

Maratha Protests in the Post-Truth Era¹

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Abstract

India has witnessed several dominant caste mobilisations under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government post 2014. The Maratha protests in Maharashtra, which began in 2016, and the government's response to them have given birth to a renewed politics of caste polarisation. When the Marathas are consolidated as one caste bloc and other castes together form a polarised political scenario, the Bharatiya Janata Party is seen to be benefiting from such an arrangement. Starting with the mammoth protest marches following the Kopardi incident in 2016, and through the Bhima Koregaon incident in 2018, the politics around the Maratha Kranti Morcha has intensified the rift between the Marathas and other castes. The paper examines the changing narratives in Indian democracy and politics around the case of Maratha protests in Maharashtra.

Keywords: Collective action, polarisation, post-truth, dominant caste

Introduction

The year 2019 began with a historical event in Indian politics: The ruling government granted 10 per cent reservation for economically backward upper castes ahead of the general elections. The tenure of this government saw protests by dominant upper-caste groups from different regions demanding reservations from the respective state governments. The Jats from Punjab were followed by the Patels from Gujarat, and the Marathas in Maharashtra joined the league in 2016. Maharashtra has seen a wave of Maratha distress during the last decade given the depletion in employment in government jobs and a rising agrarian crisis, resulting in relative loss of status

¹ The authors' personal conversations on and exposure to various social media platforms primarily including WhatsApp and Facebook during 2014 and 2018 were recalled for this article.

power with the prospective collapse of the feudal agrarian rural order. However, the distress was articulated in the vocabulary of caste-specific deprivation only in 2016.

Since the Lok Sabha election in 2014, protests by dominant castes demanding reservations in public sector were observed in various states of India. The Marathas from Maharashtra organised silent marches all over the state. They constitute almost 33 per cent of the state's population. It is a dominant upper caste with significant political representation across different political parties and institutions. The social base of two parties in Maharashtra, the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), is significantly centred on the Marathas (Palshikar 2014). In the history of Maharashtra politics, more than one thousand MLAs in Maharashtra State Assembly have been Maratha (Deshpande 2014). Currently, about 50 per cent of members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in Maharashtra are Maratha. Despite these numbers, the Maratha community has been on the streets due to a deep-rooted political discontent and socio-cultural distress. This incoherence underlines the necessity of in-depth scrutiny of a series of events which revolved around the Maratha marches.

Are the Marathas historically ignored by their own representatives or is there a larger political project at play, changing the political discourse of Maharashtra with new equations? Is the Maratha Kranti Morcha (henceforth referred to as MKM, denoting the marches as well as the organisation that coordinated the marches) an issue of social justice based on socio-historical facts or is it an instance of change in the political narrative, based more on emotional appeal and layers of fabricated victimisation? While leaning towards the possibilities in the latter halves of all these questions, this paper attempts to analyse the Maratha marches in the reference frame of post-truth politics.

Three significant events in Maharashtra have to be discussed in order to grapple with the narrative of the MKM: first, the response to *Sairat* (2016), a widely popular movie directed by Nagraj Manjule; second, the brutal incident at Kopardi, Ahmednagar; and third, the outbreak of violence at Bhima Koregaon on 1st January 2018.

History of the “Political Marathas”

The Marathas have been closely attached to positions of power since Indian independence. The feudal claim of Marathas to political power on various territorial units from pre-colonial history sits well in the collective imagination of Maharashtra, where the Marathas are considered as

Kshatriyas by non-Marathas and Marathas. In the arena of politics, the Marathas have often identified themselves with various mythological and historical kings and emperors. Their political identity has been articulated in the history of Maharashtra as 'custodians of Maharashtra' since the history of the regime of Shivaji is widely known as 'Maratha history' through the simplistic British epistemology. The rise of Hindutva politics in Maharashtra articulated this 'Maratha history' in terms of anti-Muslim and anti-minority politics (Daniyal 2014)

The relationship of the Marathas with the reservation policy has seen major upheavals. The reservation policy was conceptualised in Maharashtra, when Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur reserved 50 per cent posts in his state's services for backward communities, including the Marathas. The decision had followed the Vedokta controversy in the late nineteenth century, when many Maratha ruling families in Maharashtra were denied their claim to the Kshatriya status, and consequently their scriptural right to rule.

Following Indian Independence, the Marathas have been largely vocal against reservations. Mridul Kumar (2009) observes that in 1982, an active Maratha outfit, Maratha Mahasangh, led by Annasaheb Patil, had opposed caste-based reservations and the Maratha leader Shrimant Kokate admitted his participation in the anti-Mandal agitations. This outward rejection of reservation only took a different direction in the new millennium, when the demand for Maratha reservations in the other backward classes (OBC) category arose.

The Maratha community is not homogenous. There are numerous diversities that can be observed within the community. The Marathas are divided among rural and urban regions, with varying degrees of land ownership and varying ritual positions (endogamous sub-caste groups) disallowing inter-marriages. Despite these differences, the Marathas perceive themselves as one cultural group with common cultural history. The rural land-owning families among this diverse population of the Marathas have dominated politics in Maharashtra since Independence. In answer to a public interest litigation (PIL) from 2014, it has been stated that there have been 18 Maratha chief ministers in Maharashtra and more than 1,000 Maratha MLAs (Deshpande 2014). Research by Anderson et al (2016: 15) state that

If Marathas are present in the village, they almost always fill the gram pradhan position if there are no reservations in place for the lower castes.

Maratha gram pradhans are typically larger landowning cultivators—the majority of them own more than five acres of land and almost all of them (84%) depend on cultivation for their primary livelihoods.

This points to the fact that although the Marathas dominate the political landscape of Maharashtra, the class character of these leaders is well demarcated. There exists a small “ruling elite” within the Maratha community with a very different economic situation than the majority small and impoverished rural and urban Marathas. The ruling class does not seem to take the agricultural collapse in the state or the aspirations of youth for service sector (like IT) jobs and the necessary education for the same into account. Anderson et al (2016: 16) also note that in spite of the Marathas owning 58 per cent private colleges in rural Maharashtra, those Marathas who are in need of higher education clearly do not benefit from these colleges.

The history of the Maratha community and its relationship to the contemporary realpolitik has made it vulnerable to be perceived as aggressive and feudal. The perception of an assault on the dignity of Maratha women is seen as the highest level of assault for Maratha honour. Maratha women marrying men from other, especially lower castes is also counted as an ‘assault’ in this sense, even when the marriages have occurred with the consent of the women. For this reason, the blockbuster movie ‘Sairat’ aggravated the Maratha community in Maharashtra.

***Sairat*: “Anti-Maratha” Movie**

Sairat, the superhit movie of 2016 directed by Nagaraj Manjule, revolves around a love story of a Dalit man and a Maratha woman. The storyline of the movie reveals that Archi, the Maratha protagonist of the film who elopes with her Dalit lover, is a daughter of an influential village-level Maratha leader. The woman’s family has the couple assassinated in the name of caste honour and political prestige.

The movie was commercially successful and critically acclaimed in and outside Maharashtra and Manjule, a Dalit himself, was hailed nationally. However, the plot of the movie seemed to offend the Marathas due to the hypogamy practised by the female lead, “staining” the honour of her Maratha caste. Various social media platforms were used to convey that *Sairat* hurt the feelings of the Maratha community (Joshi, 2016). The political leadership of the Marathas expressed their dissatisfaction with Marathi movies (with special reference to *Sairat*) that generally demonise the Maratha community. Several Maratha groups and outfits appealed to the Marathas to boycott the film that injured the prestige of the Maratha community.² *Sairat* is based against the backdrop of Karmala, a Tehsil from Solapur district from the Maratha-dominated western Maharashtra.

² This was revealed through various messages that were circulated widely on various social media platforms after April 2016.

Manjule could not hold *Sairat*'s premiere screening in Karmala, which also happens to be his own native place.

The film was released in April 2016. Yogesh Joshi from *Hindustan Times* reported that around June and July, Maratha outfits protested the film by stating that it allegedly portrayed a “one-sided” story. “The film has done injustice to the Marathas by portraying them as villains. While honour killing is the reality in many communities, Marathas are being singled out and deliberately targeted’, said Rajendra Kondhre, the president of the Akhil Bhartiya Maratha Mahasangh” (Y. Joshi 2016). None of the electoral parties officially opposed the movie. However, several organisations associated with some parties took a stand against the movie. The NCP or the INC did not officially take part in the MKM events but avoided challenging MKM through a strategic distance while keeping an eye on the electoral arithmetic. It played out against their favour in local elections. These protests and agitations created a solid pitch to consolidate discontent in the Maratha community which got culminated in the MKM on the backdrop of the brutal rape and killing of a young Maratha girl residing in Kopardi.

Kopardi and the Irreparable Stain on Maratha Honour

The incident that triggered the rage of Marathas in the form of the MKM all over Maharashtra was the gang-rape and murder of a fifteen-year-old Maratha girl from the Kopardi village from Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra. On the evening of 13th July 2016, the schoolgirl was allegedly raped by three men, all Dalits, and subsequently brutally murdered. The incident soon hit the headlines and was heavily discussed in all regional media outlets. In a couple of days, all three accused were arrested and, within a fortnight, the then chief minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadanvis, visited the family of the victim.

On 9th August 2016, within one month of the incident, the first Morcha (march by the MKM) was organised in Aurangabad, drawing the participation of over 300,000 people. The rally articulated the rage of the Maratha community for destroying the “honour of their sister” and demanded capital punishment for the three accused. The hurt sentiments due to the portrayal of the hypogamous choice of the Maratha protagonist (the female lead) of *Sairat* was turned into “enraged sentiments” of the community. It was as if the community lamented the tainting of Maratha honour due the choice of a lower caste partner by the daughter of the caste-community (Archi, the female protagonist of *Sairat*) and was enraged when the honour was tainted again with the physical abuse of a young woman (another daughter/sister) of the caste-community. It is

important to note that this tainting of honour in “community sentiments” takes place regardless of a woman’s consent to the sexual encounter with a lower-caste man. The rape is in a way equated to elopement by choice. The woman’s consent does not matter to the others in the community who view any heterosexual sexual encounter between a Maratha woman and a man from another caste as the man’s triumph over the woman and her community. The woman’s choice in exercising her own sexuality is in a way invisible to the mind of the community.

Given the underlying caste polarisation between the Marathas and the Dalits, especially stark in the Marathwada region where the first march was organised, the MKM soon expressed the divide aggressively, by adding two significant demands to the initial demand of punishment for the men who assaulted the honour of the community. These two demands were that misuse of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, ³should be stopped and that the Marathas should get reservations. Within one year, more than 50 rallies were organised in all 36 districts of Maharashtra. The monsoon session of the year 2016 also had to address the Kopardi incident and the state government assured the protesters to give justice to the victim by hearing the case in a fast-track court and appointing the Padma Shri awardee of that year, Ujjwal Nikam, as the public prosecutor. Within a year, the three accused were sentenced for life in the fast-track court in Ahmednagar.

However, within this one year, the MKM had added to its charter of demands from the government again. The demand for reservations had now occupied the centre-stage and was being discussed in line with the Jat and Patel agitations in the country.

Journey of the Maratha agitations starts with the incident of rape and murder of a Maratha girl by three Dalit men. The MKM, an organisation now with a website and active social media mechanism, started demanding justice for the deceased “sister”. This became the initial rallying point for people against the misuse of the Atrocity Act. A demand for reservations for the Marathas was also strongly put forth with this. The MKM’s narrative of the dominant caste consolidation focused on the Dalits (and those who are shielding them: government and the bureaucracy) who were seen as primary beneficiaries of reservations armed with the Atrocity Act.

The Kopardi incident, the immediate response to it, and the subsequent eleven-month trial raised several questions about the series of events from 12th July. A story in *The Week* by Niranjan Takle

³ For more information see: Maratha kranti morcha. (2017, November 17). Times of India: India Times. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/miscellaneous/maratha-kranti-morcha/articleshow/59971139.cms>

even argues that several facts about the rape and murder, as recorded officially, do not add up (Takle 2017). By highlighting the caste locations of both the victim and the accused, the caste divide between the Marathas and others was deepened. While rape cases are a painful social reality of India, it is important to note that only some acquire media attention and while Dalit women's rapes are normalised and rendered insignificant by the media, certain rape cases of upper caste women become rallying points given their social location.

The MKM's Obscurantist Politics and Electoral Arithmetic

The Maratha mobilisation gained momentum after the Kopardi incident. From the demand of retribution for the culprits in the rape case, the mobilisation emphasised the caste locations of the alleged culprits and victim. This can be seen in contrast with the brutal rape case that took place in Delhi in December 2012. In the Delhi case, politics of the region did not mandate such caste polarisation and, hence, castes of the victim and the accused were rarely a matter of overt discussion. In this case, the victim was called Nirbhaya, which can be translated as fearless. However, it is interesting to note that the victim from the Kopardi case was repeatedly referred to as "a daughter of Jijau", (Queen Jijau was Shivaji's mother). In the modern political history of Maharashtra, Shivaji has often been portrayed as the greatest embodiment of Maratha pride and pride of the Maratha is often equated with the pride of being Marathi, that is, being Maharashtrian. The alleged culprits were repeatedly recalled with an emphasis on their Dalit identity. Hence, the entire incident of Kopardi was portrayed as an assault on the Maratha by the Dalits. The MKM emphasised this narrative by demanding a stop to the abuse of SC/ST Atrocities Act. On 28th August 2016, Sharad Pawar, a Maratha leader and the chief of NCP, said, "Demand for the scrapping of the act is a social reaction which needs to be considered seriously" (P. Joshi 2016). Further, he added that this Act is being misused. After a day or two, he clarified that he wanted to say that this act is misused by Savarnas. Such politics of obscurantism intensified the rift between the Dalits and the Marathas. On the face of it, it appeared as if the agenda of the MKM was to destabilise the state government.

The claim of misuse of SC/ST Atrocities Act by Sharad Pawar stands in contradiction with the surveys of implementation of the act. While most of the cases are not reported, the act remains unimplemented for a significant number of times. It would be noteworthy to observe the Supreme Court observation to the petition filed by the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) seeking direction from the Court for the government with regards non-implementation

of the Prevention of Atrocities Act. In his article in the *Economic and Political Weekly* on the Mahajan Judgment, Nitish Nawasagaray (2018) has quoted the Supreme Court in this regard. The Supreme Court has observed that:

We have carefully examined the material on record and we are of the opinion that there has been a failure on the part of the authorities concerned in complying with the provisions of the Act and the Rules. The laudable object with which the Act had been made is defeated by the indifferent attitude of the authorities ... The abundant material on record proves that the authorities concerned are guilty of not enforcing the provisions of the Act. The travails of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes continue unabated. We are satisfied that the Central Government and State Governments should be directed to strictly enforce the provisions of the Act and we do so. The National Commissions are also directed to discharge their duties to protect the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

In the backdrop of this reality, the statement by Pawar created enough space for ambiguous political interpretations. As in the case of all post-truth politics, facts and emotive appeals do not coincide, and in many cases (just as this one), they run in opposite directions. Pawar later appeared to correct himself by subverting this statement. However, he played a win-win game by making an ambiguous statement open for opposite interpretations.

“Faceless” Leadership and “Drone” Crowd

Unlike the Patel agitation in Gujarat, the Maratha protests from Maharashtra were without any concrete leadership. Different contemplations and interpretations were made in the last two years, but it was difficult to locate the political leadership of the MKM. One contemplation was that the social media is the faceless leader of the MKM (Ghadyalpatil 2016). This was true as far as social media could be seen as a galvanising force for the mobilisation of lakhs of Marathas. On the other hand, facelessness seemed to be a strategy of the MKM for playing out (dominant caste-based) identity politics without revealing its own (political) identity. The official Twitter handle of the MKM could get hardly 13,000–14,000 followers, whereas their Facebook page attracted more than 200,000 hits (as of October 2018). This reveals the socio-economic demographic profile of the MKM. Since Twitter is a space with an almost exclusively economically affluent membership, while Facebook has relatively greater and more inclusive (although limited) membership, it is clear that the MKM drew its participation mainly from the non-elites. Almost every march was covered by drones and later the technology assisted in creating an illusion of crowds of lakhs. With the slogan

“Ek Maratha, Lakh Maratha” (One Maratha means Lakhs of Marathas), mobs of Marathas were organised and orchestrated systematically. Even though sizeable crowds could be drawn on the streets, the appeal of the MKM and technological gimmicks accompanying it made it more impactful than the efforts on the streets.

Narrative Shift

Among the initial demands put forth by the MKM was the appeal to stop the abuse of the Atrocity Act and reservation for the community. Both these demands were not directly related to the Kopardi incident, but the incident was used as a catalyst to mobilise all Marathas. The aforementioned story published in *The Week* about the dubious narration of the Kopardi incident highlights how emphasis on selective facts or false information is used in contemporary right-wing politics to animate people’s emotions like caste loyalties. This is concurrent with the very idea of post-truth politics where emotions and perceptions are more powerful than the truth or facts. After 58 marches, the MKM added three more demands during the massive march of 9th August 2017 in Mumbai. These demands were: construction of a *Shiv Smarak* (King Shivaji memorial monument) in the Arabian Sea; formation of the institution Shahu Research and Training Institute (SARATHI) for the betterment of Maratha youth on the lines of Babasaheb Ambedkar Research and Technical Institution (BARTI); and reconstruction of Annasaheb Patil Financial Development Board. These demands were made to compensate for the demand of reservations as the policy of reservation could not be adopted because of judicial restraints (as of October 2018). Some tangible demands seemed well-suited for the state government as well. Erstwhile Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis proactively followed up the demands of the Shiv Smarak and SARATHI, while assuring that justice would be delivered to the Maratha community by also providing reservations.

The Maratha pride was repeatedly emphasised in this mobilisation by establishing a nostalgic link with the army of Shivaji Maharaj and pitching it against the modern reality of the Dalits abusing this feudal Maratha pride. Portrayed as a group equipped with the reservation policy and armed with the Atrocity Act, the Dalits became the principal offenders, the prime enemy, in this narrative.

Electoral Arithmetic

Even though there is no evidence to suggest any overt linkage between the MKM and the BJP, it is clear that after multiple marches by the MKM, the BJP emerged victorious in rural as well as urban Maharashtra during the civil polls conducted in January and February 2017. The BJP’s performance was stunning as politics of western Maharashtra is dominated by the Marathas and

the MKM had an unprecedented response from these parts. In Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad, the BJP unseated the NCP, which enjoys the support of the Maratha community, while in Solapur, the BJP ended the forty-year rule of the Congress by winning the civic body elections. The party also swept the countryside by winning almost half of the total twenty-five Zilla Parishads that went to polls. The party won 398 seats against the 187 that it had bagged during the previous elections.

These outcomes clearly underline that the unprecedented gatherings of the MKM were a complementary move for the BJP as it divided the voting base of the opposition parties, namely, the INC and the NCP, with the help of caste polarisation tactics on the foundation of a political narrative of Maratha pride against the modern social justice measures in the favour of the Dalits.

Bhima Koregaon and the Politics of Narrative Subversion

The caste polarisation after 2016 also resulted in *prati morchas* (counter rallies) by various caste groups, including the Dalits and nomadic tribes. The MKM responded to these interjections in two ways: either with appropriation or with increased aggressiveness. Certain caste/community groups like Muslims and various OBC groups were incorporated in the MKM events, showcasing their symbolic representation on the MKM platform (Kulkarni & Singh 2017). However, the MKM responded to Dalit *prati morchas* with a show of more strength and aggressive anti-Dalit demands. One particular Dalit agitation amid this series of rallies and marches drew the most aggressive response from the Marathas and the state government. This agitation was the Elgaar Parishad, which was followed by the violence at Bhima Koregaon celebration in the beginning of 2018.

Commemoration of the victory of the Mahar soldiers over the Peshwa army in the last Anglo-Peshwa war on 1st January is a routine celebration in the Ambedkarite community in Maharashtra. The year 2018 marked the 200th anniversary of this historic victory of the Mahars and the anniversary was celebrated with much vigour by different Ambedkarite groups that gathered at the historic site on 1st January. This event was preceded by a mammoth Elgaar Parishad in Pune's Shaniwarwada, the symbolic embodiment of Peshwa rule. Different Dalit groups, along with some progressive Muslim groups, came together for the Parishad and shared the stage with national leaders. As Probodhan Pol explains in his article in *The Hindu* on the Bhima Koregaon event, "The gathering declared a renewed struggle against the Hindutva rule over Maharashtra and India, by conceptualising the present evil to be the 'new Peshwa'" (Pol 2018). He further notes that with

leaders like Jignesh Mewani, Radhika Vemula, and Umar Khalid occupying the stage, alongside Prakash Ambedkar, the anti-Hindutva agenda of the Parishad was evident.

A couple of months before the Bhima Koregaon celebration, there was another confrontation in the village of Bhima Koregaon. The site where Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of the Shivaji Maharaj, was cremated is near Bhima Koregaon. A sign near the site, remembering a Dalit man who arranged Sambhaji's last rites, suddenly became a site of confrontation. A few Maratha households filed a complaint against the Dalits who put up the sign, claiming that there is no historical evidence of the fact that Sambhaji was indeed cremated by a Dalit and that it was illegal to put up such a sign.

On 1st January, during the celebrations at Bhima Koregaon, there was an outbreak of violence between the people celebrating the Bhima Koregaon bicentenary, consisting mainly of Dalits and Marathas. The violence resulted in one death. Organisers of the Elgaar Parishad and Bhima Koregaon celebrations accused Sambhaji Bhide and Milind Ekbote for instigating the violence. Sambhaji Bhide considers himself a carrier of the heritage of Shivaji and Sambhaji, the two icons of Maratha pride. Bhide has a history of cases against him for instigating riots. The followers of Sambhaji Bhide were accused of assaulting Ambedkarites gathered for the celebrations, since they viewed Bhima Koregaon as a site of Maratha pride and not Ambedkarite/ Dalit/ Mahar pride.

Upon the row over the violence at Bhima Koregaon the erstwhile chief minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnis, said that Sambhaji Bhide could not be arrested due to lack of evidence of his involvement in the case. A number of human rights activists now termed as “urban naxals” were named as conspirators by the government and arrested for the violence during Bhima Koregaon celebrations.⁴

The state government attempted to articulate the violence during this Dalit-led agitation in terms of violence created by the far-left. The Dalit organisers of the event also came under the government scanner as “Maoists”. At a time when both the state and central government are ruled by a Hindutva party-led alliance, the Dalit–Maratha polarisation in Maharashtra was exploited by the governing party to sustain its power. The consolidated Maratha vote bank became a new

⁴ For more information on the timeline of the Bhima Koregaon Case, see: Bhima Koregaon Case: A Timeline of What Has Happened So Far (2023, July 28). *Outlook India*. <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/bhima-koregaon-case-a-timeline-of-what-has-happened-so-far-news-306463>

majority due to this polarisation and was captured by the Hindutva forces, as it is evident from the Bhima Koregaon episode.

Conclusion

it is evident that the post-truth politics of the MKM directly or indirectly helped the right-wing politics of the BJP. The root causes of Maratha distress and discontent including a massive agricultural crisis, severely depleting opportunities in education and employment were not addressed (Palshikar et al). Rather, while ignoring all these concerns completely, an over-aggressive dominant caste identity politics with its decidedly anti-Dalit narrative occupied the centre-stage, creating a rift and changing the electoral arithmetic as well as the caste-based perception of the social fabric of Maharashtra.

The caste-based polarisation by consolidating Marathas under the MKM and reconstructing the narratives underlying the reservation policy and caste assertions has significantly altered the political dynamics in Maharashtra. The exponential rise in unemployment, the agricultural crisis in the state, and the socio-political anxieties arising out of the popular cultural discourse in the era of post-truth have resulted in a multi-faceted turmoil. At a time when new vocabularies of caste-based assertions are constructed alongside the renewed projects of religious polarisation across India through the platforms of social media, narratives behind various democratic processes are being altered. The language of social justice, which essentially accompanies the reservation policy, is suffering from epistemological violence, resulting in retributive notions of justice. Reservations have come to be associated with compensatory measures to correct the inequitable distribution of government schemes. The values underlying representation and the understanding of the distribution of socio-cultural resources have significantly altered.

At a time when the neoliberal economy has already shrunk the scope of the public sector and subsequently of reservations in the public sector, the introduction of reservation for the upper castes on economic basis, makes the whole schema of affirmative action useless. The logic of compensation of social injustice is completely shattered with this move. The core nature of caste system is hierarchy, which is invisibilised by projecting castes as competing interest groups striving for material gains from the State. Politics in India in the post-truth era articulates itself by challenging the core values of liberty, equality and social justice in the Constitution of India by reinterpreting the society, erasing the reality of existing hierarchies, and demarcating identity groups, ever-reducing in size, until ultimately only one individual with endless watertight identities

is left to fend for herself. This perfectly complements the neoliberal logic of the economy. As consciousness of material realities of class position is obscured by repeated appeals to caste loyalties in rallying calls for “preserving feudal pride”, the trend of impoverishment of non-landowning Marathas further fuels this post-truth scheme. The more impoverished the members, the more they blame the systematically identified enemy—in this case, the Dalits.

In terms of political temporality, the post-truth era has given a new point of entry for investigation of several age-old assumptions about dichotomies of reason and emotion, autonomy and control, public and private, and so on. The shift in political narratives of caste mobilisations in Indian democracy offers another array of dichotomies and rhetoric to be questioned including that of the group and the individual.

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