



# THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE:

1st June 1977

Dr M.S. Swaminathan  
c/- Mr M.S. Ramdas  
Electro-Diesel Equipment Pvt Ltd  
Jetty Road  
Allepey PO  
Kerala State, India

Dear Swami,

I find it difficult to respond to your request for advice for there is an obvious dilemma. On the one hand, if you defend yourself too vigorously people can think you have something to hide; on the other hand, they can think the same thing if you ignore them. I thought the defence of you which appeared in the Statesman on May 17th was helpful, as indeed was your own statement issued on the 18th.

To contemplate legal action for defamation is to contemplate a course in which the defamers could well gain more publicity than your defence. If Indian Libel Law is like that in Australia I think it would be very hard to make the issues concrete enough to point to a simple and clear decision in your favour. Even the truth that you did not prepare the citations of the awards would not daunt those who even think you supplied the material.

I think if the issue does not die down quickly your friends in India plus some others, including myself, should consider making a signed statement refuting the attack. Meanwhile, despite what I have said above, it would be well to get a good lawyer's advice on whether a case for defamation could be handled with confidence. (In stressing the difficulty of the legal course I am not in any way implying that there is a case against you, but rather that clever lawyers can muddy the waters so much that the clearness of your case is lost.)

I note with concern for India that you have renewed your request to be relieved of your present position. I well understand your motives but very much hope that your action does not become translated as some sort of admission that there is a case against you. So I rather hope the new Minister has the good sense to urge you to carry on.

Warmest regards and good wishes to you both.

Sincerely,

(J.G. Crawford)

P.S. I will be in Washington until June 24th and you certainly could always ask the Bank's Delhi Office to send me a confidential telex either to the Bank or to Canberra (telex number: 62694 SOPAC).