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# OPINION

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## VIEWS

S. M. (under the heading of 'The Great Indian Press'): Those whose tastes in humour run to the macabre can begin to congratulate themselves on the deal of amusement in store for them in the coming month watching the gyrations of the great Indian press as it makes up its mind about whom to back in the approaching electoral encounter.

As we all know, in making up its mind the Indian press has weighty factors to take into account which do not bother the press in other democratic countries in similar situations. For it is not merely a question of whom you would like to back but who it would be safe to back.

Among the factors to be considered, for example, are Mrs. Gandhi's electoral prospects. Mrs. Gandhi is not very fond of the Indian press. I find myself in growing sympathy with Mrs. Gandhi's opinion of the Indian press though not from the identical process of reasoning. Our definitions of good and bad in this context are unlikely to coincide and I do not think Mrs. Gandhi is concerned with good and bad as we understand these terms at all.

For her the good press is the convenient press and the bad press is the inconvenient press. The trouble is that Mrs. Gandhi may be in a position again to do something about the inconvenient press and that, as past experience tells us, can be very unpleasant.

But since Mrs. Gandhi's valuation of the convenient and the inconvenient is known to be subject to abrupt change, I should have thought that the press in its own interest, if not in the service of highfaultin ideals like democracy and freedom of expression, would put its best foot forward to work against the return of Mrs. Gandhi.

In the palmier days of Janata Raj, my feelings about Mrs. Gandhi seemed to be shared by the press almost unanimously. And I suspect the feelings have not greatly changed even now. What has certainly changed is that quite a good proportion of the press has found it advisable to hedge its bets after the possibility of a general election first raised its head. It is not surprising to see that many in the press want to be on the safe side just in case she is again in a position to head the government. Playing your skin is the name of the game, my motto would be not to place all the eggs in one basket. The Janata Government's policies as a potential tormentor of the press should be生。

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Well, perhaps, not Mr. Charan Singh himself but imagine what could not happen to the press with Raj Narain, ably assisted by the formidable Mr. Devi Lal and the Bihari ex-policeman, Mr. Kapoori Thakur, ending up in the role of Lord High Executioner in Mr. Charan Singh's Cabinet as a result of the election.

The press, of course, is quite right to ignore the Janata crowd. Except for the slight case of a swindle by Mr. Advani in the matter of radio and television autonomy, the Janata is quite incapable of cutting up rough with the press or anyone else. And I wonder if opposing them is not after all the best bet for I seem to remember that the Janata's enemies did rather well under its raj in the matter of rewards.

So the great Indian press—or significant parts of it—is busy making adjustments to prepare itself for the possibility that it might have to reckon with Mrs. Gandhi.

(Courtesy : *The Indian Express*)

[As to most journalists' condition in Mrs. Gandhi's Emergency, the following from Opinion, July 6, 1976, gives the picture :

"Well, so far as I am concerned, it has just been hell, my job I mean. Writing to order, not writing to order. Putting out stories you know are full of holes, things really being often almost the exact opposite; killing stories that you know are true and eminently newsworthy. And why? You remember the doggerel there was many years ago about what the old G.I.P. engine was repeating as it pulled its train-load up the ghats: 'For whose sake? For the stomach's sake.' Well, that's my state now. Mine not to reason why, mine not to make reply. Why don't I chuck it, then? And where shall I go? Is there anywhere in the country I can get my kind of employment on even lower wages and be allowed the kind of freedom I had before the Emergency? No, alas no, so I stay, grit my teeth and do the dirty work I am called upon to, praising and blaming as instructed. One thing though I have avoided up to now—God knows whether I shall be able to avoid it in future—volunteering the dirty work, sycophancy of my own accord, hoping to be looked at favourably by the great ones. Many a senior has fallen even to that, and laps up any opportunity of showing initiative in that fashion."

And yet members of the Indian Press, editors, commentators, reporters, temporise, compromise, snake the worse appear the better reason, for Mrs. Gandhi's benefit.  
[*Write a good story*.]

*strive to*

*reference to the view expressed by Mr. R. P. Rego, Number 18) I would like to raise a few points. Patwardhan knows what is wrong with your country. It must be not to be permeated by the RSS mentality", "clivities as a political RSS appeals to the Hindus to think then, want the entire Hindu society in heritage", to the Chaturvarna system,*

which is what has divided Hindu society through the centuries, riddling it with injustice and jealousy? Surely a man of Mr. Patwardhan's wisdom can see that it is not by going back to its past that this country can be united, but by going forward, leaving behind its "ancient past" as merely a matter of history, certainly not of pride. What is there to be proud of in grinding fifty per cent of our brothers into the dust? Or in compelling women to burn themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands? Or in destroying ruthlessly all alien culture (*vide* Harappa and Mohenjo Daro)? Or in handing over this country to every invader? Also, if we can be allowed to feel pride for our alleged ancestors' dubiously glorious deeds, should we also not be called upon to bear the burden of shame for their unquestionably unjust and inhuman deeds? The research of the great scholars that Mr. Patwardhan cites has proved beyond doubt that in the ancient Hindu society and culture a very few people enjoyed by rights the privilege of wealth and culture and created literary and architectural monuments, which may beguile the minds of those who are willing to ignore the terrible reality of injustice at the base of them.

Also, does not Mr. Patwardhan really grasp the danger of allowing a religious majority to be organised on the basis of its ancient glory, part of which consisted in fighting with and destroying some of the minorities?

Coming now to the "democratic mode" that Mr. Patwardhan talks about. Political parties, other than the RSS, also based on religious unity have appealed to the electorate under their own names, with their own manifestos in their hands. The Muslim League, the Akali Dal, even the CPI and the CPI(M) (which for the purposes of this discussion can be considered the equivalents of religion-based political parties), have not pretended to be the XYZ Party. If the RSS were not to hide under the cloak of the Janata Party, and were to come before the electorate as themselves, to persuade the people to vote for their aims and objectives, there could be no objection to their democratic mode of operation. The real objection to dual membership is not the clash of the objectives of either loyalty, but the obscuring of the nefarious purposes of the one under the veil of the more or less harmless ones of the other.

And finally, a note of caution. It must always be condemned when the baser feelings of the people form the basis of the rise to power of a political party. Take for example the Shiv Sena. In the heart of hearts, every Marathi a Bombayite resents the "encroachers". The politicians of this party be laudable if they consistently and diligently strove to resentment, or at least tried scrupulously not to feeling, letting it wear itself out through personal regrettable because it tries to take advantage movements, personal gourches and pettinesses. <sup>and</sup> <sup>be not</sup> tries of the Maharashtrians which activities as a Northern and Southern Indians. But that it is other than what it is, and power, its glory in Bombay City has

steadily waned (in spite of the fact that quite often the mode of operation of its members can hardly be termed democratic). The RSS, also trying on a national scale to take advantage of the Hindu's hidden and shameful resentments and animosities, appealing to his so-called glorious past, must equally be condemned; and unless it stands forth as itself, must be even more severely condemned. Perhaps the RSS have learnt their lesson from the limited example of the Shiv Sena's downfall, and find it safer to throw dust into the eyes of the general public by appearing before them as parts of the Janata Party.

The antics of the Fernandes-Charan Singh types must always be deplored, but the issue which they have raised (though at the wrong time) is not wholly unreal. What saddens one most is that people brought up in and supporting the liberal tradition should be so gullible as to fall victims to the sophistries of the RSS, and lose sight of what, to the readers of *Opnion*, should be a clear case of national good *versus* national evil.

\* \* \* \*

**B. P. Adarkar :** The more one goes through the explanations of President Reddy's decision to dissolve Parliament and order a mid-term election, the more one is convinced that the entire exercise is not only futile, but from the national of view, extremely hazardous. Far from bringing stability to the political structure, this election is likely to add to our many difficulties at the present time. Floods and droughts have caused havoc in many parts of the country, and few among the voters in these regions will be even interested in casting their votes. Over the whole country prices are rising greatly and we are facing a very high rate of inflation, following on Mr. Charan Singh's short tenure as Finance Minister. The economic crisis is clear for all to see; the railways, power and coal are in a mess; agricultural production is at a standstill; cattle are perishing by the thousands. The Goverments, Centre and State alike, are near-paralysed, due to the in-fighting that is going on in parties, groups and among the leaders. There is moreover a serious law and order situation throughout the country, and recently there has been visible a definite trend towards political crime including murder. Add to this the danger from without. China is already nibbling at territories in Bhutan and Pakistan is in a condition where its ruler might like nothing better than to giddy busy minds with foreign war. Is this a time then to unsettle the nation thoroughly with a mid-term election, the cost of which alone will be about 500 crores to Government? What is the same to the candidates and their parties? Strive to spend the money on succouring the helplessness we have suffered in so many parts of the

must be scrapped. The first step must be the re-calling of Parliament. I would be not toision in the Constitution for such activities as a potential advice of the Cabinet, dissolve d. election, by the same logic and in the

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same manner, he must be presumed to possess the reverse power to retrace his step as well. After all, half the conventions of a Constitution are built in political experience and this will not exactly be a legal calamity.

Simultaneously, the President should re-call the Parliament permitting the retired legislators to take their respective seats in the Lok Sabha. After this, the next step will be the formation of a stable government. For this purpose, the President should invite Mr. Ram to prove his majority on the floor of the House without any behind-the-scenes manoeuvres. This will remove one major grievance and tempers will be cooler all round. It is not my purpose here to make any special pleading for Mr. Ram or anyone else, but only to request the President to pour oil on troubled waters by correcting a manifestly wrong step. If Mr. Ram does not succeed in forming a government, of course, it will be possible to consider other steps, but short of a general election. Perhaps, the President could use Emergency powers for this and also arrange to set up a National Government, consisting of a few leaders from Parliament, some independent public men, and a few highly qualified experts. Such a Government should be empowered to carry on the administration until, say, 1982, when a normal general election may fall due.

"God! of whom music  
And song and blood are pure,  
The day is never darken'd  
That had thee here obscure."

\* \* \*

"We are betray'd by what is false within."

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