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Hx Ramesh
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Raju's Response

Dear Sanjeev

This refers to your email of August 2. While I shall deal with the two specific issues addressed to me, permit me to make a few general observations:

1. Col. Pasricha would have been pleased that his book is receiving the kind of attention he hoped it would, thanks to you. I am relieved that though its publication got delayed (for which I have taken the blame) the contents have provoked some thinking.
2. While the larger part of his criticisms and admonitions can stand the test of time there are also some comments that should be viewed from the situation prevalent then. So, to draw conclusions at this point of time, when the situation and circumstances are different would be unfair and incorrect.
3. If you now feel that there is some point in discussing what went wrong and how not to repeat Swatantra's mistakes, I shall be glad to do so at the workshop giving a first hand account. If on the other hand you and the others who read this think (like so many others have told me) that it is "bloody waste of time" I shall refrain and respond only to questions that might be asked of me and shall be content playing the role of a "bridge" - as you put it in one of your earlier messages.

Now to take up your queries as to who founded the Swatantra Party - Rajaji or Masani

"1. Undoubtedly it was Masani who began working towards the formation of a liberal party two or three years before its formal birth in 1959. An important step was taken when a group of leading citizens like A.D. Shroff, Minoo Masani, Sir Homi Mody, Mr. R.V. Murthy, Mr. Eric D'Costa, Mr. M.A. Sreenivasan (names that may not mean much to many of you who read this) decided that a party to oppose socialism was very necessary. And to be effective some of those named decided seek to get elected to parliament. In an era of one-party dominance when the Congress ruled at the Centre and in almost all the states, the seat of power was Delhi and the Lok Sabha mattered more than the State Assemblies (Rajaji once wrote that State Assemblies were no better than Municipalities). And so, in 1957 some of the gentlemen mentioned above contested as independents sponsored by some regional parties. Readers of this communication will be horrified to know that these anti-socialist independent candidates were supported by parties as diverse as the Jharkhand Party in Bihar and the Ram Rajya Parishad in Rajasthan. Before some of you gentlemen begin to ridicule this, please be aware that at that time for anyone not in the Congress or who refused to call himself a socialist, to get even a toehold in parliament was next to impossible. What these "pioneers" (I would call them that) wanted was to establish a beachhead for those opposing socialism.

And they did get a foothold - Minoo Masani managed to be elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957. He was elected from the Ranchi Parliamentary Constituency as an independent supported by the Jharkhand Party.

His efforts yielded fruit when he was able to get some five other MPs in the Lok Sabha to form a separate independent group. This group was the nucleus of the Swatantra Party yet to be born. Masani was in touch throughout this period with Rajaji who was nearing eighty and was understandably not very eager to get back into active politics. But when the Congress passed the resolution in Nagpur in 1958 to cooperativise agriculture, Rajaji's mind was made and he agreed with Masani that that the time had come to organise a party to oppose the Congress. So while the initiative was that of Masani, the Swatantra Party could never have got off the ground if Rajaji had not joined forces with Masani. This is what happened. So we always held that Rajaji and Masani were founders of the Swatantra Party. Rajaji refused to hold any position in the Party. He was content to be a member of the National Executive which he was till he died.

2. In June 1971, was I convinced that Masani must go? Of course I was not. I did my best to dissuade him but he was adamant. A futile debate on whether the 1971 debacle meant that the party had been defeated in a battle or that the war had been lost ensued between Pasricha and Masani. Pasricha, the soldier that he was, was of the view that a war consisted of many battles and that 1971 was just a battle and that the Party would live to fight another day. Therefore Masani should continue to lead the party.

Masani rejected this view. He said that the Party had lost the war and that as the general who had led the party to defeat he should step down. He wanted a resolution adopted by the General Council of the Party accepting his resignation. When no one was prepared to move such a resolution he asked me to request Pasricha to move the resolution. I did so. Why Pasricha? Because he was sure Pasricha would not disregard a request from Masani!

Masani was so demoralised by the defeat in 1971 including his own defeat in Rajkot (in the 1971 elections to the Lok Sabha) which he had held for two consecutive terms that he was disgusted with party politics and wanted out. Rajaji sent me a letter through a trusted friend that it would relieve him considerably if I could persuade Masani to stay on as President for at least another year. I made an honest effort. In a manner of speaking Masani felt let down by Rajaji who supported the 'grand alliance' and Rajaji's request was flatly turned down by Masani.

There was no way anyone could dissuade him and so I did what he wanted me to in the hope that we could persuade someone else to carry the burden. And the burden fell on Mr. N. Dandekar who took over as President pro-tem. For health reasons he agreed to be only a pro tem president. and was succeeded at the next meeting of the General Council by H.M. Patel.

These are my answers to the two questions you asked me. There are some other statements and conclusions in your email which are either unfair or have not been properly understood. Even Pasricha would have disagreed with some of the conclusions

and statements made. These are what I would like to explain at the workshop if you want me to. The Swatantra Party might have failed but during the first 12 years of its existence it was indeed a 'party with a difference' and pioneered quite a few salutary practices.. It didn't lack the courage of its conviction. It did not seek short cuts or cut corners.

Regards

Raju

Your hypothetical vote of 1962 is crucial - let me know where you stand on this issue.

Regards

Sanjay

Amish Thakur's reply

I won't as crucial for me to consider the hypothetical proposition of yours. Frankly, I don't know how I would vote, even though one person's vote wouldn't and shouldn't rightly count for much. What you have is that of you a Swatantra party's version of history. Even though it is clear as fact, my interpretation by Swatantra is correct, that is not all the facts that I would consider in my decision making. Also, my interpretation of facts would not necessarily match with yours.

My main concerns as they relate to Indian democracy, are not one or other ideology that various political groups like to propose, nor even the fact that people have serious differences over their respective approaches, but the general decay of civilised norms, the societal acceptance of corruption as normal, the level of apathy and disregard for the so called educated people of India have for public service etc. This also includes my concern over so called intellectuals and self proclaimed intellectuals of our democracy who often lack the ability and respect for the common man.

Now we are beginning to discuss history (TINA - there was no alternative - to Nehru, concept). That discussion can get seriously difficult. I do not know much about it. However, I will ask a question.

On balance, if you had been a voter in 1962 knowing the facts of the case, would you have voted for Swatantra Party (Rajaji-Masani) or Nehru? That is a key element here on this group. We are discussing liberalism and choice, particularly economic choice, and good governance, and hoping to provide Indian people with good economic policy and governance structures. This group here is a philosophical continuation of the opposition to Nehru that was expressed through the Swatantra Party in 1959. While Rajaji had expressed deep sorrow at Nehru's death and also remained on cordial terms with him, we do not need to debate Nehru as a person or if there were better alternatives (on which you are probably right, given that Patel died early), but only his policies. Unfortunately, his policies, in my view, were mostly problematic - and alternative views offered to him were ignored. (By the way, Rajaji went beyond Nehru in his opposition to US hegemony. He wanted to India to start a satyagraha against USA that Nehru shot down. Liberals are not required to be cowards or givers up of sovereignty.)

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Regards,

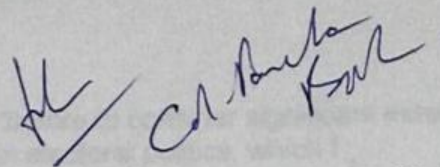
Sanjeev

Umesh Tiwari's reply

It ain't as crucial for me to consider the hypothetical proposition of yours. Frankly, I don't know how I would vote, even though one person's vote wouldn't and shouldn't rightly count for much. What you have in front of you is Swatantra party's version of history. Even though all of what is factually documented by Swatantra is correct, that is not all the facts that I would consider in my decision making. Also, my interpretation of facts would not necessarily match with yours.

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Dear Raju,

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- >
 - > I am writing to let you know that the book "The Swatantra Party - Victory in Defeat" and issues of Freedom First and two other articles sent by you have been received by me yesterday.
 - >
 - > I cannot thank you enough for this: I have already read 70% of the book
 - > since I returned from office last evening and early this morning, and plan
 - > to start making detailed notes over this weekend. I believe it is an
 - > extremely well-written book and I find much resonance with Dr Pasricha's
 - > views of the way things emerged. In particular, I believe he is strongly
 - > "on top" of the key issues that relate to party building and organisation.
 - > (Hindsight shows that there were some elements of policy advocated by
 - > members of the Swatantra party that were erroneous: e.g., a suggestion by
 - > Pasricha that financial incentives should be given for sterilisation, or a
 - > reluctance to advocate universal franchise. But it appears that their
 - > agenda was by and large in the right direction).
 - >
 - > The most startling information -- that was not known to me so far, was that
 - > Rajaji had personally acquiesced with a "Grand Alliance" in 1971 with
 - > Kamraj that included Jan Sangh and Raj Narain. I think that was when
 - > Swatantra party "lost the plot". (Masani shines through all this, though,
 - > as usual). Clearly, in my vision of the liberal party in India, I see no
 - > circumstance sufficient, except for instance the growth of a Saddam, Pol
 - > Pot, an Army dictator in India, a Stalin, Mao Hitler, for compromise with
 - > nonsecular and socialist elements. If democracy is not being permanently
 - > obliterated, or massacres by government are not taking place, then
 - ideology
 - > must reign supreme. Indira's removal was not necessary in 1971 through
 - such
 - > compromises. Even in 1977 it was probably not in any way appropriate for
 - a
 - > liberal party to have compromised and joined hands with Raj Narayans and
 - > Vajpayees at election time. The Swatantra party (if it existed) could have
 - > arguably joined hands with the Raj Narayans and Vajpayees in 1976 with the
 - > limited goal of ending the Emergency.
 - >
 - > In particular, party building is the key element. I visualise a party that
 - > will go on -- mostly in power, but often out of power, for at least 500
 - > years. If we cannot design and nurture such a party, we are bound to fail
 - > this time again, particularly starting with a much lower resource base. I
 - > am not at all concerned that we do not have "big-name" leaders in our
 - > midst: I would tend to be cautious and possibly steer away from big-name
 - > leaders since we do not need "leaders" at the stage, and possibly never --
 - > we will always need only one kind of person in the party - party builders.

- > I am also more inclined than ever before to consider significant extension
- > of the timeframe for participation in electoral politics, which I
- > visualised would take at least 3-4 years from the formal formation of such
- > a party -- in the "road map" that has been put up on the IPI web site.
- > Pasricha has "nailed it on the head" when he says that even if a fraction
- > of the resources spent on electoral contests was spent on party building,
- > the Swatantra party would have done enormously better, though maybe a bit
- > slowly. We should not allow ourselves to be 'psyched up' and imagine that
- > time is running out: we should take the time needed to deliver a good job.
- >
- > Pasricha should be compulsory reading for anyone attempting to reignite
- and
- > spread a much more widely understood liberal message in India today and in
- > the future. (For those who have not yet read this book, you may want
- to
- > get hold of it - it costs only Rs 150 -- it will be necessary to stick to
- > pieces of the book together again after reading it given that the gum
- > connecting the pages to the spine is not of the best quality).
- >
- > I have not yet had the time to send the payment for 3 years of Freedom
- > First. I propose to send that early next week along with the small cheque
- > in Indian rupees for the book, for which I insist that I should pay.
- >
- > Thank you again,
- >
- > With regards,
- > Sanjeev
- >

Friends,

My sincere apologies for not having finished my homework in time. There were some unavoidable circumstances during July that took up too much of my time. I propose below a first draft based on Pasricha's book, laced with my personal comments and observations, where necessary. I have identified 9 key lessons; they would surely be more. A couple of more readings of the book in future may help.

Feedback would be highly appreciated.

Regards,

Sanjeev

Some gems from Pasricha:

Pasricha states at page 35, "political parties are abstract conceptions which are personified for convenience of reference only. They are embodied only metaphorically." The other words, it is people who make up the party, and it is their quality and character that sustains and carries a party on in difficult times.

"It cannot be denied, that the Congress party has successes to its credit. It has come to power like a limet ever since independence, and, in the process, has brought about a complete collapse of social morality. Such has been the example set by its leaders." (Page 37)

"It is a great pity that Nehru did not live long enough to see Russia, the fountainhead of socialism, going with a begging bowl to the hated capitalist USA for brain to feed its starving masses and China following suit." (Page 59)

Some potential problems with the Indian mind: (a) intolerance of views opposed to one's own (p.40), (b) absence of the democratic spirit: "everyone has suddenly become aware of his democratic rights, but others' rights he is not prepared to concede or safeguard" (p.39), (c) avoidance of physical work; "avoidance of physical work is the hallmark of affluence ... it is not considered honorific to carry even light hand luggage while entraining or otherwise, in public view." (p.41), (d) demand for special privileges; and (e) widespread disinclination to engage in purposeful, honest, sustained political activity. Talking of Paliwal, a State leader, Pasricha says, "Like most Indians, he was aggressive, contentious and illogical." (p.108)

Historical records to be verified: Raju's views sought.

a) While it is widely said that Rajaji founded the Swatantra party, it appears from the biography of Rajaji (by his son, at p. 223) that it was Minoo Masani who probably provided the initial momentum to Rajaji for him to consider forming the party. What does Raju think of this deduction?

b) In June 1971, Pasricha was "requested by Raju to move the resolution accepting Masani's resignation ... while putting the resolution to vote, I made it quite clear that I did not commend the resolution" (p.130). Maybe Raju should set the record straight and explain the reasons why he requested Pasricha to move Masani's resignation. Was Raju convinced that Masani must go?

Lessons

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Lesson No.1 : Liberals are no different to other human beings, and we should be humble and accept our individual limitations

Throughout the book, they are descriptions of decisions taken by people that completely match my personal understanding of the way in which people behave at any level in any organisation in any part of the world. People (including me, of course) are full of prejudices, preconceived notions, unrealistic hopes, premature rush to judgement, need to seek approval from persons in authority, jealousies, etc. No individual in the history of the world has ever been perfect. Rajaji turns out to be just another human being, like any of us. So also Masani, and everybody else. The other day, I was reading Gandhi - he too had many preconceived notions; the one difference was that he had less of them than others and was willing to continuously learn. He wrote in Community Service News, September -- October, 1946, "I have great concern about introducing machine industry. The machine produces too much too fast, and brings with it a sort of economic system which I cannot grasp. ... as we grow in understanding, if we feel the need of machines, will certainly have them. ... we shall introduce machines if and when we need them." He kept saying that he was a seeker for the Truth and was happy to be corrected. Obviously one man can only learn so much in one lifetime so we can understand why he could not understand the capitalist system of Adam Smith. If he could find the time to understand it, he would have surely changed his views. Not Nehru, since he rejected Shenoy, Bhagwati, and Friedman - Nehru was a far lesser mortal than Gandhi. But Gandhi's ill considered judgement on machines demolished industry in India for 50 years. Nobody has ever told us about his view of 1946 when he expressed his willingness to change his opinion if he understood some more. Today, in an appeal to authority (fallacy of human thinking), we're told that Gandhi did not want the machine and so it is not good for us. But Gandhi admitted his lack of understanding; not so our policymakers. Never mind.

The one lesson we should take from Pasricha's book is that Liberals will need to build a political organisation that is based entirely on rigorous thinking, and complete equality. Important decisions need to be debated at length; the "leadership" needs to put in due diligence into every important decision, and bring to bear every significant perspective, both short-term and long-term, in informing the decision. There should NEVER be any regard for any other individual more than what one regards oneself; there should be no arrogance in one's own perspective or judgement. Gandhi, Nehru, Rajaji, Masani - all made significant errors of judgement, and not just once or twice. No one should EVER be treated as a "great" man or woman, nor, the "least" of us - the "trivial" farmer, or slum dweller, treated with any disdain. There are many miracles of good judgement of our

"illiterate peasants" that the smartest economists are learning today, to have been optimal, given their situation. And our poor peasants are significantly honest, which is much more than we can say about some "liberals" today.

Lesson No. 2: Never tolerate a person on the Executive Council who does not challenge any view that the person does not agree with.

Flowing from the above, we see that it is crucial for Liberals to interact as Equals, in every way, with office bearers given only the right to speak on others' behalf, after due process. Appeals to authority are the worst form of tyranny and fallacious thinking. Just because someone says so, does not make a thing true. Even Masani made such an appeal, that eventually destroyed the party. At page 79 Pasricha says, "Mariswamy, the general secretary of the Madras party, was arguing against the alliance [Grand Alliance of 1971] fairly cogently, when Masani interrupted with the remark that Rajaji was in favour of the alliance. A sudden, dramatic change came over Mariswamy. He stopped in midstream and abjectly announced that he withdrew his remarks unreservedly and totally. It struck me as extremely peculiar that the leader of the National Executive level should so abjectly withdraw his considered opinion merely at the mention of Rajaji's opinion. This is a small illustration of the type of leadership the Swatantra party was able to scrounge."

It is clear that subservience to autocratic "rule", real or perceived, is a more natural state of man than democracy, particularly in India. We are born as sheep; we love to obey authority. That is the one MOST dangerous type of person to include in a party. We should never accept a sheep or 'yes men'. If "our" party cannot be 100% democratic and encourage dissent and free expression of opinions during the time provided for such expression, then the decisions taken by the party would of significantly lower quality than if mature, considered opinions are allowed full expression. It is obvious to the meanest mind today, in retrospect, that Mariswamy was right; why then did he not challenge Rajaji when he had the opportunity and responsibility? Let us move away from him, as a person, though. It is the disease of "yesmanship" that we have to banish like the plague or smallpox.

Lesson 3: Nip the evil in the bud

At page 36, Pasricha points out how the Jan Sangh nipped in the bud any deviationist by expelling him from the party. I believe that it is crucial that people of low character be identified and expelled as soon as possible. Some recent experiences of IPI flow on into this lesson, but I believe, on reading what Pasricha and others have said, that 90% of the members of the Swatantra party should never have been there in the first

place and expelled at the first opportunity. The kind of people that the party accepted, as described in the book, is completely unacceptable for a successful party that will live and do good for 500 years, in my view. Not only do the entrance criteria need to be very stringent, but people need to be expelled for any significant deviation from ethical behaviour and ideological principles. People who discriminate against women, Harijans, Muslims, etc., etc., need to be blocked at the doorstep, but if they manage to infiltrate, they need to be expelled at the first opportunity. At page 130, Pasricha talks of Masani being "fed up with the state of indiscipline in the party." The party made too many compromises for perceived short-term gain. They all added up in the end and allowed people like Piloo Mody to take control and kill the party.

Lesson 4: Build party workers

This theme runs throughout the book. Pasricha has made it abundantly clear that nobody in the party seemed to be bothered about building a set of workers who would proselytise. He refers to the "impossibility of weaning away the half-starved, illiterate electorate of India from the fantastic charms evoked by the repetitive intonations of the blessings expected from the socialistic haven the Congress was building." In addition, there was enormous use of money power, particularly black money, by the Congress. In such a situation, "The Swatantra gospel required proselytisation on an extensive scale. Apostles were in very short supply. A corps of trained, devoted workers, functioning under the direct control of a centre, could have sown the gospel far and wide and counteracted the prevailing socialistic rhetoric." "No attempt was made to formulate a detailed scheme for the training of cadres." (p.115)

The party clearly did not have a strategy for the long-term. It was dependent on Rajaji in more ways than one. Rajaji was old and people must have thought that the party would soon die anyway; so nobody put the effort in building a long-lived and successful party. "Our" party will not be dependent on anybody - it will be dependent ONLY on good principles and systems. Elsewhere I have mentioned the need for an independent party judiciary; such ideas need to be explored in the coming workshop.

Lesson 5: Do not contest elections until fully ready

Repeatedly, Pasricha shows the ill-judged keenness of state leaders as well as National leaders to contest elections well beyond the capacity of the party to organise. At page 93, Pasricha says, "At the Baroda General Council meeting, I warned him [H.M.Patel] of the consequences of contesting the impending Assembly elections without properly trained workers in adequate numbers. In the absence of devoted workers, the elections tend to attract artful self-seekers and money-grubbers... Patel agreed with me

about a vital necessity of trained workers, but added that the impending elections were more important. I concluded that the top leadership of the party had made up its mind to build the party through elections only." This theme, of squandering party resources in elections where there was no preparation, runs throughout the book. This is one of the most significant lessons for the ideal "liberal" party that we may want to design in the future. Resources need to be spent strategically and very prudently. Recklessness and haste can only destroy. That is one more reason to have 'big picture' strategy to be continuously reviewed.

Lesson 6: Never ever consort with parties the do not have the same principles

The Grand Alliance of 1971, where the party worked in league with Socialists and religious bigots (Jan Sangh), simply with a view to defeat Indira Gandhi, was completely uncalled for, and cannot be justified on any grounds. One could understand a temporary alignment with such forces against Indira Gandhi with a view to withdraw the Emergency, in 1976-77, but even there it would be unforgivable for the party to actually contest elections with such forces, simply to defeat and individual, once the Emergency was withdrawn. In other words, the moment the party compromises its fundamental principles, it is as good as dead. We are liberals. We do not provide Indian citizens with a hodge podge of policies - strictly liberal only.

Lesson 7: Ensure rigorous audit of the party

One of the significant weaknesses of the party, as Pasricha points out, was the tendency of state units to be highly factionalised, based on feudal or caste principles. All the demerits of existing political parties began to rapidly emerge in the State units of the Swatantra party including financial irregularities. A rigorous audit of party membership, funds, processes, etc., is essential for the party to not deteriorate "around the fringes". Pasricha points out that when such an audit was commenced, it could not go far due to the tendency of state leaders to short-circuit the recommendations for improvement by using their personal contacts "at the top" - and by the leaders "at the top" allowing this short-circuiting. Stupid leadership that does not allow audit processes to go through fully need to be expelled at once through internal whistle-blower principles. Such leaders completely damage the integrity of the party.

Lesson 8 : Place a significant membership fee

While this sounds obvious, it did not appear obvious to the party at that time. By putting a low membership fee, wealthier individuals with political ambitions are able to enrol a significant number of dumb followers by paying for their fees. This allows them to gain control over

various units of the party, but does not gain the party quality membership, since these followers are aligned to this particular wealthy individual rather than to the party principles. People who are committed to the principles of the party will have no objection in paying, say, Rs. 5,000 per year (in today's value), for joining a party of quality people and principles. People pay much more simply for club memberships. It is possible that there could be multiple categories of membership with differential voting rights, to allow for students and those with lower incomes access to the party.

Lesson 9: The importance of allowing joint stock companies to fund political parties

"Masani ... gave no peace to the government till it passed a law forbidding such contributions. With the new prohibition, the Congress party was much better off. It could lay hands on the lion's share of black money of the business houses while the opposition parties were referred to the law prohibiting contributions to political parties. I wonder, how Masani feels now with the Congress party taking the entire cake. The Congress party should express its gratitude to Masani for this enabling measure." (Page 61).