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Extract from the speech of Mr. J. Hathi, Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, in the Lok Sabha on 15th April, 1964

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Mr. Hathi: Now, I shall take up two other questions which my hon. friend Shri M.R. Masani referred to. So far as Shri Masani is concerned, I have great regard for him. He is a personal friend of mine. We have a common language...

Shri Bhagwat Jha Azad: The hon. Minister is semi-literate, but he is literate.

Shri Hathi: We have a common language. In fact, he comes from the place where I am a voter; he is from my place, and he is my representative.

Shri Shivaji Rao Deshmukh: Did the hon. Minister allow him to commit the offence because of that consideration?

Shri Hathi: The only difference is that he is learned and literate, but I am semi-literate.

Shri Masani: May I assure the hon. Minister that I was not referring to him when I made that remark, but I was referring to the people who banned the book, whoever they were?

Shri Hathi: Even then, I am here on the Treasury Benches and even if I have not seen the book, and even if I have not banned it, I should take all the responsibility. So long as I am the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, and so long as I am in the Government, the responsibility is mine.

Shri Masani: Without reading it?

Shri Hathi: I came across it yesterday, but for the orders I take the responsibility. Although I am semi-literate, and I may not be able to say much, yet, I can say this that the Government had after careful consideration banned it, because it comes within the definition of the term 'prejudicial reports' as described or defined in clause (7) of rule 35 of the Defence of India Act, 1962.

Shri Masani: In what way?

Shri Hathi: It comes within that definition. That is the interpretation. The interpretation may, of course, differ. A literate man may interpret it in one way and a semi-literate man may interpret it in a different way.

Shri Masani: Is that supposed to be an explanation?

Shri Hathi: But I may say that my hon. friend is a law-abiding citizen; whatever may be the differences, and whatever may be the political ideologies, he is a law-abiding citizen; I do know it, and having known once that the book is banned and the possession of that book is illegal, I am sure that he will not be any more in possession of the book; that much I do know.

Shri Masani: Gandhiji taught us to break the law if it was wrong.

Shri Hathi: The second point that he referred was Mr Dange's letter. As everybody knows, the Home Ministry deals with a number of subjects. But our learned friend, Mr. Masani roamed about the whole country to find a stick to beat the Home Ministry

he did not think about eradication of corruption; he did not think of the administrative reform. The whole of his speech was on these two things. I would just submit to Mr. Masani that when there is a difference of opinion as to whether the letter is a genuine one or whether the letter is a forged one, why should Government take upon itself the responsibility of getting it examined and finding out whether it genuine or not.

The other thing which Mr. Masani said is that even the INTUC friends say that Mr. Nanda is too friendly to Mr. Dange. Is it, therefore, that he means to say that we do not like to get the letters examined. On the contrary, we have gone out of our way and allowed all Members of Parliament, irrespective of whether he is a research scholar or not, to look into these letters so that they can themselves see and if they want they can get the letters examined. You know, Sir, that even amongst hand-writing experts there will be difference of opinion. Two hand-writing experts never agree. One expert's opinion will be different from the other.

Mr. Masani's point/that since Mr. Nanda is Mr. Dange's friend, we are /was not examining those letters. But, we have given all facilities; we have gone out of the way; we have taken the file from the National Archives and any Member of Parliament or anybody who wants to see the letters and decide can go to Home Secretary's room and verify those letters. But, I do not propose / to get it examined.

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