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Swatantra: the Credibility Gap

by M.R. Masani, M.P.

THERE are two impressions about the Swatantra Party that have become more pronounced during the past year. One is that there is increasing acceptance and appreciation of the Party's principles and programme and of the vindication of its basic criticisms against the present Government in Delhi and the prevailing patterns of economic and foreign policies. The other impression is of an unwillingness of many people to take the Party seriously as an alternative to the Congress Party which has now ruled India for two decades. It would be surprising if amongst us some others have not had the same experience.

Hesitation in joining Swatantra ranks

While the first impression gladdens one, it does not call for further thought or action; the latter does. The lack of credibility to which I refer is corroborated by the failure of an adequate number of people to rally to the Party's ranks both before and after the last General Election in February 1967. Why did many people prefer to stand independent candidates rather than under the five-pointed star? Why, after the elections, did the Independents in Parliament and elsewhere not rally round the Swatantra Party, which was the biggest opposition group in the Lok Sabha, and help it to become the Opposition? Why did the Jan

Sangh and the D.M.K. turn down our offer to join in forming a bloc with over a hundred members in the Lok Sabha, which would have presented the country with a "shadow cabinet" and a ready-made alternative government? Why, above all, have dissident Congressmen in many States thought it worth while to unfold a ramshackle umbrella over their heads called the Bharatiya Kranti Dal with a leadership so obviously inferior to that of the Swatantra Party and with no programme to compare with our own, rather than adopt the Swatantra Party as their own? The answer obviously is that they have doubts about the Party.

Why is it that people are sceptical about the capacity of the Swatantra Party to achieve power and to deliver the goods? Since this criticism is not linked to the Party's policies and programme, it must have something to do with its organisation and the performance of the Party and its members.

I have been puzzling over this question for quite a while and would like to share my thoughts with readers of SWARAJYA a journal that has rendered such yeoman service to the Party.

Is the Party stagnant?

The first thought that occurs is that the Party is losing the élan and dynamism of its early years and is tending to become somewhat stagnant. Too many peo-

ple have been occupying the same positions in its hierarchy too long. There has been neither "job rotation", a technique that industry and business have developed with advantage, nor an infusion of new blood with the introduction into the Party's hierarchy of younger and fresher people. In that sense, it may be said that the Party tends to suffer from a "hardening of the arteries" despite its young age. It was in an attempt to check this trend that I recently asked to be excused from occupying executive office in the Party for the coming two years, as I felt it was time someone set an example.

Lack of discipline?

The second obvious weakness of the Party is the relative lack of discipline in a country where no party except the Communist parties on the one hand and the R.S.S. on the other are richly endowed with that virtue. The large number of defections among our newly elected members of the Legislative Assemblies in Rajasthan and Gujarat have brought this weakness right out into the open, and it is no use shutting our eyes to it any longer. As General Secretary of the Party, it was my misfortune for seven long years to observe growing indiscipline of various kinds and a reluctance on the part of the national leadership to curb it. I had occasion, at the recent meeting of the General Council of the Party

TWO GREAT LESSONS FROM GOKHALE'S LIFE

The two great lessons to be derived by the contemporary generation from Gokhale's life and example are in my opinion these. Firstly the need, which is indeed greater today than it was in Gokhale's time, to look upon public life as a serious career. Politics is the business of ordering the affairs of the community. And in the context of today's requirements, there is need for a far greater degree of professional knowledge and competence amongst politicians than is prevalent today. This calls for a far greater degree of earnestness, study and application. Above all, it calls for a restoration in the national scale of values of that regard for intelligence, knowledge and character which has always distinguished the Indian tradition. Secondly, unless public life is spiritualised, that is to say, cleansed of its selfish, base elements and once again a public career is looked upon as a career of service and sacrifice as in the days of the freedom struggle, we would not be able to win for the Government and the public administration that 'credibility' on which it must bank heavily during these years or transition to progress.

—S. G. BARVE

at Delhi, to mention some recent examples of such blatant indiscipline that had gone unchallenged.

Choice of candidates

When, therefore, the President of a State Unit of the Party recently complained that their inability to carry the State for the Swatantra Party and the defection of some of their members had been caused by the malpractices of the Congress Party, I felt sorry that no awareness had yet dawned that these reverses were due to the image of the Party

having been badly damaged by the behaviour of some leading members of our Party in that State prior to and after the elections. In refreshing contrast is the admission of the President of the Rajasthan State Unit that these reverses were due to the bad choice of candidates, for which he and his colleagues in the State must accept responsibility.

We in the Swatantra Party have inveighed for the last seven years against the evils of Statism. A new kind of Statism, however, has recently been emerging within our own ranks which is, in its own way, as unfortunate in its consequences as the other variety we have been attacking. This Statism takes the form of claiming that the State Executive of the Party should be left undisturbed and unchecked in their activities by the National Headquarters of the Party, that, whether in the choice of candidates or in the expenditure of funds made available by the Party, their discretion should not be questioned, and that the National Headquarters should not do anything within their territory such, for instance, as setting aside a fraudulent election, without getting the State office bearers' prior approval or consent. Now these are propositions which, if accepted, would splinter any Party and prevent it from functioning as a national organisation. The Rajah of Ramgarh had made these demands on the Party several years back and when they were gently but firmly turned down, he intrigued against the Party and applied for membership of the Congress Party and had in consequence to be expelled for his indiscipline and disloyalty. Unfortunately, this experience does not seem to have given a final quietus to this kind of Statism.

The Swatantra Party has rightly rejected tendencies of this kind which would result in Balkanising the Party and has insisted on maintaining its national character. Even as the Party was being born, Rajaji had insisted, in the context of conflicting claims for

Samyukta Maharashtra and Mahagujarat, that there could be only one Swatantra Party in the country and that was THE Swatantra Party, and that its Maharashtra, Gujarat and Bombay units were only branches to carry out the Party's work.

General council speaks out

This line of thought was reinforced when the General Council of the Swatantra Party, at its meeting in Bombay in February 1967, approved of a Statement on Organisation the relevant passage in which reads as follows:

"We must realise that there is only one Swatantra Party, and that is The Swatantra Party. Our leader, Rajaji, put his finger on this truth as far back as August 1959 in Bombay when he pointed out, in connection with our attitude in regard to a regional controversy then current in Western India, that there could not be one Swatantra Party in Bombay, another in Maharashtra and a third in Gujarat, but that these should all function as branches of a single Party.

"This is a fact which is commonplace in Britain where the Conservative, Liberal and Labour Parties are organised with National Headquarters in London, on the one hand, and Constituency organisations consisting of the candidate, the Agent (or Organiser), and local branch on the other. The size of our country certainly justifies our interposing an additional tier, namely, the State unit. But that cannot mean that the State unit should claim territorial authority, seek a monopoly of developing the Party in that area, and question 'interference' by the Centre. The National Executive of the Party and the Parliamentary Board are there precisely to guide and direct the affairs of the Party throughout the length and breadth of the country, whenever it is necessary in the Party's interests."

The maintenance of this position the Party has taken is, in

my view, a *sine qua non* of its growth and even its very existence. When a man joins the Swatantra Party in any part of the country, he does so not only because he accepts the principles and programme of the Party but also because he looks to Rajaji and the national leadership of the Party. By becoming a member, he expects certain Fundamental Rights in the party such, for instance, as his right to vote in elections freely and fairly conducted and his right to be consulted in the evolution of Party policies. If he were to be told that he would be left unprotected in case his rights were infringed by District or State office-bearers of the Party, he would certainly think twice before joining the Party.

The issue is a basic one. Is India one country and is the Indian citizen throughout the country to enjoy the Fundamental Rights under the Constitution? If the answer is in the affir-

mative, then the same principles cannot but apply to the Swatantra Party and its members. The Praja Socialist Party has receded and dwindled in the past few years precisely because it allowed the leadership at State levels to go each its own way and to weaken the national character of the Party. This is a warning the Swatantra Party will ignore at its peril.

Cadres, cadres

The three weaknesses I have mentioned above, namely, hardening of the arteries, indiscipline and Statism, undoubtedly need to be checked; but something positive is also required and that is the development of a cadre of Party workers, which is so far lacking. Lenin was right in stressing that "cadres decide everything". We have at one end a small leadership which is inferior to none in the country in its capacity, intelligence and sophistication. We have on the other a body of so-

called "active workers" most of whom are really only passive members. The conversion of this body of members into really active workers is an immediate task.

In this context, the mere enrolment of members and the raising and spending of funds will not suffice. What is called for is the recruitment and training of a body of disciplined and dedicated men and women who are convinced about the principles of the Party and are prepared to carry its message to others. To put it differently, what the Party needs is to develop an infrastructure, at grass-roots level, which would provide a link between the leadership of the Party and the general body of citizens, particularly in the countryside, whom the Party's message has yet to reach.

This is a challenge to the Party which it must meet in the New Year if it is to justify the hopes that were aroused ten years back when it took birth.

THE BEHAVIOUR OF OUR ATMOSPHERE by Dr. Sir C. V. Raman

THE dynamical behaviour of the atmosphere of the earth is of such novel character that it may be described as giving a face-lift to the science of meteorology and providing it with a fresh complexion.

Being a gaseous body, the air is completely free to move both up and down and also sideways. Hence, it is not under any constraint to rotate with the earth. The air in contact with the earth heated by solar radiation finds its way up and ultimately reaches the levels of the so-called tropopause.

In its upward movement, each parcel of air carries with it the momentum which it has acquired by contact with the earth at the starting point. The steady state of the atmosphere in its higher levels is accordingly determined by the manner in which the parcels of air there arriving distribute themselves and by such admixture of the air from different

starting points as actually occurs at such levels.

The earth at ground level moves with speeds ranging from 465 metres per second at the equator to zero at the poles. The heating effect of the solar radiation reaching the earth also varies from a maximum at the equator to zero at the poles. In these circumstances, the atmosphere divides itself into three belts, namely, the equatorial belt, the belts of the middle latitudes, and the polar belts, of which the dynamical behaviour is quite different.

This division into belts also exhibits itself at the level of the tropopause, the height of which above ground level is greatest for the equatorial belt, much less for the belts of middle latitudes and least for the polar belts. These facts indicate that these belts represent sectors of the atmosphere which rotate differently with respect to the ground below.

The foregoing considerations provide readily intelligible explanations for various well-known facts of the atmospheric behaviour. Amongst these may be mentioned the existence of the easterly trade-winds which blow in low latitudes both north and south of the equator. Likewise, the westerly winds which appear in the region of the middle latitudes receive a satisfactory explanation. The astonishing manifestation of winds of high velocity known as the jet-streams also finds a natural place in this interpretation of atmospheric behaviour.

The meteorologists should consider this thesis and think over the principles by which they could interpret the behaviour of the atmosphere. Meteorology is a complicated science and meteorologists should not merely be concerned with forecasts, but try to get down to fundamentals so that it might be built on a solid and sure foundation.