

Lord Meghnad Desai

Out of My Mind: Absurdities Around Elections

My quick forecast of total seats out of 545: BJP at 300-350, I.N.D.I.A. at 100-150 and Others: 50

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A dull election is getting positively worse. It appears each Party has an idealistic, truth-telling, clean image and then there is a combative disputatious one as well. Each image must be sharp and ready to pounce on the other side. You could call them Dirty Tricks wars.

Fair enough. But lately things have got desperate, not to say somewhat shocking in Delhi. It is the eternal battle between the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) at the power at the Centre based in Delhi and the Aam Admi Party (AAP), which rules the Delhi government (my view has been for a long time that the capital should be moved out of Delhi, the site of foreign rule. A fresh new capital should be constructed somewhere more central in Dandakaranya. After all, that was where Ramachandra was exiled. What better site could there be? Delhi is also the worst polluted city on any criterion). Anyway, the manoeuvring of rival parties the AAP and (presumably) the BJP reached a shocking stage recently. The Chief Minister of Delhi Arvind Kejriwal had been given bail to be out of jail. Let us leave that saga out of consideration for the time being as Dirty Tricks #1.

Swati Maliwal, Rajya Sabha MP of the AAP, says she was visiting the Chief Minister's home. She works as his No 2 Assistant. She was prevented by No 1 Assistant Bibhav Kumar, who based on her accounts, physically attacked her. She has filed a complaint with the Delhi Police about the attack that had had happened on her and how she was denied access to the boss. The AAP version is that Maliwal has secretly gone over to the BJP and was given a lot of money to create this drama. She is, in short, lying.

Being a non-voter, even a non-citizen, I am unconcerned as to who is right. But I am shocked a woman of mature years with a career in politics long and active enough to have reached the status of a Parliamentarian can be physically attacked and denied access to her boss by a colleague obviously known to her and can be maligned instantaneously as a liar.

What have we learnt from the "Me Too" phenomenon? I may be an outsider watching this in Delhi, but I would say if the woman's version were even half-true, give her room to prove herself. Everyone else apologise to her and to the people.

There are at most two parliamentary seats at stake (out of 545) in Delhi, which the two sides are fighting over. Is it worth maligning a woman's reputation, let alone treat lightly a physical attack that may have happened?

No doubt we shall not know the truth in finite time. But I shall always remember this as the Dirty Election, which maligned a woman. There is a price to pay for the right to vote. But there are limits.

As to the likely outcome, I bet this whole sordid saga will not make the slightest difference. So here is my quick forecast of seats out of 545: BJP 300-350, I.N.D.I.A.: 100-150 and Others: 50.

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