

Changing Dynamics of State Politics in India Through an Analysis of Shiva Sena



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Abstract:- Shiv sena decision to form alliance with their one time bête noire Congress and NCP after the Maharashtra legislative assembly election in October 2019 took everyone by surprise. Though, party contested assembly election with Bhartiya Janata Party and the alliance got complete majority in the state. Shiv Sena fully aware of the fact that BJP with 105 seats in a house of 248 will have to be dependent on them for the formation of NDA government. So party decided to bargain and demanded that the post of chief minister to be shared with them on an equal basis. Though, many political commentators initially described it as a pressure tactics of the Sena to get plum post like revenue, public work department etc in the cabinet. It eventually turned out to be a firm determination of the party to get the post of Chief Minister and for that they severed their twenty five years old alliance with the BJP and formed the Maha Vikas Aghadi (Great Development front) with congress and NCP. So what does this shift of sena who over the years have championed the cause of Hindutva even more than BJP have managed to change their course of action and what does this signify for national politics of the country which is witnessing a resurgence of dominant one party rule. In my assignment I will analyse this shift of Shiv Sena to argue that much against the public perception Shiva Sens was never ingrained in ideological politics. It kept on shifting its politics since its inception.

Keywords : State Politics, Changing Pattern, Shiv Sena, BJP.

Historical Background:- Shiv Sena was formed in 1966 by cartoonist Bal Thackrey and as Mary Fainsod, Uday Mehta Sinha and Usha Thakkar have argued in their chapter titled “The rebirth of the Shiv Sena : The symbiosis of Discursive and Organizational power” it was not Hindutva but ‘Maharashtrian’ identity targeting the dominance of outsiders especially South Indians in the government jobs against whom Thackrey used to write in his weekly ‘*Marmik*’ and later on his daily ‘*Samna*’. Two years after its formation it contested municipal election in Bombay winning one third of the seats. Since its inception Shiv Sena tried to create a space for themselves in local politics by championing the economic interest of the Maharashtrian whose jobs as Bal Thackrey used to say is being usurped by outsiders. Shiv Sena as product of sons of soil movement made

its politics Maharashtra centric and were always ready to use extreme political method to attain its end. Shiv Sainik under the autocratic leadership of Bal Thackrey immediately after its formation has won the reputation of indulging in violence. Whether its attack on communist party office in Parel in 1967, Shiv Sainik involvement in the murder of Communist MLA Krishna Desai or attack on well known South Indian restaurant 'Udipi' in Bombay the party leadership openly boasted these acts of violence. Political Scientist Usha Thakkar argued that one of the crucial reason behind the rise of Shiv Sena in late 1960s and 70s was the societal shift that was taking place in Maharashtra where local youths were looking for new economic opportunities and process of urbanization was also more dominant in Maharashtra than any other Indian state which provided Shiv Sena an opportunity to mobilize Marathi youth in its favor. Talking about why left organizations failed to mobilize young Marathi population on the question of unemployment and Shiv Sena managed to capitalize on it, Thakkar said it's the local network of dedicated activist which could go to any extent to carry out the dictates of its supremo and this gave an advantage to Sena over other political parties. Another significant aspect of the rise and growth of Shiv Sena in its nascent stage was the subtle support that it got from the Congress party. Many political scientists who have over the years worked on Shiv Sena strongly argued that Congress party in the anticipation that Shiv Sena could become a strong counterproductive force to leftist unions have provided fund to the party. This close relation between the two won the Shiv Sena the epithet of Vasant Sena (hinting towards the proximity that existed between the then Congress Chief Minister, Vasant Rao Naik and Shiv Sena). Also it was the time when many industrialist and factory owners supported Shiv Sena because they also want the leftist unions to be weakened. However despite all these till mid 1980s there was limited electoral success for Sena and it has no significant presence beyond the urban areas of Maharashtra. It was in mid 1980s when Shiv Sena decided to tread on the new path of Hindutva politics which after Shah Bano case was gaining ground in North Indian Politics under the leadership of RSS, BJP and VHP combine. Mary Fainsod, Uday Singh Mehta and Usha Thakkar in their chapter 'The rebirth of the Shiv Sena : The symbiosis of discursive and organizational power argued that there were four aspects of Shiv Sena's Hindutva politics and these were anti- Muslim, Hindu militancy, Nationalism and Religion. Rising in the Hindutva wave Shiv Sena actively participated in Kar Seva which was organized by VHP to construct a grand Ram temple in place of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. Action related to Kar Seva gets prime attention in *Saamna* . Reporting on the Ayodhya crusade. The *Saamna* ask: 'How does our Shiv Sainik appear as he is marching towards Ayodhya? Like the roaring lion spreading terror, with the gait of an intoxicated elephant, like the assault of a rhino which reduces to powder a rocky mountain, like the manoeuvres of a leopard: our infinite blessings to these Hindu warriors who are marching towards Ayodhya. Finally on 2 December 1992 the Hindu militants succeeded in desecrating the medieval mosque and Shiv Sainik was at the forefront. Not only had this Srikrishna Commission report found Shiv Sainik active involvement in the 1992-93 Bombay riot. However Congress government both at the centre and the state were unwilling to take any action against Bal Thackrey. It was a situation where Shiv Sena seems to issue direction and action would follow, but the judiciary and the government were immobilized by ambivalence as to how to proceed. The provocation of the Sena's language was thus supported by the weakness of institutional control. One of the crucial reasons behind the rise of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra was the infighting that congress could not manage to. In 1990s Maharashtra congress badly faction ridden between Sharad Pawar and Sudhakar Rao Naik who was the congress Chief Minister and Hindu Nationalist favored from this indecisiveness of the government of the day. The communal polarization that ensued first by communal rioting followed by Bombay bomb blast finally resulted in Shiv Sena and BJP alliance coming to

power for the first time in Maharashtra with a Sena Chief Minister first Manohar Joshi followed by Narayan Rane. However it was Bal Thackrey who was having the final shot and he was known in the political circle of Maharashtra as super CM. Once the Hindutva movement reached an impasse and BJP unable to form government at her own decided to enter in to phase moderation in order to woo new alliance partners nationally. A corollary result of this was the defeat of Shiv Sena and BJP government in 1999 assembly elections as they have little to show on the development front and also this time around Shiv Sena could not hark back to militant Hindutva as it did in 1995 state election because of BJP change of stance where party decided to sideline all controversial issues. Since then the organization of Shiv Sena has continuously weakened in Maharashtra as many prominent lieutenant of Bal Thackrey like Chagan Bhujbal, Narayan Rane left the party. However the biggest shock for the Shiv Sena came in 2006 when Bal Thackrey nephew Raj Thackrey who was seen as the political heir of Bal Thackrey left the party and decided to form his own Maharashtra Navnirman Sena. The Shiv Sena- BJP alliance in which Shiv Sena was the elder brother till Bal Thackrey was alive lost three assembly election before coming to power finally in 2014. However this electoral success did not change the fortunes of Sena as a party because political scenario of both national and state politics has dramatically changed and BJP under the charismatic leadership of Narendra Modi has emerged as the dominant party. The wave of this change was also echoed in Maharashtra politics where Shiv Sena was forced to accept the less important portfolio in the Devendra Fadnavis government. Commenting on this veteran political journalist Rajdeep Sardesai said that as a dominant party BJP want to usurp the vote bank of Sena and this was one of the major reason why this time Shiv Sena was adamant to have the post of chief minister for half of the term which BJP refused and Sena went extra mile to form an alliance government with arch rival congress and NCP as these two parties also want to be in power as many of their elected MLAs were vulnerable and could have been defected towards BJP . So what does this shift from Hindutva signify for Sena? Commenting on this Ashutosh Varshney and Suhas Palshikar argued that with Narendra Modi at the helm at the national level and in the absence of a towering personality like Bal Thackrey who had earned the aura of Hindu Hriday Samrat for himself, Shiv Sena aptly realized that it could only play a second fiddle role and could not champion the cause of Hindutva as Bala Saheb Thackrey used to. This made Uddhav Thackrey realized that time has come for the party to shed hardcore Hindutva and made a moderate image of the party which could attract the youth and this scan be gauged from Uddhav Thackrey calm presence as Chief Minister of Maharashtra where despite not having any previous experience of administration he seems to efficiently managing the outbreak of pandemic coronavirus in the state without giving any communal color to it as a section of media and leaders like raj Thackrey have tried to do.

Conclusion

The political drama in Maharashtra that continued for over a month had finally ended with Uddhav Thackrey, president of Shiv Sena being sworn in as chief minister of the State with the support of both NCP and Congress. After the result of 2019 assembly election which clearly gave a mandate to BJP and Shiv Sena yuti (alliance). But both Parties failed to break the deadlock as Shiv Sena was adamant on their demand of fifty- fifty sharing of all posts including that of Chief Minister. The stalemate situation made Shiv Sena looking for other option and ultimately it resulted Shiv Sena, Congress and NCP coming together to form the government. As of now things looks settled for Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi. However taking a cue from this some general conclusion can be made regarding contemporary Indian politics.

1. Diminishing role of ideology- unfortunately one of the continuous feature of Indian politics has been the continuous decline of ideology. Every political party today seems to be driven by the sole idea of acquiring power by any possible means. It is one thing that regional parties joining hands together but the problematic aspect is even national parties like congress in their urge to acquire power is willing to compromise with the Nehruvian Secularism. Ideology is important in democratic politics because it informs the voters about the behaviour of candidates in advance on certain crucial issues if they get elected. So continuous dwindling of ideological strand of indian politics is bound to disillusioned voters in time to come. Imagine how much cheated a voter will feel who had voted to defeat Jyotiraditya Scindia in 2019 general election by seeing him joining BJP and becoming a Rajya Sabha member and most probably a union minister soon.
2. States as a centre of anti- BJP politics : The electoral triumph of BJP first in 2014 and again in 2019 Lok Sabha election have created a political scenario in country where BJP has emerged as a dominant force under the charismatic leadership of Narendra Modi. At a time when congress is in complete disarray to take on BJP at the national level, challenge to the BJP are emerging from the state level where it had lost a series of state elections after its 2019 Lok Sabha juggernaut. At a time when electoral politics at the national level is increasingly marked by TINA factor (There is no alternative), regional leaders like Bhupesh bhaghel, Hemant Soren, Amrinder Singh, Arvind Kejriwal etc have emerged as regional satrap who can take on the BJP organizational, financial and leadership might. Apart from them established regional leaders like Sharad Pawar, Mamta Banerji or Akhilesh Yadav is also continuing there struggle against the BJP. How much this gets transformed at the national level largely depends upon how quickly an effective national strategy is drawn to take on the Modi's populaity.

Bibliography.

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