

The Swarajists and Constructive Work (1922–29)

The period between 1922 and 1929 saw the emergence of the Swarajists as a new trend in Indian politics. The Swaraj Party was formed under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das with the twin aims of council entry and constructive work. The era of the Swarajists witnessed new problems and new dilemmas; it enriched the national movement with new leaders and their new forms of political action.

BACKDROP

When Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, he had given the slogan of 'Swaraj in one year'. This new hope had stirred the imagination of the masses who had been aroused into vigorous action. The sudden withdrawal of the movement had created widespread disappointment and consternation. Taking advantage of people's demoralisation, government resorted to the policy of repression; and the British Prime Minister Lloyd George, delivered his famous 'steel frame speech' (praising the efforts of the ICS officers) upholding British aristocracy.

Feeling betrayed, a section of leaders had begun to question the very efficacy of Gandhian methods of struggle. The Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee concluded that the country was not ready for mass civil disobedience, and the constructive program found only a limited response. The upper middle class intellectuals were never really attracted by the idea of constructive work which was essentially a program for socio-economic amelioration. Gandhi was in prison now and there was little he could do to from behind bars. In his absence, the unity he had assiduously created began to dwindle away and there emerged an open division within Congress. Two intellectuals—Motilal Nehru and Chittaranjan Das now took the lead and put forward their new agenda of council entry.

Chittaranjan Das (1870–1925): He was popularly known as **Deshbandhu** (Friend of the Nation), Das was a lawyer and a freedom fighter. In 1894, in a stunning move, Das gave up his lucrative practice and joined the **Anushilan Samiti** with Pramathanath Mitra. In 1909, he successfully defended **Aurobindo Ghosh** in the Alipore Conspiracy Case (1909). During the Non-Cooperation Movement, he emerged as a key leader and initiated boycott of British clothes by burning his own western clothes (while at one point of time, he maintained a laundry in Paris and got his clothes stitched and washed



ChittaranjanDas

there!). As a means to fight the British rule, he started the newspaper '**Forward**' and later changed its name to '**Liberty**'. He became the **first Mayor** of Calcutta Municipal Corporation.

His wife Basanti Devi was the **first woman to be court arrested** along with her sister-in-law Urmila Devi in 1921 during the Non-Cooperation Movement. In 1922, he co-founded the Swaraj Party along with Motilal Nehru and HS Suhrawardy. His legacy was carried forward by his protégé Subhas Chandra Bose.

Motilal Nehru (1861–1931): He was a lawyer and a veteran leader of the INC. Born in a Kashmiri Brahmin family, he graduated in law from University of Cambridge and set up a lucrative practice at Allahabad. He started the daily **The Independent** (1919) and emerged as one of the few wealthy leaders of the congress. Under the influence of Gandhi, he gave up Western lifestyle and participated actively in the Non-Cooperation Movement. He, however, criticised Gandhi's decision to withdraw the movement after Chauri-Chaura and helped found the Swaraj Party.



Motilal Nehru

FORMATION OF SWARAJ PARTY (1ST JANUARY 1923)

Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru now proposed that Non-Cooperation should be taken inside the councils and transform them into arenas of political struggle. They suggested that the nationalists should not boycott the councils, but enter them, obstruct their working, expose them as 'sham parliaments' and wreck them from within.

In December 1922 at Gaya Session of the INC, CR Das (as the President of the Congress) and Motilal (as its Secretary) put forward their program of 'either mending or ending' the councils. The opposition led by Rajgopalachari opposed the new proposal which was finally defeated. Das and Motilal resigned from their respective offices.

On 1st January 1923, CR Das announced the formation of the Congress- Khilafat Swarajya Party (better known as Swaraj Party), with himself as President and Motilal as Secretary. It accepted the Congress program except in one respect, it would take part in council elections. In this way, the proposal of Nehru–Das combine divided the Congress into Pro-Changers (later called the Swarajists) and No-Changers (or orthodox Gandhians).

The Pro Changers: they wanted the constructive program to be coupled with council entry. They were led by **CR Das** and **Motilal Nehru** and included other prominent Congressmen like Ajmal Khan, NC Kelkar, Subhas Chandra Bose, Vithalbhai Patel, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy.

The No-Changers: they denounced the idea of council entry and wanted the Congress to focus on constructive program alone. They were effectively led by Gandhi (in jail now) and included C. Rajgopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, **Jawaharlal Nehru** and MA Ansari.

In September 1923, Delhi, Special Session of the Congress was held under the presidentship of Maulana Azad and Congressmen were allowed to contest forthcoming elections in the month of November. The Swarajists got only a few weeks to prepare, yet they managed to do quite well and swept the polls in some provinces despite extremely narrow franchise (only about 3 per cent).

In the annual session of the Congress at Cocanada (or Kakinada), it was further stated that Non-Cooperation could be practiced inside the councils. Efforts on constructive program were also stressed, thus avoiding another split in the Congress.

CR Das and Motilal Nehru: CR Das and Motilal Nehru were highly successful lawyers, had once been moderates but had accepted the politics of boycott and non-cooperation in 1920. They had given up their legal practice and joined the Non-Cooperation movement as full-time workers and donated to the nation their magnificent houses in Calcutta and Allahabad respectively.

Note: It is noteworthy that during 1923–24, Congressmen, both Swarajists as well as No-changers participated in large numbers in elections to municipalities and local bodies. The No-changers wished to use the local bodies to promote their constructive work. Consequently, they held the following offices:

- CR Das became the Mayor of Calcutta
- Subhas Chandra Bose became the Chief Executive Officer of Calcutta
- Vithalbhai Patel became the President of Bombay Corporation
- Vallabhbhai Patel became the President of Ahmedabad Municipality
- Rajendra Prasad became the President of Patna Municipality
- Jawaharlal Nehru became the President of Allahabad Municipality

Gandhi and the Swarajists

Gandhi Adopts a Harsh Stand

On 5th February 1924, Gandhi was released from jail and took a hard stand against the Swarajists. In June 1924, AICC meeting was held at Ahmedabad where Gandhi's resolutions were virtually aimed at eliminating the Swarajists.

- One was the **Hand Spinning Resolution** which made it compulsory for every office bearer of the Congress to spin 2000 yards of yarn every month and the defaulters were to be penalised.
- Those who did not accept the council boycott were asked to resign.

Gandhi Dilutes his Stand

Das–Nehru combine were amply disturbed as their popularity with the electorates was to a great extent due to the name and resources of Congress and they offered stiff resistance. Eventually, Gandhi decided to dilute his stand due to a combination of reasons:

- When Gandhi was released in February 1924 the Bombay government was quite hopeful for another split in the Congress. They banked on the hope that Gandhi would denounce the Swarajists which would lead them to defect. Gandhi was in no mood to oblige them, even though he continued to believe in the futility of the Swarajist program.
- Gandhi shared warm personal relations with both Das and Motilal Nehru and he had full trust in their bonafides. He saw them as the most valued and respected leaders who had made great sacrifices for the cause of the country.

- In any case, council entry had already occurred. He felt that public opposition to the 'settled fact' of council entry would be counterproductive and could be misunderstood or even seen as a weakness.
- The Swarajists had attained formidable success in 1923 elections, had grown in stature and conducted themselves in the most uncompromising manner in the councils. They were certainly not becoming a limb of imperial administration.
- Finally, towards the end of 1924 the government launched a brutal attack on the civil liberties of the Swarajists in Bengal on the pretext of fighting terrorism. Several Congressmen were arrested including Subhas Chandra Bose and two Swarajists, Anil Baran Roy and SC Mitra. Gandhi decided to show his solidarity and surrendered before the Swarajists.

On 6th November 1924, Gandhi brought the struggle between the Swarajists and the No-changers to an end by signing a **joint statement** with Das and Motilal Nehru that the Swaraj Party would carry on work in the legislatures on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress (a decision later endorsed by the Belgaum Congress). In this way, Gandhi decided to accommodate them, avoiding another split in the Congress. He allowed the Swarajists, as agents of the Congress, to deal with the government. The Swarajists in turn expressed their willingness to carry on the constructive work of Gandhi.

In the Belgaum Congress presided by Gandhi, mutual trust between the Swarajists and No-Changers was furthered.

- The Congress endorsed Gandhi's decision to allow the Swaraj Party to carry on work in the legislatures **on behalf of the Congress and as an integral part of the Congress.**
- Gandhi gave the Swarajists a majority of seats on his Working Committee.
- Gandhi also stressed on the boycott of foreign cloth and prescribed constructive program (mainly spinning khadi, Hindu–Muslim unity and removal of untouchability) as the chief means for attainment of Swaraj.

Aims and Objectives of Swaraj Party

The aims and objectives of the Swaraj Party were specified in its constitution first published in February 1923. Henceforth, it underwent many changes until December 1924 (Belgaum Congress), when its relationship was finally defined vis-a-vis the Congress. The constitution of 1924 laid down the party's aim as 'attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means', though the exact nature of Swaraj was left undefined. The manifesto of the party stated that inside the legislatures, the Swarajists would demand 'the right of the people of India to control the existing machinery and system of government', and will 'resort to a policy of **uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction**' in case the government refused to entertain such a demand.

Program of Swaraj Party

The Swaraj Party was an integral part of the Congress and functioned as one of its departments and as such, its program could not have been much different from that of the Congress. The

Swaraj Party proclaimed to carry the non-violent non-cooperation inside the councils with a view to wrecking the councils (or the Constitution of 1919) from within. With this aim, it resolved to adopt the following program:

Inside the Council: The party decided that whenever possible it would:

- Refuse supplies and throw out budget to force recognition of their rights.
- Throw out all proposals by which the bureaucracy proposed to consolidate its powers.
- Move resolutions and support bills necessary for healthy growth of the national life.
- Help the constructive program of the Congress.
- Follow a definite economic policy to prevent the drain of public wealth from India.
- Project the rights of labor and adjust the relations between landlords and tenants, capitalists and workmen.

Outside the Council: The party resolved to work for:

- Inter-communal unity
- Removal of untouchability
- Organisation of labor in the country-agricultural and industrial
- Acquisition of economic control of the country
- Establishment of control of nationalists over municipal affairs
- Carrying out the constructive program of the Congress
- Formation of federation of Asiatic countries to secure mutual solidarity
- Enlisting support of foreign countries in the struggle for Swaraj

It is clear that the program of the Swaraj Party was quite comprehensive and formulated to please all sections of society with an eye on the elections.

Methods of the Swarajists

The Swarajist policy of 'uniform, continuous and consistent obstruction to wreck the reforms from within' is comparable to the **method of sabotage** which the British felt was more difficult to deal with than open rebellion.

The methods of the Swarajists included blocking the passage of government bills, creating dead-locks, resorting to adjournment motions and asking inconvenient questions to expose the alienness of the British government. Later, the Swarajists also adopted the method of frequently walking in and walking out. This method became popular as '**patriotism in locomotion**' and earned the Swarajists the nickname of '**peripatetic patriots**'.

The destructive methods of the Swarajists included rejection of the votable parts of the budget and rejection of proposals emanating from the bureaucracy. Their constructive methods included moving resolutions calculated to promote a healthy national life and displacement of the bureaucracy. The Swaraj Party had also laid down rules of conduct for its members in the legislative bodies. They were not to serve as members on committees by official nomination.

The methods of the party for work inside the councils were summed up by CR Das in the following manner-'I want you to enter the councils and to secure a majority and to put forward national demand. If it is not accepted, I want to oppose the government in every measure, good, bad and indifferent, and make the work of council impossible. If the government conducted its work through certification, the Swarajist members would resign making it a political issue..In spite of it all, if the government did not yield, then the voters would be advised to stop the payment of taxes and resort to civil disobedience.'

In this way, civil disobedience was to be their method of last resort.

Elections and the Swarajists

Under the provisions of the Act of 1919, altogether three elections were held in 1920, 1923 and 1926.

Elections of 1920 were boycotted by the Congress owing to Non-Cooperation Movement.

Elections of 1923 were fought by the Swarajists. Liberals constituted their main opposition and there were some Liberals as well in the fray. The Liberals had participated in the previous election as well and a stigma of association with the government was attached to them. On the other hand, the Swarajists were hailed as heroes and 'men of Gandhi' who had faced the wrath of the government during Non-Cooperation Movement. Their open agenda of taking non-cooperation inside the councils had a wide appeal among the electorates.

As a result, the Swarajists earned wide success. They won absolute majority in Central Provinces and emerged as the single largest party in the Central Assembly, Bombay and Bengal Councils. With this victory, they now came to be known as the '**Parliamentary wing of the Congress**'. The following table shows the number of seats won by the Swarajists in the councils.

S.no.	Legislative Body	Total Number of Seats	Seats won by Swarajists
1.	Legislative Assembly	105	42
2.	Madras Council	98	..
3.	Bombay Council	86	32
4.	Bengal Council	111	36
5.	United Provinces Council	101	31
6.	Punjab Council	71	9
7.	Bihar and Orissa Council	73	13
8.	C.P. Council	54	40
9.	Assam Council	39	13
Total		633	174

A majority of the candidates elected were lawyers. Landlords and businessmen were also elected in significant numbers.

Elections of 1926 came as a rude shock to the Swarajists. They suffered heavy losses everywhere. They were routed in CP, UP and Punjab securing 1, 19 and 35 seats respectively. Thus, by the eve of 1926, the Swarajists had effectively lost ground. On 16th June 1925, CR Das passed away leaving a great void in the Swaraj Party. The party soon became a house divided and mutual bickering eroded even the remnants of credibility.

Work of Swarajists in the Legislatures

In the year 1924–25, the Swarajists led by Motilal Nehru, registered many victories in the central legislature. Early in February 1924, the Swarajists (not being in majority), formed a coalition of 70 members and came to be known as **Nationalist Party**, which included individuals such as Madan Mohan Malviya and Independents led by Jinnah. In 1924, it was this coalition that dominated the proceedings of the legislature.

The Swarajists intervened on several issues and often outvoted the government. Three issues remained at the centre of their demands. These were—constitutional advancement leading to self-government, grant of civil liberties, release of political prisoners and repeal of repressive laws, and third issue was the development of indigenous industries. Though the legislatures formed under the provision of 1919 Act had only a 'semblance' of power without any real authority, and the Viceroy or governor could certify any legislation if it was rejected in the legislature, yet the Swarajists registered many victories:

- In 1924, the Nationalist Party led by the Swarajists rejected the first four demands of the budget and did not allow the Finance Bill to be introduced in the legislature.
- C. Vijayaraghavachariar moved a resolution demanding provincial autonomy and Dominion status for India.
- In 1924, Swarajists led by Motilal Nehru introduced an amendment demanding the framing of an **Indian Constitution** by an Indian Constituent Assembly. Motilal also moved a resolution in favour of a **Round Table Conference** of all Indian, European and Anglo Indian interests to recommend a scheme of full responsible government.
 - This forced the government of India to appoint a **Reforms Enquiry Committee** under Sir Alexander Muddiman to enquire into the working of the Act of 1919 and suggest remedies.
 - The government also requested eminent Indians (like Motilal Nehru, MA Jinnah, TB Sapru, RP Paranjpya and Sir Sivaswamy Iyer) to serve on the Committee, a request which was turned down as per the principles of the Swarajists.
- The Swarajists also refused to attend the parties of the Viceroy as a mark of protest.
- When the recommendations of the Lee Commission (constituted to enquire into the organisation and condition of Public Services) were introduced in the Assembly for approval, Motilal moved an amendment which was carried by a majority vote.
- The success of the Swaraj Party in Central Provinces and Bengal was also impressive. In the CP, it secured absolute majority while it emerged as the largest party in Bengal. It succeeded in creating deadlocks and forcing the government to rely on their special powers. It virtually **blew up the Dyarchy** in these provinces with its method of obstruction.

- In March 1925, the Swarajists succeeded in electing **Vithalbhai Patel** as the President of the Central Legislative Assembly.
- The Swarajists succeeded in defeating the government on a number of bills. For instance, in 1928, the government was defeated on the **Public Safety Bill** by which the government proposed to deport 'undesirable' and 'subversive' foreigners (as the government feared that British and other foreign agitators were being sent to India by the Communist International).

In this way, the Swarajists achieved significant success inside the legislative bodies and achieved whatever could be achieved by constitutional methods. Their tactics stirred the otherwise dull political atmosphere of the country. They embarrassed the government with their questions and debating skills, eroding moral foundations of British Raj in India. In fact, the parliamentary duels of this period constitute a brilliant page in the annals of parliamentary politics of Modern India. These were fully reported in press and read avidly every morning by the readers.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORK BY THE NO-CHANGERS & THE SWARAJISTS

Introduction to Gandhian Constructive Work

As per Gandhi, the chariot of freedom struggle had two wheels—mass movements and constructive work. Of the 18 items enumerated by Gandhi under constructive program, the most important were Hindu-Muslim unity, removal untouchability, prohibition (of alcohol and other intoxicants), Swadeshi and boycott. According to Gandhi, when a mass movement was at its ebb, the energies of the people were to be diverted to constructive work. That is why, once the Non-Cooperation Movement was suspended, he had advised constructive work to the people.

Thus, the No-Changers quietly carried on the grass-root constructive work, they established hundreds of ashrams all over the country where young men and women promoted charkha and khadi, worked for the elevation of the lower castes and tribal people. They set up hundreds of National Schools and Colleges where young Indians were trained in a non-colonial ideological framework.

In reality, the Gandhian constructive work was multi-faceted in aim and content. It diverted the energies of the masses in positive direction, it made the elite classes familiar with conditions of villages and lower caste and brought much needed financial help to the poor. In this way, it silently promoted the process of nation building. Further, it gave continuous engagement to the Congress political workers during passive phases of the national movement, helped build their bonds with the masses and honed their organising skills. In this way, constructive work was a significant means of preparing freedom fighters and also of testing their leaders. It were these constructive workers who served as the steel frame during the active phase of the national movement.

Constructive Work by the Swarajists

The Swaraj Party had put forth the twin aims of council entry and constructive work. Though the Swaraj party was founded by nationalists who did not see eye to eye with Gandhi in his approach to non-cooperation, they could ill afford to neglect Gandhi's constructive program which alone linked them with Congress and Gandhi. After all, the Swarajists owed their political power and prestige to the Congress and to Gandhi. They also knew that there will come one day in future when they will have to leave the councils and join mass civil disobedience along with the No-Changers. Thus, the **constructive work provided a common platform to both the factions of the Congress**—the Swarajists and the No-Changers. However, being busy with council work, the Swarajists could not implement this program as zealously as the No-Changers did.

Hindu-Muslim Unity and Political Education of the Masses

These were regarded as pre-requisites for the attainment of Swaraj by the top Swarajists. The rise of Swarajists coincided with the worst period of Hindu-Muslim tension in Indian polity. But, like other groups, the Swarajists could not achieve much in halting the downward trend except talking about the desirability of Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1926, the Congress made a resolution on the establishment of Permanent Publicity Bureau for educating the masses on communal harmony and healthy national life. **Sarojini Naidu, Motilal Nehru and Maulana Azad** were made incharge of this work.

Swadeshi

Gandhi's definition of Swadeshi not only included charkha and khadi (or khaddar, coarse cloth) but also all other forms of indigenous industries. The Swarajists also espoused to the cause of khadi but not as passionately as the orthodox Gandhians. Though the Swarajists were required to attend the council meetings dressed in khadi (as per their instruction manual), they opposed tooth and nail when Gandhians proposed to make khadi and charkha a basis for Congress membership. They also opposed Gandhi's Hand Spinning Resolution for making spinning mandatory for Congress members, forcing Gandhi to remove the penalty clause.

From the above, the stand of the Swarajists becomes amply clear—they were always ready to contribute to the cause of khadi but at the same time, they made no fetish of khadi and strongly resented anything being forced upon them.

Untouchability

The removal of untouchability from Indian society and elevation of depressed classes received unfailing attention of the Congress as well as of the Swarajists. In 1924, the Belgaum Congress passed a resolution on untouchability with full agreement of the Swarajists. The Swarajists fully supported the opening of temple doors to the depressed classes. They also fully supported and stood by the rights of the depressed classes in legislative bodies.

Prohibition (of alcohol and other intoxicants)

The government received a significant part of its revenue from the sale of alcohol and other intoxicants in India. As a result, the British were unwilling to impose prohibition on the sale and consumption of such substances. Realising how the alien government was willing to forego the long-term interests of Indian society for the sake of some immediate revenue, the Swarajists stood for prohibition.

True, the Swarajists were an integral part of the Constructive Program of the Congress during 1922–29. At the same time, it is also true that, though they lent support to the constructive program, they did not share Gandhi's idealism in this regard.

DECLINE OF THE SWARAJISTS

In 1923, the Swarajists with their program of council entry appeared very promising. But the success of 1924–25 was short-lived and the years 1925–27 saw the decline of the Swarajists. The various factors that lead to their decline included—

Lure of Office

Having entered the councils, the Swarajists were not averse to enjoying the privileges. The Swarajists began to accept offices and now sat on various committees:

- Motilal, who had earlier declined to sit on the Muddiman Committee, now sat on the **Skeen Committee**.
- **Vithalbhai Patel** became President (Speaker) of the Legislative Assembly.
- Ramaswamy Iyenger sat on the Public Accounts Committee.

Rise of the Spirit of Responsive Cooperation

The policy of continuous obstruction began to give way to the spirit of responsive cooperation. Many of the Swarajists had no real faith in non-cooperation. The government also succeeded in persuading the Swarajists into some kind of cooperation. Soon the party split into two wings—**Responsivists and Non-Cooperators**.

The Responsivists wanted to work for reform and hold offices wherever possible. Some of the prominent Responsivists were **Madan Mohan Malviya, Lajpat Rai, NC Kelkar, MR Jayakar** (all of them became members of the Hindu Mahasabha). The Responsivists openly voiced the demand to reconsider party program. When Motilal rebuked them saying '**the diseased limb of the Swaraj party must be amputated**', the responsivists were ready to break out in open revolt against the central leadership. The Bombay Swarajists advocated the path of Responsive cooperation and the Swaraj Party was now ridden with defections and dissensions.

Elitist Outlook of the Swarajists

The Swarajists represented the upper-class elements of the Congress who had not much faith in direct mass action and had been drawn into the Non-Cooperation Movement quite unwillingly. On the failure of the moment, they immediately took to parliamentary politics and later became content with playing the role of the opposition. Lack of any sound ideological basis, preoccupation with party politics and lukewarm support to the constructive work further distanced the Swarajists from the masses.

Rising Communalism

After 1923, communalism raised its ugly head and the country was repeatedly plunged into communal riots. The **Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha** (founded in December 1917) became active again.

In the years 1926–27 there developed an ideological gap between the Swarajists and the Hindu Mahasabha. The Responsivists **Madan Mohan Malviya and Lajpat Rai** organised a new party of **Congress Independents**, rallied the Hindus under their banner and offered cooperation to the government to safeguard the so-called Hindu interests. They felt that continuous opposition to the government harmed the interests of the Hindus. They even accused Motilal Nehru of being anti-Hindu and of favouring cow-slaughter and of eating beef.

As the crisis deepened, Gandhi tried to intervene and improve the situation. In September 1924, he went on a 21-day fast in the house of Maulana Mohammad Ali in Delhi to do penance for the inhumanity inflicted during the riots, but to no avail.

Later, Motilal tried to make peace between the two factions of the Congress at Sabarmati. The **Sabarmati Compromise** proved abortive and failed to keep the party united. By 1927, the diarchy that was destroyed in CP and Bengal was restored. It was now amply clear that the Swaraj Party had only succeeded in wrecking itself rather than the constitution of 1919.

Their tactics proved unavailing in ending or mending the constitution of 1919, forcing the Swarajists to walk out of the central Assembly twice—first in 1926 and then in January 1930 due to the launch of Civil Disobedience Movement.

Disintegration of the Nationalist Party

The unity of the coalition formed under the banner of the Nationalist Party (by the Swarajists in February 1924) proved to be short-lived. The non-Swarajist members of the party felt that the Swaraj Party gave precedence to its interests over their cost. This led to rift and defections and the party broke down. Before the elections of 1926, the Nationalist Party had broken into three clear groups:

- The Swaraj Party (or the Congress Party)

- The Nationalist Party led by Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai
 - It included Responsive Cooperators like Hindu Mahasabha and Independent Congressmen
- The Independent Party led by MA Jinnah

Swaraj Party Remerges with the Congress

In May 1927, the situation in the country appeared grim, the Swarajists were declining, communalism was raising its ugly head and Gandhi wrote, “My only hope lies in prayer and answer to prayer”. But it seems the forces of national upsurge were silently growing behind the scenes—when the country united once again against the Simon Commission.

In 1927, **Simon Commission** (an all-white commission to frame a constitution for India) was announced which was unanimously boycotted by all nationalists. **Lord Birkenhead** justified the exclusion of Indians from Simon Commission on the plea that there were vital differences among various Indian political parties and then threw a challenge to Indians to produce a constitution acceptable to all sections of Indian society.

The Indians accepted the challenge and an All Parties Conference (1928) was called which appointed a sub-committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution. The committee drafted a constitution, famously known as **Nehru Report**. In 1928 Calcutta Congress, the Swarajists and the No-Changers resolved in one voice that in case the government did not accept the Nehru Report by **31st December 1929**, the Congress would declare **complete independence as its goal** and would also launch a civil disobedience movement to achieve that goal.

Preparations now began for a second round of mass action to achieve complete independence. With this, the council entry program of the Swaraj Party faded into irrelevance and it now merged with the Congress.

EVALUATION OF THE SWARAJISTS

The sudden withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement had led to the demoralisation of the nationalist ranks. To prevent the movement from lapsing into inactivity, the Swarajists advocated a new line of activity under the changed conditions. They placed before the nation the twin programs of council entry and constructive work. The Swarajists filled the political void at a time when the national movement was recouping its strength. They exposed the hollowness of the reforms of 1919. The years 1925–27 saw the demoralisation and decline of the Swaraj Party itself. The announcement of the Simon Commission and the subsequent changes in political scenario led to the merger of the party with the Congress. However, it cannot be denied that during 1922–29, the Swarajists played a significant role and kept the political atmosphere alive during this period.

Prelim Capsule**Prelim Capsule- The Swarajists and Constructive Work**

Date	Events	Important Details
December 1922 (Gaya)	Gaya Congress Session	CR Das (President), Motilal Nehru (Secretary). Council entry proposal of Das and Nehru defeated, on account of opposition of majority of delegates led by Rajgopalachari . Das and Motilal resign from office.
1st January 1923	Formation of Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party	CR Das (President), Motilal Nehru (Secretary). Twin aims-council entry & constructive work. Congress gets divided into Pro-Changers (later called the Swarajists) and No-Changers (or orthodox Gandhians).
September 1923 (Delhi)	Delhi, Special Congress Session	Maulana Azad (President). Swarajists allowed to contest elections due in November.
November 1923	1923 Council Elections	Swarajists sweep the polls despite narrow franchise.
December 1924 (Belgam)	Belgam Congress Session	Gandhi (President) . Congress endorsed Gandhi's decision to allow the Swaraj Party to carry on work in the legislatures on behalf of the Congress.
16th June 1925	CR Das passes away	Swaraj Party becomes a house divided and loses credibility. The Nationalist Party also breaks into three groups- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Swaraj Party (or the Congress Party) • The Nationalist Party led by Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai (It included Responsive Cooperators like Hindu Mahasabha and Independent Congressmen) • The Independent Party led by MA Jinnah

1926	1926 Council Elections	Swaraj Party suffers heavy losses.
1927	Simon Commission announced	Boycotted by all nationalists. Lord Birkenhead challenges Indians to frame their own constitution.
1928	All Parties Conference	Appoints a sub-committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draft a constitution. Nehru Committee drafted a constitution-known as Nehru Report .
1928 (Calcutta)	Calcutta Congress Session	Swarajists and No-changers unanimously give ultimatum- if demand of complete independence not accepted by 31st December 1929, Civil Disobedience will be launched. Congress prepares for next round of mass action. Council entry program becomes irrelevant. Swaraj Party reemerges with Congress.

**Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam**

1. Consider the following statements with reference to the Swarajists-

1. When their proposal of council entry was opposed by the Congress, the Swarajists defected and formed a new party, the Swaraj Party, independent of the Congress.
2. They had no faith in mass civil disobedience.
3. Jawaharlal Nehru joined the Swaraj Party.

Which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) None of the above

2. 1. The main difference between the 'Swarajists' and the 'No-Changers'

was over the issue of elections to municipalities and local bodies.

2. Both the Swarajists as well as the No-changers supported the constructive program of the Congress.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) both
- (d) neither

3. 1. The Swarajists swept the polls in the 1926 elections.

2. In the Central Legislative Assembly, the Swarajists formed a coalition known as the Nationalist Party.

Which of the above statements is/are correct? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) both
- (d) neither

4. Consider the following statements with regard to Public Safety Bill, 1928-

1. It was proposed by the Swarajists for safeguarding the civil and human rights of Indian people.
2. The bill provided for deportation of 'undesirable' foreigners including the British.

Which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither

5. The Swaraj Party carried out work in the legislatures as _____.

- (a) an independent party
(b) a coalition partner
(c) an integral part of the Congress
(d) a voluntary body

6. 1. Motilal Nehru was a member of the Muddiman Committee formed to examine the working of Dyarchy.
2. Vallabhbhai Patel became the speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly.

Which of the above statements is/are true? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither

7. Which of the following items were included in the constructive work of the NO-changers?

1. Prohibition
2. Boycott
3. Removal of untouchability

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

8. Public Safety Bill, 1928 was proposed with the aim of -

- (a) Abolishing socio-religious practices injurious to the health of the people.

- (b) Enhancing the powers of the police during external threat.

- (c) Regulating sale and purchase of fire arms.

- (d) Deporting 'undesirable' foreigners.

9. Which of the following were associated with the Swarajists?

1. Nationalist Party
2. Public Safety Bill
3. Responsivists

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

10. Which of the following Congressmen were members of the NO-Changers party?

1. Ajmal Khan
2. Subhas Chandra Bose
3. Jawaharlal Nehru
4. MA Ansari

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 3 and 4
(c) 2, 3 and 4 (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

11. Who among the following were the Swarajists?

- (a) Motilal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose
(b) Jawaharlal Nehru, Vitthalbhai Patel, MA Ansari
(c) Motilal Nehru, Vitthalbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose
(d) Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, MA Ansari

12. 1. No-changers participated in the elections to local bodies as they believed that such bodies could be used to promote their constructive work.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru became the President of the Allahabad Municipality.

Which of the above statements is/are incorrect? Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) both (d) neither

13. Which of the following were included in the program of the Swaraj Party?

1. Establishment of control of nationalists over municipal affairs.
2. Enlisting support of foreign countries in the struggle for Swaraj.
3. Help the constructive program of the Congress.

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 and 3 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

14. Why did the patriotism of the Swarajists earn the nickname of 'patriotism in locomotion'?



Previous Years' Questions – Main Exam

1. Trace the origin of the Swaraj Party. What was the manifesto of the Swaraj Party? What were the Swarajists demands and the reactions of the British? [UPSC 1990]

2. Trace the formation of the Swaraj Party. What were its demands? [UPSC 1999]



Practice Questions – Main Exam

1. Examine the performance of the Swarajists in the legislatures.
2. 'The Swaraj Party enlivened an otherwise dull political atmosphere during the period 1922-29, and played an important role on the political scene during this period'. Examine the statement.
3. Who were the Swarajists? Critically analyze their role in the national movement.

4. Write short notes on the following:
(a) Program and methods of the Swarajists
(b) Decline of the Swarajists
5. Who were the No-changers? What were their activities and role in the freedom struggle?

Answers

Practice Questions – Preliminary Exam

- | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (d) | 2. (a) | 3. (b) | 4. (b) | 5. (c) |
| 6. (d) | 7. (d) | 8. (d) | 9. (d) | 10. (b) |
| 11. (c) | 12. (d) | 13. (d) | 14. (b) | 15. (a) |

- (a) their method of travelling all over the country for promotion of nationalism.
(b) their method of frequently walking in and walking out of the legislature.
(c) their frequent visits to the Viceroy for voicing their grievances.
(d) their frequent travel abroad for gathering support for Swaraj.

15. Which of the following leaders were associated with the Swaraj Party?

1. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das
2. Jawaharlal Nehru
3. Vallabhbhai Patel

Choose the correct answer from the following options.

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2
(c) 2 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3