

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is not easy for me to speak on the issues that are at hand because although in a sense they are sterile, in another sense for me they are highly emotive and they take me back to a very difficult period.

Sir, prime Minister, Indira Gandhi was shot in broad daylight on October 31, 1984 by two assassins in front of numerous witnesses.

Three actions became incumbent upon us first, to prosecute those that were responsible; second, to institute a criminal investigation into the assassination and the attendant circumstances; third, to establish a Commission of Inquiry to go into the security lapses, the deficiencies in medical facilities and medical attention, as also the wider ramifications and implications of any conspiracy that might have been there.

This House will appreciate the inter-connection between these three sets of actions. The time frame for their completion could not be co-terminous.

Indiraji's assassination was not just to murder her, it was through that act to kill all that she stood for and fought for.

Indiraji stood for democracy. She was a democratically elected leader of the largest democracy in the world. She was a great believer in democracy and in the people of India. It is the enemies of our democracy who were out to destroy Indiraji, and the democratic foundations of our polity.

Indira Gandhi stood for secularism. She was deeply committed to secularism as the bedrock of our nationhood. The voters of religion in politics were out to eliminate her and in eliminating her to eliminate the secular basis of our nationhood.

Indira Gandhi stood for nationalism.

She was propoundly dedicated to the independence of India. The opponents of our independence were out to finish her and with her to finish our independence, our very existence.

Indiraji stood for self-reliance. She was devoted to a self-reliant India. Those bent on sabotaging our self-reliance were out to end her and our self-reliance.

Indiraji stood for stability. The incessantly drew attention to the nexus between terrorists operating inside India and elements working outside India instigating and assisting them. Those determined to dismember India were out to murder Indiraji and to so fulfil their nefarious purposes.

Indiraji stood for patriotism, Sir. The last drop of her blood was for the motherland for its unity, for its integrity. The enemies of our unity and the foes of our integrity were out to kill her and through that to destroy the unity and integrity of Bharat Mata. The assassination of Indiraji was not only the murder of an individual. Their motive was to break our unity. Their purpose was to sabotage our integrity. Their aim was to wreck our secularism. Their goal was to subvert our self-reliance. Their intent was to destroy our democracy. And their objective was to cut at the roots of our existence as an independent nation.

Sir, it was our duty to ensure that the assassins and their accomplices be brought to book; to ensure that the conspiracy from which crime was hatched be exposed and revealed.

The conspiracy which had spread its net wide both here and abroad had to be unrevealed so that the death of our Prime Minister did not become the death of our democracy, nor the end of our secularism nor the termination of our self-reliance. The conspiracy had to be traced to its farthest reaches to protect the nation from the most serious threat to our integrity, unity and independence since the wresting of our independence, our freedom in 1947.

The assassins were apprehended on the spot. The conspirators remain at large.

The assassin was given every opportunity under the law to defend himself. So were his accomplices. It is worth noting that a seven-man Bench of the Supreme Court passed the final judgement; a judgement given after due deliberation under the prescribed law. And an unprecedented step was taken in giving the accused a second opportunity. It is distressing that the integrity of judges is being impugned even in the precincts of Parliament. Sir, the motivation is not very clear. Obviously it is not the finer points of jurisprudence but ulterior political ends that are the motives.

There is an inalienable right of the accused to secure Defence Counsel and there is the inalienable right of a lawyer to extend his professional services to his clients. But when legal practice becomes a cover to pursue dangerous political pretensions, then it is incumbent upon us to expose the political wolf masquerading in the robes of a legal sheep. It is also incumbent upon us to expose his political accomplices.

If it is for the courts to defend the rights and privileges of the accused and their defence counsel, it is for the Parliament to expose the machinations of errant politicians.

In the aftermath of Indiraji's assassination we established a Special Investigation Team, the SIT, under an experienced police officer with a long track record in criminal investigations. SIT's instructions were clear, to investigate the crime and the attendant circumstances. We established a Commission of Inquiry. To constitute the Commission of Inquiry we selected a judge in consultation with the Chief Justice of India. The chief Justice suggested the name of a distinguished sitting judge, Justice Thakkar. A close linkage was established between the functioning of the SIT and the Commission of Inquiry.

Sir, the learned judge himself asked that his report be kept secret. This recommendation was accepted by Government. Government's decision accepting the learned judge's recommendation to keep the report secret was submitted for approval to this House. And this house endorsed the decision by adopting a Resolution.

This House derives its mandate from the people. The will of the House is the highest expression of our democracy. As Leader of the House, it is my sacred duty to ensure that its will is respected.

Sir, the Congress Party takes its inspiration from an ideology of over a hundred years of service to our Motherland, from principles which brought us our Independence, from ideals that have informed our modern nationhood and from a vision that has transformed humankind. Our inspiration does not come from the pages of some newspaper. We are the party of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi. We have no lessons to learn from those who eject elected in one guise, and then hope from seat to seat in a miasma of shifting loyalties and opportunistic alliances. We have nothing to learn about principles or ideology from those who lack both.

Sir, the will of this House was flouted by the unauthorised passing of a secret report to unauthorised recipients. What did the Opposition do? Did they condemn the breach of privilege of this House? Were they outraged? Did they give expression to their outrage?

Some one has betrayed the will of Parliament. Someone has breached the trust reposed in him. Someone has violated his oath of secrecy. Someone has been a traitor to his word. The leak has not come from us. We will institute inquiries to determine the source of the leak.

For the past few weeks, some members of the Opposition have behaved like marionettes of manipulative journalism. This is not surprising. We are used to this spectacle.

[Sh. Rajiv Gandhi]

But what is distressing is the spectacle of responsible opposition parties with an unimpeachable record of nationalism, drifting along with such people, to be drifting along with them in the same boat. Let me caution them: that boat is full of leaks!

Sir, allegations about the contents of the Thakkar Report reached the press three years ago. But no repercussion was heard in this House or elsewhere. Why did this not happen Sir? Was it because the journalists concerned did not instruct the stalking horses of the Opposition on what to do? Or is there a deeper significance to the timing of this latest brouhaha?

The Thakkar Report pointed to a larger conspiracy over and above the crime on the spot. Those in the know of the leaked contents also knew that criminal investigations were drawing to a close. They knew that non-disclosure of the Report was to preclude prejudicing the investigations into conspiracy and the prosecution of the conspirators. Why then the leak now? What was the intention of the accessories of the crime of leaking the nation's secrets at this time and in this manner? Why did they not disclose their hand earlier? Why now?

Some Akali leaders have said that the conspiracy case has been filed because the report was made public. In a sense, the nexus is correct but the cause and effect are wrong.

Sir, the noise was raised because we were on the point of filing charges against the conspirators. The Thakkar Report led to a line of investigation which exposed the conspiracy. So the friends of the conspirators acted to forestall the conspiracy being revealed. They knew the net was drawing to a close. They knew after Atinder Pal Singh was picked up late last year that the Investigation Team was close on their heels. They knew that it was only loose ends that had to be tied up. They knew that only charge sheets were to be filed. They knew once the

case was in the Courts, the Thakkar Report would inevitably have been made public.

So, they chose a diversionary tactic on the eve of filing of the chargesheets. They thought up this exercise of reviving what was an old thing. The friends of the conspirators could, if they had wished, have leaked the portions of the Report relating to the conspiracy because if we believe what they say—they say they have the full Report—why then only a selective leakage pointing in one direction? Why not a complete leakage? Why were they trying to protect the conspirators? Was it not a ruse to divert the attention of the nation? If it was not, why was the leak a selective leak? And if not, why now and not earlier?

We do not have definitive answers to these questions. What we do have is a stackful of needles quivering on the magnetic field of suspicion that point to the conspirators, that point to their political peers, that point to their friends, that point to their accomplices.

The political conspiracy was with a criminal purpose and treacherous intent. Criminal because its means were assassination and anarchy. Treacherous because, it was aimed at wrecking our independence, our unity, our integrity, our very existence.

The conspiracy relied on detonating the explosive mixture of religion and politics. The last time that mixture was detonated, it led to partition. Never again will we allow our country to be partitioned or divided. Never again will another Resolution whether moved at Lahore in 1940 by the Muslim League or moved in Anandpur Sahib in 1978 by the Akali Dal be allowed to break our unity or compromise our integrity. We are one nation. We are one people of many religions but of a composite culture. Our unity allows for diversity, but there is no room for sectarianism, violence or secession. As Justice Sarkaria has observed of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution "The country cannot survive as one integrated nation if the Anandpur Sahib Resolution is accepted."

Yet there is an MP, who is not a member of the Akali Dal or of its many factions, who has overtly supported the core of the Resolution. When he first espoused this ignoble cause he was not a member of any political party. Then he was deliberately adopted by the Janata Dal and made their candidate for the Rajya Sabha. Why did the Janata Dal go out of their way to select such a man unless it was that they shared his views?

I concede, of course, that the Janata Dal are such a confused lot that they did not know or did not care to find out what this gentleman was up to or what he was doing behind their back. But now it is over a month since Parliament was made aware of his nefarious activities. Has his Party done anything to throw him out of their ranks?

And what are the responsible nationalist parties of the Opposition, those that are part of the National Front, those that are part of the Janta Dal? Have they demanded his ouster? No, they have not, No, they have not done so. In effect, they have acquiesced in this national affront. Indeed, their silence is inadvertently aiding and abetting those dangerous wayward elements who seek to destroy our country. By default they are giving encouragement to the terrorists. There are sins of commission and sins of omission. I appeal to all responsible nationalist opposition parties to distance themselves publicly and clearly from these elements. Let the people of the country see the Opposition repudiate them. Let the terrorists see the nationalist parties of the Opposition's repudiation.

When the Thakkar Commission Report was tabled, a wholly unnecessary controversy was raised on what constitutes a "Report".

I would like to note that, in tabling the report in the manner it was done, no departure had been made from any precedent. As in the past, so on this occasion, the Report was tabled, but the proceedings were kept in Government archives. Never before was

this procedure challenged. Why challenge it now?

It was challenged now because of the desperate desire to vitiate the conspiracy case by portraying the observation about Dhawan as an indictment of Dhawan. There is a world of difference between observation and indictment. Justice Thakkar's job was to point every needle he could find. The needles are in the Report. The proceedings are the haystack. We were not required to table the haystack.

For four years, the SIT went into the activities of Shri Dhawan in great detail; they went into the minutiae of justice Thakkar's observations. During these years, Dhawan was kept distant from the affairs of Government. During these years, he was subjected to enquiry, interrogation and investigation more severe even than by the Commissions of Inquiry set up by the Hon. members of the Opposition who have decided to be absent today.

The SIT established that there were no grounds to convert those observations into an indictment. So, no basis remains to keep him away from the affairs of Government. We are a prudent Government. We are also a fair Government. Now that he has been exonerated, why should his integrity be doubted?

We will not allow ourselves to be diverted. We shall press on with prosecution of those not exonerated. We shall press charges against those we believe guilty of conspiring against the nation. We shall not waste time of this nation of this House as the friends opposite are doing in drawing red-herrings or in the calumniation of an innocent person.

The Congress Party and the Congress Government take their responsibilities very seriously. Whenever a *prima facie* case of nepotism or corruption has been established or a Court indictment handed down, a Congressman holding high office, be he a Chief Minister or a Union Minister or a Governor.

[Sh. Rajiv Gandhi]

has always had to step down until the charges have been cleared.

We do not have in our ranks a Chief Minister indicted by a High Court on seven charges of corruption and nepotism but who sticks to his office like a limpet.

Sir, we do not have in our ranks a Chief Minister held guilty by a High Court of "flagrant violation of the rule of law"—and that High Court judgment was later supported by a Supreme Court judgment. Yet, he continued to cling to office till he was caught out on another charge and could not continue any more.

We do not have in our ranks a Chief Minister who shields his family members from criminal investigations and prosecution in crimes against women.

Sir, the Congress Party is an honourable party. We run an honourable Government.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am Leader of this House. It is my bounden duty to ensure respect for the will of the House and its rights and privileges.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also the Prime Minister. It is my bounden duty to see that criminals are prosecuted and conspirators are foiled. This, I have done. I have been true to the sacred trust reposed in me. Sir, the nation is safe in our hands. We have guaranteed its independence. We have reinforced its unity. We have upheld its integrity.

But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am also the only surviving son of an assassinated mother. It takes a peculiarly sick mentality to insinuate that I could betray the love and affection that she showered upon me by restoring to the bureaucracy a suspected accomplice in her assassination. What manner of men are these who make such accusations! Their low insinuations are not a reflection on me, or on our Government, but on them, on their

thought processes, on the functioning of their minds, on the murky depths at which they function.

As the House is aware, I had no love for politics. I treasured the privacy of my happy family life. My mother respected both these sentiments.

Then my brother, Sanjay was killed in the prime of his life. It broke a mother's heart. It did not break a Prime Minister's will. Without even a day's break for grief, she carried on her noble task single-minded in fulfilling her pledge to her people.

There is a loneliness that only a bereaved mother can know. There is a unique loneliness that only a bereaved woman Prime Minister can know. That Prime Minister was my mother.

She called to me in her loneliness. I went to her side. At her instance, I left my love for flying. At her instance I sacrificed my family life. At her instance I joined her as a political aide. From her I learnt my first political lessons. It was she who urged me to respond to the insistent demand from the constituency and the Party to take my brother's place as Member of Parliament for Amethi. With her blessings I was made General Secretary of my Party. It was her sudden death that led to my Party asking me to accept the challenge of stepping into her shoes.

In accepting the challenge I fulfilled a national duty and a filial duty, the duty of a son to a mother.

That son stands before this House today. My private grief is my own. My memories of my mother belong to me.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, Indiraji was also the Leader of this House. She was the Prime Minister of this country and I will not stand idly by while her memory is slandered, her ideals transgressed, a vision of the India for which she lived and died is still to be fully realised. I will not stand by idly when her

tragic death is made a political play thing by irresponsible politicians of low calibre and malicious intent.

I give them my answer now. I am not going to be deflected from my purpose by the campaign of whisper and malice that has been unleashed against me, my family and my associates.

Sir, if there was one lesson I learnt from my mother Indiraji, it was to press on regardless, *Ekla chalo re*, she used to say.

Sir, chargesheets have been filed against the conspirators. The objective of the conspiracy was clearly a "Khalistan." The means to be employed was the assassination of the Prime Minister to create chaos, confusion and anarchy.

From the start of terrorism in Punjab, the purpose of the killing has been to fire a communal reaction. For the maximum reaction, they chose to kill the Prime Minister. To the conspirators, it did not matter that thousands might be killed, thousands of innocent Sikhs, thousands of innocent Hindus, thousands of other communities, nor that their aim could only be achieved by drowning the country in rivers of blood. The conspirators' intent was to promote communal fratricide, the conspirators' intent was to climb to their objective on mounting corpses of innocent men, women and children. Through a holocaust, they wanted the country to break so that on one of its pieces they could establish their fascist fundamentalist rule. It was in this atmosphere that Indiraji was gunned down in cold blood. It was in this atmosphere that an orgy of violence was unleashed against our Sikh brethren in Delhi, Kanpur and elsewhere.

I had just taken over as Prime Minister. For me there was no time for mourning, only time for action. I threw myself into restoring confidence, restoring security, restoring friendship and brotherhood between communities that have lived together for centuries.

Sir, the terrible bloodbath of November 1984 was a carnage which will rest for ever on the conscience of all decent Indians. It happened in the cusp of a traumatic transition. That is not an extenuating circumstance. We cannot forgive ourselves. It should never have happened. But let me say in all humility, Sir, we have prevented any recurrence of mass killings of Sikhs in the capital or elsewhere. Repeatedly agents provocateurs have sought to provoke horrors to fulfil their nefarious purposes. Repeatedly we have thwarted them. I am pledged to a life of honour for every Sikh in India. I would not be my mother's son if I were not.

Within a fortnight of assuming office in 1984 I decided to go to the polls to let the people determine which party they wanted, whom they wanted. That decision was a reflection of my commitment to democracy, another lesson that I had learnt from my mother.

There were those who counselled postponement of the polls as the nation was in the throes of a terrible trauma. I did not listen because I put my trust in the people. Indiraji taught me to trust our people.

The results of that election are reflected in the composition of this House. Because the people apprehended that the country might not hold together, the people held together.

Our mandate was clear. Our first task was to ensure the unity and integrity of the country. It was to assure the independence of the country. It was to reinforce our secularism and our democracy.

Over these four years, our endeavours have been attended with remarkable success. There was an agitation in Assam which was started when the Janata Government was crumbling to its conclusion. It has been brought to an end by us through an agreement. The erstwhile agitators are today full-fledged democrats entrusted by the people with responsibility for tending to that State.

[Sh. Rajiv Gandhi]

In Mizoram, an insurgency of 20 years standing has been brought to an end again by agreement. The former insurgents, whether in office or out of office, are pledged to the unity of the country and unwavering adherence to democracy.

In Tripura, within months of assuming office, the Congress Governments in the State and at the Centre negotiated an agreement ending years of violence and opening the way to the resolution of differences peacefully and democratically.

In Nagaland and Manipur residuary insurgencies are edging to a conclusion.

In the Darjeeling Hills, an ethnic agitation rocked the State as the political parties geared up for the polls. It would have been the easiest thing to have done and to have taken a populist view and gone the populist way of stoking the majority sentiment against an ethnic minority. But that is not the way that Gandhiji taught us or Panditji taught us or Indiraji taught us. With only months to go before the West Bengal Assembly election, I affirmed that the agitation was not anti-national. I insisted that the Darjeeling Gorkhas had real problems requiring real solutions. The Congress may have lost the election but we won the people of Darjeeling for West Bengal and for the country. What would have become a very serious insurgency was avoided. The Congress way, as always with the Congress, as always with Indiraji, is the country before party, the people's interests before our own.

Sir, even in Punjab, there has been substantial progress. We have moved towards restoring peace and tranquility. Last year, there was no terrorist killing reported from nearly half the police stations of Punjab. Operation Black Thunder established for all to see the sacrilege perpetrated by the terrorists at the holiest of holy shrines. Since then all Gurdwaras have been cleared of murderers and criminals. The murderers and criminals that were polluting the pre-

cincts and abusing the sanctity are no more allowed in. The granthis and sewadars no longer work under the shadow of terrorists rifles. Once again, the scriptures are being recited for spiritual salvation and not as tools of political propaganda. Sir, the terrorists have been exposed. Little sympathy for the terrorists remains. Only small sections of the people still support them. Their general support has virtually dried up. There are perhaps only one or two small terrorist groups with a vestige of ideological motivation. The rest are indistinguishable from common criminals, smugglers, drug traffickers, gun runners. The people of Punjab—Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims and of all other communities—have stood rock-like together with the country. The fundamentalists have not been able to break their communal amity. The secessionists have not been able to suborn their national loyalty. The terrorists have not been able to terrorise them. The people of Punjab have prevailed. Once more, as so often before, the people of Punjab have saved the country.

But violence continues. There are two reasons basic and fundamental.

One is the succour and support which the Punjab terrorists have been receiving from across the border and from abroad. We have taken a range of action against this. We are hopeful that the change over in Pakistan from a military rule to democratic rule will lead to the complete cessation of all support to terrorists from across the border. Some signs are visible and we are hopeful that this will be fully realised. In Pakistan, those recognising such action could destabilise the region, including their country, are now beginning to assert themselves.

The second basic reason for our not overcoming it in Punjab has been our inability as a country to present a unified front against terrorism.

The fault does not lie with the people. The people of the country, more especially the people of Punjab, have stood firm against the vilest of terrorism. They have

refused to be shaken from centuries of communal amity. They have refused to betray their country. They have refused to be untrue to the message of their Gurus.

The fault lies with some political parties. There are some parties, steadfast in struggle against communalism, terrorism and secession. We welcome their support, we honour their courage, we honour their strength of conviction. Terrorists may be a miniscule minority but they draw comfort from what some politicians and some political parties say and do. They also draw comfort from those who stay silent, those who do not denounce the dangerous pronouncements and nefarious actions of others.

During the debate on the President's Address, the Opposition disowned the views of a Member as expressed in a pamphlet, in whose publication he had connived. Yet, he continues to be their honoured and much-vaunted colleague. I do not understand and I cannot understand how they can disown him when he is not in Parliament and then applaud him when he speaks. He has not withdrawn from his position of support to the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. He has affirmed on the floor of Parliament that he still supports the Resolution. He is able to be a Member of Parliament only because one Opposition party inducted him and elected him. What does that party say now? Are they ready now at least to withdraw from him their benevolent patronage?

Double standards led to his election. He is widely known to have participated in a United States television programme sponsored by a third country to preach hatred and disaffection against the unity of India. He did not have a word to speak against terrorism even on that programme. Can his party not find anyone more worthy to festoon with their ticket? Or is this what to expect of a party whose two representatives visited a neighbouring country in so critical a time as March, 1984 and there lavished praise on the hospitality of a military dictator but did not utter a word against the support of their hosts to

terrorists, secessionists and traitors? And what of the other Members of the Opposition?

Are they prepared now at least to denounce the Member, dissociate themselves from his Party, keep aloof from his Front? Are they prepared now at least to tell the country where they stand? Do they stand with this one man and the Anandpur Sahib Resolution or do they stand with the people of this country?

Secularism is the key to the strength of India. The protagonists of Khalistan will be broken only on the rock of secularism. The only hope of the secessionists is to suborn our innate secularism, to suborn the innate secularism of our people. They hope by terror to divide community from community. They want to fan the flames of communal hatred so that India is destroyed in a communal conflagration from the ashes of which their 'Khalistan' will emerge. They are out to destroy centuries of the closest bonds between Hindus and Sikhs. They are out to smash to smithereens our composite Punjab. They want to smash the Punjab that is equally a home for the Sikhs and the Muslims and the Hindus and the Christians and many others. They tried to convert the shrines into fortresses. They failed. They tried to convert the canons of Sikhism into the cannons of war. They failed. The people of Punjab and the people of this country refused to let Hindu fight Sikh and Sikh fight Hindu. The people of Punjab and the people of this country remembered the tolerance and compassion that has been preached by all the Gurus. They remembered our composite culture which is our greatness. They remembered our secularism which is inborn in every Indian.

I put the insistent question, therefore, and there is no escaping the question. I ask it again of every Member of this House. Are you with those who stand with the core of the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: No.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: Are you with these who stand for communalism?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: No.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: Or, are you ready to stand and fight against communalism, for secularism?

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: And you must remember a recent judgement, a very important judgement of the Bombay High Court which has unseated a Member for using a communal slogan in his election. It is needless for me to mention who the lawyer fighting for communalism against secularism was. It could only have been one Member of Parliament who could take up such a case. The question that we have to ask that member is: Are you with the people of India? Are you with the heritage of India and the glory of India? Or are you out to suborn that and to destroy us? And the question I would like to ask all the Opposition parties is: Are you with that Member supporting these values or are you going to stand up and stand for the unity and integrity and glory of India? I have a plea to the Opposition, Sir. I say to the Opposition: Purge your ranks of these vile bodies and join the vast majority of our people in the struggle against communalism and against terrorism.

Sir, we will bring the terrorists to their knees. But if the Opposition prefers to consort with people of this ilk, so be it. We shall carry on the struggle ourselves single-handedly with firm determination. May I add that this was another lesson that I was taught by my mother, Indirajī?

Sir, the S.I.T. has completed its work. The chargesheets have been filed. The law will take its own course. But the designs of the conspirators against the people of this country will not be terminated in the courts of law. That battle has to be fought in the political arena. We have supporters in different sections of the House. We must all close

ranks. Those who prefer the company of conspirators and the friends of conspirators are welcome to stay away. They will stand exposed in the eyes of the people. For the rest of us, the path is clear. We shall relentlessly press on with the struggle against violence. We shall consolidate the support of the people of Punjab. We shall entrust them power and responsibility commencing with the Panchayat elections. We will talk to those who eschew violence and respect our Constitution. We shall return tranquility to Punjab.

Sir, were not those who are shouting the loudest today amongst the frontline of Indirajī's detractors? Today they are shedding crocodile tears. What love did they have for Indirajī? Was it not they who poured calumny over her? Was it not they who hounded her day in and day out? Was it not they who trampled democracy under foot when they debarred her from sitting in Parliament after the people of Chikmagalur had voted her in?

Those responsible for resorting to devious means to eliminate her from the country's public life are today posing as her champions and as her defenders now that she has been physically eliminated from our midst. Sir, this House is not misled by such posturing. Nor is the country.

Sir, in conclusion I would like to say that I have felt Indirajī's presence beside me as I have been speaking today and during these past traumatic days. I have felt her benediction in the actions that we have taken to keep the country strong and united. That is my comfort, Sir, that is my reward.

Thank you.

PROF. N.G. RANGA: I have to thank the son of Indirajī—Indirajī who rose to be the mother of India.

SHRI RAJIV GANDHI: Sir, I made a mistake. It was a three-man Bench, not a seven-man Bench.