

Chapter 5

CHALLENGES TO AND RESTORATION OF THE CONGRESS SYSTEM



*Same Nation
New Challenges
Changing Politics*

GARIBI
HATAO

INDIAN EXPRESS
A New Phase
in Indian Politics

CONGRESS FOR
A STRONGER INDIA



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1

The 1960s: A Challenging Decade



- **Poverty and inequality** remained major problems.



- **Food shortages, drought and inflation** created economic difficulties.



- India faced the **1962 war with China** and the **1965 war with Pakistan**.



- **Communal and regional tensions** increased.



- The death of major leaders created uncertainty about **political succession**.



- The Congress began facing stronger **opposition** and **internal factionalism**.

The 1960s were called a "dangerous decade" because India faced several serious political, economic and social challenges.



2

Political Succession

After Nehru: The Big Question

May
1964

- Jawaharlal Nehru died in May 1964.
- Two questions arose:
 - ▶ “After Nehru, who?” – next Prime Minister?
 - ▶ “After Nehru, what?” – would Indian democracy survive?

1964–
1966

Lal Bahadur Shastri

- Became Prime Minister in 1964.
- Faced challenges – food crisis, drought, economic difficulties, 1965 India-Pakistan War.
- Gave the slogan “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan.”
- Died in Tashkent after signing the Tashkent Agreement in January 1966.

Jan
1966

After Shastri

- Leadership contest between **Indira Gandhi** and **Morarji Desai**.
- Indira Gandhi won the support of Congress MPs through an internal election and became Prime Minister in January 1966.



“At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.”

— JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

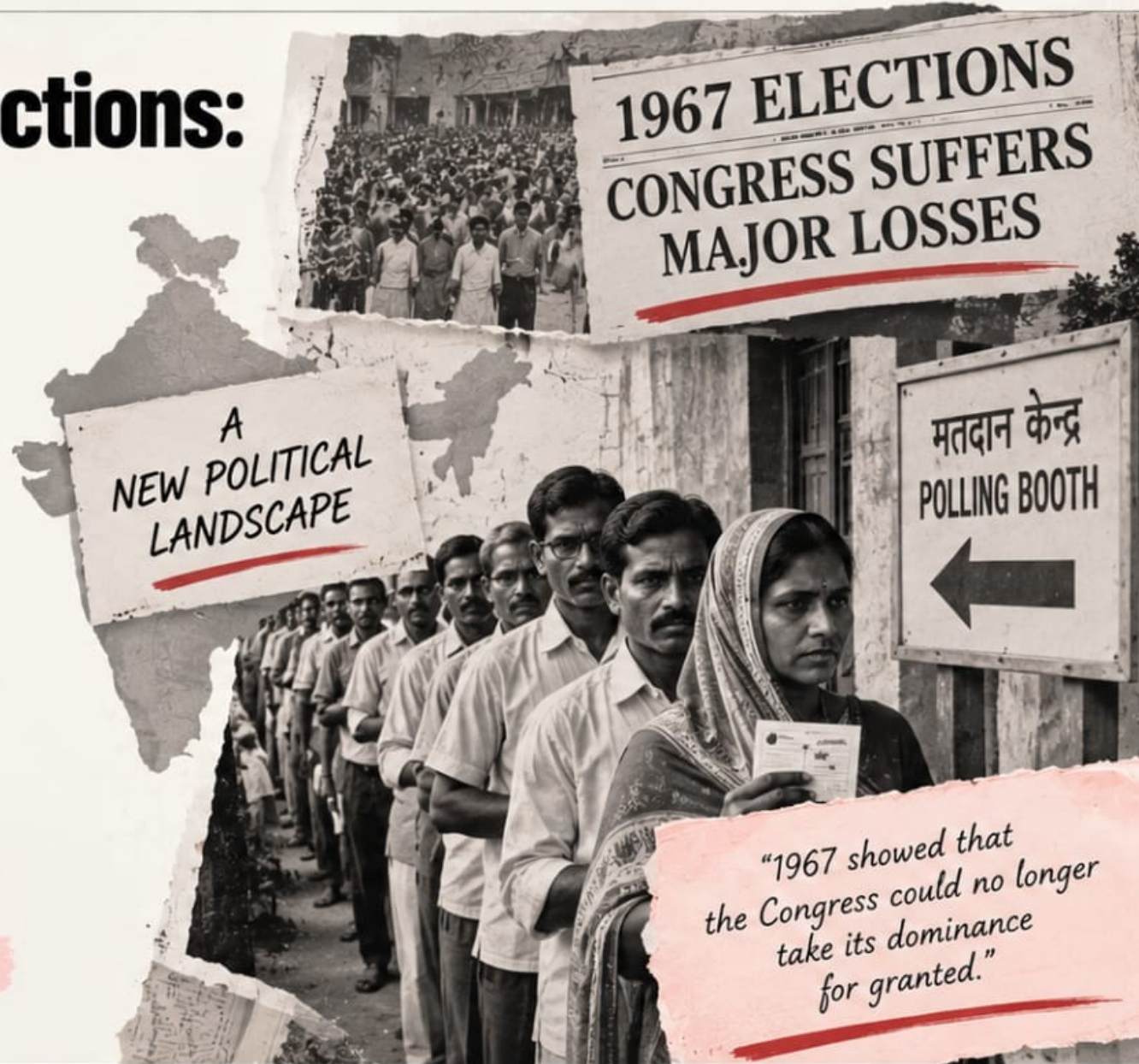


3

The 1967 General Elections: A Major Setback



- **Fourth General Elections** were held in 1967.
- Congress retained power at the Centre but its **majority was much reduced.**
- **Congress lost power in several states.** Non-Congress governments were formed.
- Marked the **rise of opposition parties** and **coalition politics.**
- Regional parties, such as the **DMK in Madras,** became more influential.
- The 1967 elections ended the era of **one-party dominance** at the state level.



4

Non-Congressism

A Strategy to Challenge Congress



- A political strategy associated with **Ram Manohar Lohia**.
- Lohia argued that opposition parties did not need to have the **same ideology to defeat the Congress**.
- Their immediate common objective could be to **prevent Congress from winning**.
- Opposition parties therefore made **electoral adjustments and alliances**.
- This **reduced the division of opposition votes**.
- The strategy contributed to Congress **losing power in several states** in the 1967 elections.

“The real battle is not between right and left, but between Congress and the rest.”

— RAM MANOHAR LOHIA

A UNITED OPPOSITION AGAINST CONGRESS

The Statesman
OPPOSITION JOINS HANDS

Different ideologies, a common goal.



5

Indira Gandhi: A New Political Style



- Indira Gandhi became **Prime Minister in 1966**.
- Adopted a more **centralised and personalized** style of leadership.
- Projected herself as a champion of the poor and marginalised – **Garibi Hatao**.
- Used **populist measures** to strengthen her mass support.
- Marginalised the old Congress leadership (often called the **Syndicate**).
- This created a direct connection with the people but also deepened **internal party divisions**.



6

The 1969 Split: A Defining Moment



- Differences between Indira Gandhi and the Congress organisation, led by the **Syndicate**, increased.
- Dispute over the **presidential election in 1969** led to an open split.
- Indira Gandhi supported **V. V. Giri**, who won against the official Congress candidate N. Sanjiva Reddy.
- The Congress split into **Congress (R)** (Indira Gandhi) and **Congress (O)** (Syndicate).
- Indira Gandhi projected the split as a struggle between **progressive and conservative forces**.
- The split gave Indira Gandhi **greater control** over the party and a stronger direct link with the people.

THE HINDU
**CONGRESS SPLITS
IN 1969**

*"This split marked
a turning point in
Indian politics."*

CONGRESS (R)
INDIRA GANDHI

CONGRESS (O)
THE SYNDICATE

**A STRONGER
CONGRESS
FOR A STRONGER INDIA**



7

The Rise of Regional Parties



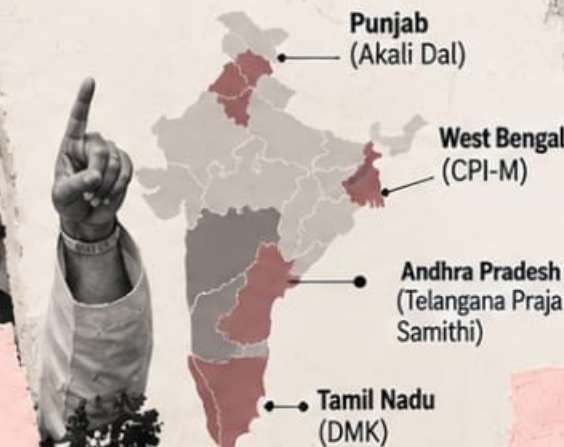
- Regional parties emerged as a **significant force** in Indian politics after 1967.
- They were based on **regional aspirations, language, culture** and local issues.
- Gained popularity due to the **decline of Congress** and growing dissatisfaction.
- Performed well in several states, especially in **Tamil Nadu, Punjab, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh**.
- These parties gave voice to **regional identities and demands**.
- Their rise **weakened the Congress** at the national level.

"Our language,
our identity,
our rights."
— C. N. ANNADURAI
(DMK)

REGIONAL PARTIES CHANGE THE POLITICAL MAP OF INDIA



"Greater autonomy
for our people."
— AKALI DAL



DRAVIDA
NADU



தமிழர் எழுச்சி

क्षेत्रीय
आवाज़
राष्ट्रीय
राजनीति में

"India's diversity
found a new
political expression."



8

Coalition Politics & Defection

Unstable Alliances in a Changing Political Landscape

1 Coalition Politics

- After the **1967 elections**, no single party got a clear majority in several states.
- Different parties came together to form **coalition governments**.
- The **Samyukt Vidhayak Dal (SVD)** became an important coalition in many states.
- Parties with different ideologies joined mainly to **defeat the Congress**.



*Different parties,
a common goal.*

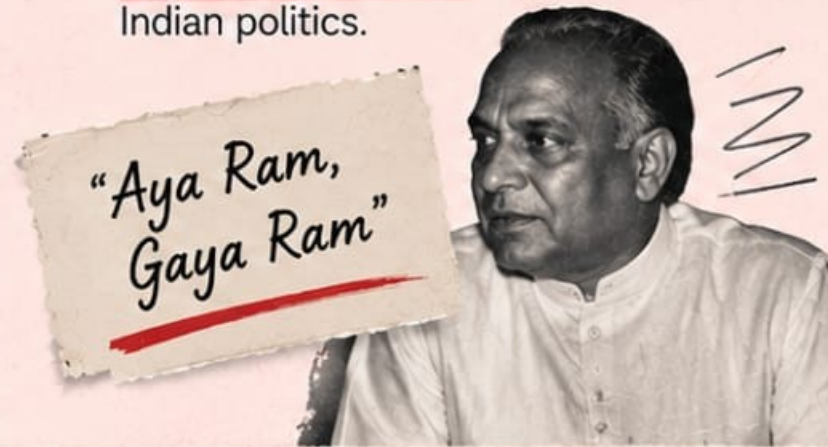
2 Defection

- Elected representatives often **changed parties** after elections.
- Defections were **common** in the period of coalition governments.
- They led to **political instability** and frequent collapse of governments.
- Many Congress legislators were also involved in such shifts.



3 "Aya Ram, Gaya Ram"

- **Gaya Lal**, a Haryana MLA, changed parties several times in 1967.
- His frequent switches gave rise to the phrase **"Aya Ram, Gaya Ram."**
- The phrase became a **symbol of political defection** in Indian politics.



9

The 1971 General Election: A Battle for a New Mandate

"Two Slogans.
Two Visions.
A Transformative Election."



Political Context

- Indira Gandhi was heading a **minority government** after the 1969 split.
- She **dissolved the Lok Sabha** and called for fresh elections in 1971.



Grand Alliance

- Major opposition parties came together to challenge Indira Gandhi.
- Projected a united front against her.
- Their slogan was **"Indira Hatao"**.



Indira Gandhi's Strategy

- Appealed directly to the **poor** and the **disadvantaged sections**.
- Used a populist programme centred on **"Garibi Hatao"**.
- Projected herself as a leader who would bring social and economic change.



10

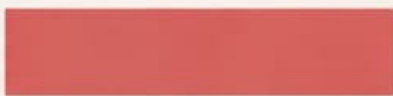
Outcome of 1971 Election & Restoration of the Congress



Election Results (Lok Sabha, 1971)



Congress (R)

352
seats

Congress (R) + CPI

375
seats

Congress (O)

16
seats

Grand Alliance

(Jan Sangh, Swatantra Party, SSP, etc.)

< 40
seats

*A decisive mandate
for Indira Gandhi.*



Restoration of the Congress

- The 1971 victory **restored Congress dominance** at the national level.
- In **1972**, the Congress won **State Assembly elections** in almost all states.
- Congress **returned to power** in most parts of the country.
- However, this was **not a return to the old Congress system** — the party had been transformed under Indira Gandhi.

A STRONGER
CONGRESS
A NEW INDIA

*"The people have
placed their faith in us
to build a better India."
— INDIRA GANDHI*

Congress Dominance Restored — But in a New Form.



11

Old Congress *VS* New Congress

From a Broad Coalition to a New Political Order

Old Congress (Pre-1969)



Strong organisation with a well-structured party system.



Many factions within the party.



Accommodation of diverse interests and social groups.



Collective and factional leadership.



Broad social coalition, including upper castes, middle classes and other sections.

New Congress (Under Indira Gandhi)



Weaker organisation.



Fewer factions.



Greater centralisation of power.



Greater dependence on Indira Gandhi's popularity and leadership.



Stronger support among the poorer and disadvantaged sections.

Congress Dominance Restored — But in a New Form.

A
STRONGER
INDIA

"A party that held India together in its diversity."

"A new Congress for a new India."

6 MCQs

Check Your Understanding!

Small Questions
Big Revision! ♥

**Q1**

Which of the following led to the emergence of coalition governments in several states after 1967?

- A One-party dominance of Congress
- B Decline of regional parties
- C Absence of a clear majority
- D Imposition of President's Rule

Q2

The Samyukt Vidhayak Dal (SVD) was an alliance of:

- A Left parties only
- B Right parties only
- C Different parties with diverse ideologies against Congress
- D Congress factions

Q3

Which of the following best describes the phrase "Aya Ram, Gaya Ram"?

- A Frequent change of political parties by elected representatives
- B A slogan used in the 1971 elections
- C A movement against price rise
- D A programme launched by Indira Gandhi

Q4

Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha and called for fresh elections in:

- A 1967
- B 1969
- C 1971
- D 1972

Q5

The main slogan used by the Grand Alliance in the 1971 election was:

- A Garibi Hatao
- B Indira Hatao
- C Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan
- D Congress Hatao

Q6

Which of the following was a feature of the new Congress under Indira Gandhi?

- A Strong party organisation with many factions
- B Greater centralisation of power
- C Collective factional leadership
- D Decline in support among disadvantaged groups

Answer Key →

Q1 C**Q2 C****Q3 A****Q4 C****Q5 B****Q6 B**

IMPORTANT EXAM ORIENTED QUESTIONS

Revise
Analyse
Answer Better!

1

Explain the factors that led to the decline of the Congress system.



2

Discuss the significance of the 1969 split in the Congress.



3

How did the 1971 general election lead to the restoration of the Congress system?



4

Analyse the differences between the old Congress and the new Congress under Indira Gandhi.



5

Why did coalition politics and defection become important features of Indian politics after 1967? Discuss their impact on political stability.



"Politics is not a game of words, but a commitment to a better future."

QUESTIONS
BUILD
PERSPECTIVE

ANSWERS

Model Answers
Key Points for Better Answers!



"Understand
Connect
Present Clearly!"



History
Explains
Today
and
Tomorrow.

1

Explain the factors that led to the decline of the Congress system.

Key Points

- Rise of regional parties and opposition unity.
- Decline of Congress organisation and internal factionalism.
- Socio-economic changes and growing aspirations.
- Erosion of Congress' ideological appeal.
- Impact of 1967 elections — loss of dominance in several states.



SAME QUESTIONS

BETTER ANSWERS

BRIGHTER SCORES

2

Discuss the significance of the 1969 split in the Congress.

Key Points

- Marked the end of the old Congress system.
- Division into Congress (O) and Congress (R).
- Struggle over leadership and control of the party.
- Indira Gandhi's assertion of authority and populist approach.
- Weakened organisational unity but strengthened Indira Gandhi's personal leadership.

**3**

How did the 1971 general election lead to the restoration of the Congress system?

Key Points

- Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha and sought a fresh mandate.
- Congress (R) projected "Garibi Hatao" and appealed to the poor.
- Grand Alliance campaigned on "Indira Hatao" but failed to attract the masses.
- Conakeed (R) won a decisive victory (352 seats).
- Restored Congress dominance at the national level.

**4**

Analyse the differences between the old Congress and the new Congress under Indira Gandhi.

Key Points

Old Congress

- Strong organisation
- Many factions
- Accommodation of diverse interests
- Collective leadership
- Broad social coalition

New Congress

- Weaker organisation
- Fewer factions
- Greater centralisation
- Dependence on Indira Gandhi's popularity
- Stronger support among poorer and disadvantaged groups

**5**

Why did coalition politics and defection become important after 1967? Discuss their impact on political stability.

Key Points

- No single party majority in several states after 1967.
- Formation of coalition governments (e.g. SVD).
- Frequent defections — "Aya Ram, Gaya Ram" (Gaya Lal).
- Ideological differences among coalition partners.
- Led to political instability and short-lived governments.



Good Answers Create Clearer Thinkers!

