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1. Desai A.R. (1976) : *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay.
2. Bhatt, Anil, 'Voluntary Action in India : Roles, Trends and Challenge', *Economic and Political Weekly* 20-27, June 1996, Vol. XXX, No.16, Pp.880-85.

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Interpreting Fractured Mandate of Goa Assembly Election 2017: A Question of Representation

Alaknanda Shringare

The recently concluded elections in Goa reveal a fractured mandate with no single party able to muster majority seats. Both Congress and BJP registered a decline in their vote share. The major set back was for the BJP which was not able to repeat its previous result in the 2017 elections. It suffered double loss not only of seat share but also of vote share. Election results though were predicted to produce hung assembly, government formation took people of Goa by surprise and produced anguish among some sections of voters.

Representative democracy has never been simple form for being democratic and non-democratic at the same time. Democratic in the sense providing opportunities to people at regular elections to hold their representatives accountable and non-democratic by way of elite rule. However, questions like who represents, who gets represented and what gets represented¹ remain critical to the functioning of representative democracy. While dealing with the question over 'who represent' the natural answer is political parties, which are often seen as indispensable to representative democracy. They provide an important institutional link between people and government. It is believed that competition for peoples' vote in the elections pushes political parties to respond to the needs and wishes of a larger society.

On who gets represented and what gets represented there is lot of pessimism. Political parties are supposed to represent public interest, but there is a possibility that political parties may pursue party interest over public interest which dominates party politics. It is true more in the case of hung assembly or Parliament that parties compromise their ideologies, principles, policies and promises made to the people to form coalition. Defections become the common feature of coalition government. The passage of the amended anti-defection law has left only one answer to the classical question of whom does the elected representative represent: they cannot but represent their political party (Yogendra Yadav, 2010, p. 358). "... voters feel that parties are essential for the functioning of democracy, but do not seem to trust them to make democracy work" (Hasan, 2010, p. 251). The question over representativeness of political parties is not new. How far elected representatives are able to represent the interest and demands of people in a true sense remained an inconvenient question to representative democracy. One such question is interpreting fractured mandate.

The mandate theory of representation is based on the idea that a party receives mandate on the basis of promises made, manifesto prepared and policies and programmes outlined during election campaign. Thus believing, elections provide an opportunity to people to decide on their verdict to vote or not to vote for the incumbent government after examining how far the incumbent government is able to deliver on its said promises. What the paper tries to examine is what happens to the fractured mandate when no single party has gained majority. Government formation which follows this type of mandate makes us think on what the verdict stood for and what happened to that verdict. The Goa 2017 assembly election result is one such case. Using the result of the recently concluded assembly election in Goa, the paper tries to understand the mandate for BJP in 2012, repercussion in 2017 election, the contributing factors for fractured mandate and the outcome of this mandate. While analysing the dilemma of interpreting the fractured mandate in Goa the paper tries to examine the question of representation.

Politics in Post-statehood Period

Hung assemblies and fractured mandates became common to Goan politics since statehood resulting in defections and instability. Political instability resulted in seven governments between 1990 and 1994. In the post-statehood period Goa assembly witnessed many defections. The Anti-defection act did not act as a barrier for these parties to change their loyalties betraying the trust of their voters. 'Aaya Ram Gaya Ram' a phrase famously used for party hoppers in India termed as 'political nomadism' by deSouza (2004) was routinely observed by the members of political parties. During the fifteen years, after the enactment of the 52nd amendment, in Goa on an average, eighteen legislators party-hopped through the duration of each assembly and there were 10 acts of group defections per assembly term (deSouza, 2006, p.1575). Individual interest and aspiration prevailed over party and interest of people. Being a small assembly with just 40 members, it was easier for the party to split with 1/3rd of its members defecting and thus not falling in the purview of anti-defection law. The electoral process is marked by paradoxical situations where splits have blurred the difference between opposition and ruling parties (Porobo, 2017, p. 250). Defections, by snapping the essential link between citizen choice and government formation, displace the demos from the centre of the democracy and replace it by the legislator who by this displacement, can be seen to convert a representative democracy into a representative oligarchy (deSouza, 2001).

An amendment brought to the anti-defection act² intends to put an end to the acts of defection by bringing in more stringent provisions after election within the purview of anti-defection was passed in 2003. However, the amended anti-defection act failed to put a curb on defections in Goa as the MLA resigns from his party, joined another party (in some cases party with different ideology), contest from the same constituency and get elected once again in the by-election. A glaring example of this is Poinguinin which was discussed by deSouza (2006). Something similar is taking place in recently concluded election

also, where a Congress MLA from Volpoi constituency resigned from his post soon after taking an oath of office as Congress MLA and joined BJP and was also inducted into Cabinet. The results of by-elections have yet to be announced, but possibility of Poinguinim getting repeated once again is very much present.

What was surprising is the re-election of these candidates, signalling the fact that such change of loyalties (not only of party but also of ideology) do not form the base for electoral choice, making it easier for the candidates to change party as and when it suits their interest. Goa being a small state it is easier for the people to access their leaders. Thus in some cases, making leaders more important than party. It does not matter then which party they shift to, their winnability in elections is guaranteed. In democracy elections are considered as mechanisms, available to the people to hold their representatives accountable for their deeds, performance and behaviour, when elections fail to deter the representatives to shun away with such practices put question over significance of elections as means used by citizens to hold their representatives accountable for their misdeeds. On the question of political nomadism, deSouza (2006,) observed that the moral attitudes of voter in India are different from those of the west, "the voter seems to be guided by a pragmatism of, 'it does not matter if a cat is black or white as long as it catches mice' variety and so the leaders' nomadism is assessed in terms of whether it will facilitate development goals or not and depending on this assessment, is rewarded a punishment".

What also needs to be analysed is the question whether elections provide enough choice to the people to choose between. The real difficulty with Indian elections is not that they lead to excessive change but that they offer little meaningful choice that can be the basis of political change (Yadav, 2010, p.356). No doubt day by day the number of political parties is increasing but this increase does not correlate with increasing choices to the people. Often it is the same candidates with different party names who are contesting elections. The Goa assembly election 2017 provided

three new parties and many new candidates to choose between but people supported the traditional parties except for Goa Forward which won three out of four seats it contested.

New Political Parties at Fray

The 2017 assembly election in Goa was unique in many ways and emergence of new political parties was one of it. It was for the first time there was a split in the RSS group which came out openly opposing BJP by forming a new party to fight against the BJP. The entry of AAP created speculations over the election outcome. Goa Forward appealed to Goan voters by raising the issue of development of Goa and protecting Goan identity. The three newly emerged parties wanted to make a difference to the electoral politics of Goa.

Two new parties emerged in the wake of assembly election 2017 in Goa, viz.; Goa Forward Party and Goa Suraksha Munch (GSM) which made the electoral scene of Goa look volatile. They are seen as challengers to both the existing national parties in Goa. What made this election look more competitive is the presence of AAP. It was contemplated that AAP and Goa Forward could dent the Congress votes while GSM and Maharashtra Wadi Gomantak Party (MGP) may damage the votes of BJP.

AAP was seen as major contender and possibly can change the party equations. There were speculations over AAP repeating Delhi election results in Goa. AAP is a first timer to Goa elections, started its campaign much in advance with its Goa Dialogue series meant to prepare a comprehensive manifesto for Goa. It conducted discussions with various groups ranging from fishermen communities, youths, church Bishops, industrialist and others. AAPs manifesto promised finalizing Regional Plan within one year, special status for Goa, expansion of Dabolim airport and investigate Mopa project and continuation of grants to English medium schools.

Goa Forward (GF) one of the two new parties was launched on 26th January 2016 with the motto of 'growth and development with

happiness'. With its message of 'Goem, Goenkar and Goenkarponn' it appealed to the Goan voters. Its effort to form an alliance with Congress failed and GF had to go to polls with no allies and with only four candidates. It won three seats in Goa legislative assembly. The GF displayed the potential for becoming a strong regional party by harping on the regional sentiments of people. With the MGP, the oldest regional party of Goa losing its hold due to the death of its earlier leaders and the defection of a few, the GF stepped into the void. The GF created hopes among the Goans as a party which stands for Goans and Goan identity. It also projected itself as a secular party. That the party could win three out of four seats it contested bears testimony to its appeals.

The second new party in the fray this time was Goa Suraksha Munch (GSM). The genesis of GSM can be traced to the Medium of Instruction (Mol) issue. The Mol became a contentious issue between Bharatiya Bhasha Suraksha Munch and BJP. Goa Branch of RSS led by Subhash Velingkar formed GSM in protest against the decision of Parrikar to continue grants to private English primary schools. BJP in 2012 assembly elections claimed that it will cancel grants to all English medium private school but continued these grants on the plea that it is not now feasible to stop them. GSM was formed on 2nd October 2016. It formed an alliance with Shiv Sena and MGP to fight the 2017 election in Goa.

It was believed that the entry of new parties will change the electoral dynamics in Goa. While there were Seventeen political parties in the fray, no major alliance was forthcoming except for the alliance formed by GSM, Shiv Sena and MGP. Together they contested 33 seats. The GSM³ was not able to win even a single seat. The alliance of Congress, GF and NCP did not materialize. The political analysts were busy doing permutations and combinations of seats in assembly. However, no poll surveys predicted the possibility of Congress securing the largest number of seats.

AAP fielded the highest number of candidates in the election but failed to win a seat. It secured only 6.2 per cent of vote share. The election

results made it clear that people voted for traditional parties which have some record of governance. What worked well for GF among the three new parties was its leader Vijay Sardesai who was an independent candidate and MLA of Fatorda. He raised many issues and questions in the assembly and provided an effective opposition to the ruling BJP government.

Introspection of BJP Rule

In the post-liberation period (after 1961) in Goa there emerged two strong regional parties - Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party and United Goans Party (UGP) - which dominated the Goan political scene for almost two decades. While most of the states in India witnessed Congress rule after independence, Goa began its democratic journey with regional parties. Congress was able to form its government in Goa, only after the UGP merged with Congress. Similarly, it was after an alliance with the MGP, that the BJP was able to make its preference felt. Both these national parties expounded regionalistic arguments to maintain themselves in power. By the time the Congress came to power the major question of merger of Goa with Maharashtra was resolved. These parties in Goa restated their ideological position on the basis of development and protection of regional identity. In 2012 for the first time BJP emerged as the party with majority seats.

Decline of Congress witnessed the rise of BJP not only at centre but also in most of the states in post 2014 elections. The Goa, 2012 election was an early reflection of this. Corruption became the major reason for the declining popularity of Congress. The issue of corruption also haunted the Congress in Goa. Anti-incumbency wave towards Congress due to illegal mining issue which was put forth by various committees appointed by Central government and Supreme Court also benefited the BJP which took away Congress votes in the state. Apart from it, issues like family raj, regional plan, casinos and Mopa international airport were some of the issues which discredited the Congress rule in Goa.

Taking advantage of anti-incumbency wave, BJP made a host of promises to the people of Goa during the 2012 election campaign. If voted to power it promised to grant special status to Goa, abolish VAT on petrol, resolve the problems of traffic jam and garbage, curb corruption in government and promised that casinos would be ordered to leave Mandovi and confined to high seas. It also promised for allowance for educated unemployed whom government is unable to give jobs.

A Mandate Unfulfilled

The 2012 assembly election was a clear mandate for BJP with 21 seats and 34.68 per cent vote share. It appeared before the people in 2012, as an alternative to corrupt Congress and family raj. There were high expectations from the BJP government to deliver. Soon after assuming power the government faced the problem of ban on mining affecting jobs of thousands of people who were directly and indirectly dependent on mining related activities. This further added to the already existing unemployment problem in the state. The government started schemes to reduce the burden of truck owners and adopted various measures to reduce the impact of ban. However, the impact was larger than the measures adopted. The disappointment with the government was visible in mining areas where BJP MLAs tried their best to win the support of the affected people, but did not succeed. Most of them faced defeat in 2017 elections.

BJP failed to fulfil its promises on curbing of corruption, garbage disposal and granting of special status to Goa. On the issue of corruption BJP assured to appoint Lokayukta. After the resignation of the first Lokayukta of Goa, Justice (Retd) Sudarshan Reddy within seven months of appointment in October 2013, the post of Lokayukta remained vacant till 2016.

The unfulfilled promises came to haunt BJP in the 2017 election. Opposition parties targeted BJP for taking U-turns on its major poll promises, like the Medium of Instruction (Mol), Casino issue, Regional

Plan and Special Status to Goa. While in opposition Parrikar supported the demand to suspend grants to private English medium primary schools and even took part in agitations organised by Bharatiya Bhasha Suraksha Munch (BBSM) under the leadership of Subhash Velingkar (RSS Chief in Goa). However after assuming power his government continued grants to 127 English medium primary schools which led to split in the RSS and resulted in the formation of GSM. There are two groups - Forum for Rights of Children to Education (FORCE) and BBSM-involved in the issue of MoI, FORCE demanding grants through Goa School Education Act, 1984 and BBSM demanding stoppage of such grants. GSM was formed with an intention of stopping grants to English primary schools and to fight against the BJP. The BJP Government appointed a committee in 2016 to hold consultation with the people for a solution keeping in mind the chunk of voters it may lose who support BBSM.

Over the Casino issue BJP promised to shift the offshore Casino vessels from Mandovi river by the end of the Assembly term which it failed to do so. The party while in opposition demanded for cancellation of licences of offshore Casinos but permitted bigger vessels once in power. It also hiked the renewal fees of the Casinos which it claimed as a source of revenue to the government. During the release of the BJP manifesto for 2017 assembly election, the incumbent CM called Casinos as gifts of the Congress government. Over the question on why BJP government did not shift them Laxmikant Parsekar, the Chief Minister claimed that the Casinos are working within the legal framework and it was difficult for the government to do so.

On the issue of Regional Plan for Goa after much delay, it was decided to ratify the errors in the Regional Plan 2021. But it was only at the fag end of the government term in the Assembly that it decided to rectify plans of Sattari, Canaconoa and Pernem. However nothing concrete came up. The Regional Plan 2021 prepared in 2008, is yet to be implemented. Regional Plan is a significant plan relating to land use

planning in Goa and this was reduced to a poll issue to be used by political parties at the time of elections. In the absence of unambiguous land use planning for Goa, the unregulated construction activities and mega projects could not be stopped.

Decision over special status⁴ was also termed as another U-turn of BJP government. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi during poll campaign for 2014 Lok Sabha elections, promised the people of Goa in a public meeting at Panaji that Special Status will be granted to Goa if BJP was voted to power. Goa Legislative assembly unanimously passed a resolution in April 2013 demanding Special Status which was later on rejected by the Central Government while the State Government hardly showed interest to pursue the demand further. The Investment Promotion and Facilitation Policy which led to creation of Goa Investment Promotion Board (GIPB) and Goa IT Investment Policy 2015-20 could not be properly implemented. The party was not able to deliver on the mandate it received in 2012 elections and has much less to show by way of its fulfilment of manifesto in the last five years.

Sensing anti-incumbency wave, BJP was trying its best to hold on to power in 2017 elections. The release of its candidate list was a clear indication of the fact that it was following winnability formula. Two of its candidates Speaker Anant Shet and Tribal Affairs minister Ramesh Tawadkar were not given party tickets on the claim of neutralising anti-incumbency factor by nominating Pravin Zantye and Vijay Pai in their places. In spite of the anti-incumbency factor, the incumbent CM Laxmikant Parsekar, Rajendra Arlekar and Mahadev Naik were given party tickets. Two former Congress candidates were also given party tickets as they were considered to be winnable candidates.

Leadership of Parrikar

India's defence minister was in the news over surgical strikes against Pakistani terrorists. But he was also known for surgical strikes to topple Congress government in Goa and engineering defections in

the opposition party. In 1999, Parrikar, MLA representing Panaji along with rebel MLA Francisco Sardinha toppled the Luizinho Faleiro government. Within a year he carried out another surgical strike against the Congress by toppling the Sardinha government and became Chief Minister in 2000. There were also accusations of horse trading against Parrikar after the 2000 assembly election when BJP mustered 17 out of 40 seats. But during his tenure as an opposition leader Parrikar built upon his image as a strong opposition leader with commitment and hard work. He appeared before the people as a choice against the corrupt Congress.

The anti-incumbency and Parrikar factor helped BJP to come to power in 2012. He became the most preferred CM candidate in Goa. The victory for BJP was not only due to its poll-promises but also due to its leader in whom people bestowed their trust and hope. A section of the Catholic community also voted for Parrikar in 2012 election in an expectation of good governance. One of the news report read: "Out of the 21 BJP MLAs who won from their seats, five are Catholics whereas two independent Catholics won largely due to BJP's support. The BJP managed to get 9 percent of the votes of the community which was desperately looking for a clean face after Churchill Alemao and Joaquim earned the "corrupt" tag" (India Today, 2012).

In 2012, it was the mandate for Parrikar as CM. He became the most popular leader in Goa. No other leader from BJP was able to muster same kind of popularity attained by Parrikar. His appointment as Defence Minister of India did not go well with the BJP's prospects in Goa. Laxmikant Parsekar, who succeeded Parrikar as CM of Goa, was no match for Parrikar. In spite of Parrikar's new appointment as Defence Minister of India, his hold over his party in Goa continued. BJP's dependence on Parrikar was visible in 2017 election, as the party did not announce its CM candidate. The party leadership gave the impression that Parrikar can come back to Goa if so needed. This turned out to be true when Parrikar resigned as defence minister to form the BJP government once again in Goa.

Interpreting Fractured Mandate

There were more than 10 lakh voters. Both Men and Women were almost equal in ratio, but more women cast their vote than men in the 2017 assembly election.

Table 1 : Showing the summary of election**Summary of Election 2017**

Total number of electorate	1080322
Male	531459
Female	548873
Electors voted	890011
Male	415575
Female	548873
Total voting percentage	83.98
Male	78.48
Female	82.56

Source: The above data is collected from the official website of Chief Election Commission of Goa <http://eci.nic.in/eci/eci.html>

There were speculations about low voter turnout due to 'silent voter syndrome' indicated by media which went wrong as Goa registered 82.56 per cent voter turnout. The increasing turnout since 2012 election is an indication of people's increasing awareness about democracy and their trust in the electoral system.

As per the Association for Democratic Reform⁵ (ADR) report out of 251 candidates, 62 per cent are crorepatis, 15 per cent have declared criminal cases against them of which 8 per cent candidates have serious criminal cases registered against them. Almost all the candidates are literate, with 51 per cent having educational qualification between 5th to 12th pass and 41 per cent candidates are graduates and above. Majority

of the candidates i.e., 63 per cent are between the age group of 25 and 50.

The Assembly election held in Goa on 4th February 2017 had a total of 17 political parties in fray which added to the speculations of fractured mandate. However election results reveal that the seats were shared mainly between six political parties and independents. Among the 251 candidates who contested the election, 232 were male and 19 females of whom 149 male and 15 female candidates lost their deposits. No single party could win a majority of seats.

Table 2 : Showing the performance of Political Parties in the 2017 Assembly polls in Goa

Performance of Political Parties

Name of the Party	Seats Contested	Seats Won	Percentage of votes polled
Indian National Congress	37	17	28.36
Bharatiya Janata Party	36	13	32.48
Nationalist Congress Party	17	1	2.28
Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party	25	3	11.27
Goa Forward Party	4	3	3.48
Aam Aadmi Party	39	0	6.27
Independents	58	3	11.12

Source: http://eci.nic.in/eci_main/archiveofge2017/Goa/05.Performance%20of%20Political%20Parties.pdf, accessed on 15/04/2017

Though the exit polls predicted BJP's return to power, the verdict was different on 11th March when the results were declared. Congress with 17 seats emerged as the single largest party with 28 per cent vote share. BJP stood second by winning 13 seats and a voteshare of 32 per cent. Many key players of BJP faced defeat including the incumbent

CM Laxmikant Parsekar. The AAP which created so much of noise was not able to win a single seat. Out of 39 candidates of AAP who contested the election 38 of them lost their deposit. MGP which contested in 25 seats won 3 seats. Among all the parties, the Goa Forward Party can be seen as a major gainer which contested in 4 seats of which it won 3.

Though the Election surveys predicted a hung assembly, government formation took the people of Goa by surprise. It created anguish among some sections who voted for GFP. They felt betrayed by the party which won three out of four seats mainly on its anti-BJP stance. The voter shift towards Congress and other parties was a clear indication of the disappointment with BJP rule in the past five years. Congress was not very vocal in its role as an opposition; it was Vijay Sardesai and Rohan Khaunte, independent candidates who on many occasions cornered the government on numerous issues. Both of them have been seen as partners of Congress in the 2017 election though formally there was no such alliance. The results show that the Congress has emerged as largest party with 17 seats and the Goa Forward winning three out of four seats. If we look at this combination, it looks more tilted towards a non-BJP government.

Electoral mandate is a decision of the people, permitting winning party to rule in accordance with the promises made during election. It is also the verdict of the people over the performance of the incumbent government. Elections serve the purpose of holding the incumbent party accountable for its past performance judged on the basis of how far the party delivered on its said promises. In the case of fractured verdict it is difficult to decide which party the people have voted for and in such cases what follows after the elections people do not have control over it.

Presence of a single, strong leader proved to be an advantage for BJP while for Congress, internal fight over CM candidate turned out to be its weakness. After emerging as the single largest party in the assembly, Congress failed to form government. Before Congress could decide on its CM candidate BJP claimed its majority to form the new government. This brings us to the question of representation. Manifestos

and promises made by the parties during elections reflect on a range of issues which in theory implies people voting for a particular party, is an endorsement of these promises. The difficulty in the case of hung assembly is to determine what the electoral mandate stands for. Fractured verdict is an indication of no clear mandate to any party. When parties form post-poll alliance to form government they compromise on most of the promises made to the people and sometimes also the ideology which they stood for. No wonder, the electorate is rendered helpless over the course of action that follows the election results. Whether such government commands the mandate of people? When the vote has no meaning, other than to declare a winning candidate, but not to form a legitimate democratic government, then we have reason to worry (deSouza, 2017). What is at the core is once again the question of representation.

Notes

1. What gets represented is also the question raised by Yogendra Yadav in his article titled *Representation*, published in Niraja Gopal Jayal and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (ed.), *Politics in India*, published by OUP, New Delhi, 2010.
2. 91st Constitutional amendment act 2003, increased the limit of 1/3rd members defecting who did not qualify as defection to 2/3rd making defection law more stringent.
3. GSM contested in Five seats
4. Special Status to Goa is a highly debatable issue and the paper do not intend to go deeper in to the issue. The author is rather confined to Special Status as a promise made by the BJP and how much it delivered on the same.
5. Analysis of candidate criminal record, educational qualification, age, etc., is compiled from the ADR report available on <https://adrindia.org/research-and-reports/state-assemblies/goa>

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