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From 1858 to 1947, India was being heldunder British rule. With their freedom stripped from their grip, the countrywas in need of a power figure, someone who could restore the independence andjustice of India. Their answer came in the form of a determined woman namedIndira Gandhi and her dedicated family who took control of their country andguided it to success when it seemed all hope was lost. On November 19, 1917, Jawaharlal and Kamala Nehru welcomed their first child, Indira Gandhi, inAllahabad, India.

Having been born to a family of active members of the IndianNational Congress Party, she was battling for her nation’s freedom practicallyfrom birth. Her father and mother serving as her inspirations, she wantednothing more than to be just like them and be able to lead activist movements. Atonly 12 years old, Gandhi attempted to become a part of the National CongressParty, but was denied for being younger than the required age limitations. Although she was rejected, she refused to watch while her parents were outfighting for their country. In an attempt to revive her strive to bring backIndia’s independence, Gandhi decided to make a new ‘ party’ to assist thepreexisting freedom efforts, and thus the Monkey Brigade was formed. Thousandsof India’s children joined and were able to take part in the National CongressParty’s work in tasks such as running simple errands, wrapping bandages andeven carrying secret messages between groups of protesters, all thanks to Indira’sdetermination. August 15, 1947marks the day that India finally gained independence from Great Britain throughthe Indian Independence Act.

Numerous celebrations were held to honor thespecial day, but without British rule, India now needed to define their ownjustice system. After some debate, the nation adopted the democratic form ofgovernment and elected Indira’s father, Jawaharlal Nehru, as India’s firstprime minister for his leadership in the many activist protests that were held. From then on, Indira aspired to just like her father and take on such anauthoritative position. This high political stature and influence provided hisdaughter with many opportunities to create and instill change on her new andimpressionable nation. Her first major use of this advantage was in 1955 when shetook up an executive body position in the Congress Party.

From then onwards, she slowly worked her way up the ladder of government officials, going from abody member to body president in just a matter of 4 years. Eventually a fewmore years past, and Gandhi was appointed to Rajya Sabha, an important post inLal Bahadur Shastri’s ruling government. After Shastri’s death in 1966, Gandhi receivedone of her biggest opportunities yet: being elected as the first female primeminister of India.

Considering how women of this era were given little to anyrights and generally were seen as objects for house chores and pleasing theirhusbands, having a female head of government seemed quite insane. The ideaitself could have made a stir of controversy because the people of India werenot yet sure what women were truly capable of, since no women had taken suchleadership yet. Such arevolutionary advancement did not go without the discontent of many. Soon afterher election, she had been challenged to a re-election by an opposing rightwing of Congress. Having only won by a narrow margin in the 1967 election, Gandhi was required to rule with a deputy prime minister for the remainder ofher term because Congress didn’t believe that she could’ve properly handled allthe power she was being given. Two years passed before the Congress Partytried, once again, to remove Indira from her position for her idea tonationalize the country’s banks unilaterally. In 1971, Indira won a landslidevictory at her re-election over the opposition thanks to her populist stance, thus cementing her as the now indisputable head of the Indian government.

Now, with a greater mass of the nation’s support, Gandhi started to make some ofIndia’s biggest decisions. The re-electionnow allowed for Indira to nationalize the country’s banks which in terms spreadthe wealth of the nation. Such a change was long overdue with India’sunendurable poverty. Gandhi’s plan also rose the budget of public spendingwhich was used for numerous programs in need of improvement, such includingrural electrification, fisheries, and irrigation.

Recognizing the importance ofproviding people of all social classes their basic needs of food, shelter, andjobs, Gandhi proposed the Green Revolution. This program not only largelyincreased the amount of wheat, rice, cotton, and milk produced, but also helpedbring India to diversify and trade more of its mercantile crops. Only ten yearslater, the Green Revolution managed to triple the production of wheat, greatlyraise the amount of rice produced, and give jobs of farmers and grainprocessors to many unemployed Indian citizens.

This industrial and economicexpansion allowed the nation to pay off debts from the World Bank, thus providingIndia with reliability to foreign countries for future investments or loans. Thisgeographical impact helped India gain allies in their future war endeavors aswell. Indira Gandhi made it clear that she wanted to use her position toimprove the living standards of her people and make a lasting impact on hernation. In spite of hermany achievements, Gandhi had to briefly step down from her role in 1977 afterher first ever electoral loss. Facing the reality of the situation, sherealized that there was not much she could productively get done consideringthat all her ideas were meant to be taken into action with the Congress. Yet, this did not stop Gandhi from running for office the next year. Quickly, votersbegan to realize that their preexisting government did have the same foundationit truly needed without Indira and decided to take their own action, havingbeen inspired by the way Gandhi did so for numerous years.

Voters decided to formthe Congress (I) Party, the ‘ I’ standing for Indira, to break away from theopposing Congress Party currently in power. Re-elections were held in 1980 and, unsurprisingly, Gandhi was re-elected and along with her came the Congress (I)Party. She was embraced and re-welcomed by her people who now had a new-foundrespect for her strong leadership. Unfortunately, onOctober 31st, 1984, Indira Gandhi’s fourth term became her last.

Twoof her bodyguards had successfully assassinated her in New Delhi. Her deathmight have seemed to be the end of Indira, but that’s far from the truth. Today, Indira is remembered as a strong and authoritative female figure who ledher nation to prosperity in times of difficulty. She serves as an inspirationfor women around the world to not be afraid to take on leadership roles, as shewould have wanted to be remembered. Throughout herlifetime, Indira Gandhi used her political power to better the lives of herpeople and her nation as a whole.

From improving the living standards toraising the amount of industry and trade, Gandhi undeniably made a lastinginfluence on India. Her persistence and drive to give all Indian citizens abrighter future reveals how important Indira was to Indian history. Without theleadership of Indira Gandhi, India wouldn’t be anywhere near as politically andeconomically advanced as they are today.