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SWARAJISTS AND CONSTRUCTIVE WORK (1922–1929)

1. Introduction

The years **1922–1929** witnessed a crucial phase in India's national movement marked by the emergence of the **Swaraj Party**. Founded under the leadership of **Chittaranjan Das (C.R. Das)** and **Motilal Nehru**, it aimed at pursuing a **dual strategy**:

- ❖ **Council entry** to expose and obstruct colonial governance from within.
- ❖ **Constructive work** outside councils to strengthen nationalist mobilisation.

This phase reflected ideological tensions within the Congress after the suspension of the **Non-Cooperation Movement (NCM)** in 1922 following the **Chauri-Chaura incident**.

2. Role of Key Leaders

(a) Chittaranjan Das (Deshbandhu)

- ❖ Early association: Member of the **Anushilan Samiti** with Pramathanath Mitra.
- ❖ Legal fame: Defended **Aurobindo Ghosh** in the **Alipore Conspiracy Case (1909)**.
- ❖ Journalism: Started the newspaper **Forward**, later renamed **Liberty**.
- ❖ Political leadership: Central architect of the **Swaraj Party (1923)**.

(b) Motilal Nehru

- ❖ Journalism: Founded the daily **Independent**.
- ❖ Role in NCM: Actively participated but **criticised Gandhi's withdrawal** of the movement in 1922.
- ❖ Organiser: Co-founder of the **Swaraj Party** alongside C.R. Das.

3. Swarajists – Council Entry Strategy

- ❖ **Formation**: Congress-Khilafat Swarajya Party formed in **1923**.

- ❖ **Leadership**: C.R. Das (President), Motilal Nehru (Secretary), Ajmal Khan (prominent leader).

- ❖ **Motto**: “**End or Mend**” the councils. The aim was not to legitimise colonial institutions but to obstruct their functioning.

Factions within Swarajists:

- ❖ **Responsivists**: Lala Lajpat Rai, M.M. Malviya, N.C. Kelkar. Favoured cooperation with government, protection of Hindu interests, and office-holding.
- ❖ **Non-responsivists**: Opposed cooperation; some withdrew from legislatures and did not contest **1926 elections**.

4. No-Changers – Constructive Work Strategy

- ❖ **Leadership**: M.K. Gandhi (main proponent), C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, M.A. Ansari.
- ❖ **Stand**: Opposed council entry; emphasised constructive work, boycott, and continuation of NCM spirit.

5. Congress Response

- ❖ **Delhi Session (Sept 1923)**: Congress **suspended propaganda against council entry**. Congressmen were permitted to stand in elections and vote.
- ❖ This compromise reflected the Congress' effort to keep unity between Swarajists and No-Changers.

6. Gandhi's Attitude

- ❖ Initially **opposed Swarajists' council entry**.
- ❖ After his release (1924), Gandhi sought reconciliation.
- ❖ **Belgaum Session (Dec 1924)**: Both groups united; Gandhi presided for the **only time** over a Congress session.

7. Swarajists in Councils

- ❖ Adopted a **policy of obstruction** to wreck reforms from within—comparable to sabotage.

❖ **Achievements:**

- ✓ Vithalbhai Patel became **Speaker of Central Legislative Assembly (1925)**.
- ✓ C. Viraraghavachari moved resolution for **provincial autonomy and dominion status**.
- ✓ In **1928**, defeated government's **Public Safety Bill**, which sought to deport subversive foreigners.

❖ **Limitations:**

- ✓ Internal splits (communal and responsivist vs. non-responsivist lines).
- ✓ Gradual decline after 1928; finally walked out post **Lahore Resolution (1929)** demanding **Purna Swaraj**.

8. Constructive Work by No-Changers

- ❖ **Ashrams:** In Gujarat's Kheda and Bardoli, where volunteers worked among tribals and lower castes.
- ❖ **Promotion of Charkha & Khadi:** Symbolised self-reliance and swadeshi.
- ❖ **National Education:** Establishment of schools and colleges outside colonial framework.
- ❖ **Social reform:** Campaigns for Hindu-Muslim unity, abolition of untouchability, boycott of foreign cloth and liquor.
- ❖ **Relief activities:** Organised during famines and floods.

9. Muddiman Committee (1924)

- ❖ Set up to review **Dyarchy** under the Government of India Act (1919).
- ❖ **Indian members:** Sir Sivaswami Aiyar, Dr. R.P. Paranjape, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

- ❖ Outcome: Dyarchy proved unworkable, strengthening nationalist demand for full self-government.

10. Applied & Analytical Dimension

1. Ideological Divergence

- ❖ Swarajists symbolised **pragmatism**—working within colonial structures.
- ❖ No-Changers symbolised **idealism**—grassroots transformation through constructive work.

2. Political Impact

- ❖ Demonstrated that **colonial councils could be challenged** effectively (e.g., Public Safety Bill defeat).
- ❖ Helped prepare ground for **1928 Simon Commission boycott** and **Nehru Report**.

3. Social Impact

- ❖ Constructive work deepened nationalist penetration into villages, building **self-reliant communities**.
- ❖ Khadi and Charkha became enduring symbols of Indian identity and economic resistance.

4. Continuity & Relevance

- ❖ The debate between **parliamentary participation vs. extra-parliamentary struggle** echoes in later nationalist phases (e.g., debates over participation in 1937 elections).
- ❖ Even today, the balance between **institutional politics and grassroots activism** remains a vital democratic question.

11. Current Relevance and Updates

- ❖ The Swarajists' role in councils is often compared to present-day strategies of **opposition parties obstructing legislative agendas** as a democratic tool.

- ❖ **2023 marked 100 years** of the formation of the Swaraj Party (1923), leading to scholarly reassessments of C.R. Das' contributions.
- ❖ The Constructive Programme's legacy—**khadi, village industries, and social**

reform—still resonates in government initiatives like **Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** and **Skill India** programs.