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SWATANTRA AS ELITE OF POLITICS

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The new image of the Swatantra can be meaningful when it is reflected in its representatives. The image has emerged from many circumstances, first the division of the Congress, with the accompanying denigration which will not only reduce appeal of the Congress as a stable party but will also reduce the total of votes required for winning against it. Secondly, since the Jan Sangh also has joined the socialist band wagon, the Swatantra Party remains the only party for the constitutional and conservative elements in the country, which though concealed are considerable and have relatively higher influence over others. The attack on the Fundamental Right to Property has alarmed, as Sri Nijalingappa confirmed, owners of rights big and small including tenancy rights. In fact there is the paradox that the beneficiaries of socialism become its enemies to protect themselves against the remaining have-nots. Thirdly, the image of the Party derives from the Orissa Government, the first to abolish land taxes, weed out wasteful state enterprises, proceed against corruption, both political and official and to make welfare not warfare the reason for advancing the interests of the masses, with co-operation of all classes. Fourth, the image of the Party derives from Parliament, where as the largest Opposition party returned from the elections, nearly wholly from rural constituencies, it has distinguished itself by its decorous and deductive approach to the interests of all sections of the people, which in the last analysis are inter-related. Fifth, its representatives, admittedly with higher qualifications, have been studious of the wants, general and personal of their electorates and to that extent have checked and orientated the bureaucracy to better service.

The selection of candidates for the next general elections, in the near future or in due course will be first of those who have satisfied their electorates by close contact. For new candidates, the first qualification will be the similar one of study and service of the chosen electorate through tours, representations and reports to the press. If it is announced that the Party will consider a statement on this at the time of selection, prospective candidates are likely to evince interest at once in their electorates. Secondly, the status of the candidate is relevant in which connection looking at the composition of the Swatantra Party and even of Congress itself, it would appear that the professional politician is losing his place. The electorate is learning distinguish between those who wish to serve it and those who must serve themselves. There is an increasing mortality of demagogues. Thirdly, the record of the candidate in public and private life must be above all suspicion. Success in private life and service in public life should be a good passport. Fourth, academic qualifications, including administrative experience should be preferred, other things being equal.

Considerations which should be discounted are first of belonging to the predominant caste in the constituency; firstly because the Swatantra Party is par excellence a secular party and secondly in a multi caste system, no one can win with the votes of only one caste, particularly when this is bandied about. Secondly, political experience should not be confused with political popularity because not only is the electorate getting wiser but is generally disposed to change. Thirdly, financial competence particularly when it is not of long standing may cancel its strength by the suspicion it rouses. In any case, expenditure of a lavish kind costs the votes of those who are not its recipients. Fourth, last minute candidates particularly those disappointed by their own parties should be accepted with care being allowed the symbol if at all and no finance.

There is much sympathy and support for the Swatantra Party. It could attract more candidates, if it leaves no doubt that it is the party of elite, preferring principle to power and service to success, except that which will come to it unsought from the basic structure of democracy.