

Indians
(1971)

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xiv:

The election results show that the Congress (R) contesting only 442 seats secured 63 million of the 144.5 million votes cast against 59.4 secured by the undivided Congress, contesting 516 seats in the fourth general elections. This is about 43.6 per cent of the popular vote against the undivided tally of 40.7 per cent in the 1967.

The Congress (R) secured 68 per cent of seats. Thus the fifth Lok Sabha will be reminiscent of the Nehru era with packed treasury benches and a mere sprinkling of Opposition members though Mrs. Gandhi has fallen short of performance of her father who won 74.4 per cent of all seats in 1952, 75.1 per cent in 1957 and 73.2 per cent in 1962.

The Congress share of the popular vote increased by about 3 per cent. In other democracies, such a swing in vote would normally leave no ripples of disturbance. The resultant concern and bewilderment one noticed in the opposition camp, therefore seemed unwarranted, though transformation thus presented deserved a careful analysis. But there is no gainsaying the fact that a gain of 3 per cent of votes by itself would not have changed the political pattern to such an extent as it actually reflected in the distribution of seats in the Lok Sabha, if the opposition parties had more effectively adapted themselves to the institutional dynamics of the electoral system.

An examination of the average vote per constituency contested by each party confirms the validity of this assumption. For once it shows the massive support the Congress (R) candidates received; at the average each of them collected 144,911 votes. At the same time, it is also clear that the alliance partners did not fully concentrate their resources. Obviously the apportionment of seats went too much in favour of the SSP which grossly overestimated its election potentialities. On the average its 93 candidates won 37,814 votes. It seems that the Congress (O) also got away with too generous a proportion of seats, while the Swatantra Party obviously was most accurate in judging

its electoral calibre. From this it may be concluded that a more concerted action of the alliance partners in a smaller number of parliamentary constituencies could have decisively influenced the distribution of Lok Sabha Seats.

Average Vote Per Candidate: Partywise Analysis,
Mid-Term Elections 1971.

Party	Average ^v Vote per Candidate
Congress(R)	144.911
Congress (O)	63.817
Swatantra	76.640
Jana Sangh	70.185
SSP	37.814
PSP	22.388
CPI	82.085
CPI (M)	83.774

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The Swatantra Party which had won 44 seats in 1967 elections and had a strength of 35 at the time of dissolution of the fourth Lok Sabha, gained 4.4 million votes (3.1%) as against 12.7 million (8.7%) in 1967. In the dissolved House it had representatives from 8 States. In the current election it drew blank in five of them, including Tamil Nadu which had 8 Swatantra members in the fourth Lok Sabha. It won its seats from Gujarat, Orissa, the Rajasthan where the princely house of Jaipur again backed the party.

The Parties.

Page 150:

One of the most ardent champions of this party is Masani who was once a convinced socialist and belonged to the left wing of the Congress. As one can learn from his book on the Communist Party Of India he was afraid that the political life in the country would be paralysed, if a democratic alternative to the Congress is not found. In the first months of 1959 Masani intensified his efforts to form a new party with clear anti-Communist leanings. In the Lok Sabha such a grouping found first shape in the 'Independence Parliamentary Group' under his leadership.

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In the light of the many difficulties to which the party was exposed the start was quite impressive.

Page 154:

Expansion of Political Influence.

What Swatantra could not achieve in organisationally on its own account was compensated for by the upsurge of anti-Congress feeling among the masses. The 'luck' of the hour came handy for the party leadership. It could hope as also other parties to capitalise on this mass discontent. Further the party leadership was more successful in forging electoral alliances than in 1962. With the prospect of better finances also Swatantra was hopeful to improve its position.

In general the elections represented the decisive step forward in the history of Swatantra. The most impressive successes the party achieved were in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Orissa.

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The Fundamental Principles

From these passing references it is clear that the philosophy of the Swatantra Party has been influenced by the neo-liberal school of the West represented by Hayek, Roepke and others. The Gandhian element is, however, not missing. Thus the fundamental principles call for a reaffirmation of 'the cardinal teachings of Gandhiji', but these are not spelled out in any concrete form. However, such a statement allows Gandhian elements to remain within the fold of Swatantra.

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Lack of Cohesion

Swatantra may be characterised by such elements which Maurice Duverger has noted in regard to liberal parties in the Western world. He stated: 'Their whole activities are directed towards elections and parliamentary possibilities and therefore, to a certain extent time bound. Their organisational structure is undeveloped. The leadership mainly lies in the hands of deputies and has strong personal bias'. This abstract perception of a professor was confirmed by the Maharani of Jaipur, when she remarked at a press conference: 'The Swatantra Party is like a mushroom which emerges just before the elections'.

In this sense Swatantra really lacks a stable organisation, which would arrest the shifts in the spheres of influence. In India where the electorate is not politicised and secularised to a large degree the possibility of being virtually destroyed in one State or the other even after the party seemed to be well entrenched is all the more evident.

Page 165:

Concluding remarks:

1. The Swatantra Party considers itself as a party whose programme serves as an alternative to socialism (of the Congress Party) and Communism. Accordingly, it clearly denounces leftism of any brand.
 2. The envisaged character of the party as a liberal alternative arouses manifold problems because of the sociological composition of the population and the political constellation in the country. The more conservative elements are supposed to stay with the liberal groups. This leads to a constant struggle between the two currents within the party and sometimes it appears that the policy of Swatantra has a retrograde touch.
 - The compulsions of various factors, like changes in the society, lead the party away from traditional bindings. On the other hand, Swatantra is not very much critical about the dangers which threaten the democratic freedom by the resurgence of militant Hinduism.
 3. The Swatantra Party is not an outspoken social-liberal reform-party. The vague limitation towards the 'right' consequently leads to a lack of 'Sozialkritik'.
 4. However, Swatantra is not a 'reactionary' party, even if the aristocracy represented in the party has not (fully) imbibed the liberal ideas of the party. There are no indications that the programmatic ferment of the party would be remodelled.
 5. Swatantra by its style and parliamentary work has considerably contributed to strengthen the democratic order in India. It is justified when the party claims that it had moderating impact on the socialist policy of the Congress, especially in respect to its agrarian programme (Wagpur Resolution).
 6. The programme and literature of Swatantra are too academic to be understood by people. It lacks mass appeal.
 7. The ~~recourse~~ recourse to ad hoc arrangements for momentary gains has harmed the image of the party. In respect to organisation Swatantra needs a crash programme.
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*From Hartmann &
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PREFACE :

Page No. xii

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