

CUET · POLITICAL SCIENCE · CLASS XII · CODE 323

The Crisis of Democratic Order

CUET unit: Politics in India Since Independence — Era of One-Party Dominance, Challenges to and Restoration of Congress System (Emergency, 1977 elections, Janata interlude)

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Snapshot

- Traces the constitutional and political crisis culminating in the Emergency of 25 June 1975 — declared under Article 352 on the ground of "internal disturbance".
- Locates the trigger in the Gujarat–Bihar movements, the 1974 Railway Strike, the Allahabad High Court's invalidation of Indira Gandhi's election, and the executive–judiciary face-off after Kesavananda Bharati.
- Documents consequences — press censorship, preventive detention, suspension of Fundamental Rights, the 42nd Amendment, and the controversial habeas corpus ruling of April 1976.
- Ends with the 1977 verdict against Congress, the Janata Party experiment, its collapse, and Indira Gandhi's return in 1980 — establishing democracy's resilience and reshaping the party system.
- CUET treats this as the densest factual chapter of the book: dates (12 June 1975, 25 June 1975, 26 March 1977), Article 352, key actors (JP, Raj Narain, Justice J.M.L. Sinha, A.N. Ray, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, George Fernandes), and constitutional vocabulary (42nd Amendment, habeas corpus, preventive detention) are favourite stems.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

- **Background to Emergency.** Post-1967, Indira Gandhi had emerged as a towering leader after the 1971 Lok Sabha and 1972 State Assembly victories; her party and government had taken a much more pro-poor orientation. Yet party competition was bitter and polarised, and government–judiciary tensions grew over Parliament's power to amend Fundamental Rights and abridge property (NCERT §"Background to Emergency", p. 93). Many Congress dissenters and opposition leaders held that her style of functioning was undermining democratic institutions.
- **Economic context.** The slogan of **garibi hatao** (1971) failed to translate into improvement: the Bangladesh refugee influx of about 8 million, the 1971 war, U.S. aid cut-off, oil-price spikes after the 1973 Arab–Israel war, and inflation of **23% (1973)** and **30% (1974)** created mass hardship. Industrial growth was low; unemployment high; salaries of government employees were frozen as an austerity

measure; the 1972–73 monsoon failure cut foodgrain output by **8%** (NCERT §"Economic context", p. 93). The combined effect was widespread distress that fuelled mass protest.

- **Naxalite challenge.** Marxist-Leninist (later Maoist) Naxalite groups, especially strong in West Bengal, took up arms against the "capitalist order"; the State government took stringent measures to suppress them — NCERT records both the genuine grievance underlying Naxalism and the harsh police response (NCERT §"Economic context", p. 94).
- **Gujarat movement (January 1974).** Student agitation against rising prices, cooking-oil scarcity and corruption; opposition parties joined; the agitation became state-wide and President's Rule was imposed. After Morarji Desai's indefinite-fast threat, fresh Assembly elections were held in June 1975; Congress was defeated (NCERT §"Gujarat and Bihar movements", p. 94).
- **Bihar movement (March 1974).** Students invited Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) to lead a non-violent, nation-wide protest; JP gave the call for **Sampoorna Kranti (Total Revolution)** — social, economic and political — and demanded the dismissal of the Bihar Congress government. JP accepted leadership on the condition that the movement remain non-violent and not be limited to Bihar (NCERT §"Gujarat and Bihar movements", pp. 94–95).
- **JP's 1975 march & opposition unity.** In 1975 JP led one of the largest political rallies in the capital, backed by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Congress (O), Bharatiya Lok Dal, Socialist Party and others. He was projected as the alternative to Indira Gandhi — for the first time, an opposition platform was capable of attracting national support (NCERT §"Gujarat and Bihar movements", pp. 95–96).
- **Railway Strike, May 1974.** The National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle led by **George Fernandes** struck nationwide over bonus and service conditions. The government declared the strike illegal, deployed the territorial army to protect tracks, arrested leaders, and the strike was called off after **20 days** without settlement (NCERT §"Railway Strike of 1974", p. 96). The strike crystallised the regime's perception that opposition mobilisation was reaching dangerous proportions.
- **Conflict with judiciary.** Three constitutional issues — Parliament's power to abridge Fundamental Rights, to curtail the right to property, and to abridge FRs to give effect to Directive Principles — were rejected by the Supreme Court. The crisis culminated in **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**, which established the **basic structure doctrine** — Parliament can amend the Constitution but cannot alter its basic structure (NCERT §"Conflict with Judiciary", pp. 96–97).
- **Supersession of judges.** In April 1973, the day after the Kesavananda verdict, the government set aside the seniority of three judges and appointed **Justice A.N. Ray** as Chief Justice. The three superseded judges had ruled against the government. Talk of a "committed judiciary" and "committed bureaucracy" began — the idea that

judges and officials should align with the executive's vision (NCERT §"Conflict with Judiciary", p. 97).

- **Allahabad HC judgment.** On **12 June 1975**, **Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha** declared Indira Gandhi's 1971 Lok Sabha election from **Rae Bareli** invalid on the petition of socialist leader **Raj Narain**, on the ground that she had used government servants in her election campaign. She was disqualified for six years. The Supreme Court on **24 June** granted a partial stay: she could remain MP but could not participate in Lok Sabha proceedings or vote in the House (NCERT §"Declaration of Emergency", p. 97).
- **25 June 1975 build-up.** JP led a Ramlila Maidan rally announcing a nationwide **satyagraha** for the PM's resignation, and asking the army, police and government employees not to obey "illegal and immoral orders." The government read this as a call for revolt (NCERT §"Crisis and response", p. 97).
- **Proclamation of Emergency.** On the night of 25 June 1975, the PM recommended Emergency to President **Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed**, who issued the proclamation immediately under **Article 352** on the ground of "**internal disturbance**". Electricity to newspaper offices in Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg (Delhi) was cut after midnight; opposition leaders and dissenters were arrested in the early hours of 26 June; the Cabinet was only informed at a special meeting at 6 a.m. on 26 June, **after** the proclamation had been signed — a procedural irregularity that has been widely criticised (NCERT §"Declaration of Emergency", pp. 98, 101).
- **Effects of Emergency.** Federal distribution of powers was practically suspended; all powers concentrated in the Union; **Fundamental Rights were suspended** including the right to move the court for their restoration; **press censorship** was imposed (papers needed prior approval before publication); the **RSS and Jamait-e-Islami** were banned; strikes and public agitations were disallowed; many political workers who were not even members of the RSS or banned groups were arrested (NCERT §"Consequences", p. 101).
- **Preventive detention & habeas corpus.** The government made extensive use of **preventive detention** (arrest on apprehension of an offence rather than for one committed). Arrested workers could not challenge detention through **habeas corpus**. Several High Courts initially allowed habeas corpus petitions, ruling that even though FRs were suspended, the State could not deprive a person of life and liberty without authority of law. But in **April 1976** the Supreme Court's constitution bench overruled them and accepted the government's plea — effectively allowing the State to take away the right to life and liberty during Emergency. NCERT calls this "one of the most controversial judgments" of the Supreme Court (NCERT §"Consequences", p. 101).
- **Resistance.** The Indian Express and the Statesman protested censorship by leaving editorial spaces blank; **Seminar** and **Mainstream** chose to close down rather than submit. Kannada writer **Shivarama Karanth (Padma Bhushan)** and Hindi writer **Phanishwarnath Renu (Padma Shri)** returned their awards in protest. Many

journalists were arrested for writing against the Emergency, as were underground newsletter distributors. Open defiance, however, was rare; most people accepted what was happening with a mix of fear, indifference and (in some sections) approval (NCERT §"Consequences", pp. 101–102).

- **42nd Amendment & constitutional changes.** Elections of the PM, President and Vice-President were placed beyond court challenge; the **42nd Amendment** extended the legislatures' tenure from five to six years — a **permanent change**, not just for the Emergency period. During an Emergency, elections could be postponed by one year — effectively, the post-1971 Lok Sabha would need elections only by 1978 instead of 1976. The 42nd Amendment also placed restrictions on judicial review and inserted into the Preamble the words "Socialist," "Secular," and "Integrity" (NCERT §"Consequences", p. 102).
- **Lessons of Emergency.** Democracy was restored quickly — "it is extremely difficult to do away with democracy in India". Three lessons: (i) by the **44th Amendment**, 'internal' Emergency can now be proclaimed only on the ground of '**armed rebellion**', and the Cabinet's **written advice** to the President is now necessary; (ii) awareness of civil liberties grew, and civil-liberties organisations sprang up; (iii) the judiciary became more active in protecting civil liberties (NCERT §"Lessons of the Emergency", pp. 102–103).
- **Shah Commission.** NCERT highlights that the police and the administration became political instruments of the ruling party during the Emergency — vulnerable to political pressures — and that this remains a vulnerability of the system that the **Shah Commission of Inquiry (1977)**, appointed by the Janata government, brought out (NCERT §"Lessons of the Emergency", p. 103; also Exercise Q5, p. 111).
- **1977 elections.** Held in **March 1977** after 18 months of Emergency; opposition parties formed the **Janata Party** under JP's leadership; **Jagjivan Ram** floated the **Congress for Democracy**, later merged with Janata. Result: Janata + allies won **330 of 542** seats (Janata itself **295**); Congress fell to **154 seats and under 35% votes**. Indira Gandhi was defeated from Rae Bareilly, and **Sanjay Gandhi** from Amethi. The wave was massive in the north; Congress retained Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa and swept the south, where the Emergency had not been experienced as oppressively (NCERT §"Lok Sabha Elections, 1977", pp. 103–105). The election was effectively a referendum on the Emergency; the verdict was a clear "no".
- **Janata Government.** Three-way contest for PM among Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram; JP and J.B. Kripalani's intervention finally produced Morarji Desai as PM. The party lacked direction, leadership and a common programme. The Janata Party split when factions could not be held together; Morarji Desai lost majority within **28 months**; **Charan Singh** then formed a government with Congress's outside support and lasted about **four months** before Congress withdrew support. In the January **1980** elections, Congress under Indira Gandhi won **353 seats** and returned to power (NCERT §"Janata Government", pp. 105–108).

- **Legacy.** Congress shed its umbrella character and identified with one ideology and one leader. Opposition learned the lesson of unity and adopted the strategy of '**non-Congressism**', which became central to coalition politics in subsequent decades. The welfare of backward castes began entering politics — the **Mandal Commission** was appointed by the Janata government, an issue that would dominate later politics (NCERT §"Legacy", pp. 108–109).
- **Final assessment.** The Emergency was both a constitutional crisis (over Parliament–Judiciary jurisdiction) and a deeper political crisis — the ruling party with absolute majority chose to suspend democratic norms, exposing the tension between **institution-based** democracy and **democracy of mass protest**. NCERT leaves the assessment of the relative responsibility of the government and the opposition to the reader, presenting both positions: the government's claim that there was a serious law-and-order breakdown, and the opposition's claim that this was an ordinary protest movement that could have been handled politically (NCERT §"Legacy", pp. 109–110).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Emergency (Article 352)	A constitutional state declared by the President on grounds of external threat or — pre-44th-Amendment — "internal disturbance"; concentrates powers in the Union and permits curtailment of Fundamental Rights	98
Sampoorna Kranti (Total Revolution)	JP's 1974 call for transformation in social, economic and political spheres to establish "true democracy"	94
Garibi hatao	Indira Gandhi's 1971 election slogan to remove poverty	93
Bihar Movement	Student-led 1974 movement that invited JP and demanded dismissal of the Bihar Congress government	94
Gujarat Movement	January 1974 anti-price-rise student movement that triggered President's Rule in Gujarat	94
Committed judiciary / bureaucracy	Idea that judges and officials should be loyal to the executive/legislature's vision — invoked by Indira-era loyalists	96–97
Kesavananda Bharati (1973)	Supreme Court judgment that established the basic structure doctrine	97
Basic structure doctrine	Parliament can amend the Constitution but cannot alter its basic structure	97
Supersession of judges (1973)	Appointment of Justice A.N. Ray as CJI by superseding three senior judges who had ruled against the government	97
Preventive detention	Arrest and detention not for any offence committed, but on apprehension that one may commit an offence	101

Term	Definition	Page
Habeas corpus	Writ ordering production of an arrested person before a court; challenge to detention	101
Press censorship	Requirement that newspapers obtain prior government approval for material to be published	101
42nd Amendment (1976)	Wide-ranging amendment passed during Emergency; extended legislatures' tenure from 5 to 6 years and curtailed judicial review	102
44th Amendment	Post-Emergency amendment that replaced "internal disturbance" with "armed rebellion" as a ground for Emergency, and made Cabinet's written advice mandatory	102–103
Internal disturbance	Pre-44th-Amendment ground used to proclaim Emergency on 25 June 1975	98
Armed rebellion	Post-44th-Amendment ground for proclaiming internal Emergency	102
Janata Party	1977 merger of Bharatiya Lok Dal, Congress (O), Jana Sangh, Socialist Party under JP's leadership	103
Congress for Democracy	Group floated by Jagjivan Ram in 1977; merged with Janata	103
Non-Congressism	Strategy of opposition parties to avoid splitting non-Congress votes by uniting against Congress	108
Mandal Commission	Backward-classes commission appointed by the Janata government	109
Shah Commission	Commission of inquiry appointed by the Janata government in 1977 to inquire into Emergency excesses	111 (Exercise Q5)
Civil liberties organisations	Rights groups (PUCL, PUDR) that emerged in the aftermath of the Emergency to monitor State action	103
Rae Bareli	Indira Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency, lost to Raj Narain in 1977	97, 104
Amethi	Sanjay Gandhi's Lok Sabha constituency, lost in 1977	104

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

- **Editorial of Nai Dunia, 27 June 1975** — blank editorial column as protest against censorship (NCERT p. 92).
- **Abu cartoon "PM says..."** — economic distress, p. 93.
- **R.K. Laxman cartoon, Times of India 16 April 1974** — JP and the Bihar movement, p. 95.

- **R.K. Laxman cartoon**, Times of India **26 June 1975** — D.K. Barooah behind the chair, captures impending crisis (pp. 98–99).
- **R.K. Laxman cartoon**, Times of India **29 March 1977** — common man with Jagjivan Ram, Morarji Desai, Charan Singh and Atal Behari Vajpayee after the 1977 verdict (p. 104).
- **Map of 1977 election results** — Congress wiped out in north, retained Maharashtra/Gujarat/Orissa/south (p. 106).
- **Cartoon "Emergency was like a vaccination against dictatorship"** — Janata Party faction cartoons (p. 107).
- **Profiles to recognise** — Jayaprakash Narayan (1902–1979), Morarji Desai (1896–1995), Charan Singh (1902–1987), Jagjivan Ram (1908–1986).
- **Sequence chain**: 12 June 1975 Allahabad HC verdict → 24 June 1975 SC partial stay → 25 June 1975 Ramlila Maidan rally → 25–26 June 1975 Emergency proclaimed → April 1976 SC habeas corpus ruling → March 1977 elections → 1980 Indira returns.

2.5 Key Articles / Treaties / Events

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
Article 352	Constitutional basis for proclamation of Emergency	p. 98
Article 226 / 32	Writs suspended during the Emergency	p. 101
Kesavananda Bharati v Kerala, 1973	Basic-structure doctrine	p. 97
Supersession of judges, April 1973	A. N. Ray made CJI over three senior judges	p. 97
Gujarat Movement, January 1974	Anti-price-rise student agitation	p. 94
Bihar Movement, March 1974	JP-led; Sampurna Kranti call	p. 94
Railway Strike, May 1974	Led by George Fernandes; called off after 20 days	p. 96
Pokhran-I nuclear test, May 1974	Indira's strategic boost	(referenced cross-chapter)
Allahabad HC verdict, 12 June 1975	Justice J. M. L. Sinha invalidates Indira's Rae Bareli election	p. 97
Supreme Court partial stay, 24 June 1975	Indira allowed to remain MP but not vote	p. 97
Emergency proclaimed, 25 June 1975	Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed signs late at night	p. 98

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
April 1976 habeas corpus ruling	SC overruled HCs; deprivation of life/liberty held permissible	p. 101
42nd Amendment, 1976	Lok Sabha term 5→6; "Socialist/Secular/Integrity" inserted in Preamble	p. 102
March 1977 General Election	Janata sweep (330/542); Congress reduced to 154	p. 104
Janata Party formed	Merger of BLD, Cong (O), Jana Sangh, Socialist Party	p. 103
Morarji Desai PM, 24 March 1977	First non-Congress PM	p. 105
Shah Commission, 1977	Inquiry into Emergency excesses	p. 111
44th Amendment, 1978	"Internal disturbance" replaced by "armed rebellion"; Cabinet's written advice mandatory	pp. 102–103
Mandal Commission appointed (1979 — by Janata)	Backward-classes commission	p. 109
Charan Singh PM	4-month government with Congress's outside support	p. 105
January 1980 Election	Congress wins 353 seats; Indira returns	p. 105

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- The Allahabad HC verdict was delivered by **Justice J.M.L. Sinha (Jagmohan Lal Sinha)** on **12 June 1975**, on a petition by **Raj Narain** — not by the Supreme Court. NTA loves swapping these.
- The Emergency was declared under **Article 352** on the ground of "**internal disturbance**" — not "armed rebellion". The ground was changed to "armed rebellion" only by the 44th Amendment **after** the Emergency, and NCERT signals this rectification (p. 102).
- The Railway Strike of 1974 was led by **George Fernandes** (National Coordination Committee for Railwaymen's Struggle) — not by JP, though JP led the broader Bihar movement.
- The **42nd Amendment** extended the legislature's tenure from **5 to 6 years** — and this was a **permanent** change, not limited to the Emergency (NCERT is explicit).
- The Supreme Court's controversial habeas corpus ruling came in **April 1976**, by a **constitution bench** that **overruled** the High Courts — not the High Courts ruling against citizens.

- Congress retained the **southern states, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa** in 1977 — the "anti-Emergency wave" was a north-Indian phenomenon.
- The Janata government appointed the **Mandal Commission** — backward-class reservations enter politics from this moment, not from 1990 alone.
- **Sanjay Gandhi lost from Amethi** in 1977 (not Rae Bareilly — that was Indira's seat).
- **Cabinet informed only at 6 a.m. on 26 June** — after the proclamation had already been signed by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.
- Janata won **295** seats; with allies it crossed to **330**; Congress fell to **154** with under **35%** votes — three different numbers, often mixed up.
- Charan Singh's government lasted about **4 months** (with Congress's outside support); Morarji's government lasted **28 months** before losing majority.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is one of the most heavily tested in the Class XII Political Science book — CUET 2023–25 papers have consistently drawn 2–3 direct MCQs on Article 352, the Allahabad HC verdict (date, judge, petitioner), the 42nd Amendment (5-to-6 years), JP's *Sampoorna Kranti*, the 1977 election numbers, and the leaders of the Janata interlude (Morarji Desai, Charan Singh, Jagjivan Ram). Statement-based and match-the-following questions on the Gujarat–Bihar movements, the Railway Strike (George Fernandes) and the Shah Commission are recurring formats.

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.9 (CUET 2023) Arrange the following in chronological order: A. Student agitation in Gujarat against rising prices B. Indo-Pakistan War (Bangladesh crisis) C. Bihar student protest against unemployment and corruption D. Peasant uprising in Naxalbari E. Railway strike
Options:

- A) D, A, B, C, E B) E, B, A, C, D C) D, B, A, C, E D) A, B, E, C, D **Tests:** Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.10 (CUET 2023) Name the President of India who proclaimed the Emergency in 1975.

- A) Dr. Rajendra Prasad B) Lal Bahadur Shastri C) Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed D) V. V. Giri
Tests: Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.11 (CUET 2023) Match List I with List II: A. Morarji Desai B. Jagjivan Ram C. Chaudhary Charan Singh D. P. C. Shah I. Prime Minister of India (1979–1980) II. Chief

Justice of Supreme Court III. Deputy Prime Minister (1967–1969) IV. Deputy Prime Minister (1977–1979) Options:

- A) A-I, B-III, C-II, D-IV B) A-III, B-IV, C-I, D-II C) A-III, B-I, C-II, D-IV D) A-IV, B-I, C-II, D-III

Tests: Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2024 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.15 (CUET 2024) The Mandal Commission was appointed by _____ Government at the Centre.

- A) Indian National Congress Party B) Bharatiya Janata Party C) Janata Party D) Samajwadi Party

Tests: Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.16 (CUET 2024) In 1974, nationwide strike by all the employees of the Railways was led by:

- A) Jayaprakash Narayan B) Charu Majumdar C) George Fernandes D) Indira Gandhi

Tests: Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key

CUET 2025 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.16 (CUET 2025) Match the following movements with their years: Movement Year
Gujarat Movement May 1974 Bihar Movement 1979 Assam Movement March 1974
Railway Strike January 1974 Options:

- A) A-IV, B-III, C-II, D-I B) A-III, B-II, C-I, D-IV C) A-IV, B-II, C-I, D-III D) A-III, B-IV, C-I, D-II

Tests: Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.22 (CUET 2025) Arrange the following events chronologically: (A) Naxalite uprising in Darjeeling hills (B) JP movement rally in Delhi (C) Shah Commission appointed (D) Supreme Court decided Kesavananda Bharati case Options:

- A) (A), (B), (C), (D) B) (B), (A), (C), (D) C) (A), (D), (B), (C) D) (C), (B), (A), (D)

Tests: Crisis of democratic order **Answer:** Not in extracted key