

6005

February 13, 1973.

My dear J.P.

I was delighted to see from this morning's papers that you have turned a cold shoulder to that amiable gentleman Biju Patnaik. While I feel that this is as you would do, I must confess I felt a little worried about your good nature and as a result sent you a telegram from Delhi where I was attending a seminar. I hope you do not mind my unsolicited advice!

Even as it is, you will see from the enclosed clipping from the Indian Express how an effort has been made to distort what you said. Fortunately, the Times has reported you very accurately and in context. I hope the Calcutta and Delhi papers have by and large not evaluated the Indian Express on this point.

In so far as I am concerned, I feel there were two reasons why a positive response should be avoided. The first is your moral stature. Any kind of association with gentlemen of the kind represented by Patnaik and Nahtab cannot but tarnish the wonderful image you have even among those who disagree with you.

The second factor in my mind was that Patnaik's effort is a nonstarter and definitely a false start which has not even 25 chance of succeeding. However fed up the country may be with the present Government in Delhi it is not going to replace it by Patnaik, Nahtab and company. As you know, I believe, a time will come for a new political incentive but not yet and when it comes it will come in new and fresh forms which are difficult to foresee at this stage. It is however so important that some one like you keeps his hands free for such a time. Such a consideration may even apply to poor me!

I know you have a third objection which is your own and that is about the level of political activity which you are prepared to undertake. It is good that all three considerations point to the same direction.

When are you coming to Bombay? I have been hearing disturbing reports about Prabhavati's condition. I do hope that they are not true, but in any event I recall that a check up at the Tata Memorial is now due. Do please let me know either from Calcutta or as soon as you arrive in Bombay.

Encl:

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan
C/o Mr. S.N. Prasad
6-C Short Street
CALCUTTA 16.

NNM:rdp