



## INDIRA GANDHI: AN IRON LADY OF INDIA (1917-1984)

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Received: 26/02/2018

Edited: 06/03/2018

Accepted: 12/03/2018

**Abstract:** This present article focuses on the life of a great person. If devoted to the life Indira Gandhi who was the Prime Minister of India for several consecutive terms till her assassination - a total of fifteen years. She was India's first and to date the only female Prime Minister. Her greatest achievement was that she led the nation to the decisive victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

**Keywords:** Indira Gandhi, Indo-Pak War.

### Introduction:

Indira Gandhi was the third Prime Minister of India and a central figure of the Indian National Congress party. Mrs. Gandhi served from 1966 to 1977 and then again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984, is the second longest serving Prime Minister of India and the only woman to hold the office.

As Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi became known for her political strategies and unprecedented centralization of power. She presided over period where India emerged with greater power than before to become the regional hegemony of south Asia with considerable political economic and military developments. Gandhi also presided over a state of emergency from 1975 to 1977 during which she ruled by decree and made lasting changes to the constitution of India. She was assassinated in the aftermath of operation Blue star. Gandhi was voted the greatest Indian Prime Minister in a poll organized by India Today. She was also named "Woman of the millennium" in a poll organized by the BBC in 1999.

### As the Prime Minister:

When Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister in 1966, the Congress party was split in two factions: the socialists led by Gandhi and the conservatives led by Morarji Desai. Rammanohar Lohia called her Gandhi Gudiya which means 'Mute Doll'. Indira Gandhi was the first woman Prime Minister of our country. When a correspondent asked her how she

felt to be a woman Prime Minister she replied "I do not regard myself as a woman to the job. If a woman has qualifications for any profession, she should be in." while Indira accepting the crown of Prime Ministership, India was facing an economic crisis; Pakistan's aggressive acts were mounting; the inflow of foreign aid had slowed down and consequently industrial production was slackening. The rains had failed causing drought in many parts and hence agricultural production had gone down. Indira fully realized that her first task was to provide food in the year of scarcity, thus, she moved the Government machinery to ensure that the basic needs were fulfilled. Huge stocks of food were imported and rushed to scarcity areas and she herself toured those areas. Not only this, but she strongly backed the efforts of agricultural scientists and agronomists to introduce intensive cultivation. The result was a green revolution in the country and today India is self sufficient in food.

In the field of industry, the problem could be solved only by greater production. To bridge the great gap between intention and action, she suggested the introduction of modern tools and techniques. Two months after assuming office as prime minister, she went on a tour of foreign countries to explain to them that there would be no change in India's foreign policy. She visited Paris, London, Moscow and Washington. In America, she was an object of curiosity for they could hardly

believe that a woman could run a nation of 500 millions. Vice President Hubert Humphrey commented that Indira Gandhi “was quite a politician...a politician of considerable means”. President Johnson also discovered that “behind the sophisticated look, there also a sophisticated mind, which had been trained over the years to deal with political problems and political situations” and according to a newspaper report she did “a million – dollar public relations job.” Her first foreign tour as Prime Minister was a great success.

John Grigg writes, “Nature and experience have made her a ‘secret’ very good at concealing her intention, always much reader to listen than to talk. but she knows how to take the decisions and when to take them. “Mrs. Gandhi was one of the world’s most travelled leaders. She had paid official visit to more than 80 countries in six continents. She is many things to many people: a sagacious statesman courageous crusader, a friends of the poor, the defender of world peace, an upholder of non alignment and the savior f democratic traditions in India. But underlying and illuminating all the facts of her personality in her deep sense of humanism.

As Prime Minister of India for close to sixteen years, Indira Gandhi provided outstanding leadership, stable government and vital stimulus for impressive economic, scientific and cultural progress to the country. Internationally, she gave vigorous support to liberal causes, anti apartheid struggle, peace and disarmament. She was deeply dedicated to the promotion international understanding through mental consultation, economic co-operation and cultural exchange. Her friendship and vapport with world leaders and leading intellectuals and cultural personalities she utilized to nature the ideas of peace and universal brotherhood.

In the tragic death of Indira Gandhi, India has lost a leader of unwavering dedication and consistent brilliance at a crucial moment of political and economic development. The nation owes a great debt of gratitude to this decisive, radiant and compassionate personality. Her father had described

himself as a person who loved India with all his mind and heart and whom the Indian people in turn deeply loved and revered. This was equally true of Indira Gandhi. The people of India will have abiding affection and respect for this great leader, who served them till her last breath.

According to a poll conducted by the freach Institute of public opinion, Mrs. Gandhi had been the ‘most admired woman’. For two consecutive years - 1967 and 1968. Earlier she won recognition in many other fields – she was awarded the mother’s award of U.S.A. in 1935, the Holland Memorial prize of Yale University in 1960 and the Italian Isabella D ‘Este for outstanding work in the field of diplomacy in 1965. In 1971, she was declared the most admired person of the world, according to a Special Gallup Poll in America. The charismatic and open-making personality of Indira left her imprint not only in the affairs own country but also in the international affairs.

She was deeply concerned about human environment. For Indira Gandhi, nuclear annihilation was the greatest, most immediate threat which mankind faced and non aligned movement the greatest peace movement of all time. As chairperson of the non-aligned movement, she was the inspiration and spokesman of the non aligned countries and the link between them and the developed countries. Hers was not the shrill voice of confrontation, but a humane and civilized voice gently awakening the world conscience to the need for changing the out moded structures of economic and political relationship. This change, she believed, would come and that it can come only through dialogue....

Being the only child of Jawaharlal Nehru. She was born famous. But, it is by what she achieved, she is placed in the ranks of the greatest not only of India but of the world. In her generation of world leaders, she was amongst the tallest. Her death was imbalance with her life. She lived with courage and died without fear. She died at the hands of the very men she trusted.

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