

# From freedom stripped from their grip, the

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

Having been born to a family of active members of the Indian National Congress Party, she was battling for her nation's freedom practically from birth. Her father and mother serving as her inspirations, she wanted nothing more than to be just like them and be able to lead activist movements. At only 12 years old, Gandhi attempted to become a part of the National Congress Party, 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 back India's independence, Gandhi decided to make a new 'party' to assist the preexisting freedom efforts, and thus the Monkey Brigade was formed. Thousands of India's children joined and were able to take part in the National Congress Party's work in tasks such as running simple errands, wrapping bandages and even carrying secret messages between groups of protesters, all thanks to Indira's determination. August 15, 1947 marks the day that India finally gained independence from Great Britain through the Indian Independence Act.

Numerous celebrations were held to honor the special day, but without British rule, India now needed to define their own justice system. After some debate, the nation adopted the democratic form of government and elected Indira's father, Jawaharlal Nehru, as India's first prime 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 an authoritative position. This high political stature and influence provided his daughter with many opportunities to create and instill change on her new and impressionable nation. Her first major use of this advantage was in 1955 when she took 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 a body member to body president in just a matter of 4 years. Eventually a few more years past, and Gandhi was appointed to Rajya Sabha, an important post in Lal Bahadur Shastri's ruling government. After Shastri's death in 1966, Gandhi received one of her biggest opportunities yet: being elected as the first female prime minister of India.

Considering how women of this era were given little to any rights and generally were seen as objects for house chores and pleasing their husbands, having a female head of government seemed quite insane. The idea itself could have made a stir of controversy because the people of India were not yet sure what women were truly capable of, since no women had taken such leadership yet. Such a revolutionary advancement did not go without the discontent of many. Soon after her 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 of her term because Congress didn't believe that she could've properly handled all the power she was being given. Two years passed before the Congress Party tried, once again, to remove Indira from her position for her idea to nationalize the country's banks unilaterally. In 1971, Indira won a landslide victory 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 of India's biggest decisions. The re-election now allowed for Indira to nationalize the country's banks which in turn spread the wealth of the nation. Such a change was long overdue with India's unendurable poverty. Gandhi's plan also rose the budget of public spending which was used for numerous programs in need of improvement, such including rural electrification, fisheries, and irrigation.

Recognizing the importance of providing people of all social classes their basic needs of food, shelter, and jobs, Gandhi proposed the Green Revolution. This program not only largely increased the amount of wheat, rice, cotton, and milk produced, but also helped bring India to diversify and trade more of its mercantile crops. Only ten years later, the Green Revolution managed to triple the production of wheat, greatly raise the amount of rice produced, and give jobs of farmers and grain processors to many unemployed Indian citizens.

This industrial and economic expansion allowed the nation to pay off debts from the World Bank, thus providing India with reliability to foreign countries for future investments or loans. This geographical impact helped India gain allies in their future war endeavors as well. Indira Gandhi made it clear that she wanted to use her position to improve the living standards of her people and make a lasting impact on her nation. In spite of her many achievements, Gandhi had to briefly step down from her role in 1977 after her first ever electoral loss. Facing the reality of the situation, she realized that there was not much she could productively get done considering that 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, voters began to realize that their preexisting government did not have the same foundation it truly needed without Indira and decided to take their own action, having been inspired by the way Gandhi did so for numerous years.

Voters decided to form the Congress (I) Party, the 'I' standing for Indira, to break away from the opposing 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-found respect for her strong leadership. Unfortunately, on October 31st, 1984, Indira Gandhi's fourth term became her last.

Two of her bodyguards had successfully assassinated her in New Delhi. Her death might 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 led her nation to prosperity in times of difficulty. She serves as an inspiration for women around the world to not be afraid to take on leadership roles, as she would have wanted to be remembered. Throughout her lifetime, Indira Gandhi used her political power to better the lives of her people and her nation as a whole.

From improving the living standards to raising the amount of industry and trade, Gandhi undeniably made a lasting influence on India. Her persistence and drive to give all Indian citizens a brighter future reveals how important Indira was to Indian history. Without the leadership of Indira Gandhi, India wouldn't be anywhere near as politically and economically advanced as they are today.