

# Challenges to and Restoration of Congress System

## FACTS THAT MATTER

1. Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru passed away in May 1964. The 1960s were labelled as 'dangerous decade' due to some unresolved problems like poverty, inequality, communal and regional divisions to be speculated to lead to a failure of democratic project or even the disintegration of the country.
2. India mainly faced two challenges from 1964 to 1966 during Lal Bahadur Shastri's reign like 'Economic Crisis' due to Indo-China War of 1962 and Indo-Pak War of 1965 and failed Monsoons, droughts and food crisis which was symbolised as a famous slogan to resolve the issues like 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan'.
3. The Congress Party faced the challenge of political succession for the second time after the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri with an intense competition between Morarji Desai and Indira Gandhi to resolved through a secret ballot among Congress MPs. Indira Gandhi defeated Morarji Desai and a peaceful transition of power was seen as a 'Sign of Maturity of India's Democracy'.
4. The government of Indira Gandhi decided to devalue the Indian rupee in order to check economic crisis of 1967. Consequently, one US dollar could be purchased for less than Rs 5 after devaluation which cost more than Rs 7 to trigger a price rise and people protested against essential commodities price rise and unemployment. It was struggled even by socialist and communist parties for greater equality.
5. The Congress Party's decision of devaluation gave birth to the concept of Non-Congressism with different programmes and ideologies to form anti-Congress fronts. It was claimed to be necessary for democratic purposes.
6. The fourth general election was held in 1967, not be in favour of

Congress. The political leaders like Kamraj in Tamilnadu, S.K. Patil in Maharashtra, Atulya Ghosh in West Bengal and K.B. Sahay in Bihar were defeated alongwith majority lost in other states also for the very first time any non-Congress party has secured majority including coalition government consisting of different non-Congress parties which were termed as 'Political earthquake'.

7. The election of 1967 brought the phenomenon of coalitions which was formed together by joint legislature parties to be called SVD i.e. Samyukt Vidhayak Dal. The SVD in Bihar included the two socialist parties-SSP and PSP along with CPI on the left and Jana Sangh on the right. In Punjab, it was called popular United Front and comprised the two rival Akali Parties at that time.

8. Immediately, after 1967, Indira Gandhi faced two challenges to build her independence from 'Syndicate' and to regain ground which were lost in 1967 elections by Congress. And Indira Gandhi adopted a very bold strategy as she converted it into ideological struggle, launched a series of initiatives and got the Congress Working Committee to adopt 'Ten Point Programme' in 1967 including social control of Banks, Nationalisation of General Insurance, Ceiling on Urban Property and Income, Public Distribution of Food Grains, Land Reforms etc.

9. Syndicate was the informal name given to a group of Congress leader like K. Kamraj, S.K. Patil, N. Sanjeeva Reddy, Atulya Ghosh who were in control of Party as organisation i.e. within Congress. Syndicate had a greater say in Indira Gandhi's first council of Ministers and in Policy formulations and implementations. After split, Congress (O) and Indira led Congress (R) formed which won the popularity after 1971.

10. The formal split in Congress (Syndicate and Indira Gandhi) came into open in 1969 on nomination of candidate for president's post. Diplomatically, Indira Gandhi's candidates won over syndicate's candidate (V.V. Giri over N. Sanjeeva Reddy), which formalised the split in Congress into two separate parties i.e. Congress (O) i.e. organisation led by syndicate known as a 'Old

Congress' and Congress (R) i.e. requisitionists led by Indira Gandhi known as 'New Congress'.

11. Everyone believed that real organisational strength was under command of Congress (O), on the other hand, all major parties like SSP, PSP, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party and Bharatiya Kranti Dal also formed 'Grand Alliance' against Indira Gandhi with a common programme of 'Indira Hatao'.

12. In contrast to 'Indira Hatao', Indira Gandhi put forward a positive programme 'Garibi Hatao' to generate a support base among landless labourers, dalits, adivasis, minorities, women and unemployed youth as well as focused on growth of public sector, imposition of ceiling on rural land holdings and Urban property and removal of disparity etc and succeeded to build an independent nationwide political support base during election contest of 1971.

13. Indira Gandhi did not revive old Congress Party but she re-invented the party by forming an entirely different popular party to accommodate some social groups, the poor, the women, the dalits, adivasis and the minorities. Thus, Indira Gandhi restored the Congress system by changing the nature of Congress system itself.

### **WORDS THAT MATTER**

**1. Defection:** An elected representative who leaves the Party on whose symbol, he is elected and joins another party.

**2. Non-Congression:** Non-Congress parties alongwith their different programmes and ideologies together to form anti-Congress fronts.

**3. Congress (O):** Congress led by syndicated also known as Old Congress, i.e. Congress (organisation).

**4. Congress (R):** It was led by Indira Gandhi and known as New Congress, i.e. Congress (Requisitionists).

**5. Grand alliance:** It was major electoral alliance formed by major parties like SSP, PSP, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Swatantra Party and Bharaitya Kranti Dal to form a United front.

**6. Syndicate:** A group of powerful and influential leaders from

within the Congress.

**7. Ten Point Programme:** Adopted by Indira Gandhi in 1967 to regain ground for Congress including social control of banks, land reforms etc.

**8. Devaluation:** To reduce the rate at which money can be exchanged for foreign money.

**9. Political Earthquake:** The electoral verdict of fourth general election in 1967 which jolted the Congress at both the national and state levels.