

SHIVRAJ. S . CHOUHAN LEGENDARY MUKHYA SEWAK- CUM-WEAKEST CM

When Shivraj paratrooped into the CM's chair most people believed that he'd be a puppet in the hands of RSS and the BJP coterie. For the large part of his first term he remained so. However second term onwards he began asserting himself. Shivraj limited RSS to social cultural affairs and education on the one hand and began dealing with central BJP leadership on relatively even terms. The third term saw him keen on legacy issues .Let's get a broad overview term wise.

The headroom for any CM to do quantum work is limited. Yet that little space if utilised well can make all the difference. In BJP it is even less ,being a cadre based outfit and control strings attached to the RSS. The real test is what he does beyond the core constituency and social schemes transcending the vote bank. His performance is evaluated by his executive / cabinet decisions (his party's performance by policies and programmes) and his credibility judged by his humanitarian steps (esp.discretionary). He'll have to be rated on going beyond symbolism for those outside core constituency and transcending tokenism for people beyond vote bank. (Since policies and programmes are not likely to favour them)

When Shivraj came in the expectations were two fold - to get the physical infrastructure in order and to get some grassroots up development in the first phase. He set the direction right - focusing on BSP (Bijli Sadak Pani) and introduced many social schemes esp. for women-whereby he was reelected .In the second term the expectations were different - Shivraj was supposed to perform on growth indices and deliver on Human Development indicators - education & health and industry & jobs. (It ought to have been infrastructure & delivery in first term, programmes & administration in the second innings and policy & governance in the third term.)

He began the second phase by making the right noises - holding investors' meet for the industry , vowing to make agriculture profitable (interest free loans, agriculture cabinet etc.), providing skills training to youth , making ITI's as brands , planning rural courts , proposing rural medical courses , sending Ayurveda doctors to villages, teaching English in Vanavasi(tribal) schools ,backing hockey and so on...

At the end of the second term - more industries were shut down than those who invested ; Education was in a shambles (Digvijay destroyed the primary education, Shivraj made a mess of Higher Studies); health service improved marginally at the



tertiary level but primary health-care deteriorated further; Agriculture improved though much less than the extent claimed (Which is a statistical jugglery) , sports was used mostly as a PR exercise - feting sports stars of other states , Indian hockey team , organising a CM sports meet etc. but not much for sporting culture...All in all, it was more symbolism than substance.

The third term was supposed to be an ideal launch pad for Shivraj 's legacy issues . However , it ran into rough weather from the outset given that in some quarters a rivalry between him and Modi was projected for the PM candidacy. So when BJP won at the centre ,on the surface it appeared to be a win - win situation for the state but in reality things were different .To begin with , Modi stopped the 100 rupees bonus on wheat (perhaps he was aware that it was a farce); after that the national economy slowed down and social sector spending was cut - hitting MP particularly hard and then demonetisation-all this perhaps made Shivraj yearn for UPA regime.

There were many half baked steps in his innings viz. embarking upon river Linkages - (Narmada-Shipra and Ken - Betwa) without gauging the possible negative fallouts of playing with nature . Besides, there have been many populisms - inviting popular film persons for state festivals and myth creation in the name of Raja Bhoj etc. Perhaps he employed the time tested trick of keeping the masses opiate - dumb and numb by engrossing them in superficial , frivolous and sensational .Shivraj kept the people engaged in massy stuff in the name of socio-cultural activities thereby taking their attention off serious stuff while giving the impression that he was doing a lot. Moreover, there were a whole lot of grey areas too- coal allocation to Ambani beyond the norm ,forcible land acquisition at Bhujbhuj; renaming many central schemes under state government's name - viz. Nirmal gram Yojana into Maryada yojana; rechristening even the cultural programmes of Congress - Lokrang to Bharat

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Many of Shivraj's actions could well fall under the category of reverse politics -doing centralization of those which ought to be decentralized viz . by organising Panchayats of poor , marginalised and the informal sector. Only the dynamic ,creamy among them make it to these and organise vote banks. Since they are not BJP's traditional vote bank, these Panchayats serve twin purposes-give the sense of participation to people as also serve as an ideas factory. However, they create powerbrokers among these sections since mostly the creamy among them are able to make it to the Panchayats.

While the delivery of social security schemes has been better than Congress the governance which BJP used to tomtom took a hit .In Shivraj's regime it was not merely corruption but plain theft of funds and natural resources. Biggest beneficiaries - were traders & OBC's- nothing surprising in that they constitute his traditional constituency and vote bank . However ,the extent was mindboggling -in Shivraj's government of Karyakartas 15% people cornered 85% of public funds for - Makaan , Dukan our K h a d a n . (L a n d / H o u s e s , Properties and Mines)

Ministers' work was clipped by empowered committees. Being a cadre controlled party the lower and middle bureaucracy almost become dedicated to them. Hence the general impression that bureaucrats controlled his government .

Shivraj did not hesitate to emulate the perverse traits of other politicians even if they were from opposing parties. For instance, the modus operandi of coopting the opposition leaders was initiated by Arjun Singh ,his disciple Digvijay mastered it - Shivraj seems to have perfected it. In particular , the lower Congress functionaries and regional media were coopted by obliging them obscenely.

Was it all running around even to stay in the same place ? Even if there were no government this could've been achieved. Why then have a government? - let bureaucracy run it. Incidentally, one sometimes wondered as to how does a CM who talks so much and travels so much get any serious work done ? All Independent reports seem to back the suspicion - On most Human Development Indices M.P fares poorly - Biggest Hunger deficit state ;Highest infant mortality, ranked 26th in Education... Overall RBI report puts the state in the most backward category. Madhya Pradesh remains the fourth poorest state - the same position that it held 15years ago.

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A CO-OPTED, VIRTUAL OPPOSITION

(Madhya Pradesh Media Platform)

National politician while talking to me sometime ago said " Your state is a politically dead state... had something like VYA-PAM happened in U.P. or Bihar - even if they are economically backward- people would've come out on to streets and government would have fallen." I offered a superficial reason saying that the opposition is limp since they're co-opted ; most of their leaders too benefitted from VYAPAM largesse.

In order to understand the real , deep reason behind it one will have to look at a historical perspective. Madhya Pradesh has never had a truly great homegrown ruler- particularly in the second millennium. Only when there were no attacks from north of Chambal and/or no aggressions from the south of Narmada did strong local kings emerge.

Looking at the contemporary reasons , it all began with Digvijay allowing free for all in the party elections exacerbated by Rahul's later experiment with elections in NSUI. Throughout the tenure he was scheming to nullify the Regional Satraps and at the same time not allowing any second rung leadership to grow. After losing in 2003 Digvijay announced a 10 year Sanyas from electoral politics -which was strange given that Sanyasis normally go to the grassroots , not Delhi. The weak leadership of UPA during the same period didn't help matters. Also , the party heads in the period didn't exactly complement and supplement the LOP.

Subhash Yadav , the first party President in the state post Digvijay was from the opposite camp. He was aggressive and had a stranglehold over cooperatives. BJP took over the cooperative movement - including cooperative banks-in a short time. They passed a law about not allowing public representatives to contest their elections -thereby eliminating most Congressmen on board. After which , Yadav was left toothless and he died a little later.

Jamuna Devi was made the LOP , going primarily by her seniority. Barring her spirited attack in the dumper scam , there is not much to write about her tenure. In fact , the No- confidence motion she wanted to table got leaked and to save the blushes Congress diverted to a personal attack on Shivraj.

Suresh Pachauri became the President before the 2008 elections. He had al ways been a paratrooper - becoming Rajya Sabha MP five times without ever contesting a single election- thanks to his proximity to Rajiv Gandhi and family. A paratrooper as LOP can still be managed by the high command - given his limited sp ace but such a

party president rarely succeeds. Pachauri met with the same fate- all the regional satraps conspired against him. Consequently , not only did Congress miss out its best chance of forming a government but Pachauri couldn't win his own seat.

Jamuna Devi was made the LOP for the second time- mostly as a compromise candidate. During the period she was mostly unwell. Sometimes she even missed the entire sessions.

In the third term Kantilal Bhuria was made the party president. Though well meaning and hard working he could not leave a mark. At best he was seen as a stop gap arrangement.



Ajay Singh was made the LOP- he was inarticulate and laid back. Moreover , that was the golden period of Shivraj's reign. All the big guns - Digvijay. Kamalnath & Scindia stay put in Delhi but the party failed to revive. The nadir was when during the last session he was to present a no- confidence motion , the Deputy Leader Rakesh Chaturvedi opposed him on the floor of the house and crossed over to BJP thereby killing the move.

During the third term Satyadev Katare became the LOP. However, it was by default -in a tussle between the most deserving Mukesh Nayak and the one with maximum support- Ajay Singh. Thus though aggressive and articulate - he lacked the moral support. Moreover, he could be easily co-opted since he'd risen from a small time employee and had several commercial interests in Bhopal. His untimely death once again brought Ajay Singh to the fore. In his second innings Ajay Singh did try to reinvent himself by becoming more media savvy and touring extensively but it was too little too late. Yet again the proposed no-confidence motion in the last session was scuttled and the entire session got washed out.

Arun Yadav was the President for most of third term. The party wanted to groom him for long term in the light of the rise of Yadav leaders on the national scene. He was offered a heavy weight ministry in the UPA regime earlier but Arun wasn't upto the mark. So , perhaps the party wanted to see whether he had the qualities of a street fighter and made him the

president. Arun was active all the time without being effective. Though a better speaker than his father , he lacked charisma - softened by comforts ,as it were.

It is worth noting that in each of the three terms one of the LOP's died in office. Also interesting to note that thrice the no- confidence motion was scuttled before discussion on the floor of the house. That tells something about the ineptitude of the Congress High Command as also the great floor management of BJP.

In the past 15 years, not merely the leader but its grassroots and frontal organisations were defunct most of the time. They also failed in their role of communicating the good work of the central government to the masses. Consequently,

most of the positives of UPA I were either wiped out , nullified or became negative in UPA-II. Even when they took up something it wasn't followed up. For instance , making Districtwise - Aarop Patra was a good move but was not persisted with. Moreover , the fact that many

Congress ruled State governments performed creditably was not driven home. Delhi , Maharashtra , Utrkhand ,Himachal , Haryana all did reasonably well. Strangely Congress didn't highlight its successes in these states .Most importantly, the opposition failed capitalise on government's inadequacies. There were opportunities galore viz. VYAPAM, Farmers' unrest , Simhashta mismanagement et al but each of these were highlighted by apolitical persons- the reason being that Congressmen and others were hand in glove in sharing the fruits. If only the opposition had shown unity on all party /state issues throughout the 5yr term and not only in the last quarter there would've been a change in polity - rather than merely a change in government.

Kamal Nath's elevation with his corporate -cum- family business approach is the last ditch effort by the party to avoid an existential crisis in the state. Bringing all the heavy weight on a platform ; pumping in huge money and appointing four working presidents is an investment in future besides giving due weightage to charisma in Jyotiraditya and popular support in Ajay Singh. The most critical role in preventing defeat is going to be that of Digvijay's coordination. On the face of it the roles have been perfectly allocated.- it is almost the same approach in Rajashtan. Whether it'll end in Gavaskar - Kapil like factionalism or Dhoni-Virat like amity, only time will tell.

THE BIG PICTURE

INFRASTRUCTURE GROWTH
MIRACLE ; HUMAN DEVEL-

OPMENT DISASTER

" Road network quadrupled in 15 yrs.
" Irrigation network doubled
" Power generation grew three times.

" MP remains at the bottom of infant mortality rate
" The state has the highest incidence of crime against women
" MP has figured at the bottom of all

reports on education- ASAR/
PRATHAM

* The percentage of Industrial production in GDP of MP remained unchanged from 2003-18
* Its ranking among bigger states pendulates between 12 and 13.
* 15yrs ago MP was the fourth poorest -in 2018 it still remains the same(It was the same at the time of formation) (Source : India Today ranking of States.)