

Six in 10 Maharashtrians relate more to the national identity than the regional

The State of Bombay was bifurcated in 1960 into the Marathi-speaking Maharashtra and the Gujarati-speaking Gujarat.

Balasaheb Thackeray's satirical cartoons on anti-migrant sentiments gained steam with the local population which led to the formation of the Shiv Sena in 1966. Since then, the "Marathi first" identity has gained traction, including the "Marathi Manus" sentiment. This identity has strong following in Mumbai, Pune, and the Konkan coastal areas.

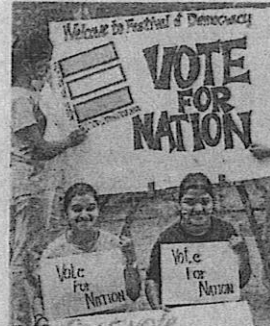
Unemployed youth were drawn to this demand for employment for local people at the expense of migrants from South India and Uttar Pradesh.

Pro-Hindutva party

The 1970s saw the transformation of the Shiv Sena to a pro-Hindutva party. The core base continued to be the supporters of the Marathi-first identity with the newer base coming from the pro-Hindutva voters. The Shiv Sena's pro-Hindutva position led to a long association with the Bharatiya Janata Party, resulting in it being one of the founding members of the National Democratic Alliance in 1998.

After the Shiv Sena split into the Shiv Sena (UBT), led by Uddhav Thackeray, and the Shiv Sena led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, the Marathi base continues to be strongly with the faction led by Mr. Thackeray and the pro-Hindutva base being equally distributed between the two factions.

The BJP, by itself, has been a favoured choice for the pro-Hindutva base as can be evidenced from the



Students paint posters during the Lok Sabha election.

EMMANUAL YOGINI

Table 1: National identity overshadowed regional identity

Maharashtrian first, Indian later	22
Indian first, Maharashtrian later	58
Equally both	15

All figures in %. The rest either gave other responses or did not respond

Table 2: Has the government worked to promote Marathi culture?

	To what extent, the government worked to promote Marathi culture..			
	Very much	Somewhat	Not much	Not at all
Overall	15	35	17	11
Maharashtrian first, Indian later	15	32	18	13
Indian first, Maharashtrian later	15	39	18	9

All figures in %. The rest either gave other responses or did not respond

Two in 10 believe that they are Maharashtrian first, Indian later. A little over one-sixth of the respondents favoured both identities equally

electoral trends till 2019.

Mood check

In order to ascertain the mood of the respondents, they were asked the following question: Some people say that they are Maharashtrians first and Indian later, while some others say that they are Indian in the first place. What do you think? Are you a Maharashtrian first or an Indian first?

From the responses, we find that the national identity has overshadowed the regional identity

significantly.

Close to six in 10 (58%) respondents believe that they are Indian first, Maharashtrian later as compared with two in 10 (22%) who believe that they are Maharashtrian first, Indian later. A little over one-sixth (15%) of the respondents favoured "equally both" identities.

When probed further, it was found that those who prioritise their regional identity are more likely to believe that the government has not worked to promote the Marathi culture.

A higher percentage of those who supported the "India first" identity (53%) felt that the government has promoted Marathi culture compared with those who supported the "Maharashtrian first" identity (47%).

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BJP is manipulating voters' lists with the help of EC, says Raut

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

Ahead of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of tampering with voters' lists in both the States with the help of the Election Commission.

At a press conference here, Mr. Raut said, "There is manipulation happening in the voters' lists in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The BJP is trying to mess up the voters' lists with the help of the EC. They [the BJP] are removing 10,000 voters who voted for the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in every constituency in the 2024 Lok Sabha election, and replacing those 10,000 voters with another 10,000 bogus voters, thus reducing our chances of winning."

He alleged that the EC had scheduled the election in a manner that would restrict the MVA from forming a government effectively.

"The counting will take place on November 23, which means the MVA partners, Sena (UBT), Congress, NCP-SP and smaller parties, will have only 48 hours for government formation. The BJP seems to



Sanjay Raut

have accepted their defeat already – that is the reason the party is playing different cards, such as engaging in voter list fraud with the help of the EC, and trying to limit the time available for the MVA to discuss and decide about government formation," he said.

The EC is acting as the BJP's spokesperson, he said. "The EC does not speak a word on the alleged tampering of electronic voting machines in the Haryana State election, and has not taken any action on the complaints raised against the misuse of money during the Lok Sabha election," he said.

Mr. Raut held Union Home Minister Amit Shah responsible for the discrepancies.

"Mr. Shah is trying his best to impose President's Rule in Maharashtra, but we will not let that happen," he said.