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# OPINION

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## ORDINANCES, LEGALITY AND TYRANNY

ORDINANCES fall upon us now like leaves in Vallambrosa. Thick and fast they come, and probably will continue to come until our single-minded Prime Minister has gathered in her own hands all the powers she enjoyed under the '75-'77 Emergency and more; the legislation she was contemplating then or had on the anvil being the more. So be not too shocked, friends. Her love for the people, she tells us about on numerous occasions. "This is just the beginning of love; complaining already! Proceed, proceed a little further, and see what happens." For readers of *Opinion*, the whole course has been indicated in the issues since she won the election in January, so they should not be surprised. The nation is back well and truly in the era of authoritarianism, and to tell the truth, there is no wide scale rejection of it. On the other hand, there would seem to be some approval. Almost twice a week, one reads of people from other parties joining the ruling party, the authoritarian custodian. The Congress(U), whose leaders were attacking her furiously, is now teetering on the edge. Some prominent leaders have actually resigned from it, and are watching carefully from outside for a favourable opportunity to swear allegiance to her. As already mentioned in *Opinion*, she calculates that by the end of the year her opponents, weak as they are now, will be decimated. She will be all-in-all, and opposition to her completely wiped out.

For the true lover of his country, this is a tragic state of affairs. But most people seem to have little objection to grovelling, either openly, or in a refined sort of way. No fault must be found with the all-Powerful. If you see a fault in her, it's your eyes that are defective, she is immaculate. The ancient courtly culture asserts itself; ji huzoor and bar sarochasm become the formulae not only for minister and government servant but for all in any way connected with or concerned about government business or policy. Why, it may be asked, then does she worry about ordinances? The reason is she wishes to observe fully the forms of law. The armed forces, her final regulatory sanction, are she believes very particular about this. If anything, however oppressive, is covered by the law, it is all right with them. If not, eyebrows might be raised. Awkward questions might follow. So dictatorship, certainly; but properly cloaked by the law. Again keeping people in prison without trial, or suppressing freedom of speech, certainly; but always under the guise of law. Then the real sin of such acts is if not wiped away altogether, almost reduced to a triviality under the weighty language of the law.

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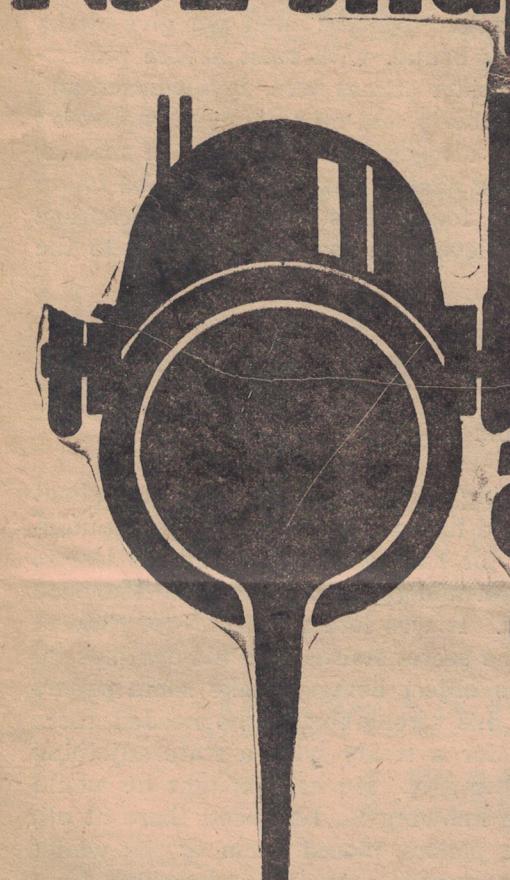
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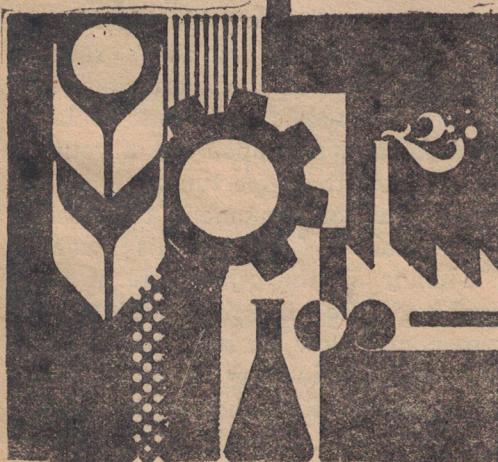


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For the next five years then, are we destined to live under such a regime ? Aye and for longer, if she decides not to hold the election, or by that time has reduced the Election Commission to a dummy of her own. The only thing to do in such circumstances is to keep the spark of freedom alive. The examples of the dissidents in the Communist countries deserve much greater attention from us than we give them. There under conditions that are really brutal, with most severe punishments for what we would not even consider crimes here, devoted men and women still worship at the shrine of Liberty and no amount of repression has been able to extinguish its flame altogether. The spirit of man is unconquerable, be assured, nor must we assume that it is not to be found at all among Indians. Wherever it is found it is upto us to encourage it. Bow not to the despot, however clever she is; surrender not to the tyrant, however strong she is.

## THE DERVISH'S IDLE DAY

(Continued from 23-8-1980)

**T**HOUGH greatly disturbed by living through again the scenes about Abida's sad end, the dervish found he had retained sufficient equanimity to bear it, and so thanked God for having let him learn his lesson. Falling into a doze, he lay down again and saw himself as he had been a couple of years after Abida's death. It was late at night. He rode in silently by himself, and climbed up the secret staircase to his own special sanctum at the top of the house, his object being to take some papers he had hidden in a secret section of his strong-box, as he needed them for the negotiations he had in hand for a treaty with a state adjoining the neighbouring kingdom on the other side. He had thought he would take the papers, and without anyone knowing he had been there at all, ride back to his camp. He took the papers, placed them in the wallet attached to his belt, when he heard a strange groaning and sighing from his wife's room next door. Stepping into the corridor outside his room, he saw a streak of light from under the doorway of his wife's room. Opening the door softly, so as not to disturb her if she were deep in sleep, he saw a strange sight. There lay his naked wife flat on her back with a look of great enjoyment on her face, and upon her a young sprig of the court, who was making the best of the opportunity.

Stricken to the heart, he stood there silent for a moment, then said "ha !" Startled, the two parted, and the man rushed for his sword, which with his clothes was lying on a chair on the other side of the bed. He let the man pick up his sword and face him, then swiftly got near enough to him to land him a tremendous blow on his jaw, and as he reeled picked him up and carrying him to the long open window, flung him far out into the torrent that flowed past the house, following it up by tossing his clothes and sword after him. The body and they he knew would fall into the deep gorge through which the torrent

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thundered and would never be found again. He then turned round and found his wife in a thin night-dress, trembling before him. "Not that," she said, "not that" entreatingly. "You can divorce me, I won't claim the mehr." "Keep quiet, incomparably stupid," said he. "I have no wish to hear your voice." Next moment, he stepped up to her, and with a quick, hard tap below her left ear, despatched her. Catching her as she fell, he placed her beside a chest of drawers with a jutting, sharp-cornered marble top, making it seem she had slipped and hit herself fatally, so that she could not even cry for help. He then went out of the room, to his own room, took the secret steps down, mounted and rode back to his camp. All the way back, he burned with a strong contempt for himself, to have been so bad a judge of human nature as to have married her. Reaching the camp, he took a long cool shower, went to bed and was soon sleeping soundly.

The dervish found himself almost undisturbed at seeing again this part of his past. It was as if he couldn't feel any regret for the happening and the actors. To kill two human beings in this manner was clearly murder. Yes, he had been a murderer and yet he felt no regret, why, he asked himself. After some time the answer came to him. It was because both the dead had been so worthless. The man, a young courtier with no sense of duty, just playing around with the wife of a serving soldier, fighting for his country, the woman faithless and quite clearly not even deeply in love with her playmate bed-fellow. Pah, they disgraced the human race, and it was better to get rid of them when the opportunity came. Quite apart from all the worldly trouble and scandal that letting them live would have caused, ethically too, the dervish concluded, there was no case for them. The man had been given a chance. He had a sword, while his opponent approached him without a weapon. Yet he had muffed his chance, the woman, well perhaps he should have let her live, but she would only have deceived some other worthy person. The moment she spoke in her time of crisis, he recognised the type, the true harlot, with no sense of responsibility at all, eager to take all she could and give nothing back. No she too was a cumberer of the earth, better dead. With his mind at peace, he fell soundly asleep.

(To be continued)

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