?...You questioned the common sense of the civil society. You said that sloganeering does not lead to governance. You taunted civil society with not understanding the difference between substance and procedure. You called them obdurate and inflexible. And you went on and on. And on. But let me ask you something first: Whom do you represent? I think the civil society, howsoever defined, has a right to know. Do you represent the people of the country? (Agrawal 2011)[4]

This brief exchange lays bare the heart of the matter. In a democracy, who decides the rules by which society must live, and what are the sources of their legitimacy? In the debate that ensued and consistently informed the tussle between activists and the government in the following months, the argument was generally polarized as follows. The political class claimed legitimacy by asserting that in a representative parliamentary democracy, Parliament is supreme, and possesses unquestioned legitimacy, as its members have been elected by the people.[5] Civil society actors cannot make any legitimate claim to represent the will of the people or to participate in the processes of decision-making and rule-making because they do not stand in popular elections. Political parties by extension, possess unquestionable legitimacy, as they are the vehicles through which the will of the people is ascertained and actualized through elections.

At the other end of the spectrum, many civil society activists argued that in a democracy, elected representatives can claim legitimacy only if they consistently act in accordance with the spirit of the constitution and the will of the people they represent. In this sense, unquestioned legitimacy cannot be claimed by participating in elections, but must be constantly renewed by elected representatives. Civil society's role is therefore to ensure that elected representatives—and, by extension, political parties—remain accountable to the people at all times.

In the Indian context, popular discourse typically perceives civil society as organized entities and/or processes (e.g., NGOs and formal entities that work on specific social themes with well-established, institutional sources of funds). Social movements, on the other hand, are seen as organic, bottom-up and spontaneous claim-making processes, which may or may not rally around strong and charismatic leaders, that seek financial support from individual contributions. In the Lokpal debate, the definitions of civil society and social movement became fluid constructs and were used by different actors at different times to make larger political points. Political actors tended to play down the social

movement aspect and portray the protests as an organized effort to, among other things, destabilize the government, while the leaders of the movement sought greater legitimacy by portraying the protests as a spontaneous popular movement.

Although this debate continued—and continues in different forms to this day, and not only in India—the story unfolded in the following months with numerous twists and turns. A joint committee was eventually formed, but after several meetings could not agree on a common draft. The government's version of the bill was subsequently passed by the Lok Sabha (lower house) in December 2011 and sent to the Rajya Sabha (upper house) for debate, where it languished long after.

The formation of the AAP

When the bill entered the domain of parliamentary procedure in August 2011, the IAC movement and its leadership tried to keep the issue of corruption at the forefront of public consciousness, but the momentum began to wane. Media interest had plummeted, and the crowds at public rallies were thinning. From a political sociology perspective, when a movement begins to wither, there are at least three possible ways to re-energize it: change the leader (Hazare), change the demands (anti-corruption/Jan Lokpal Act) or change the nature of the organization.[6] The first two were clearly not possible, as the movement owed its success thus far to these factors. With respect to the third, the group could 'either continue with and expand this civil society movement while remaining outside the formal political process or convert it into a formally political one' (*Economic and Political Weekly* 2012: 8).

At this juncture, ideological cleavages began to appear within Team Anna. Hazare had consistently argued that entering electoral politics was not an option, as the political system had become too murky and compromised to allow any space for 'clean' candidates and political parties to exist. Kejriwal, on the other hand, asserted that they had 'tried everything from *andolan* (movement) and *anshan* (fasting) to pleading with folded hands but nothing [had] worked with the present-day political leaders' (Parsai 2012). Forming a political party was soon considered to be 'the only suitable response to the challenge from the political class who had questioned the legitimacy of the anti-corruption movements and were dismissively calling them just a handful of people shouting in the streets' (Kumar 2013: 13).

The limitations of continuing as a movement thus appeared to be twofold. First, however large and widespread a social movement is, it will eventually have to petition and lobby parliament, the political executive and political parties to bring about the changes it is demanding. Second, the political class is 'bent upon ignoring the moral imperatives and refus[ing] to recognise the processes of civil disobedience like fasting and *dharna* [sit-in]' (Kumar 2013: 13) and can always fall back on the legitimacy argument to discredit a movement and maintain the status quo. The leadership of the Jan Lokpal movement eventually split on this issue, and in October 2012 Kejriwal announced that a new political party would be launched to provide an 'alternative politics for changing the system and giving power back to the people' (Parsai 2012). The AAP was formally launched on 26 November 2012, the anniversary of the birth of B. R. Ambedkar, who is widely regarded as the author of the Indian constitution.

Factors that encouraged the formation of the AAP

As noted above, there was a growing disenchantment with the established political parties in India. The underlying causes can be distilled into a basic, existential question: What is the central purpose of a political party, and what is the nature of its relationship with citizens? Is it to provide a platform and a space for citizens' concerns to be articulated? Is it to represent the voices and demands of specific populations or interest groups? Is it to mobilize citizen action? Is it to create a politically aware and engaged citizenry? Is it to promote a specific ideology? Or is it to win elections and seek power, not as a means of bringing about social and political change, but as an end in itself?

Political parties as election machines

With 1,392 registered, unrecognized political parties on the books of the Election Commission of India, the responses to such questions are no doubt varied (Palshikar 2013: 10). However, there is a popular perception that for most of the recognized regional and national parties in the current political ecosystem, 'winning and losing elections has become the only role a party envisages for itself' (Hasan 2010: 250). This was not always the case. The origins of the Indian party system lay in the evolution of the nationalist discourse as a response to colonialism. The Indian National Congress Party grew out of the independence movement and later became the leading nation builder, and therefore

could not be premised on any single social cleavage such as caste, class, religion or ethnicity.[7] For a party that was seeking to mobilize people across a bewilderingly complex country for a common cause—independence from colonial rule—it was essential to build a wide and deep organizational structure, as well as significant levels of internal democracy to ensure acceptance across typical social cleavages.

However, greater democratization and wider political participation have led to the creation of a political context that is characterized by a multiplicity of political parties, many of which are based on social cleavages that include caste, religious, linguistic and regional identities. These parties compete vigorously with each other, resulting in a preponderance of coalition politics. Increased political competition, measured and compared primarily by success in elections, has also resulted in the gradual but inexorable strengthening of the parliamentary wing over the organizational wing of most established political parties. This means that identifying and promoting charismatic leaders and 'winnable' candidates has become more important than persevering with ideologically or issue-based work by the party organization on the ground.[8] With the definition of political legitimacy being reduced to success in elections and the number of seats a party can gain, winning popular elections (as opposed to strengthening intraparty democracy or organization building) has become the primary occupation of most established political parties at both the national and regional levels.

Corruption and criminality

A study commissioned by International IDEA reports that 'criminality and corruption among party leaders are becoming more common and parties are becoming more identified with a single personality and are unable to develop internal mechanisms for leadership renewal and the renewal of senior office holders' (International IDEA 2008). Indeed, an increasing number of parliamentarians have criminal records. The 2004 Lok Sabha experienced a 31 per cent increase in members with serious criminal records from the previous election (Joseph 2009).

Taking note of these trends, the Supreme Court of India recently passed two judgements that deeply resonated with the disaffection of ordinary citizens with the political class. In the first, the Court ordered that any sitting member of parliament or of a state assembly would automatically be disqualified if any court convicted him or her of a crime and sentenced him or her to more than two years' imprisonment

(Venkatesan 2013).[9] Previously, members could take recourse to a higher court and continue to represent their constituency pending the outcome of an appeal, which in practice could take decades. In the second judgement, the Court ordered the Election Commission of India to allow voters to select a 'none of the above' option at each election. While the modalities of providing such a choice have yet to be worked out, it follows the theoretical principle of voters having a right to reject any given pool of candidates, which has been championed by the AAP (*Indian Express* 2013b).

Campaign finance

Competing in elections has become very expensive. By some estimates, the total expenditure across all political parties in the 2009 Lok Sabha election was USD 3 billion (Timmons 2009). The deputy leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha recently stated that 'his campaign expenses for his parliamentary election in 2009 had skyrocketed to 80 million rupees (USD 1.3 million at current rates). This was more than 30 times the permissible limit of 2.5 million rupees at the time. The amount also exceeded his total declared assets of 62.25 million and was in stark contrast to his sworn declaration before the Election Commission that his election expenses came to only 1.94 million' (Bhushan 2013).[10]

Why are such vast sums of money required for election campaigns in India? The most problematic 'costs' are outright attempts to buy individual votes, cases of which have been regularly reported in the media (Hiddleston 2011). Buying media space, whether through regular advertising channels or by buying favourable reportage, is also expensive (Raman 2009). Other costs are 'political necessities' such as providing 'largesse to campaigners and contractors, caste and community leaders and incentives to minor political rivals to gut their own campaigns' (Bhushan 2013). Finally, as a consequence of the organizational hollowing out mentioned above, most political parties no longer have a regular cadre of party members and workers who are willing to dedicate time and effort to carry out the required organizational work before and during elections. This means that a large number of people have to be employed during an election campaign, which requires significant resources.[11]

Politics and business

Needless to say, if billions of dollars are being spent on elections, the money has to first come from somewhere and later be recouped. This

inescapable economic logic has played a critical role in the proliferation of political corruption, leading to the public anger that was manifest in the Jan Lokpal agitation. The state does not finance party election campaigns in India. In the past, big businesses and wealthy individuals made large donations to political parties on the right and in the centre, which were seen as an investment in maintaining good relations across the political spectrum. Such donations, along with individual contributions from party members and in-kind contributions from the state, such as free airtime on what was then only state-owned media, typically financed the relatively low costs of election campaigns.

Today, however, politics is increasingly seen as a lucrative business. Elected representatives not only make policies that benefit certain business interests over others, but they are also in a position to influence the allocation of government contracts worth billions of dollars. For example, *The New York Times* reports that 'In Andhra Pradesh [a state in southern India], the [then] Chief Minister converted most of his party's legislators into contractors by allotting them government contracts to build canals and roads' (Bhushan 2013). Raising funds from interested actors to finance election campaigns is therefore not very difficult, as campaign donations are considered investments with high returns. Deeper ethical questions are raised by the increasing trend of wealthy businessmen financing their own campaigns and obtaining party nominations and directly entering the national parliament or state legislatures. This trend has led to widespread public concern 'that politicians are controlled by private "money bags" or criminal elements who also find their way into politics' (International IDEA 2003: 176). A recent study carried out by the National Social Watch Coalition reported that '128 out of the 543 members of the 15th Lok Sabha belonged to the business class'.[12]

Family matters

The greater democratization of the political process by increasing non-elite participation has also led to a shrinking of the democratic process *within* political parties, including centralized, oligarchic party leaderships that are often controlled by family dynasties (Sridharan 2009). As large sums of money play a central role in this heady mix of power and politics, much of it through illegal and unaccountable channels, trust in the political class also becomes a matter of concern— and in matters of trust, family comes first. This partially explains the importance of dynastic politics in India. In the current Lok Sabha, '28.6

per cent of MPs [have] a hereditary connection' with politics (French 2011: 116). Furthermore, 'Every MP in the Lok Sabha under the age of 30 [has] in effect inherited a seat, and more than two-thirds of the 66 MPs aged 40 or under [are hereditary] MPs' (French 2011: 119–20).[13] In a situation in which political 'parties have become a closed shop with entry restricted only to those who have the right credentials of birth' (Hasan 2010: 250) or the ability to generate and/or invest large sums of money, most established political parties cannot claim to be either representative or democratic, as their functioning appears to restrict the ability of ordinary citizens to participate directly in the political process.

In sum, the Jan Lokpal movement was a response to the profound questions that are confronting most established political parties in India. These include a reduction in the defining characteristics of the democratic process to electoral politics (rather than internal party democracy); questionable strategies and actions related to financing and managing election campaigns; the whittling away of internal party organizational and institutional structures; and the infiltration of political parties by vested interests. The next section examines the extent to which the Jan Lokpal movement addresses these questions.

Unique features of the AAP

Origins

The AAP self-consciously locates its origins in the IAC-led movement described above; its vision document states that:

> For the past two years, millions of people came out on the streets to fight corruption and demand Jan Lokpal...For two years we tried all available avenues. We negotiated for our cause with the government, prayed to all parties, begged in front of them, sat on dharna [sit-ins], organized protests and sat on indefinite fasts three times but nobody listened—neither the parties nor the leaders...We realize now that begging will not work. It is time to uproot these parties and change the whole system' (AAP 2012b: 1).

The party leadership has also asserted that the decision to form a party was made after consulting supporters of the popular movement through a survey organized using social media: 76 per cent of respondents were reportedly in favour (DNA 2012). The leadership claimed that it entered the political arena reluctantly after exhausting all other available options, and in consonance with the wishes of a popular movement. The AAP

therefore differentiates itself from the established political parties by asserting that its very existence is premised on a deep and meaningful engagement with citizens, reflected in the popular movement against corruption that preceded its formation.[14]

Strategies for outreach and engagement

The AAP has also made efforts to deepen citizen engagement, including through the use of social media and modern telecommunications. The party has 1.5 million registered phone users in Delhi, which enables it 'to muster thousands of protesters at a few hours' notice by text message'. Kejriwal has claimed that 20 million people have subscribed for party updates (*The Economist* 2013). The AAP also plans to launch an online television news channel (Menon and Subramaniam 2013). Party leaders claim that its extensive use of social media is important in part due to corporate control over, and intimidation of, traditional media outlets, which have begun to ignore the AAP because it has spoken out against large corporations and their influence over government policies (Jebaraj 2013). As of 5 September 2013, the AAP's page on Facebook had been liked by 293,107 people, compared to 264,423 for the Congress Party, and it had 116,871 followers on Twitter—minuscule numbers for a country with a population of over 1 billion, but with an Internet penetration of only 12.5 per cent of the population (International Telecommunications Union 2013).[15] Social media have played an indirect role by generating sufficient public interest in the AAP's activities on virtual platforms, which in turn has forced traditional media outlets to report on its activities. Yet the AAP relies primarily on other innovations to spread the word. For example, several auto-rickshaw unions in Delhi agreed to support the AAP by putting up posters for the party on over 30,000 rickshaws in the run-up to the elections in Delhi in November 2013, and volunteers associated with the party were encouraged to put up posters outside their homes (*Business Standard* 2013).

Apart from such innovations, the AAP leadership suggests that its strength lies in its ability to mobilize volunteers and members at the constituency level, in the first instance in Delhi:

> The people, in large numbers, are with us…Young boys and girls who have
> given up their careers, postponed their services exams; software engineers
> who have taken off from work for two years…Every single street [in Delhi]
> is being mapped. For every 25 homes, there has to be one sthaniya prabhari

[local volunteer] whose job [will] be to communicate the message of the party and to be in touch with people. Our target is [125,000] volunteers as sthaniya prabharis, and we have already crossed 75,000...That is our strength... None of the [other] parties have any grassroots volunteers. They are completely shallow. Other [parties] have money power. And they hire people (Joseph 2013).

Structure and functioning

Although it appears that the process is still evolving, the AAP's main public organizational principle is intraparty democracy. It premises its structure on a membership basis, and any adult can become a member of the party by paying a small fee (AAP 2012a). The AAP claims that 'There is no central high command in [the] Aam Aadmi Party. The party structure follows a bottom to top approach where the council members elect the Executive Body and also hold the power to recall it'.[16] Elections at all levels will take place every three years, with the proviso that: 'No member will hold the same post as an office bearer for more than two consecutive terms of three years each' (AAP 2012a: 16). Furthermore, the party states that: 'If someone is a member of any Executive Committee of the Party, then none of his or her immediate family members can become a member of any Executive Committee of Party' (AAP 20012a: 22).

The party constitution also provides for the office of an internal Lokpal (which is already in place) to investigate allegations of 'corruption, crime, substance abuse and moral turpitude against all office bearing members of the party. Any citizen can present proof of wrongdoing against a party member. If the internal Lokpal finds the party member guilty, he or she will be subjected to appropriate disciplinary action as decided by the internal Lokpal.'[17] The party Lokpal's current members, none of whom are (or can be) members of the party, are a former chief justice of the Jharkhand High Court, a former chief of naval staff and a human-rights activist/academic.[18] In sum, the party is attempting to institutionalize systems of internal democracy from the very beginning, and use them to deepen citizen engagement through its membership structure, party governance and organizational activities.

Candidate selection

Perhaps the AAP's greatest innovation in citizen engagement is in its selection of candidates for the Delhi Assembly elections.[19] The process it has devised flows from its stated intention to be different from other

political parties: 'No one will need to buy an election ticket in our party. Candidates contesting elections from an area will be selected by the people of that area. In all political parties today criminals and mafia goons are given election tickets. Such people will never be given tickets in our party. A thorough screening process will ensure that no one with a criminal record or proven corruption charges can stand for elections for our party'.[20] Furthermore, and in a direct indictment of the dynastic politics discussed above, the party also asserts that 'No two members of the same family will be eligible to contest elections in our party'.[21]

All who aspire to a party nomination must first have the signed support of at least 100 voters from his or her constituency. The signatures are sent to a screening committee, which interviews the supporters. Based on the interviews and input from local volunteers, a shortlist of five names is released for feedback from the public, which is encouraged to 'submit proof of any wrongdoing by the shortlisted candidates'.[22] Party volunteers then rank the candidates in a secret ballot using a preferential voting system. Finally, the Political Affairs Committee holds another round of interviews to select the final candidate, taking the result of the ballot into account. The AAP used this system to select party candidates for 33 of Delhi's 70 assembly constituencies in the November 2013 elections.[23]

Finances

The AAP also aims to function very differently from established political parties on the critical issue of campaign and party finances. It asserts that the 'party will function with full financial transparency. Every single rupee collected by donations to run this people's party will be publicly declared on the party's website and all expenditures will also be declared on the website'.[24] The list of donations is posted on the party website, and information about online donations is updated in real time. The website also provides details of donations by country, province within India, month and amount. The party has also published statements of its income and expenditures from its inception to date.[25] Social media are being used extensively to raise individual donations, and a recent email campaign sought to raise INR 1.4 million (USD 24,000), which is the legally permissible limit for campaigning in each assembly constituency, for a party candidate who had been seriously injured in a road accident. The party reported that it received USD 32,000 within a single day in response to the call (Khandekar 2013).

The AAP collected over USD 1 million[26] in its first year, suggesting that ordinary citizens are willing to contribute to a political party if they feel inspired to engage with it. To put this figure into perspective, the amount that can be legally spent by a candidate on an election campaign for the Delhi Assembly is INR 1,400,000,[27] which is roughly equivalent to a total of USD 1.6 million for all 70 Delhi Assembly constituencies. The two largest national political parties in India, the Congress Party and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), reported their incomes from 2007 to 2011 as USD 250 million and USD 130 million, respectively (Vyas and Rao 2012).

Interestingly, a recent development appears to corroborate the AAP's position on party transparency. The Central Information Commission (CIC), the highest appellate body for disputes related to the implementation of the Right to Information Act (RTI Act) in India, ruled in 2013 that six major political parties (and, by extension, most others) were deemed to be public authorities under the RTI Act and had to therefore set up systems and processes to comply with the Act. The RTI Act provides a legal framework for citizens to seek *any* information that is held by any public authority in the country, subject to well-defined exceptions such as those related to national security. Although most major political parties criticized this judgement on the grounds that previous legislation provides sufficient transparency, research suggests that 'a great deal of money is flowing through illegal channels' to political parties (*Times of India* 2013; Gowda, Rajeev and Sridharan 2012: 233). All the major parties appear to have closed ranks on this issue, and the government is planning to amend the RTI Act in Parliament to exclude political parties from its ambit. The AAP, by contrast, welcomed the CIC ruling and reiterated that it has been proactively placing all its finances in the public domain—regardless of how small the donation—and that its candidate selection process is far more transparent than that of any other party.

Using the above approach, strategies, agenda and activities, the AAP is seeking to redefine democratic politics in India. It portrays itself as resurrecting the essence of multiparty democracy by building a people-based organizational structure, practising norms of meaningful intraparty democracy and engaging with citizens at every stage of the electoral process—from raising funds transparently to selecting candidates for elections and developing constituency-level election manifestos. It goes further to advocate legislative practices—such as referendums, direct initiatives, the right to reject and the right to recall[28]—that will allow deeper citizen engagement with the electoral

process before elections and greater accountability from their elected representatives.

Unsurprisingly, the strongest criticisms of the AAP have come from the established political parties. The main themes of the critique revolve around assertions that: the AAP is essentially a media creation; neither the anti-corruption movement nor the political party that arose from it are representative of the concerns of the people as a whole; its popularity is limited to urban centres and the middle classes; it proposes naive solutions to the complex problems of democratic practice in an extremely diverse social context; and, finally, it is best to ignore it as a non-starter in the national political arena. Most political parties initially adopted a wait-and-see approach to assessing the extent to which the AAP is able to generate popular support.

Election results

The State Assembly elections held across five states in India, including Delhi, in December 2013 were regarded as a litmus test. This chapter focuses on the Delhi Assembly elections. If the party garnered a significant share of the vote or number of seats in the Assembly, then mainstream political parties might be forced to take on board some of the AAP's reformist ideas in order to make themselves more competitive in future elections.

In a stunning and unprecedented debut, the year-old AAP became the second-largest party in the house by winning 28 of the 70 seats in the Assembly with 30 per cent of the vote. In comparison, the largest party, the BJP, won 32 seats—four short of a majority—with a 33 per cent share of the vote. The incumbent Congress Party won only eight seats with 25 per cent of the vote, leading to a hung Assembly. Interestingly, the AAP's Arvind Kejriwal comprehensively defeated the incumbent chief minister, who had held the position for the past 15 years, in her home constituency.

Although the results of the Assembly elections in much larger states were also announced at the same time, the victory of the AAP in Delhi quickly became the main story of the day. The 'transformatory' potential of the party soon became obvious in statements from the established political parties. According to the vice president of the Congress Party, Rahul Gandhi: 'the AAP involved a lot of people who the traditional political parties did not involve. We are going to learn from that and do a better

job than anybody in the country and involve people in ways you cannot even imagine now...I am going to put all my effort into transforming the organisation of the Congress party together with the leaders of the Congress party, and give you an organisation that you will be proud of and has your voice embedded inside it' (*Indian Express* 2013c).

The days after the election results saw frenetic activity on the issue of government formation. In the early days, both the BJP and the AAP made statements to suggest that they would not attempt to form a government, as they did not have a clear majority in the house, and would prefer to sit in the opposition. Commentators saw this as a radical change in the political culture brought about by the AAP (*Firstpost* 2013). As the deadlock continued, it appeared that Delhi was headed for president's rule and fresh elections within a few months, in all likelihood to be held in conjunction with the national elections in 2014. After a few days, however, the Congress Party suggested that it would be willing to support an AAP-led government from the outside. Criticisms of the AAP began to appear in the media suggesting that it was being irresponsible by not taking the opportunity to form a government, especially as some in the Congress Party had suggested that its support would be unconditional.

While a political analysis of this offer is beyond the purview of this chapter, what followed was another interesting experiment in the political history of India. The AAP conducted a 'referendum' to elicit the public's opinion on whether it should form a minority government with outside support from the Congress Party, a party that its leaders had castigated as irredeemably compromised and corrupt to the core. Using text messages, web-based polling and over 250 community-level meetings to carry out its referendum, the AAP claimed that an overwhelming majority of respondents—including 750,000 responses received through text messages and the web—wanted it to form a government. Thus Kejriwal was sworn in as chief minister of a minority government on 28 December 2013. He resigned, however, on 14 February 2014 after he was unable to introduce the Jan Lokpal bill in the house.[29]

Conclusion

Some scholars have suggested that the AAP lacks a deep understanding of the root causes of corruption in politics, which are linked to the globalized neoliberal economic environment (Shukla 2013). Others suggest that the party is focusing on the wrong issue, as corruption is

not the most important problem in Indian politics, and that its proposals to decentralize and democratize politics may actually do more harm than good in a context in which entrenched socio-economic hierarchies define political practice (Palshikar 2013). Palshikar further suggests that 'ideas of recall and legislative initiative also have a shade of political anarchism to them. Recall in particular is a recipe for chaos and undermining the system's ability to run' (Palshikar 2013: 11). He also argues that the AAP needs to focus on party building, while warning that 'a party that seeks to adopt very open procedures for designating its office holders runs the risk of being taken over by those who may have different ideas than the founders and more active members' (Palshikar 2013: 12). He remains unconvinced of the potential contribution of the AAP, calling it a likely spoiler in a multiparty electoral system, at best, and an entity that has 'sharpened a sense of "specific anti-partyism"' at worst (Palshikar 2013: 13).

Interestingly, many civil society groups that have been active in the area of anti-corruption for several decades were highly critical of the substance and leadership of the IAC and Jan Lokpal campaigns. However, the intensity of the criticism from within civil society/social movements decreased substantially once the AAP was formed. This may, of course, reflect the complex and often competitive dynamics within civil society. In many ways, the AAP is attempting to reinvent the relationship not only between citizens and political parties, but also between political parties and civil society.

While the long-term influence of the AAP is not known, it has had substantial success in bringing the debate around political parties and citizen engagement to the fore of public consciousness. Citizen trust in political parties and the political class has rarely plumbed such depths in recent memory. Some reasons are discussed above, and the AAP seems to be addressing many of them via its stated aims and actions. Critically, it has been able to do so as the result of its origins as a social movement, which has helped it mobilize thousands of volunteers in a short space of time. At the very least, the party has succeeded in re-engaging many ordinary citizens in the political process. For example, a supporter declares on the AAP's website: 'I have never supported or ever voted for any party in my life...But today I have donated INR 100 [USD 2] to support AAP...and I feel really good about it...Need to see India a better place.'[30] However, the process of evolving from a social movement into a political party has been far from smooth, and has engendered vigorous debate both within and outside the 'movement'.

Throughout these debates, however, the formation of the AAP has been posited as a necessary step to enable ordinary citizens to reclaim political power in a more meaningful way.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, political parties, citizen movements and citizens could take some concrete and immediate steps to resurrect their failing relationships with each other.

Political parties

1. Political parties must revisit and in most cases rejuvenate the organizational structure through which they build and maintain their relationships with citizens on a day-to-day basis, not merely at election time. In this sense, they must ensure that they return to their primary role as critical and legitimate mediators between citizens and the state, and not restrict themselves to acting as electoral machines.
2. Political parties must take urgent measures to actualize systems of intraparty democracy and democratic processes, and must do so visibly and transparently. A political party that is not internally democratic will find it difficult to convince citizens that it will act for the common good when in power.
3. Political parties must transparently present their finances. The proactive disclosure of detailed information pertaining to revenues and expenditures will help re-establish a modicum of trust between political parties and citizens.

Citizen movements/citizen groups/citizens

1. Citizen movements and citizens must not allow their frustrations with current democratic practices to turn into anti-democracy rhetoric. Political parties, however deeply flawed, are essential to the democratic process, and it is important to focus on reforming, rather than eliminating, them.
2. It is not necessary (or healthy for democracy) for all citizen movements to turn into political parties in order to be effective. A movement's decision to evolve into a political party must be well thought out.
3. Citizens must proactively increase their engagement with the political apparatus. In practical terms, this could mean joining political

parties—either new or old—that are proximate to their needs and sensibilities, and demanding changes from within; holding political actors to account using instruments such as the RTI Act; and using avenues such social media to engage with the democratic process beyond the occasional casting of votes. Eternal vigilance, after all, remains the price of democracy.

Notes

[1] These include the telecom spectrum scam, which according to some accounts cost the treasury USD 40 billion; allegations of 'USD 80 rolls of toilet paper' purchased for the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi; and the allocation of housing intended for the families of fallen soldiers to politicians and senior bureaucrats at below-market rates (*Business Week* 2010). In addition, tapes of tapped telephone conversations leaked to the media in 2010 seemed to suggest that large corporate entities had been directly involved in selecting the Cabinet and allocating key ministerial portfolios when the current Congress Party-led coalition took office in 2009 (*Open* 2010).

[2] Although an official list of the members of Team Anna was never announced, names and brief profiles of those popularly understood to be part of the core leadership of the movement are available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_Anna#Original_group> (accessed 11 July 2013).

[3] See <http://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Lokpal/Comparison%20 of%20govt%20JLP%20and%20ncpri%20bills%20updated.pdf> for a comparative table of the different versions that had been proposed (accessed 11 July 2013).

[4] Emphasis in original.

[5] The irony of this position, given that the prime minister himself was a member of the upper house, and therefore not directly elected by the people, was also mentioned in the debate.

[6] Telephone interview, Professor Anand Kumar, member of the National Executive of the AAP, 12 July 2013.

[7] Post-independence, the immensity of social, linguistic and cultural diversity continues to explain why no party in India has ever been able to dominate national politics by focusing on any single social cleavage.

[8] For a more detailed report on this issue, see the Vohra Committee Report on the Criminalization of Politics, Department of Legislative Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India (co-sponsored by the Election Commission of India (2010).

[9] This issue has caused much controversy. The government, in consultation with all the major political parties, first sought to annul this order by

passing an ordinance, but later backtracked and accepted the judgement amid great political drama.

10 The Election Commission has sought an explanation from the candid, if errant, member, and he runs the risk of being disqualified from running for election for three years.

11 International IDEA has carried out detailed comparative research on the legal frameworks that regulate political financing in democracies around the world. However, evidence-based research on the state of implementation of these frameworks, particularly in the context of India, is sparse. The IDEA database on political finance is available at <http://www.idea.int/political-finance/>.

12 This included Vijay Mallya, a member of the Rajya Sabha and the owner of Kingfisher Airlines, who was quite conveniently on the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Civil Aviation (Raman 2012).

13 There are six parliamentarians aged 30 or under. By 'hereditary MPs', French means parliamentarians whose parents or close relatives from the previous generation are or were parliamentarians or representatives in state assemblies.

14 Other political parties have emerged from social movements in the past, but apart from the Janata Party (established in 1977, also on an anti-corruption plank), most arose from regional movements and none has had much electoral success. The AAP is perhaps the first movement-turned-political-party since the Janata Party that has aspirations at the national level.

15 It should be noted that those with Internet access largely belong to the middle and upper classes, which are key actors in forming public opinion.

16 See <http://aamaadmiparty.org/page/how-are-we-different>, accessed 18 July 2013.

17 See <http://www.aamaadmiparty.org/page/internal-lokpal>, accessed 21 July 2013.

18 Ibid.

19 Details available at <http://delhi.aamaadmiparty.org/news/candidate-selection-process-delhi-elections-2013-english-version>, accessed 20 July 2013.

20 In a recent development, 'the Supreme Court...struck down a provision in the electoral law that protects a convicted lawmaker from disqualification on the ground of pendency of appeal in higher courts' (*Indian Express* 2013a).

21 See <http://aamaadmiparty.org/page/how-are-we-different>, accessed 18 July 2013.

22 See <http://delhi.aamaadmiparty.org/news/candidate-selection-process-delhi-elections-2013-english-version>, accessed 20 July 2013.

[23] See <http://delhi.aamaadmiparty.org/Delhi-Elections-2013/CandidateList>, accessed 21 July 2013.

[24] All parties must declare all donations over INR 20,000 (approximately USD 350) to the Election Commission, and such information is indirectly available to citizens via the Right to Information Act.

[25] See <http://aamaadmiparty.org/income%20expenditure%20details>, accessed 7 September 2013.

[26] Of which about USD 200,000 came from a single source, Shanti Bhushan, who is a well-known Supreme Court lawyer and the father of one of the founding members of the AAP. Figure as of 8 September 2013. Updated figures are available at <http://aamaadmiparty.org/page/aap-donations-visualizing-the-change>.

[27] <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/delhielections2013/election-commission-to-monitor-delhi-polls-spendings/article1-1120902.aspx>.

[28] For details of their legislative proposals, see AAP 2012b.

[29] <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/arvind-kejriwal-quits-over-jan-lokpal/article5688528.ece>.

[30] See the comment by Manoj of 10 July 2013, available at <http://aamaadmiparty.org/donation-list>, accessed 21 July 2013.