



The Role of Regional Political Parties in Goa

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Abstract

Political parties have developed in every country in the modern world. Their importance in political systems of various kinds since the late nineteenth century has meant that they have long been a central concern of political writers, political philosophers and political scientists. In 1850 no country in the world (except the United States) knew political parties in the modern sense of the world. There were trends of opinion, popular clubs, philosophical societies and parliamentary groups, but no real parties. In 1950 parties function in most civilized nations, and in others there is an attempt to imitate them. (Duverger, 1964) This explains the development and the necessity of political Parties in Modern Representative Democracies. The article is about the emergence regional political parties of Goa, the role played by the regional Parties in retaining the unique identity of Goa and the Party Politics.

Key words: philosophical societies, Portuguese, Parliamentary elections

1. An Overview of Political Parties in Goa during Portuguese period

The tiny Territory of Goa on the subcontinent of India which was under the Portuguese domination for 450 years has attracted quite some attention of many in the world during the last 50 years. Goa was the smallest territory ruled by the smallest colonial power which held on to it longer than any other; yet it was the first subject 'nation' to raise its voice against political slavery and alien domination in the sixteenth century when the world had not even dreamt that it was possible for the conquered peoples to revolt against their political masters with a view to overthrowing them. This aspect of Goa's history is not known to many. Yet it is a historical fact. By 1788 whole of Goa was completely under the Portuguese domination. In 1820 parliamentary Government was established in Portugal and as Goa was ruled from Portugal Goans too were entitled to send

representatives to the Portuguese Parliament.

By a Decree(order) of 18 April 1821, Goa was authorized to elect six members to the Portuguese Parliament (Cortes). In the earlier stages of Parliamentary elections, the Goans were satisfied in aligning themselves with the political parties in Portugal known as *Patuleia* and *Chafarica*. But in the second half of the nineteenth Century, two distinct Goan Political parties made their appearance. Both had their origin with two families in Salcete.

The First Political Party known as *Partido Indiano* led by the family of Loyolas of Orlim. The other political party was known as 'Partido Ultramarino'. This Party was founded by Bernardo Francisco da Costa of Margao.

The coming into existence of these parties was a great gain in Goa. The two parties were in forefront of almost all elections there were held in the



nineteenth century. With Antonio Olivier Salazar coming to power everything was changed. All the political and civil rights were suspended as he was a dictator. Salazar for nearly 20 years denied the political rights to its citizen. But in 1945 he gave some democratic rights to its citizens. But in these elections only the candidate of '*Uniao Nacional*' (National Union) Party alone could be elected. The elections were held to National Assembly in 1945 with two representatives from Goa. There were four elections from that year till 1961 when the Portuguese colonialism came to an end in Goa.

2 The First General elections of Goa Daman & Diu (1963)

Goa was liberated from the Portuguese Colonial yoke on 19th December 1961. To oversee the transfer of power after the liberation of Goa, Major General K.P. Candeth who led the victorious Indian Forces was appointed Military Governor for nearly six Months. The task of the military administration was to bring normality and create conditions for the introduction of civil administration. The civil administration was headed by Lieutenant Governor Tumkur Shivshankar. The task of the governance and law making was carried out by the Lt. Governor.

The Union Territory Amendment Act 1963, introduced in Lok Sabha by Home Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, passed on 4th May 1963 providing for 30 elected MLA's and two elected MP's to the Lok Sabha. It also sought the delimitation of the constituencies to make way for the 9th December elections. Any attempt at government formation in a democracy is preceded by the formation of political parties, coalitions or mergers and a free and fair election. With the advent of liberation, political parties, offering several alternative syndromes of

ideologies, interest and attachments made their appearance for the first time on the Goan scene.

The Indian National Congress was seen by many as the main contender for power and bearing in mind the role of the congress in Goa's Liberation, its rule in majority states, the absence of other well organized parties in Goa, and the charismatic leadership of Nehru at the centre, many gave it the best chance of winning the first free elections to be held on liberated Goan soil. The congress highlighted the important issues of political stability and developing the economy. Basically the aims, objectives and programs of the Congress in Goa were same as those of the congress during the 1962 elections in the rest of the country. The branch of Indian national Congress was established in Goa in September 1962. Purushottam Kakodkar was appointed president of the ad hoc committee. The manifesto of Congress clearly mentioned that "the continuance of Goa Daman & Diu as a Union Territory and assured the people that any future changes in the political setup would be referred to the people."

The Maharshtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), established on March 06, 1963 appeared to thrive on primarily the contentious issues that the congress wanted to steer clear of. The party was born out of the merger of organizations that cherished the cause of Merger of Goa with Maharashtra. The MGP generally concentrated its campaign in the New Conquest areas, the hinterland which overwhelmingly Hindu, backward, largely illiterate and low caste.

The United Goans Party (UGP) was the virtual antithesis to the pro-merger MGP. The UGP was born out of likeminded parties committed to preserving the Goan identity, more



specifically by working for separate statehood, within the Indian Union.

Exhibit 1: Goa Daman & Diu Assembly Election Results, 1963

Name of the Party	Seats Won	Candidates fielded
MGP	14	27
UGP	12	24
Fronte Popular	00	08
Jana Sangh	00	NA
Praja Socialist Party	02	No figures
Indian National Congress	01	69
Independent	01	61
Total	30	189

The December 1963 elections, the first ever democratic exercise in Goa after 451 years of autocratic rule, witnessed an unprecedented 75 percent voting. In an astonishing result the MGP emerged as the single largest party with 14 seats, the UGP won 12 seats, the other parties in the fray the Fronte Popular and Jana Sangh were not able to win any seats, the Praja Socialist Party won two seats who supported the MGP, while congress suffered the humiliating defeat. Although it nominated 30 candidates, just 1 was elected in Daman, 18 congressmen lost their deposits compared to five of the UGP and Four of the MGP.

3 The Origin of Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Paksha

There is some confusion and controversy over who the founders were. One of the founders, late P.P. Shirodkar, who had been President of National Congress (Goa), insisted that the MGP was formally born on March 6, 1963. MGP was an amalgamation of three main groups: Maharashtrawadi Aghadi of Mapusa, which was led by R.A. Tople and S.Dhond, the Samyukta Maharashtrawadi Gomantak led by V. Velingkar and J.Shinkre of Ponda, and a faction of the National Congress (Goa) that he himself headed. It was Shinkre

who wrote to the then chief election Commissioner on August 17, 1963 asking that the party be granted recognition. The letter claimed that the party had the blessings of India's Defence Minister Y.B.Chavan, and stressed the fact that MGP had been formed with the exclusive agenda of merging Goa with Maharashtra. It also stated that party would stand automatically dissolved after its objective was achieved. According to historian Y.D. Phadke, it is indisputable that Political stalwarts from Maharashtra notably Y. B. Chavan, Socialist Leader S.M. Joshi and Nath Pai, allied with Peter Alvaris were instrumental in forming the MGP. Gajanan Raikar, a former MGP MLA and a freedom fighter admits that MGP was formed by the leaders from Maharashtra to pursue their agenda of merging Goa with Maharashtra. However the MGP was more than just a merger of organization. It was more the end result of a metamorphic process. The party had roots in the Azad Gomantak Dal formed by V.N. Lawande in Belgaum in 1954 with the support of Hindu Mahasabha and Jana Sangh, the annual Marathi literary conferences which invariably raised the demand for merger. The Gomantak Gayak Samaj, the Marathi Gayak Samaj and



Gomantak Maratha Samaj were the other groups who supported the demand. Synoptically MGP was an institutionalization of twin demands of merger and Marathi. Dayanand B. Bandodkar, a self made man, philanthropist and mine owner was made the President of the MGP and he was the chief financier of the Party.

The leadership of MGP tried to project a certain image of the party in terms of Bhaujan Samaj (a virtual conglomeration of low castes) whose interests it claimed to represent. This image related to socio-economic dimensions as well by highlighting oppressed conditions of tenant, lack of education and economic poverty. With a view to projecting itself as the true representative of Bhaujan Samaj, MGP sought to characterize the congress as enjoying the support of landlords and Brahmins and the United Goans Party, the other major party in fray, was enjoying the support of Catholics. On 29th and 30th December 1962, 11th Gomantak Marathi Sahitya Sammelan was held in Goa. At this Sammelan a formal resolution was passed, stating the Gomantak Pradesh should be merged with Maharashtra to develop the Marathi Language and literature in Goa.

4 Origin of United Goans Party (UGP)

As a reaction to the demands and pledges made at the Sammelan, the United Goans Party was formed by merging Goencho Poksha of Jack Sequiera, the Partido Indiano of Alvsaro Loyola de Furtado, the Goa National union of J.M. Desouza and United Fronts of Goans and Democratic Party who shared common goal of attaining statehood for Goa within Indian Union. The UGP accused the Sammelan speakers of making rude and

objectionable remarks that disturbed our harmony and stated that the issue of merger should be raised yet¹. The party was predominantly a catholic organisation with some Hindu supporters who were naturally disappointed with the stand taken by the Congress.

The founder President, Alvaro Loyola de Furtado, invited Jack Sequiera to join the UGP and subsequently asked him to lead the party, primarily because of his organisational skills, but also because he had a dynamic personality with an ability to attract followers. He personally supervised the entire campaign and generally appeared to command a larger followers and respect among the socio-political elite of Goa because of his educational and cultural background. As well as his ability to attract crowds.

5 Role of MGP & UGP during Opinion Poll (1967)

Following MGPs victory in the first election, the MGP demanded that Goa be merged into Maharashtra. The MGP wanted that the issue should be voted in the Goa legislature, as was the norm in a representative democracy. The UGP was of the opinion that such an important decision should not be left to MLAs but should be put before the people of Goa to decide. If the merger was to be voted in the Goa legislature, it was a foregone conclusion that the MGP with its majority would push through the merger.

The MGP MLAs visited New Delhi several times in order to convince them to hold a referendum in Goa. First they met Jawaharlal Nehru; and after his death, they met Lal Bahadur Shastri



to press for a referendum. With the death of Shastri in 1966 in Tashkent the decision was now left to the new Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The UGP delegation met her and submitted a memorandum that such a monumental decision affecting the future of the State could not be left to legislators alone, but should be put before the people to decide. Finally the central government agreed to hold a referendum in Goa. The UGP demanded that all people from Goa, regardless of where they were staying in India, should be allowed to vote. Those staying outside Goa could vote by postal ballot. However this request was denied. They also demanded that all deputationists from Maharashtra should not be allowed to vote and that the Bandodkar ministry should resign in order to conduct a free and fair poll. The centre conceded the demand for Bandodkar's resignation.

The opinion poll was held on 16 January 1967. A total of 3, 17,633 votes were polled. The merger was defeated by 34,021 votes. Apart from MGP and UGP there arose many small regional parties on the eve of elections and they disappeared soon after elections. These parties are created just for the sake of contesting elections if the concerned heavy weight is denied ticket from the major National or regional Party.

6 Declines of Regional Parties

6.1 Decline of UGP

A section of UGP MLAs were unhappy with the very idea of an Opinion Poll. A splinter group of four MLAs headed by Alvaro De Loyala Furtado formed United Goans (Furtado Group). The original party was known as United Goans (Sequeira Group). The U.G. (F) received recognition from the Election Commission and used *The*

Rising Sun as its symbol. The Furtado Group received the support from Goa Organised Alliance and fielded eight candidates in the next election. The Sequeira Group used *The Hand* as a symbol. The symbol was associated with St. Francis Xavier. It contested all thirty seats this time, claiming primary responsibility for the Opinion Poll and its verdict and promised a *separate Konkani State of Goa*.

In 1977, Erasmo de Sequeira of UGP (Sequeira) joined hands with the Bharatiya Lok Dal, headed by Charan Singh. He did this without consulting his party members. The party members were enraged, causing the UGP (Sequeira group) to split into two groups: UGP (Sequeira Group) and UGP (Naik Group). Sequeira lost the next parliamentary election to Eduardo Faleiro of UGP-N in March 1977. In the next Assembly elections, UGP-S managed to win just three seats as compared to UGP-N, which won 10 seats. The UGP had never won an election. Its split, first in 1967 and once again in 1977 further weakened the party. Its decline between 1977 to 1989 also corresponded with the rise of the Congress, a national party which did not win any seat in the first elections. Finally UGP merged with the Congress.

6.2 Decline of MGP and its reemergence

MGP was Goa's first ruling party after the end of Portuguese colonial rule. In the first elections held in 1963 MGP came to power with full majority and remained in power till 1979 until it became victim of defection. The party has its base amongst non-Brahmin Hindus, a group that represents section of poor of the Goan society, and was particularly deprived power during Portuguese rule in Goa. Despite defections in the party, it managed to be



in power for the first two decades of post-Portuguese Goa, defeating the other contenders for power.

MGP's first chief minister was the mine owner Dayanand Bhandodkar. After the death of D.B. Bhandodkar in 1973 his daughter, Shashikala Kakodkar came to power. Shashikala Kakodkar lacked the charisma and leadership qualities possessed by her father, The failure of Shashikala Kakodkar was not just due to lack of leadership qualities, she failed to become the uniting force to bring party members together. In her first tenure as chief minister (1973-77), Pratapsingh Rane and two MLA's left the party due to her centralized style of functioning. In 1977, fourth assembly elections Kakodkar's party won 15 assembly seats and formed the government with the help of two independents. Her government was defeated during the budget session on floor of the house by one vote on 23rd April 1979.

Later Shashikala Kakodkar left MGP and joined Congress, Ramakant Khalap became leader of MGP. Under his leadership MGP from just two seats was able to win 18 seats in the subsequent elections of 1989.

MGP's plank was largely based on populism, and promising a better deal to the Hindus who are economically deprived and socially oppressed sections in Goa. It was initially associated with an idea of merging Goa with the neighbouring state of Maharashtra, a policy it subsequently given up after the 1967 Opinion Poll, as the people at Goa voted against the merger. The party has also supported the use of the Marathi language; though some interpret its stand on language and merger as being partly a means of fighting caste issues and countering the domination of Goa by the traditional Hindu and Catholic

elites. During the first 18 years after integration with independent India, MGP led the state government. Today, however, the MGP is marginalized when compared to its earlier status. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), particularly between 1999 and 2005, had taken over most of the Hindu voters, and a large chunk of the MGP party cadre. The BJP allied with the MGP in the elections of 1994, and made inroads into the party's vote-base, even though it won only four seats in that election, and the MGP got 10. Over the years, the MGP, which is symbolized by a lion and has a saffron flag, has been further eroded by the emergent BJP. In the elections election in the early 2000s, the MGP were reduced to just one seat (out of a total of 40 seats) in the Goa legislative assembly, while the BJP made large gains. In the Lok Sabha parliamentary elections of 2004, the party had launched candidates in both constituencies in Goa. They managed to get 5377 and 2207 votes.

The party improved its strength during the June 2007 state elections, in which it allied with the Indian National Congress party. The MGP got 9 per cent of the vote and won two seats in the state assembly, a gain of one. The party entered a coalition government led by the Congress Party including the Nationalist Congress Party. Recently in 2012 General elections to the Goa Legislative assembly MGP made a pre-poll alliance with BJP and came to power with three MLA's. The vote bank of MGP is increasing day by day. But the party has changed its stand in many aspects. Some are of the opinion that the MGP in 1960's and 70's which was dominated by the Bahujan Samaj leaders but over the years the situation has changed and it has been predominated by the upper caste



Hindus. But there is belief that these leaders are working for the upliftment of the Bhaujan Samaj.

The demise of Dayanand Babdodkar and fall of Shashikala Kakodkar was marked with the fall of MGP party as a dominant party revealing the weakening of importance to MGP ideology i.e. the merger issue and language issue. In the 80's MGP seat share gradually declined, from 7 seats in 80's to 2 in 2002, except in 1989 when it managed to get 18 seats in Goa's Assembly. But slowly MGP is gaining

importance as evident from the increasing vote bank and increasing members of legislative assembly from 02 MLA's in 2002 to 03 MLA's in 2012 Assembly elections.

7. Conclusion

The MGP and UGP has contributed a lot to the overall development and maintaining identity of Goa. It is clear that the pre-statehood politics of Goa was dominated by MGP and UGP.

Exhibit 1.2: Result of Goa's Assembly Elections 1963-2012

Party	Seats won by parties under union territory					Seats won After statehood						
	1963	1967	1972	1977	1980	1984	1989	1994	1999	2002	2007	2012
BJP						00	00	04	10	17	14	21
MGP	14	16	18	15	07	08	18	08	04	02	02	03
Cong (U)					20	D	D	D	D	D	D	D
Cong (I)	01	DNC	01	10	00	18	20	23	21	16	20	09
UGP	12	12	10	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Others	03	02	01	05	03	04	02	05	05	05	04	07
Total	30	30	30	30	30	40	40	40	40	40	40	40

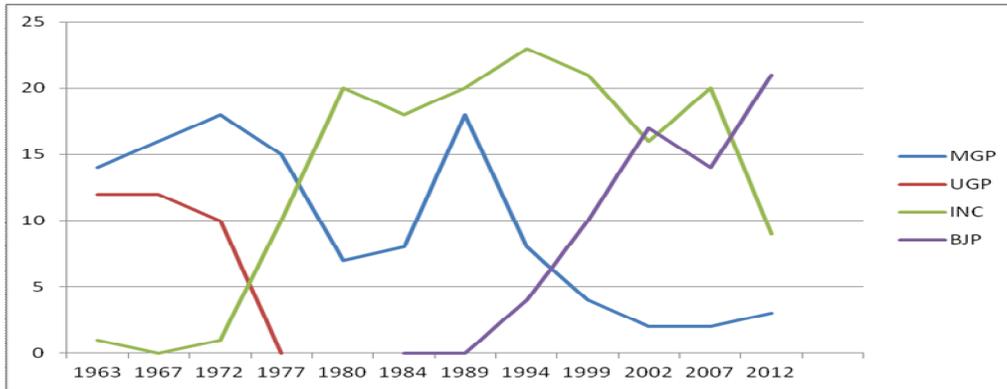
But slowly at the end of 1980's National Political parties started playing important role in Goa's politics. The entry of Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party and Goa attaining Statehood, increasing the number of Members of legislative assembly from 30 to 40 created many histories in the party politics of Goa. The post-statehood politics was mainly dominated by Indian National Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party and the main feature of Post-statehood politics is that of Instability and cases of constant defections and misuses of high post of Speaker.

Emergence of national political parties was a major development in the political history of Goa which resulted in the decline of regional Parties. If we look at the exhibit 1.2 and Exhibit 1.3 we can analyze that With the emergence of national political parties regional parties merely became the parties on margin. The Congress made its entry way back in 1963 but it was only in 1980 (i.e. after 17 years) it was able to form its first government. The Bharatiya Janata Party which was formed after the national emergency in India, tried its luck in Goa's politics in 1984 but managed to form the Government only in 2000. One of the reasons for the rise of national



parties in Goa is decline of regional parties started losing vote banks in Goa. parties. For various reasons regional

Exhibit 3. Result of Goa's Assembly Elections 1963-2012



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