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*Glory to God in the highest,
And on Earth, Peace, and to all men Goodwill.*

(Men here means all human beings.)

HOWEVER unworthy then, and deserving of condemnation a person may be, to him or her at this time we must extend the compliments of the season and wish them well. Not to Indira Gandhi, surely ? Aye, even to her. Accordingly greetings dear Indira. May the rest of December be propitious to you and the new year, 1981, be kind to your failings, and make you a better and more virtuous person. May the Lord turn the thoughts of you, the inveterate liar, away from the lie, and induce in you some idea, at least, of the sacredness of truth. May you begin to realise the value of honest dealing, and cease to regard as most important and profitable the unscrupulous manipulation for which you are deservedly noted. May the fallacy of regarding your will as the whole law become apparent to you and may respect for the law of the land become a part of your ordinary behaviour. May you be enabled to give up your inordinate love of power, and cease gathering all power to yourself. May you learn to recognise and willingly accept that you are but one centre of power among others and enjoy its exercise without all the time being obsessed by the oppressive desire to get all power into your own hands. Power you know is a good servant but a very bad master, and the attempt to acquire it anyhow is fraught with the greatest danger to one's ethical and spiritual nature.

To-day, dear Indira, nobody with any regard for the truth, can describe you as a good ruler, one whose thoughts and actions are informed by principle. No, you are definitely a bad ruler, and consequently, in many matters an incompetent ruler. May you, in this season of goodwill, realise that this is a fact, that only your sycophants, of whom the number is very large, would in their own interest and to please and flatter you, deny it, and that accordingly you ought to amend your conduct and attitudes so as to make it untrue for the future. You may say the Good, what have I to do with the Good ? Am I Socrates ? Enough for me what works ; that is all I care for. Ah, but don't you see, if you act with a total disregard for the good, your actions prove futile ; they don't work.

Where have you got to in Assam ? You said they had a genuine grievance. Now you term the movement extreme regionalism, and have taken recourse to repressive and oppressive measures. Remember you can do anything with bayonets except sit on them. Let principle and the good inform your conduct even at this late moment, or you will drive

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the Assamese, who have behaved with exemplary patience and discipline, into open rebellion. Surely the idea of civil war appals even you, or does your enormous obsequious majority in Parliament, your immediate circle of yes-men and hatchet-men, blind you completely to things as they are ? May the year '81 make you see clearly and steadily. May it give you strength enough to admit that even you can be wrong, and to change course without covering up with false excuses and baseless arguments.

You will soon have been a year in office, a year that to any impartial observer, has been a year the locust has eaten. You have solved no problems ; you have aggravated existing ones and created many new ones. Some say you have done all this intentionally in order that all sections in the country, even those opposed to you, should beg you to take more powers, extraordinary powers, anything you want, and just restore normal civil life. This may be so ; taking into account your propensity for getting your own way by hook or by crook, rash would be who rejected it at first sight. But consider what it means for your own reputation. It has fallen so low that ordinary people are prepared to believe that for your own purposes, you will commit or permit to be committed gross outrages against your own fellow-citizens ! Surely you feel the shame of that. May it so be that during '81 your conduct is so exemplary, so free from prejudice and predection, so wholly decided by the public interest, that at the end of the year, any such suggestion will be immediately dismissed by all sections of the people !

Much good have we wished you, dear Indira, in this season of goodwill. Whether you will bring it to pass is entirely in your hands. You may exclaim 'what nonsense !' and go along exactly as you have been doing. On the other hand, a responsive chord may be touched in your heart ; you may say, To be all-powerful, is that really such a worthwhile goal ? You may prefer to live by law,

Acting the law we live by without fear,
And because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.

The choice is wholly yours. May you choose well !

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