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PARTY POLITICS IN INDIA

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“शास्त्रबोधनं तत्त्वदर्शनम्” ।

[Realization of Truth is the aim of Science]

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Party Politics in India

I feel honoured to be asked to address the Harold Laski Institute. I did not learn at the feet of Prof. Laski, as have so many others in our country, but I did know him when I was a student at the London School of Economics. He was a very lovable man. Whether one followed his political thinking or not, he was a very good friend to students and young people and very beloved of them. I am glad to visit an Institute commemorating his work. I am also very happy to see, next to his portrait on the wall, that of Mr. G. V. Mavalankar, who was the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly from 1945 and Speaker of the Provisional Parliament. Mr. Mavalankar was a great Speaker—a fine, fearless, independent presiding authority.

Now, the subject on which Professor Mavalankar suggested I should talk, the functioning of political parties and party democracy in India, is a very wide one and I will try to share some thoughts with you on three or four specific aspects of the subject, which otherwise could hardly be covered in an hour.

Are Parties Necessary?

The first point I suggest we consider is the necessity of political parties—a topic which, in our country, is not deemed to be concluded or closed. In most parts of the world, the question does not arise. Political parties are considered to be a concomitant of the democratic form of government, but in India my friend Jayaprakash Narayan has kept the debate alive. Only recently, you will remember at an AICC meeting Mr. Nehru felt called upon rather vehemently to say, "I am entirely in favour of the Party system of Government." Now, in this particular debate I feel sorry that I cannot go all the way with my good friend Jayaprakash, much as I admire his idealism and the spirit of service in which he has raised this issue. For as long as one can foresee, political parties will, in my view, be necessary in a democracy. Jayaprakash says that elections should be held on the principle

of selecting the best man. That is not quite so simple because, when thousands upon thousands of people have to vote, the question arises: who is the best man? How do we weigh the quality of one man as being better suited to represent us than another? The answer is that one votes for the man who represents one's point of view better than the other candidates. That is, one votes for the man with whom one has the greatest ideological affinity. And that is what political parties are about. They are groups of people with common thoughts or common programmes or common policies offering a choice to the electorate. Therefore, in selecting 'the best man', the mechanism of a political party becomes a very great aid, or should be a great aid, to the electorate.

Having said that, I would also say that there is no doubt that party politics are acquiring a somewhat bad name in this part of the world. We have seen how, in one country of Asia after another, party democracy is giving way to some form or another of dictatorship or autocracy. There is a growing cynicism about all politicians based on the fact that most politicians, according to public opinion, do not practice what they preach. There is a gulf between profession and practice on all sides, and there is growing cynicism as a result, which is very dangerous, because, if people really come to believe that all politicians are crooks, democracy will not survive for long. Mr. Nelson Rockefeller, a likely candidate for the Republican nomination in America in the next Presidential Election, recently said quite aptly that "to call politics dirty is to call democracy dirty."

Party's Proper Sphere

There is a current world trend as a result of which a political party tends to become too dominant over the individual. The political party in most parts of the world, though not total like the Communist Party, is in danger of becoming all-pervasive, of trying to dictate to a member his thinking on almost every aspect of life. This phenomenon was referred to by the well known Italian novelist some of you must have read, Ignazio Silone, who has been in the past a member of

the Italian Socialist Party. He pointed out that the party system in Italy was also tending in the direction of dominating the minds and lives of people too much. He made the plea that the party should be kept to its proper place. Just as, much earlier, somebody had said: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's", so too, since the party reflects the attempt to capture the State, a point comes where we must tell the party to keep its hands off certain spheres of life which should really belong to the individual conscience and the individual personality.

When we formed the Swatantra Party in this country in 1959 under Rajaji's inspired leadership, thanks to his guidance we tried to assert this principle of a limited government and a limited party. Our party was "a party with a difference." In our Statement of Policy we said that the Swatantra Party "believes that the present trend followed in India and elsewhere by which political parties dominate more and more the thoughts, activities and lives of their members is one that needs to be reversed. The Party holds that democracy is best served if every political party allows freedom of expression to its members on all matters falling outside the fundamental principles of the Party. The Party therefore gives its members, whether in Parliament or elsewhere, the fullest liberty on all questions not falling within the scope of its principles and Statement of Policy."

This might explain something that confuses and puzzles many people as to how in the Swatantra Party leading members are found to be at variance on matters which the Party does not consider to be of the first importance but which to individuals might seem to be somewhat important such as language, or regional boundaries, or the banning of the nuclear bomb on which my great leader Rajaji and I hold very different views and freely express them in public. We believe that this should be so and that it is not on every public issue that members of the Party should conform to our view.

The Swatantra Party has said from the start that the Swatantra Party will not follow the lead of the other parties

in trying to indoctrinate and capture student organisations and groups of students. In our Statement of Policy we have said that we will keep out of the Universities. We will go and address study circles or meetings but we will not set up groups of students based on our platform and subscribing to our programme. That stage must come after they have graduated and become full citizens. Similarly, in the case of trade unions and workers who today are, we know, exploited by the various political parties, we have kept our hands off trade unions and said that while our members may go and serve as individuals there will be no Swatantra TUC to add to the INTUC, the HMS, the AITUC and the UTUC. We will not form a fifth Trade Union Congress just because others have set this pattern. So, in these ways, we have tried to keep out of what we consider unnecessary or undesirable party activity.

Similarly, in the case of Municipal and Panchayat elections. From the beginning, we have said that we will not contest Village Panchayat elections. Recently, there was a great deal of pressure from some of our people who asked why, when the others were not abstaining, we should do so. It was, they said, an unfair handicap. I am very glad therefore that the AICC at its recent meeting has reaffirmed the Congress Party's decision to keep out of Village Panchayats. That makes it much easier for us to adhere to our own stand without being blamed for unduly restricting the party's activities. These are ways in which we believe that the Party should limit its activities.

Need for an Opposition

Now I come to a second point, and that is the need for an Opposition. I think almost every member of the Indian intelligentsia by now is clear that parliamentary democracy cannot effectively function if there is no effective opposition. In fact those of you who have read the book by E.F.M. Durbin, that outstanding British Socialist thinker who died prematurely as a result of a drowning accident some years ago, will remember that he says that of all the tests of a democracy the acid test is whether or not there is a

functioning Opposition and an alternative government. No Constitution is democratic if in practice there is no other party than that in office prepared to take over the reins of government. Durbin was right. You have only got to read the Constitution of USSR to realise what a beautiful document it is! The Soviet Constitution gives all the guarantees of freedom of expression, opinion and association, but an opposition candidate is not allowed to stand for election! Now, in our country since Independence that little component has been missing. There are people who say that, in a developing country, in a backward country, we cannot afford the luxury of a parliamentary Opposition. In other words, they say that in a backward or developing country, a one party government is desirable. We see that the leaders who today are in power in Ghana, Egypt and Indonesia have actually carried that belief into practice.

An interesting example of the relevance to our country of this issue occurred when Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited Kenya not long ago. While she was in Kenya she happened to say that she did not quite see why there should be two political parties in Kenya and why one would not suffice. A leader of the Kenya African Democratic Union, KADU, one of the Ministers of the then Government, promptly rapped Mrs. Gandhi on the knuckles and said that if that is what she believed she should confine her preaching of it to India, since in Kenya they believed in a two-party system as in England. This little incident shows how easy it is to drop into the habit of saying that an Opposition is a luxury a backward country cannot afford. I would, on the contrary, say that in a backward country the need for an opposition is a hundred times more than in an advanced country where the liberties of the people are more secure and democratic traditions are stronger.

Now, this missing element in our democracy, this political vacuum, was sought to be filled by the establishment of the Party to which I belong some three years ago. Mr. Rajni Kothari, who comes from this State but is at present working in the North, in an issue of *Seminar* of June 1962,

where the results of the elections are analysed, seems to think that we have at least partly fulfilled our task. He says: "The role of the Swatantra Party seems to be significant. Its very rise, quite apart from its spectacular successes (not fully reflected in legislative returns), has made political controversy more ideologically oriented and divisions within the Congress Party more crystallised. It has also filled an important gap in the country's political organisation, the availability of an Opposition party which can canalise all dissenting elements from the Congress. A Party so much like the Congress and so different, that is the crux of its achievement. This will become more clear with the passage of time". I hope he is right.

Electoral Reform

A factor that comes in the way of building an opposition in India, an effective one, is the electoral system. As you know, we have the single member constituency and the simple majority. Now, this means that a minority party can become a government, with a majority in Parliament or Assembly. As you know, the Congress Party secured 45% of the popular vote for the Lok Sabha and the total vote secured by it for all the State Assemblies put together is only 40%. And yet we find that the Congress Party is in office at the Centre with 70% of the seats in the Lok Sabha. In only three States in the Indian Union did the Congress get a popular majority. So that today we have a minority government led by Mr. Nehru masquerading as a majority government. Its majority is purely synthetic. It is not a reflection of the will of the people. This comes of the fact that elementary precautions in the way of proportional representation of the mind of the electorate were not taken in the Constitution.

I remember that, in the Constitution Committee of the Constituent Assembly, I moved a resolution for the introduction of proportional representation in Assembly and Parliamentary elections. But Sardar Patel, who was the President of the Committee and the majority leader in the Committee, opposed the amendment and saw that it was defeated. His idea was that it would come in the way of stable government,

and that we might follow the example of France, where constantly shifting coalitions accompanied the system of proportional representation. Now, I think this view was based on a misunderstanding. It is not the system of election that decides whether you have two or five or ten parties and a stable government, it is the temperament of the people. There are countries like Switzerland, Sweden and Ireland, all of which have proportional representation and all of which have enjoyed extremely stable government over decades. On the other hand, I am quite sure whether you have Proportional Representation or not, in a Latin or Asian or African country, you will have constantly changing governments and constantly splitting parties. We are like the Latins in temperament and not like the Anglo-Saxons and the Teutons, and no amount of legislating will make us have two parties if we are not made that way. Thus, unless at least a third of the country's politicians are prepared to be in Opposition at any given time—which unfortunately is not the case in India today—a two-party system can hardly be expected to emerge. It is better to recognise the differences in national temperaments and to provide safeguards against distortion of the popular will than to try and legislate all nations into a two-party system which will never come into effect merely through these measures.

I feel the time is over-ripe for an electoral reform which may take one of many shapes—the alternative vote or the list system. However, since I realise that those who benefit from a system are not always ready to change it, I do not have very much hope of the present ruling party agreeing to electoral reform, any more than the Conservative Government in England is likely to give the Alternative Vote to enable the Liberals to destroy their majority. In the absence of electoral reform, the alternative is obvious. Democratic Opposition Parties, which see the dangers to which the country is exposed, have to come together to form a broad-based National Democratic Party, which can replace the Congress government in 1967. If they can't come together in one party, the least they can do is to have electoral adjustments by which inter-oppositional contests are eliminated and a straight fight

given to the candidates of the ruling party. In the recent General Elections there is one party that cannot be blamed for the failure to develop such an understanding, and that is to the Party to which I belong, which tried consistently though unsuccessfully over many months to achieve such an adjustment. 'Left' and 'Right'

The third topic with which I would like to deal is the ideological pattern of our party system. In common terminology, parties are either 'left' or 'right.' I would like, first of all, to point out how meaningless these words have become. I was delighted therefore when, on June 13, Mr. Nehru, when asked about the left and the right wing elements in his own Cabinet at a press conference, replied: "These terms do not fit in our politics." I hope that after this statement by our Prime Minister the heresy which I have been trying to preach that the words 'leftist' and 'rightist' have no meaning will be a little better appreciated. Harold Laski had something interesting to say on the subject *a propos* a similar discussion in England many years ago. Referring to the quarrels between the left wing and the right wing of the Labour Party to which he belonged, he once observed: "Too much preoccupation with the wings is likely to disturb the flight of the bird." Actually these terms were taken from the sitting arrangement in the French National Assembly after the French Revolution, which rather like our own Parliament, the Lok Sabha, was a semi-circular horseshoe; those who sat on the right of the presiding authority happened to be moderates at that time and those who sat on the left were those who were the most extreme. This antiquated terminology of the French Revolution we have carried into entirely different situations where it has no meaning at all.

I would like to ask you who are present what you think is a leftist party. Perhaps, if you thought a little, you would say that a leftist party is a party that believes in rapid progress, in the fullest human liberty, one that is opposed to tyranny of any kind. And you would say that those who believe in the concentration of power and authority in one or a few hands are rightists. If that is so, it is obvious that the Communist

Party in India or in any other country symbolises extreme Right reaction, because it believes in the fullest concentration of power in the hands of the party dictatorship in charge of the State machine and that the Sarvodaya people, like my friend Jayaprakash and Acharya Vinoba Bhave, who believe in the fullest decentralisation following Gandhiji's thinking are extreme leftists. But that is not how our newspapers use these terms! By the same logic then the Communist Party is extreme Right, Mr. Nehru's Government is inner Right, the P.S.P. is the Centre, the Swatantra Party is inner Left and the Sarvodaya group are the extreme Left. That would certainly be a more logical application of these terms. However, in order to avoid confusion, I would suggest that intelligent people stop using these meaningless labels and go behind them to analyse the content of political programmes.

The word leftist also has another disadvantage. It becomes a subtle cover or veil to hide the real coloration of a person. "Leftist" is a very convenient cover for hidden communists, crypto-communists and fellow-travellers. Mr. A. D. Gorbala, one of the finest political commentators in India today, in his issue of May 23 of *Opinion* says: "What an umbrella-word is 'leftist'! How many take shelter under this umbrella's shade! Is a well-known medical man a communist? Well, he is a leftist. Is an equally well known writer, a scientist, a communist? You know, the apologists will say, both of them are leftist. Is Krishna Menon a Communist? Pat comes the answer, 'he is a leftist.' Are journals which persistently support the Soviet cause Communist? No, they are always leftist". And therefore, for another reason, that it causes confusion and gives aid and comfort to the Communists as a cover for their underground activities, it is a term that should be avoided.

Now, how then should the Swatantra Party be correctly described? Believers in Statism like the Communists and Mr. Nehru call it reactionary. Unattached people like yourselves would probably call it Conservative. The first description obviously is motivated by the desire to create prejudice and is a mere term of abuse. The second description is not objectionable if it means that the Swatantra Party would like to con-

serve what is good in India's history or tradition. I would, however, take exception to it because I do not think that the programme and manifesto of the Swatantra Party are conservative. I think a more accurate description of the Party would be to say it is Liberal and Gandhian. The policy of minimum government and of maximum individual liberty comes directly from Gandhiji's teaching. You remember Gandhiji's phrase: "That government is best which governs least." This is the basis of our programme. Gandhiji also said: "I look upon an increase in the power of the State with the greatest fear because, while apparently doing good by minimising exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality which lies at the root of all progress."

Similarly, Western Liberalism also bases itself on minimum government and maximum individual liberty. It is not the Conservative but the Liberal school of economists, like Prof. Hayek, Prof. Roepke and, may I say, Prof. Shenoy, whom I am glad to see in the audience, who are the staunchest individualists, not the conservatives. In Europe, if you know the party spectrum, you will find that the Conservative Party in Britain and the Christian Democratic Parties of Italy and Germany are more Statist than the Liberal parties of those countries.

So, in the spectrum, the Liberal is the most individualist, the Conservative or Christian Democrats more-Statist, the socialist even more Statist, and the Communists completely Statist. Hobhouse, in his book on *Liberalism*, says: "Liberalism is the belief that society can safely be founded on this self-directing power of personality. That it is only on this foundation that the true community can be built. Liberty then becomes not so much a right of the individual as a necessity of society." In other words, the Liberal believes that the human being is capable of rational choice. The Liberal believes and has faith in the people. Prof. Parkinson, of whom you well know in another context, said recently in an article published in an English journal: "The word Liberal means generous or open-handed. But generous with what? With freedom and political responsibility."

Now, it happens that I was elected a Patron of the

Liberal International some years before the Swatantra Party was formed. At a Conference of the Liberal International in Italy in 1959, soon after its establishment here, I produced the programme of the Swatantra Party and asked them to comment on it. The leaders of world Liberalism were puzzled as to why Rajaji had called it a Conservative party. According to them ours was a liberal programme. They passed a resolution which said: "That the 9th Congress of the Liberal International held at Gardone, Italy, from October 1 to 4, 1959, welcomes the formation of the Swatantra Party in India and trusts that this Party will prove a staunch and successful upholder of the values and policies of liberals which are so necessary for the development of the good life, for friendly relations between the people of the East and of the West and essential to the peace of the world." So that it is not my word that I ask you to accept but the word of the authentic organ of world Liberalism.

Who Is Outdated?

Indeed, I would say that, taking the world as a whole, the gulf between Democratic Socialists and Liberals is becoming very narrow. In more advanced and educated countries, there is not very much to divide the Liberals and Socialists any more. You know, for instance, that Mr. Woodrow Wyatt only a few weeks ago made the suggestion that the British Labour Party and the Liberal Party should merge in a common party to oppose the Conservative Party. The German Social Democrats are among the leading members of the socialist movement in the world. Soon after the Swatantra Party was formed, I tried to find out where their new programme, which they published in October or November 1959, about three or four months after ours, disagreed with ours. It will amuse you to know that practically right throughout the new German Socialist programme echoed the terms of the Swatantra Party's Statement of Policy. We took the trouble to publish it as a pamphlet with the title "Who Is Outdated?" in parallel columns, in reply to one of Mr. Nehru's gibes. I'll just read one passage to you to show how, even in language, the German Social Democrats, six months after

we published our programme, practically paraphrased our economic programme. Now this is what the Swatantra Party said in August 1959: "The Party believes that in the field of production, the free choice of the producer and the consumer must be given basic place and importance. In Industry the Party believes in the incentives for higher production and expansion inherent in competitive enterprise, with adequate safeguards for the protection of Labour and against unreasonable profits, prices and dividends where there is no competition or where competition has not secured the necessary corrective." Four months later, in November 1959, this is what the German Social Democrats produced: "The free choice of consumer goods and services, the free choice of a place to work, free initiative for employers, are decisive foundations and free competition an important element of a free economic policy. Totalitarian control of the economy destroys freedom. The Social Democratic Party therefore favours a free market, wherever free competition really exists. Where markets come under the domination of individuals or groups, however, manifold measures are necessary to preserve the freedom of the economy. As much competition as possible—as much planning as necessary."

So I think I have made the point that it is important to go behind these catchwords and slogans that Prime Ministers and newspapers might bandy and to try to understand the real content of the programme of a political party.

As I said, democratic socialists are moving nearer and nearer the Liberal position. In fact, Communists also are trying to edge away from the collectivist creed. Djilas, the Yugoslav communist, again in jail for his insistence on expressing himself, says in his book, *The New Class*: "Communism as an ideology has run its course. It does not have any new thing to reveal to the world." Because of this fact, in Yugoslavia, in Poland, and even in Russia, within the limits of party dictatorship and the secret police, you can see the beginnings of the struggle to edge away from collectivism, to edge away from the kind of State Capitalism which some people in our country believe is socialism. In Britain it will interest you to know, the older generation is more socialist than the younger. This

was not so fifty years ago, it was not so twenty years ago. Here is the division of the present House of Commons in Britain by age groups. You will see how, as the age goes up, the number of Socialists increases and the number of Liberals and Conservatives drops. Age Group 20-29—the youngest—Liberal and Conservative 9, Labour 1; 30-39 Conservative and Liberal 52, Labour 18; 40-49, Conservative and Liberal 140, Socialist 55; 50-59, 118 Liberals and Conservative, 106 Socialist. Now we come to the older people, age group 60-69, 35 Liberals and Conservatives, 57 Socialists; over 70, 3 Conservatives and 20 Socialists. So it is becoming a creed of the old and the out of date. I was very glad when Mr. Frank Moraes wrote in the *Indian Express* on May 28, 1962: "When will Mr. Mr. Nehru and his henchmen who dutifully echo his economic and political incantation realise that they are at least three decades behind the time and that they do not lead the vanguard of thinking but bring up the rear?" Something that I have now been saying for five years.

In America there is a similar trend which is symbolised by the Conservative revival in the campuses of U. S. universities. Someone has written a little jingle about this development and I quote a few of the verses because the last line of the last verse puts a question which may well be addressed to the large number of neutralists among the intelligentsia of this country:

"Students, students, turning Right
On all campuses in sight,
Which unlikely left-wing scheme
Made you swim against the stream?"

...
What the reason? Where the blame?
Are they too numerous to name?
What your anger? What dead air
Caused you to abjure, forswear?

...
Students, students, turning Right
On all campuses in sight,
We greet you with this happy song—
But what the hell took you so long?

Now, there are people who say: Yes, your programme is a beautiful one, it is a progressive one, a liberal one, but what about the composition of your Party? Is it not true that there are too many princelings—is it not true that its social composition is feudal and reactionary?

Reality of Party System

And that brings me to another part of my talk, concerning the extent of the reality of the party system in India. To what extent does it really reflect the political emotions and thoughts of the people of India? It is a legitimate question and I think those who say that the political parties in India float on the surface and do not really go to the roots, to the heart of the people, do not move people in our villages, have something in what they say. Now, why is it so? The answer is obvious. First, there are the distances, there are the numbers. We must remember that India today is as big in population, area and complexity of languages as Western Europe. A political party in India is like a political party that functions from Scandinavia to Spain and Yugoslavia. As you know, such parties don't yet exist. But apart from all this, it is also to be remembered that four-fifths of the voters in India are illiterate. Now, that may not mean that they are less intelligent than those who read and write. But it *does* mean that you can't approach them so easily. It does mean that they can't read your Manifesto. It does mean that they can't follow your speeches in Parliament. And since you can't reach all of them verbally, the means of communication are terribly restricted. If Television were here, the problem would be solved. But television in the villages of India is a very distant dream. So it is inevitable that the parties find it very difficult to get to the people.

In such a situation, ideology counts for little. Organisation counts for a great deal more. And this last election, if I may say so, like previous elections, was not decided by political programmes or ideology. It was decided by the relative strengths of the political machines. If the Congress Party got more votes, though not a majority, it is because its machine was older, stronger and more widespread than

the machine of any other political party. It is the machine that counts.

The Swatantra Party's message was very well received. Wherever you could find people to address, they applauded it. But how many people could you address? The conveyor belt—a large number of people who could reach the masses in the villages—simply did not exist. With a handful of workers and a handful of jeeps, we could only reach so many people. The result is that the political programme of the Swatantra Party never reached millions of people. And that is why the appeal remained limited.

So I would say that in a backward country like this, with an illiterate electorate, by and large organisation counts more than ideology. There are many other factors that count. Religion counts, Caste—which Jayaprakash has accurately described as "the biggest party in India." Parochialism or local influence. The cult of personality. Patronage of government. The fear of Authority. Did not Gandhiji say over and over again: "India has to learn to say 'no'"? I am sure, if he were alive, he would repeat that and say India has still to learn to say 'no'.

Then there is money—the power of money. As you know, some of us tried in 1961, when the Companies Bill came up before Parliament, to stop political parties receiving contributions from Joint Stock Companies registered under the Companies Act. I myself moved that amendment and you will recall that every political party voted for my amendment, including the Communist Party, which finds it very difficult to vote for anything I propose! The only Party that voted against it was Mr. Nehru's party and, because it had a majority, the amendment was defeated and the door was kept wide open for Company contributions—Big Business contributions to political funds.

When the balance sheets of the Companies are published in the next few months, I hope some department of economics will do a little research and publish the grand total of contributions received from Joint Stock Companies by the respective political parties. It will be found, of course, that the Congress

Party got many times more than all the other political parties put together. During the campaign, Mr. Nehru struck an attitude or pose of saying that if any business firm wanted to help and the Congress and the Swatantra Party, he would have nothing to do with it the Congress Party would return the money. Some of us noticed that no money was returned, no cheques ever came back! After the whole election was over, the Prime Minister had to admit in the Rajya Sabha recently that just a little trifle amounting to Rs. 16 lakhs had crept into the Congress Treasury from a certain leading business house which had given the Congress Rs. 16 lakhs but had also given Rs. 8 lakhs to the Swatantra Party. So we know where the money goes—it adds to the political and economic patronage of the ruling Party.

Mr. Nehru said after the elections, at a press conference, that the victory of the Swatantra Party candidates 'had nothing to do with the Swatantra Party and its programme.' His argument was that they had got elected on personal grounds. Well, it is possible that in the case of some Swatantra Party candidates, their local position added to the political appeal of their ideology. But then, if that is so and the eight million or nine million votes cast for the Swatantra Party were not because of the Manifesto of the Swatantra Party, logically it would follow that the 51 million votes that were cast for the Congress Party also were not because of the Manifesto of the Congress Party. The question arises: how many of these 51 million really believe in the so-called socialist pattern of society, in the collectivisation of the land called cooperative farming, in the Soviet pattern of planning or in the Defence Portfolio being handed over to a Communist? The answer would be: as few in the Congress Party as in the Swatantra Party. So let us not have two standards. Let us say either that votes are cast for political programmes or that they are not cast for political programmes. It can't be that the Congress voters vote for socialism, but the Swatantra Party voters do not vote for the Swatantra philosophy. Many more people voted through local influence-cum-caste-cum-money-cum-authority-cum-patronage-cum-fear

for the Congress Party than for the Swatantra Party. The double standard must be dropped. What is good enough for the Congress goose is good enough for the Swatantra gander.

Having said that, I will admit, as I have already done, that the ideological appeal of all political parties in India is weak. By and large it is only one of six or seven things which determine how a man votes. That I am prepared to say and, if I did not do so, I would be lacking in candour in an intellectual gathering of this kind. Also, I am not here to talk as General Secretary of my party. I am talking as an individual and it is possible that a great deal of what I say is heresy in so far as my own Party is concerned. But then, I am happy to belong to a Party that has given me the liberty to express my personal views.

Now I come to my last point: What follows from all this? Analysis is good, but there must be some conclusion. What is to be done? How do those who believe in democracy propose to serve it and save it from the obvious dangers to which it is exposed in the present situation?

What Is To Be Done?

Faced with this discouraging picture, the question arises as to what the believer in democracy must do. Escape from public and civic activity in the face of this massive political backwardness would be easy. No sincere patriot or citizen with a sense of duty can justify such a path. Withdrawal from mere party politics is one thing; withdrawal from all politics is—as Jayaprakash Narayan has repeatedly explained—something quite different.

The other alternative is to participate in the democratic process in such manner as is open to one at any given time. 'We must educate our masters', said a British politician in the nineteenth century when the franchise was extended to the working classes. There is no escape from this slow process in our present set up, no short cut from this long and difficult task. The only alternative would be, not non-party democracy or Panchayati raj, but a one-party dictatorship.

Our elections lose a great deal of their educational value

and of their genuinely representative character by the way in which political parties nominate their candidates. The current practice of all parties is to follow the bad example set by the Congress Party not only of choosing candidates largely in accordance with the religious or caste configuration of a constituency but also of delaying the decision in regard to the choice of candidates till a few weeks or sometimes even a few days before Nomination Day. In the recent General Elections, we saw this bad example set by the Congress Party followed by all others. There was competition between various parties in the clever-clever game of trying to have a look at the other fellow's list and then choosing one's own candidates!

The results of this procedure have been disastrous all round. The jockeying for position and the scramble for 'tickets', a word which is misused in India, created dissension and ill-feeling within each party. The general calibre of candidates selected tended to be low all round, determined as it was by last moment considerations of expediency rather than by merit. In the absence of a long period of acquaintanceship, the choice made by voters between competing candidates was extremely superficial and generally followed caste and other pre-determined lines.

Since the birth of the Swatantra Party, I have argued that candidates should be nominated several years in advance of the General Elections so as to give time to the candidates to nurse their constituencies, get known and show results, and so as to give the constituency a chance to know and judge the candidate. I am therefore delighted that Mr. Nehru, at a recent meeting of the AICC in Delhi on June 13, suggested that the nomination of Congress candidates should take place three or four years before the next General Elections. I trust Mr. Nehru's views on this point will be given effect to by the Congress Party, so that the good example may be followed by others who have so far been misled into following its wrong practices.

Similarly, as far back as March, 1960, in my General Secretary's Report to the Patna Convention of my Party, I

had stressed the value of quality as opposed to numbers:

"We should be careful not to depend on dubious elements. Our enthusiasm and eagerness to see the Party grow should not lead us to welcome people in our fold without due discrimination. In the pursuit of importance and numbers, the weightage that needs to be given to quality should not be overlooked.

"People are tired of the old faces and the old voices. They look for new thinking. It will be good policy for us to attach more value to new and unknown people, preferably the young, whom we can infuse with our message and enlist among our workers.....

"It is less harmful to have no unit in a particular place or district than to have a bad one."

Perhaps I may be forgiven if, in the light of the modest experience that I have obtained as Secretary of two political parties, one in the Thirties and the other more recently, I were to venture some suggestions as to the factors which in my view make for political success. I am not here referring to the adoption of any particular set of policies or adherence to any ideology. What I am asking myself is: What, concretely, are the organisational factors that would make for the success of an Opposition party in the 1967 General Elections? In the hope that this may stimulate a certain amount of thinking and discussion, particularly in the ranks of democratic opposition parties, I suggest the following thoughts:

1. Candidates for election, whether for Parliament or Assembly, should be provisionally chosen four years before the elections, that is, in the beginning of 1963. The purpose would be to give the candidate a chance to nurse his constituency and to show his mettle as the party's mouthpiece and standard-bearer. The party should be free to change its prospective candidate at any time when it is found necessary. The final choice should be made and announced a year before Nomination Day, in the light of experience gained.

2. In making a choice, the credibility of the candidate should be decisive. Men of dubious morality and character should be ruled out, however attractive they might otherwise

be on grounds of caste, religion, local influence or financial resources. No tall promises made by a party of clean government and efficient administration will be accepted by the electorate unless the man or woman who stands before them embodies in himself or herself the two qualities of integrity and competence.

3. The large number of primary 25 N.P. members a party enrolls, though of some value, is not decisive in terms of organisation. What is decisive is the building up of a cadre of intelligent, loyal and disciplined workers through and round whom the organisation at the grassroots level can be built. It is they who have to carry the message of the party to the voter's door. What ultimately decides an election is whether or not a party has even a small core of supporters who are themselves convinced and are therefore able to convince others of the rightness of their cause.

4. It is obvious that the social basis of a party must be broadbased, and that in its ranks elements such as small farmers, industrial and agricultural workers, artisans, shopkeepers, professional men, Harijans, Adibasis, youth and women should find a place.

5. The maintenance of a high level of discipline and rectitude is a pre-condition to effective functioning. Connivance at indiscipline and malpractices is much too common in the ranks of all parties in India. This lowers them in the eyes of observant and intelligent people who wonder how, in the case of an Opposition party, clean government will be ensured by such a party when it is placed in power if it is not in a position to ensure certain standards of behaviour within its ranks when power is still remote.

6. The collection of funds from thousands of middle-class and small people instead of reliance on a few big contributions from those with means is another test that a party which hopes to win success must be prepared to face. This carries with it the concomitant of proper accounting and auditing of funds so collected and firm action against those members of the party who mishandle such funds or fail to render proper accounts.

7. The sum total of all that has been said above would, if given effect to, result in the creation in the minds of the electorate of the image of a party as one that is made up of good men and true animated by a desire to serve the country and working hard for the cause. Such an image can be created only over a period of months and years by the good sense of the policies of the party, the energy, enthusiasm, intelligence and unity with which those policies are advocated, and the discipline by which they are supported.

When political power and economic patronage are concentrated in the hands of the ruling party, as they are at present, only an Opposition party which is accepted as morally superior by the people at large can hope to make the grade. In the absence of such moral superiority, all talk about the corruption of the ruling party and all promises to provide good government will meet with scepticism. I am convinced that, if these seven components are not there, no amount of money, no amount of local influence, no caste support, not even a beautiful manifesto and clever speeches will enlist the support of the electorate in 1957.

I am aware that there are intelligent people, honest in their own personal lives, who think that, in a backward country like ours, condoning indiscipline, disloyalty, casteism and misbanding of funds help in building a party. Now, quite apart from any moral considerations, I am deeply convinced that such an approach is pragmatically unwise and unsound. Such people claim to be realists, but to me it appears that this is cynicism masquerading as realism. No democratic party or movement was built on cynicism. Democratic causes are furthered by faith in the goodness of people and their intelligence.

By vocation, I happen to be a management consultant, and I venture to think that efficient and clean management is as essential to the growth of a political party as it is to that of a business enterprise. Conniving at malpractices in political life is not only an anti-social act like conniving at blackmarketing or evasion of taxes but, in the long run, such behaviour does not build a sound party just as it does not

build a sound business.

I would like to end with the thought that, while parties are essential in a democracy and will be for many generations to come, a political party is a mere means to an end and not an end in itself. It follows from this that the interests of the party cannot be an end which justifies doubtful means. The inter-relation of ends and means is a lesson that some of us in our generation were fortunate enough to learn at Gandhiji's feet. 'My party right or wrong' is therefore a slogan as unworthy of credence as that other slogan 'My country right or wrong.' Loyalty to one's party is good, provided it is balanced with non-attachment. The choice between conformism to the party's demands and heresy is always a difficult and delicate one. Each man's conscience must decide as to where to draw the line. Professor Tawney, a colleague of Professor Laski, once responded to a suggestion made to him by Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the British Labour Party to which he belonged, with the words: 'Your Party has the right to demand any service of you but not to dishonour you.'

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