



Party Politics in Goa: An analysis of defection cases of splits & Mergers- (1999-2002)

Balaji Sudas Shenvy, Doctoral Research Student, Department of Political Science, Goa University

Abstract- Splitting and merging of the political party for self growth is seen now a day in the all the states of India and this is big concern of Indian Constitution. The main objective of this research is to understand the party politics in Goa in the context of lawful defection cases leading to splits & mergers in the political parties in order to attain power. There is dearth of literature available in this arena, however, the archival newspapers available in the Goa State Central Library has plethora of factual information which has been dissected for this research in order to explore the dynamics of party politics in Goa. The major hypothesis developed for this research is that defection versus loyalty and ability versus incompetence to rule the State is one amongst the major issue which the Goa politics has faced during 1999-2002. This research work outline the political party's merges and splits the consequences of their activity over the rule. Being in the power is the single motto of all the political party and for this they opt such unlawful activity. This research also outlines the breaking of tenth schedule of Indian Constitution in a very crucial manner and how these unlawful, activity create a negative impact on the democracy.

Keywords: Party Politics, Splits, Merger, defection, Goa

I. INTRODUCTION

Defection, toppling of Government and instability dominated Goa's politics during 1999-2002. Indian National Congress (INC) received people's mandate with absolute majority to govern the State and politics of Goa in the General elections held in 1999; after a brief imposition of President's Rule, as the INC led coalition Government was reduced to minority and no political party managed to form the Government. INC won the elections with absolute majority of 21 in the 40 seated constituencies of Goa Legislative Assembly which was for the first time any single political party received such an absolute majority since attainment of statehood. With absolute majority, aspirations for ministerial positions gained momentum leading to dissidences within the legislature party. All these led to lawful splits in political parties and keep off the Anti-defection Law. The period- 1999-2002 witnessed various splits, mergers and formation of splinter group in the Goa legislative Assembly which led to the collapse and formation of the Governments and ultimately led to the dissolution of the assembly.

II. CASES OF SPLITS & MERGER

The Tenth Schedule, as it was originally enacted, contained a provision to protect legislators when an original party splits and one third of the legislators form another group. This provision was deleted by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003, when it was found that it was being abused by the legislators. Following cases of split in INC during 1999-2002 and their subsequent splinter groups within the faction and their merger into National political parties were the hall mark of this period which is analyzed in the present research.

INC which won 21 seats formed the Government under the leadership of Luizinho Faleiro on 9th June 1999. Soon after the formation of the Government and Cabinet, dissatisfaction within the INC MLA's started. Faleiro took defensive steps to prevent the dissidents from reaching the required numbers to form lawful splits in the Congress and keep off the anti-defection law. He started engineering defections in the regional parties like Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP), United Goans Democratic Party (UGDP), projecting a picture that these regional parties had themselves preferred to join the INC.¹ During the first two defections, the INC took both the UGDP legislators elected during 1999 elections- Suresh Parulekar (Calangute) & Jose Philip D'Souza (Vasco) into its party fold. This increased the strength of INC from 21 to 23.² On the eve of Parliamentary elections of September 1999, the Congress engineered defection in the MGP and took two legislators out of four elected- Ramakant Khalap (Mandrem) and Prakash Velip (Quepem) into INC under the banner of MGP (Khalap) faction, this led to increase strength of the INC from 23 to 25.³ Realizing Faleiro's move, the dissidents also became more active. The rival camps within the INC were ready for battle of wits and guts over the parliamentary elections fiasco issue. The spark was ignited by the MLA's who were aspiring for the ministerial positions in the cabinet.

On 19th November INC MLA and health minister, Francisco Sardinha led a revolt along with ten other legislators by forming a separate group INC (Sardinha) which was called Goa People's Congress Party

(GPCP) and claimed to form the Government with the support of BJP and other allies.⁴ Francisco Sardinha along with Dayanand Narvekar, Victoria Fernandes, Subhash Shirodkar, Somanath Zuwarkar, Alexio Sequiera, Francis Silveira, Mauvin Godinho, Arcio de Souza, Venkatesh Dessai & Francis de Souza formed Goa People's Congress Party (GPCP) and communicated the formation of this separate party to the Speaker, Pratapsing Rane and claimed to form the Government with the support of ten members of BJP, two members of MGP, lone NCP member Wilfred D'Souza formed Goa Democratic Alliance.⁵ Sardinha was sworn in as Chief Minister of Goa on 24th November 1999. Dissidences within the INC were responsible for the fall of Faleiro's Government which reduced the INC strength to 14.

On 16th August 2000, once there was a split and these five members of INC led by Shaikh Hassan Harron (Mormugao), Suresh Parulekar (Calangute), Prakash Velip (Quepem), Jose Philip D'Souza (Vasco), Filip Neri Rodriguense (Villim) formed a faction of INC (Shaikh) and extended their unconditional support to Sardinha led Government.⁶ The Speaker Pratapsingh Rane recognized the split in the INC legislature party.

In a fast-paced political development in Goa, on 21st October 2000, Four INC legislators- Ravi Naik (Ponda), Ramakant Khalap (Mandrem), Sanjay Bandekar (Canacona) and Manohar Azgaonkar (Dhargal) formed a faction- INC (Ravi) and later joined the BJP on the same day. Similarly on the same day, four out of five legislators from INC (Shaikh)- Shaikh Hassan Harron (Mormugao), Prakash Velip (Quepem), Jose Philip D'Souza (Vasco), Filip Neri Rodriguense (Villim) joined BJP.⁷ These two major mergers helped BJP to increase their strength from 10 to 18. BJP, along with two members of MGP and an independent legislator from Ponguinim constituency Isidor Fernandes supported the coalition and dislodged the Sardinha government. Manohar Parrikar was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Goa on 24th October 2000.⁸

In another political development, on 7th November 2000, two legislators of GPCP under the banner of GPCP (Dessai) - Venkatesh Dessai (Valpoi) and Francis de Souza (Mapusa) formed a group and merged into BJP.⁹

Meanwhile INC was trying to consolidate united opposition thereby strengthening INC. Four legislators of GPCP formed a faction GPCP (Zuwarkar) – Somanath Zuwarkar, Subhash Shirodkar, Victoria Fernandes and Francis Silveira, merged back into INC, thereby reducing the number of GPCP to three.¹⁰ They were all admitted into INC by Faleiro. Faleiro retaliated to combine all the forces against BJP for fight against their policies.¹¹ On 5th April 2000, GPCP formally joined back to INC. Out of remaining three legislators- Francisco Sardinha, Mauvin Godinho joined back to INC.¹²

As all the anti BJP forces were becoming strong in Goa, BJP realizing the threats of defections dissolved the Legislative Assembly to face the elections.

Exhibit 1.1: Cases of Splits & Merger- 1999-2002

| Sr. No | Date of Split/Merger | Political Party | Particulars of the events | Members associated | Remarks |
|--------|----------------------|-----------------|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 4.07.1999 | UGDP | Two MLAs Merged into INC. | Suresh Parulekar, Jose Phillip D'Souza | Split in UGDP |
| 2 | 16.08.1999 | MGP | Two MLAs Merged into INC | Ramakant Khalap, Prakash Velip | Split in MGP |
| 3 | 19.11.1999 | INC | 11 MLAs formed a separate Group INC (Sardinha) named it as GPCP | Francisco Sardinha, Dayanand Narvekar, Victoria Fernandes, Subhash Shirodkar, Somanath Zuwarkar, Alexio Sequiera, Francis Silveira, Mauvin Godinho, Arcio de Souza, Venkatesh Dessai & Francis de Souza | Split in INC |
| 4 | 16.08.2000 | INC | Five MLAs formed INC (Sheikh Hassan) to support Sardinha Government | Sheikh Hassan Harron, Filip Neri Rodrigues, Prakash Velip, Jose Phillip D'Souza, Suresh Parulekar | Split in INC |
| 5 | 21.10.2000 | INC | Four MLAs formed INC (Ravi Naik) to support BJP Government | Ravi Naik, Ramakant Khalap, Manohar Azgaonkar, Sanjay Bandekar | Split in INC to merge into BJP |
| 6 | 21.10.2000 | INC (Sheikh) | Four MLAs merged into BJP | Sheikh Hassan Harron, Filip Neri Rodrigues, Prakash Velip, Jose Phillip D'Souza | Merger of INC (Sheikh) into BJP |

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|---|------------|-----------------|---|--|------------------------------------|
| 7 | 07.11.2000 | GPCP (Dessai) | Two MLAs Split from GPCP and formed GPCP (Dessai) to join BJP | Venkatesh Dessai & Francis de Souza | Merger of GPCP (Dessai) into BJP |
| 8 | 14.12.2000 | GPCP (Zuwarkar) | Four MLAs from GPCP formed GPCP (Zuwarkar) to merge into INC | Victoria Fernandes, Subhash Shirodkar, Somanath Zuwarkar, Francis Silveira | Merger of GPCP (Zuwarkar) into INC |
| 9 | 05.04.2001 | GPCP | Two MLAs merged into INC | Francisco Sardinha, Mauvin Godinho | |

Source: Compiled from the various issues of Local daily Newspapers

III. FINDINGS & OBSERVATIONS

1) Abuse of Legal provisions under Tenth Schedule

The provision of 'split' has been grossly misused to engineer multiple divisions in the party, as a result of which the evil of defection has not been checked in the right earnest.

In case of Goa, between 1999-2002, it is evident that the INC which won trumping majority in the Assembly elections and in order to control the dissidences within INC went on engineering splits in regional parties and their merger into INC resulted in the formation of splinter group within INC known as GPCP; which led to the collapse of Government in November 1999. Further dissatisfied INC legislators in order to gain positions went on splitting the INC which ultimately facilitated the BJP in Goa to expand and form their Government. However, the provision of 'split' was done away with by the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act- 2003. But the removal of the split provision prompted political parties to engineer wholesale defection (merger) instead of smaller groups.

2) Instability

The abuse of the legal provision under the tenth schedule resulted in constant instability in Goa. Within three years Goa, experienced three different Governments. Legislators were moving from one splinter group to another in a lawful manner disrespecting the mandate of the people and changing sides over the floor of the House. Both the National political parties INC-BJP were tiring to engulf the regional political parties and their voters.

Exhibit 1.2: Instability caused due to Splits & Mergers- 1999-2002

| Sr. No | Name of the Chief Minister | Political Party | From | To | Time Period | Reasons |
|--------|----------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Luizinho Faleiro | INC | 09.06.1999 | 24.11.1999 | 168 days | Government reduced to minority |
| 2 | Francisco Sardinha | GDA Coalition | 24.11.1999 | 23.10.2000 | 334 days | Withdrawal of support |
| 3 | Manohar Parrikar | BJP led Coalition | 24.10.2000 | 03.06.2002 | 588 days | Dissolution of Assembly |

Source: Compiled from the various issues of Local daily Newspapers

3) Easy recognition has encouraged splits & mergers

Acceptance of the claims of splits and subsequent recognition to the split groups without proper examination has encouraged a series of defections during 1999-2002. The Speaker of the Goa Legislative Assembly- Pratapsingh Rane, should have exercised his constitutional authority more judiciously while taking decisions on recognition of the splits in the Congress Party. Quick decision on the recognition of splits, without studying the matter in depth, only encouraged defections.

For example: The split led by Shaikh Hassan Haroon was not proper as there was no split in the party's organization unit as required under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. The Split of INC (Ravi) - its split and subsequent merger was decided within shortest possible time.

4) The distinction between BJP-INC blurred

The distinction between the ruling and the opposition has blurred. The BJP looks like the INC and the INC looks like the BJP. No party stands out from the other. The opposition in its true sense should present itself as a contrasting alternative to the ruling camp, but the lines between the two do not exist and both of them have become hospitable to floor crossers. Because the name of the game is not public service but capture of power and in this system the power can be captured only by having the arithmetic right. The following exhibit explains the movement of the elected legislators from the political party they got elected and how they moved lawfully by forming splinter groups and mergers thereby misusing the constitutional provisions.

IV. CONCLUSION

There will be nothing of Democracy left if we do not stop the slide right now. Defection must stop. The very foundation of democracy is adult franchise one man, one vote, using the franchise voters elect a representative of their constituency to the legislature. Democracy gives freedom to any citizen to offer himself as a candidate for the representative's office; he approaches the voters as an independent or as a member of a party and seeks their patronage on the basis of a distinct ideology, manifesto and programmes. Among many candidates in the fray the majority of voters choose one to represent them. There cannot be two opinions that each voter who has voted for a particular candidate has made his choice after an evaluation of his party and its ideology, manifesto and programmes or his ideology and programmes if he is an independent.

Exhibit: 1.3 Movement of Legislators from one party to another- 1999-2002

| Sr. No | Legislator | Elected | Joined | Moved | Then to |
|--------|---------------|---------|--------------|--------------------|---------|
| 1 | F. D'Souza | GRC | NCP | GPCP-GPCP (Dessai) | BJP |
| 2 | J. Phillip | UGDP | INC | INC (Shaikh) | BJP |
| 3 | S. Parulekar | UGDP | INC | INC (Shaikh) | - |
| 4 | R. Khalap | MGP | INC | INC (Ravi) | BJP |
| 5 | P. Velip | MGP | INC | INC (Shaikh) | BJP |
| 6 | S. Sardinha | INC | GPCP | INC | - |
| 7 | D. Narvekar | INC | GPCP | INC | - |
| 8 | S. Shirodkar | INC | GPCP | GPCP (Zuwarkar) | INC |
| 9 | S. Zuwarkar | INC | GPCP | GPCP(Zuwarkar) | INC |
| 10 | V. Fernandes | INC | GPCP | GPCP(Zuwarkar) | INC |
| 11 | F. Silveira | INC | GPCP | GPCP (Zuwarkar) | INC |
| 12 | V. Dessai | INC | GPCP | GPCP (Dessai) | BJP |
| 13 | A. Sequeira | INC | GPCP | GPCP (Sequeira) | INC |
| 14 | A D'Souza | INC | GPCP | GPCP (Dessai) | - |
| 15 | M. Godinho | INC | GPCP | INC | - |
| 16 | S. Hassan | INC | INC (Shaikh) | BJP | - |
| 17 | F.N Rodrigues | INC | INC (Shaikh) | BJP | - |
| 18 | S. Bandekar | INC | INC (Shaikh) | BJP | - |
| 19 | M. Azgaonkar | INC | INC (Shaikh) | BJP | - |
| 20 | R. Naik | INC | INC (Ravi) | BJP | - |

Source: Compiled from the various issues of Local daily Newspapers

Defection is a betrayal of the voter's trust. Representation of a constituency is a political contract between the voters and the elected candidates, a contract based on his commitment to a certain ideology and programme. The moment he defects, this political contract is invalidated. The voters have every right to say that the elected candidate has ceased to represent them. Each voter has a right to ask the State to grant him opportunity to exercise his 'one man, one vote' privilege again to elect a new representative. The law of defection must therefore be re-drafted to make a fresh mandate mandatory for a defector.

Defection is an act that undermines all democratic principles and is complete disrespect to the voters, as there is no ideological reasoning for changing sides. While the reason bandied by the defecting MLA is development of the constituency, everybody knows that it is the personal development that the MLAs have in mind. The ministerial berths and chairmanships that are distributed to them post the change of sides, are evidence of this. They gain, whether the constituency gain is debatable, and the State definitely does not.

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