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HINDUSTANI MOVEMENT
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Dear Friend,

After I wrote to you last, I am glad to inform you that I am much better now. However, I am still under observation by the doctors. I extend to you my very best wishes for a Happy New Year, and I am sure that you must have spent a Happy Divali also. Let us hope and pray that we will be able to celebrate next Divali in a far better atmosphere of complete freedom and without any fear.

Some stray thoughts : Recently our Union Home Minister, Shri Brahmananda Reddy, made a fairly accurate statement that the discipline in the country is slackening and that we are going back to pre-emergency days. I have always doubted the effectiveness of legislation whether it is passed during an emergency or in normal times to control and regulate human nature. One cannot build up discipline and character with the stroke of a pen. One can only achieve it with continuous training and dedication lasting over a period of time. In any case, present day politicians (of all parties) have neither the training nor the discipline, nor the dedication to impart and inspire discipline among the people. Slogans cannot substitute for sincere hard work.

We have seen what has happened in China after Mao's death. I wonder how true or false is Mao's statement. "Political power grows from the barrel of the gun", when it is obvious to everybody with an open mind that political power alone cannot change people's attitude and nature even with the help of guns and threat of imprisonment.

A shocking episode: Recently a friend of mine showed me some newspaper reports of papers published in Mauritius. They contain a story of the arrest of Mr. Sitaram Singhania at Plaisance Airport, at Mauritius, on the 8th October 1976, as he was found to be in possession of jewels worth more than one million rupees, and which were not declared by him. Thereafter, the Controller of Customs, Mauritius, imposed a fine of Rs. 39 lakhs on him. The "Express" (A Mauritius Newspaper) of the 13th October 1976, says "has this affair any embarrassing aspect for the Government of India and Mauritius?" The newspaper further reports "no official explanation is available in this matter". Numerous questions stay without any answers. Why a man of this stature took such a big risk? Why does he travel with these jewels? -- in any case this affair has embarrassed numerous Mauritian personalities and on many occasions, the Indian invitees."

I also learn from reliable sources that an attempt was made by Mr. Singhania and other interested parties to involve an high political dignitary of India. This question has also been taken up in Parliament in Mauritius and with also the Secretariat of the Legislative Assembly. Wild rumours and speculation are afloat, because Mr. Singhania reached Mauritius on the same day when our Prime Minister reached and according to the "Express", the Mauritian Newspaper, dated the 13th October 1976, "a person came to him and had impressed the Customs Officers that they were not to question this person, who had very highly placed contacts in the country, and that the jewels, were to be presented in the form of a gift to Mauritius". All this is not only shocking but disgusting. It is made out in certain quarters that Mr. Singhania pressurised to take the jewels. Even, if this is true, Mr. Singhania had no business to behave in this manner.

I appeal to Mrs. Gandhi to conduct a public trial and let an opportunity be given to Mr. Singhania to explain his position. Let all facts be out, such as how come the jewels went out of India, without the Indian Customs detecting them. Who are these "Indian invitees to Mauritius who have been embarrassed?" There are many shopkeepers who are languishing in jail for selling a couple of smuggled pant pieces and saris and here a billionaire from India, educated and knowledgeable, who manages to carry out of our country jewels worth over a million rupees. A public trial is a MUST, and we hope that our Prime Minister will not hesitate to conduct it.

Fundamental Rights of the People: Recently, I met a friend of mine and also an ex-Congressman. He was very jubilant about the fundamental duties incorporated in the Constitution. However, the friend could not reply to one of my questions. I told him that I think that one of my most important fundamental duties is to follow the voice of my conscience. If, in the performance of my duty, the voice of my conscience, differs from the viewpoint of the Government of the day on any issue like defining Socialism or Satyagraha, whose dictates should I follow? If I follow the dictate of the Government of the day, I have to kill my conscience and I am not prepared to do that. My friend had no answer.

Let us pray for Mrs. Gandhi: God blessed her and the people supported her. They gave her full authority in the last elections to remove their poverty and build a strong and prosperous India. For some reasons nothing substantial was achieved and understandably there was dissatisfaction and ferment throughout the country. She declared an emergency. Her opponents were sent to jail and her path was cleared. Admittedly, there have been some gains of the emergency and at the same time a substantial number of people are becoming more and more restive and unhappy. They feel that the price paid to achieve these gains of the emergency does not make them worthwhile. Many agree with Mr. M.C. Chagla's remark that "it is like being in the midst of a dark tunnel with no light at the end in view". I honestly feel that in the interest of the nation and in her own personal and political interest, Mrs. Gandhi should no longer prolong the agony of the people who are innocent and who genuinely believe in democracy. Neither J.P., Morarji Desai, Vajpayee or Piloo Mody are the enemies of the nation. They are not even enemies of Mrs. Gandhi, in a personal sense, for they are only opposed to her policies. Everybody has committed mistakes. Even Mrs. Gandhi has admitted about her party also. It is possible for her to start a dialogue with those people and evolve a code of conduct. What is hurting most is not the postponement of the elections, but the continued stalemate which is breeding more frustration and despair than ever. It is not possible to consolidate any gains that may have been achieved because of the emergency, unless a national effort is forthcoming. India cannot progress with a partisan approach. It would be a pity if political prejudices, fears and suspicions are allowed to come in the way of making India a truly great nation.

Finally, if Mrs. Gandhi can co-operate with Mr. Dange, who has played a more disruptive role than Mr. Morarji Desai and J.P. --- and Mr. Sanjay Gandhi --- would also agree with us --- there is no reason why she cannot work with her father's lieutenant --- and former Deputy Prime Minister of India respectively.

Finally, please let us know your activities concerning our Movement. So far as we are concerned, we are facing great financial difficulties. Would you like to support your Movement? Your contributions, however small, will be most welcome.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Madhu Mehta,
National Convenor,
Hindustani Movement.