

Maharashtra Verdict Sees Only One Loser – Shiv Sena

Four weeks passed after the 2019 Maharashtra Assembly election results were announced on October 24.

Maharashtra finally got a government in the fifth.



November 23, 2019. Saturday. It turned out to be a strange morning. The newspapers carried news that a Shiv Sainik shall be the Maharashtra Chief Minister tomorrow. But, the TV channels were showing precisely the opposite! Devendra Fadnis assumed the office of the Chief Minister while the Shiv Sena and its associates were left in the lurch.

Shiv Sena had parted its ways with BJP with whom it contested the elections. Shiv Sena became ready to leave Hindutva ideology. It was also ready to leave the issue of giving Bharat Ratna to Vir Savarkar. BJP's Chandrakant Patil summed up saying that the Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut irrevocably ruined his party. It tried to explore ways to form a

government. It, however, miserably failed to get the support of the required number of MLAs in the time given by state Governor. Today, it cuts a sorry figure.

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This situation, however, was preceded by a series of deliberations, meetings and negotiations in Delhi and Mumbai between the three chief players – the Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Congress – in a protracted drama. It apparently suggested that there is an understanding between them that Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray would be the next Chief Minister of Maharashtra

As it turned out, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by the invincible Modi-Shah duo had the last laugh. Naturally, the seasoned political party, the BJP could not have remained a silent spectator. Thackeray did confirm this, and had earlier said “All will be clear on Saturday.”

The Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari had to cancel his scheduled visit to New Delhi on Saturday. It became later clear that he was actually waiting for the inevitable event.

To be sure, one could easily say that the Shiv Sena, NCP, and Congress would have been a coalition of the improbables. It can be best described as one of the most unusual in recent Indian political history. It became quite obvious that they could manage to stitch this partnership together solely on the age-old philosophy of “Your enemy’s enemy is my friend”.

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All three pursue a common goal – to keep the BJP out of power. It forms the basis of their politics. However, this combination could not show the political stamina nor the will for ideological adaptation to last a 24-hour period. A full five-year term seems to be a ridiculous possibility.

The Congress and the Sena have been bitter political adversaries in the state for decades. The Shiv Sena has invariably used to criticise the Congress over the party's Muslim appeasement policies, its alleged involvement in corruption scandals and even Mrs Gandhi's foreign origin.

Shiv Sena's hardline Hindutva ideology was the factor which delayed a decision by the Congress' Sonia Gandhi in early November to agree to a coalition. Otherwise, Shiv Sena could have formed the government at the first instance. Shiv Sena again faced a humiliating situation on November 10, 2019 when Aaditya Thackeray went to the Governor to stake claim. Shiv Sena had to return empty-handed. In the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the Sena, much like the BJP (its then alliance partner), had taken on the then Congress president Rahul Gandhi.

Today, that is history. This seeming 'insult' could nonetheless have become a bone of contention.

The other twist in the tale is the NCP itself. Five years ago, in October 2014, soon after the Maharashtra elections, the NCP unilaterally decided support the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Its leader Sharad Pawar can spring a surprise any time. After all, the BJP has 105 seats and the NCP 54. They can, theoretically, come close together to reach the majority mark along with a few independants. It was this possibility that was creating a trust deficit between the three parties. Sena's worst fears came true on the morning of 23 November 2019.

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The BJP-NCP coalition, though, may be ready to form a government, but the alliance partners may not have a long-term common ground to stand on. It is for this reason that the first few months of the new government will be key to gauge what the next five years are going to look like in Maharashtra.