



Indira Gandhi: A Personal and Political Biography

Inder Malhotra

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A definitive, incisive and no-holds-barred account of the life and times of one of India's most charismatic and prominent leaders who has left a distinctive stamp on history

For almost two decades, Indira Gandhi stood out the world's most powerful woman. In India, there is hardly a neutral opinion about her. She is either adored or abused.

Inder Malhotra's biography explores objectively this highly complex and very private person – right from her childhood to her last days – who lived under constant public gaze and learnt to adjust her demanour to the occasion, rigorously concealing her true self and real feelings.

This comprehensive work recounts her unusual and unhappy 'love marriage' to Feroze Gandhi and examines the ambivalent influence of her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, on her career. It also focuses on her relationship with her sons: Sanjay, her chosen heir, and his elder brother Rajiv, who, ironically, succeeded her as the prime minister of India.

The author traces Indira Gandhi's own evolution from a 'dumb doll' to the 'empress of India' and her downfall, the seeds of which were sown when she imposed the Emergency on 25 June 1975. This phase marked a dark period in the post-independence era. Her party (the Congress) lost the March 1997 general election and she was out of power for nearly three years. The author also describes the later revival in her fortunes, when she returned as prime minister in January 1980. During her second term, she had to order the Indian Army to enter the Golden Temple in Amritsar (the holiest shrine of the Sikhs) to flush out the militants hiding there. This move led to her being assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984.

In the revised and updated edition, Inder Malhotra throws light on the impact that Indira Gandhi had (and continues to have) on Indian politics after her death when her mantle fell on members of her family, including Rajiv Gandhi first and Sonia Gandhi later.

This is not only a compulsive and gripping narrative about a remarkable personality but also a fascinating study of India after independence.

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