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# *Social Science in Perspective*

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# SOCIAL SCIENCE IN PERSPECTIVE

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## **Goa Assembly Election 2022: An Indication Towards Multi-polar Party Politics**

**Alaknanda Shringare  
& Ravaji Gaunkar**

*In the post-statehood period Goa witnessed bi-polar party competition between Congress and BJP. Many regional political parties emerged during assembly elections but the party competition largely remained bi-polar. After the last two elections new political parties entered the electoral arena and they have become significant players in Goa's electoral politics. With every new party entering the electoral arena the combined vote share of Congress and BJP is declining, especially since 2017 assembly election. The 2022 assembly elections in a way convey that Goa's party politics is moving towards multipolarity. If the trend continues there is a possibility that the new players other than the Congress and the BJP will have a larger say in the government formation.*

The electoral contest in Goa looked a multi-cornered one this time with the entry of Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the new regional outfit Revolutionary Goans party (RGP). Goa over a period has witnessed an increase in the number of political parties contesting assembly election. The electoral contest in the state is viewed by the political parties such as TMC and AAP as a way to fulfill their ambition

of getting the status of national political party. With increase in the number of political parties, political mobilizations and assertions seemed to have become stronger demanding greater share in the power structure. However, surpassing all the predictions of a hung assembly the BJP was able to muster a majority. While examining some of the significant aspects of 2022 assembly election the paper points out that the 2022 assembly election is an indication of a shift from bi-polar party competition to multi-polar politics.

### **Bi-polar competition**

Two regional parties-Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) and United Goans Party (UGP) dominated the Goan politics soon after liberation<sup>1</sup>. Their hold over state politics continued for almost two decades. In the post-statehood<sup>2</sup> period the control of regional parties weakened to a considerable extent leading to the rise of Congress. The weakening of the UGP allowed the Congress to gain over the vote bank of UGP which later merged with the Congress. Congress formed its first government in 1980. Post-statehood is also marked as the period of coalitions and defections. The extent of defections is such that between 1990 to December 1994 Goa had seen seven Chief Ministers with governments lasting for few days or few months (deSouza, 2004). Many strong candidates of the MGP joined Congress which weakened MGP while strengthened Congress support base in Goa. Congress continued to be in power for almost three decades until challenged by the BJP. By making inroads into the MGP votes, BJP established its hold over Goa's politics. After prolonged coalition governments BJP came to power with full majority (21 seats) in 2012 under the leadership of Parrikar.

Many regional outfits emerged during assembly elections but the party competition largely remained bi-polar in the post-statehood period. The entry of new political parties such as Goa Suraksha Munch (GSM), Goa Forward Party (GFP) and Aam Adami Party (AAP) in the 2017 assembly elections were seen as damaging the vote base of both

Congress and BJP, but the election results proved that the new political parties had made no impact on the vote base of the existing power blocs. Since 2017 AAP is trying to expand its base to Goa. Party competition for assembly elections held on February 14, 2022 once again looked multi-cornered with the entry of Trinamool Congress (TMC) and RGP but ended up being a bi-polar competition between the Congress and the BJP. These two parties together acquired more than 50 percent of voteshare (Table 1).

**Table 1: Performance of Congress and BJP in the Goa assembly since statehood**

Year	Congress		BJP	
	Seat share	Votes share in percentage	Seat share	Vote share in percentage
1989	20	41	0	0.39
1994	18	37	4	9
1999	21	39	10	26
2002	16	38	17	36
2007	16	32	14	30
2012	9	31	21	35
2017	17	28	13	32
2022	11	23	20	33

Source: Compiled from <https://eci.gov.in/files/category/71-goal/>

The election results confirmed the fact that, despite the presence of large number of parties the major competition for power is between the Congress and the BJP. However, it is important to take into consideration that with every new party entering electoral arena the combined vote share of Congress and BJP is declining, especially since 2017 assembly election. An examination of vote share of the parties helps us analyse this factor in a better way. In the 2012 assembly election both Congress and the BJP together polled 65 percent of the

votes which has been reduced to 61 percent in 2017 and further decreased to 56 percent in 2022 assembly election. This decline of the vote share is attributed to the entry of new political parties. In 2017, the AAP, GFP and Goa Suraksha Munch and in 2022, the TMC and RGP reduced the combined vote share of Congress and BJP. In 2017 assembly election the vote share of both Congress and BJP got reduced by two percent point. In the 2022 election the vote share of Congress has drastically got reduced from 28 percent in 2017 to 23 percent while the BJP added to its vote share by one percent from 32 percent in 2017 to 33 percent in 2022. AAP which could not win any seat despite contesting from all 40 constituencies in 2017 assembly election, won two seats in 2022 assembly election. RGP a new regional party to contest 2022 election, registered a spectacular victory in 2022 by winning 9 percent vote share and one seat in the assembly. Is this an indication of the fact that the new parties are going to be the significant players in the formation of government in the coming years? Are we witnessing the beginning of a new type of party politics in Goa?

### **Important Highlights of the 2022 Assembly Election**

#### **Major Issues**

Unemployment, mining, free water and electricity are some of the important issues raised by the political parties during their campaign. Though most of the parties supported restarting mining in Goa, mining was not the major issue in the 2022 election. Promises to women and youth prominently figured in the manifestoes of almost all major political parties. TMC promised 30 per cent reservation for women in government as well as private jobs and 50 per cent reservation in local bodies. The party promised woman from every household a direct cash transfer of Rs. 5000 per month through Griha Laxmi Scheme irrespective of economic background. Congress also promised 30 per cent reservation for women in government jobs. BJP was taking credit for effective implementation of Ladli Laxmi scheme which provides

financial benefit of Rupees One lakh to the applicant at the time of marriage and Griha Adhar Scheme of Rs. 2000 to every eligible woman. AAP manifesto highlighted women's safety.

All the party manifestoes highlighted the need to create new jobs for the youth. The TMC and AAP promised reservation for Goans in the jobs. AAP made an assurance of unemployment allowance to the youth, while TMC announced Yuva Shakti scheme to be implemented if it came to power. The scheme provides collateral-free loan to youths at four percent interest rate. Congress was focusing on the issue of misgovernance of BJP, safety of women, unemployment and corruption in the government. AAP's major focus in the campaign was on the replication of Delhi model of governance with free electricity and water supply up to certain units and improvement in government health and education facilities.

### **Alliances**

Goa being the smallest state is attracting political parties with national ambition. The 2017 assembly election saw the entry of AAP while the TMC decided to contest the 2022 assembly elections. There were also one or two new regional parties contesting assembly elections and winning few seats. The increase in political parties is resulting in division of votes. TMC riding on the victory in West Bengal elections started aggressive campaigning in Goa and projected itself as the only alternative to BJP. Its attempt to form a united alliance against BJP in Goa did not materialize. TMC is a new party to Goan voters and its failure to form alliance with the Congress was a major setback to the party but for Congress it was in its interest to keep the contest bipolar. The only alliance TMC was able to form was with the MGP. MGP has strong vote bank in some of the constituencies which proved beneficial to the TMC. Congress was reluctant to have any pre-poll alliance but later decided to form an alliance with the GFP. The only other pre-poll alliance was between the NCP and Shiva Sena.



### **Candidates' hold over constituencies**

There is a strong hold of candidates over certain constituencies in Goa. Out of 40 constituencies in about 12 constituencies the candidates have their strong hold. For instance Rohan Khaunte (independent candidate who supported BJP after 2022 assembly election results), Atanacio Monserrate, Jennifer Monserrate, (both husband and wife were earlier in Congress, joined BJP with 10 rebel MLAs in 2019), Pratapsingh Rane (Congress), Vishwajit Rane (BJP), Milind Naik (BJP), Mauvin Godinho (BJP), Reginaldo Lourenco (independent), Vijay Sardesai (GFP), Pramod Sawant (BJP), Digambar Kamat (Congress) and Sudin Dhavlikar (MGP) are some such candidates. Pratapsingh Rane (Congress) who had won from Poriem constituency for 11 consecutive times resigned from active politics just before the 2022 assembly election. Even switching their loyalty to another party did not impact their winnability. In many constituencies candidates are getting elected more than two to three times despite hopping from one party to another. Rane's daughter-in-law Deviya Vishwajit Rane won from Poriem constituency in 2022 on BJP ticket.

### **Family Raj**

Apart from strong candidates family raj is emerging as one of the notable features of state politics. From one family in 1967 it has increased to nine families in 2022 assembly election (Prabhudesai, 2022, pp. 329-330). Porobo (2018) examines this aspect in the context of changing economic scenario in Goa mainly after liberalization of Indian economy in the 1990s. Porobo argues that the family raj found before 1990s was mainly to have a control over the political party but after liberalization the economic interest provided momentum to the families in power to cling to positions (Porobo, 2018, p.165). What also explains the family raj is the large stakes these ministers have in the land. There is an ever increasing demand for land in Goa for tourism and real estate business. The ministry of Town and Country Planning, PWD and urban development are much sought after and bargained for in return for

support to form the government. The bargaining power increases with more family members elected in the assembly. Ideology and moral grounds have taken a back seat. 'The trend of family raj coincides with the increasing trend of converting agricultural land into settlement and selling it to land sharks' (Prabhudesai, 2002, pp. 329-330). The Town and Country Planning (TCP) became an important weapon in the hands of the government for large scale conversion of land which resulted in dramatic increase in the prices of the land (Coutinho, 2022). On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Goa legislative assembly by an amendment inserted section 16B to the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act which allowed change of zone type specified in the regional plan<sup>3</sup>. Following this large number of applications are received by the TCP department from across all the talukas for converting cultivable zones into settlement (Prabhudesai, 2022, p.333-337).

### Party Hopping

Between 2017 to January 2022 large number of candidates changed their party loyalty. Congress is the biggest loser in this period with majority of its MLAs joining BJP. From 17 seats in 2017 the Congress strength has been reduced to two members before the 2022 assembly election. In the wake of assembly election 2022 many candidates have switched over their party. This is the first time that the state witnessed large number of defections just before the assembly election. The Table 2 depicts the names of those candidates who changed their party between September 2021 and January 2022.

**Table 2 :Candidates switching loyalties**

<b>Name of candidate</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>Party joined</b>
Louizinho Faleiro	Congress	TMC
Jayesh Salgaonkar	GFP	BJP
Ravi Naik	Congress	BJP
Churchill Alemao	NCP	TMC

Rohan Khaunt	Independent	BJP
Alina Saldana	BJP	AAP
Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco	Congress	TMC *
Carlos Almeida	BJP	Congress
Michael Lobo	BJP	Congress
Pravin Zantye	BJP	MGP
Joseph Sequiera	TMC	BJP

*Source: Authors compilation*

*\*Resigned later from TMC and contesting as independent candidate from Curtorim*

### **Profile of voters**

The electoral profile of Goa reveals its diversity and the same is reflected in the election results, making it essential to understand this diversity. As per the electoral roll prepared on January 5, 2022 by the Election Commission, the total number of registered voters in Goa were 1156464, of which 539420 were from North Goa and 617044 from South Goa (Government of Goa, 2022). Between 2017 and 2022 the number of voters in Goa has grown by 45000 persons with 28387 additional voters in North Goa compared to 17193 in South Goa with women voters outnumbering men voters (Times of India, January 6, 2022).

Along with an increase in the number of voters there is a corresponding increase in the voter turnout since 2002 assembly election. One of the reasons for the increase in the voter turnout is the efforts of the Election Commission of India (ECI) through its SVEEP activities initiated since 2012 assembly elections to create awareness about electoral process among the electorates and to ease the process of election to voters. An increase of 10 percent voter turnout was seen in 2012 assembly election compared to the previous assembly election in 2007 (Table 3). It is evident from Table 3 that the voter turnout for North Goa is always more compared to South Goa.

**Table 3: Voter turnout in the assembly elections**

Year	North Goa	South Goa	Total
2007	72	66	71
2012	84	79	82
2017	83	79	83
2022	79	78	80

*Source:* Data collected from office of the Chief Electoral Office, Goa

*Note:* All figures are in percentage form.

### Gender

When one look into the demographic profile of the voters, one can observe that not only the number of women voters has seen an increase (Table 4) but there is also an increase in the voter turnout of women compared to male voters (Table 5). Among the youth, as per the electoral rolls published on January 5, 2022 there are about 1.67 percent voters in the age group of 18 to 19 years (Government of Goa, 2022).

**Table 4: Gender profile of the voters**

Year	Total No. of electorates	Total no. male Voters	Total no. of female Voters
2002	926438	467723	458715
2007	1010246	505609	504637
2012	1026304	511110	515194
2017	1111692	547328	564364
2022	1156464	562500	593960

*Source:* Data collected from the ECI website: <https://eci.gov.in/statistical-report/statistical-reports/>

**Table 5: Voter turnout in assembly elections**

Year	Male	Female	Total voter turnout
2002	70	68	69
2007	70	70	71
2012	79	85	82
2017	78	84	82
2022	78	81	80

*Source:* Data collected from ECI website: <https://eci.gov.in/statistical-report/statistical-reports/>

*Note:* All figures are in percentage form

Women as voters are significant to the political parties but they are reluctant to give party ticket to women unless they have strong family background in politics. Compared to the last four assembly election, the 2022 assembly election saw maximum number of women contesting election. Out of 26 women candidates, 6 contested as independents. Goa with 40 seats where stakes for winnability is so high women are not seen as winning candidates by the political parties. AAP which took pride in fielding more number of women candidates in 2017 assembly election has reduced the number of women candidates for 2022 assembly election. This decision of the AAP do not correspond in any way with winnability factor of women as compared to male candidates of AAP in 2017 assembly election. Women are seen more as vote bank by the political parties rather than as political representatives. This explains the competition among the political parties by way of promising schemes or programmes for women voters.

Table 4 and 5 also shows the significance of women as voters to political parties. The post-poll surveys conducted by the CSDS, Lokniti confirm that more number of women voted for BJP compared to Congress or any other party in the 2017 and 2022 assembly election. BJP's Ladli Laxmi scheme and Griha Adhar scheme might have been the reasons for more women supporting BJP. Despite similar promises being made by the TMC and other parties large number of women

supported BJP. The party which received more number of votes from women in the election did not make attempts to increase the number of women contesting assembly election on their party ticket in the past. It fielded least number of women candidates compared to Congress and AAP in 2017 election.

### Caste

As per the District Census Handbook, North Goa (2014), 69 percent of the total SC population and 37 percent of total ST population of Goa is in North Goa. The report further states, 69 percent of the total population of the SCs and 37 percent of the total population of the ST are located in North Goa, with majority of the SCs situated in the Talukas of Pernem, Bardez and Bicholim and STs in the Talukas of Ponda, Tiswadi and Sattari. It is evident from the Table 6 that, majority of the ST population is located in South Goa and the Talukas of Salcete and Quepem has bulk of the ST population followed by Sanguem and Canacona (Census 2011 South Goa, 2011).

**Table 6: Caste profile**

Caste	All Goa	North Goa	South Goa
SC	2	2	1
ST	10	7	14

*Source: District Census Handbook, North Goa (2014) retrieved from and South Goa District Religious Census 2011 retrieved from: <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/district/181-south-go.html>*

*Note: All figures are in percentage form*

### Religion

The religious profile of Goan voters reveal, 66 percent Hindus, 25 percent Christians and 8 percent Muslims while Bhuddhist, Jain and other religious population put together comprise one percent (Census, 2011) of the total population. Large number of Hindus are located in North Goa while majority of Christian population is located in South Goa (Table 7).

**Table 7: Religious distribution of the population**

Religion	All Goa	North Goa	South Goa
Hindus	66	76	53
Muslims	8	7	9
Christians	25	16	36

*Source:* District Census Handbook, North Goa (2014) retrieved from and South Goa District Religious Census 2011 retrieved from: <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/religion/district/181-south-go.html>

*Note:* All figures are in percentage form

### **Weakening of Congress**

Defections weakened Congress to a considerable extent between 2017 and 2022. The Congress missed the chance to form the government in 2017 despite winning large number of seats in the assembly (17). Candidates with political aspirations from within the Congress with a hope to be inducted into the ruling cabinet and other benefits resigned from the Congress and joined BJP. Vishwajit Rane was the first person to join BJP soon after the 2017 election. A major blow to the Congress was in 2019 when 10 of its MLAs joined BJP. Rarely politicians are punished for such activities by the voters which supports the decision of their representatives to change party to further their interest.

The Congress party's strength has reduced to two in the state assembly with Ravi Naik and Reginaldo Lourenco resigning from Congress in December 2021, earlier in September 2021, Luizinho Faleiro resigned from Congress and joined TMC. Congress faced bigger challenge of reviving the party in the state. Due to continuous defections in the party, the party took a firm decision on not to allow the defected candidate to join back. Reginaldo who joined TMC in December 2021, soon in the month of January 2022 resigned from TMC and made an attempt to join back Congress. Congress was firm on its decision that its doors are shut on the defectors who left the party. Congress contested in 37 seats and on three seats GFP its alliance partner contested

the election. But due to the absence of winning candidates, in both voteshare and seatshare the Congress performance was low in the 2022 assembly election

### **BJP's Rise Despite Anti-Incumbency**

Under the leadership of Parrikar BJP increased its seat share from 4 seats in 1994 to 21 in 2012. Since 2012 BJP is in power in Goa. In 2017 election due to anti-incumbency the BJP's seatshare was reduced to 13 but it outsmarted Congress by quickly forming an alliance with MGP and GFP to form the government. Internal bickering among the alliance partners started after the death of Parrikar. The MGP came out of the alliance in 2019 (Shringare, 2022, p. 196). Before the 2022 assembly election GFP also came out of the coalition and contested the election in an alliance with Congress.

The BJP and Parrikar in Goa became so identical that many started believing that without Parrikar the BJP will not survive in Goa. Death of Parrikar in 2019 created a leadership vacuum in the party. The Party chose Pramod Sawant as the Chief Ministerial candidate but there were doubts over how long he will be able to hold the alliance partners together. The post-poll survey conducted by the CSDS, Lokniti after the 2019 Lok Sabha election reveal that for majority (58 percent) of the respondents death of Parrikar was not an important issue while voting (Shringare, 2022). The 2022 was the first assembly elections fought by the BJP without Parrikar. The BJP's win in 20 seats out of 40 once again confirmed that the death of Parrikar did not make much impact on BJP's electoral prospects in the state.

BJP which is in power since 2012 was facing anti-incumbency factor in the 2022 election. BJP did not have much to show by way of its performance under the Chief Minister Pramod Sawant. The protests at Melauli against an IIT project and the Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary brought criticism to the government. In the name of public interest and future development of Goa, government sanctioned projects for doubling of railway line and road expansion in a wildlife sanctuary which is declared by UNESCO as one of the eight biodiversity hotspots (The



Guardian, 2020). The government also came under criticism for not properly managing the situation which emerged due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. The government was criticised by the opposition parties and various sections of the society over introducing Bhumiputra Adhikarini Bill in 2021. The bill 'provides for a mechanism to give ownership right to the self-occupied dweller of a small housing unit to enable him to live with dignity and self-respect' (The Indian Express, 2021). The person who lived in Goa for last 30 years be called as 'Bhumiputra' in the bill. Under the pressure of growing criticism the government decided to allow the bill to lapse. BJP government was also hit by the allegation of a 'job scam' by its MLAs.

Despite these criticisms and accusations against the government, the opposition was divided and this ensured victory for the BJP. Confident of its victory in a context of divided opposition the BJP decided to contest the 2022 assembly election alone. Continuing its strategy of social engineering, BJP gave for the first time tickets to 12 Catholic candidates. In the 2017 assembly election it fielded seven Catholic candidates and in 2012 six Catholic candidates were given party ticket all of whom emerged victorious (The Times of India, 2022). The representation to Bhandari and OBC candidate can also be seen from the candidate list declared by the party. The election results confirm that the BJP is able to retain its voteshare, in fact increased it by one percent while the Congress voteshare reduced due to division of opposition votes.

### **Support Base of BJP**

#### **Bahujan Samaj**

There are many determining factors that influence voters while voting. Electoral analysis in the past heavily relied on religious factors while the 2022 assembly election brought to the fore the caste factor with AAP declaring its CM candidate from Bhandari community. The Bahujan samaj of Goa which rallied behind MGP under Dayanand Bandodkar<sup>4</sup> moved away from it in the post-statehood period. The support base of the OBC was split between Congress, BJP and MGP.

It was observed that the large number of Bahujan Samaj voters who supported BJP in 2017 have moved away from it in the 2022 assembly election which is more true in the case of Kshatriya Maratha community and Bhandari samaj.

As per the government of India data, the OBC population in Goa is around 18 percent and the central list of the OBC consisted of 17 OBC communities of Goa (Government of India, 2021, p.237-238). In the year 2014 the government of Goa decided to increase the OBC reservation from 19.5 percent to 27 percent (Government of Goa, 2014). In the same year government of Goa conducted a survey of OBCs. As per the survey report OBC consists of 27 percent of the total population in Goa (The Indian Express, 2022). While Bhandari community comprises little over than 61 percent of the OBCs in Goa of which majority of the OBC population (254276) is located in North Compared to South Goa (104238) (The Navhind Times, 2014). Among the Talukas of Goa, Pernem has highest population of OBCs (58 percent), other three being Bicholim (39 percent), Bardez (30 percent) and Ponda (38 percent) (The Navhind Times, 2014). These figures were contested by the President of Bhandari community Ashok Naik, who claims that Bhandaris comprises not only majority of OBCs but also among Hindus they are in majority. There is no denial of the fact that Bhandari community is politically significant in some of the constituencies of Goa.

Since liberation, Goa had only one CM from Bhandari Community. Announcement of CM candidate belonging to Bhandari Community by AAP in the 2022 assembly election with a hope of attracting voters from this community though created some buzz, did not yield expected results to the party. The BJP which in the past made attempts to keep Shripad Naik from Bhandari community away from state politics. In the 2022 assembly election while distributing tickets to candidates the party took precautions to provide adequate representation to Bhandari and other OBC communities.

Goa has seen three Maratha Chief Ministers-Pratapsing Rane, Laxmikant Parsekar and Pramod Sawant. While the exact population

of the Maratha's in Goa is not available, it can be safely said that it has a sizeable number. The issue of building IIT campus in Melaulim village of Sattari taluka brought to the fore the power struggle between two Maratha leaders, CM Pramod Sawant and Health minister Vishwajit Rane. The BJP government decided to have IIT campus in Melauli village which falls in the Sattari taluka. The project was earlier supported by Vishwajit Rane who belongs to the constituency which falls in Sattari taluka. The Melauli villagers protested against the IIT project which intensified in January 2021. The protest was also supported by the other villages of Sattari. Most of the people affected by the project were tribals, so the 'tribal people's organisations such as GAKUVED<sup>5</sup> Federation and Kul Mundkar Organisation demanded scrapping or shifting of the project' (The Navhind Times, 2021). Under the pressure from the people of Sattari Vishwajit Rane decided to withdraw his support to the project. The CM was reluctant to shift the project but under the growing pressure from the villagers and representation made by Vishwajit Rane, the Chief Minister (CM) decided to shift the project from Sattari.

**Table 8: Voting pattern of the OBCs**

	INC 2017	INC+ 2022	BJP 2017	BJP 2022	MGP 2017	TMC+ MGP 2022	AAP 2017	AAP 2022	RGP 2022	Oth 2017	Oth 2022
Khatriya Maratha	21	14	53	34	16	16	4	<1	5	6	31
Bhandari Samaj	18	14	54	44	14	19	4	4	9	10	10
Other OBC	16	20	39	38	16	10	4	7	11	25	14

*Source: CSDS, Lokniti Post Poll Survey 2022 (The full Table showing all castes and communities voting pattern has appeared in The Hindu, March 15, 2022)*

*Note: all figures are percentages N: 2066*

It is evident from the CSDS, Lokniti Post Poll survey findings that, despite the announcement of CM candidate from Maratha Samaj large number of Maratha voters chose not to vote for BJP in 2022 assembly election. In the 2017 assembly election 53 per cent Maratha

voters supported BJP which got reduced to 34 per cent in 2022. It is also important to observe that 31 per cent of the voters (Maratha) preferred to vote for Other parties not considered to be significant players in the electoral politics of Goa. From among the Bhandari samaj 54 per cent supported BJP in 2017 which got reduced to 44 per cent in 2022. There is not much difference in the other OBC support to the BJP between 2017 and 2022 assembly election. While the BJP has reduced its support base among the Marathas and the Bhandari samaj, it is able to increase its support among the higher caste Hindus and ST communities (The Hindu, March 15, 2022).

### **Religious Factors**

The unique history of Goa with more than 500 years of Portuguese rule gave Goa a unique identity which is more reflected in the form of religious identity and culture. As per the 2011 Census report Goa has 66 percent Hindus, 25 percent Christians and 8 percent Muslims while Bhuddhist, Jain and other religious population put together is less than one percent (Table 7). This unique identity and the distribution of the population (especially religious distribution) in North and South Goa also reflected in the voting pattern. Large number of Hindus supported BJP while majority of the Muslims and Christians supported the Congress.

It was believed that due to the initiatives of Parrikar and the anti-incumbency factor against Congress in 2012 election many Christians supported the BJP. In 2019, BJP faced a major blow due the death of two of its important leaders, Chief Minister (CM) Parrikar and Deputy CM Francis D'Souza. Parrikar was considered to be the secular face of the BJP. To win over the Christian votes Parrikar inducted Catholic candidates in the party. 'Francis D'Souza became the BJP's best known minority-face' (The Times of India, 2019). D'Souza was appointed as Deputy CM after the 2012 assembly elections. When Parrikar was trying to woo the Christian voters, D'Souza became instrumental in convincing some Christian leaders to contest on BJP ticket (Times of India, 2019). Another important leader who helped BJP to pull Christian

votes in the past was Mathany Saldana who died soon after 2012 assembly elections. With the support of Mathany Saldana one of the popular leader of Goa, Parrikar embarked on 'Mission Salcete' to attract Christian voters from South Goa. Mathany made a strong appeal to the Christian voters to vote for the BJP. Due to the efforts of Mathany Saldana and Francis D'Souza for the first time the BJP was able to make some inroads into Salcete in the 2012 assembly election, which was earlier the bastion of Congress. This trend did not last long. BJP lost Christian votes to the Congress both in North and South Goa in 2017 assembly elections. It is interesting to note that in this election more number of Christian candidates (7) got elected on BJP ticket compared to Hindu candidates (6). However, this win do not mean the Christian voters support BJP. This fact remained true in 2022 assembly election also where BJP has seen further decline in its support base among the Christians from 18 percent in 2017 election to 13 in 2022 (The Hindu, March 15, 2022). The party has registered an increase in its support base among the Muslim communities from 10 percent in 2017 to 17 percent in 2022 (The Hindu, March 15, 2022).

### Conclusion

One can observe that the new players split the vote base of both BJP and Congress. Goa has 65 percent Hindus but it is not a homogeneous group. While the BJP was able to attract large number of upper caste Hindu votes, most of the OBC voters have moved away from the BJP in the 2022 assembly election. Many Christians who supported BJP in 2017 preferred to vote for non-BJP party in 2022 election. Congress votes were also split among new parties. Congress lost large number of support base among Upper caste Hindus, OBCs, STs and Christian voters who preferred to vote for parties other than Congress and BJP.

With increasing number of significant players in electoral competition, voters in Goa have shifted away from both Congress and the BJP, but what benefitted BJP is splitting of votes among opposition

parties which resulted in BJP MLAs winning some constituencies with a narrow margin of victory. It is important to note that, AAP which performed very badly in 2017 election has won two seats in the present assembly. The new regional outfit Revolutionary Goans' performance in the present assembly election was impressive in terms of vote share (around 9 per cent) and winning one seat. With every assembly election the number of political parties is increasing in Goa's electoral politics. The 2022 assembly elections in a way convey that Goa's party politics is moving towards multipolarity. If the trend continues there is a possibility that the new players other than the Congress and the BJP will have a larger say in the government formation in future.

## Notes and References

### Notes

1. Goa attained liberation of Portuguese rule in the year 1962 and remained Union Territory till 1987. The period after the liberation of Goa is referred to as post-liberation period.
2. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1987 Goa was conferred statehood and became the 25<sup>th</sup> state of Indian Union. The period after this date is referred to as post-statehood period.
3. Regional Plan is the land use plan for Goa.
4. The first Chief Minister of Goa
5. Gawda, Kunbi, Velip and Changar (GAKUVED)

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