

Shiv Sena: A Tiger with Many Faces?

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There is probably only one party in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) that shares the ideological position of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It has also been one of the earliest allies of the BJP: the Shiv Sena of Maharashtra. Formed in 1966 as a small, Mumbai-based outfit to pursue the interests of the Marathi speaking job-seekers of that city, Shiv Sena has indeed come a long way, being one of the more indispensable partners of the BJP and in fact, senior partner in the politics of the State. The story of the Shiv Sena is therefore, a story of the growth of a para-political outfit into a State-level political player, a story of dexterous movement from the metropolis of Mumbai to the rural terrains of Maharashtra, a story of the skilful journey between regional identity and communal identity, a story of the interesting institutionalisation of popularity of the founding leader and setting up of a complex organization, a story of packaging semi-fascistic appeal in the crafty covers of regionalism, nationalism, and electoral pragmatism.

The expansion of Shiv Sena took place in the eighties and it shot to prominence at the national level in the nineties. The last two decades have witnessed the rise of Shiv Sena as an important political force in the State of Maharashtra. This paper seeks to trace this evolution of Shiv Sena over a period of time and address two broader questions: What is the political and organizational context in which Shiv Sena operates? Secondly, Is it just another regional\ State level party or does it represent a trend towards the rising non-democratic tendencies in the Indian polity?

I

The Electoral Arena

When the Shiv Sena was formed, the founder leader, Bal Thakare pledged that the organization was only a social forum and had nothing to do with politics (Purandare, 1999: 41). Scholars who have studied the Shiv Sena have rarely tried to explain this fact. It has only been mentioned how the 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. (In this connection, the appeal of an anti-political stance among sections of urban middle classes also needs to be taken into consideration. Also, it is useful to remember that anti-political stance is one of the characteristics of fascistic politics.) 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 neighbourhood circles of youth. The Shiv Sena also earned publicity for its involvement in many riots against the south Indian establishments and non-Maharashtrian officials. Besides, Shiv Sena was actively engaged in anti-communist 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 MLA (October, 1970).

The seventies saw the 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 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 process. 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, 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
1996	20	15	16.8
1998	22	6	19.7
1999	22	15	16.9

Table No. 2
Shiv Sena Performance in Assembly Elections

Year	Seats Contested	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

Notes: 1. Did not contest the elections in 1977-78 and 1980

*2. Till 1990, Reports of the EC mention Sena candidates as Independents
Sources for Tables 1 and 2: Journal of Indian School of Political Economy, Special Issue, January-June, 2003, Statistical Appendix and data collected by the author from Newspaper reports.*

*** : Eckert, 2003: 303.*

Sena's alliance with the BJP took place at a time when the Shiv Sena had already started spreading in the areas outside of Mumbai and 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 seats (Unique Features, 1993 and Kulkarni, 1997). 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 councils. In the Zilla Parishads, Sena candidates won 19 per cent seats of the 1641 seats all over the state (Palshikar, 2002: 1274-76).

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	--	3	--	4
Marathwada	3	4	--	4
W. Maharashtra	--	1	1	1

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

Region	1990	1995	1999	Total Seats
Mumbai	15	18	11	34
Konkan	11	15	15	31
N. Maharashtra	2	5	10	36
Vidarbh	9	11	8	66
Marathwada	11	15	16	46
W. Maharashtra	4	9	9	75
Total	52	73	69	288

Source for Tables 3 and 4: Palshikar- Deshpande, 2003

II Organizational Dynamics

Entry into the electoral arena and bargaining with a national party like the BJP had certain organizational implications. So also did 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 Thakare, 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 through around a hundred 'branches' (Morkhandikar, 1967: 1903 and Joshi, 1970: 970-71). By the end of 1988, it had about 40,000 branches spread all over Maharashtra (*Marmik*, spl. issue, January, 1-7, 1989: 5). 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 tactics. 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 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 hibernation 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. 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 eighties, 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 issues of 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 (Akolkar, 1998: 123).

The real impetus to the expansion of the Shiv Sena came from its careful efforts to highlight the communal cleavage 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 castes (Vora-Palshikar, 1990). 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 the 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 the 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 Dr Ambedkar's critical writings about Hindu religion (Riddles of Hinduism) and mobilized the caste Hindus, and when the Shah Bano issue erupted, Shiv Sena jumped the fray by attacking the central government for 'Muslim appeasement' (Purandare, 1999: 229-47 and 265-310). The Ramjanmabhoomi agitation of the 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 that went in favour of the Shiv Sena was the decision of Sharad Pawar to merge his Congress (S) with the Congress (I) in 1986. 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*', (Thakare 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*' started in 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 coordinators, *Loksatta*, Pune, 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' (Sardesai, 1995) 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 Thakare. (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 Thakare's tremendous appeal and the authoritarian style of functioning, there have been instances of minor dissensions 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 soon killed (Shridhar Khopkar in 1989). 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. Morerswar Sawe from Aurngabhad, Ganseh 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 (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 Thakare family, Raj, nephew of Bal Thakare and Uddhav, the son. Perhaps in complicity with the Marathi press, a whispering campaign against 'dynastic rule' ensued. Thakare reacted swiftly by announcing that not only his family members but he himself, too, would henceforth keep away from the Shiv Sena. This had the dramatic effect of enraging the ordinary Sena activists who gathered at the residence of Thakare 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 Thakares and by implication, against the founder leader as well. The short drama ended with Thakare 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 Thakare and the followers. It also reconfirmed the power of histrionics that Thakare was able to exercise (Purnadare, 1999: 356-59; Akolkar, 1998: 228-34). More than anything else, this episode helped to establish the leadership of the two young members of the Thakare family. Soon, they fell out and 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 star of the son 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 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 hand. In the case of Mumbai

corporation, many of the followers of Raj tried to rebel or sabotage (*Maharashtra Times*, Mumbai, January, 10, 19, 20, 23, February, 23, 2002), but Shiv Sena won comfortably. 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 Thakares would have any serious repercussions for the party in the near future. Bal Thakare 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 the Shiv Sena has far reaching implications, but we shall turn to them only in the last section.

III Nature of Shiv Sena's Appeal

Shiv Sena came into being when the Congress party and the 'congress system' were firmly in place. Shiv Sena managed to carve out a niche for itself in the political set up in which most non-Congress parties were finding it difficult to survive. Later, when the decline of Congress set in, terms of political competition changed and along with this change, the actors in politics also changed. New actors occupied the political space. In this changed context, instead of fading out into oblivion, Shiv Sena reinvented itself and grabbed the centre-stage of State politics. This feat was possible mainly because of the continued appeal of the Shiv Sena. As is famous, Shiv Sena started as a Mumbai-based organization upholding the rights of the local Marathi speaking people to obtain jobs in the commercial, industrial and public sector concerns on a priority basis. This demand was accompanied by a cultural-political package: Shiv Sena sought to inherit the legacy of the emotional appeal mobilized by the movement for the formation of the Marathi speaking state of Maharashtra. It claimed that Mumbai 'belonged' to Marathi people and therefore, the city must bear the imprint of Marathi culture and society. As the name of the Sena suggests, it is the 'army of Shivaji' thus, invoking the fond memories held by most Marathi speaking people of the seventeenth century Maratha king, Shivaji. In Shivaji's name, Shiv Sena claimed to represent the interests, not merely of the residents of Mumbai, but all the Marathi people and not merely their employment interests, but cultural (or to use a more contemporary phrase, identitarian) interests and anxieties. Thus, Shiv Sena's 'nativism' (a description employed by Gupta, 1982) or its insistence on 'preferential policies on ethnic basis' (Katzenstein, 1979), contained a strong element of regionalism, even though that was not and could not be employed by the Sena throughout the State. Nativism was the expression of this regionalism in the city of Mumbai.

Shiv Sena's regionalism was a queer mix of many appeals. Apart from focusing on the plight of the jobless Marathi youth of Mumbai and generally invoking the spirit of the Marathi identity, Shiv Sena's regionalism was also characterized by a strong element of nationalism. Sena's regionalism never juxtaposed the region versus the nation. The jingoism of Shiv Sena always accommodated the region within the confines of the nation. This dovetailing of the two made the Sena immensely popular and it also allowed the Sena to appropriate the Shivaji symbol. In Maharashtra, Shivaji is seen as both a great national hero and the symbol of native pride of the Marathi society. Shiv Sena projected itself precisely on this combined platform of national cause and regional pride. Much of its anti-communist activity and campaign went down well mainly because of this 'nationalist' stand and the projection of the communists as 'anti-nationalists' in the light of the stand taken over the issue of Sino-Indian dispute. The communists were also shown in poor light for their stout espousal of the Soviet line. Moreover, nationalism also meant rapid progress and discipline as far as the Sena was concerned and therefore, the communist propaganda against the capitalists and the frequent strikes were seen and shown as anti-national. Shiv Sena's nationalism had one more element right from the beginning. The nation consisted of the Hindus. Therefore it was Hindu nationalism that the Sena was upholding right from the beginning and it never made a secret of its impatience with minorities and minority rights. Of course, it is true that Shiv Sena did not emphasise its Hindu nationalism in the early years, but equally, it did not hide it either. It is possible to argue that Sena's appeal hinged on the adroit combination of nativism, regional identity and a communal construction of nationalism. Since 1984, Shiv Sena projected itself as a Hindu nationalist force. This was for two reasons. In the first place, the decision to expand the activity of the party beyond Mumbai necessitated the shift of emphasis from the regional to national in order for the Sena's appeal to be relevant in the rural environs of Maharashtra. Secondly, the Sena could not have been blind to the potential of the militant Hindutva appeal in non-urban areas of the State. Already, since the late seventies, anti-minority and anti-Dalit mobilizations were gaining ground in the State. While the BJP was a non-force in the State, the Ayodhya issue was showing the potential as a weapon for communal mobilization. (For a detailed discussion of this rise of 'neo-Hinduism', see Vora-Palshikar, 1990.) Thus, the mid-eighties saw the Sena relying more on the Hindutva appeal. Muslims were targeted and Hindu religious sentiments were mobilized by indulging in communal propaganda and exploiting the sensibilities of the Hindus in the course of many small but a few vicious communal conflagrations. Critics of the Shiv Sena as also inquiry commissions have pointed to the complicity of the Shiv Sena in many of these instances of communal violence. At least, it is easy to see a pattern: communal flare up would follow the Sena's attempts to start the Shiv jayanti celebrations in small towns and villages (Palshikar, 2000) and on the heels of such communal incidents, the Shiv Sena would become popular in the concerned localities. Shiv Sena's nationalism thus took a pronounced militant Hindu shape and Shivaji was once again brought into the discourse, this time not as a regional-national hero but as a 'Hindu' king who put brakes on the 'Muslim' expansion. Just as in the regional mobilization, Hindutva was an incipient element; the Hindu communal mobilization of the Sena continues to retain regional identity and nativism as its subterranean elements. Again and again, whenever the Hindutva appeal was not thought to be adequate, Marathi pride has resurfaced. For instance, in elections to the Mumbai

corporation in 2002, Shiv Sena relied heavily on the question of Marathi pride and managed a comfortable victory. Since then, the issue of 'outsiders' has been kept alive at least in the case of large cities like Mumbai, Thane, Pune and Nasik. Thus, the success of the Sena's ideological appeal lies in its skill to combine the regional with the national.

One more factor needs to be considered for a better appreciation of the nature of Shiv Sena's appeal. That is the style of the Shiv Sena's ideological mobilizations. Two characteristics quickly attract the attention of the observer in this connection. Firstly, there is a surprising 'plausibility' and 'simplicity' in the arguments put forth by the Shiv Sena. The amazing ability of its ideological positions to 'uncomplicate' issues and present them to the public as amenable to quick solutions is an important ingredient of its style. This makes the ideological position 'plausible', though, for an observer the same may appear to be wanting in logic and consistency. The second is the strong element of action-orientation. Shiv Sena's ideological positions are not interested in explanations but in action. The ordinary Sena worker is exhorted to take action, be it social service, neighbourhood activity or strong-arm tactics and violence. Thus, if injustice to the Marathi people is detected, 'direct action' in the form of looting and intimidating the south Indian hoteliers would be one form of 'action', while starting street-side eateries, the famous 'vada-paav' stalls, would be another form of action. Similarly, if Muslims are identified as the 'enemy', then anti-Muslim violence can be one form of action, while celebrating Hindu festivals with gusto would be another form of action representing assertion. This action orientation in conjunction with the simplified plausibility of the ideological position makes Shiv Sena's appeal very attractive and 'easy-to-serve-easy-to-consume'. Examples of Sena actions, like threatening a boycott of the Sikhs in protest against the killings of Hindus in Punjab by the terrorists (*Maharashtra Times*, Mumbai, March, 6, 1988; incidentally, this threat was never implemented), digging the cricket pitch in order to sabotage the India-Pakistan cricket match (*Maharashtra Times*, Mumbai, October, 23, 1991), the organization of 'Maha-aratis' in January 1993, the campaign to detect and deport the 'Bangla Deshis' hiding in Mumbai (*Loksatta*, Pune, November, 21, 1994), disturbing the Gazal Mehfil of Gulam Ali (*Sunday Times of India*, Pune, May, 3, 1998), prove the point that more than the ideological appeal or at least as much as it, the possibility of being part of the action and thereby relate meaningfully to the ideological position constitutes a very significant aspect of Sena's appeal. These actions, sometimes planned, sometimes spontaneous, channelize the emotional energies unleashed by Sena's ideological mobilization. This action-orientation is often born out of the urge to function as monitors of society's morality and also to determine what constitutes that morality. Shiv Sena has always facilitated realization of this urge. Thus, for example, it allows its cadres to be opposed to the India-Pakistan cricket match in India but does not mind India playing Pakistan in a third country; or organizes a concert by Michael Jackson, but allows its cadres to declare a ban on the Valentine Day celebrations. The obvious inconsistencies are not relevant here. Of significance is the fact that the Shiv Sena allows sections of its followers to be arbiters of social mores and manners. Many times, the actions taken by local Sena workers have only a thin link with the pronounced ideological positions. This situation produces local networks of bosses who lord over their small territories. But it also gives the local workers a sense of importance as holders of public conscience.

IV Social Space occupied by Shiv Sena

The foregoing discussion suggests that the ideological appeal of Shiv Sena has to be understood in terms of its sociological base. Given the nature of its initial stand regarding sons-of-soil, it was quite natural that lower middle class youth should form the bulwark of Sena's supporters and active followers. This situation continued for some time. In addition, a section of Marathi intellectuals were also attracted to the Shiv Sena. The legacy of Samyukta Maharashtra Movement (movement for the formation of a Marathi speaking State) was still alive and the supporters of that movement saw in the arguments of the Shiv Sena an extension of that agitation. They saw Shiv Sena as an organization interested in the espousal of the regional pride for which the State formation movement had fought. By extension, the support of this intellectual section also ensured a sympathetic press and sympathetic middle class in general. Even the strong-arm tactics of the Shiv Sena were seen as inevitable effect of the apathy of the State government to the 'just' demands and expectations of the Marathi youth. Soon after its formation, Shiv Sena was busy in destroying the trade union movement of Mumbai. In doing this, Shiv Sena itself attempted to organize the industrial labour force. This created a considerable following in the Marathi speaking industrial work force of the Mumbai city. In a sense, the support base of Shiv Sena had extended from the Dadar, Girgaum, Parle and other typical Marathi middle class localities to Lalbaug-Parel areas dominated by the industrial workers of Mumbai. Shiv Sena soon entered the slums of Mumbai through its neighbourhood activity and efforts to organize the workers from the informal sector. Two additional factors should be noted in the context of this varied support base of the Shiv Sena. One is the populist appeal that the Shiv Sena offered to its followers. This attracted social groups of different nature and evolved an emotional bond between each group and the organization. Thus, Shiv Sena could comfortably combine the support of the urban white-collar middle class and the underclass from the slums. Secondly, Sena's frequent resort to collective violence as a means of putting pressure on its opponents provided activists from the slums with the opportunity of entering the arena of public action. Those involved in collective violence also got an opportunity to settle private scores and make some private gains. This led to charges of extortion and Shiv Sena has never been able to convincingly shake off these allegations. In any case, these complex opportunity structures made the Shiv Sena popular among a large variety of social groups from Mumbai and nearby areas of Thane and Kalyan. As the Shiv Sena got entangled in violent clashes with the Dalits of Mumbai in the early seventies, it gained popularity among the sections of caste Hindus that were opposed to radical Dalit politics. This was another potential constituency for the Sena, which was exploited to the full only in the late eighties by the party.

In the eighties, as the Shiv Sena started spreading across the rural parts of Maharashtra, its social base became more complex. Here, it presented itself as anti-Muslim and anti-Dalit. But even in this projection, a couple of subtexts existed. Shiv Sena presented itself as distinct from the Brahmanical RSS brand of Hindutva. As in the case of Mumbai earlier, Shiv Sena offered a populist version of Hindutva, which was far more fiery and

militant. Secondly, Shiv Sena's anti-Dalit stance was also nuanced. Initially, it declared itself as opposed to the 'Namantar', i.e. naming of the Marathwada university of Aurangabad after Dr Ambedkar. This endeared it to the vast sections of people from that region since no party was openly opposed to the move to change the name of the university, although there was a popular agitation against the move. Shiv Sena also made it clear that it was particularly opposed to the Buddhists ostensibly because they were monopolizing all the benefits of reservations, but people could not miss the fact this opposition was more for having deserted Hindu fold. Shiv Sena's stand regarding the Buddhists ensured that it got considerable following from the non-Buddhist Dalit communities, notably the Charmakar and Matang communities. At the beginning of its entry into rural Maharashtra Shiv Sena also spoke against the Marathas for having cornered all positions of power in the state. This led to a misplaced belief that Shiv Sena 'represented' the OBCs. As it started gaining ground in rural areas, Sena suspended its anti-Maratha criticism. In fact, many observers have pointed out that the young Maratha followers of Sharad Pawar who were themselves opposed to entrenched Maratha leadership, joined Shiv Sena once Pawar went back to the Congress party (Akolkar, 1998: 119, Latpate.1990: 10). As a result, main following of Shiv Sena in the Marathwada region was the Marathas. This consisted of two distinct groups; those who were anti-Dalit and opposed to the 'Namantar', and new entrants who saw no opportunity in the established Congress set up and turned to the Shiv Sena. It was in Vidarbha region where some OBC following could be won over by the Shiv Sena, mostly due to the efforts of Chhagan Bhujbal.

Table No. 5
Party Preference among various Social Sections: 1996
(Row percentages)

	Congress	Shiv Sena	BJP
<i>Age Groups:</i>			
Up to 25 years	31.4	21.6	15.5
26-35 years	34.9	25.6	12.1
36-45 years	39.8	18.7	15.2
46-55 years	33.3	25.6	8.5
56 years and above	36.7	21.8	11.6
<i>Education:</i>			
Non-literate	37.5	26.8	11.3
Up to Middle School	36.3	24.3	9.0
Up to college	34.3	25.8	17.6
Graduate and above	22.4	14.3	24.5
<i>Residence:</i>			
Rural	38.6	24.3	12.4
Urban	27.3	15.2	14.2
<i>Sex:</i>			
Women	37.8	22.6	10.0
Men	32.4	22.5	15.8

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Table No. 6
Party Preference among Caste\community groups: 1996
(Row percentages)

Caste\Community	Congress	Shiv Sena	BJP
S. C.	27.7	8.3	8.3
S.T.	37.2	3.7	18.5
OBC (non-Kunbi)	37.2	25.5	15.6
Kunbi	26.0	34.1	13.8
Maratha	37.8	36.0	4.3
Muslim	56.0	1.8	1.8
Other	38.2	12.0	16.1

Table No. 7
Party Preference among various Social Sections:1999
(Row percentages)

	Congress	Shiv Sena	NCP	BJP
<i>Age group:</i>				
Up to 25 years	25.0	22.0	18.5	17.3
26-35 years	27.0	18.0	17.3	18.0
36-45 years	39.8	18.3	21.0	12.5
46-55 years	33.3	23.8	18.9	14.0
56 years and above	36.7	16.8	31.6	11.7
<i>Education:</i>				
Non-literate	29.3	17.9	28.0	8.3
Up to primary	30.9	18.4	20.6	14.7
Up to secondary	23.0	20.9	13.8	32.8
College and above	19.3	23.5	15.1	23.5
<i>Residence:</i>				
Rural	26.3	19.8	24.3	11.6
Urban	28.9	18.7	15.2	21.3
<i>Sex:</i>				
Women	30.4	18.8	21.9	11.2
Men				

	23.9	20.0	20.6	18.6
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Table No. 8
Party Preference among Caste\Community Groups: 1999
(Row percentages)

Caste\Community	Congress	Shiv Sena	NCP	BJP
S. C.	50.0	7.0	20.9	3.5
S.T.	31.3	6.0	13.4	11.9
OBC (non-Kunbi)	21.4	24.3	15.7	17.9
Kunbi	15.2	30.3	26.5	15.9
Maratha	22.6	25.1	28.4	11.9
Muslim	45.9	1.2	30.6	--
Other	30.7	14.6	13.1	30.7

Table No. 9
Caste Composition of Voters of main Parties: 1996 and 1999
(Column percentages)

Caste Group	Cong. 96	Cong. 99	SS 96	SS 99	NCP 99	BJP 96	BJP 99
Maratha	20.5	19.6	30.4	30.5	31.5	6.3	19.0
Kunbi	10.6	7.1	21.6	20.0	16.0	15.3	13.7
OBC (non-Kunbi)	28.4	21.4	30.4	34.0	20.0	32.4	32.7
S. C.	6.6	15.4	3.0	3.0	8.2	5.4	2.0
S. T.	6.6	7.5	1.0	2.0	4.1	9.0	5.2
Other	27.7	28.9	13.4	10.5	20.2	31.5	27.5

Source: Compiled from Palshikar-Deshpande, 2003 and Palshikar, 1999.

Note: For Tables 5 to 8 row percentages do not add up to 100 because other parties are not included in the Tables.

Electoral Base

Survey data for the nineties throws a little more light on the composition of the Sena supporters in terms of its voters. It may be said that the overall profile of the voters of the Shiv Sena approximates that of the Congress voter. Table nos. 5 to 9 present the details of the structure of Sena's newly found voter base in the nineties in comparison to the voter base of the Congress. There are obvious differences in terms of the support among

Muslims, S.Cs. and S. Ts. But apart from that, Shiv Sena's voter base has more in common with the Congress than with the BJP. If we take into consideration the fact that Shiv Sena continues to be popular in the urban centers of Mumbai and Thane, much of the difference between Shiv Sena and the Congress in terms of support among different educational categories can be easily explained. Barring these differences, the Shiv Sena is taking up the social characteristics of the Congress and thus, providing the voters with a 'similar but different' alternative. It is similar in the sense that the pattern of power sharing would not be drastically different under a Shiv Sena dispensation. Like the Congress, Shiv Sena would also provide an umbrella for all--almost all--social sections. The movement of the Shiv Sena from a party *only* of the urban residents to a party enjoying support in rural areas as well, has meant that now many sections can easily relate themselves to the Shiv Sena. When the expansion of Shiv Sena began, it appealed to both the Marathas and the OBCs. Shiv Sena's strong anti-Dalit posture endeared it to these sections. More particularly, Shiv Sena's argument that all power in the State had always gone to the Marathas opened up possibilities for the OBCs. At the same time, its opposition to Mandal reservations made it popular among the Marathas. The contradictions in these positions notwithstanding, they gave a clear message about the accommodative approach of the Shiv Sena. These moves indicated that Shiv Sena would adopt the same accommodative approach towards most major social groups like the Congress did successfully in the past. One recent instance of this is the attempt of the Shiv Sena to make friends with the Dalit forces in the state. In 2003, Uddhav Thakare took the initiative and called for an alliance between Shiv shakti (forces represented by Shiv Sena, but also a euphemism for caste Hindu forces) and Bhim shakti (Dalit forces having allegiance to Dr. Ambedkar, the various factions of the Republican Party, RPI). This move was calculated to attract the young activists of the RPI. More specifically, this call also signalled the readiness of Shiv Sena to accommodate the Buddhists. Similarly, in the same year, Uddhav Thakare launched an initiative called 'We, Mumbaikars', in which the definition of Mumbaikar-one belonging to Mumbai city-was made so flexible as to include non-Marathi people who have settled in Mumbai long ago, the Gujaratis, Sindhis etc. In effect, this strategy was adopted in view of the growing numbers of non-Maharashtrian population in Mumbai. Needless to say, moves like these make it possible for the Shiv Sena to strike new electoral combinations, but they also make it look more like the Congress. The difference of course, lies in the espousal of open communalism on the one hand and constant encouragement to direct action on the other. This similar-but-different alternative has attracted the youth from Maratha and OBC caste groups of the rural areas to the Sena. As is clear from Table No. 9, Shiv Sena has now become a balanced combination of the Maratha-Kunbi and OBC communities in the State. The data regarding the electoral base also shows that there is considerable stability to the Shiv Sena's support base. In a period when electoral support of many parties has been shaky, Shiv Sena has managed to retain its base between 1995-96 and 1999. The formation of NCP representing the Marathas did make some difference for Sena's base among the Marathas, but otherwise, Sena has received consistent support from various social sections. One major limitation of this support base of the Shiv Sena is that it is regionally fragmented. Its Maratha votes come mostly from the Marathwada region, while its OBC votes come from the city of Mumbai and the Vidarbha region. Konkan and Vidarbha provide its Kunbi votes. The link between region and community support has

implications for the future of the Shiv Sena not only in the electoral arena but in the field of mobilizational and movement based politics as well. Shiv Sena's skill in transcending these regional barriers will decide its statewide role in the future.

V

Multiple Trajectories of Shiv Sena

A careful look at the career, appeal and social base of the Shiv Sena makes it clear that the Sena's tiger (Sena's mascot) has many faces and multiple voices. Shiv Sena's journey from a small Mumbai-based outfit to a dreaded organization with a penchant for 'direct action' (Eckert, 2003) to a party spread all over the State, indicates that there are many trajectories in the life of the forty-year-old organization. We shall attempt to situate the Shiv Sena in terms of four trajectories: first, the 'Congress connection', secondly, the structure of electoral competition in the nineties, thirdly, the institutionalisation of the party structure as opposed to youthful spontaneity and the fourth is the anti-democratic dimension of Shiv Sena.

Blessings of the Congress

Shiv Sena emerged in the aftermath of the agitation for the formation of Marathi speaking state of Maharashtra with Mumbai, then Bombay, as its capital. The agitation over *Bombay* was especially bitter because of the opposition from a section of the Gujarati traders and industrialists. The image of Maharashtra Congress was considerably tarnished and within Congress, there was an ongoing rivalry between the Marathi\Maratha leadership and the Mumbai-based leadership. Almost every study of the Shiv Sena has recorded this aspect of the growth of the Shiv Sena (Morkhandikar, 1967: 1903; Gupta, 1982: 162-65; Lele, 1996: 192; Akolkar, 1998: 66-83). Both, the Marathi\Maratha faction and the Mumbai faction used the Shiv Sena for their purposes and in turn, helped the Shiv Sena in gaining ground in the city of Mumbai. Thus, if the Shiv Sena was at one time called 'Vasantsena' (meaning the army of Vasant Rao Naik, who was the State C. M. between 1963 and 1974) (Akolkar, 1998: 74; Tamhane, 1998:5), implying that it was an instrument of the Marathi faction, Shiv Sena also supported leader of Mumbai Congress, Murli Deora in mayoral election in 1977. Later, in the 1975-77 period, Shiv Sena supported the leadership of Indira Gandhi and the authoritarian measures adopted by her. Shiv Sena was also very friendly with Antulay, who became the Congress (I) C.M. in 1980 and in fact actively participated in his election campaign (Purandare, 1999: 212-13). In 1985, the then C. M., Vasantdada Patil, in his ongoing battle with the central leadership, made a statement in the state legislature that the 'conspiracy' to take away Mumbai from Maharashtra by making it a union territory would not be tolerated. This gave the Shiv Sena a perfect election issue for the city municipal election. Shiv Sena could come out of its political isolation of the 1978-85 period by winning the Mumbai corporation election that year and from that point on, started expanding in the rest of the state since 1986 (Palshikar, 1999). In 1995, the Sena-BJP alliance was short of a majority in the state assembly, but managed to form a government because – MLAs who were

elected as Congress rebels supported the alliance and joined the ministry. Many Congress leaders have since then actually joined the Shiv Sena or received its support (prominent among them have been Shalinitai Patil, who later joined NCP, Vilasrao Deshmukh Congress C.M. from 1999 to 2002, who got support from Shiv Sena for his election to the legislative council in 1996, the Vikhe-Patil father and son, Babasaheb Bhosale, Congress C.M. in 1982). It may be said that at each stage of Shiv Sena's growth, the Congress connection has been a contributory factor. As was already noted, when Shiv Sena decided to 'gallop in the entire state of Maharashtra', (1986) it benefited from the decision of Sharad Pawar to merge his Congress (S) with Congress (I). In the 2002 elections to the Mumbai corporation elections, the Congress party turned down the proposal of the NCP to have a coalition for defeating the Sena-BJP alliance. The division of Congress-NCP votes cost these parties 41 seats and majority in the corporation (Bhosale, 2004: 251). This long story of Shiv Sena's links with the Congress is relevant for two reasons. One is the simple matter of organizational expansion and electoral arithmetic. But more than that, the Congress connection shows that there was some acceptability to Shiv Sena's regionalist stand among Congress leaders (Akolkar, 1998: 74). By allowing the regionalist rhetoric, Congress allowed that rhetoric to gain legitimacy. The Congress connection also shows the inability of the Congress leadership in the state to appreciate the dangers in the Shiv Sena type of regionalism and Shiv Sena style of politics. Or, if they did, then they did not mind it.

Electoral Competition

Shiv Sena's dalliance with the Congress did not matter much so long as the Congress was dominant in the electoral arena. The division in the Maratha leadership and the anti-Congress atmosphere in the country in general (1977-78) created a challenge before the Congress party in the state (Vora-Palshikar, 1996). The split in the Congress at the all-India level in 1978 resulted in a hung assembly in 1978 and the two Congress factions came together to form a coalition government. Since then, the structure of political competition in the state underwent a change. Politics in the state now experienced a strong opposition in the form of the Janata party and later in the form of Congress (S). Internal factionalism of the Congress party spilled out side of the party and the congress system developed cracks. The ability of the State Congress to arbitrate claims by different factions and social forces declined. Split among the Maratha leaders further added competitiveness to electoral politics. The quick decimation of the Janata party and the inability of the BJP to capture the space in the rural parts of the State ensured a vacuum which was first filled by the agitation of the farmers' movement (Shetkari Sanghatana) led by Sharad Joshi and later by Sharad Pawar's Congress (S). The split among the Maratha leadership further meant that there was now space available for political formations not necessarily originating in Maratha politics. All these factors changed the nature of electoral competition in the State and facilitated the entry of Shiv Sena out side of Mumbai. The traditional electoral dynamics changed because politics based almost entirely on the interests of the Maratha leaders—involving issues of sugar cane growers, sugar cooperatives, other rural cooperatives—lost primacy. Caste identity, religious identity, urban anxieties, corruption, etc. became the dominant themes in the political process of the State. The Congress apparatus was not used to these themes and did not know how to handle them. As dispenser of political opportunities, the Congress was

reticent in allowing newcomers to the arrangement of power sharing in the State. In most cases, the families of the established leaders controlled all opportunity structures at the local level, leaving little room for the new entrants to politics. Shiv Sena benefited from these developments. The oppositional space opened up by Shetkari Sanghatana was not being translated into electoral politics, a new generation of politically ambitious youth was awaiting opportunities to 'make it' in politics and the Congress was unable to address these developments. Most importantly, since it did not have any existing organization in the rural parts of the State, the Shiv Sena could accommodate a large number of new aspirants both as its activists and as candidates in the legislative elections of 1990 and 1995. In 1990, for instance, 150 of the 180 odd candidates of the Shiv Sena were new entrants to politics. Even in 1995, 42 of Sena's 73 MLAs were first timers and 29 had no previous political experience worth the name, thus making Shiv Sena a fast track for rising politically as far as the new entrants to politics were concerned (Palshikar, 1999: 16-17).

Institutional Stability

Shiv Sena has almost successfully handled two stages of its organizational transformation. One was the move from regionalist exclusivism to communal exclusivism. This movement was not very difficult for the Sena to make because it had already developed a sensibility among its followers to oppose 'outsiders' or 'others'. The regional explanation of the plight of poor job seekers was mostly incidental to the exclusivist sensibility that the Sena underscored. More than the content of the regionalist-nativist rhetoric it was the strategy of drowning public reason in the din over an 'enemy' that was crucial to Sena's success. Secondly, keen followers of the Sena could not have missed the implicit anti-Muslim trend in Sena's early rhetoric as well. As Manohar Joshi put it, after *all, a south Indian is an Indian, but the Muslim always thinks of Pakistan* (Gupta, 1982: 150). Therefore, this transition from one exclusivism to another was not very difficult. Another transition that the Sena underwent in the late eighties was much more complex. It related to the territorial expansion, with which the composition of the Sena followers changed considerably. It now consisted of peasant OBCs (in addition to its service OBC caste following in the city of Mumbai), for the first time, sections of the Maratha-Kunbi caste group became Sena's followers, and beyond the white-and-blue-collar following, Shiv Sena's followers now included the rural sections. It was indeed very difficult for the second ranking leaders of the Sena who were entirely from the urban background to relate themselves to the rural following, but they went about it valiantly, and finally succeeded. In the almost two decades of this new expansion of the Shiv Sena, most of its state level leadership has remained with the Mumbai based leadership and those from out side of Mumbai have to be content with district level role. However, we have already seen that most of the new entrants to Shiv Sena in the eighties were also new entrants to politics itself. Therefore, for them even the district level leadership positions were more than enough. Only in cases where leaders of stature defected from the Congress that the question of their role arose. Sena either packed them off as central ministers (Balasaheb Vikhe from Ahmednagar district) or had to witness them returning to the Congress as Vikhe-Patil did recently (February, 2004). Finally, Thakare's popular appeal has been Sena's main weapon of overcoming the crisis arising out of its expansion. His leadership and popularity would always silence or marginalize all internal dissidence and work as a link for the entire following.

The third transition involved the issue of leadership. This is a matter that the Shiv Sena has been facing for some time and has only uncomfortably and tentatively settled so far. We have already noted that the conflict between Manohar Joshi and Bhujbal took an ugly turn and resulted in the desertion by Bhujbal. However, that does not mean that Joshi was anointed as a future leader of the organization. In fact, he was unceremoniously replaced from chief ministership of the State in early 1994 and Narayan Rane was made the chief minister. But the rise of the two members from Thakare's own family has complicated matters for the Sena. The organization has not settled this matter successfully. Today, there are virtually two camps in the Shiv Sena, one belonging to Raj Thakare and another owing allegiance to Uddhav Thakare. It appears that the senior Thakare has settled in favour of the son, Uddhav Thakare. But the fact that Raj has formidable following can make things difficult for the organization. Organizations like the Shiv Sena, which are based on one authoritarian leader, often run the risk of fading into oblivion once the key leader departs. Shiv Sena has definitely outgrown this stage. In a very skilful manner the popularity of the leader has been transformed to the newer leaders. Besides, authoritarian control of the organization has also been transformed from the senior leader to the new leader. This institutionalisation of the party structure is the most remarkable feature of the Shiv Sena's organizational trajectory.

But it is precisely this success that can create certain difficulties in the future journey of the party. Shiv Sena has always lived on its image as a lively, spontaneous, militant organization. Organizational expansion and institutionalisation of the structures can halt its militant march and soften the image of the party. While this may make the party more electorally acceptable, can the Shiv Sena sustain a staid, run-of-the-mill image? One scholar has recently argued that the Shiv Sena's success hinges on its image as a party of 'direct action' and that Shiv Sena has been able to retain that image even after its expansion (Eckert, 2003: 26-280). It is true that compared to many other parties, Shiv Sena allows greater space for its activists to engage in direct action while at the same time trying to gain electorally through its newly found base. However, there is a tension between the two and the Sena is currently experiencing that tension. Since the Sena lost power in the assembly election of 1999, there has been a period of comparative lull in the activities of the Sena involving 'direct action'. As the Congress-NCP government came to power in 1999, its Home Minister and Sena's bête noir, Chhagan Bhujbal tried to outsmart the Shiv Sena on a number of issues. He even attempted to arrest Thakare, giving a much-required 'cause' to the Sena to indulge in direct action. Later, the Sainiks from Mumbai attacked the official residence of the Home Minister, galvanizing its cadres. But a lacklustre performance in the local government elections in 2001-02, the ongoing war of inheritance between Raj and Uddhav, confusion over the extent to which issue of regional identity should be emphasised in contrast to communal issue, have all produced a halt to the vivacity of the Sena's direct action strategy. This is not to say, however, that the Sena has weakened. Far from it. As major opposition party in the State, the Sena is well placed to face the elections and is in an upbeat mood about its chances of replacing the Congress-NCP government. Uddhav Thakare has been untiringly labouring to ensure the electoral victory of the party. But electoral arithmetic implies moderation and routinization of popularity. Eckert believes that key to Sena's success lies in its

ability to avoid 'routinization', while the activities of the Sena over the last ten years (1995-2004) indicate the turn to routinization. This was the worry of some sainiks in as early as late eighties (Heuze, 1996: 218). Sena's pet resort to the issue of Marathi identity in the Mumbai municipal election of 2002 has also been characterized as routinization (Masselos, 2003). Katzenstein et al (1998:230-34) have also emphasised the strength of the institutional network of the Shiv Sena and pointed to the organizational contradiction it faces. The dilemma of the Shiv Sena's organizational trajectory lies here: to win elections on a regular basis the party needs to turn to institutionalisation of its popularity. But this robs it of the spontaneity and space for 'direct action' representing anti-establishment sentiments.

Anti-democratic elements

This takes us to the final trajectory of the Shiv Sena. What does the Shiv Sena stand for? Is it a narrow, parochial, 'Marathi' organization? Is it a militant Hindu communal organization? Does it represent the revolt of the lower middle classes? Is it a network of culture guards, or as Heuze puts it, an expression of cultural populism (Heuze, 1996)? We can classify the critical assessments of Shiv Sena in two broad groups.

Let us begin with the personal popularity of Balasaheb Thakare. Thakare's popularity is based on the spoken word and the written word. Large crowds throng Thakare's public rallies. Early in its career, Shiv Sena came to be equated with massive rallies, rousing speeches, and stray attacks on 'outsiders' by the dispersing crowds. Thakare, the cartoonist, quickly transformed into a demagogue. As the response to Thakare's speeches grew, he carefully cultivated the art of arousing emotions, and also the art of creating an atmosphere of expectancy and emotional excitement. Chanting of slogans and a motorcade precede the arrival of Thakare on the scene of the rally evolving a surcharged atmosphere. The speech is almost always laced with strong expletives against the 'enemy', aggressive warnings, unadulterated criticism, mimicry, abuse and simplification of complex issues. The listeners are quickly turned into an hysterical, unthinking mass. The fact that Thakare himself has never held any public office adds to the mystical attraction and the crowd is often reminded of this. Since 1988, when Thakare gave a call for a boycott of the Sikhs and received threats from some terrorist outfit, a large security contingent accompanies him. Taking advantage of this, Thakare reminds his adoring followers how he is facing harassment due to the security cover and says that he is putting up with this only because he wants to serve the cause (of nationalism). The security cover is thus transformed into a 'suffering' indicating a sacrifice on the part of the leader. These minor, but carefully thought out strategies evolve an image of Thakare as the great leader, in fact some one who is above politics. This image helps him in convincing his audience (and reader) about the authenticity of what he is saying.

Following aspects of Thakare's demagogy are worth mention. One is the skill of simplifying the issues and showing how they can be easily resolved. The other is projection of Thakare as the unselfish, renouncing kind of a leader. Thirdly, Thakare's demagogy thrives on the basis of creation of the 'other', the enemy, whose villainy is the cause of all the troubles. Fourth, Thakare often exhorts the audience\ readers to take action and in doing this, he justifies violence as a just means. There is a clear espousal of physical force and masculinity. One or two instances of the speeches of Thakare would

perhaps suffice. Thus, in one of his speeches in the campaign of 1995, he promised that if his party was elected to power in the centre (the election was for the state assembly!) Pakistan sponsored terrorism will be wiped out in a matter of few days. Since he was speaking in the area dominated by the naxalites, he implored the naxalite and Tamil terrorist 'boys', to effect bomb explosions in Pakistan. He also assured that if he ever became the prime minister of India, even for one week, he would resolve the Kashmir issue! (Report in Daily *Saamna*, Pune, January, 31, 1995). Such claims, instead of creating doubts in the minds of the listeners\readers, make them wonder why other parties have never done this. Distortions and use of stereotypes are the two other features of demagogy. Thakare's speeches and writings never lack in these. In the early phase, when south Indians were the targets, he popularised the epithet 'lungiwalas' for the south Indians (a reference to the dress of average south Indian male person). In the latter phase, Thakare evolved an image of the 'nation' that excludes the Muslims. He leaves the audience in no doubt about the clear divide between the 'we' and 'they'. For instance, he says, "I shall only tell one thing to Muslims living here—stay as *our*, Hindustan's citizens. Do not stay as *our enemies*.." (ibid.) Or, "... Here onwards, *we* shall not die at the hands of *these* people in *our own* motherland..." (Report in *Loksatta*, Pune, January, 25, 1995). Another constant refrain of Thakare's speeches is exhortation to act. He pours ridicule on moderation, inaction, discussion, etc. Militancy and aggression are upheld as 'manly', as masculine virtues. Those opposing 'direct action' are branded as effeminate or worse.

Thakare's art of building up hysteria is often accompanied by mimicry and very effective histrionics. The element of drama adds to his larger than life image. The strategy of indulging in histrionics was effectively used when Thakare got wind of the attempts by some senior leaders to oppose the younger Thakares. As noted earlier, he simply announced his 'resignation' from the Shiv Sena thereby creating a stir among the sainiks and forcing the senior leaders to vow allegiance to him and all his decisions. The point he wanted to hammer was that he had nothing to gain by remaining the leader of the Shiv Sena and in fact, it was merely because of the love of the thousands of his followers that he was grudgingly working as the leader of the Sena. This was the theme he had already offered to his audience in 1995: "... For whom am I doing all this? Is it not for you? I want your blessings alone, nothing else. See, think of it... I am a '*sanyasi*' (renouncer). Nothing will happen to me (if you do not give your votes)...as for you, whatever is in your lot, you will have to bear with it..." (Report in *Saamna*, Pune, February, 4, 1995; translation of this and the passages in the preceding paragraph are mine, *emphasis added*). Needless to say, such demagogy would have an appeal across different social sections. Therefore, when the Shiv Sena started spreading into rural areas of Maharashtra, Thakare's demagogy was its main weapon.

The response received by Shiv Sena in rural areas of Maharashtra and its electoral success have made the task of analysing its character all the more difficult. It is possible to argue that the Sena's evolution as a Mumbai-based organization fighting for the cause of Marathi people and its evolution as a political force in rural Maharashtra are two entirely different journeys. Both Jayant Lele (1996) and Gerard Heuze (1996) in their separate analyses of Shiv Sena draw attention to the conditions obtaining in the urban

areas of Mumbai and Thane. It was in these cities that Shiv Sena first rose to popularity among the lower middle classes and later penetrated among the lower classes. Shiv Sena appeared on the scene when the ambivalence of the lower and middle classes was becoming acute. Their contradictory location in a city of riches, lumpen or near-lumpen conditions obtaining in Mumbai's cramped chawls, the impoverished cultural existence both as a socio-linguistic group and as members of the work force, coupled with unbridled advance of the rich and the neo-rich ensured that the lower and middle classes would be available for demagogic appeals and populist mobilizations. A romantic idea of Marathi Mumbai appealed to them and they also liked the idea of identifying somebody as responsible for their wretched conditions. The urge to function as protectors and arbiters of culture and social mores is also more pressing in the environs of such cities. The attraction of 'direct action' as Eckert calls it is also a characteristic of the complexities of city life. Through Thakare's demagogy, Shiv Sena was instrumental in expressing these urges and providing both a political shield and polemical defence of 'direct action' and hence its popularity over a long time in Mumbai and adjoining areas. This combination of demagogy, direct action and the ambivalences of urban life among both lower and lower middle classes, shaped a semi-fascist tendency in the political and civil life of Mumbai and to a lesser extent the adjoining cities.

However, the moot question is what is the meaning of Shiv Sena's spread in rural areas? Shiv Sena captured the rural terrain of Maharashtra riding on the magic of Thakare's demagogic speeches and writings in the *Saamna*. It is also incontrovertible that in order to expand in the new areas, Shiv Sena communalised the social situation and created anti-Muslim and anti-Dalit sentiments. Thus, in spite of the difference in the nature of the social base of Shiv Sena in Mumbai and the rest of Maharashtra, the attraction of the demagogic appeal and the construction and articulation of the communal sensibilities are two common features of the Shiv Sena all over the State. It is possible to make a distinction between the two 'Shiv Senas' in terms of social base, propensity to direct action and the political economy of its support. However, following features are common to both: communal understanding of the self and an exclusionary image of the nation, belief in the efficacy of physical force for the solution of all problems, anti-politics sentiments, and dependence on populist leadership. These features inevitably point to the anti-democratic tendencies implicit in the politics of the Shiv Sena. Thus, Shiv Sena has a double life: as a political party operating in the arena of competitive politics and as a social force representing and exacerbating the anti-democratic tendencies prevalent in the society. These two 'avatars' of Shiv Sena are not exactly mutually exclusive. Its electoral avatar benefits from the mobilization gained from its anti-democratic avatar and its anti-democratic avatar gains legitimacy from its electoral achievements. As the Shiv Sena transforms itself under the new leadership of Uddhav Thakare, it faces the challenge of retaining its identity as an organization of 'direct action' (essentially representing the anti-democratic elements) and at the same time offering the voters an alternative as a party of governance. Riding two horses simultaneously is always a risk, but more so when you know that the two horses gallop at different speeds.

However, Shiv Sena will keep trying it and take the risk involved, firstly, because it has created an image that it is a party of anti-establishment. Secondly, its electoral success is

dependent on its ability to appropriate the anti-democratic sentiments and convert them into an electoral base. More importantly, the political economy of the State has produced anxieties and uncertainties in which anti-democratic appeal holds an attraction across classes and castes. In a sense, therefore, just as the Shiv Sena has been a factor shaping State politics in the nineties, the social and politico-economic conditions prevailing in Maharashtra have made it possible for the Sena to ride the two horses without falling between. At least so far.

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