

# **Socio-Political Causes of BJP's Losses in Maharashtra Assembly Poll 2019 Election**

**By**

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**Abstract:** This paper is based on the assembly elections of Maharashtra held in October 2019. Election results were in favour of ruling NDA alliance – BJP and Shiv Sena (SS) but in fact before six months NDA sweep 41 out of 48 parliamentary seats from Maharashtra and raise the level of expectations from upcoming assembly elections. All exit polls predict that this ruling alliance will win minimum 165 and maximum 220 seats. Only one exit poll show this lowest range. In 2014, both SS and BJP fought separately and won 63 and 122 seats respectively, total 185. They fought elections collectively and shade few seats, BJP won 105 and SS won 56 seats that means they won 161 seats 15-16 seats more than the required 145 for majority but lost 24 seats as compared to 2014. After results something in between them create distance the pre poll alliance and the alliance got broken. Now new combination is coming up. But this paper is focused on the results, why a party who won 23 parliamentary seats alone and collectively won 41 seats with socio-political backing throughout Maharashtra fails to increase its assembly seats and not even that loose some seats. Present paper is focused on this question and tried to give some reasons and causes of BJP-SS losses in this election.

**Keywords:** Elections, propaganda, campaign, alliance, caste, dominant caste, leader, politics, etc.

Politics is an integral part of every society and human being. The slogans like private is political shows that in every society every individual action is related with the reference of others. A person who gain knowledge and hide it in the name of secrecy or security is also politics of knowledge sharing. It is well known that sociology is a study of society, social interaction and social groups. Groups formed when three persons came together and interact, even if they neglect anyone at some point of time is also a part of communication. It simply means interaction within group is political. It is also true for interaction between two or many groups. Human interaction is not neutral at any given time. It is guided by social values and norms, these values and norms guided by our theory of religion, economy and political philosophy. When we say social democracy, it means interactions and decisions of society based on the values of socialist system of government achieved by democratic means.

Interactions between equals and interaction between unequal are almost different at any given point. Influencing others decision through available and innovative means is politics. In democracy the decision takers are periodically elected and for that the political leaders and aspirants contest in periodic elections. People choose their leader from them and for that leaders shows their future agenda of action as well as work done by them. So winning and losing elections is a game of influencing people's decision of vote in favour of ours whereas showing the flaws of others also help in winning the elections? Caste or group or community of ours and theirs also play crucial role in electing leaders. Communities with higher numerical strength and wealth always influence others. Whereas small communities create alliance with other communities for power sharing. So election is a game through which the political contestants shows their numerical strength of voters. The looser is the one who lost numerical strength whereas winner shows its required numerical strength.

Present paper is based on the socio-political analysis of losing seats related with BJP's political contest in Maharashtra assembly election 2019 and its causes.

In the name of mahayuti (Grand Alliance) Shiv Sena (SS) contested 124 and BJP+ (Bhartiya Janta Party and other small allied) contested on 164 seats of 288 total Maharashtra Assembly seats in 2019. Both of them come together in 2014 after poll alliance and form stable state government in Maharashtra for five years. This time they make an alliance for parliamentary elections and won unprecedented 41 out of 48 seats. The magic of such a win increases their hope, not only there's, all the media houses, exit polls and poll predictions shows that this alliance win at least 200 seats, BJP win 140 to 150 seats and they form government whose Chief Minister (CM) will be off course Mr. Devendra Fadnavis, the winning captain of the ship. Star campaigners of BJP in Maharashtra were Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi, Home Minister and BJP's president Mr. Amit Shah and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mr. Yogi Adityanath where as Mr. Rahul Gandhi was the only star campaigner from Indian National Congress (INC).

In 2014, all major parties of Maharashtra BJP, SS, NCP (Nationalist Congress Party) and INC fought assembly elections separately. In such a multiparty contest BJP won 122, SS 57, INC 44 and NCP 41 seats. After results BJP and SS came together and form a stable government for five years. In 2019 elections, BJP-SS and NCP-INC fought as an alliance. Another important thing with BJP-SS is that they won 41 out of 48 seats in parliamentary elections, just six months before. It was expected by their opponents that BJP improve its

MLA tally from 122 to 145 minimum, at list. But what results shows was reverse, BJP won 105, 17 seats lesser than previous.

Politics of Maharashtra stands on multiple poles, one of the oldest pole is Congress (INC) and its ally (NCP), which was formed by Mr. Sharad Pawar in 1999. Another pole is BJP and SS, both of them build their ideology and politics around Hindu nationalism, anti-reservation, anti-dalit and against minorities. They all have their support base in Marathas and OBC caste and alternative or minor caste from other remaining groups. Marathas are those who think that they were hereditarily related to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his caste, who build Swarajya. Maratha-Kunbi are the dominant caste of Maharashtra who control village, taluka, district, region and state politics due to their numerical strength and economic power through land holdings. Whereas alternative caste are those aspirant castes whose numerical strength and wealth is much lesser than dominant caste but they clam cultural equality with dominant caste and also aspirant for power, this create tension between these two groups in local communities.

What is their position of Maratha in Maharashtra state?

In Maharashtra, Maratha are around 30 percent, they own over 75 per cent of land, 55 per cent of educational institutes, 70 per cent of cooperative and 86 from 105 sugar factories. Out of 19 chief ministers, 12 belongs to Maratha community. As of December 2016, from the 366 MLAs (Legislative assembly has 288 and legislative council has 78), 169 (46%) are Marathas. Together with OBCs they form three-fourth of the state population. Kunbi caste came under OBC category but they also claim Maratha status and Maratha-Kunbi jointly constitute around 32 percent of Maharashtra population. Politics of NCP, INC and SS revolve around these two communities where as BJP create its major social base in OBCs. Especially the alternative castes like Tali, Madi etc. –major competitor of Kunbi but lesser in number; Dhangar, Kalar, Powar etc. are alternatives of Maratha but lesser in number. BJP also expand its social base in alternative caste of SCs like Mang, Chamar, etc., major caste of SC in Maharashtra is Mahar, constitute around 60 per cent of SC population. For BJP dent in Maratha-Kunbi vote is important in Maharashtra. It show how caste playing its socio-political role in progressive Maharashtra. Even the selection of Fadnavis as CM of Maharashtra in 2014 also based on caste. Eknath Khadse was one of the strong contender of CM post, but get side lined for Fadnavis(Brahmin) as he is closer to BJP and RSS bosses. The other important contenders for CM post of Maharashtra are Chandrakant Patil and Sudhir Mungantiwar, both

are ministers of Fadnavis cabinet. Fadnavis cut their wings just before elections and project himself as only candidate for CM post of Maharashtra.

This election was seen as an attempt to rebuild Maratha pride against Brahmin Chief Minister, Devendra Fadnavis. In past few months three of the descendants of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj joined BJP. One of them is Sambhaji Chhatrapati, a Rajya Sabha MP from Kolhapur Royal family. The other two who joined BJP within few months before elections were Udayanraje Bhonsle and Shivendra Raje Bhonsle. Udayanraje Bhonsle was an MP and resigned in September to join the BJP, the same was repeated by Shivendra Raje Bhonsle. Joining of Bhonsle with BJP gave major boost before the elections (Dutta, 2019). This was actually a great loss (of NCP) for any party as their traditional authority and historical support detached from them.

One of the major demand of this wealthy Maratha community is reservation in educational institutions and government jobs. Maharashtra saw a powerful agitation in 2015, but the new CM Mr. Fadnavis sorted this problem very tactfully, he introduce a law for providing 16 per cent quota to Maratha, outside OBC reservation. The high court revised the law and bring down the Maratha reservation from 16 per cent to 12 per cent in education and 13 per cent in jobs.

Politics of SCs in Maharashtra is related to Mahar, which is dominant in number as well as spread all over Maharashtra. Population of SC in Maharashtra is around 12 per cent. Mahar's claim the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar and also follower of him. After independence Dr. Ambedkar conceptualise a nationwide political party – Republican Party of India. After his death, dalit leadership split into various groups and they lost the political momentum build by Dr. Ambedkar. But Dalit population and specially Neo-Buddhist (Mahar Caste) stick to the fractions of Republican Party. In 1990s this vacuum was filled by BSP (Bahujan Samaj Party) of Mr. Kanshram. A newly immersed salaried middle class from this caste found its future in BSP and become cadre of it. After the death of Mr. Kanshram, Ms. Mayavati become the sole and leader of BSP. BSP influenced dalit politics all over India but Mayavati contended in Uttar Pradesh and she dissolve cadre based status of BSP. At the mean time Advocate Prakash Ambedkar, grandson of Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar shown his political presence in Maharashtra. His party Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi(VBA) showed his strong

political presence in 2019 loksabha elections. In 2019 Maharashtra state assembly elections VBA fought 232 seats out of the 288, lost all seats. It came second in 10 constituencies and third on many seats. In fact, VBA is brain child Prakash Ambedkar and founded on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018. As the name shows, it represents Dalits and Bahujans (a term used for common Hindu and Non-Hindu masses of India). In short span of hardly two years the achievement of VBA is much more than expected. This is the third political front of Maharashtra. Dalit were untouchables and from the bottom of Hindu society, their polar opposites are high caste Hindus or more particularly Brahmins. Politics of Dalits and Brahmins (and high caste) are also polar opposite, their understanding of society, polity, economy, culture and religion are polar opposites. They are natural opponents in every field, politics is a part of it. So, the immergence of VBA with dalit and Bahujan vote automatically dent the vote bank of dalit and OBC, it means it decreases the vote share of INC-NCP and SS-BJP. It is because of this some political analyst, news makers and political leaders called VBA as second team of BJP. As shown through figures INC loses 12 (Chikli, Khamgaon, Akalkot west, Dhamangaon railway, Chimur, Ralegaon, Arni, Chandivili, Shivajinagar, Pune Cantonment, Tuljapur) and NCP loses 11 (Chalisingaon, Jintoor, Ghansawangi, Paithan, Ulhasnagar, Daund, Khadakwasla, Gavrai, Usmanabad, Madshiras ) constituency seats because of VBA. But this is not a true argument in political democracy when a party loses some seats because of less votes means someone get more votes and some other players also take their share from total votes. In fact, VBA came second in many constituencies, which itself shows that the new comer in politics create its own social base. In past all parties played negative role related with dalits in Maharashtra. To counter Republican Party and its fractions, national parties placed other SC candidate on reserve post of SCs and through their vote bank this candidate get elected. So the biggest caste from SC group has little and dependent representation in assembly.

BJPs state politics shifted its attention from alternative castes to dominant castes. Which hurts many who build party base in their respective communities and areas. Some of these are, Eknath Khadse belongs to powerful and wealthy Leva Patil community with strong hold in some part of north Maharashtra and western Vidarbha. Chandrakant Bavankule from Tali caste, who have strong hold in some of the regions of Vidarbha. Are some of those who lost their importance in and after 2019 Lok Sabha elections, may be because in this election BJP-SS alliance got overwhelming votes from people of Maharashtra. As against this those

who entered in BJP from INC and NCP get prominent voice and space in state politics. It hurt old party loyalist and cadre of RSS.

The prominent faces of BJP, who lost in this election are Pankaja Munde, daughter of late Gopinath Munde, who was responsible for attracting OBC votes towards BJP. Eknath Khadse's daughter Rohini get defeated from SS rebel Chandrakant Patil from Muktainager, Jalgaon, etc.

### **Causes of BJP's losses**

National Democratic Alliance couldn't fulfil its promises made in 2014 parliamentary and assembly elections in Maharashtra state. All these promises missing from 2019 BJP's election manifesto for Maharashtra assembly, not only this, all of them missing from election publicity and propaganda campaign. Separate Vidarbha state was one such promise forgotten by BJP. Vidarbha punish them for that.

One prominent message was spread on social media, related with division of Maharashtra in three parts – Mumbai, Poona (Western Maharashtra) and remaining Maharashtra. It creates lot of tension in the people who read that. Mumbai is the economic capital of Maharashtra and India, if it detached from Maharashtra then the per capita income and GDP of the remaining Maharashtra fall down drastically, it means such a decision cuts the economic lifeline of remaining Maharashtra. Poona with Western Maharashtra is the developed region of Maharashtra, most of the cottage, small and medium scale industries as well as cooperative sugar industries and other industrial sector located in this region. In short, cutting these two parts from Maharashtra creates a remaining state which is predominantly backward. People who are in favour of Vidarbha state also dislike this division. On the other hand, general public of Vidarbha is not in favour of separate Vidarbha state because they are connected with Mumbai.

Fixed and floating voters. It is not new for anyone who consciously reading and listening the political development. Each party has its own hard core support base – they are fixed voters, at any cost, they vote only for that predetermined party and its ideology. Cadre based parties, community or caste based parties or parties with nationalist or extremist agenda or specific ideology etc. all have their support base of voters. Floating votes are those, who change their voting behaviour according to situation. On 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Pulwama terrorist attack change the rhetoric of parliamentary elections and it was aired by nationalist

and national security agenda change the voting behaviour of Indian voters and they overwhelmingly support Mr. Narendra Mode as a candidate of Prime Minister of India and his party. This phenomenon was limited but most of the political strategist and analyst never came up from this hangover. Maharashtra assembly elections came under this category. BJPs election strategist fail to capture the mood of people and also expected minimum 114 seats. They use their same nationalist rhetoric of national security and article 370 for propaganda but this time opposition was more cautious and never challenge this issues and so it lost appeal in common masses.

On the other side, fixed voters were on the easy going condition because the propaganda and media machines shows glaring picture in favour of BJP. Even Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis high profile campaign, yatras and public meeting shows overwhelming response and he confidently told people that his alliance will win more than 200 seat in this assembly elections.

Projection of National agenda on Maharashtra and National leadership also create some problems. In Parliamentary elections BJPs war machine Projected 'NaMo' as the strongest and nationalist leader at the same time this war machine assassinate Rahul Gandhi's character, who was not in the contest of prime minister post. In Maharashtra BJP adopt same strategy and project Mr. Devendra Fadnavis as candidate of Chief Minister Post, a blessed one from BJPs central leadership. But without any candidate of opposition (Demon) for CM post, this entire campaign is good for nothing.

Save Merit Save Nation campaign and movement was a brain child of BJP and its sister organisations. It was against reservation, because for them, reservation hampers the national talent and merit. This ideology was against people who came under different reservations in educational institutions and government jobs. Ten per cent reservation for economically weaker section was amended by central government in 2019 and as it is adopted by Maharashtra state government, increases the quota limits. The support base of BJP belongs to those who are against reservation, especially high caste and middle and lower class Hindus. Quota was extended for lower class, so some are happy and others are unhappy. This ideological split somehow decreases few percentage voting of BJP.

BJPs high profile campaign forget the leader who build its support in Vidarbha. Nitin Gadakari was one of them, who not only build the party but increases its support base in

Vidarbha. People of Vidarbha respect and obey him. But his presence in campaign is negligible. Vidarbha region comprises of 62 state assembly constituencies. BJP won 29 from them but lost 15 as it was won 44 in 2014 (Rampal). People like Nitin Gadakari, Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Rajkumar Badole, Parinay Fuke, Nana Patole etc. played very crucial role in 2014 elections but now somehow marginalised from BJP campaign, its result is the loss of seats in Vidarbha region. Reduced victory margins in few urban posts, indicates that traditional or fixed party voters are not willing to let themselves be taken for granted. In many constituencies, BJP workers rebelled against their own ally SS (Datar) as well as against imported contestants of BJP. These internal matters collectively harm BJP.

Strong sense of insecurity was immersed among subaltern groups, especially in Dalit's, Muslims, other minorities and those who are not in favour of Hindu nation and nationalist agenda. If you calculate these people, their proportion is more than 60 per cent. They feel increasing insecurity in all arenas of life. Mob lynching of Dalit's and Muslim's, social-political-economic discrimination, increasing violence and support from top leadership (RSS chief asked question on the term 'Mob Lynching' and declared it as foreign origin, but what about the people who died?) collectively alienate them from BJP. On the other side climate change and its havoc on farmers, rural society and poor's from urban areas also dissatisfied with government efforts due to negligence and improper management.

Some government decisions from last five years like demonetisation, privatisation and unprecedented mechanisation created underemployment & unemployment followed by slowdown of economy. In September entire Indian industrial sector shows negative growth. In developed state like Maharashtra, people are well aware about situation. But initiatives from government side for curbing this condition is not visible. Even the person who frequently wrote (Mr. P. Chidambaram) on such condition and challenge central government are now in jail.

State assembly elections in 2018 shows that people of respective state rejected the ruling BJP. In fact they rejected strong state government and gave hanged mandate. Same story repeat in Maharashtra. It also means their government become soft, caring, inclusive and marching towards overall development including human development. Weak mandate denote all these characteristics. In Maharashtra no party is in position to form its own government as well as any coalition government will be weak.

The myth of undefeated BJP was challenged through mandate in Haryana and Maharashtra.

BJPs real challenge in Maharashtra started when Enforcement Directorate send a letter to Mr.Sharad Pawar, Captain of NCP.People knows that such allegations on opposition leaders are normal but this time it gain sympathy for Mr. Sharad Pawar. Mr. Devendra Fadnavis started projecting Mr. Sharad Pawar as an opponent (Demon). Pawar took this as challenge and change the entire scenario of politics in Maharashtra. "Political observer and scribe Mohan Patil said that Pawar's grit and fierce campaign across the state left BJP baffled." (Jadhav). Even as PM Modi, Amit Shah, Fadnavis and many central ministers were campaigning in the state with all means but Pawar single handily led the opposition without much help from INC. His Satara rally was a major boost at NCP and INC workers, said Patil. "79 year old Sharad Pawar, facing various ailments stood drenched on the podium to address his party workers in Satara last week. As heavy showers lashed, the old man roared from the dais refusing to take an umbrella saying that the leader must not cover himself when his party workers are fighting rains. Thousands of party workers present in Satara were in tears, said Patil. The man depicted his grit and determination and the picture went viral on social media."(Jadhav).Pawar's presence was so strong that his party's contestant defeated Chhatrapati Shivaji's scion Mr. Udayanraje Bhosale from Satara assembly who dissented the NCP and joined BJP just few months before. Jadhavreported on 24<sup>th</sup> October that, "Sources close to Sharad Pawar say that Pawar might after support to Shiv Sena, which wants to see Sena ChiefUddhav Thackeray's son Aditya as Maharashtra Chief Minister. NCP sources said that the Congress and NCP leadership might extend support Sena and joined the government to keep the BJP away from the power." That very day, when Jadhav report, all from Maharashtra and others sure that BJP with 105 and SS with 57 assembly seats easily form government in Maharashtra but Fadnavis wants Chief Minister Post and the same was claimed by SS. They starched their relations in such a way that they broke the alliance, Fadnavis become Chief Minister for three days with the help of NCPs Ajit Pawar and resigned. After that on 28<sup>th</sup> November, Uddhav Thackeray took oath as CM of Maharashtra with the help of NCP and INC, both these parties are also part of new government.

This high end political Drams was crafted and directed by NCPs Chanakya, Mr. Sharad Pawar with perfect ending. Fadnavis become CM for second consecutive term, Ajit Pawar become deputy CM and got clean chit from Fadnavis government for money

laundering cases. Uddhav Thakre, president of SS become CM of Maharashtra and the new government of Maharashtra stands on three pillars – SS, NCP and INC.

In short, final blow for BJP in Maharashtra was designed by Mr. Sharad Pawar.

## **Conclusion**

As the figure shows, BJP was not lost the battle of assembly elections. Because with their ally they won a mandate to rule Maharashtra comfortably for next five years but it is also sure that BJP lost 17 assembly seats as compared to 2014. We saw number of reasons for loosing these seats and most important reason of this lose in Vidarbha caused by internal fractions of BJP. BJPs election machine of Maharashtra underestimate its gentlemen Mr.NitinGadakari. If he was in campaign of BJP for at least Vidarbha, than it was sure that minimum 10 more seats they won from Vidarbha. Shared Pawars' political engineering was undoubtedly unquestionable but if BJP with 130 seats, than is it possible? The other thing this paper shows that BJP made many people unhappy due to high handed policies and social exclusion of many alternative and lower caste and marginal groups. One should remember the fact that each vote counts. It is not a number, any vote whether it is in favour or against any party or ideology, it is meaningful and should be respected by politicians and political parties.

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