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Personal
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STERILE APPRAISAL

It was but natural that the Jana Sangh's poor showing in the mid-term elections to the Lok Sabha would come up for discussion at the party's conference at Udaipur. It was also to be expected that some of the comments would be bitter. But, judging by reports, the entire discussion seems to have been charged with unproductive petulance. Immediately after the elections, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said that he did not regret the Sangh's participation in the so-called "grand alliance", that there was now no point in one party in the alliance blaming another, and that the electoral verdict should be accepted in "a sporting spirit". On Saturday the delegates at Udaipur seemed to be in no mood to show such maturity. Many of them discovered in the brief alliance the main explanation for the Sangh's failure in the elections, suggesting that association with the Congress (O) and the Swatantra Party had tarnished the Sangh's image; in particular, an alliance with the party of Mr Morarji Desai and Mr Kamaraj was said to have been inexcusable folly. Speculation on what the Congress (O) and Swatantra now think of their pre-poll association with the Jana Sangh would be interesting; it may be also instructive to recall that it was Mr Masani, not any Sangh leader, who had been sceptical about the alliance from the beginning.

As Mr Masani had then pointed out, an alliance can work only when there is an identity of aims, at least a common programme. The "grand alliance" failed because it was not a genuine alliance;

but some thought should be given also to the weaknesses of each constituent of an alliance. Theoretically, there is no reason why parties regarded as being on the right of the Congress (R) should not be able to find a sufficiently large body of common aims to sustain closer cooperation; any trend towards the cohesion of like-minded political forces should promote political stability. But, if the Sangh has now discovered that there can be no such understanding, that is entirely its own affair. But it needs to be pointed out that in "going it alone" it will need greater strength of its own, not less. Reports from Udaipur do not make it clear how the Sangh's individual appeal will become more powerful to the electorate. It appears that an attempt will now be made to project the party as a champion of the weaker sections of the community; but the Sangh may be mistaken if it expects to gain much at this stage from a posture of competitive radicalism. Perhaps the Sangh leadership is also aware of the contradictions inherent in this stance; hence its anxiety to exploit the emotional appeal of the Bangladesh issue. But is the Sangh sure that people in its traditional bases are really prepared to accept the consequences of military intervention in East Bengal? It does not even want to annoy these people by suggesting that the physical burden of the refugees should be borne by them as well; in fact, it has specifically opposed the refugees' dispersal. The satyagraha which the Sangh proposes to launch will be no more than another tiresome gimmick.