

**Politics of Symbolism: Shiv Sena and MNS in
Maharashtra (1970-2010)**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled “**Politics of Symbolism: Shiv Sena and MNS in Maharashtra 1970-2010**” submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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**Politics of Symbolism: Shiv Sena and
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The analytical study of identity politics explores several trends of dialogue at varied levels. One such trend which has surfaced due to certain predominant features of unique democratic society like India is the socio- cultural linguistic separatist movement. Before one gets down to understand the impact of the dialogue between social identity politics and socio- cultural linguistic separatist movement it becomes more important to first introspect the reasons behind emergence of such movement.

Indian democracy is diverse in its nature and geographical stretch. Cultural-ethnic communities and groups are in abundance within Indian territory, which in a way also shapes the unique identity of it at larger international platform. In past several events have taken place where in this unique feature of India has been challenged by ethnic groups and communities clashing with each other. When too many cultural groups tend to exist under one rigid structure the clash may take place. Unequal economic growth has also been one of the prime reasons for this kind of resentment amongst the communities. Migration has been another main reason for growing contention in metropolitan cities like Mumbai and Bangalore amongst the locals.

The study of this interaction led many of the eminent social scientist like Mary Katzenstein, Depankar Gupta, Thomas Bloms Hensen, Suhas Palshikar, Sujata Patel and many others to coin terminologies like Nativism, Bhumiputra etc for a distinct and more refined analysis. However I here use politics of symbolism as a conceptual term in order to study this phenomenon. The idea here is to look at the growth of symbolic politics as a concept keeping political parties like Shiv Sena and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena [Henceforth MNS] in Maharashtra political sphere as reference point.

Symbolic politics has been applied in various forms at different junctures starting with the Samyukta Maharashtra movement going on till the period of Shiv Sena and MNS in Maharashtra which stretches to 2010. Symbolic politics as a concept has different means through which it can be analyzed in terms of its

functionality as an attracting factor of movement. These means are cartoons, speeches, statues, constructed figures, charismatic appeal of a personality in deriving mass popularity. In India these means or expression of symbolic politics have been applied to its extreme limits at different junctures. Symbolic politics have witnessed in different parts of India like UP, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra etc. Then the question arises why I have chosen Maharashtra as point of reference to study politics of symbolism as a concept and also that why not a comparative analysis of all the states. The reason being firstly Maharashtra is the only state where in the functionality of symbolic politics has been observed in a full fledged manner in a way that all its means have been put use. The transformation within conceptual features of symbolic politics has been observed in phases in the case of Maharashtra.

Secondly in Maharashtra coming in of parties like Shiv Sena and MNS brings in the study of symbolic politics into a completely new level which enables social scientists to study symbolic politics in phases and have more refined analysis as one gets to observe the concept from all dimensions.

In the late 1950s Samyukta Maharashtra movement came into full force in the region of Maharashtra during the phase of linguistic reorganization of states. This was the time when methods of symbolic politics were applied in the movement in order to gage popular mass appeal. Many political writings, pamphlets were put to use to make the drive more popular. The purpose of the movement was to have separate state of Maharashtra for Marathi speaking people with Bombay [Now Mumbai] as its capital. The unique Marathi culture was projected in forefront for stressing the importance of having a separate state. The constructed image of Marathi Manos and Maratha pride was also given a lot of importance. This was an era where in the usage of symbolic politics was done in a most appropriate manner. A stage where the concept was totally new to such kind of setup and the concept was also not used for gaining political profits. Many stalwarts like Acharya Atre, Prabodhankar Thackeray, Senapati Bapat, Shahir Amar Shaikh from Maharashtra were involved in the struggle for having separate identity for the state.

The next phase of symbolic politics begins from 1966 onwards when Bal Thackeray came into picture in Maharashtra politics. When he formed his own

political party Shiv Sena in 1966 [which was a social organization in the initial stage of formation] the mark of Samyukta Maharashtra movement was left on his idea behind forming the party. He understood the importance of the role played by symbolic politics in the success of the movement and there in he decided to formulate the main framework and ideology of the party that appeals to Marathi Manos symbolically. In the case of Shiv Sena one gets to see different phases of symbolic politics functionality like 1970s to 1980s where in the party carried anti south Indians drive there onwards in 1980 to 2000 the whole Hindutva politics [anti Muslim drive] and finally from 2000 to 2005 the anti north Indians drive[migrants from UP and Bihar]. Post 2005 onwards MNS headed by Raj Thackeray nephew of Bal Thackeray comes into picture. MNS 's ideology is also been formulated on the module of symbolic politics and as Raj's aspirations suggested in order to give a immediate lift to its parties political career he started a full fledged drive against migrants from UP and Bihar which as expected gave a lot of popularity to the party.

The Key point to observe here is the way in which various means of symbolic politics have been tactfully applied by both these parties which in a way reveals different dimensions of politics of symbolism as a concept. In order to substantiate let me put forth few examples. In the initial phase of 1966-80s Bal Thackeray through his party mouth piece Samna [A Marathi daily newspaper] and Marmik [Marathi magazine] came out with aggressive editorials and cartoons to gage attention of local people. In the period following after that which is 1980-2000 was an era where in the party got into Hindutva politics and the concept of symbolic politics got saffronized under the realm of turning anti Muslim. So one would notice presence of this particular element in the speeches of Bal Thackeray where in he talks about this constructed image of Hindu Rashtra and the created visual impact of activities carried out in a symbolic fashion. Finally in the period of 2000-2010 where in there is anti north Indians drive running through the state specifically in the city of Mumbai both Shiv Sena and MNS use a much more vibrant means employ symbolic politics. They conducted regular rallies, made speeches with an aggressive tone and language, and to top it all the persona of articulation [impact of a charismatic personality to gain popularity amongst the masses]. In this phase media played a key role in flourishing these means of symbolic politics.

These are just few examples of how symbolic politics conceptually put into function at different levels. A much deeper analysis will go into the chapters following here after. It is in the following three chapters that I would go into a deeper introspection of each phase keeping the functionality of the means in mind. One more point of clarity that I would like to make at the very outset is that from a larger framework I have kept Maharashtra as a point of reference but the emphasis in particularity is on Mumbai. The apparent resurgence of Marathi symbolic politics in and over Mumbai has to be understood in the specific context of the city's history, as well as the larger one of how democratic politics in India has dealt with the issue of diversity inside the nation. The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena and the Shiv Sena build on practices of linguistic localism [one of the prime means of symbolic politics] in India and it requires more than the mere legalism of constitutional rights to understand and counter it. One of the key points to note here at the very outset is also that from the very beginning of the movement of Samyukta Maharashtra movement till the recurring events in phases under purview of symbolic politics the epicenter has always been Mumbai for Shiv Sena and MNS.

The incorporation of Mumbai into Maharashtra, a monolingual political unit, is an aberration in the historical evolution of the city since parts of it did not grow in overwhelmingly Marathi environs and in others the Marathi populace cohabited with other sociolinguistic groups. Marathi is not the lingua franca of a multilingual Mumbai, it has two competing languages, Hindi and English. It is against this backdrop that the alternative model of cultural of Shiv Sena and MNS variety appeals to the wide sections of the Marathi speaking population. Politics of symbolism as a concept has been carved out of different forms in its contemporary usage. The cultural politics of Maharashtra in general and Mumbai in particular is an evident factor for it. The way in which politics of symbolism has been reappearing in the political scenario of Maharashtra is worth exploring in order to understand the shifting trends of symbolic politics. The idea here is to analyze the contemporary usage of symbolic politics and to look whether there is a shift in the nature of how symbolic politics here is conceived. One can only understand these particular trends when it is seen how language [means] of symbolic politics develops from 1970-2010. The usage of different kinds of metaphor like Marathi Manos, at various levels of Maharashtra's cultural politics gives a vibrant dimension to politics of symbolism. The larger

inferences I want draw here is that the contemporary usage of symbolic politics in the cultural politics of Maharashtra has manage to show the shifting dynamics within politics of symbolism.

Literature Review

The theoretical retrospection of identity politics has gone on to give very dynamic results for social scientist in relation to democratic society. The dialogue between the democratic society and identity politics is something which is quite common in the contemporary era where in diversity of socio- culture ethnic community is spread all over in the country like India. At various junctures this dialogue has given rise to different kinds of movements. This has led to a theoretical categorization of these movements on the basis of its phenomenon.

Different social scientists have coined terminology to refer to their study according to the theoretical categorization. So one comes across terms like Nativism, Sons of the Soil, Bhumi Putra, and linguistic localism. Before moving further in this direction one needs to first understand the conceptual relevance of these terms. Firstly to understand the role played by Nativism in this dialogue between democratic society and identity politics. Merriam-Webster defines “nativism” as ‘a policy of favoring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants’ or ‘the revival or perpetuation of an indigenous culture especially in opposition to acculturation.’

Mary. F. Katzenstein explains Nativism as something which generally takes place in urban areas as industrial and commercial centers, cities that is because these places generally attract migrants from distant and culturally diverse region. The heterogeneous populations which then eventuate form the seedbed of nativist politics. According to her Shiv Sena has followed this nativist politics right from its origin and its first target being the south Indians. She further goes on to explain the key features of nativist politics and why does it take place, by the help of this particular phase in Maharashtra especially in Mumbai. She concludes by drawing that the nature of nativism as a concept will remain, only the phases will differ¹.

¹ Katzenstein, Mary F. "Origins of Nativism: The Emergence of Shiv Sena in Bombay." *Asian Survey* 13, no. 4 (Apr 1973): 386-399.

The next in this line of argument is Prof Dipankar Gupta. He analyzes the next phase that was against the Muslim under the light of nativism as a concept. He too concludes by arguing as Mary had done.² One of the main line of argument upon which I will be focusing is that by Mahesh Gavaskar. He stresses upon the fact that if one needs to properly understand how nativism in Mumbai has left an impact upon the cultural politics of Maharashtra then one needs trace the history of Mumbai right from the time when Maharashtra was being formed.³

On the other hand when one analyzes ‘Sons of the Soil’ as a conceptual category. Myron Wiener here tends to study migration in aggregate terms, with all their implication for employment and urbanization. Current political interest in migration, however is on an entirely different dimension: the ethnic origin of migration and their seemingly special propensity to secure jobs in competition to local inhabitants. Migration may form only a minority of a given population and may even be preempting attention away from the miserable dwellers in the city. . Given the right condition, however, this minority can be significant in provoking political agitation and even the violence among the native born who consider themselves oppressed.

The dynamics of identity politics reaches another level when terminologies discussed above come into a dialogue with symbolic politics. A proper understanding of symbolic politics can only be derived when the analysis is done from the strand point of these movements. The usage of symbolic politics within different socio-cultural linguistic separatist movement has been extremely predominant over the years. Social scientists like Suhas Palshikar, Sujata Patel, Thomas Blom Hensen and Tarini Bedi have tried to examine the role of symbolic politics in the case of Shiv Sena and MNS in Maharashtra. Different expression of symbolic politics has been analyzed in detail. The lineage of symbolic politics is an important phenomenon in understanding the transforming features of symbolic politics.

² Gupta, Dipankar, *Nativism in a Metropolis- A case of Shiv Sena in Mumbai*, Oxford University Press.

³ Gavaskar, Mahesh. “Mumbai’s Shattered Mirror”, *Economic and Political Weekly*.Feb 2010: 17-22.

Chapterization

The first chapter deals with conceptual dynamics of symbolic politics and the positioning of symbolic politics within the identity politics. In this chapter I analyze the symbolic politics as a concept within the Indian democracy. Politics of symbolism as a concept finds its expression in cartoons, statues, speeches, constructed figures, charismatic appeal of a personality functioning at different level and junctures. These tools in a way work as a key for the politics of symbolism's growth and immense popularity in terms of its usage. Many examples have been illustrated on the basis of conceptual usage in day to day performative activities. A deeper insight would be drawn while dealing with the chapter.

In the second chapter I will be dealing with the historical background of the politics of symbolism in Maharashtra as it becomes important to introspect the lineage of symbolic politics as to where it all started from. Next comes the section on constructed image of Shivaji and how it has worked as one of the prominent tools of symbolic politics at different levels. I will also analyze the shifting trends in politics of symbolism under the influence of Shiv Sena and MNS in Maharashtra.

In chapter three, different modules of notions functioning within the symbolic politics have been examined in detail. The politics of naming, symbolic usage of cartoons for attracting mass attention, Women in Shiv Sena- An image construction of violence and aggression to achieve political motive, An era of a roaring tiger [Bal Thackeray's journey at Shivaji park delivering speeches and strategic twisting of issues] are some of the broader dimensions that I will be dealing with under the pretext of evaluating symbolic politics functionality.

Methodology

The methodology adopted for the present study involved the use of both primary and - secondary sources of literature. At the initial stage, a perusal of secondary literature was undertaken to find gaps that could be bridged or conceptual aspects and linkages that could be explored further.

The study is based on extensive archival work in the city of Mumbai. The different sources that were studied in depth included the Shiv Sena mouthpiece

SAMNA for the period 1971-2010. Special attention was given to cartoons, pictures and articles as a point of analysis.

Interviews were also conducted with the Chief Editor of Samna, Sanjay Raut, Sujata Anandan of the Hindustan Times, Mumbai and Kumar Ketkar, Editor of the Lok Satta. Separate questionnaires were prepared for each of the interviews in order to bring out the contrasts and different points of view of a select media on the topic. This exercise enabled arguments in the study to be strengthened further. Hence, the study has made use of research tools of interview and a review and analysis of primary and secondary literature in order to provide valuable insights on the topic.

Chapter I
Theorizing Symbolic Politics:
Conceptual Framework

Chapter 1

Theorizing Symbolic Politics: Conceptual Framework

The main aim of this chapter is to understand the conceptual dynamics of politics of symbolism and to analyze the importance of such concepts in examining the politics of parties like Shiv Sena and MNS. I also draw prominent examples from events, speeches and interviews to substantiate my main argument that politics of symbolism has been one of the prominent tools of such political parties. The only difference is that the concept has grown into different trends under the reign of Shiv Sena and MNS⁴.

In a competitive party-based democracy the general elections are to be held following a set period of time. This limits the legislative period of a democratic government. Since democratic politics is subjected to consent and substantiation, the actions taken by politicians and policy makers have to be justified continually by the politically informed public. Policy makers and politicians also have a duty to inform the public about political plans and decisions and generate attention for them. General elections represent the peak of a politically inspired process to create legitimation through communication⁵. However, this should not obscure the fact that this process is permanent and designed to run over the long-term - not least because political action itself is also communicative action.

Murray Edelman developed the concept of 'symbolic politics' for understanding political communication⁶. He assumes that all political actions and events are characterized by a division into an instrumental dimension, that is, a principal value - which represents the actual effect of a political action - and an expressive dimension, that is, a dramaturgical symbolic value - which represents the presentation of the action for the public. According to Edelman, political players

⁴ Choudhury, Enamul. "The Politics of Symbols and the Symbolization of 9/11." *The American Journal of Islamic Sciences* Vol.18(1) (2004): pp. 1-4.

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.

⁶ Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence*, Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1971.

subconsciously produce a make-believe political world for the electorate using political symbols and rituals for and by the mass media. This process gets increasingly superimposed upon the principal value of political actions.

Ulrich Sarcinelli also makes a distinction between production (creation) and presentation (communication) dimensions of politics and between principal and symbolic political values⁷. According to Sarcinelli, material (producing) politics is increasingly losing its importance as a decisive element. In contrast, the 'mediatization' of politics, that is, the presentation and 'packaging of politics' tailored to the needs of the mass-media and in particular those of TV, is becoming increasingly important in the maintenance and pretence of a politically capable leadership. Verbal symbols (catch phrases such as 'Euro', Tax Reform etc.) and non-verbal symbols (anthems, flags, shaking hands when receiving state guests etc.) generate attention. In addition to this, they reduce the complexity of political problems, communicate a certain way of looking at the world and stimulate emotions among the viewing public.

Political symbols, however, do not exclusively serve the communication and presentation of political reality. Given the intense competition among parties for media attention, political symbols can and are instrumentalized to create a make-believe political reality. The term 'symbolic politics'" represents this very use of symbolization within the political communication process. The imprecise and mostly disparaging use of this phrase in everyday life makes clear the widespread criticism of the use of symbols in politics. But this criticism overlooks the fact that a "pure" politics, that is, politics based on "principal values" without dramaturgy and without additional symbols cannot exist. Ever since the dawn of politics, symbolism has been an unavoidable constituent of political reality. It represents a forum for policy makers in which they can present themselves, prove their problem-solving abilities and communicate their basic political direction, values and standards. Given that the vast majority of the population is unable to experience directly politics in all its complexity, the media, for the most part unnoticed by the public, is presented with a more fitting version of politics in the guise of rituals, stereotypes, symbols and well-

⁷ Sarcinelli, Cited in., Hansen Blom, Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001

known thinking to fit in with the accepted view of 'political reality': While this political 'production' becomes political reality for the public, real political actions that are hammered out "well out of the media spotlight" remain largely in the dark.

Symbols are the means by which meaning is constituted and conveyed.⁸ Symbolic generalizations construct order by categorizing reality. Thus, "the migrants," "Muslim," "Bhaiyas," "South Indians," "Shivaji a great Maratha Hero," and "Maratha dignity" are symbolic generalizations that order human collectives or their values. In academic discourse and political commentary, such symbolic generalizations have been -and continue to be -used in constructing the meaning of Islam, particularly, through various sorting schemes of classifying Muslim identity and politics⁹.

1.1 The Construction of Symbolic Meaning:

According to Suketu Mehta,

The purpose of symbols in political discourse is not simply to point but also to evoke, edify, and conserve meaning. They do so by evoking categories of meaning that already exists in a culture and its history. For a symbol to be appropriated in a given discourse, the recipients must be familiar with it and interpret its meaning in terms that are favored by them.¹⁰

Therefore, popular culture serves as a good barometer of what is going on.

Symbolic meanings remain open-ended and stand in contrast to instrumental meanings. Instrumental meanings are closed by virtue of being based on the knowledge of a cause-and-effect relationship whether presumed or verified. In instrumental meaning, the problem lies not in a theory but rather in its deliverance (i.e., developing and putting in place an effective technology of intervention or a procedure). In its formal structure, procedural reasoning appears to be neutral toward the issues addressed. But in the realm of cultural meaning, such procedural reasoning

⁸ Dandavate, Uday. "Icons of Mumbai." *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 47 (Nov 2010): 29-31.

⁹ Goswami, Triveni Vernal, and Anuradha M.V. "Mirroring Identities: Reflecting Realities –Mumbai and its Politics of Representation." <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/tgoswamipaper.pdf>, p.2-5 Accessed on Jan 2011

¹⁰ Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. New Delhi: Penguin books, 2005. p .25-30

cannot avoid relying on those symbols that are prevalent in a culture. Through this tacit reliance, procedural reasoning also becomes symbolic. The political nature of such reasoning is often revealed in the regulative criterion used in meaning construction. One such criterion is the press.

The structure of symbols is such that they can be meaningful without the contextual specification of authorial intent. In a sense, that symbols till the time they are contextualized in an authorial intent remain independent in terms of their multiple interpretations on the basis of its structure. The evocative power of the symbol overrides the descriptive accuracy of the propositions, and herein lies the strength and limitation of symbols. Symbolic meaning can be as much abused for the purposes of propaganda and mass mobilization as it can be used for expanding the horizon of meaning beyond the confines of nominal.

At this very point comes the role of parties like Shiv Sena and MNS. Leaders like Bal Thackeray and Raj Thackeray, by making best use of their charismatic personality, deliver political speeches in such a manner that masses are provoked by it and situation is hyped to a extent as if the time for saving culture, pride and self respect has come. The issues are molded in such a manner that the reality looks different. The usage of provocative terms and personalizing the tonality of writings, cartoons and speeches has been a old practice of leaders like Bal Thackeray and Raj Thackeray.

Media played a key role in comprehending this kind of politics in Maharashtra to the next level. Shiv Sena during its formation started its own local newspapers for approaching the 'Marathi Manooos' at their door steps. The idea was also to hit the ideology of the masses with fiery writings and by touching at the wrong end of the issues. This kind of beginning did gave them sort of mileage in the politics of Maharashtra for some time in 70s and 80s. However, rigidity of such kind of crude symbolic politics is not certain and which is why Shiv Sena had to also shift their style of approaching the very use of the concept. With the Hinduization of Shiv Sena came the idea of giving a new touch to the visual impact of the party meetings, rallies and public addressing of prominent Shiv Sena leaders. Turning the pages of history one may notice that in 1980s and 1990s saffron was all over the places where Shiv

Sena's major event took place. Even the dressing of Bal Thackeray it played a major role. The usage of sword and trishul became a common practice in public meetings and events.

The stress on visualization of symbolic politics became more evident in the following years. This defiantly gave a whole new meaning and shape to the concept. This was quite clearly projected in the works of Suketu Mehta and Thomas Blom Hansen¹¹. The major leap took place with the coming of MNS, this was the time when mediaization of symbolic politics took a sudden turn.

1.2 The Dynamics of Symbolic Politics:

Political symbols perform two important functions - creating expectations and preserving order. To do both, they rely on mix empiricism of historically preserved meanings and contemporary facts to structure the language of experiencing and expressing reality. To understand the dynamics of symbolic politics, symbolic meaning is one side of the coin. The other side is the instrumental meaning of actions.

The two Political symbols, which are cultural forms of meaning, are also complex and contingent, for they emerge from and inhere in the interaction of the cultural mind, historical memory, and the ambivalence of public opinion. Focusing on symbols allows one to understand how meaning is constituted, particularly in knowing how an original event that gives rise to a symbol becomes less determinative with the responses that emerge in reaction to it. These responses beget other responses, and soon the original symbol acquires new and varied meanings.

Meanings, both symbolic and instrumental, interact in specific ways to define a situation and the political response to it. In politics, we have a mix of symbolic and instrumental meanings that remain embedded in rhetoric and rituals. Both moral rhetoric and public rituals are commonplace in international and domestic politics, as well as in the stark differences that exist between the two. For example, such moral

¹¹ Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. New Delhi: Penguin books, 2005. Also See, Hansen Blom, Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001

rhetoric as the ‘Mumbai for Mumbaikar’ and such public rituals as displaying the flag are carefully embedded in political speech to shape public understanding of events.

Forming a set of relationships between objects or events uniquely brought together for the ruling regimes to legitimize their power and interests. This occurs both through the direct assertion of power and the construction of perceptions, motives, and directions in the ruled.

Forces of globalization have increasingly changed the socio-political landscape in the world today. Large scale movement of people and the subsequent interactions have brought about a consciousness and an awareness of one's identity and the need to re-assert it, in the face of the changes wrought by globalization. The fear of being overwhelmed by the *other* in these contested spaces, has forced many groups to re-conceptualize who they are and to consolidate their position in the society.

The issue of identity is political. It affects and gets affected by powerful forces in the society like the state and is powerful enough to mobilize the community at any moment in time. The construction of identity may not only be the construction of the *self* but many a times it is also the construction of the *other*.¹ The political parties and leaders driven by partisan goals make these group based identities salient by the creation of the *other* and ascribing monstrous qualities to them.

The objective here becomes to look at how power and politics shape the identities of people especially in the context of increasing migration of people from rural to urban communities. We attempt to understand this dynamic phenomenon through two cases situated along different temporal as well as physical spaces in India that are useful in demonstrating that Identity politics in a country fraught with diversity has been an easy passage to power and things have not changed much over the years.

1.3 Identity and Symbolic Interactionism:

Social identity has been defined by Tajfel "as the individuals knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of his group members."¹² The collective identity refers to self definition based on the prototypical characteristics of the in group that differentiates its members from the out groups. Identity does not develop in a void. When viewed from a sociological and social psychological perspective, it is seen to be complexly intertwined with the society. Society and identity are dependent upon one another, each creating the other through subjective interpretations. Weick's sense making perspective is particularly useful in understanding the interpretative dynamics of identity construction.¹³ Individuals according to the theory are immersed in a continuously flowing stream of events. People notice and give meaning to particular events in this flow depending upon their past experiences, dispositions etc. This is to imply that the environments, including the social environments, exist in the minds of individuals.

Further, to understand the relation between society and identity, Weick explains that, the sense making perspective is relevant for social institutions like caste and class as well, though developed in an organizational context. These institutions were created through the process of sense making and over time their justification for existence get institutionalized and rigid providing its members with a sense of self and a socially acceptable guide for behavior. This identity though sticky to some extent is also in a continuous state of being created and reinterpreted. An aggregate of the individual sense making results in the way a collective self/group/organization is perceived and is characteristically greater than the sum of its parts. Sense making at the collective level is also affected by the sense giving/influence processes of the powerful stakeholders. The identities are a reflection of the society they are embedded in.

Migration is an important feature of our contemporary societies. Awareness of their social situation, the disadvantages emanating from migration and its resultant

¹² Tajfel, Henri. *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

¹³ Weick, Karl E. Kathleen Sutcliffe, and David Obstfeld. "Organizing the process of sensemaking." *Organization Science* 16, no. 4 (Jul-Aug 2005): 409-421.

competition for scarce resources by groups is an important factor that leads to social movements and identity based movements.

Political parties play a significant role in bringing about this awareness in a rather pronounced if not distorted fashion. The speeches, protests and demands by the political parties and especially their leaders lead to greater solidarity within the group because they see themselves set against the 'other', the outsider group. This in-group homogeneity at times may be so strong that it leads to violence even in response to minor instigations.

It refers to political activity driven by a single purpose to rescue an alienated and deprived group from its marginalized status. The marginalization is perceived to be caused as a consequence of one's belonging to a particular group. These groups are generally the basis of self definition like gender, ethnicity, caste, position etc. The uniqueness of identity politics lies in the fact that it tries to use the distinguishing characteristics of the group that led to stereotypes and discrimination against it in the first place, as a weapon to assert one's selfhood. These differences which might at times be real facts are used to create an identity based on "difference" with the other groups rather than on similarity.

The proponents of identity politics use the principles of social identity theory and self categorization theory to homogenize the group members. They assign an "essence"—some core qualities that are valued positively by all the members of the group. This assignment of qualities to the in-group over time becomes so rigid that it, in itself, turns into a form of oppression. No dialogue is possible within or outside the group once this stage is reached. The social identity theory and the self categorization theory are discussed in brief below.

The social identity theory given by Tajfel and Turner (1972) states that identity develops as a result of categorization of the social information in terms of group belongingness¹⁴. This categorization produces an accentuation effect referring to the

¹⁴ Tajfel, Henri, and J C Turner. "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict." In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, by W.G Austin and S Worchel, 33-46. Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole, 1979.

tendency in people to perceive greater similarity within categories and differences across categories. Social comparison also affects the self and social categorization process. Moreover, since social categorization carries an evaluative component as well, people accentuate one's own group's positive characteristics and attribute negative qualities to the out group. This is also a way to enhance one's own self esteem through self enhancement. It is also found that groups that possess a collectivistic orientation are prone to engage in social action more than an individualistically oriented group.

The self categorization theory is an adjunct to the social identity theory. The social categorization theory adds to the Social Identity theory by saying that people develop prototypes of the qualities that members of the in group and out group may possess, leading to a *depersonalization* of the individual group member and themselves. Self categorization leads to homogenization of the group as well as the self. People stop seeing oneself as possessing unique characteristics; neither do they feel that members of an out group might have individual differences. The depersonalization and homogenization of the characteristics of the member of the out-group as well as the self prototyping leads to 'contagion'. This implies that members might start perceiving assaults against their co members as a personal assault. This feeling makes mobilization of group members easy. These prototypes are context dependent though. They depend upon which out-group is most salient at that particular point in time. Identities that are significantly valued and are frequently employed are more salient.

First, this kind of mental categorization simplifies the confusing influx of social information and makes the actual world easier to comprehend and handle. Secondly, social categorization reduces uncertainty. Since prototypes have the support and consensus of the other group members it is considered to be a valid way of thinking and behaving. This provides moral support to individuals during times of uncertainty. Moreover, prototypes provide people with tools to know what to expect and how to behave in social situations. Therefore when groups hold prototypes that are simple, clear, highly focused and consensual, they are also highly cohesive and are a source of a strong social identity to its members. The next section discusses how

political parties driven by identity politics use the above mentioned theories for their own selfish ends.

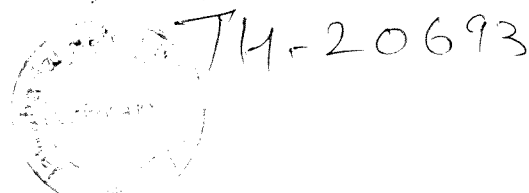
Identity politics is neither a new phenomenon nor is it limited by national and state borders. It is almost universally experienced, used and misused. In India, the diversity in caste, class, region, religion, language and cultures complicates the issue of identity even further. These issues instead of losing ground have in fact gained roots in the Indian psyche, post independence¹⁵.

In Suketu Mehta's book, through a comparison of two case studies situated along different temporal as well as physical spaces in India, but which have several common threads weaving their way through them, the author attempts to make the following arguments -First, politics of identity is being used by political entrepreneurs to not only keep alive the 'sons of the soil' debate in the psyche but also mobilize a collective in the creation of the 'other'. Secondly, the author seeks to argue that parochial politics may work as a *mobilizational tool* in the short run but not as a political alternative in the long run. Thirdly, in a threatening scenario, people tend to make an effort to bring about transformations in their social identity, in an effort to fit in with the prevalent "cultural milieu".

1.4 The Shiv Sena and its dynamics of Symbolic Politics:

Shiv Sena, during nearly three and a half decades of its existence, symbolized the semi-fascist face of reactionary politics. Amongst all the regional parties that are supporting the BJP-led regime, it is only the Shiv Sena (SS) that has a clear ideological affinity with the RSS-controlled Sangh Parivar. That is precisely why the SS has been the BJP's earliest and oldest political ally in the country. For the last 12 years since 1989, the two have had an unbroken alliance at both national and state levels. Despite rough patches, this alliance is set to continue for the near future.

¹⁵ Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. New Delhi: Penguin books, 2005. P.26-30. Also see Hansen Blom, Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001 pp. 23-27.



Although their interpretations may somewhat differ, the SS and the BJP share a common allegiance to the communal and fascistic concept of cultural nationalism and to the aim of achieving a "Hindu Rashtra". The rapid growth of the SS in Maharashtra since the mid-eighties is, in fact, closely linked to the parallel growth of the saffron brigade at the national level during the same period. One of the major reasons for the success of the communal appeal, whether of the SS or the BJP, is of course the scope provided by the deepening economic crisis resulting from the policies of successive Congress governments. Another important reason has been the ruling class tendency of compromising with the communal forces, at both national and state levels. In the case of the SS, as we shall see, this tendency has been exhibited with a vengeance.

The SS has systematically targeted different sections of minorities in a cynical attempt to build its mass support. Such minority targets have included non-Maharashtrians, Muslims and Dalits. The communal riots and caste atrocities unleashed by the SS constitute a dark period in the history of Maharashtra. The links of the SS with mafia gangs, organized crime, extortion rackets and corruption scandals are notorious. These links have been openly revealed especially during the SS-BJP state government's four and a half years in power. Although the SS-BJP is now out of power in the state, sections of the bureaucracy, the police and the media are still under their influence.

Rabid anti-Communism has been a fundamental and consistent plank of the SS ever since its inception. It is this aspect that has ensured it the firm support of big business and the ruling classes. As is only too well-known, it was the ruling Congress party that nurtured and supported the SS for over two decades from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties. In the early phase, this support was given to break the Communist hold over the trade union movement in Mumbai; in the later phase, it was to settle factional scores within the Congress itself. At the same time, it is also true that, with the sole exception of the Communists, all other opposition parties in the state have also collaborated with the SS at various times, their leaders sharing the platform with the SS supreme and some of them even going to the extent of striking electoral alliances with the SS in local elections.

The SS has always been under the authoritarian grip of its demagogic supreme Bal Thackeray, who has never disguised his contempt for democracy and adulation of dictatorship. His servile support to the Emergency, although couched in these ideological terms, actually had the much more banal motive of somehow staying out of jail, an experience that he is known to dread. Thackeray has publicly glorified the likes of Adolf Hitler and Nathuram Godse, and this has given immense vicarious pleasure to the dominant hardcore elements of the Sangh Parivar.

We shall consider Shiv Sena here in three broad sections. In the first, we shall trace the extremely revealing genesis of the SS during the last three and a half decades of its existence. In the second, we shall try to analyze the reasons that have led to its remarkable growth in recent years. And in the third, we shall consider its future prospects and the urgent need to combat this reactionary political force.

This came in the Lok Sabha elections of May 1991. In three successive election rallies in Aurangabad, Pune and Kolhapur, Thackeray raised a nationwide storm of protest by his shockingly outrageous glorification of Nathuram Godse, the communally-surcharged assassin of Mahatma Gandhi! The PTI, in a despatch from Pune on May 17, 1991, which was carried in all the national dailies, quoted Thackeray as saying in the election rally,

We are proud of Nathuram, he saved the country from a second partition. Nathuram was not a hired assassin. He was genuinely infuriated by Mahatma Gandhi's betrayal of the nation. Gandhi had said that he would lay down his life before allowing the division of the country. But ultimately he did nothing to stop the partition¹⁶.

These odious remarks of Thackeray were also published in the SS daily "Saamna" itself. In similar fashion, Thackeray often glorified Adolf Hitler in his speeches and writings, again following in the footsteps of RSS chief Golwalkar. It was at Thackeray's hands that a laudatory biography of Hitler written by a saffronite Bal Samant was published. In the speech made at the function, Thackeray not only

¹⁶ Bal Thackeray Interview given to Times Today, accessed from Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjkkMhfwUsw> retrieved on Jan 2011

praised Hitler to the skies as a great nationalist, but he also bought over 200 copies of the book and distributed them free to all his important SS lieutenants¹⁷.

With this fascistic ideology, attacks on the press, the judiciary, and on culture and literature were a regular feature of SS activities since its inception. The battles conducted with the pen in earlier years were later supplemented by battles conducted with sticks and stones. The most notorious early instance was the running battle of words that went on for years together in the sixties between the "Marmik" run by Bal Thackeray and the "Maratha" run by P.K. Atre. Atre was an extremely versatile man of letters and also a great orator; he was one of the leading figures of the Samyukta Maharashtra Movement; and he was generally of a democratic and secular bent of mind. Thackeray took this battle of words to such lower depths that he began to routinely refer to Atre in "Marmik" as "that pig from Worli", this referring to the fact that the office of the popular Marathi daily "Maratha" was situated at Worli¹⁸. Later, in the 1967 elections, SS hoodlums savagely attacked Atre's public meeting at Thane, and Atre himself escaped by the skin of his teeth.

Amongst scores of such incidents, we shall limit ourselves to just three major instances of press-bashing conducted by SS workers in the early nineties. In October 1991, SS workers attacked the office of the Marathi evening paper in Mumbai called "Mahanagar", which had run a strong editorial condemning the SS for having dug up the cricket pitch at the Wankhede Stadium to prevent the holding of the India-Pakistan match. A journalists' demonstration held to protest this attack was stoned and three journalists, two of them women, were physically assaulted. One of them, Manimala of the 'Navbharat Times' was attacked with a crowbar, which fractured her skull! At around the same time, another woman journalist who criticized the SS in a television program had to face a campaign of character assassination in the Hindi evening paper of the SS "Dopahar Ka Saamna", which then went on to run a filthy editorial that compared women journalists to prostitutes!

¹⁷ Bal Thackeray Speech given at a rally in Aurangabad 1991 Accessed from Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=278rY-H5NMg> retrieved on Jan 2011

¹⁸ Bal Thackeray speech at Dussehra Rally at Shivaji Park 1997 Accessed from Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lldrtaWDrM> retrieved on Jan 2011

In August 1993, SS hoodlums physically attacked the editor of "Mahanagar" Nikhil Wagle while he was addressing a seminar. All these successive incidents led to a wave of protests which culminated in a large mass dharna right outside the SS Bhavan in Mumbai. This protest was personally led by national-level editors like Nikhil Chakravarty, N. Ram, Prabhash Joshi, many other eminent secular intellectuals and by leaders of the Left and democratic parties in the state.

But within six months of this, in February 1994, SS storm troopers made another dastardly assault on a dozen journalists at Aurangabad under the very nose of Thackeray, who had himself, instigated this attack. Those who accompanied Thackeray included Manohar Joshi and other SS bigwigs. Three of the scribes, of whom two belonged to the minority community, were grievously injured in this assault. Still later, the Aurangabad office of the largest-selling Marathi daily in the state, "Lokmat", was vandalised by SS hoodlums. So far as the verbal attacks on several editors and journalists in the columns of "Samna" and "Marmik" and the abysmal level of these attacks, the less said the better¹⁹.

Similarly, whenever the judiciary handed down judgments against the SS, Thackeray assailed it openly through his statements and editorials. For instance, when the High Court ruled to unseat some SS-BJP MLAs, Thackeray made a speech in Mumbai to inaugurate the SS-BJP Lok Sabha election campaign of 1991. In this speech, as reported by "The Independent", a daily that was then run by the Times of India group, Thackeray "launched a vitriolic attack on the judiciary, terming it 'corrupt' and 'partial'. He minced no words while criticizing the 'temples of justice' ". A report of the same meeting in the "Times of India" dated April 20 can only be construed as dark threats issued by Thackeray to the judiciary. It read, "clarifying that he was not speaking against all judges, he said a judge who had ruled against the SS had lost one eye permanently while his other eye, too, was about to go out of order. In the case of another judge, the chair on which he was sitting and delivering the judgment broke down. These were mere omens".SS attacks on cultural artistes and

¹⁹ Rajadhyaksha, Ashish. "' People-Nation' and Spectatorial Rights: The Political 'Authenticity-Effect', the Shiv Sena and a Very Bombay History." In *Indian Cinema in the Time of Celluloid: From Bollywood to the Emergency*, Tulika books. New Delhi, 2009. p 2-7

literary figures reached a crescendo after it came to power. I shall deal with them later.

The first mass rally of the SS was held at the Shivaji Park in Mumbai on October 30, 1966. It was the day of Dusehra, and on every Dusehra day in subsequent years, similar SS rallies have been held on Shivaji Park. Like the "shakha" concept, this practice, too, has been lifted from the RSS, which has regularly held its annual Dusehra rallies at Nagpur. There was a large turn-out for this first-ever SS rally, which is said to have surprised Thackeray himself. Apart from the Thackeray father-and-son duo and other SS leaders, it was another prominent Congress leader Ramrao Adik who addressed this SS rally.

This first rally of the SS ended in a manner that accurately foretold the shape of things to come. After inflammatory speeches by Thackeray and others, the dispersing mob savagely attacked shops and restaurants owned by South Indians, looted them and set them on fire. As was to happen on innumerable later occasions, the police did not lift a finger against these handlums! This was obviously under special instructions from Congress chief minister Vasant Rao Naik and home minister Balasaheb Desai, from both of whom Bal Thackeray and his hordes were to enjoy full protection for the next ten years! Twenty years later, in the mid-eighties, it was another Congress chief minister of the same name, Vasantdada Patil, who was to take the moribund Shiv Sena under his wing, help it to regain control over the Mumbai municipal corporation, and enable it to spread its communal tentacles all over Maharashtra.

In November 1986, the SS gave a call for the observance of a "Saffron Week" all over the state to propagate its version of Hindutva. This was in the background of the Rajiv Gandhi regime's opportunistic decisions as regards the Shah Bano case and the subsequent debates.

In 1982 with the Jan Jagran Yatras of the VHP, their scale increasing, in 1984 when the SS got into the fray. 1986 onwards, when the SS spread to Maharashtra, communal riots and atrocities on Dalits were ignited in several areas around the Ayodhya shrine. The "Saffron Week" was used for the airing of rabid communal

propaganda and for the starting of SS "shakhas" in villages. All this set the stage for communal riots in various parts of the state.

Actually, communal riots were a prominent feature in Maharashtra throughout the eighties. They began to spread from towns to villages and soon all over the State. These were spearheaded by the SS, with various RSS outfits and sometimes even local Congress bosses playing a supporting role. This created an atmosphere of communal and caste polarization which was utilized by the SS and the BJP to expand and consolidate their base.

It was in this background that, in December 1987, an assembly by-poll was held in Mumbai for a middle-class suburban constituency called Vile Parle which had large chunks of both Marathi and Gujarati voters. For the first time, the SS contested this seat on a strident Hindutva platform, which even the BJP till then was hesitant to adopt. In fact, in this election the BJP supported the Janata Dal candidate, with the Congress also in the fray. The SS candidate Ramesh Prabhoo won this seat convincingly and the SS promptly proclaimed this as the victory of Hindutva.

Close on the heels of this success in Mumbai came the SS victory in the municipal corporation elections of Aurangabad in 1988. The rapidly growing city of Aurangabad,(with a large Muslim and Dalit population), considered as the political centre of the Marathwada, was a turning point for SS fortunes. That year, in addition to its weekly "Marmik" which was being published all these years, it started the Mumbai edition of its daily called "Saamnaa" (which means Confrontation). This was obviously in preparation for the parliamentary and assembly elections due in 1989-90. With a daily newspaper in its hands, the poisonous divisive propaganda of the SS reached fever pitch.

In April 1989, a shocking incident occurred in Thane. The SS had unexpectedly lost the Thane mayoral election due to cross-voting by some of its own corporators. This was an unprecedented event in the annals of the thoroughly regimented organization. An irate Thackeray warned of dire consequences awaiting the betrayers. Within days of this warning, Shridhar Khopkar, one of the suspected corporators, was murdered in cold blood by SS hoodlums.

Within just two months of this incident, at the Palampur meeting of its national executive in June 1989, the BJP took the decision of forging an alliance with the SS for the ensuing elections. This was done with the blessings of L.K. Advani and under the insistence of Pramod Mahajan, Gopinath Munde and a large majority of the BJP state unit. The same Palampur meeting of the BJP also decided to come out in open support of the VHP's Ramjanmabhoomi agitation. This was the beginning of the SS-BJP alliance based on Hindutva, which has lasted upto this day.

1.5 Shiv Sena and its Cultural Violence:

The Nazi boss and Gestapo founder Hermann Goering used to say that whenever he heard the word "culture", his hand immediately went to his pistol! Thackeray and his SS workers faithfully followed Goering's example. Very early in its career, the SS had attacked two radical plays by Vijay Tendulkar, called "Sakharam Binder" and "Ghashiram Kotwal". The latter had exposed the degenerate ways of the Peshwas, the Brahmin rulers of Maharashtra who had succeeded the Maratha reign. This exposure was resented by the Brahminical SS. In the eighties, it was the turn of the film "Tamas", which was made by Govind Nihalani on the basis of the novel by Bhisham Sahni. The theme was the catastrophic communal inferno at the time of partition, and the film began with the apt sentence, "Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it."²⁰ The SS, BJP, RSS and VHP began a violent campaign demanding a ban on the film, but they did not succeed.

A decade later, a saffron playwright wrote a play called "Mee Nathuram Boltoy" (I am Nathuram Speaking) whose shows created a furore. But it was these same organisations that defended it to the hilt in the name of "freedom of expression". The play had to be eventually withdrawn. But in the very first year of the SS-BJP regime, a public function was held in Pune to felicitate Nathuram's brother Gopal Godse, who was himself one of the accused in Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. He had spent many years in jail and unrepentant Hindu fanatic that he

²⁰ Balasubramaniam, Rajeshwari, and Zahid Shahab Ahmed. "Extremism in Paksitan and India: The Case of the Jamaat-e-Islami and Shiv Sena." www.rcss.org. 2010. http://www.rcss.org/publication/policy/policy_paper/policy50.pdf. Accessed on Feb 2011

was, he had even written a book justifying the assassination. Although no major SS-BJP leader dared to attend this function, it was clearly an SS and RSS show. The same rabid communal angle was exhibited by the SS later in the disruption of Ghulam Ali's concerts and the destruction of M.F. Hussain's paintings.

Then came the hooliganism of the SS against Deepa Mehta's film "fire", under the plea that the depiction of a lesbian relationship went against Indian culture. On the heels of the opposition to "fire" came the vulgar demonstration outside Dilip Kumar's house – because Dilip Kumar had defended "Fire", because he was a Muslim and also because he was a secularist. On top of this, SS MP Sanjay Nirupam went to the extent of calling Dilip Kumar a "Pakistani" in Parliament. Another renowned thespian Sunil Dutt, who trounced SS leader Madhukar Sarpotdar (of the Bombay riots fame) in the Lok Sabha polls in Mumbai, has also been a special target of SS.

P.L. Deshpande, who was one of the most popular writers in the state, was selected for the "Maharashtra Bhushan" award by the SS-BJP regime. In his acceptance speech, he criticised the lawless and violent ways of the SS. Thackeray promptly insulted him by asking why he had accepted the award in the first place! When eminent historian and ex-president of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan Y.D. Phadke wrote an article in a local daily criticising the SS leadership in the Ramesh Kini murder case, "Saamnaa" responded by declaring that if anyone were to beat up Phadke with shoes, he would be performing a sacred task! Later, when Vasant Bapat²¹ in his presidential address at the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan chided the intolerant ways of the SS, Thackeray poured contempt on him, branded all writers as "buffaloes for sale" and demanded that the state government withdraw its subsidy of Rs.25 lakhs given to the Sammelan.

In 1998, in its bid to stop India-Pakistan cricket matches, the SS had dug up the pitch of the Wankhede stadium in Mumbai. In 1999, as part of a renewed campaign for the same cause, hundreds of SS hoodlums attacked the Cricket Control Board office in the state capital, and they destroyed and ransacked the invaluable international cups and trophies that had been won by the Indian cricket team! Most of

²¹ A famous Marathi poet from Maharashtra. He also served for ten years as an appointed member in Sahitya Academy and in 1999 he chaired the *Marathi Sahitya Sammelan* held in Mumbai.

the above mentioned acts of goondaism occurred when the SS-BJP regime was itself in power, but, as expected, nothing whatsoever was done to nail the culprits. Alongwith all other factors, these fascistic actions, too, were to lead to the political downfall of the SS-BJP regime.

The state of Assam located in the Northeastern region of India, has seen a steady flow of migrants from both within India as well as from across the borders, across several decades. Apart from migrants from within India, there is also a steady flow of immigrants from Bangladesh (most of which is illegal) which has not only changed the demography of the state but has also mounted pressures on the availability of employment opportunities, land and other material resources. The Assam movement began in the year 1979 with an allegation that a large number of foreigners, more particularly the immigrant Muslims, and also the Bengali Hindus (from neighboring Bangladesh), got themselves enrolled in the voters' list of Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency in the state of Assam. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) initiated an agitation demanding the deletion of the immigrants' name from the voters' list and their deportation from the country. The popular vernacular press played a significant role in rousing parochial sentiments amongst the common populace, fuelling suspicion, frustration, anger and subsequent violence. Inflammatory speeches that exhorted the common people to "rise up" and fight back against the 'other' (in this case the immigrant Bengali Muslims), who were purportedly threatening to outnumber the resident Assamese community, were widely reported in the press. Deep seated myths of the glorious past were invoked through cultural symbols, music, art and literature. Although the Assam Movement came to end in 1985, the reverberations against the 'outsiders' refused to die down completely. It reared its ugly face time and again, in the following years—in 2003 during the anti-Bihari attacks, which almost took the form of ethnic cleansing. These incidents reveal the significant role played by a few influential people who could mobilize the popular resentment and channelize it, to a violent end. Mobilization of students also played a major role in spreading the tentacles of the movement. They acted not just as the resource mobilizer but also as a vehicle of impassioned, chauvinistic appeal.

1.6 MNS- Taking Symbolic Politics Further:

Maharashtra is one of the biggest and one of the most prosperous of the twenty eight states in India. Mumbai, its capital is the second most populous city in the world. This can be accorded to the continuous influx of migrants into the city each day from different parts of the country looking for better economic opportunities. Most of the migrants in the past few decades have been from the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Ideological feuds within the Shiv Sena (a regional political party) led to the formation of the MNS under the leadership of Raj Thackeray. Over time, he successively brought the *sons of the soil* debate into the limelight and resurrected the ghosts of the "*Marathi Manos*" bringing it back to the political arena of Maharashtra after a lapse of almost three decades. The largely self employed migrant workers of lower echelons are the *others* targeted by the newly formed MNS to spearhead its political agenda. While posing the "migrant worker" as the vicious *other, stranger and alien*, the leader simultaneously endorses the pride in the Marathi language and culture. All these goals however are achieved more through violence and force. The demands of the party range from reserving seats for the local Marathi people in banks and railway jobs, attacking film producers and actors on minor issues, assaulting MLA's for using Hindi instead of Marathi to take oath in the legislative assembly, and demanding that fresh licenses not be issued to non-Marathi auto and taxi drivers.

Last year Maharashtra celebrated 50 years of its existence. So is Mumbai in many ways. For years it has been a land of opportunities, a land where dreams come true. Politically though, the city still struggles to reach a sense of identity.²² Keeping alive the 'Sons of the Soil' debate, the two cases discussed above demonstrate how frequent cries of 'Sons of the soil' are heard in the political landscape in India, reflecting the extent to which parochial sentiments have become the chosen tool for political entrepreneurs who exploit the emotions of the common people for electoral gain. Fear is often used as a tool for the preservation of identity by playing upon the underlying anger, frustration and suspicion of the 'other'.

²² Ashok, Dawdle, Shiv Sena in Action, Cited in ., Hansen Blom, Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 200. p 2-7

Migration and the subsequent pressures on land and material resources in an urban sprawl, is a real problem that cannot be done away with easily. Advocates of identity politics tend to play upon the genuine grievances of the people and craft fissures amongst them by pitting one community against the 'other'. Popular literature, music, cultural symbols and even the vernacular press are taken recourse to, in an attempt to carve a niche for themselves and generate dissent within the community. As a repository of decision-making authority, the State too plays a significant role in creating and nurturing the discourse on Identity, at any given point in time.

Building on the ideas of symbolic management and transformational leadership, Ashforth and Mael (1989) suggested that leaders play a very important role especially through the use of symbols to increase group identification²³. This is clearly visible when it is observed that the Shiv Sena supremo, Bal Thackeray has over the years, cultivated an image of being an unselfish and sacrificing leader to establish credence with his target audience. This was a deliberate and tactical move. He did not fail to use any opportunity to make even the simplest of events appear like a great sacrifice.

In addition to the fiery speeches and the use of symbols to evoke the Maharashtrian identity in his followers, Bal Thackeray and lately his nephew Raj Thackeray, evoke hysterical reactions from the crowd through the aura they create around each political rally. Chanting of slogans and a motorcade precede the arrival of Thackeray on the scene of the rally evolving a surcharged atmosphere. The speech is almost always laced with strong expletives against the 'enemy'.

There were news paper reports on the rally about the aggressive warnings, unadulterated criticism, mimicry, abuse and simplification of complex issues and the criticism on how he tends to simplify issues and his demagogy thrives on the basis of the creation of the 'other'—the enemy, whose villainy is the cause of all the troubles²⁴. Both Bal Thackeray as well as Raj Thackeray often invoke the glorious past and extol the greatness of Shivaji to rouse popular sentiments.

²³ Ashworth, Blake E, and Fred Mael. "Social Identity Theory and the Organisation." *Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 1 (1989): p. 23

²⁴ *Tehelka*. "Mumbai Secessionist." Oct 19, 2010.

Social Identity is the individuals' self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups²⁵. Multiple social identities exist in an individual. Caught amidst an unfolding conflict, people have often been found to bring about changes in their identity, to "fit in". In Assam, most of the immigrants make special efforts to look like a local by wearing the 'Gamosa' (traditional hand towel) and speaking Assamese. In fact, it has been reported that a revival of Assamese medium schools is taking place because of the newfound interest generated in them by the immigrants. Even in Mumbai, anecdotal evidence reveals how post-MNS attacks, migrant auto drivers adapted themselves to the changing cultural milieu by etching slogans such as *Jai Maharashtra!* (*Long Live Maharashtra!*) on the walls of the autos and wearing the Gandhi *topi* that has come to be recognized as a quintessential part of the lifestyle of a Maharasthrian.

Conclusion:

This chapter was an attempt to understand the way in which politics of symbolism undergoes complicated dynamics at various juncture from conceptual standpoint and how a socio-economic phenomenon like migration becomes instrumental in shaping the identity of various communities. The political leaders act as the catalysts in the formation of this identity, creating the other and exploiting the resultant emotions for their own political gain. Help in the strengthening of the in-group identification on the one hand while simultaneously widening the divide between one's own group and the '*monstrous migrant other*'. Despite the recurring catastrophes brought about by this kind of politics nothing seems to have changed over the years. In the chapters to follow one would notice the transforming trends of symbolic politics within Maharashtra. The historical background of Samyuktha Maharashtra Movement gives a chronological backdrop to symbolic politics and its different means of functionality. The idea here is also to examine different means of symbolic politics through an indepth analysis of Shiv Sena and MNS at different occasions.

²⁵ Hogg, M A, and G M Vaughan. *Social Psychology*. London: Prentice Hall, 2002.

Chapter 2
Political Symbolism and ‘Marathi
Manoos’- Shiv Sena & MNS in
Maharashtra

Chapter 2

Political Symbolism and ‘Marathi Manoos’- Shiv Sena & MNS in Maharashtra

The politics of symbolism is becoming an eminent feature of Indian democracy in recent past. This is because of its diverse cultural heritage. The wide spread diversity in different parts of India has today led to the huge identity issue. This invariably has led to politics of symbolism specifically in states like Maharashtra and Assam. The larger inference I am trying to draw here is that politics of symbolism has taken extreme forms and is leading to different type of rhetoric such as ‘Marathi Manoos’.

After the independence of India in 1947, regional administrative divisions from the colonial era were gradually changed and states following linguistic borders were created. Within the Bombay Presidency, a massive popular struggle was launched for the creation of a state for the Marathi-speaking people. In 1960, the Presidency was divided into two linguistic states, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Moreover, Marathi-speaking areas of the erstwhile Hyderabad state were joined with Maharashtra. Bombay, in many ways the economic capital of India, became the state capital of Maharashtra. On one hand, people belonging to the Gujarati and Marwari communities owned the majority of the industry and trade enterprises in the city. Thackeray founded Shiva Sena as a political organization. It should be noted that at the time of its foundation, the Shiva Sena was not a political party. The political approach of Shiv Sena was centered around the concept of ‘bhumi Putra’ (sons of the soil), the idea that Maharashtra inherently belonged to the Marathi community²⁶. Shiv Sena was thus born out of a feeling of resentment about the relative marginalization of the native Marathi people in their own state by people whom they perceived as outsiders.

Shiv Sena especially attracted a large number of disgruntled and often unemployed Marathi youth, who were attracted by Thackeray's charged anti-migrant

²⁶ Katzenstein, Mary F. "Origins of Nativism: The Emergence of Shiv Sena in Bombay." *Asian Survey* 13, no. 4 (Apr 1973): 2-3

oratory. Shiv Sena cadres became involved in vandalising South Indian restaurants and pressuring employers to hire Marathis²⁷.

The main characteristic of the early years of Shiv Sena was the frequent struggles against communist trade unions²⁸. Prior to the formation of Shiv Sena, the Communist Party of India played a dominant role in labour politics of Bombay. Shiv Sena was supported by elements inside the Indian National Congress, who hoped that the new organization would be capable of weakening the communist trade union influence. Soon Shiv Sena cadres were involved in a series of violent conflicts with the communist trade union activists. In 1970, a CPI MLA of Dadar, Krishna Desai, was assassinated. CPI charged Shiv Sena for the murder, and held Thackeray responsible for the act²⁹.

The years since 1970s has witnessed a rising trend of anti-migrant regionalist sentiments evoked by political parties in an openly unabashed manner. The recent socio-political developments in Maharashtra could be cited as a leading example in this regard. From a political science perspective, it is important to understand such anti-migrant rhetoric and the possible conceptual/theoretical framework within which such a politics could be located for further debate. To research and possibly open up newer theoretical and conceptual debates which could help us to understand the anti-migrant rhetoric generated in Maharashtra is the main aim of this study. This is a crucial juncture to study such phenomena because as social scientist we could provide the right theoretical platform on which fertile debate could arise and thrive, else we could witness a similar trend of hate rhetoric and anti-migrant sentiment vibrating across the nation.

In Maharashtra particularly in Mumbai, generating hatred against one or other form of 'otherness' has found explicit political expression in the Shiv Sena formed in 1966 to safeguard the interest of the 'sons of the soil'. Shiv Sena has always tried to invoke this feeling of nativism amongst Maharashtrians in one or the other manner.

²⁷ Katzenstein, Mary F. "The emergence of Shiv Sena in Bombay." *Asian Survey* 13, no. 4 (Apr 1973): 386-399 p. 4-6

²⁸ Shaikh, Juned. "Worker Politics, Trade Unions and the Shiv Sena's rise in Central Bombay." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 18 (Apr 2005): 1893-1900. P. 3-7

²⁹ *Indian Express*. "What an Idea." August 5 2010.

The difference remains that every time they have new target group. In its initial phase the target group was south Indians then it became Muslims and finally now it has shifted to north Indians. The recent outbreak came in the form of rhetoric ‘Mumbai for Marathi’. Shiv Sena however has never been able to achieve bigger political profits [In state legislature or parliamentary level] by using such rhetoric. It has always been restricted to municipal level. The point although to note and analyze here is that regardless of its political ups and downs, it has always remained in the limelight and made its dominance felt in Maharashtra. One of the major reasons for this has been ‘Samna’ the popular mouth piece of Shiv Sena. The larger inferences that I am trying to draw here is that the kind of symbolic politics carried out by the parties like Shiv Sena and MNS in Maharashtra has certainly brought a change in the political atmosphere of India. In order to understand politics of symbolism in Maharashtra in a much better form, one needs to look at the historical formation of Maharashtra.

2.1 Shivaji as an iconic figure or as symbolic tool:



Figure 1.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the image of Shivaji assumed a central position in movements of self-assertion and identity formation. Phule's interpretations of Shivaji was that of a non-brahman king and Tilak's of a champion of

Hinduism³⁰. Shivaji always represented resistance -sometimes to foreign rule, at others to Muslim rulers. Shivaji's many images were reactions and responses to the establishment of colonialism in western India. In this section, I am going to make an attempt to draw analytical inferences of Shivaji, the Maratha king, as an iconic figure in the beginning of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement and how Shiv Sena came in to picture in 1966, Shivaji became symbolic tool to attain political ends.

Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha kingdom in the 17th century, occupies a prominent position in the Maharashtrian ethos; in traditional folk culture, popular imagination, and in recent politics of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti and the Shiv Sena. Shivaji's lifetime, with tales of his military prowess and valour, continues to be a strong emotive force for the people of Maharashtra. The position of preeminence occupied by Shivaji remains unchallenged or unrivaled by any other figure in Maharashtrian history. As a tried and tested symbol of history, culture and identity formation, the image of Shivaji provokes curiosity regarding its history and evolution thus making a study of the changes in the image over time and of the forces that might have facilitated this evolution an essential component of the history of modern western India. In this section I propose to look at the evolution of the image of Shivaji, starting from the second half of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th century. The period is significant as it marked the establishment of colonialism in western India, which in turn introduced a number of new forces of change in the polity, society and economy of the region.

Adapting to, as well as resisting colonial rule involved both the convergence and moving away of ideas and communities. Integral to this development was at one level, a growing need felt for an 'all-India identity' as also identity formation along linguistic, regional and caste lines in an effort to assert separateness.

These movements of identity formation, although often divergent in their aims were not completely differentiated in their means, and often used similar rhetoric and symbols for mass mobilisation. The symbiotic relationship among identity, nation building, myth, symbol and history assumes great relevance in this scenario. As

³⁰ Vartak, Malavika. "Shivaji Maharaj: Growth of a Symbol." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 19 (May 1999): p.1-3

Anthony Smith points out, the past that is being handed down is a multilayered past susceptible to different interpretations. It also contains differing strands of tradition and it is possible to speak of a single monolithic past³¹.

Thus what we see is that nationalism or movements of identity formation enjoy a certain amount of freedom to choose from the various strands those which they seek to make popular as the 'true past'³². The process of distillation of the past however operates within a definite tradition, it is not entirely new but inherits the mythologies and symbols of previous generations. The past therefore takes on the form of the didactic and the dramatic, using poetic spaces, specific forms of folk culture as well as modern modes of expression³³

In revivals and reconstructions, whether in the case of broad nationalism or subnationalisms, the past often includes a romantic 'golden age' where the community is perceived to have thrived in all aspects of human activity. Central to this theme is the idea of linear development, which culminates in a downward trend leading down from the 'golden age' to the present³⁴. The aim is to retail the past in a way that would not only inspire the community to act in a chosen direction but also to explain their present condition and prescribe remedies³⁵.

Therefore, while studying identity formation or the growth of a people's political consciousness, it becomes essential to explore the various images of Shivaji popularised by the different ideological viewpoints as the 'chosen pasts'. It would also be necessary to take into consideration the variety of media used, from the traditional oral medium to the use of modern methods of printing and publishing to the populist methods of mass meetings, speeches and festivals. Integral to this would be the study of the socioeconomic and power structures that facilitated the growth and shape of the image

³¹ Burman, Roy J.J. "Shivaji's Myth and Maharashtra's Syncretic Traditions." *Economic and Political Weekly* 36, no. 15 (2001): 1226-1234. P. 2-7

³² Smith, A. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. p.177.

³³ Smith, A. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. p.261.

³⁴ Thakkar, Usha, and Mangesh Kulkarni. *Politics in Maharashtra*. Delhi: Himalayan Publishing House, 1995. p. 82-86

³⁵ Smith, A. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986. P.191

One of the most important figures responsible for building the image of Shivaji and taking it to the masses was Bal Gangadhar Tilak through populist means of festivals and public meetings. Tilak presented a combination of both the orthodox and the progressive. His success lay in his ability to communicate and function within elite circles as well as feel the pulse of the people and act accordingly. Among the other achievements of the movement was that the Shivaji icon brought together members of the elite ruling classes, like the princes of states like Ichalkaranji, Aundh, Sangli and Baroda with members of the Congress, like Surendranath Banerjee and Madanmohan Malaviya. It is important to note that leaders such as the above-mentioned, although from different parts of the country, spoke at the festival regarding the greatness and the all-India relevance of Shivaji.

The major shift in this kind of iconic projection of Shivaji came in 1966 when Shiv Sena was formed. The ideology upon which the party was formed had a great influence from the very figure of Shivaji. The initiatives taken up by the party were totally blended with the image and aura of Shivaji as a Maratha ruler. To take a few examples here, when Victoria Terminus station's name was changed to Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the idea was to enforce the relevance of Shivaji in Marathi culture and invoke the feeling of Maratha pride. Similarly names of road, lane, park were changed [Shivaji Marg, Shivaji Chawk and Shivaji Park]. Leaders like Bal Thackeray and Raj Thackeray frequently used the example of Shivaji as a warrior in order to mobilize the masses through their writings and speeches at various events.

Standing at 309 ft in the Arabian Sea, the statue has the Maratha warrior atop a horse, surrounded by lush gardens and a museum with rare artifacts from the era. The grand celebrations come at a price of over Rs 300 crore. Credited with setting up a Hindu empire in the state, Shivaji espoused the ideology of Hind Swaraj or freedom for Hindustan. His battles with the regional sultanates established him as a Hindu icon for some; for others, he is the brave war hero who mastered the art of guerrilla warfare. For centuries after his death, Shivaji caught the attention of historians, poets and politicians alike. Several plays, films and books have been written on the warrior who ruled the Maratha empire till 1640. Various regional political parties have invoked his name to garner support and win votes.

According to, Suhas Palshikar "Shivaji is one of the few historical legacies that Maharashtra can be genuinely proud of. But over time, the real in the history has given way to the imagined as well"³⁶. For years, political parties have staked claim to selective parts of the Maratha warrior's legacy to strengthen their foothold in the state. During its regime in Maharashtra between 1995 and 1999, the Sena-BJP underlined their Shivaji theme by renaming city landmarks after the ruler. The National Congress Party is cashing in on Shivaji's Maratha connection too. The 2009 Lok Sabha elections saw it woo Marathas by offering tickets to Shivaji's descendants, Udayanraje Bhosale and Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje.

State politicians call it an attempt to strengthen the party base in Western Maharashtra, the heart of the erstwhile Maratha empire. National Congress Party (NCP) leader Vinayak Mete, who was suspended for attacking writer Kumar Ketkar because of a satirical piece on the memorial, has been re-inducted into the party within a year.

The regionalisation of Indian politics over the last 30 years has seen parties fall back on symbols, historical figures and caste. They are capitalising on Shivaji's legacy since he is revered in the state,³⁷

The recent controversy over who should head the memorial committee might be a ploy to appropriate Shivaji's legacy ahead of the Assembly elections and cash in on Maratha pride by invoking his name. The battle has now taken the form of a Brahmin-Maratha divide with hardliner Maratha groups trying to emphasise Shivaji's caste. While the Maratha Seva Sangh is objecting to the appointment of Babasaheb Purandare, a Brahmin as the chief of the committee, the Maratha Mahasangh has threatened an agitation if the memorial includes Brahmin figures from history such as Ramdas Maharaj and Dadoji Konddeo, fearing that it will lead to "Brahminising the Maratha warrior". As Palshikar explains, "The memory of Shivaji helps sustain regional pride. So parties follow a process of appropriation of the icon. Every

³⁶ Palshikar, Suhas. "Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 14/15 (Apr 2004): 1497-1507.

³⁷ Venkatesh Kumar, Cited in., Palshikar, Suhas. "Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 14/15 (Apr 2004): 1497-1507.

appropriator attaches a certain meaning to the memory of Shivaji.³⁸ The pre-Independence era saw an attempt to give the warrior a pro-Brahmin feel, leading to the popular phrase *Gow Brahman Prati Palak* (saviour of the Brahmin and the cow). In recent times, there has been an upsurge of Maratha groups who have refused to accept history as propagated by Brahmin scholars.

With 2011 assembly elections too, Shivaji's name is being invoked once again to win support, a strategy that has been used from the pre-Independence era. Bal Gangadhar Tilak celebrated Shiv Jayanti to gather people and inspire them to fight for independence; leaders of the Samyukta Maharashtra movement also used his name to garner support. Later, the Shiv Sena, which takes its name from Shivaji, also used the Maratha ruler to invoke Marathi *asmita*.

Sanjay Raut, spokesperson of the Sena said, "Whenever there has been an agitation, Maharashtra has come together under Shivaji's name and it continues. There's no better way to connect with people."³⁹ While the attempt to stake a claim to Shivaji may have grown manifold in the last few years, political parties are aware that it will not translate into votes. "How will it benefit any party when everyone is using his name?"⁴⁰ Despite this, regional outfits continue to be locked in a battle of one-upmanship to grab a piece of his heritage.

The 'Shivaji Jayanti' celebrated with enthusiasm in Maharashtra has now become the cultural territory of Shiv Sena, a political party which represents Hindus and specifically Maharashtrian chauvinism and a resurgent subnationalism. Significantly, Shiv Sena finds a majority of its supporters from the upper caste, middle and lower middle classes and not from the backward and dalit sections of the society for whom Phule and his non-brahman ideology form the crux of their polemic. The present form of Shivaji as a symbol makes it pertinent to explore the various reasons for this particular version taking shape.

³⁸ Palshikar, Suhas. "Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 14/15 (Apr 2004): 1497-1507.

³⁹ Quoted in Thakkar, Usha, and Mangesh Kulkarni. *Politics in Maharashtra*. Delhi: Himalayan Publishing House, 1995.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Thakkar, Usha, and Mangesh Kulkarni. *Politics in Maharashtra*. Delhi: Himalayan Publishing House, 1995.

2.2 Samyukta Maharashtra Movement and the Rise of Symbolic Politics:

The Samyukta Maharashtra movement has been an epic event in the history of Maharashtra politics. The main driving force behind the movement was the ascribed usage of symbolic identity politics. The whole notion of Maratha pride and restoration of Marathi culture was given top most priority and this is where symbolic politics first began. Given this, it becomes important to understand the historical background of the movement

No more complex and important problem has confronted the Government of India since independence than that of linguistic regionalism. The re-drawing of state boundaries to correspond with linguistic regions has been a cornerstone of the policy of India's ruling Congress Party since 1921.⁴¹

Samyukta Maharashtra Movement roughly translated as United Maharashtra Movement, spearheaded the demand in the 1950s for the creation of a separate Marathi-speaking state out of the (then bilingual) State of Bombay in Western India, with the city of Bombay (now known as Mumbai) as its capital. The movement was founded on February 6, 1956, under the leadership of Keshavrao Jedhe in Pune. Some prominent activists of Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti were Acharya Atre, Prabodhankar Thackeray, SenapatiBapat and ShahirAmarShaikh. Acharya Atre criticized Jawaharlal Nehru, Morarji Desai (then chief minister of Mumbai) and S.K. Patil (a prominent MP from Mumbai city) through his firebrand editorials in Maratha. The Indian National Congress had pledged to introduce linguistic states prior to Independence. However after Independence, Nehru and SardarVallabhai Patel were adamantly opposed to linguistic states. They perceived linguistic states as a threat to the integrity of India. For the first time and perhaps the only time, RSS and its chief Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar supported Nehru and Patel against redrawing of the map along linguistic lines. In 1956, the States Re-organization Committee (SRC) recommended creation of linguistic states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and several other States, but recommended a bi-lingual state for Maharashtra-Gujarat, with Mumbai as its capital. Further, they recommended the creation

⁴¹ Sirsikar, M.V. *Politics of Maharashtra*. Bombay: Orient Longman Ltd, 1995. p. 120-127

of Vidharbha state to unite the Marathi-speaking people of former Hyderabad State with Marathi speaking areas of Central provinces and Berar state. This led to the creation of Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad, causing a great political stir and, under the leadership of Keshavrao Jedhe a whole party meeting was held in Pune. Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti was founded on February 6, 1956. S.M.Joshi, Shripat Amrit Dange, N.G.Gore and Prahlad Keshav Atre fought relentlessly for Samyukta Maharashtra, even at the cost of sacrificing the lives of several people and finally succeeded in convincing Congress leaders that Maharashtra should form a separate state. The resignation of C. D. Deshmukh, the then Finance Minister of the Nehru Cabinet, had its salutary effect. In January 1956, demonstrators were fired upon by the police at Flora Fountain in Mumbai. Flora Fountain was subsequently renamed Hutatma Chowk ("Martyr's Crossroads") in their memory. It is estimated that in all, more than hundred people were shot by security forces during the period of agitation and at different places. Morarji Desai, who was the then chief minister of Bombay state was later removed and replaced by YB Chawan as a result of criticism related to this incident.

The Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti achieved its goal on May 1, 1960 when the State of Bombay was partitioned into the Marathi-speaking State of Maharashtra and the Gujarati-speaking State of Gujarat. However Goa (then a Portuguese colony), Belgaon, Karwar and adjoining areas, which were also part of the Maharashtra, envisaged by the Samiti were not included in the Maharashtra state. Chronology of statehood of Maharashtra (Timeline) 1906: Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak conceptualizes the state of Maharashtra. 1919: Congress Democratic Party includes demand of state of Maharashtra in its manifesto⁴². The manifesto is drafted under leadership of Tilak.

⁴² Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan. *History, Culture and the Indian City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. P. 45-50



Figure 2.

Now in order to understand the historical background of Samyukta Maharashtra movement in a greater detail and its relevance in the emergence or rather the breeding of symbolic politics a deeper analysis of chronological events needs to be done. The statue at Flora fountain in Mumbai has a long drawn historical relevance. One needs look at it from the aspect of a visual spectacle and its symbolic

appeal. Heritage architects have complained for years that the Soviet-style concrete statue next to the Flora Fountain ruins the visual sweep of the Fort colonial facades and streetscape. But did you ever wonder what this monument is supposed to commemorate? Fifty years ago this year, the struggle for Samyukta Maharashtra spilled onto the streets of the city formerly known as Bombay. This socialist realist sculpture was later erected as a martyrs memorial to Marathi nationalism the Hutatma Chowk marking the 105 people who died in protests against Nehru plan to make Bombay into a City State after Independence. Like with the Shivaji statue opposite the Gateway of India, the statue at Hutatma Chowk was intentionally placed to ruin a view of a famous colonial landmark, and reorient the symbolic geography of the city. The battle for Mumbai heated up when the States Reorganisation Committee report, published in 1955, recommended statehood for Telugus in Andhra Pradesh, in the old princely state of the Nizam of Hyderabad. But the same report proposed the erstwhile Bombay State either be a bi-lingual Marathi-Gujarati unit with Bombay as its capital, or that Bombay be made an Union Territory, separate from the linguistic states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. These proposals stirred a popular outcry against the denial of a Marathi state without Bombay, and a coalition of anti-Congress activists and political parties united in the demand for Mumbai to be the capital of a united Maharashtra from Socialists, Communists and trade unions to the Marathi press, literati and workers across the city. After popular unrest and street violence, the Centre capitulated, and made Mumbai into the capital of the new state of Maharashtra on 1 May 1960.

It is no coincidence that Maharashtra Diwas is also May Day, the annual holiday when working-class solidarity is celebrated throughout the world. Samyukta Maharashtra was important because the demand for linguistic statehood was in Mumbai combined with a popular movement against rigid class hierarchies in an industrial city dominated by big business interests. In the years before and after Independence, city politics was a conducted in back-room deals between the Congress Party and industrialists the Parsi, Gujarati and Marwari sheths and sahebs of the popular imagination. It was this party machinery, identified with S.K. Patil and the party bosses, that was targeted by the Samyukta Maharashtra movement as unrepresentative, and not in keeping with the new order of things in independent India, where common people should participate in governance.

While today we identify the official changing of the name of the city from Bombay to Mumbai with the Shiv Sena in 1995, it was a generation earlier, during Samyukta Maharashtra, that Mumbai was first extensively used in the public sphere to signify a city different from Bombay. For Acharya Atre, S.A. Dange, and Prabodhakar Thackeray (father of Balasaheb) the leaders of Samyukta Maharashtra Mumbai was to be a working-class city with better employment opportunities and social justice for all not just a city that spoke Marathi, favoured sons of the soil, and suspected outsiders of stealing their jobs. Class justice was as important as linguistic unity in the socialist vision of the Samyukta Maharashtra. The Shiv Sena was founded in 1966, more than ten years after the Samyukta Maharashtra movement, when the city economy stagnated and shrunk, and popular dissatisfaction with the hopes of statehood led to the emergence of more parochial forms of linguistic politics.

Thackeray founded the Shiv Sena as a political organization in 19th July 1966. It should be noted that at the time of its foundation, Shiv Sena was not a political party as such. The political approach of Shiv Sena was centered around the concept of 'bhumi Putra' (sons of the soil), the idea that Maharashtra inherently belonged to the Marathi community. Shiv Sena was thus born out of a feeling of resentment about the relative marginalization of the native Marathi people in their own state by people whom they perceived as outsiders.

Shiv Sena especially attracted a large number of disgruntled and often unemployed Marathi youth, who were attracted by Thackeray's charged anti-migrant oratory. Another main characteristic of the early years of the Shiv Sena was the frequent struggles against communist trade unions. Prior to the formation of the Shiv Sena, the Communist Party of India played a dominant role in labour politics in Bombay. The Shiv Sena was supported by elements inside the Indian National Congress, whom hoped that the new organisation would be capable of weakening the communist trade union influence. Soon Shiv Sena cadres were involved in a series of violent conflicts with the communist trade union activists. In 1970 the CPI MLA of Dadar, Krishna Desai, was assassinated. CPI charged the Shiv Sena for the murder, and held Thackeray as responsible for the act.

When the Shiv Sena was formed, the founder leader, Bal Thakeray pledged that the organization was only a social forum and had nothing to do with politics⁴³. Scholars who have studied the Shiv Sena have rarely tried to explain this fact. It has only been mentioned how Sena departed from this avowed non-political stand within one year of its formation and started participating in city elections of Thane and Mumbai from 1967 onwards. It is necessary to note that in the first ever rally of Shiv Sena in Mumbai, prominent Congress leader Ramrao Adik was present and the Shiv Sena leadership could not have taken a 'political stand' while courting friendship with one section of the Congress. Between 1967 and 1972 Shiv Sena emerged as a prominent party in both Thane and Mumbai. Its popularity in these cities derived from two factors: an unconventional, near-violent espousal of the 'sons-of-soil' policy and an informal network of social service activity based on the principle of neighborhood circles of youth. Shiv Sena also earned publicity for its involvement in many riots against the south Indian establishments and non-Maharashtra officials. Besides, Shiv Sena was actively engaged in anticommunist propaganda and violence. Shiv Sena effectively destroyed the trade union movement of Mumbai, which was under the control of the left and the socialists. The anti-communism of Shiv Sena reached a flashpoint when a CPI MLA was murdered in 1970, allegedly by youth belonging to Shiv Sena (19 Sena workers were arrested and tried and 16 sentenced). Ironically, Shiv Sena's first entry into the State legislature was from the seat vacated by the murder of Krishna Desai, the CPI MLA, when Sena candidate defeated the widow of the murdered MLA⁴⁴.

The seventies saw Shiv Sena involving itself in electoral politics on a more regular basis. In 1971, it allied with the Congress (O) and fielded three candidates for Lok Sabha from Mumbai and Konkan, losing in all the three constituencies. In 1972, Shiv Sena fielded 26 candidates for the Assembly election and could win only one seat from Mumbai city. Shiv Sena had declared its support to emergency proclaimed by Indira Gandhi's government and thus, it was logical for it to support the Congress in the elections that followed, although it did not field its own candidates in the Lok Sabha election of 1977. In 1978, when attempts to enter into alliance with the Janata

⁴³ Purandare, Vaibhav. *The Sena Story*. Bombay: Business Publication, 1999. P.41

⁴⁴ Hansen Blom, Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001

Party failed, Shiv Sena allied with the Congress (I) and fielded 33 candidates for the assembly election, losing in all constituencies. Again, in 1980, the party did not contest from any seats but supported the Congress (I). In 1984, Shiv Sena allied with the BJP for the Lok Sabha polls and contested two seats from Mumbai losing both in the process⁴⁵. This put brakes on its alliance with the BJP. At the time of the Assembly elections of 1985, the Shiv Sena was not accommodated in the front led by Sharad Pawar (Progressive Democratic Front, PDF, consisting of Pawar's Congress (S), Janata Party, Peasants and Workers Party PWP, BJP and the left). Shiv Sena contested 33 seats on its own and managed to win only one seat from Mumbai city.

On the eve of the 1989 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance took shape again. In the mean time, BJP's national level ambitions had grown and Shiv Sena, too, had come out of the Mumbai city and become popular in many parts of Maharashtra. Sharad Pawar had returned to the Congress party deserting the PDF experiment. These developments produced a more congenial atmosphere for the Sena-BJP alliance to shape as a more serious political force in state politics. Since then, the two parties have remained steadfastly in alliance contesting all Lok Sabha and Assembly elections together. In fact, they have also contested most of the local elections as alliance partners. The formula adopted by these parties for seat sharing is realistic and reflects the scope of political ambitions of both: For Lok Sabha, the BJP gets a larger number of seats, and for the Assembly, the Shiv Sena contests more seats than the BJP. Table nos. 1 and 2 give the details of Sena's performance in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections respectively.

Table No. 1 Shiv Sena in Lok Sabha Elections

Year	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Votes (%)
1971	3	—	NA
1985	2	—	NA
1989	6	4	10.2"
1991	17	4	9.5

⁴⁵ Palshikar, Suhas. "Regional Parties and Democracy: Romantic Rendezvous Or Localized Legitimation? ." www.democracy-asia.org. www.democracy-asia.org. http://www.democracy-asia.org/Suhas_Palshikar_democracy_regional_parties.pdf (accessed Jan 2011). p. 4-9

1996	20	15	16.8
1998	22	6	19.7
1999	22	15	16.9
2004	22	12	20.11
2009	22	11	19.82

Source for Table 1: <http://www.indian-elections.com/>

Table No. 2 Shiv Sena Performance in Assembly Elections

Year	Seats Conteste	Seats Won	Votes (%)
1972	26	1	1.8
1978	35	—	1.8
1985	33	1	2.0
1990	183	52	15.9
1995	169	73	16.4
1999	161	69	17.3
2004	163	62	16.7
2009	151	44	17.1

Source for Table 2: <http://www.indian-elections.com/>

Sena's alliance with the BJP took place at a time when Shiv Sena had already started spreading in the areas outside Mumbai. This is reflected in the regional composition of its MPs: two out of the four it won in 1989 were from Marathwada region and in 1991, three were from that region. Thus, Shiv Sena had struck roots in a new region. There is a consistency in Sena's performance in the Marathwada region over the entire decade of 1989-1999. In the 1999 elections, Shiv Sena has gained in the north Maharashtra region as well. Thus, the most distinguishing feature of Shiv Sena's electoral performance in the nineties has been its expansion outside of Mumbai while retaining its hold over the regions of Mumbai and adjoining Konkan. So far, Shiv Sena has not succeeded in gaining a stronghold in the sugar belt i.e. in the western and southern regions of the state (See Tables 3 and 4). Another limitation to this electoral expansion has been the inability of the party to repeat a similar kind of success at the level of local elections for the Municipal Councils and Zilla Parishads.

In the 1992 elections to the Zilla Parishads, Sena managed to win a mere 56 seats in the entire state out of a total of over 1500 members, and in 1997, when it was in power at the state level, it could win 251 seats out of around 1800 seats⁴⁶. In the local elections held in 2001-2, Shiv Sena won 270 seats in the ten municipal corporations out of a total of 1164 seats (a little over 25 per cent) and won 14 per cent seats in the 192 municipal councils winning presidentship in 28 councils⁴⁷. In the Zilla Parishads, Sena candidates won 19 per cent seats of the 1641 seats all over the state⁴⁸

At the Assembly level, Shiv Sena's success has been more evident. It emerged as the largest opposition to Congress in 1990 and finally wrested power from the Congress party in 1995, installing its own leader as the Chief Minister. Its alliance with the BJP ensured that when the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) came to power at the centre, Shiv Sena shared power at the centre as well.

Table No. 3 Region-wise performance in the Lok Sabha Elections in the Nineties

Region	1991	1996	1998	1999
Mumbai	1	3	2	2
Konkan	—	3	3	3
N. Maharashtra	—	1	—	1
Vidarbha	—		—	4
Marathwada	3	4	—	4
W. Maharashtra	—	1	1	1

Source: Palshikar-Deshpande, 2003⁴⁹

Table No. 4 Region-wise Distribution of Sena MLAs: 1990-1999

Region	1990	1995	1999	Total Seats
Mumbai	15	18	11	34

⁴⁶ Palshikar, Suhas. "Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 14/15 (Apr 2004): 1497-1507.

⁴⁷ Palshikar, Suhas, and Rajeshwari Deshpande. "Electoral Competition and Structures of Domination in Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 34/35 (Aug-Sep 1999): p. 1270

⁴⁸ Palshikar, Suhas, and Rajeshwari Deshpande. "Electoral Competition and Structures of Domination in Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 34/35 (Aug-Sep 1999): p. 1274-76

⁴⁹ Palshikar, Suhas, and Rajeshwari Deshpande. "Electoral Competition and Structures of Domination in Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 34/35 (Aug-Sep 1999): p. 1275

Konkan	11	15	15	31
N. Maharashtra	2	5	10	36
Vidarbha	9	11	8	66
Marathwada	11	15	16	46
W. Maharashtra	4	9	9	75
Total	52	73	69	288

Source: Palshikar-Deshpande, 2003⁵⁰

2.3 Organizational Dynamics

Entry into the electoral arena and bargaining with a national party like the BJP had certain organizational implications. So also was the decision to expand beyond Mumbai. Since its formation in 1966, Shiv Sena had only an informal organizational structure. Under its founder and undisputed leader, Bal Thakarey, Shiv Sena evolved a ward wise structure in Mumbai and later in Thane, for purposes of better coordination. Within first five years of its formation, Shiv Sena functioned around a hundred 'branches'⁵¹. By the end of 1988, it had about 40,000 branches spread all over Maharashtra⁵². But even before the Shiv Sena set out to its state level expansion, it had already put in place a large number of front organizations that were functioning in different fields and creating a base for the Sena in the urban centers of Mumbai and Thane. A quick look at the list of these front organizations is enough to convince us that the Shiv Sena was seriously trying to occupy the socio-political space in the cities of Mumbai and Thane while most of the press was focusing exclusively on its unconventional and violent tactics⁵³. In the field of trade unions, Shiv Sena operates through Bharatiya Kamgar Sena, Shramik Sena, Cotton Workers' Sena, Shramjivi Kamgar Sena, Municipal Workers' Union, Co-operative bank Employees' Union, S.T. Workers' Union, BEST employees' Union, Cine Workers' Union, and so on. Much of Shiv Sena's base in Mumbai and Thane can be explained in terms of the work of these organizations, because they cater to the vast sections of

⁵⁰ Palshikar, Suhas, and Rajeshwari Deshpande. "Electoral Competition and Structures of Domination in Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 34/35 (Aug-Sep 1999): p. 1276

⁵¹ R.S, Morkhandikar. "The Shiv Sena: An Eruption of Subnationalism ." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Oct 1967: p. 1903-1906. Also see Joshi, Ram. "Shiv Sena: A Movement in Search of Legitimacy." *Asian Survey* 19, no. 11 (Nov 1970):p. 969-978.

⁵² Marmik; *Special Issue*. "Shiv Sena and its Emergency Move." Jan 1-7, 1989: p.5

⁵³ Prakash, Bal. "Shiv Sena Losing Ground." *Economic and Political Weekly* 32, no. 4 (Jan 1997): 150-151

workers in various sectors of the economy. Besides, Shiv Sena also floated a consumer protection front, women's front and a student union. As an organization that began with the issue of the rights of the Marathi speaking job seekers, Shiv Sena has also been running the ' Sthaniya Lokadhikar Samiti' an organization that protects the rights of the 'locals' in employment. This means that Shiv Sena maintains a record of job seeking Marathi speaking youth and manages to get them jobs either through negotiations or intimidation. In any case, this activity endears the Sena no end to the job seeking youth.

As noted earlier, Shiv Sena chose to support the emergency and also supported Indira Gandhi in the elections in 1977-78. In the anti-emergency atmosphere, this move backfired and Shiv Sena was considerably isolated both from anti-Congress parties in the state and the public in general. Shiv Sena survived mostly through its astute control over the middle class sections of Mumbai and friendly relations with sections of State Congress, especially, Antulay, who became the Congress Chief Minister in 1980. In the eighties, Shiv Sena came out of this hibernation⁵⁴ by adopting a set of strategies. It severed its links with the Congress and adopted a strident anti-Congress stand which was its characteristic in the earlier period. Secondly, it sought to ally with the opposition forces in the State, particularly Sharad Pawar, who was then the main opposition leader in the state. Thirdly, Shiv Sena took up a more aggressive position on Hindu-Muslim issues as compared to the BJP and the RSS. Finally, for the first time since its formation, Shiv Sena made serious attempt to expand outside of Mumbai-Thane belt. It already had some base in the adjoining Konkan region. Now, the party set out to woo the voters of Marathwada and Vidarbha regions as well. It may be said that the latter two were strategies adopted with a calculated move to win a new social base, while the first two strategies were incidental. Thakare and Shiv Sena were never exactly pro-Congress although they always benefited from internal fighting within state Congress. Now the Sena set out to project itself as the main anti-Congress force in the state.

Attempts to expand at the state level involved certain organisational changes. The Sena is famous for its annual rally in Mumbai held on the Dussera day.

⁵⁴ Heuze, Gerard. "Shiv Sena and 'National' Hinduism." *Economic and Political Weekly* 27, no. 40 (Oct 1992): 2193

Often, major policies used to be announced at this rally. Shiv Sena did not have any regular meeting of the party cadres except this rally. During the 1980s, Shiv Sena started institutionalising its functioning in many respects. This effort included the holding of annual 'adhiveshan' or session of the leaders and cadres of the party from all over the state. The first such session was held in 1984 in Mumbai. It was decided at this session that Shiv Sena would now devote itself to the entire state of Maharashtra. This was reiterated at the second session in 1985 held in Mahad town of Konkan region where the turn to Hindutva was confirmed.⁵⁵

The real impetus to the expansion of Shiv Sena came from its careful efforts to highlight the communal cleavage⁵⁶ as the most salient one. Since the late seventies, Maharashtra was witnessing the rise of Hindu communal organizations, which held some appeal for the youth belonging to the non-Brahman castes⁵⁷. Shiv Sena exploited this situation to the maximum. In 1984, Thakare took the initiative in this direction and mooted the idea of a Hindu Mahasangh to protect the Hindu interests. Although BJP ignored this initiative just as many other Hindu organizations also did the same, this move helped in galvanizing the Sena workers giving them a sense of purpose and direction. It also gave Shiv Sena an ideological space to enter the rest of Maharashtra, where the issue of sons-of-soil would not have clicked with the masses.

Once the initiative was announced, Shiv Sena went about it in a vigorous and systematic manner. It engaged with the Muslim community in different places at Mahad and Kalyan to begin with. It also took up the issue of the inclusion of Ambedkar's critical writings about Hindu religion and mobilized the caste Hindus. When Shah Bano issue erupted, Shiv Sena jumped the fray by attacking the central government for 'Muslim appeasement'⁵⁸. The Ramjanmabhoomi agitation led by RSS-VHP was already creating an atmosphere favourable to Hindu mobilization and Shiv Sena could easily claim that it was the protector of the Hindu interests. Another factor

⁵⁵ Akolkar Prakash, *Jai Maharashtra* (Marathi), (Nov 1998) Mumbai, Prabhat. P.123

⁵⁶ Palshikar, Suhas. "Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 39, no. 14/15 (Apr 2004): p. 1503

⁵⁷ Vora, Rajendra, and Suhas Palshikar. *Maharashtratil Sattantar* (Marathi). Mumbai: Granthali, 1996.

⁵⁸ Purandare, Vaibhav. *The Sena Story*. Bombay: Business Publication, 1999. p.229-247

that went in favour of Shiv Sena was the decision of Sharad Pawar to merge his Congress (S) with the Congress (I) in 1986.

Indian National Congress (Socialist) was a political party in India between 1978 and 1986. the party was formed through a split in the Indian National Congress. Initially the party was known as Indian National Congress (S) and was led by D.Devraj. it broke away from the parent party in 1978 following Indira Gandhi's drubbing elections. The party also got many of the legislators from Karnataka, Kerela, Maharastra and Goa including the future Union Ministers and Chief Ministers A.K. Antony, Sharad Pawar, Dev Kant Baruah, Priyaranjan Das Munshi and K.P. Unnikrishnan. When Sharad Pawar took over the party presidency in October 1981, the name of the party was changed to Indian Congress (S). In 1986 Pawar and his party rejoined the Indian National Congress. This created a vacuum as far as the Marathwada region was concerned and Sena's entry in that region at about the same time gave an opportunity to the restless youth of the region to latch on to the militant and anti-Congress party. In a sense therefore, the Shiv Sena was only occupying the oppositional space vacated by Sharad Pawar but in doing so, it was transforming that space into the base of militant, anti-Muslim communalism. This communalism was later to become the centrepiece of Shiv Sena's distinctiveness as a political party, which even BJP has found difficult to match. Shiv Sena, which had literally grown out of the Marathi weekly devoted to cartoons, the '*Marmik*' (Thakeray had started this weekly in 1960), now spreads its message not only to its followers, but the lay public as well through its mouthpiece, a Marathi daily, '*Saamana*' since 1989. It is no more a party of the urban-based lower middle classes alone, but attracts a strong and devoted following from all regions of the State. It in fact also claims to have branches in many other States, though the structure is pretty loose and control of the leadership shaky over these branches. One may perhaps ignore the Shiv Sena's claim of having spread all over the country, (in 1995, after it came to power in the State, the Shiv Sena organized its 'all-India' session in Mumbai, it has also appointed its state coordinators⁵⁹).

⁵⁹ *Loksatta*. "Shiv Sena and its Shakhas." Nov 30, 1995.

The Delhi unit of Shiv Sena came to limelight when it dug out the cricket pitch in Delhi to sabotage the India-Pakistan match, and so on. The main distinction, though, is that for the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, 'Shiv' symbolizes Shivaji, whereas for its northern followers, 'Shiv' represents the deity, Lord Shiva. It is doubtful, if Shiv Sena can really expand out side of Maharashtra, though Hindutva is the main link between the sensibilities of the Sainiks of Maharashtra and their north Indian counterparts.) One thing is clear though. It is difficult to ignore the outcome of its campaign started in the eighties, to open a Sena shakha (branch) in every village of Maharashtra transforming it into a statewide political force and facilitating its entry onto the electoral scene of the state from 1989 onwards.

The expansion brought about by and during its Hindu 'avatar'⁶⁰ and the electoral successes of the nineties changed the organizational dynamics of the Shiv Sena. Apart from the leaders who are responsible for the functioning of various front organizations, a new category of leaders has now been introduced. These are the 'Sampark Pramukhs', chief contact persons, for each district. This ensures that no single leader would be able to dominate the Shiv Sena branch at the district level. The Sampark Pramukhs are directly responsible to the Senapramukh, Balasaheb Thakarey. (Earlier, he used to be described as the Senapati, literally meaning the Commander of the Army, but since the eighties, Sena literature refers to him as the Sena Pramukh, i.e., Chief of the Shiv Sena.) With the Sena Pramukhs and the Shiv Sena becoming a partner in the ruling coalition between 1995-99, a little more collegial structure of leadership did arise but Thakare never allowed any doubts to be raised as to his pre-eminent position in the party. Though Shiv Sena continues to be led by the founder as the undisputed leader, the Shiv Sena organization has now become somewhat bureaucratic. It has also been witnessing dissidence, tensions and stiff competition for control over the organizational apparatus. In spite of Thakarey's tremendous appeal and the authoritarian style of functioning, there have been instances of minor dissensions⁶¹ when individual leaders left the party, but that did not affect the party almost at all. Shiv Sena has never taken kindly to detractors, and in one instance, a corporator who had allegedly voted against the party's decision was

⁶⁰ Sardesai Rajdeep, ' Shiv Sena's New Avatar: Marathi Chauvinism and Hindu Communalism', in Thakkar Usha and Mangesh Kulkarni (eds.), *Politics in Maharashtra*, Bombay, Himalaya, pp. 127-146.

⁶¹ Hansen, Thomas Blom. "Predicaments of Secularism: Muslim Identities and Politics in Mumbai." *the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6, no. 2 (June 2000): 256-260

soon killed⁶². As the organization grew in the late eighties and the nineties, local level leaders tried to retain their control at the local level. This often led to local rivalries and in some cases, confrontations with the top leadership. Morersshwar Sawe from Aurngabad, Ganshe Naik from Raigad, are some examples of leaders who left the party after such differences. In the 1990 Assembly, Shiv Sena bagged the post of leader of the opposition and this post was given to a senior leader, Manohar Joshi. Chhagan Bhujbal, who was instrumental in the expansion of the party in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of the State, felt sidelined by this and left the party to join the Congress along with a few MLAs in November, 1991. In Shiv Sena's history of last forty years, this has been the only instance of a major organizational crisis. In the aftermath of this crisis, Sena's relations with BJP also became sore over the issue of post of leader of opposition. The year 1992 also witnessed another challenge to Thakare. Top leaders of the Sena were uneasy over the increasing power of the two young members of the Thakarey family, Raj, nephew of Bal Thakarey and Uddhav, the son. Perhaps in complicity with the Marathi press, a whispering campaign against 'dynastic rule' ensued.

Thakarey reacted swiftly by announcing that not only his family members but he himself, too, would henceforth keep away from Shiv Sena. This had the dramatic effect of enraging the ordinary Sena activists who gathered at the residence of Thakarey to press for the withdrawal of his 'resignation'. Senior leaders were heckled, attacked and manhandled, because it was evident for the ordinary workers that the senior leaders had ganged up against the young Thakarey's and by implication, against the founder leader as well.

The short drama ended with Thakarey agreeing to continue to work for the Shiv Sena 'as long as the Sainiks had faith in him'. The episode warned the senior leaders of who was the boss and also reconfirmed the 'emotional' bond between Thakarey and the followers. It also reconfirmed the power of histrionics that Thakarey was able to exercise⁶³. More than anything else, this episode helped to establish the leadership of the two young members of the Thakarey family. Soon, they fell out and

⁶² AIR1990SC625, (1990)1SCC397, CrI: Appeal No. 669 of 1989, Decided On: 16.01.1990, Appellants: State of Maharashtra Vs. Respondent: Anand Chintaman Dighe

⁶³ Purandare, Vaibhav. *The Sena Story*. Bombay: Business Publication, 1999 p.356-59 and Akolkar Prakash, *Jai Maharashtra* (Marathi), Mumbai, Prabhat, 1998. pp. 228-34

a muted warfare between the two leaders ensued over the leadership of Shiv Sena. Both had been working in the Sena since 1989-90, but Raj was the more popular among activists and also seen as more flamboyant and aggressive in his public speeches.

Since 1999, however, the fortunes of Uddhav Thackeray began to rise dramatically. This was partly due, perhaps, to the fact that senior leaders felt more comfortable with Uddhav and also found him more relevant for the long-term expansion of the party. In the distribution of tickets in the 1999 corporation election, many of the followers of Raj tried to rebel or sabotage, but Shiv Sena won comfortably⁶⁴. This controversy has not died down entirely, but Uddhav has been nominated as the 'working president' of Shiv Sena, a position that hitherto did not exist in the organization. Given the nature of loyalty evolved by the Sena leadership among its followers, it is unlikely however, that the rift between the two Thakareys would have any serious repercussions for the party in the near future.

Bal Thakeray has shown that he can transfer his popularity from one region to another (Mumbai to rural Maharashtra), and also from himself to another leader (earlier his nephew, and now, his son). Therefore, Uddhav Thakare can inherit a substantial part of the senior leader's popularity without much difficulty. Besides, in collaboration with many senior leaders, Uddhav has also been working hard to set the Sena on a firm organizational footing, downplaying its image only as a militant organization. This institutionalisation of Shiv Sena has far reaching implications, but we shall turn to them only in the last section. Elections, and later on in organizational matters, Shiv Sena continued to depend more and more on Uddhav. In the elections to local bodies (2001-2), Raj was kept away and Uddhav was given a free hand⁶⁵.

2.4 Emergence of MNS and its electoral performance

On 18 December, 2005, Raj Thackeray wrote an open letter to uncle and Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray, announcing his resignation from the party. On

⁶⁴ See *Maharashtra Times*. "Gamble or a Stick Card - Shiv Sena Chief in Dilemma." Jan 23, 1999, "Run for the Chair." Jan 10, 1999, "Stuck in Dynasty Politics." Jan 20, 1999, "Who will be the Next?" Jan 19, 1999.

⁶⁵ Mohanty, B.B. "Regional Disparity in Agricultural Development of Maharashtra." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Feb 2009: 63-70.

March 9th, 2006, Raj Thackeray announced the formation of a new party, the Maharashtra NavNirman Sena, or the MNS (literally: *army for the re-invention of the state of Maharashtra*). The MNS' core beliefs are laid out as -- Control the political dominance of migrants and protect the opportunities of that Marathi Manus [Marathi person/Maharashtrian], to insist on Marathi language and Marathi name-boards everywhere and to make teaching of Marathi language compulsory in all schools in Maharashtra.

Merriam-Webster defines “nativism” as ‘a policy of favoring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants’ or ‘the revival or perpetuation of an indigenous culture especially in opposition to acculturation.’ Using either conception of the term, one could describe the core policies of the MNS as being essentially premised on a platform of nativism, or more specifically, Marathi nativism. Campaigning on this platform, the MNS has been very prominent in the public eye, whether it is for the controversial statements of Raj Thackeray, or the violence of party members. The success of the MNS can be evinced in its electoral conquests like four municipal seats in 2007 (Pune Municipal Corporation, Nashik Mumbai Corporation, Brihan Mumbai Municipal Corporation, Thane Municipal Corporation) and more dramatically, 13 seats contesting from 148 constituencies in the 288 seat Maharashtra Legislative Assembly in 2009;

Having splintered off from the original party of Shiv Sena- the MNS is often viewed as an alternative manifestation of the Sena nominally existing under a different banner. At the simplest level, I have found critics of the two parties to cynically remark that they are “exactly the same”, or “different heads of the same monster”; equally revealing is the steady conflation of the two parties in the media. Thus, during the recent clash between the Shiv Sena leadership and Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan, one news story described the Shiv Sena *and* the MNS as being ‘champions of the non-issue’ as evinced by the Shah Rukh Khan controversy, while a Supreme Court lawyer has petitioned the Election Commission to simultaneously de-recognize both Shiv Sena and the MNS for ‘unleashing a reign of terror in the guise of supporting the concerns of Marathis (sic)’⁶⁶. That the MNS is essentially a splinter

⁶⁶ www.noompa.wordpress.com, retrieved on Oct 30th 2010

party off the Sena, counting a number of former *sainiks* amongst its ranks no doubt plays a large role in this constant conflation, as does the apparent similarity of the parties' nativist agenda.

I argue that the MNS can be viewed through a similar lens: while Raj Thackeray has not condoned violence in the categorical terms that Bal Thackeray has done, his repeated defense of party-instigated violence and arm-twisting can be classified under the same rubric of violent politics. Furthermore, the comparison can be extended to include the programmatic bent of the two parties: the politics of nativism espoused by the MNS comes remarkably close to the agenda of the early Shiv Sena. While I shall argue that the MNS attempts to get at a less nebulous conception of the Marathi Manus than the Shiv Sena does, it is also clear that the MNS deploys many of the same signifiers of Marathi culture. From the prominence of the color saffron in the MNS flag, to the invocation of the warrior Shivaji and his central place in Maharashtrian culture, the MNS appeals to symbolic registers that have hitherto been the purview of the Sena.

While it is tempting to take these similarities and compare the MNS and the Sena together, I make the case against such a reductionist understanding of the MNS. In its attempt to stake out a claim as being the party of the Marathi Manus, the MNS aims for a less nebulous conception of the Marathi Manus than that evoked by the Sena, one with more clearly defined boundaries. While such a move would seemingly increase the potential for ideological exclusion by concretely laying out the sites of political contestation, it is precisely through this reification of the Maharashtrian ideal that the MNS is able to conceive of a more encompassing definition of the Marathi Manus. This conception of the Marathi Manus includes Muslims, an inclusion that is neither permitted by the Shiv Sena's negative definition of the Marathi Manus- one constructed by negation, or what the Marathi Manus *is not*- nor by the anti-Muslim activities of Bal Thackeray and the Sena. The MNS' attempt to woo Muslim voters is also evidenced in Raj Thackeray's silence in the media on issues of communal controversy, where the Sena is conspicuously present. Despite being a constant presence in the media and the public eye the MNS has stayed remarkably silent on issues of Hindu-Muslim antagonism, while its violence has thus far not fallen along religious lines. In this, the MNS is markedly different from the Sena. In discussing the

MNS' non-communal politics and the specific complexion of its nativism, I point to a crucial point of divergence with the Shiv Sena.

The programmatic bent of the MNS notwithstanding, it is important to study the measurable consequences of its pure activism. While there is some evidence to indicate that Muslim voters are attracted to the MNS, a breakdown of the MNS' voters reveals a marked similarity to the Shiv Sena in terms of percentage of votes attributable to Muslims; indeed, in so far as the MNS' voters are predominantly wealthy urban-dwellers, it is similar to the Shiv Sena. Given the MNS' eschewal of anti-Muslim rhetoric and the more inclusive conception of the Marathi Manus, the inability of the MNS to translate this political program into Muslim votes is a puzzle, particularly given the Congress-NCP coalition's own inability to secure a steady Muslim vote-bank.

Conclusion

The movement which started for statehood with its identity went through different phases of symbolic politics. Media in late 60s was a tool of mass mobilization became in post 70s period a tool of emancipation in politics for parties like Shiv Sena and MNS. In this chapter the historical backdrop to the key argument that I am trying to substantiate, gives one a understanding how Samyukta Maharashtra Movement became a bedrock for what was to come in disguise of symbolic politics.

In the next chapter the idea of symbolic politics reaches to the final stage of dynamic crossroad, wherein it collides with language usage in populist mass based mobilization. The role of figures like Bal Thackeray and Raj Thackeray is examined in the new era of symbolic politics. The historical backdrop that has been drawn in this chapter becomes an eminent factor in introspecting importance of Samyukta Maharashtra movement in structuring the further analysis. Samyukta Maharashtra was the beginning of symbolic politics in early 1960s.

CHAPTER 3

**Rhetoric and the Spectacle of Symbolic
Politics in Maharashtra**

CHAPTER 3

Rhetoric and the Spectacle of Symbolic Politics in Maharashtra



Figure 3

The role of symbols, speeches and symbolic political activities has come to play a major role in the breeding of 'politics of symbolism' in Maharashtra. Shiv Sena and MNS on several occasions have involved themselves in the revival of this politics of symbolism in new forms each time. This has led to conceptual transformation in terms of its usage and interpretation.

Shiv Sena has a strong meta-narrative of its founding which focuses deeply on the maverick discursive performances of its founder against the more embedded systems of economic and political power in the Bombay of the 1960s⁶⁷. Right from its inception, the party has relied on diverse forms of media such as its own daily newspaper, a weekly cartoon and satire publication, everyday public oratory across

⁶⁷ Lele, Jayant. "Saffronisation of the Shiv Sena: The Political Economy of City, State and Nation." In *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern India*, edited by S Thorner and A Patel, 185-212. Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1995. Also see Purandare, Vaibhav. *The Sena Story*. Bombay: Business Publication, 1999

the city of Mumbai, and more recently cable television networks to disseminate to its public. Since the 1980s, the ideological stance of Shiv Sena while still embedded in a discourse of regional rights and access to economic mobility, has aligned itself closely with Hindu nationalism. At the same time, its impact has spread from the urban centre of Mumbai into the districts of Maharashtra. However, despite the evolution of the party's agendas and its electoral tactics, its own self-construction remains rooted in an oppositional, maverick, and locally constituted modern identity. It's publicly aggressive, often criminalized performances seem to draw from this construction⁶⁸.

Shiv Sena has systematically targeted different sections of minorities in a cynical attempt to build its mass support. Such minority targets have included non-Maharashtrians, Muslims and Dalits. The communal riots and caste atrocities unleashed by Shiv Sena constitute one of the darkest period in the history of Maharashtra. The links of the Shiv Sena with mafia gangs, organized crime, extortion rackets and corruption scandals are notorious.

Rabid anti-Communism has been a fundamental and consistent plank of Shiv Sena ever since its inception. It is this aspect that has ensured it the firm support of big business. It was the ruling Congress party that nurtured and supported Shiv Sena for over two decades from the mid-sixties to the mid-eighties. In the early phase, this support was given to break the Communist hold over the trade union movement in Mumbai;

Bal Thackeray as a party chief, always carried this constructed figure of aura in the minds of Marathi Manos in Maharashtra which invariably in some occasions took over the enigma of Shiv Sena itself. If seen within this context, one could postulate that Shiv Sena had been under the dominant hold of its demagogic leader Bal Thackeray, who has (ironically) never disguised his contempt for democracy and adulation of dictatorship. His servile support to the Emergency was couched in these ideological terms. Thackeray has publicly glorified the likes of Adolf Hitler and

⁶⁸ Hansen, Blom Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.

Nathuram Godse. In this chapter, I attempt to analyze these particular aspects in different phases and events.

3.1 An Era of a Roaring Tiger- A Historic journey of Shivaji park:

Venue: Shivaji Park, Mission: Resurrection', actually tells us what the octogenarian tiger roared, spoke, hit out and whatnot.

[Sumedha Raikar, writing in the *Mumbai Mirror* in a piece headlined]

Word play, unparliamentary usages, below-the-belt jokes, sloganeering, lots of Congress and MNS-bashing

- that's what the speech was all about!

And more, according to her report:

Using the choicest of epithets from his of-late under-used lexicon – bhadve, namard, napunsak, chaatu, bootpushe, saale, to name a few.

Oct 19 2010 News reports hits the Indian masses with a catchy front page headline about a man who is known for roaring speeches at Shivaji Park. This was the time to launch his grandson into the politics. This was also his appearance in front of the huge crowd after a span of three years. One could visualize a fully packed ground with saffron flags all over the park. The crowd looked all filled with enthusiasm and waiting to listen to the ageing tiger. The dynamics of symbolic politics unfold in this section in a manner that how for Bal Thackeray politics of symbolism became one of the prominent tools of political growth. This actually led to two prominent changes in the politics of Maharashtra. Firstly, the way symbolic politics was inducted within the personality of Shiv Sena leaders and the Shiv Sainiks in different phases gives a whole new dimension to the concept itself. Secondly the role of media here in this situation comes in to a serious observation as it reads the speeches, annual rally of Sena and changing stance of top notch Sena leaders. This section makes an effort to substantiate the above stated argument and lines it up with other strand of argument.

Bal Thackeray has gone through a long journey of addressing the masses gathering every year for the Dusehra rally at Shivaji park. In the early 1970s and 1990s, Shiv Sena gained lot of popularity amongst the inhabitants of Maharashtra

because of the aggressive speeches of Bal Thackeray. He had his own style of putting up issues in front of the masses. The kind of style used in his speeches and choice of words actually made a difference for the party at that point of time. Some scholars read this kind of politics as a degeneration of Indian democratic phenomena. However the task here is to understand the growth of politics of symbolism in such kind of phenomenon.

Shiv Sena has also transformed the symbolic importance and style of these festivals in many areas of Bombay into more aggressive celebrations of Maharashtra community. In the 1980s the Sena incorporated other festivals, such as the Dussehra and the Navratri festival originating in Gujarat, in an effort to appeal to the wider Hindu community.

This is not to suggest that tendencies towards the calculated and selective use of venom, stereotypes and demonizing of sections of our people were entirely absent before, specifically since independence. What is noticeable, however, is the sharp acceleration in the use of hate speech and its reproduction in writing, and the acceptance or 'tolerance' that such use of hate speech has received among the wider polity. This phenomenon also actively coincides with the growth in presence and popularity of political parties and their 'leaders' who have tailored their appeal among people by pitting one section of the population over and above another – in both spoken word and written manifestos of their political parties.

Bal Thackeray's twisted word plays, his humor, his personal style of articulation of events and issues fetched him a lot of popularity amongst the Marathi Manos. The attractiveness of its violent, masculine postures and its use of ordinary street language at public event, rallies to thousands of young men in Bombay and other places in Maharashtra. Shiv Sena has clearly emerged as the foremost promoter of the urban and the modern in Maharashtra: in its street-smart jargon and its use of popular slang and other symbols of popular assertiveness; in its mobilization and reliance on young, mobile, and plebeian men as activists and audience, celebrating their independence, masculinity, and self-reliance through the Shiv Sena; and in its unapologetic enjoyment and celebration of the pleasures and possibilities of modern

urban life—technology, consumption, good jobs, sumptuous living and the music, dance, and aesthetics of the Hindi film.

In the construction of identity and a programmatic profile of Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray has, throughout the history of the movement, tried to gauge popular moods and has devised an often changing range of effective others and enemies. In his rhetoric and writings, he has rather ingeniously interconnected the various anxieties of the ordinary Marathi speaker toward strangers. As Eckert notes, the Shiv Sena always reproduces a constitutive, if imprecise, "they." "What is common to the depictions of all of its enemy images is that they are made out to be existential threats to the lives and livelihoods of every 'good Indian'⁶⁹.

The South Indians posed the initial threat, then Communists, the city elite, and later the Muslims in India became the more effective other. Some of the early representations of South Indians as barbaric, bloodthirsty Communists, aligned with larger interests of the Gujarati city elite in a secret parallel government defied all logic. But they appealed to the fears and anxieties of lower-middle-class families, who felt squeezed between the city's powerful economic and political elite and large, self-conscious working-class communities. In one of the few programmatic statements from Shiv Sena's early period, Thackeray deployed the widespread style of rumors of communal atrocities when he alleged that "bloodthirsty slum dwellers," encouraged by their Communist leaders, had plundered victims of a railway accident: "These South Indian vultures from nearby huts swooped over the injured and dying women lying in agony, cut their limbs with sickles to snatch their ornaments"⁷⁰

Despite changes over the years, the Shiv Sena discourse has been interwoven rather consistently with a reiterative celebration of Maharashtra culture, its martial values, manliness, cultural authenticity, and individual character, which currently are perverted and de-purified:

⁶⁹ Eckert, Julia. *The Charisma of Direct Action: Power, Politics and the Shiv Sena*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.

⁷⁰ *Shiv Sena Speaks* 1967. Quoted in., Hansen, Blom Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001. P. 24.

Economic deterioration and even its total downfall can be repaired; but a Nation's Character once destroyed, can never be supplied. Character is a coat of triple steel giving security to its wearer. Apart from the economical situation, the ruthless banditry that is playing havoc in Bombay and elsewhere throughout Maharashtra has deprived its people of their national character and culture. The dense black cloud of intruders from outside has deprived the blooming generation of Maharashtra of its ancestral zeal and enthusiasm to fight out the battles of life with determination and chivalry—the hallmark of Character. The question of rejuvenating the Character of Maharashtra must be solved at all costs.⁷¹"

This passage is strongly reminiscent of the wider Hindu nationalist discourse of an organic national culture, as well as of the SMS notion of the contamination of Bombay. "Outsiders," a recurrent metaphor for perceived excesses of modernity, had a devastating impact on the original, pure values of Maharashtrian culture, Thackeray claimed. The only way to manage Bombay, and thus cope with its modernity, was to assert the superiority of this original, essential cultural matrix. The essence of Maharashtra was the Marathas, and the entire Hindu nation—should be cautious not to alienate them: "A disgruntled Maratha is a risk which the Nation can ill afford to bear" because "the Marathas as a race are renowned as the best of the Warrior classes of India since long [ago]". In this early document, Thackeray merely rearticulated an already authorized discourse of Marathas as the martial guardians of the Hindu nation, and recommended that the government should make military training compulsory for all able-bodied Maharashtrians.

Finally, Thackeray portrayed Shiv Sena as a young, vibrant antiestablishment. To this day the aura of youthful exuberance, lack of respect for authority, virility, and physical courage have been carefully cultivated by Thackeray in speeches and in his appearance, for example, his consistent attempt to look young and vital, his use of hair dye, his fondness of female beauty, and so on. The rather consistent rejection of *rajkaaran* (politics) as dirty, useless, and compromising still plays a central role in the celebration of the youthfulness and maverick character of the Sena, even into the 1990s when Shiv Sena became the second largest party in the state.

⁷¹ Hansen, Blom Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.p.25

In spite of such populist antiestablishment rhetoric, Shiv Sena has never espoused the anti political stances represented by Gandhian communitarians or the Hindu nationalist movement⁷². For years Shiv Sena has advocated authoritarian governance, and on many occasions Thackeray has advocated *thokshahi* (dictatorship) as a form of rule. He was one of the few political leaders outside the Congress Party who lauded Indira Gandhi's imposition of emergency rule in 1975. Most of Shiv Sena's demands over the years indicate a strong belief in the state as an agency capable of imposing order on society. Shiv Sena demanded that 80 percent of all jobs in the organized sector and 80 percent of all housing facilities be reserved for Marathi speakers; that compulsory military training be required of Maharashtrian males; and that there be slum-clearance drives against illegal settlements, expulsion of illegal immigrants from the state, higher salaries for police constables, the scrapping of prohibition, and stringent measures against the *matka* (gambling, allegedly operated by South Indians). Shiv Sena also demanded stringent measures against "owners of hotels and restaurants which engage servants only of the owner's caste or clan and refuse to engage servants from the native stock"⁷³. One of the more prominent demands was to make English compulsory as a medium of instruction at all stages of education in order to enable Maharashtrians to compete with people from other parts of India.

⁷² Hansen, Blom Thomas *Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

⁷³ *Shiv Sena Speaks* 1967. Quoted in., Hansen, Blom Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001. P. 27



A Satire on who will be the next leader of Shiv Sena by cartoonist Satish Acharya

Figure 4

3.2 Bal Thackeray and his Cartoons:

Politics of symbolism in Maharashtra entered into a new level when Bal Thackeray the cartoonist shifted to politics. The idea here is to understand how he used cartoons to appeal the 'Marathi Manoos' in Maharashtra. One of the prominent things to notice in this section is the style used in his sketches and the choices of words in the tag lines. Cartoons can play a major role in shaping the politics of symbolism in a new form at different situations.

One of the other prominent analyses I am trying to make here is the line of difference between the cartoon sketches of R.K Laxman and Bal Thackeray. One may well ask why R.K Laxman? The reason being that R.K Laxman, is one of the

renowned cartoonists of India started his career at one point of time with Bal Thackeray at the Free Press Journal. R.K Laxman, like Bal Thackeray is also a political cartoonist. However there is huge difference between the ways both take their sketches. For R.K Laxman his sketches were a means of political expression in day to day life, whereas in the case of Bal Thackeray his sketches are a means of political mobilization or a symbolic way of portraying political picture to the Marathi Manos. Before Bal Thackeray formed the Shiv Sena and enjoyed a political clout that could bring the entire metropolis to a halt, Bal Thackeray was known for his political cartoons. The seeds of Thackeray's political career were probably sown when he drew cartoons for Marmik, a weekly publication. "Balasaheb gave his humorous touch to all political and social situations that arose during his time through his cartoons," said Pandharinath Sawant, executive editor, Marmik. "One can study the bygone era from the cartoons that will be on display." He added that the features to look out for in the cartoons are edgy satire, sarcasm and caricatures of some of the most important leaders of Indian politics. Shiv Sena and its mouthpiece Saamna evolved from Thackeray's political cartoons. After the newspaper launched in 1989, the cartoon weekly took a backseat. Since then, it has evolved into a general entertainment magazine. "The cartoons were the biggest weapons we had to fight for the Marathi cause. That is where the political movement began. Politicians in Maharashtra used to worry what Balasaheb would say about them through his cartoons. Today, we follow the same philosophy in Saamna," said Sanjay Raut, executive editor, Saamna. For someone who has had no formal training in art, Thackeray's cartoons don't, in any way, lack creativity. They reflect his in-depth knowledge of Marathi literature and awareness of civic, national and international events.

"It is not possible for a cartoonist to match his standards today. He would spend entire week thinking about the subject of his cartoons," said Sawant. It wasn't surprising that when Winston Churchill's biography was published, Thackeray was asked to contribute six of his cartoons. Cartoonist Hemant Morparia says, "The cartoons show his flair for wit and drawing. He is a tiger, so even his cartoons have a lot of bite. He uses the cartoonist's license in the political area. It is evident in his speeches where he uses humor to engage audiences." Subhash Desai, senior Shiv Sena leader, agrees. "He is a sharp observer and his wit has no competition." For over three decades, Balasaheb's cartoons spiced up the political theatre in Maharashtra with

satirical swipes that spared no one. Starting out a cartoonist at the Free Press Journal, he loved to pour ridicule on netas-especially Messrs Morarji Desai, S K Patil and the non-Marathi Congress barons from Mumbai whose politics were popularly seen as anti-Marathi.

Sharp lines and crisp comment were the hallmark of Balasaheb's cartoons. Within weeks of its August 1960 launch, Marmik was a hit, and stories abounded of how Marathis would queue up in front of Thackeray's Shivaji Park residence to snap up a copy before continuing their rounds of shakhas across Mumbai. Ravivaarchi Jatra (The Sunday Fair) was Marmik's centre spread which showcased Balasaheb's consummate skills as caricaturist. A perplexed old man with a quizzical look in his old eyes and a tiny cap on his bald pate never failed to pop into the frame. Harping mostly on parochialism, Marmik would stoke pent-up sentiments of Marathi-speaking people, their ambition and their anger, through its incisive cartoons and analytical pieces.⁷⁴

While South Indians were prime targets for Thackeray's scathing jibes back in the 60s, the underlying essence of the magazine was in upholding the Marathi identity. So when Marmik in its golden jubilee issue of August 15 comes with a three-page Hindi article, it piques one's curiosity whether this is an indication of the way the winds are beginning to blow for the Sena.



Figure 5

⁷⁴ Times of India, Common Man [Section], Oct,Dec, 1995.

Thackeray used Marmik's cartoons as powerful weapons to fight for the sons-of-soil cause. What is known as the turning point for Marmik was in 1965, when Thackeray began publishing lists of over 1,000 corporate executives in Mumbai - mostly South Indians - to point out how majority of those occupying the cream positions were 'outsiders'. The lists would begin with a caption - "Read this and keep quiet". Following the thunderous response, Thackeray later changed it to "Read this and arise." The Hindi piece, 'Lokadhikar ke liye lalkaar ...Marmik' by Prem Shukla, Dopahar ka Saamna editor talks about the mighty and impact of Marmik's compelling cartoons. However, Shukla denied that his Hindi piece has any political implications. "Marmik has never been anti-Hindi. It was a revolutionary, first-ever vernacular cartoon magazine of Maharashtra."⁷⁵



Figure 6

His Cartoons were full of sarcasm and witty humour. The approach used was very simple and yet clever enough to instigate the Marathi Manoos. The cartoons drawn by him had a personal remark on several politicians at different levels. Some had aggressive tag lines; on the other hand some were too symbolic to gage the meaning of it.

Bal Thakrey very clearly understood the power of his passion and when it got blended with media each spell of his work became magical. Samna and Marmik became his weapon in disguise to achieve Political high. Media also gave an important role in providing limelight to each and every sensation created by his cartoons.

⁷⁵ Marmik. "Viyang Chitra." June 2, 1971.

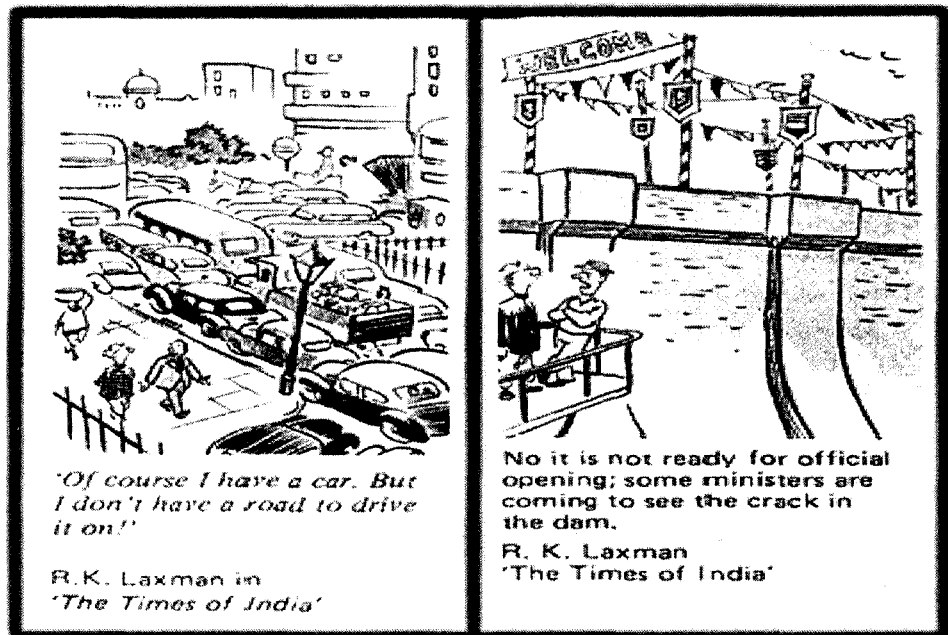
R. K Laxman one of the renowned cartoonist who in his initial days of career was working at free press journal where even Bal Thackrey was also working as a cartoonist .



R K Laxman is India's greatest ever cartoonist, illustrator and humorist. He is best known for his "common man".

Figure 7

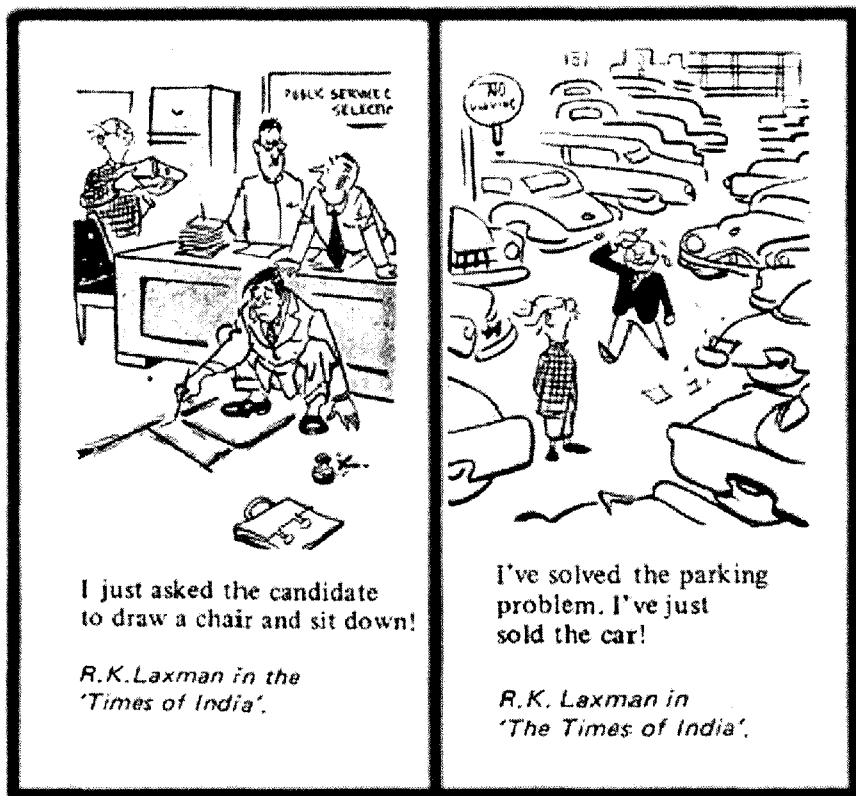
Some of R.K Laxman's works are displayed below.



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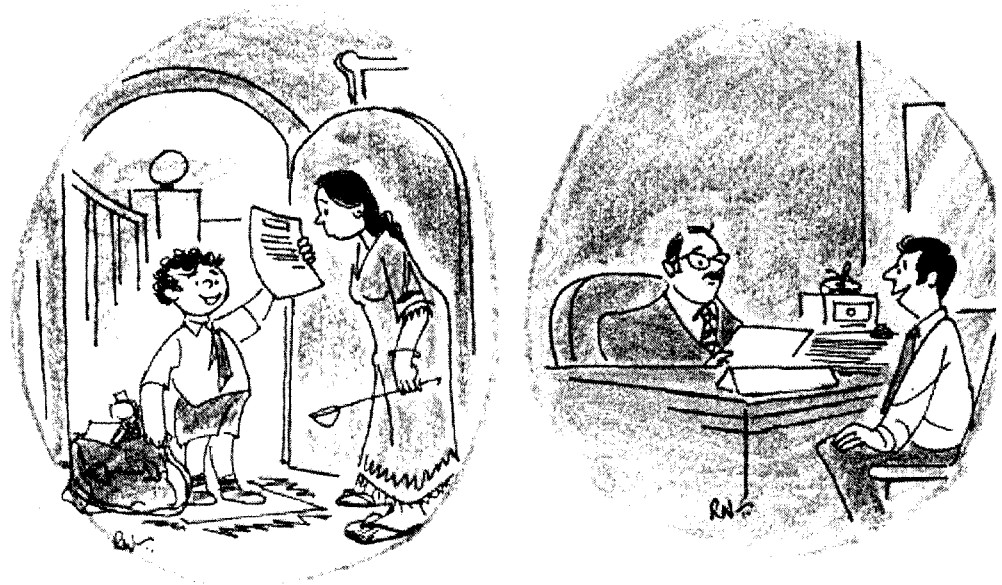
Figure 8

⁷⁶ Samna. "Chitrapat." Jan 21, 1998.



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Figure 9

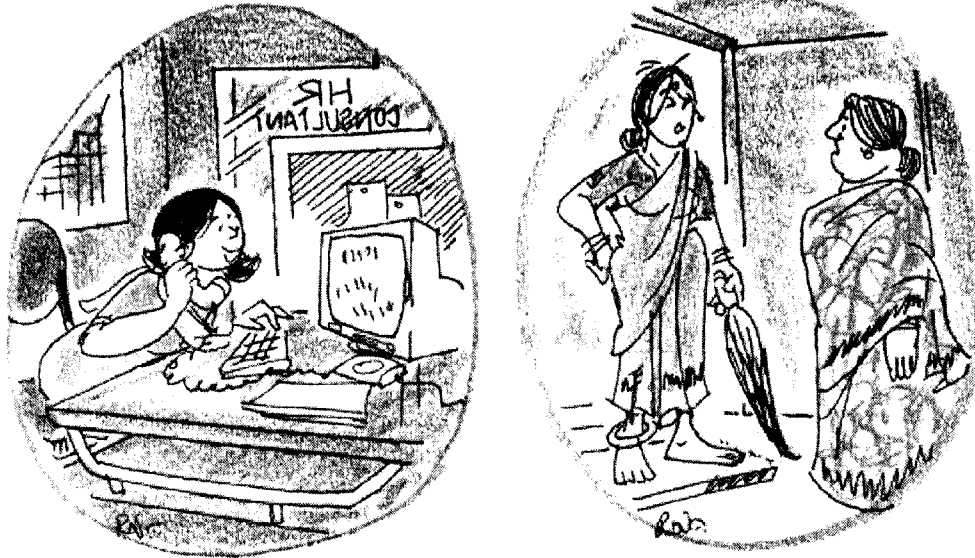


"Senior Executive, mom, effective 1st April, 2020! Some uncles came to school for campus recruitment."

"Lunch allowance will do, thanks; I don't need tea allowance. I may be attending another interview by tea time."

Figure 10

⁷⁷ *Times of India*. "Common Man." May 12, 1991.



"And GMs? Do you want any GMs? We have a huge discount going on GMs..."

"Does the job involve foreign assignments? I hear your children are both settled in America."

Figure 11

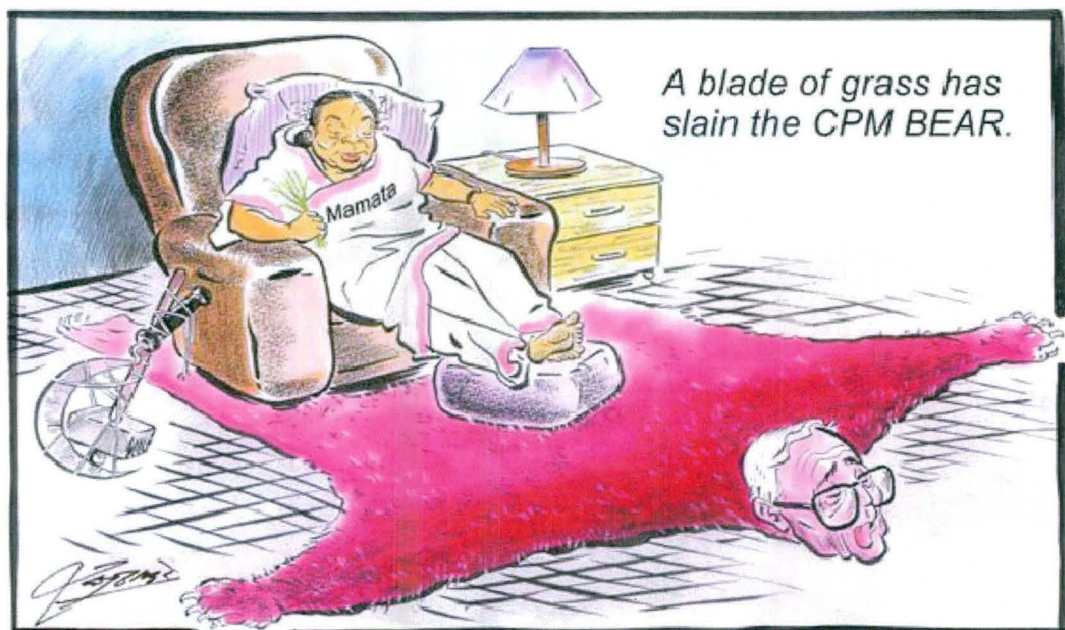
Laxman was born on 23 October, 1924. He was youngest of six siblings. He loved drawing figures from a very early age. He used to draw on floors, walls or whatever he got. In his school, he used to draw his teacher's caricatures.

His early works include magazines and newspapers, Swarajya and Blitz. He drew cartoons for some local newspapers and some humor magazines. He also illustrated R K Narayan's, India's noted English novelist, (and his brother) famous work "Malgudi Days". A turning point came in his life when he joined "The Times of India", India's leading newspaper. He continued with TOI for more than 50 years. He also created a popular mascot for the Asian Paints group called Gattu. He has also written some novels.

Millions of people started their day with his "Common Man". The common man showed his joy, sufferings and indifferent view on many things and incidences taking place around him. His impeccable art work brought him innumerable fans including many famous personalities of the country. He also got several honors for his ultimate work such as the prestigious Ramon Magsayay award in 1984, Padma Vibhushan in 2005 and numerous doctorates.

Apart from his daily cartoons, another passion for Laxman is to observe and sketch crows. Why crows? Because crows are immensely intelligent birds, and are unfairly dismissed by fretting people as a nuisance. According to a review of R K Laxman's autobiography, the book also contains mini travelogues about the places he has traveled.

They give an interesting account of RK Laxman's wanderings in these places and the small discoveries that he made there and of course, his own impressions about the places. Few sketches of crows and Lord Ganesha seen in the book have a life of their own.



Raj Thackeray as a cartoonist in his satirical best, on CPM's plight.

Figure 12

In an analytical study of Bal Thackeray's cartoon work one also comes across his nephews caricature and cartoon crafts and in this line of thought one notices a point of similarity in the way an attempt has been made to mock at different situations while simply targeting the personal features of the personality in that cartoon.

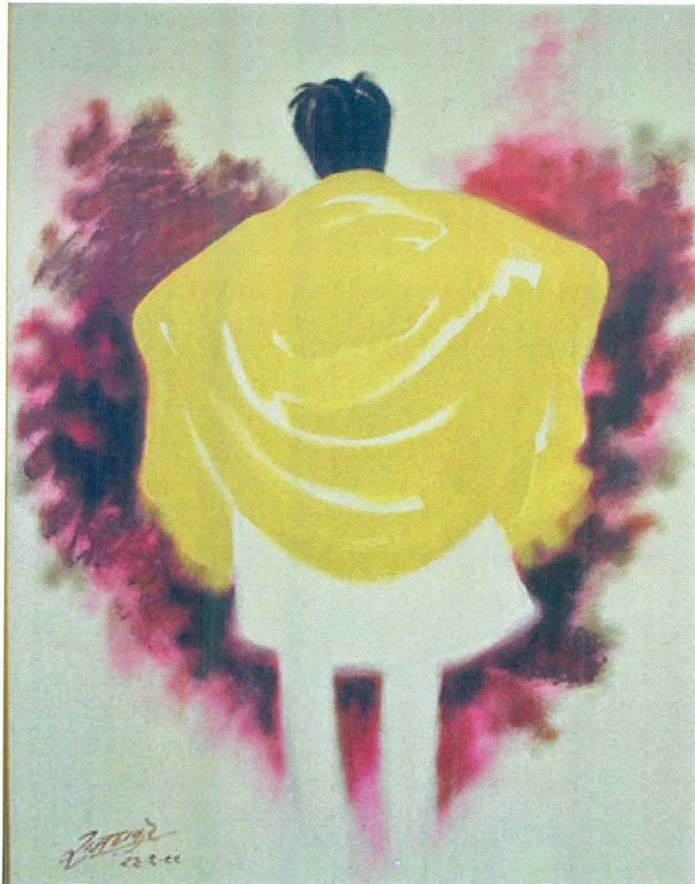


Figure 13. Raj Thackeray portraying as Bal Thackeray. Notice the legal postures in which he portrays his uncle sparing him of any ugly caricatures.

3.3 Raj Thackeray and his Invocation of the Past;

One of the key aspects of transforming politics of symbolism as a concept has been portrayed by Raj Thackeray right from the time MNS came into existence. Raj is indebted to his uncle not only for his political style, but also for being his mentor as a cartoonist. The skills of articulation and delivering speeches with the idea of moving the masses have been one of his key strength. Presenting a twisted picture of the entire situation and putting it up with a charismatic appeal is the politics that Raj has learnt to involve himself over the year. In this section, I would put forth the idea of reviving the past and the scheme of channelizing political gains with the help of politics of symbolism as a tool. One of the interesting points to analyze here is the role of media in this kind of scenario where in constant media attention gives mileage to such kind of symbolic politics as it plays invariably into the hands of politicians like Raj Thackeray.

Raj was involved in the affairs of Shiv Sena along with his mentor Bal Thackeray more seriously even before Uddhav became politically active, and as such had a good grip on the organization. He has a good understanding about the mindset of Shivsainiks and the organizational weaknesses of the party. He played a leading role in spreading the network of Bharatiya Vidyarthi Sena in Maharashtra. He therefore had a direct leadership authority over those sections in Maharashtra even after the split from Shiv Sena. A small section of these followers did not join him after the split but a lot of them also remained loyal to him thus providing him a minimum base for his newly formed MNS in the state. There were also some disgruntled elements within the Sena fold, who could have easily walked away with Narayan Rane but formation of MNS slowed down the trend of tailing Rane. Deepak Pyghude a known youth leader of Shivsena from Pune openly sided with Raj and so did some of the erstwhile Sena leaders like Bala Nandgaokar join his flock from Mumbai and Nasik. These are the main areas where his organization has some presence in Maharashtra. The recent agitation has however caught the imagination of the 'Marathi Manos' Maharashtra wide. It has also effectively undermined the leadership of Uddhav Thackeray within his own organization. Thus the battle continues for the claim to the legacy of Shiv Sena in the state.

In some of his writings Raj has tried to blend the history into present day situation and brings into light a picture which is blurred from the point of logical reference. However when such kind of writings are presented in a rally like situation where we have people from all walks of life then it becomes the word of bible for that moment. Lets analyze few of such examples.

Some write-ups from MNS website –

I want to make it clear that my agitation has never been against the Uttar Pradeshis. But Bhaiya journalists from some Hindi news channels have started a campaign against me and my party.

My agitation is against the leaders of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar who foment political and cultural unrest in Maharashtra with the help of thugs. This doesn't end here. It will go on and on.

To recap the past, Maharashtra had opposed bilingual State and had stood firm to emerge as a State of Marathis. They put up a brave fight to incorporate Mumbai into

Maharashtra. The *Samyukta Maharashtra* agitation was captained by stalwarts such as Prabodhankar Thackeray, Acharya Atre, Comrade Shripad Dange, S. M. Joshi, Krantisinha Nana Patil, Barrister Nath Pai, CD. Deshmukh, who was a topper in the ICS and held the finance portfolio in the Nehru cabinet, and Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

I, my party and Maharashtra share this legacy. There is thus no need for Amar Singh to teach Maharashtra what the Indian Constitution is. He thinks he can get away with any anti-Maharashtra statement like the one he has made, 'Polluted thoughts germinate from the minds of Marathis as salt water of the sea seeps into their brains'. Amar Singh dared to say this because the spineless representatives from Maharashtra who warm their seats in New Delhi take such shit lying down. But I and my party, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, are here to give a fitting reply to Amar Singh and those of his ilk⁷⁸.

This small piece of write up placed above is been taken from MNS's official website. The write was a response written by Raj Thackeray to Amar Singh's allegation on MNS for attacking people from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. One clearly notices the kind of references he has linked his argument to and the personal remark that he makes about different politician is quite intriguing as these are the factors which gets him mass support during rally. People are misled by his writings and arguments that no doubt, are catchy, though clearly devoid of reason.

Concept of symbolic politics is exploited in a way that the actual essence of it is lost in the manipulative and superficially constructed. This is clearly revealed when a close examination of these factors is done. Misrepresenting history, misquoting stalwarts like B.R Ambedkar and many others like him are the key ingredients of such kind of politics. In another such writing where he is trying to clear his stance. I will take this letter written to the editor of Loksatta paragraph wise and analyze how crudity of language has been used and the kind of examples been stated in order to substantiate his argument.

⁷⁸ Thackeray, Raj "Awaken Maharashtra, Rise!" in MNS website. <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13&did=0&dsid=0&pmid=0&id=601> accessed on Mar 2011

Raj Thackeray writes-

I would like to draw your attention to your letter addressed to me in Loksatta (17th February 2008), which immensely pleased me. The leaders of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (I don't mean the entire North India) describe me and my associates as 'hooligans' and my party, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, as a party of hooligans. I can understand their outburst as they have over the years spun a web of cultural, economic and political interests. They fear that me and the MNS are a threat to them. The unbridled political and cultural clout which the UP-Bihar political class has for long been enjoying in Maharashtra was severely undermined when I launched my agitation. In such times your letter came as a pleasant surprise to me. It is heartening to know that someone is willing to initiate a dialogue on the issues that I have raised. That you should take the lead is important in that you enjoy a stature of your own. As one of the key functionaries in the Prime Ministers Office you have handled India's core political and cultural issues. Sudhindraji, you have raised a range of issues in your letter. Let me begin with 'violence'. However, before I dwell on this I want to make it clear that I have been in active politics for the last 19 years and in view of this I am sure you have no doubt about my political experience and expertise as well.⁷⁹

Raj Thackeray opens the letter on very humble note and tries to put forth a generous inclination in explaining his stance, however if one notices carefully, this is quite unlike his personality wherein he usually carries a rough and aggressive tone during interviews and political speeches. In an attempt to go point wise while justifying his position on various issues Raj Thackeray uses several terminologies borrowed from media to make arguments were knitted and pointed towards leaders from UP and Bihar. However the language that has been used to spun the historical fact which substantiates his argument is cleverly done in order to gauge the attention of readers. In the end of the opening paragraph, he confirms his political expertise of 19 years and leaves no doubts in the mind of respondent and reader from where his style arguments are coming.

Now, on 'violence'. Neither I nor my party has ever indulged in illegal and unconstitutional activities. Violence has not been unknown to Maharashtra's political domain. Every political party has, at some point of time, indulged in violence and

⁷⁹ Thackeray, Raj "I Follow my conscience", Raj Thackeray's response to the letter by Sudheendra Kulkarni, published in Loksatta dated 24th February, 2008 published in MNS website <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13> accessed on Mar 2011

mayhem. The difference is only in degrees. Some political parties have even morally justified violence. Some of Maharashtra's present-day ministers have earned a dubious reputation in this scenario. However, I, for one, have never condoned violence. Nor have my party men indulged in such dastardly acts. I can cite a recent example. Close on the heels of my agitation, the entire media (mainly Hindi and English) collectively riled me, blatantly distorted my statements, raised a hue and cry against the MNS and spread venom in the minds of Marathi people. However, my party members never even once harmed members of the media, either physically or verbally. Instances of workers from major political parties in Maharashtra retaliating against the media are galore. I can furnish proofs. The MNS' tolerance should be attributed to our firm roots in Maharashtra's syncretism culture, its philosophy.⁸⁰

In this paragraph, he gives a clear example of what it is to present a distorted picture and misguiding the readers. In the issue of violence he outrightly denied his party's role in it and claim his party to be tolerant which is quite far from reality. In order to substantiate this particular stance of his, Raj Thackeray gives the example of Maharashtra's 'syncretism culture' which again comes as a surprise as there seems to be no coherence between the two. Once again he attacked media for distorting his image and also his political statement.

I have personally apologised for the loss of innocent lives in our Nashik agitation. It was not an assassination. The MNS doesn't believe in political murders. Politicians who have blood on their hands descend on Maharashtra and pontificate on non-violence, while media-persons (especially from the Hindi and English press) hover around them, address them as 'Sir' and call the MNS a 'goonda' party. This is a crude joke. Now about the popular outburst. Such outbursts are a fall-out of socio-political agitations. Violence and destruction of public property that accompanies such agitations is never welcome. But it is unavoidable. Gandhiji had to withdraw the Chauri Chaura stir because of violence and mayhem. Yet, he couldn't stop destruction of public property and violence in the 'Quit India' agitation. History has shown that neither the Congress nor the African National Congress can contain such outbursts. Countless people have died in Communist-led agitation and more have been killed in political violence in Communist countries. As former Communist, you are, I am sure,

⁸⁰ Thackeray, Raj "I Follow my conscience", Raj Thackeray's response to the letter by Sudheendra Kulkarni, published in Loksatta dated 24th February, 2008 published in MNS website <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13> accessed on Mar 2011

not unaware of this blood-soaked past. The political history have studied tells me that laws are broken and lathi blows are suffered and jails are over-filled because of political movements.⁸¹

In this part of letter once again Raj Thackeray at one hand one clears the air that his party members have been involved in political murders. He is also apologetic for what happened during the Nashik procession. However on the other hand, he says something completely opposite of his previous statement that in a socio- political agitations damages to lives and public property is something which is unavoidable. To go step further here, he falls back on examples of Gandhi's satyagrah and the Chauri Chaura incident. He also talks about Quit India movement and communist led agitations. The simple point I am trying to make here is that by strategically placing these kinds of examples he is trying to bring about a coherence in his arguments, eventhough he succeeds in making populist writing.

Sudhindra, honourable L K Advani and BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudi have accused me of leading an "unconstitutional" stir. Such agitations will weaken the nation, they say. Wasn't Advani aware of all this when he led the 'Rath-Yatra' in the 1990s? I can't recall Rudi having raisei these issues during the Godhra crisis or the 'Rath-Yatra'. This means that everyone wants Maharashtra to pay obedience to MLAs and MPs from other States. These worthies know that their Maharashtra counterparts will not breathe a word for Maharashtra. The MNS is seen as a hindrance by the UP-Bihar politicians. Which is why this hate campaign against me and my party⁸².

Now comes his favorite part where in he takes on politicians like L.K Advani and Rajiv Pratap Rudi for accusing him of inflicting the nation with such kind of pointless agitation. He straight away reminds them of Rath Yatra and Godhra riot in order to ask them where the nation heads then. These kind of remarks are very much strategically knitted in order to gauge readers attention and populist appeal.

⁸¹ Thackeray, Raj "I Follow my conscience", Raj Thackeray's response to the letter by Sudheendra Kulkarni, published in Loksatta dated 24th February, 2008 published in MNS website <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13> accessed on Mar 2011

⁸² Thackeray, Raj "I Follow my conscience", Raj Thackeray's response to the letter by Sudheendra Kulkarni, published in Loksatta dated 24th February, 2008 published in MNS website <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13> accessed on Mar 2011

Sudhindra, I am not and have never been opposed to common UPites and Biharis. If the 'chhat-puja' was being celebrated as a religious festival I would not have taken exception to it. The Gujaratis in Mumbai celebrate 'garba' and the Bengalis, their 'Durga-puja'. We participate in these popular community festivals. Marathis are devotees of Lord Ayyappa of the South. However, the 'chhat-puja' is planned by Bihari politicians and goons as show of strength in Mumbai. Sudhindra, Biharis have for centuries been living in Mauritius or, over the last few decades, in Dubai. We've never read reports of the 'chhat' being celebrated in those countries⁸³.

While talking about the Chat-Pooja in here, he clearly harps upon the fact that he has nothing against people from UP-Bihar but its with the politicians from these states who make it politicized and a fest of displaying the strength. However the frame of reality speaks otherwise as their prime targets have always been common people from these state and to say that their party had never any issues with Gujarati and Bengali community celebrating garba and Durga pooja is something again irrational to argue upon. It is again a phenomenon of playing with words and factual evidences.

The 'Ganesh' festival is not being misused by Marathis to display their clout or flex their political muscles. Marathis never do this. In fact, none of the linguistic-ethnic communities behave in a feudal manner. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab constitute the northern belt and we Marathis have no problem with them. These States and their citizens behave with a sense of responsibility. Sudhindra, you have called India a basket of flowers. Very true. However, when these State begin to fight for political space the situation becomes volatile. Trouble arises when a Bihari or a UP migrant comes to Mumbai and tries to flaunt the power that he has inherited from leaders. These leaders have brought a mafia rule in their States and crushed the common man. Although rich in Nature's bounty and resources, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have become paper States. And leaders from these two states come to Mumbai to demand my arrest. Because I am a goonda. What a joke!⁸⁴

⁸³ Thackeray, Raj "I Follow my conscience", Raj Thackeray's response to the letter by Sudheendra Kulkarni, published in Loksatta dated 24th February, 2008 published in MNS website <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13> accessed on Mar 2011

⁸⁴ Thackeray, Raj "I Follow my conscience", written in MNS website <https://www.manase.org/en/maharashtra.php?mid=66&smid=13> accessed on Mar 2011

In the end he goes all out in proving his point by citing an example of Ganesh festival not being used by 'Marathi Manos' for the display of strength and how other states in the northern belt have a sense of responsibility. He further goes on to describe how leaders from UP and Bihar have crushed the essence of state and got 'Gunda raj' (criminalization) in their state. So in overall analysis of this write up, one notices as to how he fabricates the popularly used terms with historical facts in order to get across arguments for his stance.

3.4 Shiv Sena and its Gendered Politics:

Women in Shiv Sena have been playing a key role in enhancing the politics of symbolism from the very inception of the party. The visual performative intersect will be an evident phenomena which I will try to draw in this section. The constructed image of women when put into question and examined under the paradox of visual performative intersect of Shiv Sainik women takes the concept of symbolic politics to a different level all together. In order to substantiate my argument I will take several illustrations of events and quotations from various articles written by Tarini Bedi who has done an enormous work on women Shiv Sainiks. This would make the section more clear in terms of showing the embedded nature of visual performative intersect in symbolic politics of women Shiv Sainiks.

Members of the Shiv Sena's womens' wing have adopted a skilful negotiation of the public sphere through everyday 'visible' performative strategies that get expressed at the local level in urban India. The politics of visibility is critical in the constitution of the political, gendered subject within a political party where women despite their broad participation remain structurally subordinate. Narratives and data from fieldwork done by Tarini Bedi in her various articles on Shiv Sena women show how personal stories of political awakening are deeply embedded in the visual performances and urban imaginaries that frame them.

See we are Shiv Sainiks, but it is Shiv Sena that makes us Shiv Sainiks. I can face anything. But I am loving. People are scared, yes 101 percent scared. If you inquire

here, then everyone will first say that Shinde is very loving, but she is dangerous. That is what I want them to think because that is what gets my political work done⁸⁵

The recognition by this Shiv Sena leader that actions like the assault on the man above is what 'gets her political work done' is an important dimension of women's militant politics in India.⁸⁶ According to her, women like Bala who are embedded in regional political parties are able to display a particular kind of power and femininity that are specific to women's participation in regional political parties through the kind of militant tactics described above. Like Bala, many women see their militant tactics as circumventing institutional law, and it is often this marginal and extra-legal action that is also a badge of power and effectiveness.

The above quote is a clear expression of the ways in which the visual, women's entrance into the public sphere, and the everyday performative intersect around the constitution and shifting of gendered identities. This intersection is particularly relevant in an urban Indian context marked by a surge in media and consumer practices, increasing public mobility for women, and shifting notions of the private sphere of the home. Kaur (2003) takes this her starting point, the analytical paradigm that looks at identities as historically, discursively and spatially performed spheres. It argues that discursively constituted identities take on a unique relevance in the context of urban populations in the developing world who are deeply embedded in the consumption of visual technologies⁸⁷.

The 'extra-legal' and militant tactics displayed by Bala and the analysis of their deep implication in local dynamics of power form the core of this section's concern. Tarini Bedi uses ethnographic data collected from several years of fieldwork with women of the militant political party Shiv Sena (also allied with the politics of Hindu religious nationalism in the western state of Maharashtra) to suggest that discursive constructions of political and private behavior within a non-liberal political

⁸⁵ Bedi, Tarini. *uchicago.edu*. 2006. <http://home.uchicago.edu/~tbedi/BediAnthofIndia.pdf> (accessed February 2011).

⁸⁶ This particular point is quite evidently highlighted in Bedi, Tarini. "Violence, Aggression, and Militancy: Reexamining Gender, and Nonliberal Politics." In *A Companion to the anthropology of India*, by I Clark-Decès. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

⁸⁷ Kaur, Raminder. *Performative Politics and the Cultures of Hinduism: Public Uses of Religion in Western India*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.

movement often associated with right-wing politics in India, reveal less about the ideological (or religious) structures that assumedly guide such politics and more about the motivations, pragmatics, and local forms of power that they confer on their adherents. Strategy-making and "meaning-making" are two sides of the same coin for Hindu nationalist women. Many Hindu nationalist movements are able to mobilize women through a discourse on "women's rights" and resistance to gender violence.⁸⁸

Hindu nationalist discourse is rather more malleable than is immediately apparent in its ideological proclamations and is therefore able to take on a wide variety of political issues and appeal. Anti-minority (largely anti-Muslim) communalism is certainly one of the boldest faces of Hindu nationalism. However, communalism is a contradictory agenda. It embodies within itself both democratic and anti-democratic elements that can be utilized freely to carve out spaces of power for women⁸⁹

I argue that Shiv Sena women have embedded themselves in these contradictions quite skillfully. Because most scholarly literature and public rhetoric alike discuss Shiv Sena's politics as part of the *politics of Hindutva* in India, I will begin with a broad discussion of women and Hindu nationalist politics.

I illustrate that violent and aggressive strategies that arise during times of communal crises directed against minorities become mobile resources for women to mark out their political and personal power in conditions of urban and sexual insecurity. Therefore, non-liberal political agendas, particularly those associated with religious politics, operate for women in ways that can be both constraining and liberating. Finally, I suggest that despite commonly held assumptions that political organizations classified as 'right-wing' present unified discourses on gender, religion, and nation, in personal, and increasingly in public practice, there are a wide variety of often competing positions that arise out of the pragmatic imperatives of urban governance.

⁸⁸ Nayak, Meghana V. "The Struggle Over Gendered Meanings in India: How Indian Women's Networks, the Hindu Nationalist Hegemonic Project, and Transnational Feminists Address Gender Violence." *Women and Politics* 25, no. 3 (2003): 78

⁸⁹ Nayak, Meghana V. "The Struggle Over Gendered Meanings in India: How Indian Women's Networks, the Hindu Nationalist Hegemonic Project, and Transnational Feminists Address Gender Violence." *Women and Politics* 25, no. 3 (2003): 78

Shiv Sena has embedded its political practices very skillfully within fragmented and insecure urban milieus with deep vacuums of power. As women tend to bear the brunt of urban insecurity, they also rise to fill these vacuums of power through a skillful positioning of themselves as urban caretakers⁹⁰. As urban caretakers, they invoke a wide range of iconographies at various times, with religious iconographies being only one among many.

The political logics of Shiv Sena women suggest that such a politics is, in fact, a highly fluid enterprise. Departing from most examinations of political behavior that see political actors either as 'ideologues' or as 'cynics', this chapter attempts to illustrate that the majority of the political logics of female Shiv Sainiks takes place in between these two spectrums of behavior and for the most part these logics are driven by very pragmatic concerns of acquiring and discursively constructing local power at the level of the neighborhood.

The need to examine women's political strategies seriously has emerged even as feminist scholars often find themselves at odds with the ideological roots of exclusionary movements.⁹¹ However, the increasing participation of women in these movements has meant that the 'problem' of right-wing women cannot be ignored⁹². This problem has forced scholarship to engage in a somewhat conflicted debate with what agency really means and the diverse sites at which agency might be constituted⁹³. These cultural revivalist movements are variously described as "fundamentalist"⁹⁴, "communalist", or "oppositional". It could be argued that the Hindu nationalist mobilization of women in India has, at various points, spanned all three of these types. Most other arms of the *Sangh Parivar* have a strong connection between the party or electoral arm, the BJP, and the "movement" arm (and in many cases the ideological driver such as the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* and the *Vishwa*

⁹⁰ Weinstein, Liza, and Tarini Bedi. "Building Politics: Gender and Political Power in Globalizing Mumbai." In *Gender and Power in Global Context*, by S Dasgupta. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010.

⁹¹ Koonz, Claudia. *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

⁹² Pateman, C, and E Gross, . *Feminist challenges*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986.

⁹³ Gardiner, Judith Kegan, ed. *Provoking Agents: Gender and Agency in Theory and Practice*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

⁹⁴ Moghadam, Valentine M, ed. *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.

Hindu Parishad). However, despite this connection, each has its own domain of influence. Shiv Sena, however, acts as both party and movement, and therefore the specter of electoral politics looms large behind the actions of the movement while a sense of resistant movement based politics exists behind the actions of the party.

In its early years, Shiv Sena constituted itself as a regional movement that was 'oppositional' to, and critical of, more embedded forms of political and economic power in the western state of Maharashtra. As it gained electoral power, it took on both communalist and fundamentalist forms allied with Hindutva and the critique of the moral lives of an Indian public seduced by a rising economic consumerism. However, despite the evolution of the party's agendas and tactics, its own self-construction remains rooted in an oppositional, maverick, and locally constituted 'modern' identity; and its publicly aggressive, often non-legal tactics seem to draw from this construction⁹⁵.

In the case of Shiv Sena, there have undoubtedly been varying degrees of cynicism over and disregard for the participation of women in what is otherwise assumed to be a deeply "masculinized" political party. However, the realities of the electoral process in India that now mandate the reservation of electoral seats for women and the unique local functioning of the party around everyday problems, has made it almost imperative to look at women's political strategies, rather than simply at women's symbolic importance. Almost all the Shiv Sena women with whom I conducted my research desired real, electoral power and an opportunity to run for an election for their local civic body. They saw most of their everyday aggressive practices as discursive expressions of their local power to be rewarded by the party with either a nominated post in the women's wing or an electoral ticket to the civic body.

It is often an implicit assumption that because women are generally considered passive, women who are publicly aggressive are either acting pathologically or through ignorance or male control. However, Shiv Sena women quite strategically inject themselves into visibly violent events such as riots and public protests not only

⁹⁵ Hansen, B Thomas. *Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, 'Mumbai' and the Postcolonial City*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.

to court public press (which is widely believed to be a requisite for promotion in the party), but because of what many of the women see as the most coveted of opportunities—a chance to contest a Municipal Corporation election. This is why being photographed at *morchas* [public protest] is something that Sena women do not mind at all. It is, in fact, pictures of Sena women at *morchas* that one sees in the media most often; and the discourse of most English language media in Mumbai generally characterizes Shiv Sena women's participation in *morchas* as irrational outbursts led by the invisible Sena leadership.

Most literature that propagates the idea of the aberrance of militant women, and particularly Hindu women casts them at two ends of the spectrum with little possibility for anything in between; in the positive form of goddess or the negative form of rebel⁹⁶.

Shiv Sena does not rhetorically or pragmatically pathologize aggression, even for women, because it is able to fold violent female action into its discourse on justice and truth, since the fight for justice is always assumed to be a violent one.⁹⁷ I contend, therefore, that public aggression and militancy among Sena women are, in fact, carefully crafted performances of visibility by Sena women rather than spontaneously or irrationally erupting acts of protest. Further, they emerge out of a very incisive perception of the sorts of public personae that are most likely to achieve political and social gain.

This kind of action seems to throw into disarray one of the key issues which scholarship on gender and political militancy has had to grapple: How far does women's participation in religious, right-wing politics represent conscious, independent action or free choice? Some scholars of the Hindu right suggest that it is

⁹⁶ Forbes, Geraldine. "Goddesses or Rebels? The Women Revolutionaries of Bengal." *The Oracle* 2, no. 2 (1980). Also see, Carol, Hills, and Daniel Silverman. "Nationalism and Feminism in Late Colonial India: The Rani of Jhansi Regiment, 1943-1945." *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 3 (1993): 741-760.

⁹⁷ Bedi, Tarini. *uchicago.edu*. 2006. <http://home.uchicago.edu/~tbedi/BediAnthofIndia.pdf> (accessed February 2011).

important to see Hindu communalism as a 'conscious' political project rather than simply in terms of the Hindu religion⁹⁸.

The reality is that these movements have been tremendously successful in mobilizing women towards goals that have broad political and institutional ramifications, and in ways in which the feminist movement has been only partially successful. This is something that liberal feminist scholars simply cannot ignore. Most examinations of gender and politics have pointed to the predominance of "mother" figures in the both liberal and conservative discourses of gender and nationalism⁹⁹ (Klatch 1994; Smith 1994; Yuval-Davis 1997). It has been argued that contemporary Hindu nationalism derives much of its motherhood imagery from religion because of the ways in which Hinduism worships mother goddesses¹⁰⁰. However, as Amrita Basu points out, motherhood imagery is not confined to communalism or fundamentalism, but is a staple of all nationalist movements¹⁰¹.

For Shiv Sena women, the figure of Meena Thackeray (late wife of the party's founder) is a key iconic figure. However, she is not the only one; historical motherhood icons such as *Jijabai* and the *Rani of Jhansi* appear quite often in Sena iconography. Jijabai was the mother of the Maratha warrior king Shivaji after whom Shiv Sena is named. The Rani or Queen of Jhansi hailed from a Maratha-led princely state who bravely fought off British forces during the 1857 war. She is widely celebrated as an icon of nationalism and patriotism. Both are mother figures, though with distinctly more militant affiliations. Therefore, for Shiv Sena women neither of these mother figures serves in the most obvious sense as a cultural role-model of conventional femininity. The invocation of Jijabai, the mother of Shivaji, as an iconic

⁹⁸ Agarwal, Purshottam. "Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi: Legitimizing Rape as a Political Weapon." In *Women and Right-wing Movements: Indian Experiences*, by T Sarkar and U Butalia. London: Zed Books, 1995.

⁹⁹ Klatch, Rebecca. "Women of the New Right in the United States: Family, Feminism, and Politics." In *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, by V.M. Moghadam. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994. Also see, Smith, Joan. "The Creation of the World we Know: The World-Economy and the Re-creation of Gendered Identities." In *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*, by V.M. Moghadam. Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994.

¹⁰⁰ Basu, Amrita. "Hindu Women's Activism in India and the Question it Raises." In *Appropriating Gender: Women's Activism and Politicized Religion in South Asia*, by P Jeffrey and A Basu, 167-184. London; New York: Routledge, 1998.

¹⁰¹ Ibid p.177-178

figure for Hindu women has been noted in several narratives of Hindu nationalist women in India¹⁰². In her work with women in the Hindu nationalist movement, Menon finds that in many cases, stories of Jijabai often overpower stories of Shivaji himself. However, she suggests that this narrative frame often reproduces the gender hierarchies that are inimical to women's interests. For Sena women, while Jijabai is certainly a key narrative frame, it is closely folded into the narrative of the bravery of Shivaji, which, in turn, is really the imaginary upon which Shiv Sena women draw in their visual and performative actions.

Therefore, while Jijabai herself is certainly invoked for her greatness in mothering the warrior Shivaji, it is her intimate connection to bravery — to what is seen as an unconventional, visible expression of feminine courage — that provides the more prominent narrative frame and performative resource. While Sena women often locate these narratives and performances in larger ethno historical imaginaries, such as stories of Jijabai, it is important to point out here that there is a great deal of creativity in the invocations of particular aspects of this imaginary; and certainly not all Shiv Sena women invoke these iconic figures in order to find their place within an acceptable, gendered, political space. There are, therefore, key ideological distinctions between Sena women and those of other Hindu allied women's movements. Sena women, unlike women in other Hindu religious organizations, do not undergo collective ideological indoctrination and training as part of their initiation into the party¹⁰³. Their collective experience is, in fact, rooted in the performative experience of public display, through which historical iconographies are creatively invoked.

While the Jijabai narrative operates through this corporeal dimension of mothering and motherhood, the *Rani* (queen) of Jhansi narrative operates somewhat differently for Sena women because of her ambiguously gendered performance. The queen of Jhansi was the Queen Laxmi bai -a widow and skilled warrior who

¹⁰² Menon, Kalyani Devaki. "'We Will Become Jijabai': Historical Tales of Hindu Nationalist Women in India." *Journal of Asian Studies* 64, no. 1 (2005): 103-126.

¹⁰³ Baccetta, Paola. *Gender in the Hindu Nation: RSS Women as Ideologues*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2004. And Sahgal, Meera. "Manufacturing a Feminized Siege Mentality: Hindu Nationalist Paramilitary Camps for Women in India." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36, no. 2 (2007): 165-183.

defended her town of Jhansi against the British in 1857, and who was killed in battle at the age of twenty. She therefore serves as a potent symbol of resistance, but it is her defiance of gendered norms that makes her most interesting as a symbol of unconventional femininity for Sena women. It has been pointed out that the Rani's legend, when stripped of its symbolic richness, is, in fact, a rare convergence of traditional and modern gendered identities. Rani Laxmi bai was known to be a tomboy, who was skilled as a warrior, horsemanship and swordsmanship. She was both literate and a renowned orator. However, she was forced into *purdah* and married at the age of eight or nine to a man forty years her senior. When she was widowed at eighteen, she was criticized for not behaving as a "proper" widow -even fashioning her sari into pants in order to be able to ride a horse¹⁰⁴. Her rebellious nature is often invoked by Shiv Sena women as a performative resource.

We are the ones who give justice. Okay, we are not in power, but I still feel powerful. My husband always tells me, "If you have to go out, don't go out like a dog, go out like a tigress. The doe is one who is scared and runs away, so don't go out like that. If you go out like a tigress, everyone will be scared of you." And that is the advice that I give to all my women *karyakartas* [worker in service of the party]. I tell them that, "If someone is in the wrong, just go and slap them right there; don't think about what will happen later, I am here to watch your back."¹⁰⁵

The above narration of various ideational and practical ways through which Shiv Sena women accrue a sense of power often through violence deeply problematizes the feminist paradigms of resistance and liberation that are more conventionally used to look at gendered action in feminist theory. In practice, as the above quote illustrates, power is located and created discursively through a wide variety of images and actions that are produced out of the relational aspects of everyday life.

¹⁰⁴ Carol, Hills, and Daniel Silverman. "Nationalism and Feminism in Late Colonial India: The Rani of Jhansi Regiment, 1943-1945." *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no. 3 (1993): 741-760. Also see Lebra, Joyce C. *The Rani of Jhansi: A Study in Female Heroism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986.

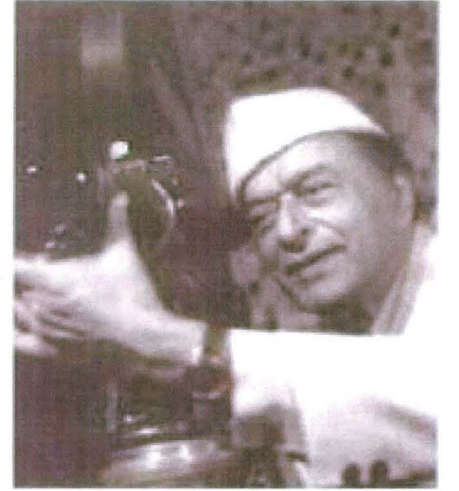
¹⁰⁵ Female Shiv Sainik in Mumbai : Weinstein, Liza, and Tarini Bedi. "Building Politics: Gender and Political Power in Globalizing Mumbai." In *Gender and Power in Global Context*, by S Dasgupta. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2010.

Therefore, a feminist analysis of women's political participation in movements such as Shiv Sena, forces a move away from the more conventional feminist categories of liberation and resistance. It asks for an engagement with the ways in which power gets performed and narrated within situated contexts to produce subjects who perceive themselves as powerful and whose discursive production of power has very pragmatic movement, but rather by focusing on "the conceptions of self, moral agency, and discipline that undergird the practices of this non-liberal movement so as to come to an understanding of the desires that animate it" ¹⁰⁶.

3.5 Bombay Vs Mumbai:

मुंबईतील मराठी माणसाला लोकल
ट्रेन, ऑफिस अशा ठिकाणी हिंदीत
बोलण्याचा "रोब" जडला
आहे. त्यातल्या मराठी मुलींना हिंदीत
बोलण्याची घाणेरडी खोड असते.
गमतीची गोष्ट ही की हे लोक
चांगले मराठी बोलू शकत नाही की
चांगले हिंदीही बोलू शकत
नाही. त्रिशंकू सारखी यांची अवस्था.
होताना दिसते.

-व्ही. शांताराम



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Figure 14

In November 1995, the city of Bombay was officially renamed Mumbai. The government of India finally gave in to the request by the state government of Maharashtra to change the name of the city on all letterheads, official stamps, tags, and so on. Newspapers tried to estimate the cost of this operation, and the renaming caused an intense debate in the city and state. The state government, headed by the

¹⁰⁶ Mahmood, Saba. 'Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival' 2001. http://www.middle-east-forum.eu/docus/Feminist_Theory.pdf accessed on Mar 2011, p.203

¹⁰⁷ Shanta Ram's poetry on Mumbai city and the viewpoint shared by many.

regional party Shiv Sena, and the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) argued that the renaming was meant to highlight the local origins of the city's name derived from Mumbadevi, a local goddess of Koli fishermen who originally lived on the islands and marshland that became the city of Bombay.

The renaming aimed at undoing the Portuguese and later British casting of this name. Vernacular newspapers in the city and the rest of the state supported the 'vernacularization' of the city's name and argued that the city really was not renamed. The only novelty was, it was argued, that the vernacular pronunciation of Bombay in Marathi, one of the city's two main languages, was now properly spelled in English. According to this view, the renaming was a minor, entirely justifiable, and long overdue act of redress on behalf of the vernacular world. Parts of the English-language press, some quarters in the Congress Party, and some intellectuals and spokespersons from significant minorities in the city, such as the Urdu-speaking Muslims, opposed the renaming on the ground that Bombay's cosmopolitan character should be reflected in its name. In many of the city's newspapers, one could find a stream of letters to the editor bemoaning the loss of the old name, and with it the older experience of Bombay, the dreams of Bombay as a metaphor of India's diversity, the imaginings of modernity, and the hopes associated with that name.

What does a proper name imply? According to Thomas Blom Hansen

Just as a proper noun refers to the individuality- or inherent properties of an object or person, a name cannot be "proper" unless it marks, or symbolizes, the individuality and properties ascribed to its object. To be recognized by a proper name signifies respect for the choice and meaning of this name, just as proper names accord a measure of uniqueness and subjectivity to persons or groups. The right to name, and the entitlement to hold a name for oneself, shapes the style and ways that objects or persons are known and how their assumed properties are described¹⁰⁸.

Kripke argument on rigid designators align with our argument on names and signifiers—

¹⁰⁸ Hansen, Thomas Blom. "The Vernacularisation of Hindutva: BJP and Shivsena in Rural Maharashtra." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 30, no. 2 (1996): 137-172.

For a name to become proper it must become a "rigid designator," a signifier that creates meanings but cannot be substituted by a set of descriptions. A rigid designator defines a context and "holds" sets of connotations as designated objects, none of which can fully describe the designator¹⁰⁹

Or, to go a step further, we can argue that proper names do not describe objects or places. They create and fix those objects. As Zizek argues, "[the identity of an object] is *the retroactive effect of naming itself* it is the name itself, the signifier, which supports the identity of an object.¹¹⁰ Mundane processes of using names, affixing them, enunciating them, and so on, have exactly this quality of constant reiteration that builds up and stabilizes the imputed properties of a place, a group, and a nation.

This notion of reiterative practices of naming as a creation and fixation of identities, and of the use of names as claims to certain identities, properties, or entitlements, is a central theme in this section. The underlying argument throughout the following section is that politics of identity generally is driven by the paradox that no identity, no sense of community, and no imputed property of a place ever can be self-evident or stable. There are always multiple meanings, distinct narratives, and inherent instabilities within such entities. One can say that the rigidity of the designator ultimately is impossible or that the name never can become completely 'proper'.

The reply to this is, however, always more reiteration of a particular meaning of a name, new inflections or supplements that can support and extend particular meanings of a name or a designator, or maybe to invent a new name altogether. The efficacy of a name, and thus an identity, in terms of the fixing or accruing of meaning and connotations, depends therefore, on its constant performance in authoritative writing, in public speech, images, songs, rumors, and so on.

¹⁰⁹ Kripke quoted in Hansen, Thomas Blom. "The Vernacularisation of Hindutva: BJP and Shivsena in Rural Maharashtra." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 30, no. 2 (1996): p.139

¹¹⁰ Zizek. Quoted in. Hansen, Thomas Blom. "The Vernacularisation of Hindutva: BJP and Shivsena in Rural Maharashtra." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 30, no. 2 (1996): p147

GANDHI MET RAJ THACKERAY

Created By: Dhiraj Mahite

*"If Someone Throws
A stone At You,
Throw Back A
Flower At Him"*

-M.K. Gandhi



*"If Someone Throws
A stone At You,
Throw Back A
Flower At Him ,
But, Make Sure That
You Throw It Along
With Flowerpot "*

-Raj Thackeray



What An Idea !



Indian Express, August 21st 2010

¹ Indian Express, August 2010 accessed from the news website on Dec 2010

Figure 15

Conclusion

Conclusion

The conceptual introspection of politics of symbolism has opened up several dimensions for an in-depth study. In the changing era of democratic structures around the world has been undergoing a shift within its module of functioning and in the case of India where one notices an immense amount of cultural diversity the change seems to be something natural in a way that has to come in order to adapt and respond to the situation in an appropriate manner. The socio- cultural linguistic separatist movement and political parties affiliated with such movement always use new strategies for mobilizing masses in accordance with the built situational environment. Politics of symbolism is one such conceptual framework which has been incorporated in this kind of movements and its functionality differs according to the level and degree of usage.

In this dissertation, I started with a hypothesis as to how the contemporary usage of politics of symbolism in the politics of Maharashtra managed to show the shifting dynamics within the concept itself. The idea is to examine whether there is a shifting trend within politics of symbolism as a concept due to its module of functionality in Maharashtra politics as opposed to the studies done in past with different terminologies to analyze similar movement in phases. The findings have been arrived at after a careful analysis of archival sources and some key secondary literature. It is important to sum up the crux of each of the chapters

In the first chapter, the politics of symbolism is theorized to its core limits and different conceptual interpretations of the concept are analyzed. In this process, one notices the changing phenomena of functionality of the concept.

Political symbols, however, do not exclusively serve the communication and presentation of political reality. Given the intense competition among parties for media attention, political symbols can and are instrumentalized to create a make-believe political reality. The term 'symbolic politics'" represents this very use of political symbols in the political communication process. The imprecise and mostly disparaging use of this phrase in everyday life makes clear the widespread criticism of

the use of symbols in politics. But this criticism overlooks the fact that a "pure" politics, that is, politics based on "principal values" without dramaturgy and without additional symbols cannot exist. Ever since the dawn of politics, symbolism has been an unavoidable constituent of political reality. It represents a forum for policy makers in which they can present themselves, prove their problem-solving abilities and communicate their basic political direction, values and standards. Given that the vast majority of the population is unable to experience directly politics in all its complexity, the media, for the most part unnoticed by the public, is presented with a more fitting version of politics in the guise of rituals, stereotypes, symbols and well-known thinking to fit in with the accepted view of 'political reality'. While this political 'production' becomes political reality for the public, real political actions that are hammered out "well out of the media spotlight" remain largely in the dark.

After looking at the broader essence of politics of symbolism as a concept, I have tried to give several examples of events that would substantiate on the above two conceptual framework. In this chapter another point worth noting is the stress upon the role played by media in supplementing the political developments in Maharashtra.

Symbols are the means by which meaning is constituted and conveyed. Symbolic generalizations construct order by categorizing reality. Thus, "the migrants," "Muslim," "Bhaiyas," "South Indians," "Shivaji a great Maratha Hero," and "Maratha dignity" are symbolic generalizations that order human collectives or their values. In academic discourse and political commentary, such symbolic generalizations have been -and continue to be -used in constructing the meaning of *Marathi Manos*, particularly, through various sorting schemes of classifying Maratha identity and politics.

In the second chapter, I have attempted to show a historical trajectory of the movement which started for statehood with its unique identity through different phases of symbolic politics. Media in the late 1960s, a tool of mass mobilization became in post 1970s period, a tool of emancipation in politics for parties like Shiv Sena and MNS. When MNS came into picture, it changed the meaning of the concept itself. In this chapter, the historical backdrop to the key argument that I am trying to

substantiate, gives one an understanding as to how Samyukta Maharashtra movement becomes bedrock for what is to come in the disguise of symbolic politics.

In the next chapter, the idea of symbolic politics reaches the final stage of dynamics wherein it collides with language usage in populist mass based mobilization. The role of figures like Bal Thackeray and Raj Thackeray is examined in a whole new era of symbolic politics. The historical backdrop that has been drawn in this chapter becomes an eminent factor in introspecting importance of Samyukta Maharashtra movement in structuring the further analysis. Samyukta Maharashtra was the beginning of symbolic politics in early 1960s.

In the third chapter, different categories functioning within the paradigms of politics of symbolism are put to test. Categories like cartoons, speeches, politics of naming and constructed figures are analyzed in different phases of the movement. In this chapter, the new phase of symbolic politics is explored. The concept of visual performativity is examined to its core end within larger inferences of symbolic politics. Conceptual categories like rhetoric and language dynamics within the transforming phase of symbolic politics has gone on to play an exorbitant role in Maharashtra politics. Parties like Shiv Sena and MNS have been cashing on conceptual categories stated above. Important point to note here is that media as an institution has proven to be supplementary source of benefit in doing so. Media played a major role in shaping the politics of Maharashtra of what it is today.

Impact of a charismatic personality in changing course of the hour has been an eminent factor in making Shiv Sena and MNS popular amongst the masses even beyond the region where it functions. Leaders like Bal Thackeray and Raj Thackeray although capitalize quite comfortably in their inner potentials for influencing the masses but the constructed image of 'Maratha pride' from the vantage point of symbolic politics has been defamed in an overall sense. This particular analysis comes very clearly in the electoral performance of both the parties.

In an overall analysis, I would like to conclude with certain set of evaluations. Firstly, politics of symbolism as a concept has turned out to be more deformed in nature in terms of its purpose of usage. Political motives have driven political parties

in strategizing and packaging the concept in such a manner that the entire picture of reality changes. The concept which started as a mass mobilizing factor turned out to be a simple medium of seeking attention as its effect in this level becomes temporal and it is only there till the time it is again and again upon the masses through different modes.

The impact of media has been another factor which has been a prominent reason for a change in the conceptual framework. The new and the transformed politics of symbolism as a concept runs totally on the mercy of media projection. Political parties like Shiv Sena and MNS have over the years capitalized on such kind of politics. However, the impact on the masses of the strategies applied by them is fading away due to the temporality of such kind of transformation within the concept. So therefore these political parties do gain some mass popularity but they are unable to equate this into electoral performance and in the bargain cut across on each others vote. Hence parties like Congress emerge as beneficiary in such kind of politics.

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