

Swaraj Party

The Swaraj Party or the Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party was formed on 1 January 1923 by C R Das and Motilal Nehru. The formation of the Swaraj Party came after various significant events like the withdrawal of non-cooperation movement, the government of India act 1919 and 1923 elections. The formation of this party is an important chapter in Modern Indian History and should be well-read for the IAS Exam.

This article will provide details about the Swaraj Party from the competitive exams' perspectives.

Swaraj Party - Background

How the party came into the picture can be understood by the following points mentioned below:

- After the Chauri Chaura incident, Mahatma Gandhi withdrew the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922.
- This was met with a lot of disagreements among leaders of the Congress Party.
- While some wanted to continue non-cooperation, others wanted to end the legislature boycott and contest elections. The former were called no-changers and such leaders included Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, C Rajagopalachari, etc.
- The others who wanted to enter the legislative council and obstruct the British government from within were called the pro-changers. These leaders included C R Das, Motilal Nehru, Srinivasa Iyengar, etc.
- In 1922, in the Gaya session of the Congress, C R Das (who was presiding over the session) moved a proposal to enter the legislatures but it was defeated. Das and other leaders broke away from the Congress and formed the Swaraj Party.
- C R Das was the President and the Secretary was Motilal Nehru.
- Prominent leaders of the Swaraj Party included N C Kelkar, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Subhas Chandra Bose.

Aims of the Swaraj Party

The Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party or the Swaraj Party aimed for:

- Attaining dominion status.
- Obtaining the right to frame a constitution.
- Establishing control over the bureaucracy.
- Obtaining full provincial autonomy.
- Attaining Swarajya (self-rule).
- Getting people the right to control government machinery.
- Organising industrial and agricultural labour.
- Controlling the local and municipal bodies.
- Having an agency for propaganda outside the country.
- Establishing a federation of Asian countries to promote trade and commerce.

- Engaging in the constructive programmes of the Congress.

Significance of Swaraj Party

- Gandhiji and both the pro-changers and the no-changers realised the importance of putting up a united front in order to get reforms from the government.
- So, it was decided that the Swarajists would contest elections as a separate 'group' within the Congress Party.
- The Swaraj Party won 42 out of 104 seats to the Central Legislature in 1923.
- The party's programme was to obstruct the government. They wanted to create deadlocks on every measure.
- They boycotted all official functions and receptions held by the government.
- They voiced their grievances and aspirations in the Legislative Assembly.

Swaraj Party and its Achievements

- Swarajist Vithalbai Patel became speaker of the Central Legislative Assembly in 1925.
- They outvoted the government many times even in matters related to budgetary grants.
- They were able to defeat the Public Safety Bill in 1928.
- They exposed the weaknesses of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.
- They gave fiery speeches in the Assembly on self-rule and civil liberties.

Drawbacks of Swaraj Party

- They could not coordinate their struggle inside the Assembly with the mass freedom struggle outside.
- They totally relied on newspapers to carry their work and message in the Assembly to the outside world.
- Some of them could not resist the perks of power. Motilal Nehru was a member of the Sken Committee and A Ramaswamy Iyengar was a member of the Public Accounts Committee.
- Their policy of obstructionism had its flaws and limitations.
- The death of C R Das in 1925 further weakened the party.
- There were internal divisions among the Swarajists. They were divided into the **responsivists and the non-responsivists**. The responsivists (M M Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai, N C Kelkar) wanted to cooperate with the government and hold offices, whereas the non-responsivists (Motilal Nehru) withdrew from legislatures in 1926.
- The party was in shambles when it went into the 1926 elections, and as a result, did not perform well.
- The party's failure to support the peasant cause in Bengal led to a loss of support of many members.
- The party merged with the Congress in 1935.