
Emergence of New Trends in Party and Government: The Indian Context

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Abstract: *After the elections of 1967 the parties which had competed with each other in the opposition changed the mutual relationship and cooperated, though in a limited way, in coalition government. In the evolution of the post-Congress dominant Party system political contradictions were minimised and attempts were made to reconcile different views. However, it heralded a change in the party and Government system. The immobilism in the political power-structure was broken up and in many States the opposition could realise its aim to come to power (Narain, 1967). The realisation of a change in the power-constellation had a healthy impact on the public, as frustration and loss of faith in democracy found a legitimate outlet in the change of Government. In the situation when the one party dominant system has broken up the way of constitutional life changes considerably. The continuing and prevailing norms of political behaviour began to be challenged while new norms have to be evolved. The new realization and its further expansion in Indian government and politics changed, to a*

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large extent, the face of Indian democracy leading to make it a vibrant political system. Simultaneously the public expectations from the system also increased many folds and therefore complexities and challenges for the system as well. The study would help solve the systemic challenges which all systems, and developing in particular, are facing in their day to day working.

Keywords: *Government, Party, India, Consensus and Compromise. Introduction*

1. Internal Feud in Party and Society

The decline of Indian National Congress considerably started with the death of Nehru in 1964. It was the beginning of the erosion of popular support for the party which continued in successive years. It was increasingly ridden with groupism and factional rivalries at every level, leading to the formation of dissident groups in almost every state. After the death of Shastri Indira Gandhi took over the leadership of the Government without direct personal legitimation and she hoped that a convincing victory of the Congress in the elections would prepare the necessary ground for a plebiscitary consensus in her favour. On becoming the Prime Minister, initially she had not been able to form a cabinet of her own choice, having had to leave all important portfolios-Home, Defence, Finance, External Affairs and Food-undisturbed. Kamaraj, the Party President and the Syndicate consistently tried to reassert the party organisation's position vis-à-vis the Prime Minister and to restrict her freedom of action in framing and implementing policies. Indira Gandhi had to tolerate all this because of 1967 being an election year. But in order to attain her objective of retaining power as well as reasserting her authority within the Congress Party, Indira Gandhi used Machiavellian strategy and tactics. However, for both-Kamaraj and Indira Gandhi the result of 1967 election was a not so good experience. Kamaraj lost his State (Tamil Nadu) to the Dravida

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Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and suffered himself a humiliating defeat. With that he lost the legitimacy of claiming the Prime Ministership. On the other Indira Gandhi also lost prestige because of unfavourable election result for the Congress Party though she herself was elected with a convincing majority. But she could not prove herself to be an 'election locomotive,' as the Congress leadership expected of her.

In the larger interest of the Party a compromise formula was put forward by Kamaraj and was accepted by all including Indira Gandhi and Morarji Desai. Accordingly Desai was inducted into the cabinet of Mrs. Gandhi as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. But the solution was short lived as they both - Mrs. Gandhi and Desai differed fundamentally in their character and approach. They both had always been ideological opponents. The leftist tendencies of Mrs. Gandhi were as well known as the conservative ideas of Desai. In between the deepening organisational crisis Mrs. Gandhi took several pro-left step that strengthened her position in the party. She suddenly came out with the proposal of bank nationalisation and finally succeeded in carrying through her resolution at Bangalore Session and Morarji Desai also supported it. But finally on the issue of Presidential candidate and consent of Mrs. Gandhi in favour of a non-Congress candidate, V.V. Giri, the split in the party became imminent. The Congress got split up in 1969 into Congress (Ruling) led by Indira Gandhi and the Congress (Organisation) led by Kamaraj. This result was in reality a result of the power struggle for power within Congress between the parliamentary or ministerial wing headed by Indira Gandhi and the organisation wing led by then Congress President, Kamaraj. However, Indira Gandhi gave it an ideological cover by abolishing privy purses and by nationalising bank. Consequently, the party system got polarised into the so-called progressive and reactionary forces (*Pal, 2008*). The crucial point was made clear in the 'Unity Resolution' where it was declared that the Prime Minister and the

Congress President were not centres of power. The Prime Minister is the leader of the legislative party and the Congress President has no right to control her actions (*Congress Bulletin, 1969*). In this way the power game was dressed up in ideological terms. It was conceived as a fight between young socialism and old conservatism.

As a result of the split that took place in the Indian National Congress the Party which had so far enjoyed an absolute majority at the Centre for the first time since independence, lost that position in both the Houses of Parliament. The Congress Parliamentary Party of President, S.Nijalingappa group elected Morarji Desai as its Chairman and Dr. Ram Subhag Singh, former Minister of Railways, and S.N. Mishra as the leaders of the Party in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha respectively. The new group claimed a strength of 111 members in both the Houses of Parliament-65 in the Lok Sabha and 46 in the Rajya Sabha -who were later allotted regular seats on the opposition benches (*Rahman, 1970*). But as a result of Mrs. Gandhi's steps soon the Congress under her became what the undivided Congress was before the Bangalore session of AICC. The old brand of Congressism had shown remarkable resistance in reasserting itself and in this connection election of V.V. Giri as the President of India, was her first victory. Her pessimism soon gave way to hope and confidence when she nationalised the major Indian banks, abolished the princes' privileges and launched a radical-sounding if essentially populist, personist style "garibi hatao" programme. Further she continued her remarkable offensive, she called a mid-term poll in March 1971 and won it resoundingly, the ship of state which had been rocking on a sea of crises in the preceding six or seven years, seemed once more to have been put on an even keel (*Abraham, 1979*). The sense of returning security was reinforced a hundred fold at the end of 1971 with the Bangladesh war when India, politically dominant and militarily triumphant, emerged as the undisputed subcontinental power.

On the eve of 1971 election apart from political groupings and power struggle among political party, economic priorities continued to remain on the top of agenda. In her announcement of the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, Mrs. Gandhi underlined the necessity to seek a fresh mandate from the people so that the Government could go ahead with its proclaimed social and economic programme. For that purpose it was understandable that all the national political parties brought economic issues to the fore. They revealed some very significant shifts in emphasis. The split and the subsequent development influenced the party line on the management of the public sector, the procedure of licensing and simplification of the tax structure. To quote Congress (R) manifesto, 'Where licensing is needed, it will be simplified, its regulations widely advertised and prompt decision assured. All licensing will be for promoting industrialisation and not for hampering growth' (*Election Manifesto of Congress, 1971*). By 1971 a clear shift in both the social basis of Indian politics and its party and governmental apparatus began to take place. This shift was also due to the food crisis of 1965-67 which resulted in a series of other steps in the revision of other strategy. The Government of India's steps included a new irrigation policy with emphasis on minor irrigation, a concentration of inputs-improved seeds and fertilizers on highyielding areas as the principal way out of stagnation, a comprehensive soil survey, a reassessment of plan priorities and a re-allocation of scarce resources including foreign exchange. This meant that the people at large started reviewing the economic and administrative performance of the party in power in terms of how it affected their day-to-day life and related this to their own electoral decision-making (*Singh, 2009*). As a result the popular demand then was for performance. The people wanted a government that works and an economic system that delivers in terms of production. The talk of social justice in the sense of distributive justice, as earlier defined has taken a back seat. In plain terms the country was ready to move forward on a realistic basis. In addition the emancipation of women, especially among the urban

middle classes, the growing assertion of their rights by the scheduled castes and tribes, the increasing secularisation of thought and life and the declined of the joint family are some other important manifestations of this remorseless process. The result is the strangely contradictory situation which has arisen in India-the decline of democratic institutions amidst the growing democratisation of our society.

2. Turbulence of 1971 Election

The election results of 1971 Lok Sabha showed that the Congress (R) secured 58 per cent of seats. It swept the polls, winning 352 of the 518 seats. The February election turned out to be an overwhelming personal triumph for Indira Gandhi and a rude shock to the Opposition. This gave the party a two-thirds majority required to amend the Constitution. The "grand alliance" of the Swatantra, the Jana Sangh, Congress (O) and the PSP performed very poorly in the parliamentary elections while most of the regional parties such as Bharatiya Kranti Dal in UP, the Bengal Congress in West Bengal, Shiv Sena in Maharashtra, the Akali Dal in Punjab and the Utkal Congress in Orissa were substantially weakened by the polls. The only opposition to fare well were CPM, CPI and DMK, the last two being the Congress allies. The fifth Lok Sabha was considered as the reminiscent of the Nehru era with packed treasury benches and a mere sprinkling of opposition members though Mrs. Gandhi had fallen short of performance of her father who won 74.4 per cent of all seats in 1952, 75.1 per cent in 1957 and 73.1 per cent in 1962. Likewise in the State Assembly elections of 1972 Mrs. Gandhi-led alliance returned with a landslide victory. This happened as coalition government based on anti-Congressism had failed to deliver. The charisma of Indira Gandhi revived the Congress. The dominance of Congress was conspicuous as it was voted to power in all the states in which the elections were held. This success story of Congress in the elections was the impact of war politics that resulted in the

formation of Bangladesh, a separate nation. But Indira Gandhi's main political achievement was that she checked the mood of despair, frustration, and cynicism that had prevailed since 1962 and initiated a climate of hope and optimism. As a result of her radical and egalitarian programme and slogans, Mrs. Gandhi's popularity grew further; and she replenished the Congress party's social support base, especially among the rural and urban poor and to some extent, among the middle classes (*Chandra and Mukherjee, 2002*). Her steps went a long way in projecting Indira Gandhi as a dynamic leader. It led to refurbishment of the image of the new Congress and emergence of Indira Gandhi as the saviour of the poor.

The 1971 elections restored the Congress party to its dominant position in Indian politics. By voting for Congress the people had simultaneously voted for change and stability. Now it was for the Congress (R) government to come to the expectations of the electorate. If the new government failed to be as effective as the Nehru-led Congress, its popularity would be a short-lived. But that would be a failure of leadership and not of Parliamentary democracy as such. Indira Gandhi received the mandate she had sought and she now became the unchallenged leader of Congress and the dominant political figure in the country. The elections also represented further politicisation of the masses. People's votes had cut across religious, caste and regional barriers. Elections had also shown that once national issues were raised, vote banks and politics of patronage became relatively irrelevant and that increasingly people could no longer be dictated to, bullied or bought. Indira Gandhi had demonstrated that building a coalition of the poor and the disadvantaged around a national programme could be a viable political option. In the circumstances, the faith of the voters, especially the poor, had reposed in her also represented a dangerous signal. She had raised high hopes among them; and she had now to deliver on her promises, for she had the parliamentary strength to pass any laws, to take any administrative measures, and there could

be no excuses for failure. For the next few years there was no substitute for performance. She must create the impression of a decisive forward movement, and she must produce results.

3. Ups and Down in Congress Image

The succeeding years of Mrs. Gandhi's regime were meant to fulfil its electoral promises. There was political stability in the country; the government had a two thirds majority in the Lok Sabha; and Indians had acquired fresh and heightened self-confidence in their own capacities and capabilities as well as faith in the political leadership. In fact during 1971-74 the government undertook several measures to implement its left-of-agenda. In August 1972, general insurance was nationalised and five months later the coal industry in 1973. Ceilings were imposed on urban land ownership. Earlier in 1969 the Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act was passed to check the concentration of industrial enterprises in a few hands and in 1971 it appointed a MRTP Commission to implement the Act. The central government initiated a programme of cheap foodgrains distribution to the economically vulnerable sections of society and a crash scheme for creating employment in rural areas. It also made it compulsory for nationalised banks to open branches in underbanked areas such as small towns, rural clusters and the poorer parts of the cities and to make credit available to small industries, farmers, road transporters and self employed persons. But despite all these and others, under the pressure of the CPI and leftists within the party Mrs. Gandhi refused to go any further in nationalising industry and she remained fully committed to a mixed economy.

However, with the Parliamentary elections, Mrs. Gandhi was able to assert her authority, encompassing many features of the pre-1967 era. A major difference in the new model was the collapse of the competitive mechanism within the dominant Party. The

Congress split and the emergence of Indira Gandhi's leadership destroyed the balance of internal factional competition. Factional bosses were suppressed and crushed. Such a combination of the monopolistic dominance of the Congress led to steady erosion of the openness of the system and there emerged an authoritarian concentration of power (*Kumar, 2009*). In India it was the beginning of the politics of populism, opportunism and of naked power. The dominant party ruled through the mechanism of centralised command. Even the tendency to impose leadership on the states seemed to grow and in the process intra-party democracy was weakened. At a later stage, the social ills that posed a direct threat to the political system of the country were rated high, resulting in the worsening of the quality of political management. Indisputably the standards of public life have declined sharply. And it would be dishonest for anyone to think that standards had fallen only in public life. The same story began to be repeated in almost all other walks of life.

But soon in 1973 the tide changed for Indira Gandhi and it came sooner than expected. The economy, the polity and the credibility of her leadership and Congress government started going downhill. After the 1971 election victory, a series of further such measures increasing government control and intervention were introduced with the active support of left radical intellectuals like P.N. Haksar, D.P. Dhar and Mohan Kumaramangalam. As a result, the disenchantment followed rapidly. In 1972 came another drought and the underlying economic crisis, which had first manifested itself in the mid-sixties, resurfaced after the euphoria of the three preceding years. In May 1973 the UP provincial constabulary mutinied and had to be suppressed ruthlessly. It sent a shock-wave down the entire system for this was a major revolt by those whose duty it was to enforce law and order to keep the system itself going. In addition, the external factors-the five-fold oil price rise by OPEC countries at the end of 1973 and the energy crisis it precipitated was for the

Indian economy the last straw on the camel's back. By then the system was in deep crisis. Industry was in recession, the level of investment had fallen, successive droughts had lowered agricultural productivity, traders had begun to cash in on, even as they helped to worsen, shortages and the consequent black market in a wide range of commodities from steel and cement to edible oil and foodgrains. Hardpressed by this array of hostile economic forces, large sections of the population stepped up their demands on the system at the very moment when it was least able to meet. The ideological short-sightedness of the Congress government on the economic front on the one hand and rise in corruption on the other led to great resentment against the Congress regime throughout the country.

4. Phase of Image Deterioration

In the situation the dominance of the Congress party began to decline by 1974 on account of the failure of the Congress government at the centre and in most of the states due to its failure in fulfilling the rising expectations of the masses. The party system adopted in India is described as multi-party system with one dominant party. The causes for the multiplicity are many and interesting. In this hybrid growth, one dominant factor has been the personal ambition of some leader. Such a person, when he feels that his avenues are blocked, he thinks of leaving the party and forming a new one or joining other and he tries his level best to cover his action with some ideological justification. On the other the changing bases of our political society has become a major concern of our polity. In India, the idea of the State as a protector of the rich as well as a liberator of the poor has survived for long. The State in India is a compromise between the two, without giving principle an exclusion dominance over the other. But in reality the divide between the poor and the rich has remained deep. Almost like the distinction between the electoral promise and political performance of our parties.

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In the meantime the Indian society has also been on rise and several international developments took place in decades, fifties and sixties. The political recognition of Indian middle class had begun in the seventies after the evaporation of political slogans- 'garibi hatao'. The increasing pace of urbanisation especially of the cities and metropolitan centres, with slums, housing, transport, civil maintenance, and proletariat problems combined with the steady drift of the rural skilled and the rural poor to the urban areas is adding to the duality of Indian society. Further the increasing extension of duality in Indian society is conducive to discontent and discord and cannot promote the needed harmony. Thus the country was not happy with the inflation accompanying economic development, which had brought misery to the poor and the fixed income groups and increased inequality in income and consumption levels (*Rao, 1984*). Inflation and black money diminish the people's faith in the efficiency of government and have reinforced the atmosphere of discontent, distress and anger in the country.

It was in this context that Jaya Prakash Narayan launched his movement for "Sampoorn Kranti" in 1974. Earlier in January 1974 a major upheaval occurred in Gujrat when popular anger over the rise in the prices of foodgrains, cooking oil and other essential commodities exploded in the cities and towns of the state in the form of student movement which was soon joined by the opposition parties. As a solution the central government was forced to ask the state government to resign, suspend the assembly and impose President's rule in the state, however, it proved a failure and due to continuing unrest and fast unto death by Morarji Desai, Mrs. Gandhi dissolved the assembly and announced fresh elections to it in June. On being inspired by its success, the similar agitation was started by students in Bihar and in line they commenced an agitation with the gherao of state assembly on 18 March 1974. Jaya Prakash Narayan also decided to go beyond Bihar and organise a country-wide movement against widespread corruption and for the removal of

Congress and Indira Gandhi who became a threat to democracy and portrayed as the fountain head of corruption. Although the movement against the Congress and Mrs. Gandhi began to decline by the end of 1974, the month June of 1975 proved fatal for the Congress, Mrs. Gandhi in particular.

A sudden twist to Indian politics was given by a judgement of Allahabad High Court on 12 June 1975 which against an election petition by Raj Narain, convicted Mrs. Gandhi for having indulged in corrupt campaign practices and declared her election invalid. Against the judgement Mrs. Gandhi refused to resign and appealed to the Supreme Court. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, the vacation judge of the Supreme Court created further confusion when he decided on 24 June that, till the final disposal of her appeal by the full bench of the Supreme Court, Mrs. Gandhi could stay in office and speak in Parliament but could not vote in it. Both the Congress Party and Mrs. Gandhi suffered another political blow when the Gujrat assembly election results came on 13 June 1975. The opposition Janata Front won 87 seats and the Congress 75 seats in a house of 182. The Janata Front succeeded in forming a government in alliance with the same Chimanbhai Patel. In the circumstances, without any wait Jaya Prakash Narayan and the coalition of opposition parties, decided to seize the opportunity and, accusing Mrs. Gandhi of clinging to an office corruptly gained. In a rally in Delhi on June 25, 1975 they announced that a nation-wide one-week campaign of mass mobilisation and civil disobedience to force Mrs. Gandhi to resign would be initiated on 29 June. Ultimately, she found herself placed in a situation where imposition of emergency was the only way to keep things under control. But what prompted Jaya Prakash Narayan to oppose Congress and Mrs. Gandhi was the naked tyranny of her rule. With a massive majority in Parliament, the Congress government acquired unprecedented power which it utilised for self-aggrandisement. It now had a halo which gave it a touch of permanence. It went about destroying merrily all democratic

traditions, norms and values. Jaya Prakash clearly saw that a major surgical operation was urgently needed (*Rahman, 1978*). With his selfless devotion to the cause of the consolidation of independence, JP thought that, though a sick, old man with one foot in the grave, he could still save India from further disgrace and humiliation. His democratic conscience deeply hurt, he could not remain a passive spectator any longer. Austerity is too well ingrained in Indian character not to seek political expression at some stage. But there were no obvious candidates for that role right now.

5. Declaration of Emergency and Thereafter

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, retaliated by imposing internal emergency on 26 June 1975, under Article 352 of the Constitution. She explained the situation later and claimed that faced with an extra-constitutional challenge she had no other option. Resignation, she said, would have strengthened the forces that were threatening the democratic process and bringing the country to the edge of anarchy and chaos. There was, moreover, no legal, political or moral reason why she should step down during the hearing of her appeal. But as indicated by several scholars and analysts, in reality she too had another democratic option. She could have declared that Lok Sabha would be dissolved and fresh elections to it would be held in October-November. Even simultaneously she could announce that the Emergency would be lifted as soon as the opposition gave up its demand for her resignation, agreed to adhere to the Supreme Court or Parliament's judgement, and accepted the test of elections, exactly what General de Gaulle did when faced with the much more pervasive and radical upsurge of student and workers in May 1968 and the protestors accepted the challenge to face de Gaulle in elections. The political tragedy was that both the JP Movement and Indira Gandhi shunned the option of elections, and created a political atmosphere in which dialogue and accommodation between the two opposing forces was not possible.

The declaration of emergency followed a major shake up in the government machine, as well as in the political atmosphere of the nation. In the early hours of 26 June, hundreds of the main leaders of the Opposition were arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA). Among those arrested were Jaya prakash Narayan, Morarji Desai and Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Congress dissidents such as Chandra Shekhar. In addition several academics, newspapermen, trade unionists and student leaders were put behind bars. Nearly 200,000 political detainees who were in jail without trial remained there during the Emergency. The government had grown arrogant treating people as ignorant mass with the only duty and right to obey.

In a calculated move during the emergency the Parliament was made utterly ineffective. The state governments were rigidly controlled. The two non-Congress government of DMK in Tamil Nadu and Janata in Gujrat were dismissed in January and March 1976 despite being quite compliant. A series of decrees, laws and constitutional amendments reduced the powers of the judiciary to check the functioning of the executive. The Defence of India Act (DIA) and the MISA were amended in July 1975 to the detriment of the citizens' liberties. In November 1976, an effort was made to change the basic civil libertarian structure of the Constitution through its 42nd Amendment. The period of Emergency concentrated unlimited state and party power in the hands of the Prime Minister to be exercised through a small coterie of politicians and bureaucrats around her. The worst part of the emergency was the creation and promotion of a caucus which controlled not only the Party organisation but also the government. The caucus was described as an extra-constitutional centre of power. It was criticised for giving 'orders' to the government servants and directions to the governmental machineries both in the Centre and in the States. A sharp attack was also made on the role of Sanjay Gandhi who was being projected as a national leader and became in the phase a de

facto ruler. In other words a few people took advantage of the emergency to destroy what little of democracy we had in the Congress.

The Emergency which Mrs. Gandhi imposed in the name of internal security was largely in response to a desperate coalition of dominant groups she represented to and a deep rooted, all pervasive structural crisis. The pre-emergency assumption was that it would give full and free play to demands by diverse groups for the fulfilment of their new found expectations (*Jain, 1980*). Mrs. Gandhi obviously was alive to the dangers inherent in rapid politicisation. During the emergency she shout to devise a system which could insulate the executive from popular pressures via the press and appeared favouring a French - type Presidential system with the same end in view. But India's case was different and you cannot contain a flood by closing the gates. You have to let the waters pass. You can do so safely if you have had the wisdom to raise and strengthen the embankment in advance. Our embankments have got weakened and eroded with the rise in the intensity of the floods. In plains terms, Mrs. Gandhi was to do all that she could to restore the prestige and autonomy of institutions like the judiciary and the civil service if she was to ensure that the pressure politicisation inevitably generates would not overwhelm the system and, indeed the country (*Singh, 2002*). In contrast during the emergency social contention was artificially held in abeyance, aspirant groups were inhibited about voicing their claims and social conflict was sought to resolve not by accommodation through the free play of argument but with the iron hand. Not surprisingly, this approach brought rapidly diminishing returns in terms of discipline; 'order' and 'stability'. Though the experiment in constitutional dictatorship was short-lived.

On the other was the positive side or public response to the Emergency. The people, except intelligentsia, initially responded to

the situation with passivity, acquiescence, acceptance or even, support. Apart from the arrest of opposition leaders, the repressive measures were almost entirely directed either against anti-social elements or against the extreme communal right or the miniscule far left who had enjoyed little popular support before the Emergency and who were in any case known to be averse to democracy. With the restoration of public order and discipline, many felt relieved that the country had been saved from disorder and chaos. There was less crime in the cities, ghettos and uncontrolled, often violent, demonstrations came to an end. Inder Malhotra, a perceptive journalist of the time wrote later, 'The return of normal and orderly life, after relentless disruption by strikes, protest marches, sit-ins and clashes with the police, was applauded by most people. In its initial months at least, the Emergency restored to India a kind of calm it had not known for years (*Malhotra, 1989*). In addition, there was an immediate and general improvement in administration, with government servants coming to office on time and being more considerate to the public, quick, dramatic and well-publicised action was taken against smugglers, hoarders, blackmarketeers, illegal traders in foreign currency and tax evaders, with several thousand of them put behind bars under the MISA. A major factor in the people's acceptance of the Emergency was its constitutional, legal and temporary character. It was proclaimed under Article 352 of the Constitution. It was approved by parliament and legitimised by the courts.

6. Conclusions and Evaluation

Throughout the Emergency Mrs. Gandhi asserted that she was fully committed to multi-party democracy and a free press, that the Emergency was an abnormal remedy for an abnormal situation, and that democratic conditions would be restored and elections held as soon as the situation returned to normal. But from mid-1976 popular discontent increased as relief to the people did not last long and

economic growth of the first year of the Emergency was not sustained. Mrs. Gandhi and Congress failed to create any new agencies of social change or organs for popular mobilisation. For common people there were no avenues of protest or any other mechanism for the voicing and redressal of their grievances. Simultaneously the drastic press censorship and the silencing of protest led to the government being kept in complete ignorance of what was happening in the country. Further the denial of civil liberties began to be felt by the common people it began to impact their daily lives in the form of harassment and corruption by petty officials. Delay in lifting the Emergency began to generate the fear that the authoritarian structure of the rule might be made permanent or continue for a long time. The already exiting climate of fear and repression, corruption and abuse of authority was further worsened by the excesses committed under Sanjay Gandhi's direction. Suddenly on 18 January 1977 Mrs. Gandhi announced that elections to Lok Sabha would be held in March. She also released political prisoners, removed press censorship and other restrictions on political activity such as holding public meetings. Political parties were allowed to campaign freely.

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