Indira Gandhi is the most outstanding political figure during the post-independence period. In many ways she outshone her father, who indeed was the architect of Indian foreign policy. The essential difference between Pandit Nehru and Mrs. Gandhi, however, lay in their approach to politics and political decisions. Whereas Pandit Nehru could never extricate himself from firm ideological positions, Mrs. Gandhi had mastered the art of realpolitik. Where Pandit Nehru tended to be tentative—the Sino-Indian War of 1962—Mrs. Gandhi was decisive—the Indo-Pak war of 1971. All the same, Mrs. Gandhi had imbibed from her father the traits of a charismatic and popular leader who identified herself with the masses. The most eventful period in Mrs. Gandhi's career was the decade of the seventies, wherein she not only roped in Soviet Union to stand by India in all its difficulties, but also successfully projected India on the international scene.

During the seventies I had attended many sessions of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha from the visitor's gallery and therefore had the opportunity of seeing Mrs. Gandhi from very close quarters. Her command over the proceedings of the Lok Sabha when the Morarji Desai Government was out to drive her away from the House after her victory from Chikmagalur, to say the least, was masterly. Soon I had a rare chance of seeing Mrs. Gandhi at her residence, 12, Willingdon Crescent, with my father, who had been summoned by her to discuss some political matters pertaining to Orissa. The meeting was attended by among others, by Mr. Bhisma Narayan Singh and late Vashpal...
Kapur. Behind the politician I perceived a very warm person who enquired about my career and whether I had any inclination to join politics. But what enthralled me was her deep personal and informal behaviour when she came down to the portico to wave us 'good-bye'.

It was just co-incidental that when I joined as lecturer in Revenshaw College, Cuttack, the Head of the Department Professor Altaf Hussain asked me to teach International Relations at the Post-Graduate level. I made an instant decision that if ever I were to work on a Ph.D dissertation, I would take up Mrs.Gandhi as the central figure in South Asian politics and the concurrent emergence of Indo-Soviet friendship. In attempting this work I have tried as far as possible to make an objective assessment of the evolution, development and fruition of Indo-Soviet relations.

A personal factor that influenced me to make this attempt was my father's political career and commitments which were inextricably woven into the Congress, his regards for Mrs.Gandhi and his admiration for Soviet Union. A product of the thirties he was deeply influenced by Pandit Nehru's views on socialism and hence became an ardent admirer of the Soviet Union. His first visit to the Soviet Union was in 1955 as the manager of the Indian Football team when he was Works Minister in the N.K.Chowdhury Cabinet. In 1964 he became the founder-President of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society in Orissa. During his presidentship a number of cultural agreements were signed between the Soviet Union and India and a number of cultural delegations from the Soviet Union visited Cuttack. Notable among the
agreements signed were the Cultural Relationship and Cooperation Treaty between the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society and the Soviet-India Cultural Society in 1966. The agreement was signed by K.P.S. Menon and the noted Indologist Professor Cheleisev in the presence of the Soviet Ambassador to India Smirnov and Air Marshall Jagjit Singh Arora. In 1970 the Lenin Centenary was celebrated in Cuttack at the Barabati Stadium under the auspices of ISCUS. It was attended by Jagjivan Ram, K.P.S. Menon K.D. Malaviya, Romesh Chandra, Aruna Asaf Ali, the Soviet Ambassador Pegov and the leader of the Soviet cultural delegation Nina Popova. Of the several cultural delegations that visited Cuttack, the one that was graced by Valentina Tereshkova was the most outstanding. In 1974, my father was elected to the Rajya Sabha and in July 1980 he was nominated to lead the Indian Parliamentary delegation for the Moscow Olympics. On 17 July 1980, Mrs. Gandhi summoned him to her office and specifically asked him to take note of two important matters. The first pertained to a thorough observation of the management and conduct of the Olympics, which could be replicated in India for the conduct of Asiad'82, and the second point she highlighted was her utter disappointment with the CPI. Mrs. Gandhi asked him to impress upon the Soviet leaders-whoever came his way - that the CPI had been playing a very, 'divisive' role in India. His diaries are replete with praise for the Soviet people, their culture and the way the Russians had been conducting the Olympics. 'I have no regrets that I have not seen the Olympics at either Tokyo or Munich for, what I am seeing here in Moscow is the best', was his last comment. He expired in Moscow on
23 July 1980’. His death at the Olympics was perhaps the greatest irony of his ‘life’. An intense lover of sports - he pioneered the construction of one of the finest composite sports complex in the country, the Barabati Stadium, he was the Senior Vice-President of the Board of Control for Cricket in India and the Senior Vice-President of the Indian Olympic Association - he died at the 'paradise' of all sports-lovers, the Olympics, and in the country he admired, the Soviet Union. Mrs.Gandhi, despite her great personal tragedy - Sanjay Gandhi had died on 23, June 1980 - asked the Indian Ambassador in Moscow I.K. Gujral to send my father’s body back to India at the earliest. She also asked the AICC to charter a defence aircraft to carry his body to Cuttack.

While working on this project I have received tremendous encouragement from my mother who is a constant source of inspiration.

My uncle Mr.A.C.Mahanti and my aunt would never allow me any rest and kept on reminding me 'finish your work as soon as possible'. I also owe much to every single member of my family. Mr.K.C.Das my father's colleague, to whom I have turned in hours of need has also been a great source of inspiration.

However, this work could never have been complete without the help, advice and guidance of my supervisor Dr.H.S.Vasudevan. I hope I have lived upto his expectations. Dr.David Baker, St.Stephen's College, Delhi - a family friend - has been diligently pursuing my progress since the day I began my work. He is an unending source of
inspiration and affection. I cannot conceive of this project without his encouragement. My humble regards are due to Professor M.N.Das who constantly encouraged me. I must express my deep and sincere feelings to my revered teacher Dr.H.S.Patnaik, Utkal University, who always says he has great confidence in my capabilities. I hope I have not belied his trust. My deep sense of gratitude are also due to the Head of the Department of History, Ravenshaw College, Dr.G.C.Patnaik and my colleagues Mr.A.K.Behera and Dr.S.P.Pani. I shall be failing in my duties if I do not mention the help rendered to me by my students Prakash Kumar Jena, Umakant Mishra and Santosh Kumar Sethi. Each one of them has gone out of his way to help me. Other students like Sridhar, Narendra, Umakant Raj and Fahim have always been at my back reminding me, 'Sir, you must do it'. I must express my profound sense of gratitude to Dr. Mohammed B. Alam of Midway College, Kentucky, United States, who took all pains to send me photostat copies of American Congressional Records and other important materials which were so vital for this work. I am also indebted to Mr.Subhakanta Behera, I.F.S., Under Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, for having provided me access to the Ministry and for furnishing me with de-classified material. Mr. G.S.Patnaik, Secretary ISCVS, Orisa, who also teaches Russian, took all pains in reading out reports from Pravda and Izvestia. My warm regards are due to him. Two extremely courteous persons - my colleagues whom I can never forget for the help they rendered me while I was working at the Teen Murti, New Delhi, are Mr.B.K.Bohidar and Mrs.S.Bohidar.
Most importantly I must thank Mr. Santosh Kumar Moharana who worked very hard for typing this manuscript.

Finally, I must take this opportunity to say that the one person who has been deeply involved in my work and without whose help encouragement and sustained support this work could never have been through is my friend Dr. Jayant Rath. I owe him so much which are beyond words and definition.

The topic is diverse and multi-faceted and it has been tough working on it. Yet, I must say I have enjoyed every bit of it. I have visited several libraries in Delhi and I have benefitted from each one of them. The Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti, is a store-house of knowledge. I have made extensive use of the facilities available in this library. Besides the IDSA library, the Sapru House library, Barakhamba Road, New Delhi the India International Centre, the American Centre, the Jawaharlal Nehru University library, the Parliament House Library the Ministry of External Affairs, South Block, New Delhi and the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Janpath, New Delhi, have all been of great help. When I started my work Soviet Union was still a super power and Gorbachev's 'glasnost' and 'perestroika', were in full swing. Hardly could any one have foreseen the collapse of the Soviet Union. Like someone has rightly said that while chiselling the Communist monolith into a more humane form the sculptor himself cracked, so with the fall of Gorbachev came the dissolution of the
mightily Soviet empire so assiduously built after the Bolshevik triumph of 1917. India's relations with Russia, however, should not be neglected for, after all, Russia is a "sleeping giant" which would soon wake up to fulfil its global commitments.

Karanveer Ahanta