

Seix Barra!

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# The Red Sari

**This is a machine translation**

First edition: October 2008  
Second impression: October 2008  
Third impression: November 2008  
Fourth impression: December 2008  
Fifth impression: January 2009  
Sixth impression: January 2009

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for all the world:

© PUBLISHING 5ErX BARRAL, S. A., 2008, 2009

Avda. Diagonal, 662-664 - 08034 Barcelona

www.seix - barral.es

ISBN-: 978-84-322-3197-7

Legal deposit: M. 58.902 - 2008

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*You were born with this book and to you I dedicate it, Olivia*

# OPENING

*Conductance of the darkneses to the light, the death to immortality.*  
**Veda**

# 1

New Delhi, 24 of May of 1991.

Sonia Gandhi is not able to think that the man of his life is dead, that no longer will feel his caresses, nor the heat of its kisses. That it will not return to see that so sweet smile that a day snatched the heart to him. Everything has been so fast, so brutal, so unexpected that still it does not assimilate it. His husband has been falling in terrorist attack for two days. Rajiv was called Gandhi, he has been prime minister, and it was to point to return to be it, according to the surveys, if its electoral campaign had not been truncated of so tragic way. It was forty and six years old.

Today, the capital of India is had to dismiss the rest of this illustrious son the mother country. Féretro that contains the body is tended in the great hall Teen Murti House, the residence palaciega where its childhood lived when his grandfathers, Jawaharlal Nehru, were prime minister of India. He is palacete colonial, white, surrounded by a park with great tamarinds and flamboyanes, whose red flowers emphasize on a yellowish turf of as much heat. Originally designed to lodge to the British Commander-in-chief of a branch of the armed forces, later of independence it happened to be the residence of the maximum agent chief executive of the new India nation. Nehru settled there, next to his Indira daughter and her grandsons. To the gardeners, cooks and other members of the service who today, next to thousands of compatriots, come to render tribute to the assassinated leader, cost to them to think that the mortal rest that they lie in this ardent chapel they are those of that boy who played the hiding place in those rooms great like caves, with ceilings of six meters of height. It seems to them that still the echo of its laughter resonates when it pursued persecuting to its brother by those long corridors, while their grandfathers and his mother took care of some head of government in one of the halls.

A great photo of Rajiv with a white garland is placed on féretro surrounded in a flag saffron, green white and, the national flags. Its full smile of freshness is the last image which the thousands of people who march past by Teen Murti House, in spite of the 43 degrees take in the memory that mercury marks. It is the image that also will take their relatives, because the body of this man who the women found so handsome has been so destroyed that the doctors, in spite of to have tried to reconstruct it, have not been able to give form to the amorphous mass of meat that has left the pump. They say that in the effort to embalsamar to him, one of them faint. So that they have been limited to put cotton and bandage, and much ice so that it holds until the day of the cremation.

“Please, they are careful, do not make damage”, says to its widow using a pain face to him to which they periodically come to replace ice because the heat raises, inexorably, and it will continue doing it until the first days of July, until which they unload monzónicas rains. Its only consolation - that had been able well to finish equal if it had accompanied to him, as so many times for it does not serve to him because at this moment it

wanted to also die. It wanted to be with him, always with him, here and in the eternity. It wanted to him more than to itself.

It is certain, has its children. The small one, Priyanka, of nineteen years, colored person, discharge, is a strong girl as much of character as physically. One has taken care of the preparations of the funerales and is very pending of its mother. It insists to him for which it eats something, but the simple evocación of food produces nauseas to him. It has been two days with water, coffee and juice of Lima. Her old friend the asthma, that that accompanies to him since she was very young, has returned to appear. Two nights back, when they notified to him that his husband had been victim of an attack, had a so violent crisis that it almost lost the knowledge. Her daughter looked for her antihistamine ones to him and she occurred them, although she was not able to console it. It fears that of the heat and the pain one suffocates again.

Rahul, the greater one, is veintiún years old, and finishes arriving from Harvard, where it attends his studies. In its son it recognizes its husband: the same smooth factions, the same smile, the same expression of kindness. She watches to him with infinite tenderness. Young what seems to him to ignite the funeral pyre of their father, as it corresponds to him to the son according to the Hindu tradition.

To the one of afternoon, the arrival of three generals, representatives of its respective armies, indicates the beginning official of the funeral of State. Just before the military raise féretro with the aid of Rahul and other friends of the family, Priyanka approaches to caress it, as if it thus wanted to take leave of his father before this one undertakes the last trip. Her mother, who been has occupied in saluting to so many personalities, stays to certain distance, watching the scene with tears in the eyes. It goes dressed in sari white unpollluted, as it corresponds to the widows in India. It takes more than half of its life living here, so India feels. In last February, it celebrated its twenty-three years of marriage with Rajiv having supper in a restaurant in Tehran, where it accompanied to him in an official trip. It continues being very handsome, like was it to the eighteen years, when it knew him. The black hair, grained of white incipientes, carefully is combed backwards, gathered in a monkey and is covered by an end of sari. If they were not swollen by the weeping, their eyes would be great. They are of dark brown color, with long eyebrows finely shaved. It has the straight nose, the fleshy lips, the very white skin and a marked affluent jaw. Today it seems one of those afflicted heroins of an overproduction of the Indian cinema, although their silhouette and its arrogant bearing evoke some goddess of the Roman pantheon, perhaps because sari that takes with great soltura seems to the túnicas of the women of the antiquity. Or perhaps by its physicist. He has been born and servant in Italy has itself. Its name as a single person is Sonia Maino, although they know like Sonia Gandhi, now the widow of Rajiv.

Than more average million people they defy the heat to see pass the courtship funeral that one goes to the place of the cremation, to a

distance of about ten kilometers, behind the walls that the emperors mogoles erected to protect to the old Delhi, in splendid gardens located to borders of the Yamuna river. Escorted by five squads of thirty and three soldiers each one, the platform on wheels that féretro adorned with calendulas takes is towed by a military truck also place setting of flowers. In the sidewalks of its interior they go seated the chiefs of staff. They follow the automobiles to him that transport the family. Some peculiar one guesses right to see Sonia take off its enormous sun glasses to go a handkerchief through the face and, with trembly hand, to dry the tears. The courtship lines up the Rajpath avenue, bordered of well-taken care of gardens where generations of delhiitas have taken a walk in the shade of their great trees, in their majority jambules of more than one hundred years, with black fruits like higos. Most of trees they were planted to fight against the heat, when the English decided to make of Delhi the new capital of the Empire in damage of Calcuta. They raised to an pleasant city garden with wide avenues and huge perspective, as it corresponded to one imperial capital. The great central Vista of Rajpath, rebosante of a multitude carrying clavelinas oranges, the sacred color of the Hindus, now brings memories to him to Sonia of a past of happiness, so next in the time and nevertheless so distant... In this same avenue and in front of the Door of India, local version of the arc of Parisian triumph, was last the 26 of January, day of the national celebration, being present at the military parade next to Rajiv... How many times has been present at it? Almost so many as years take in India. All a life. A life that finishes.

In order to add sarcasm to the tragedy, its car stops and it is not able to start again. The motors suffer at that rate with this temperature and. Sonia and his children leave the vehicle and the multitude rushes itself immediately on them, forcing the Black Cats, the special commandos of security dressed black, to unfold quickly and to form a human chain to protect to them while they change of automobile. Soon the courtship starts again, to the rhythmic rate of the honor guards. Later, the narrow streets near Connaught Place, the multitude becomes human tide ready to invade it everything, as if it wanted to devour the courtship, and the security system is with great difficulty able to maintain it to ray. The faces of that multitude show exhaustion, they drip to per them of sweat, and the glances of black eyes stop before four full military trucks of journalists of the entire world. Old men and women, children and with semblantes of grief and tears in the eyes throw petals of flowers to féretro.

The courtship arrives at the place of the four cremation to and average from afternoon, with one hour of delay on the predicted schedule. There is as much people which today parterres is not seen flowery, only the great trees, like sentries of the eternity who project their benevolent shade on the assistants, many dresses with black suit, like John Major or the prince of Wales, others of military uniform, like Yasser Arafat, all chorreando sweat. The funeral pyre composed by ten quintals of wood is ready. Behind, in a platform specially constructed for the occasion that dominates the pyre,

the nearest relatives are placed . To about three hundred meters of distance towards the north are the mausoleos of Nehru and his Indira daughter, getting up in the exact location where their cremations took place, and that already never will be able to be destined to another use, so and as it indicates the tradition. Rajiv will have his soon, in stone worked with form of leaf of loto. The family reunited in the death.

Soldiers remove the body from Rajiv of féretro and they place it on the funeral pyre, the head oriented towards the north, according to the ritual. Soon, the generals of the three armies carefully fold the flag that surrounds the mutilated corpse and cut the cords of the white shroud that retains it. The family is standing , elbow with elbow. The priest, old with beards luengas and white like the snow that seems removed from an old story, sets the standards of the Vedaic rites and says one short oration: "Condúceme of the unreal thing to the real thing, the darkneses to the light, the death to immortality... " An old one is known: also he presided over the funerales of Indira. To Rahul, white dress with one kurta, gives a small water full jar to him sagrada of the Ganges. The young person, barefoot, crestfallen and become absorbed in thought after his black paste glasses, gives three returns to the pyre while she is spilling drops on his father, fulfilling therefore the purifying rite of the soul. Soon one kneels down before its rest and it cries on the inside, without nobody sees him. It cries by a father who always was tolerant and compasivo and that adored its children. They bring forth dry tears of a wound that, intuits, never will heal. Their mother and her Priyanka sister, whose worthy serenity affects to the presents, approach the pyre and meticulously place trunks of wood of sándalo and accounts of rosaría on the body, in gestures that are recorded by the televisions of the entire world.

The hour arrives to take leave. Sonia deposits an offering on the body to the height of the heart. It is done of camphor, cardamom, nail and sugar and assumes that it contributes to eradicate the imperfections of the soul. Soon it touches to the feet in signal of veneration, as it is custom in India, together its hands to him to the height of the chest, one inclines for the last time before its husband and one retires. Through the television cameras, the world discovers this stoic woman that Kennedy remembers before to Jacqueline twenty-eight years in Arlington. Five and the twenty of afternoon are.

Five minutes later, his Rahul son, serious and decided, gives three returns to the pyre before planting the ignited torch that takes in the hand between the wood trunks of sándalo. The pulse does not shake to him: he is his to have of good son to help to that the soul of its father is freed of its mortal wrapper and reaches the sky. During seconds, it seems that the time stops. One does not see smoke nor flames, only hear the Vedaic songs between the multitude. Sonia has returned to protect the face behind his sun glasses. That they do not see it cry. It is necessary to stay finds out, since it has done it until now, costs what costs. It finds out as Rajiv stayed when it was called on to him to ignite the funeral pyre of his

Indira mother Gandhi, only seven years ago, while the small Rahul cried in its arms. It has been finding out soon like the own Indira when it attended the cremation of its Jawaharlal father Nehru, and to the one its son Sanjay, its right eye, its heir designated, died when crashing its small plane a sunny morning of Sunday, for already eleven years. A date that Sonia cannot forget because as of that day nothing returned to be like before.

It has had to remove forces from deepest of its being being today here, because the Hindu priests refused to that she was present at the cremation. It is not custom that the widow attends, less still if it is of another religion. But in that Sonia one was inflexible. It reacted since her Indira mother-in-law had done it, not letting itself dominate neither by prejudices nor by archaic customs. Under no concept it would remain in house while the entire world was going to attend the second death of its husband. Thus it said it to the organizers of the funeral. Nor at least it had to threaten taking to the case to the Maxima authority to them of the country because before the force of its determination, they were climbed down. Sonia Gandhi deserves an exception well.

But now it is necessary to be to the height. Not to vacillate, not to desmayar themselves, not to decay. To continue living, although is difficult to do it when what one wants it is to die. What difficult not to let itself drown by the emotion when the Vedaic psalms take step to safe of tube and soldiers, perfectly formed, presents/displays their arms and aims at the ground, in mourning signal, doing to sound their bugles. When the dignitaries arrived from the entire world, the generals with colorful his chamarras of as much decoration and the representatives of the Indian government, with their clothes of cotton wrinkled and soaked after to have waited for as much time in the dog days, rise in unison and they remain immovable, of stone, in a brief and last tribute. When the friends, come from Europe and America to give the last good bye, are not able to contain the weeping. Sonia recognizes among them Christian von Stieglitz, the friend who presented/displayed to him to Rajiv when they were students in Cambridge, and that has come accompanied To pound, its Spanish woman.

And soon the murmur that raises suddenly, like a ground swell that comes from distant spot, the borders of the city and perhaps of the four corners of the immense country, and that becomes a single shout, frightful, guttural, the shout of thousands of throats that seem to become aware from the irreversibilidad of the death when the bonfire pledges suddenly in an explosion of flames and in few minutes it surrounds the shroud in a fatal hug. Rahul takes steps towards back. Sonia staggers. Her daughter passes the arm to him over shoulders and she maintains it until she recovers forces. Through wall of flames, the three attend old and tremendous the spectacle to see how the person that they want more consumes and she becomes ashes. It is like another death, slow, penetrating, so that the alive ones always remember that nobody escapes to the inevitable thing of the destiny. Because it is a death that enters by the five senses. The burned scent to, the diaphanous colors of the alive ones behind the burning air that



raise of the bonfire raising ash eddies, the flavor to sweat, dust and to smoke that the lips are had left patch, and soon the shouts of “ Alive Rajiv Gandhi” that they appear of the multitude they conform a renewed and eternal scene simultaneously. As the flames ascend, Rahul is arranged to carry out the last part of the ritual Armed of a bamboo wood of about three meters in length, gives a symbolic blow to the skull of its father, so that its soul ascends to the sky awaiting its next reincarnation.

For Sonia, words do not exist to describe what it is seeing, the staging of the atrocious feeling of loss that tears it on the inside, as if an invincible force was destroying the entrails to him. Never since at this moment it has understood the deep meaning of this ancestral custom Remembers that it made a face of misfortune when, nothing else to arrive at India, it found out the existence sati. What horror, what barbarism! , it thought. Formerly, the town adored the widows who had the value of throwing themselves to the funeral pyre of the husband to undertake next to the being loved the trip towards the eternity. Those that they were given to the flames heroically they happened to be considered like divinities and to being venerated like such during years, some during centuries. The rite of sati, that has its origin in the noble families of the Rajput, the chaste single-breasted uniform jacket of the India of the North, soon became popular to the humblest classes, and finished corrupting. The English prohibited it, as soon also the first government made democratic of India, by the abuses that were committed in their name. But in the origin, to become sati was a test of supreme love that it only can include/understand a woman when it sees burn the corpse with the husband who adores. Like Sonia at this moment, who sees the fire like a liberation, like the only way to end that so total pain that it obstructs its soul.

“It reacts”, is said to itself. It is not necessary to let itself drag by the death. The life is a fight, knows she well to it. The physical contact with its children comforts it. Then, with renewed forces, they bring forth found feelings: justice anxieties , desires of revancha reason why have made their husband, and a deep revolt because what it has happened he is unacceptable. Had been able to avoid? , it is asked incessantly. She tried in the measurement of her possibilities, scrutinizing the faces of all those that approached their husband in the electoral meetings, trying to guess the revealing bulk of a weapon under a shirt, or the suspicious gesture of a potential assassin. Because it always knew that something could happen thus. It knew it from the day in that Rajiv yielded to the request of its mother, Indira Gandhi, then prime minister, and put in policy. For that reason, when two days ago less it sounded the telephone eleven to the ten at night, one hour so unusual, Sonia occurred the return in the bed and she covered the ears like protecting itself of the blow that knew was on the verge of receiving. The worse news of its life was at heart the awaited news. The era still more since Sonia found out that the government had retired to Rajiv the degree of Maxima security that corresponded to him for being prime minister. In the bureaucratic slang, it had category Z, and that gave right the

protection of SPG (Special Protection Group), which had protected to him of the terrorist attack. So that they retired it, no matter how much it demanded it? By laziness? Or because that tried "forgetfulness" satisfied the aims with its political adversaries?

A dry, hard, indescribable noise, gives back it to the reality. It sounds like a shot. Or a small explosion. All those that have attended a cremation know that it is. They lower to the head others watch the sky, others so are captivated by the spectacle that seem hypnotized and continue watching. The skull has exploded by effect of the pressure of the heat. The soul of the deceased already is free. The ritual has finished. People send petals of flowers to the flames, while another disturbing vision arises. The long and fine hands that equal caressed their children as they repaired to an electronic device ° signed international agreements are in the open, and show black fingers who raise themselves and they twist, in a heartrending goodbye from beyond. Good bye, until always.

Sonia breaks in sobs. Where is the consolation? In what God it is necessary to look for it? What God allows that a good man as Rajiv jumps in thousand pieces by the fanaticism of others hombres' that also have family, that also has children, that also know to caress and to want? What sense to give all this tragedy? Their children, worried because the mixture of smoke, ash and intense emotion causes a new attack to him of asthma, are placed each one to their side, while she calms and contemplates, broken on the inside, how its dream to live long years on happiness next to its husband becomes smoke. Ciao, amore, until another life. India finds out will remember it thus, standing up and immovable like a stone, stoic, other people's to the shouts of the crowd that is delirious, while the fire consumes the corpse of its husband. It is the alive image of the contained pain.

The roar of an army air corps helicopter drowns the cánticos and the shouts of the multitude. People raise the Vista towards the off-white heat sky and dust to receive a rain of rose petals that fall from the apparatus that gives returns on the pyre. While the body finishes burning, the family lowers the steps of the platform. With walking vacillating and disturbed faces, they receive words of condolencia of the president of the Republic. In a very Indian disorder, the other personalities are crowded. All mean words to him to Sonia: the North American vice-president, the king of Bután, prime minister of Pakistan, of Nepal and Bangladesh, old prime minister Edgard Heath, the vice-presidents of the Union Soviética and China, the old friend Benazir Bhutto, etc. But nobody is able to approach the widow because suddenly the chaos explodes. And it is that the corpse not only belongs to the family, or the foreign dignitaries. The multitude, that in his first rows is composed by militants and responsible for the party of Rajiv, feels that it also belongs to them to them. They are only one very small part of forty affiliated million of of the party that under the banal and little showy denomination of Congress Party (Started off of the Congress) represents the greater democratic political organization of the world. It was born to half of century XIX like an association of political grupúsculos to demand

equality of rights between English Indians and within the Empire. The Mahatma Gandhi transformed it into a divided solid whose goal was to obtain independence by the route of the non-violence. Nehru was his president, later she was his daughter, and Rajiv has been the last one. Even though of the burning and irrespirable air, now the militants want to close by see the mortal rest of their leader turned ash. All want to lick the flames of the death and of the memory, so that they take the metallic fences as if they were straw strings and they are rushed towards the bonfire to the shout of: "Rajiv Gandhi is immortal" The Black Cats, the elite commandos, are themselves forced to take part. They form a human barrier around the family, and decide to fight itself in retirement, step by step, between the shouts of hysteria of a crowd untied, until arriving at the automobiles and putting to them out of danger.

The following days, Sonia, in shock state, takes refuge in itself. It lives become absorbed in thought in its memories with Rajiv, breaking to sob when it leaves the ensoñación and one is as opposed to the terrible reality of its absence. It cannot let think about its husband, does not want to stop to think about him, as if to do it it was another form to give death him. Not even it wanted to separate of those two ballot boxes that contain ashes, but is part of the ritual that the death returns to the life.

Four days after the cremation, the 28 of May of 1991, Sonia, accompanied by their children, raise a special compartment of a train that takes to Allahabad, the city of the Nehru, where everything began more ago than one hundred years. In white the fabric compartment totally covered sprinkled of flowers of daisy and jazmín, the ballot boxes are placed in a estrado species of next to the framed photo of a smiling Rajiv. Sonia, Priyanka and Rahul travel seated in the ground. The train stops in a rosary of jammed stations of people who come to render tribute to the memory of her leader. The emotion underflow exhausts Sonia, but by anything in the world it would let greet those poor men of huesudos faces stained of sweat and tears that to weighing of everything smile to offer their consolation to him. The smiles of the poor men of India are an immaterial gift, but that nests in the heart. Nehru, his mother-in-law and her husband said to it: the confidence of the town, the heat of people, the veneration and, so that no? , the love that they profess to you compensates all the sacrifices. That one is the true food of a race politician, the justification of all its sinsabores, which gives sense to its work, to its life. During the twenty-four hours that the train baptized by the press with the name of heart-break express - the express of the broken heart takes in crossing the six hundred kilometers of passage, Sonia is able to measure the intensity of the affection of the town towards its political family - "the family", as the Indians know, so popular that it is not necessary to need which treats. A family who has governed India for more than four decades, but that has been four years outside the power. Sonia contemplates to his Rahul son, who has remained slept between two stations. Hopefully never she returns the family to the power. Priyanka watches with absent air, also is exhausted. It has a great similarity with

Indira, he himself bearing, such shining and intelligent eyes. God protects to us.

In Allahabad, the ashes are deposited in Anand Bhawan, the ancestral mansion of the Nehru, who Indira, when was named prime minister, turned opened museum the public. A patio of Moorish style with a source in center remembers the original proprietor, a Muslim judge of the Supreme Court that in 1900 sold the mansion to Motilal Nehru, the great-grandfather of Rajiv, a shining lawyer who made as much money who) says the legend, sent his clothes by boat to one tintorería of London. That man corpulento, that took always thick moustache and that dressed as they gentleman, that was extroverted, splendid, have vivante and dicharachero, adored to his son Jawaharlal, perhaps because he was last that it had left, being the lost one two children and one daughter previously. That love, intense and reciprocal, was in the origin of the fight by the independence of the sixth part of the humanity. Motilal wanted that his son developed all his potential, which meant to give the best possible education him, although that implied to separate of him: "I never thought that it wanted so much to you as when I had dejarte in England for the first time, in the internal school", wrote to him, because it was not able to recover of the anguish of to him to have left single, so far, to the thirteen years of age. What Motilal in a year won had been enough to put a business and of solving to him the life to him for siem.pre. But for the father that was a easy and egoistic position: "I think without vanity spying some that I am the founder of the fortune of the Nehru. I see you you, son mine beloved, like the man who will be able to construct on those foundations that I have created and I hope to have the satisfaction to see arise a day a noble company that will be raised towards the sky... " The noble company finished being the fight by the independence of the country, in which father and son became jumbled with all the force of their convictions.

The life of the Nehru changed when Jawaharlal presented/displayed to its father a lawyer who finished returning of South Africa and that was organizing the resistance against the colonial power of the English. He was a singular man, dress with dhoti, trousers of woven crude cotton by hand. It had very out of proportion long arms and legs that made look themselves him like a long-legged bird. Their black ojillos were closed when, behind its glasses of metallic mount, its typical smile used, between malicious and kind. Venerated like santo by its disciples, he was nevertheless a capable politician who had the art of the gestures simple able to communicate with the soul of India. The young person Nehru considered a genius him.

Thus the Mahatma made contact Gandhi with enemy with that family, and it transformed it for always. The outlandish Motilal left sophistication by simplicity, changed to its suits of franela of Saville Row and the hats of glass by dhoti, like Gandhi. It offered its house and its fortune to the cause of independence. The enormous hall was transformed by Motilal into room of meeting of the Party of the Congress. The home of

the Nehru little by little became the home of whole India. Always there was multitude of supporters in the iron door wishing to see the father and to the son, wishing to have his they darshan, the old tradition of religious origin that consists of looking for the visual contact with a person highly venerated thus to receive its blessing, for want of being able to touch to him to the feet or the hands. Towards the end of its life, Motilal, aquejado of fibrosis and cancer, it shared cell in the jail of Nainital with its son, who took care of to him as he could. The patriarch died without getting to see independence, without knowledge that his son, who the world would know like Nehru, would be chosen Head of State of the new nation. It died in this house of Anand Bhawan, a day of February of 1931, accompanied by its woman, her son maintaining to him the head in its lap.

The cream and rooms, painted blue celestial, conserve such movable, such books, the same photos and memories on which they lived in them. The one of the Mahatma Gandhi it has a long cushion in the ground, comfortable and a one rueca that used to spin cotton and that turned symbol of resistance against the English. The room of Nehru has a simple wood bed, a carpet, many books and a statuette of the three monkeys that symbolize the Buddhist orders: you do not see badly, you do not listen badly, you do not say badly.

Sonia remembers the first time that visited east place. She was its Indira mother-in-law who was it. In that occasion, it did not repair in the tremendous symbolic load that has this house in the history of India. Simply, it visited the home of the ancestors of its political family, the house where they had been born and they had married Nehru first and soon its Indira daughter. He had not been able to calibrate in its measured joust all the meaning that the walls of this mansion locked up, to weighing of which Indira taught the secret quarter to him of meeting, in a cellar, that Nehru and his companions of the Divided incipiente of the Congress used when they hid to escape to the casts of the British police. Now which it returns with ashes of its husband, it sees everything it with other eyes. This Victorian mansion is not the simple scene of intense a familiar life; their walls count you intrigue them, the dreams, the hopes and the misfortunes of the fight by independence. Their walls are modern India. The ballot box with ashes of Rajiv, the last object that today comes to add itself to the others, is like a point to the end of one long phrase that began to write Motilal Nehru in century XIX when it founded here the local section of a political organization called Party of the Congress. The circle is closed.

At noon Sonia and his children, accompanied by a small courtship, leave the familiar house to go to the outskirts, to the Sangam, one of the most sacred places of the hinduismo where the brown waters of the Yamuna are united to the clear ones of the Ganges, in the confluence of another imaginary river, the Sarásvati. They arrive at an enormous sand esplanade that is going to give to the border, dominated by old a hard Muslim one whose walls are covered with ivy and that contains in their interior ficus bengalí centenary that, according to the legend, is able to

release of the cycle of reincarnations all the one that it jumps from his branches. In this esplanade the Kumbha Mela, a festividad is celebrated successively every three years to which travelling million of of all India washing their sins go, turning it the more multitudinal religious concentration of the world. Today there is much people also, but the place is so immense that it seems desert. In a platform on the river, a priest friend of the family, pandit Chuni Lal, makes an offering and intones orations on the background noise of the tintineo of thousands of bells and the echo of the conches, before giving the copper ballot box to Rahul. The boy the taking in his hands, approaches the border and he spills it slowly, scattering ashes in the calm waters that reflect the golden rays of the sun, the same waters which they welcomed ashes of Motilal, those of the Mahatma Gandhi and also those of Nehru. Certain distance, Sonia and Priyanka observe the scene, the irritated characteristics, and soon they approach Rahul and, squatting, they caress the water with the hands. The witnesses of the scene, between which is the secretary of his husband, will take in the memory the image of the three together to the edge of the water, Rahul sobbing on their mother, Priyanka supporting their head in the shoulder of Sonia and she, inconsolable, with the eyes bathed in tears that form another affluent who is united to the Ganges, the great river of the life.

## 2

“Lady, these are the schedules from the flights to Milan.” Sonia does not remember to him to have asked that information the secretary of his husband. Perhaps it did it, in the confusion of the principle, when before the enormidad of the tragedy it looked for protection. When suddenly it thought about fleeing from this country that devours its children, to look for the consolation of its family, the heat of his, the security of the small city of Orbassano, to the outskirts of Turin, where its youth lived until the day of its wedding. It remembers that nothing else to return of the place of the attack in the south of India, with the mortal rest of its husband, it spoke on the telephone with its family in Italy, that was shaken. Her sister greater Anushka said to him that no longer she took the telephone because journalists of the entire world called asking details of which it had happened and she did not know what to say to them. “Still it is not known - it explained Sonia- to him, can be sijs which they killed Indira, or the Hindu fundamentalists which they killed Gandhi, or Muslim extremists of Kashmir... veto that is to say. It was in the black list of at least a dozen of terrorist organizations... ” And now measured greater Sonia regrets to him not to have forced to demand the protection government. Rajiv did not believe in them: “If they want matarte, they kill”, said to you.

When he had to his mother to the other side of the telephone, Sonia crumbled. The mother was in Rome, in house of Nadia, the small, separated sister of a Spanish diplomat. “Perhaps you would have to return to Italy”, said to him.

- I do not know... - Sonia with the difficult voice by the weeping responded to him.

The doubts Are so many! It seems to him that to leave it would be like killing a part of itself, but is certain that it came to India, adopted its customs, fell in love with its people by love to Rajiv. Now, what sense must remain? Is not tired to live besieged by bodyguards who when arriving the fatídica hour are incapable to avoid the worse thing? The memory comes to him from when Rajiv, worried about the security of the children, thought about sending them to study to the American School of Moscow. To Sonia it did not make any grace him separate of them. The British tradition, soon adopted by the well off classes of India, to command to the children to a boarding school hit completely its Italian condition of mamma. So that they left them in house, Nueva Delhi, and first all the mornings came tutorial and soon they went escorted to the school to be educated in an atmosphere “norm! ”, which in the society considered a boldness act, such era the weight of the threats that were hung over the family of prime minister .

The suggestion of its mother to return to Italy touches a sore that hurts. Sonia faces a conflict that is incapable, so far, to solve. A cruel conflict, because on the one hand it is the Maxima preoccupation, the security of his children, and would seem logical to undertake a change from return to Italy, a total change of life, the abandonment of all the familiar tradition of his husband, and by another one the inertia of so many years

here taking the overwhelming weight of the Nehru-Gandhi last names, and to stay oneself as they are, in the same house, like guardians of the memory, surrounded by the faithful friends of always, of the affection of so many, knowing the difficult thing that it turns out to escape of the spiderweb of the India policy. In sum, to choose between the security, the anonymous life and the uprooting of self-imposed exile or to follow in the candlestick, which could take to one of its children to be a day prime minister and, perhaps, to being also assassinated. Like Indira or Rajiv. Then it yes thinks that, that better to change of life to be saved, to forget the policy that it detests, to flee from the power that always has scorned and that is destroying it.

But... can be fought against the destiny? India feels very, it has learned to love the people of this country, and it is known wanted by them. How to break that nexus of union with the memory of its husband that represents the friends, the companions, the affection of the people of India? He would be a little like desalmar itself. In addition, the body does not lie: its gestures, their form to walk, to move the head of side to side to say that yes seeming to say that not - so typical of the Indians, its way to join the hands, to watch, to listen to its accent... all its corporal language evokes genuinely to the one of a person India. What would do she in Italy? What life the delay in Orbassano, aside from the company of its nearer family? Here it is its circle of friends, is its world here, here they are twenty-three years of life intense - and happy. In addition, their children no longer are young... And they, will want to go to live to a place who have only visited of vacations? After having itself bred in the houses of two prime minister of India, the one of the Indira grandmother first and the one of its Rajiv father, yet what that means, will be able to be accustomed to an anonymous life in the suburbs of an Italian city of provinces? It is certain, speak Italian with fluidity, are average Italian, but Indians by the four flanks feel. Here there are servant, have learned here of its father to want this immense, difficult and fascinating country; here they have assumed the values of the great-grandfather Nehru, the great hero of independence and founder of modern India, values that they have to do with integrity, the tolerance, the scorn to the money and the cult to the service to the others, mainly to the most needed. Here there are servant, like a great family India, in the house of the Indira grandmother, who the same gave a push them while she took the tea with Andrei Gromiko or Jacqueline Kennedy who helped them to make the duties in the table of the kitchen. Would be satisfied their children to a prosperous and comfortable life in the best one of the cases, but moved away of everything what they have sucked since they were born? And, for her, would not be a defeat to return to the town of where left?

- I believe that my life is here, mother... - it ends up saying Sonia to him when it recovers the capacity to speak.

- Lady, has a visit.

The secretary who has interrupted it remains in the threshold of the door until Sonia does a gesture now saying "I go", and then the man



retires. She takes leave of her mother and hangs the telephone, drying herself the tears. When getting up itself one adjusts you fold them of sari and one goes to the office of its husband, in the ground floor of the colonial villa where they have lived since they left the residence of prime minister. When seeing all the objects in its site, its cameras of photos, its books, its magazines, its papers, its radius, it seems to him for a moment that he is still alive, on the verge of arriving from trip, that what it is living is not more than badly a dream, that the life follows equal because it is stronger than the death. But it is not Rajiv that enters by the door, smiling, tired and ready to embrace it, but three of its companions of party, three veterans with sad and heartbroken semblante, two of them dressed in shirts Indians high neck, the other with suit type safari. Because if this attack has devastated the family, also it has left to the Party of the Congress without head. and somebody must lead the Party. Who will be the next one? , that one is the question that gerifaltes that now visits Sonia hours have done after knowing the tragedy.

- Soniaji - ji says to the spokesman of the retinue using the suffix that denotes affection and respect I want that you know that the Committee of Work of the Party of the Congress, reunited under the presidency of the old friend of your husband, Narashima Rao, you has chosen president of the party. The election has been unanimous. Enhorabuena.

Sonia remains them watching, impassible. Is not the somewhat pure and sacred pain? The tears by the death of their husband have not let to him dry itself and they are already here the politicians. The life follows, and is cruel. Incapable to smile, it has neither desire nor forces to pretend that she is in favor honest of the result of the voting.

- I cannot accept. My world is not the policy, already you know it. I do not want to accept.

- Soniaji, I do not know if it give account to you of which the committee is offering to you. It offers the absolute power to you of the greater party of the world. And it does in silver tray. It offers the possibility to you of leading a day this great country. Mainly, it offers the possibility to you of assuming the inheritance of your husband so that its death has not been in vain...

- I do not believe that it is the moment for speaking of this...

- The Committee of Work is deliberate during long hours before hacerte this proposal. I assure to you that we have thought much to it. You have the free hands and accounts yet our support.

We requested to you that you continue with the familiar tradition. It is your to have of good daughter of India.

- You are the unique one that can overwhelm the emptiness that has left Rajiv - another one adds.

- India is a very great country... - Sonia- responds. I cannot be the unique one between billion.

- You are the only Gandhi...

Sonia raises the Vista to the sky, as if she was waiting for that argument.

- ... Without having your children, clear.

- My children are very young still, and they are not either today for speaking of policy.

- It is not little thing in India to be called Gandhi... - another one adds.

- I know what you mean to me - it interrupts Sonia- to him. It is a last name that forces, but that also condemns. Sight which has happened.

In fact, Sonia is called thus because her Indira mother-in-law married with parsi Firoz call Gandhi, not because had some relation of kinship with the father of the nation, the Mahatma Gandhi. Call Kumar, or Bosé, or Kapur, or anyone of the common last names of India could be had. But the chance wanted that its last name agreed with the one of most famous of the Indians, the man more wanted by its town it to have guided by the way of the freedom. The man who became so intimate of the Nehru who was considered like one more of the family. Together they obtained independence and they made thanks to a powerful instrument, the Party of the Congress, that today is orphaned. That gives the Gandhi, including Sonia, a dawn before the masses that a incalculable value for the politicians of its party has.

- It watches... You are the heiress of this photo.

One of them indicates a photo on a small table next to the sofa. It is in a silver frame, and shows Indira, of girl, sitting next to the Mahatma.

- I thank for much to You, really, that you have thought about me for that position. It is a great honor, but I do not deserve it. You know that I detest the notoriety. In addition I do not belong to the direct family, I am the daughter-in-law...

- You married with a Indian, and you already know that here the daughter-in-law happens to form part of the family of the husband as soon as house... You have fulfilled our customs religiously. You are so India as anyone, and any India is not the woman of a Nehru-Gandhi. It watches this photo... that sari red which you had been the day of your wedding, is not the one that Nehru wove in the jail?

- Yes, but that does not clear that she is foreign...

- To the town it gives him equal where you have been born. You would not be the first foreigner of birth in being president - it interrupts third. He remembers that Annie Besant, one of the first leaders of the party and first in leading it at national level, were Irish. The idea is not so preposterous.

- They were other times. I am too vulnerable to assume that position. You imagine the attacks of the opposition? they would instrumentalizarían to the town against me, and would be a disaster for all.

- Soniaji, we do a supply to you without conditions... - the greater one of all, an astute politician known by its ability says in manipulating, and that seems to be on the verge of removing an ace of the sleeve... Perhaps

most important for you it is that you are going to return to have the maximum degree of protection, like when Rajiv was prime minister .

- I feel it, but you have called to the mistaken door. I do not have ambition of being able, never has liked that world, develop bad in him, detest being the attention center . To Rajiv it did not like either. If one put in policy, were because her mother requested itself. If no, it would continue being a pilot of Indian Airlines, would be alive today and we would be probably very happy... So, I feel much, but you do not count with me.

- You are the unique one that can avoid that the party collapses. And if the party is broken, it is very probable that the whole country crumbles. What has maintained together with India from independence? Our party. Who is the guarantor of the values that allow that all the communities coexist peacefully? The Congress. Ever since we are not in the power, it watches how the old demons take terrain: hatred between communities, religions, the separatist temptations of so many states... The whole country runs towards the ruin, only you you can help us to save it. You have prestige and people want to you. For that reason we have come personally... to appeal to your sense of the responsibility.

- Responsibility? So that there is to be this family the one that pays with the blood of its members a constant tribute to the country? Is that it has not been enough with Indira and Rajiv? Queréis more?

- Piénsalo, Soniaji. It thinks about Nehru, Indira, Rajiv...

Your family is so intimately bound to India like a liana around the trunk of a tree. You are India. Without you, we are not nothing. Without you, there is no future for this great nation. This one is the message that we come to transmitirte. We know that they are bitter hours, and we requested pardon to you to interrupt your duel, but you do not leave to us. You do not throw overboard as much sacrifice and as much fight. You have in your hand the torch of the Nehru-Gandhi, you do not extinguish it.

Words, words, words... Always there is a greater intention, one more a higher goal to the end of the way, one more a nobler reason, one better justification to adorn the last aim, that does not let be to take control of the power. The politicians always find arguments and excuses to speak of the only thing that interest to them, the power. By force of to have lived so many years in the shade on two prime minister , Sonia knows the percal. The desolation of all the heads of list imagines perfectly that were going to appear to the elections and that today also feel like orphans. The murder of its husband are broken the dreams of much people, not only his. One imagines all the conjectures, the maneuvers, the trips, the deceits of all those that fight by the succession of Rajiv in the party. It is much what is in game, for that reason come the big shots to render pleitesía to him, without losing a time apex. They do not think about her like being human, not even in these low hours, but like instrument to maintain the reins of the power. It is hour to position itself in the party because the power does not support the emptiness. In a country of limited resources, where the opportunities are few, the political power is the key of the individual prosperity.

Sonia learned of Rajiv and Indira to maintain to ray the politicians, not to let itself use by them. But they are astute and think that Sonia will end up yielding, who will do it, if not by her, by their children, to maintain the name of the family alive, because the power is a magnet del that is impossible to escape. Does not say the Vedaic poets that not even the Gods can resist to the praises?

The following day, Sonia sends a letter to the central seat of the party: “ Deeply I am affected by the deposited confidence in me by the Committee of Work. But the tragedy that has been lowered on my children and me not allows me to accept the presidency of this great organization.” He is jarro of cold water for the faithfuls who do not accept their rejection and who decide to continue pressing it with all means their reach. Each morning, supporters of the party pronounce themselves their address as opposed to, a colonial villa located in number 10 of Janpath, an avenue of the Nueva center Delhi. They take placards and they shout eslóganes of “Alive Rajiv Gandhi; Soniaji president”. Sonia, irritated, requests the secretary to him of his husband who throws to the demonstrators, whom aim to this spectacle that seems to him stupid and without sense puts. “That looks for a successor - it thinks. My family already has done enough... »

Those that of truth they feel tranquilized when they read the news in the newspaper are their relatives in Orbassano, near Turin. “In the city we breathed all with lightening - a neighbor declares. Thank heavens which it has not accepted the position of its husband, it had supposed a great risk for her and her children.”

**ACT I**  
**GODDESS DURGA RIDES**  
**ON A TIGER**

*The own thing of the power is to protect.*

**PASCAL**

### 3

Sonia was eighteen years old, the age in which decided to go to England to learn English, when it fell in love with Rajiv. She was so handsome that people became in the street to watch it. It walked very raised, and its dark and straight brown hair framed its face of madonna. Josto Maffeo, a classmate which the week ends shared with her the passage in bus from the town of Orbassano, where lived with its family, until downtown of Turin, today turned a well-known journalist, remembers it like "one of the women more handsome than I have known in my life. In addition to handsome he was interesting, very friend of its friends, calm and balanced. It did not like to participate in juergas multitudinal and, that yes, always maintained a certain reservation with respect to the others".

It is not to be strange then which the father of Sonia, a fornido man whose face of mountain dweller outdoors took the track of a hard past of work, was against with as much vehemence to that her daughter went to study English to Cambridge. The good one of Stefano Maino, with its short hair combed backwards, its thick moustache that tickle to its incarnated daughters when kissing them and their cheeks did, was plated to the old one. As much it is so years back, when settling in Orbassano and finding out that the school of the town was mixed, one refused to that their daughters frequented and chose to send it them to Sangano, a population to ten kilometers of distance, an exclusively feminine school. When they went away making greater, it always wanted to know in what place and with whom were their three daughters. Either him for much grace that left the ends week, and that that they were not nocturnal exits, which had not tolerated. They were exits to Turin, half an hour of train or bus, to take a walk under the soportales of its beautiful avenues or, if it made bad, to merendar with the friends in one of famous the cremerie of the city. Stefano was a man of strict principles and irremediably he hit its adolescent daughters. Who used to do to him in front was Anushka, the greater one, a girl of strong, rebellious character and peleona. To his side, Sonia was an angel. Smallest, Nadia, still did not give problems.

Her wife, Paola, a woman with regular factions, a frank smile and refined air more, compensated with her flexibility the severity of Stefano. She was more open, more tolerant, more comprehensive. Perhaps for being woman, was more able to understand her daughters, although its adolescence was very different, in a mountainous village that did not arrive at the six hundred inhabitants, and at a time at which Italy was a poor country. Very poor. Their daughters have never had to milk cows by obligation, or to take care of the tasks of the field or to serve coffees in the bar as the family. They have been fruit of the postwar period, daughters of the Marshall Plan, the economic expansion, resurging of Italy in Europe. They have only known the poverty refilón, when they were small, because in the years of postwar period it was impossible to escape to the spectacle of disabled and the paupers that looked for the heat of the supported sun and the public charity in the walls of the seat of the town. and that contact

marked them for always, mainly to Sonia. In Vicenza, the big city next to the village where they lived, the poverty was before seen arrive at the center, in those districts of shacks, where the children played naked or walked with done clothes shreds.

- So that their mothers leave go thus, in leathers? - the small Sonia asked perplex.

- Those children go thus because they do not have clothes. They do not go thus in vain, but because they do not have more remedy. Because they are poor.

The girl understood the terrible thing for the first time that it was the poverty. In addition, it added its mother, some families passed hunger. Every month did not come the parish priest from the town to house to make storing of dust milk, food and clothes that soon distributed between the most needed? That parish priest knew that always he could count on the Maino family who, although also passed estrecheces, was catholic devotee and practiced the charity.

- The Gospel says that the poor men will be first in entering the Kingdom of Skies... You has not taught it in the catechesis?

Sonia asentía, while he helped his mother to prepare a package of used clothes. In house of the Maino, nothing was thrown, was not wasted anything. The small ones inherited of the greater ones. What it was not used gave the poor men. The memory of the war was too next like forgetting the value the things.

The parents of Sonia were native of the region of the Véneto, in particular of the village of Lusiana, in the Asiago mounts, spurs of the Alps, a cattle zone that gives its name to one of appreciated cheeses more of well-known Italy and also by its marble quarries. The paternal family, the Maino, was of robust, honest, direct modales and very workers. A quality that did not escape to him to the mother of Sonia, Paola Predebon, daughter of an ex- customs officer who took the bar of the grandfathers in the village of Comarolo I gave Conco, at heart of the valley. Stefano and Paola married in the pretty church of Lusiana, consecrated to the apostle San Giacomo, with their tower extended like an arrow that aims at the sky and that seems minarete of a mosque, it influences without a doubt of the Ottomans who walked centuries ago that way.

Nine Sonia was born to and average of the cold night of the 9 of December of 1946 in the civil hospital of Marostica, a very old and small city walled on the feet of the Asiago mounts. "And cream one bimbaaa! ", good the new one reached the village of Lusiana quickly, and the echo resounded in the stone walls of the houses, in the stables, the rocky escarpaduras and mountains of the environs until losing itself to the distant spot, in cascade. Like tribute to just the arrival and following the tradition, the neighbors tied pink fabric bows in the iron doors of the windows and the doors of the village. To the few days it was baptized by the parish priest of Lusiana with the name of Edvige Antonia Albina Maino, in honor to the maternal grandmother. But Stefano wanted another name for his daughter.

To the greater one, baptized like Ana, Anushka called, and to Antonia Sonia called. It fulfilled therefore the promise that had become to itself after escaping with life of the Russian front. Like many Italians anchored in the poverty, Stefano had let itself seduce by the fascist ideas and the propaganda of Mussolini and at the beginning of the war had gotten ready in the infantry division 116 of Vicenza, regiment that belonged to the body of bersaglieri, of great reputation in the Italian army and in which also it had served the Duce. Bersaglieri, which they were known by its fast cadence when marching past, more than one hundred thirty passages per minute, and mainly by the helmet of shining wide winged that hung a plume of black pens of rooster and which they fell of side, was surrounded by a dawn of value and invulnerability that the campaign of Russia swept with a stroke of the pen. The division lost three fourth parts of its men in the first collision with the Soviets. There were thousands of prisoners, between whom was Stefano, that he managed to save other survivors along with. They were able to take refuge in a farm in the Russian steppe, where weeks under the protection lived on a family of farmers. The women cured the wounds to them, the men provided food to them, and the experience, aside from saving the life to them, changed to them completely. Like thousands of Italian soldiers, they returned disappointed with the fascismo and thanked for the Russians to them to have saved. From then, Stefano let speak of policy; for him, it was done of lies. In tribute to the family who saved to him the life decided to put to its daughters Russian names. and not to discuss with its political family nor with the priest for whom the name of Sonia did not comprise of the santoral - Sofía was acceptable; Sonia, no, Stefano accepted to register it in the registry with totally catholic names. After the baptism they invited to neighbors and family to a plate of codfish to the Vicentina, the favorite of the region, with much polenta to dunk in the sauce. It was a luxury to obtain codfish because in those times of postwar period there was shortage of everything, until in Vicenza, the capital of the region located to fifty kilometers of distance, down in the plain.

The joy of the Maino had been total but for the difficulties that Stefano had to remove ahead to his flood prole. In those years, it was very difficult to escape of zarpazo of the misery. They had to eat, to get dressed, and little more. The Maino did not have earth, only cows and a stone house that he himself raised with his hands, the last one of the Rua Maino, the street where generations of relatives his, that originally had arrived from Germany, had been constructing their dwellings. They were Spartan, but they had magnificent views to the valley. Stone light walls separated the meadows where the cows grazed, whose young was the main resource of the zone because the Earth was bad for agriculture, were too much stone and too many hills. Sonia and his sisters grew as opposed to the sublime spectacle of the valley of Lusiana, that she changed of color according to the stations. All the green and brown tonalities and shades of marched past before their eyes, of the color emerald of the trees in spring to the yellow of the fields in summer, happening through the cobrizo of the autumn and the



target of the winter. For the children, the first Nevada of the year was like a great celebration who celebrated with joy; they played to make snowmen and to throw balls by the white streets. But to Sonia the mixture of physical and cold exercise caused a fatigue to him in the chest that forced it to return soon to house. It liked to take refuge to the heat of the iron stove fused of the kitchen, while the wind whistled by the cracks of the windows.

Sundays in the morning, the tintineo of the cowbells of the cows was mixed with the campanadas ones of the church, while the endomingada family went to the mass that never skipped. They said so that Stefano found a job, so that the asthma of Sonia sent, so that the general situation improved, so that the children had all the necessary one and they grew up healthy and happy. At the beginning of the fifty, Stefano ended up finding a job, but not in his town, but across of mountains, in Switzerland. Its experience as bricklayer and his seriousness were worth to be contracted several seasons to him. A minimum of two months went away and returned with the full pockets of liras that lasted less than what it had hoped.

In 1956, Stefano made the decision to emigrate, as their three brothers and so many countrymen were doing it. The industrial pole turinés, that had grown around Fiat, acted of magnet for million of Italian that they wanted to flee from the poverty of the field. The Maino crossed in train all the north of Italy and they settled in Orbassano, an industrial town to the outskirts of Turin.

Thus they did it because Giovanni, one of the brothers of Stefano, to whom they called “ the Moor” by the sallow color of its skin, had married with a girl of a near town and assured that the boom of the construction needed many arms. In addition Stefano knew the region because in the Thirties he had worked of worker for the army in the rehabilitation of military forts in the border with France, in the Alps. It liked the piemonteses, perhaps because also they were mountain; direct, frank people, who do not waste the time in contemplations.

Work, work and work, that one were the prescription of Stefano to prosper quickly. It did not make another thing, did not know hobbies him nor was fan to the sports, although it liked to go to the bar of Pier Luigi to see in the television the end of the Juventus. To that same bar her daughter went assiduously Sonia, because Pier Luigi sold best ice creams of the zone. “Era molto vivace, molto biricchina”, would say of the girl.

When it arrived at Orbassano, Stefano already was official and of he happened there to mount its own company of real estate construction. It began with reforms, soon constructed to villas, small palazzi and more ahead leaned houses. “Era a very straight man”, said of him its friend Danilo Quadri, a mechanic who repaired to the failures of his concrete mixers and other machinery to him and that ended up becoming its great friend. Every day they were seen at the time of the coffee in the Bar as a child, the seat in front of the City council, a building of two plants with soportales, a clock in the facade and an Italian flag in the balcony. Alongside it was the church of San Juan Baptist, with its characteristic tower and its picudos tejaditos

turquesa color, where Sundays with their respective families went to mass . Stefano was a man of fixed schedules, loving of the routine. Later of its daily appointment with its Danilo friend, it returned walking to house by the Route Frejus, flanked of buildings without grace nor style where a block of floors arose next to an old villa in a mixture very characteristic of the popular urbanism of the postwar period. Its house was in the number the 14 of the Route Bellinis, to a distance of approximately kilometer and means of the seat of the town. That villa of three floors surrounded by a small garden had been the dream of its life. When it had settled to the debts contracted when beginning its business, it looked for an expensive lot that it was near the station of the trenino and the one of buses and bought it to headress tiles. Stefano raised to his house in time record, with typical tavernetta that occupied all the ground floor. There was no a house that boasted that tavernetta did not have his, very well-taken care of, with its bar, its bar, its chimney, that the parents used to meet with friends or to celebrate anniversaries, and the children for his guateques. It made the great house with idea distribute it between its daughters when they were greater. Aside from the work, the family was a fundamental value in the life of Stefano Maino, like good Italian. And, by all means, the religion. Values all that Paola shared with his woman, and that made an effort in transmitting the children.

Sonia was ten years old when she arrived at Orbassano. The change of a village from mountain to a suburb of a great city as Turin were impressive. It was a easy life much more, more entertaining, than it offered infinite possibilities. The only shade in that new life had to do with its origin. They were paesane, as it is called contemptuously to the immigrants of the field in the north of Italy. Estigma that made them feel less than the others and that created a complex to them that would last all the life to them. In the village never they had felt different; here yes, mainly at the outset, in the school, where other children dealt with them paesane to dress to the old one or in clothes "of town". Orbassano was not other people's to the clasista atmosphere of Turin, a preservative city where it lunches to twelve, the capuccino to five in great pastry shops is taken from style art déco and it is had supper to seven of afternoon. Where the ladies go always very repeinadas, and the gentlemen dress to the last one. Where the worker wants to live as the pattern and imitates it, the pattern like the rich bourgeois of whom it wants to comprise, and the bourgeois like the aristocrats to whom secretly they admire. Then, veleidades of rebellion did not exist; nobody wanted to hang the head, all wanted to be like him. The prosperity seemed not to have aim and allowed that all persecuted their dream of social mobility. Little by little and to measurement that the father prospered, estatus social of the Maino family was rising. Of daughters of "shepherd of cows and bricklayer", the children happened to be to daughters of a constructor who lived desahogadamente. Of farmer daughters immigrant to industrialist daughters. Paola, the mother, one more a more sensible woman to the social surroundings that his husband, immediately caught the tastes

of the Turinese bourgeoisie - the style to dress, the gestures, etc... -, and it transmitted its daughters, who quickly were made "young ladies". Never until the point of which they apostatized of their origins, they were too honest for that. But always they knew that never they would reach estatus of Turinese the genuine ones because they had not been born there.

After finishing the primary one in the school of girls of the town of Sangano, Sonia had wanted to continue his studies in the school of Orbassano, but his father was against. "Nothing of state school for my daughters. For them, always the best thing." The best thing, according to the Maino, was the school of the sisters of Helping Maria in Giaveno, a beautiful medieval city to about twenty kilometers of house, well-known place of relaxation of many Turinese ones. There they would have the possibility of mixing itself with children of a "better atmosphere" than in the state school of Orbassano. Aside from which they valued much the religious education, also they wanted to take off the sambenito of paesane. So that they left to the children Mondays in the morning and they gathered Fridays. It was not a hard boarding school, to the opposite, was full of amiable salesianas nuns who immediately took affection to Sonia. "The greater one had much genius and was difficult, but Sonia was same kindness", would say of her the sister Domenica Rosso, who was assigned her tutor. "Che bel carattere, sempre gioviale", remembers the Giovanna sister Negri, before adding: "It studied to get out of trouble, but he was smiling and always very servicial." Sonia already showed a quality that would be revealed of great importance in its adult age: she was conciliadora. "It had a special talent so that two companions who fought themselves let do it, or to put in agreement a group and to make an activity in common. She was a very calm girl, from small, perhaps because of its problem, that made it mature before time... " The problem to which the Giovanna sister talked about was the asthma. It remembers that the cough attacks were of such intensity that they had to accommodate it in a single room. She was only the internal one that slept single, and it did with the windows opened until in winter, in spite of the glacial wind that blew of the Alps. The boarding school, that had two hundred students, was in a hill that dominated the city: the towers of their medieval churches emerged between a mosaic of old tile roofs, and across of the river there was a great risco whose top used to be snow cover. When the cough attacks yielded, Sonia, under his edredón of pens, remained watching that mountain, slightly illuminated by the reflection of the lights of the city and that remembered its native Lusiana to him.

Sonia learned to ski, like all the piemonteses, for those who the ski is the king of the sports. But never she was a great fan, as it did not go it to any sport, because it feared that the exercise triggered an asthma attack. In order to compensate, to which yes much was become fond of went to the reading, a passion that would last all the life to him. At the outset, as era of rigor in the catholic schools read the lives of the saints. Mainly it liked histories of the missionaries who gave everything it by the poor men in distant countries. To be misionera seemed to him a heroic, full life of sense,

because there was to give itself to the others, and exciting, because she was full of adventure. The nuns of the boarding school regularly projected films that counted the great ones you develop and myths of the Christianity - like the life of San Francisco de Asís, by example and which they left the children, mainly to Sonia, petrified of emotion. But the pleasure of books lasted more than the one of the films, and could reread them and recreate to the time that learned of the experiences and the thoughts of the personages. The reading opened the doors to him to the world. Thanks to her, and her innate curiosity, the adolescent Sonia developed a feeling that the nuns called love mundi, love of the world according to the exquisite description that had made of it San Agustín.

In the classes it had to learn the life of the great heroes of the modern history of its country like the philosopher and Mazzini politician, that contributed to that Italy was a democratic republic; or the fates of the peculiar Garibaldi, idealist and soldier who fought by the unification of the country. She learned on the Risorgimento, the nationalistic movement of century XIX, but of the rest of the world the nuns taught little. For example, of India, its fight by independence and its irruption as a modern State not even heard speak. The vague figure of Gandhi sounded something to him, but it had not either been able to say whom it was, like the great majority of students not only Italian, but European. Nehru, however, was more familiar to him. Sometimes the silhouette of that elegant man, hairdo with its characteristic cap, glimpsed it of way to the bed, already with the put nightgown, in the nocturnal reporter who their parents saw in the television.

Of all ways, to Sonia history did not interest to him particularly, like either the scientific matters, or those that they had to do with the policy. Of always it liked the languages, for which it had a certain facility. His father had animated to him to learn Russian and a particular professor had paid to him. Sonia understood it and she spoke it, although she cost to him to read it. Also French learned, in house. In addition the languages served to travel, to know another people, other customs, other worlds, to discover those places that had been able to sight in the lives of the missionaries.

Later, when it had left the boarding school of Giaveno and it was registered in an institute of Turin to make the precollege student, their infantile dreams went away transforming. They went away adapting to the reality. The idea of being stewardess of Alitalia, to gain the life traveling by the world, got to seduce it. It did not require an excessive effort and, when the baccalaureate had finished, it would fulfill almost all the requirements; she was well similar, of good modales, measured what had to measure, knew Russian and French, it had everything... Only it needed to perfect its English.

- Papa, I want to go to England to learn well English...

- Nor to speak.

To Stefano, the idea that her daughter lived between airplanes and hotels of for did not do the minimum grace there here to him, and did not seem to him something serious either. If it wanted to learn English, it

already paid classes to him in an academy, did not need to leave house. Had perhaps not learned Russian with a particular professor? Had perhaps not learned French without never going to France? Sonia, who knew the stubbornness well his father, avoided to face him, but at heart he was equal of cabezona when she was convinced of which she wanted. From chaste it comes to him to galgo...

So the support of its mother won and while it finished its studies, it worked sporadically in Fieratorino, the organization in charge of the congresses and the industrial fairs, as the famous Hall the Automobile Sonia made its pinitos of stewardess, and until of interpreter of Russian in a golf championship. It liked the contact with diverse people. The same curiosity that felt towards the languages felt towards the culture and the spirit of the people who spoke them. The world was definitively greater than the small Orbassano, plasters trabajitos widened the horizon to him. Little by little, its dream of being stewardess went transforming into the one of being professor of languages or, better still, interpreter in some international organism like the United Nations.

Like good mountain dweller, Stefano was authoritarian and rigid, but not as obstinate as not to realize necessity of his daughters. It was caught in a common dilemma the people of its generation: on the one hand it felt the necessity to have them under control and to educate them to the traditional way (the girls could make certain things; the boys, however, could do everything what they wanted) and by another one saw that the times changed and that no longer it was to hope to that they found husband. and, even so better than they were economically independent not to have to live under the rule of a man. So that before the pressure of its woman who was pawned on which their daughters had a profession, transigió, and accepted to become position of the trip and the studies of Sonia in England. But they were not arranged to that her daughter went of au to pair to live with any family in a city any. They chose Cambridge, cradles of one of the most prestigious universities and colleges. In the age in which she was Sonia, it was more worth to surround it by the best possible atmosphere... She thanked for it embracing to him and kissing to him like when she was small, looking for the tickle of her moustache.

The 7 of January of 1965, took leave of their sisters and gave a strong push to Stalin, the old dog that had been its companion of games during all its childhood. Their parents accompanied it until the airport by Milan, to one oretta of distance. The fog in the morning took step to a sunny and cold day. Sonia struggled between the excitation to travel single for the first time and the fear to the stranger. It had eighteen years and the life ahead. A life that neither in its preposterous dreams the more had been able to imagine.

## 4

“For them, always the best thing...” Stefano never scrimped with his daughters. The Lennox Cook School was one of the best and more expensive schools of languages of Cambridge, located in a pretty street a little separated from the center. It presumed to have had famous writer E. M. Foster between his professors of Literature, although in those years was too greater and she was only going sporadically to give some to char it. By the price of the matriculation, the school was also in charge to look for an English family each student who asked for it, so that she could live like payment guest.

Compared with the one of Turin, the climate of Cambridge seemed to him to depressing Sonia: the cold congealed the bones because of the humidity, fell chirimiri constant and it was made at night to four of afternoon. In addition it was a penetrating cold because, to save, the radiators of the house stayed most of the day dull. For its surprise, the one of its room worked only with currencies. It had thought that to live in an English family it would be like doing it with any Italian family, where everything shared. But that was to not know the local customs. To be payment guest was a business more and, like so, everything was entered. It discovered horrified that it had to pay every time that it wanted to occur a bath and that was going to leave expensive to maintain the level to him of daily hygiene to which she was customary. But the worse thing was the meals. It had never eaten col boiled neither meat with jam nor tortilla of potatoes accompanied by... potatoes. To rise in the morning and to be as opposed to one toasted with tomato sauce haricot beans cut the appetite to him. And toasted with espaguetis soft and sticky that they gave him a day it badly seemed to him a joke of taste, although when seeing that the others sank the tooth to him with fruición, that occurred to account of thus were the things in that so rare country. To this the difficulty was added that it had to express itself: he was incapable to maintain a fluid conversation with the welcome family. In fact, it knew less English of which one had imagined.

At the outset, it thought that never it would be accustomed. Its timidity constituted an obstacle to be related. It avoided to see itself with other Italians because it was there for studying and does not stop to amuse itself. The first days it was dedicated to discover the city. The gothic church of the King's College and the full river of trays with tourists were two of their favourite places. But there were many interesting sites like the chapel of the Trinity College with its statues and plates in honor to the great personages who had studied or investigated there, like Isaac Newton, Lord Byron or the own Nehru; the “mathematical bridge”, the first bridge in the world designed according to the analysis of the mathematical forces that act on their structure... It did not seem to him stranger who Cambridge was considered one of the most beautiful cities of England, but that did not stop being a poor consolation to its solitude. When coming out of class it used to ramble by the streets of the center. From time to time it entered one of the numerous bookstores, mainly in which they had foreign press, to leaf

through some Italian magazine or newspaper. That fleeting contact with its country was like a balsam. It felt as much nostalgia, threw as much of less to his, that when returning to its fourth frozen one the soul on the feet fell to him. Pero so that demons will have felt like to me to come to study thus to a site? , he asked myself while he gave a strong one pierced to his inhalant.

By very timid that was, it was impossible not to make friends to the eighteen years in a place like Cambridge, where one of each five inhabitants was student. There were them of all the nationalities and all the races and were dedicated to all type of activities during their free time, from the sport to the dramatic art, happening to listen to live music or to go of picnic to the Orchard Tea Garden, gardens in an idyllic place that seemed removed from a novel of Thomas Hardy and whose cafeteria served a delicious cake as cheese. Those that had printed to the city that cosmopolitan, amused and simultaneously interesting atmosphere, by that are they Cambridge was world-wide well-known, and many were like Sonia, is to say foreign without family nor friends. The others were needed an a.

He was a German boy who spoke to him for the first time of a restaurant where he ate decently. Christian von Stieglitz was a Right student of the International in the Christ's College, a high boy, good looking, with eyes of blue an intense one and watched she itched. English means average German, spoke several languages, although it felt predilection by Italian and the French. and by Italian and the French, so that... what better way to unite the useful thing to the pleasant thing that teeming by the schools of languages, floods of handsome students! Thus it went as it knew Sonia, and it convinced it so that it proved the only place in Cambridge where one ate decently. He was not very expensive, and it was not either far from the school. The Varsity was well-known for being the oldest restaurant of the city and was boasted to have had as I illustrate companions at table to prince Faisal and the Duke of Edimburgo at its time of students. Ten years before Greek Cypriot had been bought by a family and since then she offered Mediterranean plates to its numerous customer, who included as much professors as students. One was in an old building of brick facade seen painted of target with two great windows cuadritos in the superior floor. It was announced by a discreet label of black letters. It was a local Straits and from the large windows that they gave to the street were possible to be seen the buildings of the Emmanuel College, another institution with much wall-plate where it had studied very same Mr. Harvard, and that served to him as inspiration to found the university that takes its name near Are enough.

For Sonia it was an authentic revelation, and a consolation for its poor stomach. He was nearest the homemade food that had proven since it had arrived at the city. So soon it was become fond of to mezze, the appetizers that they included to wet bread in tarama, a cream done with huevas of fish and lemon, the thorns of meat roasted to the coal grill or the speciality of the house, the lamb to the furnace that melted in the mouth as if he was mantequilla. In addition it liked the atmosphere. One could go single

to eat to the Varsity and not to feel single. More of once it had to be crossed a personage who cojeaba little at that time and always went loaded of books. It developed investigations on cosmology in the university and years later its name would give the return to the world. Stephen Hawking was called and also he was assiduous of the Varsity.

Another personage who went there would jump to the world-wide fame, but for other reasons. Sonia had paid attention to him several times because she occupied, next to a group of bullangueros students, a long table next to hers. "One of those boys emphasized by its aspect and its modales --Sonia- would count. He was not as scandalous as the others, was reserved, more amiable more. It had great black eyes simultaneously and a wonderful, innocent and amazing smile."

Days more behind schedule, while Sonia was having lunch with a Swiss friend in a table in a corner of the floor of above, it saw him approach, accompanied of Christian van Stieglitz, its German friend. After the habitual interchange of greetings and jokes, the European said to him:

- Sight, I present/display my companion of floor, it is of India, it is called Rajiv...

They occurred the hand: "As our glances were crossed for the first time - Sonia- would say felt to annoy my heart." Rajiv was it been throughout observing the lunch, captivated by its calm beauty.

- You like? - Christian- had asked to him. She is Italian, I know it...

- Then preséntamela.

The German was surprised because Rajiv was not specially ligón nor mujeriego, but distant and was rather diminished. "The first time that I saw - would count Rajiv-, I knew that she was the woman of my life."

That same one behind schedule decided to go the four to Ely, a town to twenty kilometers of Cambridge known by their magnificent erected románica cathedral within the walls of a benedictine monastery. They moved in the old blue Volskwagen of Christian, whose ceiling seemed perforated of smallpox. The person in charge of it had been Rajiv, that had given two returns of bell a day in which had left to give a return. To lead era one of its passions. As they did not have money to take it to a factory of plate and painting, to fix had it to put within the vehicle and to straighten the ceiling to kicks. By the others, the Escarabajo was the dream of all student because it supposed to have means of deprived transport to leave the routine and to discover the country at will.

The stroll to Ely did not have anything of extraordinary, nevertheless he was most special of those than Rajiv and Sonia made together in all their life. The one that never would forget. It was behind schedule without rain, and seemed that the sun rays caressed the moss of the walls and illuminated the black and shining slate tile roofs by the humidity. Ely was a wonderful known town to still lodge the greater set of medieval buildings in use in all England, a magical place, where it was easy to lose between the old houses and the old gardens, where they enjoyed



spectacular views on the English countryside from the stop of the towers. Christian, who knew it well, did of cicerone and she showed the prettiest and romantic corners to them, like a magician removing prodigies from its chistera. She was a behind schedule calm one, in that Rajiv and Sonia spoke little, letting itself rock by a fullness feeling that seemed to exceed to them. "The love of Rajiv and Sonia began there same, in the gardens of the cathedral, and at that precise moment. He was something immediate. I never saw two beings connect of that form, and for always. From that moment to the day of its death they became inseparable", would remember Christian later.

Can the love arise almost from a so instantaneous, insolent way? When Rajiv took the hand to him while they took a walk in the shade of the very old walls of the cathedral, Sonia did not have forces to retire it. It thought about doing it, but it did not do it. That warm and smooth hand transmitted a security to him and, so that not to say it? , an immense and deep pleasure. As if all its life had been waiting for that surrounding contact. It could not retire it, although its conscience indicated to him that it had to do it.

In the following days, it tried to fight against that feeling that put the heart to him to galope and that it caused certain anxiety to him because was uncontrollable. One insisted on dominating it, in not letting itself consume by that fire that the smile of Rajiv had ignited in its interior. The women do not yield before the attempts of seduction of the first that arrives, that had taught from Ilías tender childhood to him. And it had yielded, although she was only giving the hand him, taking a walk as if they were fiancès of all the life. Did not have to be contained, to disguise the feelings, to put the pretendientes on approval? But everything what it assumed that had to do starred against that smile, that glance of aterciopelados eyes, that tender voice that became broken because Rajiv was almost as timid as she.

- Quieres to behind schedule come this to the Orchard?

- No, thanks, today not - it with a knot in the throat responded, without being able to separate her glance from the eyes of him.

- It is only a short while, and we will return soon...

She denied of new, this time with the head, and smiled like not discouraging to him, because in the bottom she was wishing to say yes that. Rajiv did not insist, remained planted there, without knowing how what expensive to put nor what to do with its hands, like a shameful boy who does not know how how to fit a refusal. It was not the prototype of the Italian pretendiente, rather on the contrary. He was a little patoso with the girls, but that, instead of diminishing it, increased its enchantment. Rajiv lacked malicia and vulgarity; the verborrea was not his. He was a serious boy, and its smile seemed frank. But for Sonia always the doubt existed... And if it wants to take advantage of me?

During one season she decided not to go more to the Varsity not to fall in the temptation to find it again it. Better take drastic measure. But then its life returned to be as gray as before, a life without flavor... nor color.

That attraction towards that boy, will he not be single? , it was asked in its frozen room while it sank the tooth to an apple. How can be an authentic feeling, if we have almost not spoken? How can he want what it is not known? All these questions were crowded in their mind while it tried to be convinced that no, it could not be, his imagination him was playing bad a last one, did not feel anything by that boy. Soon, at moments of lucidity, account occurred of which he had to be very different from her in everything. It was of another country... And of what country! Neither of Europe nor of the United States, but of a distant and exotic place del that she did not know anything almost... A Indian, nothing less! Of other race, with skin a little sallow and which surely it professed another religion, that would have been bred with other customs, almost medieval... Would be a madness to enamor to me with somebody thus! , it was said then. Was not the full world of histories of Indians or African strained by European who) once obtain them and they take them countries to its, they finish of slaves? It saw itself suddenly like the fleeting whim of an Eastern prince, or something of the sort. Then for a moment one forgot everything and it returned to be she herself, a lost Italian student in Cambridge, wishing that the vacations arrived to return to house and to end the vertigo of the solitude and the uncertainty that, without knowing it, was turning it adult.

But the memory of that smile did not disappear with the mere will to erase it, as if it was enough with pushing a button to issue orders to the heart. The smile of Rajiv was strained by the mysteries of its mind and, in a confusion, it returned to occupy a central place in its imagination. Like he was much more pleasant to let itself take by the ensoñación that to be fighting against the dictation of the heart, finished giving loose rein to its wanderings... What had that smile that seduced so much to it? Era the refinement of its modales and their way to express itself what it arrived to him at the heart? Era its composure of Eastern prince? Rajiv spoke with the best English accent, as if its life in Cambridge had lived all. He was courteous and galante, a little to the old one, qualities that they were scarce between the other students. Christian, who knew him or several months ago, finished finding out that del was grandson that outside prime minister of India, and that is something that it impresses, or at least urges on the curiosity almost as much as the fact that Rajiv had not mentioned it before. Who asked to him, Rajiv explained that its last name did not have relation some with the one of the Mahatma Gandhi, but abstained to communicate its kinship with Nehru. Indeed which it enjoyed more in England it was of the tranquillity that it provided to him to live on anonymous way. All its life in India had been the grandson of the first governor of independent India, an icon venerated by million people. Now that could be he himself, it wanted to enjoy it to the maximum.

In spite of being the one who was, it did not have money to leave. It had wanted to invite it to one of the little nocturnal clubs where live music could be listened and that was called Them Badly Fleurs du, but the budget did not reach to him after as much. Christian it surprised the

abysmal difference to him that was between both great groups of Asian students in Cambridge, the Pakistanis and the Indians. First they used to have much money and they wasted it, but the Indians were all in the last ones. The reason was due to the restriction imposed by the Indian government to its citizens to limit the currency purchase, not being able to change more than 650 pounds whenever they went on a trip. "The beauty of Cambridge - Christian- would remember is that he was great a leveling one of social and economic classes."

The nocturnal life practically nonexistent era because they closed the doors of colleges to eleven. It was necessary to leave by day, and the distractions were very simple: to take a walk, to go in tray by the Cam river, to happen afternoon in digs of one or another one... The second time that Rajiv proposed to him to leave, it accepted, and were listening to music in the very small lodging of students that shared with Christian and who was to overflow with friends and discs. Sonia finished that with the certainty that behind schedule Rajiv really wanted it. It gave until pain to see so enamored it and so impotent to express its feelings. Sonia perceived that he was imprisoned of a torrent of feelings that revolvían to him by inside as much as to her. They had that day not taken the bicycles because it rained, so that it accompanied it walking to his house, a good stretch, because she lived more near the center. So they were become absorbed in thought in its conversation that was lost by the desert city while it opened his heart to him. It confessed that it enchanted to him to live in England because here felt frees by first time in its life. It told him that from boy it had lived escorted by guards on security in the house of the Nueva center Delhi where his grandfathers exerted of prime minister. It told much him that it displeased to him to be recognized like son of the family to whom it belonged, because it clipped its movements and their freedom, because it never knew who were really their friends, since people approached to him with second intentions by her proximity the power. It spoke to him of the so placentera sensation that it experienced the first time that lead old Volkswagen de Christian and who made him feel frees like never before. Also it spoke of the death of its father, happened four years to him back. Of the one of its grandfathers the previous year, that hurt to him still more because it loved like a another father to him. "Yes--Sonia said timidly, that I decide to me." Sonia vaguely remembered to have seen the previous year in the reporters of the television images of the funerales of Nehru, huge, solemn and sad.

Rajiv spoke to him of a whole little, mixing it everything, overturning in disorder memories with desires, nostalgias with hopes, yearnings with grief. Sonia understood that, more there of the nationality or race difference, that boy belonged to a world to which she never had had access, not even mere knowledge. More than the fact of being of India, which separated to him more of him was the orbit in which it turned, so far from the life of middle-class of an Italian of Orbassano like the Earth of the moon. Everything separated to them, and for that reason nevertheless, and perhaps same, the mutual attraction era still more fort. It symbolized for him

everything what longed for: to have a normal life. It was not India, she was not English, he was not identifiable in any step of the social hierarchy. It represented the anonymity of the Indian class; in other words, the freedom, that is what it could more wish a boy of veintiún years that had grown in a golden cage.

It told its passion him by the photography, by musicians of jazz like Stan Getz, Zoot Sims and Jimmy Smith, although also it appreciated to the Beatles and Beethoven. But its authentic passion was to fly, and had arisen to the fourteen years, the day in which his grandfathers Nehru took to give a return to him in glider: "The sound of the wind, the sensation of total freedom, the impression that you are outside everything... he is something fantastic. I enlisted for always." and the beauty to fly on the plains of the north of India, with its winding rivers, its pueblecitos surrounded by green and brown fields where the most mini piece of earth is cultivated... As a result of that experience member became of the Flying club of Delhi and whenever it returned from vacations, it left in glider to occur a return and to forget the world. Now it had desire to prove the flight with motor and played with the idea to become pilot.

To Sonia, this boy opened the doors to him of a unknown world and that shone as the stars in the firmament. He was a warm, practical and simultaneously a little boy soñador, and mainly it inspired confidence to him. It spoke with total naturalness, and it was not conceited don't mention it because it did not need it. He was the opposite of fanfarrón, the opposite of typical ligón Italian that knew so well. Walking next to him, it seemed suddenly to him that those streets were not those of always, that were in another much more pretty city that the one that had known until then. Rajiv made dream, removed it from its shell, it made forget him itself and nostalgia that had felt until then. That night when leaving it in his house it declared itself to him to his a little clumsy way, saying to him that she was the first girl whom it had really liked, and that it hoped that she was the unique one. It said it with as much candor that was difficult not to believe to him.

But even so, Sonia continued fighting to clear it to it of the mind, because she was stubborn and because its heart oscillated like a pendulum, torn between the reason and desire. Prey of an eddy of contradictory feelings, felt vertigo as if it was a precipice in front of, titubeando, with fear to fall. What pinto I in the world of that boy? What I have who to see with a mimado boy to whom his famous grandfathers took a walk in glider? So that I let myself dazzle? Sonia boasted itself to have the Earth feet, and she had them. But the more it was obsessed, the more distant was with him, and that apparent coldness was for him a still greater incentive to seduce it. The reality was that it thought about him day and night, as if had become its own breath. When it was not with him, it looked for the company of the girls of its class with the single aim to speak of him and his captivating enchantment. The feeling that obstructed it served to him as stimulus to learn English and more quickly better, such era the

necessity to be to the height, of not losing the shades of the conversation with Rajiv and its friends. Does not have like the love to learn a language well! , it was said surprised when noticing that it understood a conversation suddenly, a reporter, an article in the newspaper.

But he was exhausting to always live to the con, a little while to question that attraction that filled it of hope and, later, of doubts and fears. Tired of that swing that took it to the melancholy of the euphoria, a day let fight and it giveave in its arms, when still the music of Gerry resounded in its ears Mulligan from the interior of a bar of the concurred Sydney Street.

## 5

Of the arm of Rajiv, the life acquired another tone, another flavor. The strolls by the river in a tray that took he like an authentic gondolero behind colleges, the views from the stop of the church of St. Mary that enjoyed seated in the turf and eating a sandwich, the scent of the parks after rain... Most anodyne it received an unexpected relief. "Some night they went to Them Fleurs du Badly to listen to live music and to dance twist, the rate that made rage at the time and that Sonia danced very well. Cambridge was suddenly the most romantic city of the world, and no longer it wanted to be in no other place to enjoy the present. A present that consisted of seeing itself , to go in bicycle of one house house of the other every day, to go of picnic, to formulate plans of weekend... Rajiv was very fan to the photography and soon he, their Minox camera and Sonia formed an inseparable trio; it had found to perfect his musa and it did not stop to portray it. The romance reached such intensity that the owner of the Varsity, Charles Antoni, said that never he had seen "a pair so enamored... it seemed of novel".

The present also was to travel in the Volkswagen Escarabajo that Rajiv ended up buying to its friend by a handful of pounds. They crossed the English countryside, they visited London and they enjoyed a freedom that then seemed not to have aim. When the windshield was broken to them, they continued using the car but surrounded in blankets.

Rajiv lived like any English student, working in its vacations to obtain extra money. He had been ice cream salesman, another year had worked in the harvesting of the fruit, having loaded trucks or making the turn at night in a bakery. "Cambridge gave a vision me of the world that it had never had if I had had left in India", Rajiv would remember later. In Sonia it found a perfect ally. It was enemy of the estridencias and the extravagances and aspired to which there was well-known, to a calm and stable life without frights nor scares. If Sonia perceived the so great difference that she separated to him of him, also saw the points that they had in common. Both were of timid nature and they did not look for protagonism of any type. Neither the honeys of the success nor the notoriety called the attention to them, rather on the contrary, was something of which the more it was worth to flee. "It did not interest the outer world nor the worldly life to them... They valued the privacy first of all", would say Christian. Both had a very similar concept of the familiar life, perhaps because in her respective cultures the family is the supreme value. Rajiv lacked political ambition, it liked the technical questions and the manual activities. It confessed to him that if it had delivered the attack to enter in the Trinity College, had been to please its grandfathers, who had studied there and who lodged the illusion of which one of its grandsons followed its steps. But now that had died Nehru, Rajiv was thinking seriously about leaving the Trinity College and dedicating themselves to its true vocation, to be airplane pilot. It still did not know how to say it to it to its mother.

What yes it knew to say by letter to Indira, in March of 1965, month and means to him after the encounter in the Varsity, is that it had known Sonia: «... You always ask to me on the girls who I know and if there is some attracts to me specially. Then now I say to you that I have known a girl very special. Still I have not requested it, but she is the girl with whom I want to marry.” In her answer, her mother remembered to him that the first girl who one knows necessarily is adapted. It wanted to adjust the passion of its son. To the aim and the end, only it was twenty years old. But in its following letter, Rajiv confessed to him: “I am sure that I am enamored with her. I already know that she is the first girl with that I leave, but how to know if one is going to know other than it is better” To mail return, Indira announced to him that it finished accepting his first official position, that had done it a little grudgingly, but that already was: she was minister of Information of the government of India. Like so, it had the intention to make an official trip to London at the end of year and it would like to take advantage of that opportunity to know it. To Sonia a knot in the stomach when finding out the news was done to him. As far as telling it his, he was totally incapable to arm itself of the necessary value. It did not want nor to imagine which would be the reaction of its father...

But the news of the arrival of Indira made forget the present for a moment him. Of soon it had a feeling nubarrones in the horizon of its happiness. They returned the fears and it was wondered what future it had in that romance. He was too pretty to last. No longer it doubted its feelings; on the contrary, she was in favor crazy of Rajiv, never had known a fit similar, but it intuited that the so enormous difference that there was between its origins would finish making an impression on the relation, and could perhaps ruin it completely. Little which knew of India it had learned it of a friend who had described like a country distant and immense town to it of elephant and snake charmers and anchylosed by the poverty and the delay. A country that lacked the most basic comforts, a country punished by an implacable climate, a dirty country where the cows stood out to their wide ones and more were respected than the members of chaste the more losses, really a difficult and exciting country... for an anthropologist or yogui, but it does not stop a girl who aspired to work in an international organism and to have a familiar life without problems. Where fitted Rajiv in that picture? The Nehru, had explained him that friend who was not either too much to the current, were of aristocratic origin, of Kashmir. Of some way they dominated the society of its country, and until certain point they had been controlling the world-wide policy... To its side, what were the Maino? , Sonia thought. Paesani, was said to itself. What could contribute to Rajiv the daughter of a small Italian constructor of provinces? She was sure that the mother of Rajiv would become the same question, and that caused a great frustration to him. Sonia was conscious that their families “could not be more different”, according to his own words. It was not either able to imagine saying to him to its father who had fallen in love with a sallow man of skin, that above was Indian and that in addition it professed, at least

officially, the Hindu religion. No, that one was a pill that the good one of Stefano Maino was not going to swallow with taste, by very prime minister who had been the grandfathers.

Its nature introvert prevented him to share its fears with Rajiv. It did not want to break the happiness, that it could be as fragile as the finest crystal. With him it was of a full dulzura of reserve and the eyes with which it watched to him were loaded of questions. He was Indian, but in its gestures and their way to speak it saw to an English. He was distinguished and simultaneously one behaved with an amazing simplicity. Sonia, in fact, experienced a strange and definitive change that led the blind acceptance, total, of which she could, because of Rajiv or thanks to him, to happen to him more ahead. It felt that to the distant border of its own one to be everything it had been fixed beforehand by the destiny, before at least of that had been born.

A week end Sonia knew Sanjay, the only brother of Rajiv, two years smaller, than it was making a course of learning in the house Rolls-Royce in Crewe, to three hours of way, and that it used to go to Cambridge to amuse itself from time to time. He was very handsome, like its brother, but with attractive a different one. Sanjay had an oval face, heavier and sensual lips and entered incipientes. Like his brother, exhibited impeccable modales and spoke with smooth voice with a perfect British accent. Both were frugales in their habits. Sanjay ate little, but it spoke much of policy and they enchanted the parties to him. To Rajiv it liked neither to smoke nor to drink, did not interest anything to him the policy, rather it apostatized of that world and it preferred a calm supper with friends to a noisy celebration. Sanjay was colder than its older brother, did not come off that sensation of calm calidez, good person who as much security gave Sonia. And their glances were different. Rajiv did like acariciándose with its almendrados eyes. His brother, however, had a distant glance, something makes insolent. One noticed to him the other way around very proud of being the one who was, that its brother.

It was the wonderful year, perhaps happiest of its lives, if by happiness it is understood the almost total absence of preoccupations and problems. But the course arrived at its aim, and the vacations of summer were going to interrupt idilio of Cambridge.

In 1965 July , Rajiv and Sonia separated for the first time. Sonia returned to Italy. Chiquilla had arrived months back like one, now returned like a woman, with the firm idea to make its life with Rajiv. It did not know how nor when, but she was determined. It was a happy and disquieting goodbye at the same time because, although they were convinced that they would return to be, Sonia feared the reaction of its parents. The future it was seeded of incognitos.

It filled of satisfaction to realize to him much that had improved its English when they left works to him interpreter in the fairs of Turin. What differentiates, what soltura... At least, the signor Maino had not thrown the money. It was the good news for its parents. The other, the important one,



was not able to verbalizar it. No matter how much it tried it mentally, it did not leave to him. "I want deciros that I am enamored with a boy... No, thus no, is ridiculous! - it was said, before trying another way: I have known somebody very special and I am wanted to marry with him... Pero how I am going to say that to them? ", it returned to say itself desperate. When the moment arrived for facing it, it remained paralyzed. "Although éramos a family very united - Sonia would write late more, they were very conventional, specially my father who was a patriarch to old usanza. In that type of families, the contact between boys and girls strictly were watched and controlled."

Rajiv did not understand the reluctance of Sonia to speak with its parents. She tried to explain herself: How to tell them of sopetón that there was been living an enthusiastic history of love all these months without to them to have communicated nothing? It did not know how to break the ice. "It does not seem that he is able to say it to it - wrote Rajiv to its mother. I cannot understand it. It must be something very peculiar. It only does what the father says." Clear that Rajiv did not know Stefano Maino, never it had seen its reddened face, its rudas factions of mountain dweller, never had heard its hoarse voice nor its sharp tone when something it did not like.

"It took long time to Me to do to me with the value sufficient to speak to my parents of my feelings towards a boy who stops they not only was a stranger but a foreigner also," the occasion took place after the wedding of Pier Luigi, the owner of the bar-monopoly in Via Frejus. Pier Luigi, who had seen it grow, had wanted that she was witness of his wedding. It was the great event of the summer in the district. A celebration with music and much drink in the bar, that was to overflow with people, so much as in the annual appointment that reunited to the neighbors ritually to see in the television the Festival of San Remo.

- I am enamored, I want to him - it said to them after explaining to them who was the boy and how they had been known.

- What age you say that it has?

- Twenty years...

- He is too young - her mother intervened.

- And above is of that way! - the father added.

So and as had imagined, did not show it the minimum enthusiasm. They reacted with a total disdain, as if her daughter had been imprisoned of a fleeting attack of madness. There was nothing in that relation that they could like: the boy was hardly two years old more than Sonia, was foreign, but he was not English nor French but of a country that only left in the news by its disasters, he was terrone, as those of the north of Italy call to the immigrants of the south, with aggravating of which not even was Italian. And it had another important defect: he was not catholic. For them, Sonia had drowned the restlessness to feel for the first time single in a foreign country falling in arms of first of turn.

- One will already go to him...

But one did not go to him. Until the mailman it joked with the family because now it brought daily letters, all with letterhead of England, all for Sonia. The "girl" went long hours in her quarter, responding her voluminous correspondence, or waiting for anxious a telephone conference. Soon they were the sisters, who understood that Sonia really was enamored. "Already one will go to him" of the parents gave rise to "and if it goes in serious" of Anushka and Nadia. The only thing that dulcificó the position of its mother was to find out at least that the small era "of good family". Of something had served to send it to the most expensive school of Cambridge! That he was the grandson of Nehru, who her Indira mother was in the government to Stefano left him indifferent, but Paola yes was sensible to it. And the sisters also. They were already seen marching past backs of elephant in the gardens of some Indian palace. For them, history had something of fairy tale ; an Eastern prince had fallen in love with his sister... He was exciting.

The battle horse went the return to Cambridge. His father did not want that she returned. According to him, already it knew sufficient English. In fact, it wanted take drastic measure idilio of its daughter. Pero Sonia was pawned on obtaining its title, the Proficiency in English, and for it it needed a year more. As always, the influence of Paola was decisive. She and their husband knew perfectly that her daughter wanted to return because she was enamored, but Paola insisted on the importance from which she obtained a title. Sonia stayed signs. It said to them that if did not want to help it, it was arranged to do like many girls who studied there English, would look for a work and one would become independent. To anybody it likes to face its parents, to Sonia still less because it did not go with its character of docile girl. But it could plus the love.

Their parents finished yielding, thinking that to be against to the romance of his daughter he would not do more than to exacerbar it. Better than it returns to England, thought. At least it would return with a title. They were sure that that history of love, that they saw like an eccentricity, would not hold the passage of time... The only thing that could make era advise to him: eye where you put, you do not hurry.

Sonia was so respectful with the familiar traditions, and so little she blankets of the confrontation, that promised to them to have them to the current of everything. So that, from return to Cambridge and before the next arrival of Indira, that had shown desire to know it, he thought that it was better than their parents knew it. Rajiv, that was wishing to put itself in contact with the Maino, took advantage of the occasion to send a letter to them and to request permission to them so that the encounter between its daughter and Indira Gandhi took place. A pasmados archiformal and very respectful letter that left the Maino, but what were going to do, to refuse to it? Stefano had not doubted nor a second to it, but her woman convinced to him so that she gave his authorization.

## 6

It was winter and the highway shone in the rain. They were arriving at City in the Volkswagen weakened of Rajiv when Sonia a panic attack entered to him. Suddenly, the perspective to go to a reception in the embassy of India and to be with the mother of its fiancé in an atmosphere that did not know terrified it and it paralyzed it. What I there am going to do? , it was said suddenly. A torrent of questions, some serious ones, other trivial ones, acted hastily in their head: How is necessary to treat it? I will be dressed suitably? What I must say to him? And if it despises to me? And if is aggressive it?

- You do not say trivialities - Rajiv repeated to him.

Suddenly, to Sonia the world fell to him above. It seemed to him that the months last in company of Rajiv had been a dream that was on the verge of becoming pieces. It thought that it was not prepared to know its mother. In addition, that encounter would mean to commit itself still more, and how could do it if their own parents had been so obstinate his idilio?

- But if they are to the current, if your father has given permission you... Now you lie down back?

Rajiv did not understand anything. Sonia was scared. It thought that perhaps his father was right and had arrived the moment for stepping on the brake, for calming themselves, for giving reverse gear ...

- Sonia, we have been, are hoping to us...

- I feel it, I do not go, I cannot.

Sonia lost the stirrups, was incapable to control itself. The efforts of Rajiv to calm did not give it result, so that it had to call to his mother and to invent an excuse to cancel the appointment.

They later postponed it for days, when Sonia had calmed itself. This time was promised itself to behave well, but it continued being a drink difficult to happen. The legs shook when it raised the steps to him of the residence of the ambassador of India, where stayed Indira and its friend of the soul, Pupul Jayakar, that had helped him to organize the tribute to Nehru. The two still were excited because the eve, after a poetry recital of Allen Ginsberg and other poets of the generation beat, had finished to the one of the dawn in a Spanish restaurant eating covers and seeing dance flamenco. To its return, they had been with the ambassador preocupadísimo; it was to point to call to the police because it thought that something had passed them.

Indira received to them in its room, slightly perfumed of incense. Sonia was in front of a surrounded woman of fragile aspect in elegant sari of silk. It recognized in its eyes black and almendrados those of Rajiv. The hair gathered in a monkey let see in the forehead a tuft of abundant white hair in spite of its forty and eight years. That tuft, that would become its sign of identity, conferred an undeniable distinction to him. It had a full smile of enchantment, delicate ways and a prominent nose that it tried to disguise with maquillaje under the eyes to attenuate the shades. In fact and

according to it had confessed its Pupul friend to him, which it had really liked had been to operate that nose.

“ I in front of was perfectly normal a human being - Sonia- would say, in front of a warm and cosy woman. It did all the possible one so that it felt to me to pleasure. It spoke to me in French when it noticed that I dominated plus that language that the English. It wanted to know of me, my studies.” Rajiv had of having counted to its mother something to him on the attack of nerves, because Indira said to him that “it also had been young, terribly timid, and enamored, and who understood to me perfectly”.

Sonia, relaxed, enjoyed that first encounter, that finished of the possible most familiar way. In effect, the pair had to attend a celebration of students and Sonia requested to change of clothes in a quarter of the embassy. But nothing else to leave, encountered and the heel of its shoe tore the backstitch of its suit at night. “The mother of Rajiv - Sonia- would count took control of a needle and black thread and, faithful to its slowed down style, that it would observe close by later, was put to sew the backstitch. Was not exactly that what my mother had done? All my doubts disappeared, at least at the moment.”

An affection current happened between those two so different women in everything, except in the love by Rajiv. Indira had not communicated its son, but the idea to have a foreign daughter-in-law someday had a little disturbed. Now, after knowing it, their reserves had dissipated: “Aside from handsome - Dorothy Norman- wrote to him to her North American friend is a healthy and direct girl.”

Dorothy was glad to receive those news of her friend. Finally, it seemed that Indira left the deep existential crisis in which it struggled from the death of its Firoz husband four years ago, and from most recent Nehru, its father. Widow first, and later orphaned one. In addition, as their children were in the foreigner, it had remained single. The day in which Rajiv had left to Cambridge, Indira had written to Dorothy: “I feel sad. He is a little while heartrendering for a woman when his son becomes a man. It knows that no longer it depends on her and who from now on he is going to make his own life. And although sometimes they let it throw a look to that life, always will do it from outside, the distance of another generation. My heart suffers.”

To Indira it cost to him much to recover behind schedule of the death of Nehru, happened in a warm one of the 27 of May of 1964. In her last days, it had not left him nor to a second, always pending of her necessities, administering to him medicines, supervising her diet, separating the visits. The last photo which them they made together, in that is seen it its side squatting, shows to an expression of deep sadness and great tenderness in its face. Indira had spent the last years stuck him, organizing the agenda to him, coordinating the visits of foreign dignitaries like the Shah of Iran, king Saud, Ho Chi Minh or Krushchev. It had gotten until a to make of communication channel between him and its ministers. The own Nehru, the named being maximum agent chief executive when India became independent in 1947, had asked to him who assumed the role of “first lady”,

since her wife had passed away time back and he needed to somebody confidence that knew to run the house to him. Indira had accepted with reluctance at the outset, soon with authentic devotion. It had done it not only because she was a obedient daughter India, but because its marriage crumbled. She was fed up with the acts of infidelity of Firoz, its husband. In fact, they practically lived separated time, so that it and its children ago settled in Teen Murti House, the pretty residence of prime minister of the Nueva India in center Delhi. The first that did Indira was to off-hook the collection of pictures of imperial heroes and to send them to the Ministry of Defense. Soon, it replaced them by India crafts, and troc3 the heavy French curtains by visillos of crude cotton, the weave that rueca of Gandhi turned autarky symbol. It fixed the quarter of its father with a low bed surrounded by its books and favorite photographies. A day confessed that it had liked to be decorator of interiors, but the destiny had reserved another paper to him.

If the death of Nehru had prevailed to the world of a giant - he had been the unquestionable leader of the movement of countries nonaligned that grouped to more than half of the world-wide population; if it had left to India without the symbol of its fight by the freedom and without prime minister, and to the Party of the Congress without its Maxima authority, to its Indira daughter it had left it in the middle of an immense crater, like if its death had been a pump that had devastated everything to his around. Nehru had been the presence and the dominant force in his life, the light that had guided its steps. Perhaps that passion by its father was consequence of much that had missed to him of girl, since it spent almost more time between grates than in house due to his political activism. But when it returned, its presence filled of joy the familiar mansion of Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad. Then it was already a legend of meat and bone, always relaxed, by much tension that was to his around, with a face that seemed carved by a chisel, a provided affluent body, a timid and inquisitive glance to he himself time, a frank laughter and a natural elegance that stood out taking to a rose in the eyelet of the third button of his sherwani. Their great culture, his sharpened sense of humor and its dowries of orador won the affection there to him where it was. One developed with the same facility in the halls the high society that in the jails of its graceful Majesty. It got to have of interlocutors from its professors from Cambridge to heads of government and virreyes, from the very same king emperor of England - and his jailers to tribal heads of Afghanistan.

After which his father, the great Motilal, him left single to the thirteen years in the boarding school of England, Nehru remained to seven years learning Political Sciences and being interested in the last technological advances. It returned from England in 1912, transformed into a British horseman. It began to work in the writing desk of his father, and this one was very satisfied with the substantial income that now to him his son provided. The rest of the time distributed between the library of the School of Lawyers and the institution to it that could not lack in colonial India, the club, where it spent and tedious hours seated in the armchairs

long to chester of the overloaded halls discussing legal subjects with old members the British administration. A boring life, according to the own Nehru, whom it changed as a result of an apparently insignificant fact, when it received the visit of a group of farmers who requested aid to him against landowners who used cruel and expeditious methods to expel them from their legitimate earth. Nehru acceded to accompany them to his village to explain the case. It was a vain trip of three days that transformed to him of timid lawyer and that, according to its words, did not know the conditions in whom the great majority of Indians lived and worked, to revolutionary. "Seeing with its misery and overflowing gratitude them, I felt a mixture of shame and pain - it wrote, shame of my easy and comfortable life and the politiquo of the cities that ignores to this vast multitude of children and half-naked daughters of India, and pain before as much degradation and unbearable poverty."

To this the news that arrived from the city santa to him of Benarés, to borders of the Ganges- was united . Mohandas Gandhi, that lawyer who still was a stranger, had caused to an authentic commotion when doing an incendiary speech against the inequality and in favor of the poor men in the occasion of the inauguration of the Hindu University. "The jewel exhibition that you offer hoyes to us a splendid celebration for the Vista - had said to an audience made up of colonial authorities and Indian aristocrats, but when I compare it with the face of the million poor men, I deduce that there will be no salvation for India until you take off those jewels and you deposit them into the hands of those poor men." The hearing reacted with indignation. Princes and dignitaries left claustro of the university. Only the students applauded the words of Gandhi. But the echo of that intervention resounded in whole India, and Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to know him.

"Era as a powerful fresh air current - Nehru de Gandhi- would write; like a light ray that crossed the dark; like an eddy that questioned everything, but mainly the way in which the mind of people worked. It did not come from above, it seemed to emerge incessantly from between the million Indians, speaking its language and turning aside the attention towards them and to their pressing necessities. " Its force was transformed in a concept that it coined in 1907 whose name derived from the sánscrito, satyagraha, that means the force of the truth, and whose intention implied the idea of a powerful but not-violent energy to transform the reality. For the masses Indians, satyagraha represented an alternative the fear. She was the bengalí poet and Nobel prize of Literature, Rabindranath Tagore, that Gandhi granted the title by which would be known. Tagore called Mahatma to him: "great soul".

But the great soul needed a great lieutenant. That one became his disciple and friend Nehru, and although they did not have anything in common, the combination of forces that arose from that intense friendship would end up changing the world. Because Gandhi was a faith man, of religion; Nehru was a rationalist one, an falsified product of Harrow and

Cambridge that as soon as she spoke the native languages of India. Their years in Europe made see him like ridiculous many customs of their compatriots, like the one of not leaving house in considered days little propitious. In the most religious country of the world, he was an atheist whom it despised to santones and yoguis, people in charge according to him of the delay, the internal divisions and the dominion of the foreign colonizadores. Gandhi found too much him gentleman for his taste and did with him what did with other members of the high class. It sent them to the villages to recruit new members for the Party of the Congress and step to know the true face its mother country. The majority had never seen the poverty of its own compatriots. But that one was the beauty of the movement of Gandhi: it put in contact to the high class with lowest, than they began to exist to eyes of the rest of the society. By first time, India was imprisoned of an ample popular movement that rejected the way to live imposed from distant London.

During thirty years, Nehru crossed India, in cars of oxen, in train on foot, galvanizing to the population. But Gandhi dreamed about an India of villages that lived in autarky, an India without discrimination of chaste but deeply religious, Nehru did with a released India of his myths and the misery by the industry, science and the technology. For Gandhi, those were indeed the misfortunes of the humanity. For Nehru, they were its salvation.

Their differences of opinion and vision never put in check the friendship and the deep respect that both men professed themselves. They agreed in the fundamental thing; to obtain a united and independent India without bloodshed . Nehru was convinced that Gandhi was, aside from santo, a genius. It valued its extraordinary political ability, its art to speak with gestures that arrived at the soul of the town. When both were eeted again, they chatted long short while, they interchanged points of view, they evaluated the last advances in the fight, or the last misfortunes. They discussed on strategies, got upset, soon they were ed \*\*\*reflx mng or simply they meditated. Gandhi always made clear that the torch of its combat would spend a day through the hands of Nehru, and him aupó to the presidency of the Party of the Congress in three occasions.

Indira grew up in that atmosphere where the border between the familiar life and the political life was nonexistent. To Gandhi it told its secrets him of chiquilla, said to him much that it was strange to its father, spoke to him of its solitude, of its complexes for being a girl feúcha. Nehru passed a total of nine years locked up, interrupted by short periods of freedom. The familiar life was suffered as much of it that once Indira had to say to him to a visitor: "I feel It, but my grandfathers, my father and my mother are all in the jail."

From the death of Nehru, to Indira old memories of their childhood came to him to the memory, when it was disguised of Juana de Arco and it emulated his father saying: "Someday I will lead my town towards the freedom", while it harangued an imaginary multitude. Or like when "first political action" committed his) as it would call it later, that went

to attack an English police that burst in into the house of Anand Bhawan to obstruct objects and furniture because, as a matter of principle, its father and his grandfathers, as well as the members of the party, refused to pay guarantee whenever they were arrested. It wanted to enter in the Congress to the twelve years, but like it was not the prescribed age, was rejected. The bull by the horns reacted to its way, since it would later do it in the life, taking. It reunited in the gardens from that mansion to several hundreds of children of the district. Indira went to them since his father had done it, conminando to them to fight by the liberation of the mother country in spite of the dangers. Thus the "army of the monkeys " created, that were children who made workings of spy, stuck posters, made flags and they infiltrated behind the police lines to pass messages to members of the party. Its army got to count with several thousands of children who supported substantial to which they fought. What happy felt when his father was proud of her...!

Their relations always were marked by the suffering of the distance, that only the letters were able to mitigate: "I want that you learn to write letters and that you come to see me the jail. I throw to you much of less", wrote Nehru to her when she as soon as it was six years old. For his thirteenth birthday, Nehru wrote to her: " What gift I can mandarte from the jail of Naini? My gifts cannot be material nor solid. They only can be facts of air, the mind and the spirit, like whom it would grant a fairy to you, things that not even the high walls of a prison could retain."

Indira dived in those letters - they were hundreds of letters, a touching and interesting correspondence, because both wrote very well to prepare the commemorative exhibition, that one that came to inaugurate to London. It wanted to emphasize the compasiva facet of its father as well as his incredible value and entereza with the help of photos and objects and of illustrating them with extracted legend of its writings and speeches. Of all the projects that it had undertaken from the Ministry of Information that now directed, in this one turned upside down with special devotion. Not only by the sentimental question, but because it thought that to give to know and to raise the memory of Nehru it was important for the world and India in individual, a new nation needed the example of leaders who forged their unit.

Rajiv accompanied Sonia to visit the exhibition on Nehru. It was a way to introduce to the Italian young person in the complex history of its country, a way to explain who were he and its family to him. Sonia stopped long before the suit of fiancée of the grandmother of Rajiv, Kamala, and observed the ritual utensils that are used in the weddings of Kashmir. The photo foot explained that the woman also had been in the jail and that died of tuberculosis to the thirty and six years... Sonia thought about Indira; with a father in the jail and an ill mother... What childhood had been hers?

- Sad - Rajiv- said to her. In addition my mother also became ill of tuberculosis. It was long seasons locked up in a sanatorium where they advised to her that one did not marry and did not have children... - Less badly than it did not make case... - she with a smile said.



- One was saved thanks to the discovery of antibiotics. It had more luck than the grandmother...

Sari was other exhibited, red pale, with a silver-plated festoon. - That one is sari that my grandfathers in the jail for the wedding of my mother wove... I hope that someday you to it take... - it said to him with guasa.

Sonia ed \*\*\*refl mng itself, little convinced. One did not imagine surrounded in that fabric, that had been made inside a cell reconstructed there same for the occasion with extended photographs: the camp bed, the notebook in that was seen phrases of their newspapers of prison could be read, rueca with which Nehru had spun that sari in a gesture that combined the love towards the daughter and the love towards the country... Gandhi had turned rueca a symbol of fight by independence. The English had ruined the rich textile industry India having put rates disturbed to Indian products for, however, selling they woven industrialists made in England. Rueca was a revolt symbol, a way to say that it was not necessary to buy concerned textile products because each one could spin its own fabrics. There was a letter that Sonia read. It was written by Nehru from the jail and it directed it to its daughter, who was going away to marry: "At the outset, to spin he is very boring but as soon as you put yourself to it, you discover that it has something of fascinating. I dedicate to him half an hour to the day. As it is not long time, I produce little although I am enough express. Ever since I have begun, for seven weeks, I have been spinning almost ten thousand meters. I have understood that thousands for sari are needed thirty. Within four months, can that has sari for you"

That sari was not only a fiancée suit, was also a flag. For Sonia, a fiancée suit had to be white, with veil, like which it saw all Sundays of spring in the fiancées who married in the church of San Juan Baptist of Orbassano. Sometimes it forgot that Rajiv was Indian.

Shootings of the celebrations of independence were exhibited, that on board showed the last parade of the virrey Lord Mountbatten and its Edwina woman of a vehicle literally besieged by the multitude. "Young Lluven!", it said scared Pamela, the daughter of the virreyes, because the women sent their babies to the air to avoid that the multitude squashed them. Rajiv told him that her mother saw how a woman decided that his baby would be safer with Lady Mountbatten and went it. Edwina had in its arms long short while. It was seen Nehru walking literally over the crowd, shouting so that they raised the flag saffron, green and white of the new nation that incorporated a singular shield in center: one rueca. Mountbatten fought to separate to children and young people average in a faint by the racket and to put them out of danger. The flag was received with a tremendous uproar of joy. A cannon shot was listened to and soon, like by magic art, a rainbow arose in the sky, giving rein to the most many-colored interpretations on the meaning of that "act of God".

But also there were photos and shootings of the tragedy that accompanied independence. Rajiv told Sonia who Nehru made his famous

speech of independence with the destroyed heart. A recording reproduced its voice that night of the 15 of August of 1947: "Many years ago, we gave an appointment to the destiny and has arrived the hour to fulfill our promise... To the edge of the midnight, when the men sleep, India will awake to the life and the freedom..." To listen to therefore the voice of Nehru it caused that Sonia shook. Rajiv explained to him that his grandfathers knew that while announced the greater news in the history of India, the city of Lahore, old capital of the empire mogol and the most cosmopolitan city of sub continent, that had happened to belong to Pakistan, he burned in one orgia of violence. It was the principle of a tragedy of gigantic dimensions well-known like the Partition. The independence of both countries triggered a movement of ethnic and religious cleaning without comparison in history. The Hindus, that lived generations ago in which now it was Pakistan were forced to flee. To the inverse one, the Muslims of India fled in opposite direction. The shootings of those columns of refugees and the story of the committed atrocities - families burned alive in its houses, women sent from trains in march for being of the mistaken religion, violet daughters forehead to its parents... - they left surprised Sonia.

- And the not-violence? - Sonia asked timidly, whom that saw their ideas preconceived on the Pacific character of the Indians came down.

- Gandhi was able to stop great part of the violence with his uninformed ones... - Rajiv- responded to him but in the end nor he himself could escape to the religious fanaticism.

Then it told him that to the four years her mother took a day to him to visit the Mahatma in house of the Bir it, a well-off family who lent lodging and support to him whenever she came to Delhi. Gandhi very was depressed by the declarations of Hindu extremists who accused of treason to have defended the persecuted Muslims to him, and by all the tension that the country supported, although the violence of the partition had stopped already. "I cannot continue living in this madness and in this dark", that same morning was this Gandhi to him to the photographer Margaret Bourke- White. Gandhi, who was like of the family, was very affectionate with Rajiv. While the adults chatted and tried to relax the atmosphere with some joke, the small Rajiv played with flowers of jazmín that her mother had bought to him to the Mahatma. In a photo it was seen how the boy placed them around the toes of Gandhi.

- It stopped to Me with a smooth gesture of his hand - Rajiv-counted. "You do not do that", said to me, " only put flowers around the feet of deads".

It continued telling him that that same one behind schedule, while it went to the center of the garden for the oration, a man approached Gandhi and joining the hands Namasté saluted to him "!", it said, soon fixedly it watched the eyes to him, it removed a Beretta pistol from the pocket and it shot three shots point-blank to him. He was a Hindu fundamentalist.

The exhibition showed images of the chaos that followed the attack. Perhaps most dramatic it was the photo of Nehru raised in the ceiling of a car and calming the population with a megaphone in the hand. All wanted to approach to give a last greeting to the "great soul". A loudspeaker reproduced the words that Nehru directed to the nation by radio in that terrible night: "The light has been extinguished on our lives and there are no darkneses more. Our wanted leader, the father of the nation, has left us. I have said that the light has been extinguished, but is not certain. The light that has shone on this country was not an ordinary light. Within thousand years, it will continue shining. The world will see it because it will continue giving consolation innumerable hearts." Sonia felt chills when listening that voice that seemed to arise from beyond.

- My grandfathers always were obsessed with maintaining united and lay India - Rajiv- explained to him. It said that the nation only could survive on those two values... and I believe that it was right.

Other photos showed Nehru with Gandhi, smiling ones and obvious in agreement; other serious ones and differing; to Nehru with Chinese, Soviet, American leaders; with scientists like Einstein, writers like Thomas Mann and Pearl S. Buck... In the end, Sonia stopped long before the photos of the family reunited in Anand Bhawan, looking for seemed. Rajiv was finer than its Firoz father; it had the elegance of its mother, thought. Motilal patriarch looked itself like his own grandfathers, the father of Stefano, with his wide face of strong and square jaw and the equal moustache of thick. It did not repair in the text of the photo that spoke of the eternal dilemma of the Nehru between having to politician and the personal necessity, and that, in that conflict, to always have it had prevailed. Although Sonia visibly was altered by everything what finished seeing, could not measure the reach of those words nor imagine that someday its meaning would persecute it.

## 7

The glad life of enamored in England received a victim: the studies of Rajiv in the Trinity College. It suspended all the matters of the course. He would never be a scientist. It had already warned its mother that the studies were too arduous and of which the results would be catastrophic. Indira did not reproach it; to the aim and the end, it also had suspended in Oxford, although their circumstances had been very different: it had never had a normal escolarización, and when younger she was always ill. Of between the members of the family, only Nehru had demonstrated a genuine academic ability. His Rajiv grandson was neither a great student, nor a great reader nor an intellectual like his grandfathers. It had always liked the practitioner, the technical questions, to understand how a machine works, to try to fix it if he spoils. He was able to mount its own loudspeakers to listen to music, or to gut one radio to fix it. It was manitas, a quality that had inherited of its father.

Rajiv had to leave Cambridge and to fall back in the Imperial College of London, study more technicians of mechanical engineering. But already it had a clear idea of which it wanted. One had paid attention to the publicity of the aviation school Wiltshire in Thruxton, one old base of the RAF near Southampton reconverted school of pilots. It wanted to take advantage of the vacations summer to begin to take classes from flight. To become pilot had an advantage added to the one of the pure one to please to fly: it was the fastest way to be able to gain the life, indispensable requirement to marry with Sonia. Much more fast than a university race. As it did not want to ask money to him its mother, it decided that it would work to pay to the flight hours and the instructor until pass first.

In 1966 July, Sonia returned to Italy with the title of Proficiency in English of the University of Cambridge under the arm. The mailman returned to be the person who more assiduously visited the familiar house of Via the Bellinis before the exasperación of the Maino marriage who, in spite of having authorized the encounter with Indira, continued being against idilio of their daughter with Rajiv. She said openly that a day would marry with him. Their parents tried to dissuade it. Stefano proposed to him to hope to that he had most of age before making any decision:

- It is Only a year more - her mother added. A decision thus cannot be taken lightly. Soon you could be regreted all the life.

- While you are under our responsibility - his father continued, I cannot allow that you marry with that boy. We are sure that it is a wonderful chaval, is not that... but it would be to fail to fulfill with my to have of father if it said to you: it advanced, vetoes India, cástate with him. You do not understand it? Delay a little more.

It was a reasonable proposal, but the love understands little of reasons. To the twenty years, to hope is a torture. Strikes of Post office, so frequent Italy, became that year in the greater enemy of Sonia. Rajiv continued writing every day, telling the happiness him that felt learning to fly on the English countryside. It did in a biplane, a Tiger Moth, a model of

years thirty, an agile and sensible airplane that provided hours to him of intense pleasing. The goal was to fly single, and to obtain it had to accumulate a minimum of forty hours with an instructor. That one was the indispensable requirement to be examined after civil pilot, and to continue scaling steps until being able to be commercial pilot.

Rajiv had thought to make a trip to Orbassano. It wanted to convince the father of Sonia so that it let it travel to India. "I want that you go to India - wrote to him and you remain with my mother, without me, so that you can see the things as they really are, and in which to you concerns, in its worse light because I will not be and you will not have to anybody in that to trust. Thus you will know the country and people... I do not want arrastrarte to anything without you know everything what it implies. It would feel person in charge to me if, later, something leaves bad and you feel somehow wounded - in the feelings or another thing. I do not want to have to request accounts to him to anybody safe to same me, for that reason I do not want to lie nor engañarte." The letter showed a certain moral height and Sonia felt affected, although pessimistic as far as the probability that his father approved that plan.

In order to pay for the trip to Italy, Rajiv was forced to obtain more money: "I feel much not haberte been able to write before, but I have found a job of bricklayer in a work - it said in another one of its letters. I have been working up to ten hours to the day, more hour and average of displacement, so that when returning to house he was dead. I have so many stiffnesses that only I can escribirte very slowly." Affection letters were full, of illusion by the future, although the last ones revealed a great fear. Rajiv was worried about the news that arrived to him from India. Prime minister had died of an attack to the heart while he was of official visit in the Soviet Union to sign a treaty of peace with Pakistan, after one short war. "India lives a situation convulsa, very bad very... - it wrote to him to Sonia-. I have the prefeeling of which much people are going to want that my mother is prime minister . I hope that it does not accept, will end up it killing."

Rajiv was right. The power group that controlled the Party of the Congress loved its mother of prime minister: "It knows all the world-wide leaders, has crossed the world with its father, is servant next to the heroes of the fight by independence, has a rational mind and modern and it is not identified with any chaste one, state or religion. But mainly, it can make us gain the elections of 1967", wrote a head of the party. There was another reason, more powerful still: they wanted it in that position because they believed it weak and they thought that he was maleable. The old big shots of the party were convinced that they could follow in the positions nails, enjoying the privilege to make decisions without the responsibility to take them. The best one of worlds. In fact, they did not know Indira Gandhi. To its forty and eight years, nor she herself conocla even.

The eve of its election like female leader of the government, the Maxima authority of the second country more populating with the world, Indira had written to Rajiv a letter saying that a poem of Robert Frost was

not able to take off of the head who summarized the crossroads well in which he was: "What difficult is not to be king when it is in you and in the situation." Also it told him in the letter that to the dawn of that day visited the mausoleo of the Mahatma Gandhi to impregnate itself of the memory of that had been its second father. Soon it went to Teen Murti House, now national museum, and length was had left short while in the room where Nehru had died. It needed to feel its presence. One of its letters remembered when it was fifteen years old: "I know brave, and the rest will come single." Well, the rest had arrived. It was going to cross the threshold of a new existence, a life for which at heart always had been preparing itself, although it did not admit it consciously.

After the death of its father, it had dreamed about retiring of the world. It played with that idea during a time, until thought about renting a pisito in London and looking for a work there of which it was, perhaps of secretary in some cultural institution. To flee from itself, that is what looked for. But soon the reality reached it, and it could not continue dreaming about its own freedom. It had to solve concrete problems. It had remained without house and of its father it had inherited its personal objects and their rights of author, not much. Nehru had been eating his capital, because its wage of prime minister did not reach to him after its expenses of representation, and was not of which put the hand in the coffers of the State. It is certain that Indira inherited the old mansion of Anand Bhawan in Allahabad, but involved so many expenses that to maintain an important load supposed it. In addition it had two children studying in England. How to pay for all that? Retiring of the world? Account occurred of which it was a chimera, a whim. Its life been too much had dominated by the policy like being able to retire so young. Every day people came to see it, people of all class and condition, since they did it when his father lived. The same multitudes that congregated themselves now in Teen Murti House came to see it her. They came to greet it, to expose its complaints, that she it listened to them, said phrases, showed interest to them by its offenses. They were the poor men of always, the poor men of eternal and old India, such poor in name of which Gandhi and his father had fought. Indira was not going to leave thrown them, had been to insult the memory of Nehru. On the contrary, it received them and it listened with attention which they meant to him. They were they who really consoled their wounded heart. From them it was removing forces to come out ahead, to find a sense to its life. Those poor men made realize him of which what she had really inherited it had been the power of his father.

The presence of Nehru also felt it when entering the building of the Parliament, in the landscaped Nueva center Delhi, a gigantic red and beige circular building of arenaceous with one veranda full of columns. In their interior, under a cupola of thirty meters of height, the representatives of the town chose it by 355 votes against 169. Its party voted in mass by her. In its brief speech, it thanked to them. "I hope not to betray the confidence that you have deposited in me." He was radiating, very conscious that its

appointment with the destiny had arrived. It was going to take possession from that “wide extension of India humanity” according to the description of Nehru.

The residence that was assigned to him found in he himself Nueva district Delhi that the old mansion palaciega. Number 1 of Safdarjung Road was a typical colonial villa with painted walls of target, surrounded by a good garden and with four rooms of which it turned two office and one in room of reception. It made clear that every day between the eight and the nine in the morning the house would be open to all, without concerning the position nor estatus social. It was the same schedule that Nehru had dedicated to the same task.

Indira explained to Rajiv the reasons that had impelled it to accept the candidacy. In its months to the front of the ministry of Information, one had been dragged to face serious a national crisis that did not depend on the jurisdiction of their own ministry. The crisis pilló of vacations in Kashmir, the gorgeous region of where the Nehru was native. Nothing else to arrive, found out that Pakistani troops, disguised civil volunteers, had themselves to capture the capital, Srinagar, to foment a scrambled Pakistani pro between the population. Indira disobeyed the order of prime minister to return immediately to Delhi. Not only it remained in Kashmir, but that flew towards the front when the hostilities exploded. “We will not give a centimeter from our territory to the aggressor”, proclaimed in a tour by the cities of the north. The press praised its gesture: “Indira is the only man in a government of old”, said a holder. The correspondents who followed it were astonished to verify how Indira was received everywhere by enormous multitudes that shouted their enthusiasm. The Pakistani army was defeated. India, and Indira, left victorious, giving rise to the idea that later would be appropriated the popular imagination: “India is Indira; Indira is India.”

All that happened while to eight thousand kilometers of Rajiv it learned there to control his Tiger Moth in the sky of England. « ... If my mother does not appear prime minister, everything what we have obtained from independence will lose”, said to him to Sonia in a letter that seemed to contradict to the previous ones. And he is that Rajiv lived to its way the conflict on its mother, who was the one of all the family, oscillating between having towards the nation, towards the inheritance of its father and grandfathers, and the exigencies of the personal life. When Rajiv knew that her mother had left chosen prime minister, the letter that arrived to him at Sonia distilled the anguish that this new situation created to him: “If something happens to him to my mother I will not know what to do. You cannot imaginarte much which I depend on her, of its aid in any situation, specially with you. You are going it to have much more difficult that I. For you, everything will be new and it is the unique one who can of truth ayudarte. I do not know what would do if it got to lose it.”

The photo of its mother was in cover of the world-wide press. In a kiosk of Thruxton, the town near the air base, Rajiv bought a unit of the The

newspaper Guardian: "No other woman in history has assumed similar responsibility and no country of the importance of India has given the power to a woman in democratic conditions", said the text. The photo of its mother also occupied the cover of the Time magazine: "The India shaken into the hands of a woman", said the holder. Although it protested that he was not feminista, the entire world had curiosity to know how a woman with little experience in administrative subjects was going to face the immensity of the problems that waited for it. As immense as the nation that had to govern, composed by a mosaic complex of towns that shared races, religions, languages and cultures of an enormous diversity. A country of Hindu majority, but with more than one hundred million Muslims who turned it the second Muslim country of the planet. Without counting the ten million Christians, seven million of sijs, two hundred thousand parsis and thirty and five thousand Jews whose ancestors had fled from Babylonia after the destruction of the temple of Salomón. A territory where 4,635 different communities coexisted, everyone dragging its own traditions, and as old languages as diverse, as urdu of the Muslims, that were written of right to left, or hindi, that was written of left to right like the Latin alphabet, or the tamil that was \*\*\*reflexed mng sometimes from top to bottom, or other alphabets that were deciphered like hieroglyphics. In this Babel forty and five official dialectos and seventeen languages were used eight hundred. But English, the language of the colonizadores, continued being the common language after the imposition of hindi was rejected by the states of the south. A country that dragged hirientes inequalities, with an affluent corruption inlaid in all the levels of the society and a paralyzing bureaucracy. A country known by its high spiritual conquests and simultaneously by their ominous indicators of material well-being, a country where the man was more fertile than the Earth than worked, a country constantly whipped by natural calamities, and nevertheless devotee of three hundred thirty million divinities. Perhaps the greater profit of that nation forged by Nehru and Gandhi is that it continued being free in spite of the rosary of curses and overwhelming inherited problems of the British colonizadores. In spite of which an English general at the moment of independence had prophesied: "Nobody can forge a nation of a continent of so many nations."

But that continent country that her mother had to govern was worse of which there was been never under Nehru or his successor. Several years of droughts had caused food shortage and triggered hambrunas pertinaces. The state of Kerala was shaken by violent disturbances related to the food distribution. The economy was victim of a galloping inflation. The region of Punjab was anxious because a state of exclusive punjabí speech protested; a leader sij threatened immolating itself if its request were not taken care of. The Naga town of the northeast fought by the secession. Like colofón, santones Hindu was pronounced naked, with the body covered with ash, in front of the Parliament, in the own noses of Indira, to demand the prohibition to kill cows in all the territory. A claim



that went against the aconfesional Constitution of the India, that committed itself to respect the rights and the equality of all the religions. In a so poor country, the cow meat was an essential protein source for the minorities like the Muslims or the Christians. The protests degenerated and had died when the police shot against the agitators. "I am not going to let to me intimidate by the rescuers of cows", declared challenging Indira. Decidedly, India did not look itself like any other country. In 1966 it was a gigantic pot to pressure on the verge of exploding, as if independence had given foot to the outbreak of million small rebellions, fruit of centuries and centuries of operation of minorities by others, of chaste ones by others, of ethnic groups by others... Gerifaltes of the Congress had not made to Indira any gift when apar it to the top.

For Indira there was a clear priority, the same one that their father or Gandhi had identified: to end hambrunas, to avoid the death of poorest. If for it it were necessary to ask for aid to the international organisms and to the richest countries, it would be necessary to swallow the pride and to put the hand. Twenty years after independence, India, very to its grief, little reached enviable estatus of international pauper. Indira was ashamed to have to request, but it knew that another option did not exist. Nevertheless, she was determined to not suplicar anything: "The more weak it is our position, the more strong we must seem."

It accepted immediately the invitation of president Johnson to Washington and meticulously prepared the trip, on whose result the life of million compatriots would depend , and perhaps its political future. It elaborated its speeches puntillosamente and it corrected them consulting its booklet of appointments, that always accompanied it. It looked for simple ideas and it fled from the complicated concepts. It chose its clothes with he himself care with which it prepared its speeches: sari, a bodice, a chal and shoes for each reception. In order to crown it everything, it wanted to go accompanied of its two children. Rajiv had to interrupt its classes of flight and to travel to Paris to meet with its mother. There, after the general Of Gaulle offered a lunch in his honor, they embarked in a Boeing 707 that the White House had made its available. When they asked to him Of Gaulle what it had seemed him Indira, the old statesman said: "Those so fragile shoulders on which the gigantic destiny of India rests... it does not seem that they shrink of as much weight. That woman has something inside, and she will obtain it."

In Washington, B. K. Nehru, cousin of Indira and ambassador in the United States, received a telephone call to one hour early. It was of president Lyndon B. Johnson, a native giant of Texas:

- I finish reading in The New York Times that to Indira it does not like that they call "Lady prime minister"... How I must direct me to her?

- Déjeme to consult it, president. I return to him to call as soon as it has pertinent instructions.

Immediately afterwards, one hurried to the suite of Indira.

- That calls to me as it wants... - she said, and before his cousin had left, she added. Also you can say to him that some of my ministers call "Sir to me". If it desires to him, can call to me thus.

President Johnson succumbed to the enchantments of Indira. It unblocked the North American aid, that had been interrupted as a result of the fast war with Pakistan, and located to the World Bank to lend money to India. The only point of discord during the visit was when Johnson wanted to remove it to dance after the official banquet. Indira refused, did not want nor to think about the reaction of the India press before a photo of the "socialist daughter of Nehru dancing - enjoyada with the foreign president". He explained Johnson to him who could make it very unpopular, and he understood it. "I do not want that nothing bad happens to him to this girl", it said to its head of cabinet with its strong tejano accent that made him permanently seem caught a cold, before promising to Indira three million tons of foods and nine million dollars of immediate aid. That trip was the first great success of flaming prime minister, although it confessed to one of its men of confidence: "I hope to never be more in a similar situation."

Sonia lived all this from the distance, with certain apprehension because they were spectacular changes, and very pub bid. The Italian means widely disclosed the news of the access of Indira Gandhi to the power, and the Maino marriage could see in its television set, from the hall Via Bellini the face of the mother of the pretendiente of its daughter yet luxury of details. But the fact that she was now prime minister did not seem to moderate to them. On the contrary, Stefano saw the ears him the wolf. For him, that increased the risk, made the company still more preposterous. Everything what surrounded to that lady was in danger, knew it very clearly. Had not killed the own Gandhi? Those countries were too unpredictable... Paola, nevertheless, could not disguise a certain satisfaction. Her daughter had not fallen in love with a anyone. Somehow, Sonia had cleared to them slides of paesani, them "had ennoblecido", although for that reason she was not arranged to that that history of love prospered. She either did not want to lose it.

Rajiv returned satisfied from its trip to the United States, although he was too short and too much it was saturated of official acts as to enjoy it since it had liked. From boy, the policy always had meant the same for him: interminable sessions of photos with its mother, to have to listen to during long suppers boring conversations, to be always very educated, to wear necktie, to say yes to everything, etc. More and more it was convinced that his trajín was a life moved away of all that, a discreet and calm existence next to the woman who cleared the dream to him. Also it wanted to flee from itself, its roots, the weight of the familiar tradition that, intuited, could a day squash it. It secretly trusted that the destiny that their last names never marked would reach to him.

In October of 1966, it asked the lent car its brother to go to see Sonia; old Volkswagen had deteriorated so much that had sold it by four pounds. In addition the car to Sanjay was more appropriate for a so long

trip. It was an old Jaguar, a model that his brother had acquired thanks to his contacts in the Rolls- Royce to an exceptional price because he did not work. Sanjay had patiently fixed it until obtaining that it started again. On the contrary that his brother, to Rajiv it did not like to be conceited, and to enter with that car in Orbassano gave him on the other hand until shame but it thought that more it was worth to appear thus, like somebody well-to-do and not like a mochilero. Of that it stews would have more possibilities favorably of impressing the parents of Sonia.

It was expectant before her arrival; it had been months without seeing it and the delay became eternal. Their sisters and friends also were nervous. Not every day an Indian prince ready arrived at that city dormitory of the suburbs of Turin to take to his cenicienta... The curiosity was enormous, including the one of its parents, whom they had invited to him to have supper that same day, although all did like if nothing.

The arrival of Rajiv in its Jaguar was an authentic commotion in the vecindario. Who would be that English rich one that came to see the Maino daughter? , they were asked between murmurs. The disagreement was still greater because its aspect not cuadraba with its automobile. "It seems siciliano", joked a companion of Sonia. "With that cochazo, could be terrone of camorra", commented another one. Rajiv arrived untidy and with beard of several days because it had slept in the car to save hotel rooms. Sonia did not know if it were the fatigue or the perspective of the supper, or the recent events that were catapult to their mother to the international scene, but noticed worried to him when finally it could embrace it, in a dreary street about Orbassano where they had mentioned the morning of his arrival.

- I am going to have to return to India - it confessed to him as soon as the passion of the encounter had calmed .

- Then... you pilot license?

- Me I will remove it there. Of all ways, I do not have money to remove it to me in England. What it worries to me about all this is to be so far from you.

There was another reason, and it is that her mother had requested to him who returned.

- She is very single. It has enormous problems - it confessed Sonia to him.

It explained to him that nothing else to return from the United States, the opposition attacked it with viciousness, accusing it to have fallen under the influence of the Americans and to leave the policy of not-alignment of its father... But not only the opposition, but those that had chosen it for the position of prime minister, the heads of its own party also. They were in favor annoying of the way in which Indira faced the problems, directly, skipping the hierarchy of the party, as in the case of the Pakistani skirmish. An old colleague of Nehru had sent one not as much lasts diatriba against Indira in the Parliament questioning the aid as the conditions that the Americans had imposed to give it. Among them she was the one to

devalue the rupee, a very unpopular measure that Indira took in spite of having to go against all the country, demonstrating so it was not an imitation of her father, who was able to administer a bitter medicine to the nation if he really believed in it, and that he had nothing to offer to anybody. But the result was that it was in its lowest point, while the predictions on the future of India were made more and more shady. The idea that prevailed was the personality and the example of Nehru they had solely been able to maintain the united and democratic India, but that now, with the successive droughts, the innumerable and small ethnic rebellions, the tension with Pakistan and the leadership of Indira, the country was on the brink of madness and the disintegration.

- And they blame my mother for that reason - Rajiv - said. As if she were responsible for which there has been three years of droughts and people die of hunger... The case is that I have the impression that I am leaving it and I do not like.

To listen to Rajiv speak of his mother represented for Sonia its peculiar initiation into the Indian policy. He was not conscious of it, but it made contact with her through concepts and very distant and incomprehensible ideas that always were similar to him, and that soon would become something as familiar as in their house was to comment on the results of the Juventus or the football of the fashion of Milan. Contact began to occur on which it was not possible to be lived near anybody like the mother of Rajiv without it affecting the life of all those that surrounded it, she included. But he was still something too cloudy and distant like altering it. Each battle to its time. The one of now it was to overcome the resistance of his parents.

Sonia accompanied to Rajiv's house by a friend who offered himself to lodge her, and soon he showed her his town to him. They took individual cappuccini in the bar as a child, they walked by the streets of the center, and they stopped in the bar of Pier Luigi. Aside from taking his establishment, Pier Luigi was a radio ham in his free hours, hobby to which Rajiv also wanted to dedicate himself. It had discovered it in his studies of flight and, aside from the attraction by the magic of the electronics, also he saw in it a way to communicate with Sonia from the distance. The desperation to be a day so far from her made him dream about any possibility of overcoming that emptiness.

Sonia left him so that she could rest and was in gathering at night to take it to him to have supper at his parents' house. Meanwhile, he would go to the annual appointment of old students in his school of Giavena. "Memory that day as if outside yesterday", Negri would say to the Giovanna sister. Sonia was twenty years old. After the meeting of old students of the school, Sonia announced that she left.

- So that you do not remain to have supper with us? - I said to him. You have been long time in England and we have almost not seen you.

- I cannot remain - Sonia- responded. I have a guest who comes to have supper tonight to house.

- And who is...? - sister Giovanna asked guasona.

Sonia smiled, letting see the hoyuelos of his cheeks. In the end, it loosen it:

- My fiancè.

- Your fiancè? Vaya surprise! Cuéntame... Who is?

Sonia was obstinate to respond, which still more urged on the curiosity of the nun.

- He is Indian... - it said with reluctance.

- Indian? - it repeated astonished.

Sonia put a finger in the lips, so that she lowered the voice.

Soon it said to him, almost as a sigh:

- He is son of Indira Gandhi.

"I remained pasmada", would remember the sister later Negri years.

That supper was a little the Italian version of the famous film that would carry out Katharine Hepburn and Sidney Poitier. That was not fiction and did not only have final happy, although the reactions of Stefano Maino and Spencer Tracy were similar. Rajiv spoke of its studies. The title finished removing from deprived pilot, and thought that in year and means it would obtain the one of commercial pilot. It wanted to be placed as rapidly as possible. It was a powerful right for it:

- I have come with a very serious intention - it said to him to Stefano Maino-. I have come to say to him that I want to marry with its daughter.

Sonia did not know where to put because she was called on to him to translate. Her mother, nervous, began to place drinks upon the small table of tresillo. The hands shook to him. The patriarch stayed warm, but she signs:

- The smaller doubt of its sincerity and its honesty does not fit to me - it responded to him, watching Sonia to request to him that it continued translating. It is not necessary more to watch the eyes to see to him how it is. I do not doubt you. All my doubts have to do with my daughter. He is too young to know what wants... - Sonia watched the ceiling, exasperated. I do not believe frankly that it can get used to living in India. They are too different customs.

There Rajiv suggested Sonia went to spend short vacations. It explained its idea to him that first she was single, before it arrived, so that thus he could judge in case same. But Stefano was against categorically.

- Until which it does not fulfill most of age, I cannot let march it.

It was a hard bone to nibble, Sonia knew it but it could not allow that the atmosphere of the meeting was degraded. The silencios of their father could be cut with a knife. That man was a rock, and he only made a minimum concession:

- If for then you continue feeling the one the same towards the other, I will let it go to India, but that will be within a year, when he is of legal age - said before turning itself towards its woman and adding: If the subject leaves bad, it will not be able to reproach to me that it has contributed to annoy the life to him.

But Stefano continued believing, and hoping of all heart, that the waters would return to their channel and that Sonia, before the difficulties that would be finding, would finish throwing the towel. It tormented the idea to him to separate of its daughter.

## 8

When Rajiv told to its mother its encounter him with the Maino in Orbassano, Indira was in agreement with the condition that the Italian patriarch had imposed. To test the feelings of the young ones was the only way to know if that history had future. It was necessary to gain time; at heart, she also had preferred who Rajiv did not choose a foreigner. But the time demonstrated that both were wanted, Indira did not think to be against to the decision of its son. It had undergone too much with the rejection of its own father to its wedding like inflicting the same to no of its piston rods.

“ The marriage is not it everything. The life is something much more great”, was this Nehru to him when it had been going to see it the jail of Dehra Dun to say to him that she wanted to marry with Firoz. Nehru advised to him that she recovered forces before making any decision. He had been very ill and his father remembered to him that the doctors had advised against to him to have children. In addition, the desire of Indira seemed to him a triroad, because it meant to throw overboard “the inheritance and the familiar tradition” to marry with a man of surroundings and an education very different from his. Indira did not agree, at least at that moment. It said that it wanted an anonymous life to him and it frees of tensions, which never had had. It wanted to marry and to have children. More than one, it stressed, because it did not want that his son underwent the solitude that she had known. It wanted to take care of them and their husband in a full house of books, music and friends. If to reach that dream, it had to defy the doctors and until its own health, it were arranged to do it.

Firoz was son of parsi call Jehangir Ghandy, whose official biography attributes to him to be naval engineer but other sources assure that he was a licor salesman, although without relation some with Gandhi. At the end of the Thirties, it changed the spelling of its name by the one of Gandhi, the last name of a chaste one of perfumistas, a current last name in chaste the Bania of the Hindus of Gujarat, of where the Mahatma was native. It has not been registered the reason of that small change that finished being of inestimable value for the future political race of its woman.

Follower of Zarathustra, the religion parsi is one of oldest of the humanity, but Firoz never was religious, on the contrary. It had made contact with enemy with the Nehru as a result of the movement of fight against the English that took it to become member of the Party of the Congress. Very active and very radical militant, knew texts Marx and Engels better than the own Nehru. Together they had participated in France in a meeting of protest by the bombings against the civil populaces in the war of Spain. Firoz had tried to convince the anti-communist organizers of the act who let speak to the Pasionaria, but he did not obtain it. Nehru, furious, did a speech ignited, defending ardent the right to the freedom of expression.

Nehru did not question to Firoz like militant, but she thought that he was badly started off for its daughter. Both men were opposed in everything. Firoz was short and square, a little fanfarrón, spoke in very high voice and used palabrotas by piece. Neither he was refined nor she was an

intellectual. It liked the good table and the alcohol and interested the electrical and mechanical cars and gadgets, passions to him that Rajiv and Sanjay would inherit. She had been a terrible student, although it liked classic music India and the flowers, like a Indira. But without university title neither perspective profession nor to gain the life, with a solid reputation of mujeriego, was logical that the Nehru saw that gift nobody that she tried to enter the first family of India with great distrust.

- You are servant in Anand Bhawan surrounded by luxury and servants - her grandmother said to him to Indira in an attempt by presionarla-. Firoz lacks fortune, is of another atmosphere and another religion.

- It does not concern the religion to us because neither we are religious - Indira- responded to him. I am austere like my mother, and although I have lived in Anand Bhawan, I can be equal of happy in the hut of a farmer.

More or less the same Sonia said to him to his parents when these evoked the difficulty to live so far, in a so different country. For Sonia, India was an abstraction. It did not scare to him minimum, in spite of everything what it had heard. If Rajiv had been a esquimal, it had given him equal to follow to him the North Pole. "When you are enamored - the love wrote gives a very powerful force you. Navy of that force, nothing gives fear you. You only love the person who masters. It only wanted to Rajiv. It had gone to the aim of the world with him. It was my greater security. It could not think about anything or about anybody, only in him"

If Nehru finished giving his consent to the wedding of Indira with Firoz, Indira acceded to the request of its son when this one requested to him that it wrote to the father of Sonia so that let it go to India. A year had passed, the term that Stefano Maino had imposed, and the passion of the young people did not show signs to cool off. Neither Sonia nor Rajiv were arranged to live the one without the other; the separation became too painful. Indira understood that the thing went in serious. In fact it had preferred to follow the route traditional, to choose a daughter of good family of Kashmir to marry it with its son, so and as it sends the tradition, so and as his Motilal grandfathers choosing to Kamala did, his mother. The "arranged marriages" were the common thing, and love marriages, the weddings by love, the exceptions. First they used to work better; the rate of divorces between this type of unions is amazingly low because the parents look for candidates for their compatible social and cultural means sprouts, the one that of in case it constitutes an advantage at the time of the coexistence. The seconds were a lottery. Indira had not had luck. Perhaps Rajiv had it, although it dragged hándicap of which her fiancée was foreign. In the traditional society, the foreigners not even deserved a place in the roster, were considered "without chaste". Nueva Delhi was not deep India, but thus Indira was even perfectly conscious of the difficult thing that it could turn out to him to a western girl to adapt to the life in his country, although



she was arranged to make to it it most pleasant possible because the girl it had liked.

The letter of Indira Gandhi inviting to Sonia to spend vacations to Nueva Delhi was a misfortune for Stefano Maino, but he was a word man and it did not have more remedy than to fulfill its commitment. They discussed it in family and since there were no escape, they were left in which Sonia would go to India, but a month only, and later it would return to house definitively convinced that it could not never live there, thought its parents. Here not only it had to his, but also a future. It had been working all the year in Fieratorino, and they left every time more opportunities to him to gain the life with the languages that had learned. If it did not like Orbassano because it seemed to him small and suburbial, it could always go away to live to Turin. Their parents still dreamed that some businessman would know it in one those fairs and would end up marrying with her. Sonia did as if she listened to all those suggestions with attention, but its mind was already very far, to eight thousand kilometers of distance.

The 13 of January of 1968, exactly thirty and four days after to have fulfilled the majority of age, Sonia landed in the airport Palam de Nueva Delhi. It had a knot in the stomach. Their parents and sisters had been going to dismiss it the airport of Milan and not even the duro of Stefano had been able to contain the tears.

- If you do not like, you become immediately, eh? - it had said to him while her mother still put in the handbag more medicines to him, as if she went to the forest.

Sonia did not sleep during the flight. Now which one faced single his destiny, a species of anguish entered to him. The illusion to see Rajiv was transformed into a vague fear. They had been a year without seeing itself. And if it disappoints to me? Or I disappoint him to him? And if in its own atmosphere one behaves of another way? If he is not the same one that the one that I believe that it is? They were inevitable questions, the right reaction of which had bet hard to a letter. Now it was called on to put the letter mouth arrives.

From the air, the interlace of avenues and Nueva roundhouses Delhi suggested the geometric marble figures in star form that decorated the palaces mogoles. The airplane landed in the morning. The climate could not be more different from the cold winter that had left back. It made a temperature exquisite, the sky was blue, and nothing else to leave the airplane its sense of smell was impregnated of a very characteristic scent, that later it would identify with the scent of India: a mixture of scent to burned wood and honey, ash and last fruit. and a sound, the quack of cornejas, those crows always present, dresses of gray or black, clucking, insolent people, relatives, who gave the welcome him from the railing of the lobby of arrivals, from posts and the edges of the windows. There it was waiting for Rajiv to it: "Nothing else to see it - Sonia- would count invaded a deep sensation to me of lightening." Also they were its Sanjay brother and a called friend Amitabh, son of a marriage, the Bachchan, that the Nehru

knew long time ago. The father was a famous poet in hindi and delegated parliamentary and Indira him he had requested the favor to lodge Sonia while its visit lasted.

The fears that had felt during the flight disappeared suddenly, as if they had never existed. On the contrary, now it had the certainty that it had done well in following the dictation of its heart in spite of the difficulties. "It was of new to its side and nothing or nobody it would separate to us again", wrote Sonia remembering its arrival.

Nueva Delhi was not India so and as it had imagined, at least the part where it lived, with its wide bordered avenues of great always green trees, many of them in flower. The house of the Bachchan was in Willingdon Crescent, the avenue of the banianos. The English city planners who made of Nueva Delhi an pleasant city garden wanted that each avenue had its own species. Janpath, the old Queen's Way, was the one of nims, those sacred trees known by its medicinal properties; Akbar Road the one of the tamarinds; and in Safdarjung Road, where was the residence of Indira Gandhi, there was profusion of flamboyanes with a green foliage and shining cultivated field of orange flowers. The little rolled traffic was made up of cyclists, cars thrown by donkeys or camels, carricoches with the ceiling anlarillo, petardeantes , old motorcycles Ambassador, retort of the Morris Oxford III of 1956 that made under license in Bengal, all drawing for the cows that stood out to their wide ones in the middle of the road. It was not rare to run into with a car of oxen and until with some elephant that transported merchandise, lengthy in a traffic light. It was a calm city of three million inhabitants, without department store nor commercial centers, with a single hotel of luxury in the heart of the diplomatic district.

Sonia was received with all the calidez that could be expected of a family India, although Rajiv could not take care of it since it had wanted because the 25 of January were going to be examined of commercial pilot and had to continue accumulating flight hours and to study. But their cousins and friends, and until Indira Gandhi, turned upside down so that its stay was most pleasant possible. Although it slept in house of the Bachchan, in the morning passed great part in house of its fiance'. At that time, prime minister lived without hardly safety measures. It received to people all the mornings to the doors of its house with the simple presence of a guard. Their children either did not have escort, except in certain considered events dangerous.

Friends and relatives alternated themselves to teach to Sonia the city, flood of parks and gardens, old monuments and magnificent buildings that had been raised by the English when in 1912 they had decided to change the capital of Calcuta to Delhi. They drew up a new city in which they planted thousands of trees. From immemorial times, the vegetation had been the obsession of the governors of Delhi. Some gardens decorated mausoleos and tombs with the idea that the deads felt peacefully happy and, others had been conceived like acts of charity for the town, and others had made them the kings for use and enjoys own. To Rajiv it specially liked

to take a walk by the gardens of Lodh to the dusk, with its pools and their rows of gigantic palms that surround the tomb by Mohamined Shah, a precious monument of style indomogol that conserved rest of the turquesa tiled one and of the original handwriting that ornamented it. It was a popular place where the enamored pairs of could enjoy a little while tranquillity and certain privacy. In his moto Lambretta also showed the spectacular Nueva imperial Delhi, and views to him that the British architects had conceived to impress and to intimidate the local population. The one that Sonia admired from the arc of triumph of the Door of India, where an eternal flame in memory burns with the Indian soldiers died in the two world wars, was huge. Like it was it the imposing building of South Block, mixture of neoclassic style mogol and where, across of the facade decorated with bas-relief of flowers of loto and elephants, was the office of Indira Gandhi, and on all the Palace of the Presidency of the Republic, once the palace of the British virrey, an elegant building of arenaceous red beige and crowned by a vast cupola of copper, exquisite proportions and considered by many like one of the most beautiful buildings of century xx.

And where was the India of which they had spoken to him? , Sonia asked itself. The India that terrified its parents? Other India? It was not necessary to move much. It was enough to follow the wide Rajpath avenue, the old King's Way, and to arrive at the Old Delhi. That was another world. Around the Red Fort, another spectacular monument constructed by emperor Shah Jehan, he himself who had raised the Taj Mahal in honor to his woman, moved a colorful and noisy crowd who seemed to be participating in a gigantic carnival of juggler, snake charmers, fortune teller, musician, tragadores of sabers and faquires that transferred their cheeks with daggers. This one was the eternal India, same that invaded the side streets around the Great Mosque, with its full positions of fabric clothes of colors, its salesmen of fruit, candies, lanterns, bitumen and batteries, his limpiabotas, its peluqueros in the middle of the street, its dark factories in which young they braided carpets and others made precision instruments... A life explosion, an exotic and bullanguero chaos that left ebria of colors, noises and scents it. And everywhere, behind a street, the bottom of a garden, one old tomb or cenotaph, a Muslim or Hindu monument that went back to the night of the times, like a reminder of the old thing could be seen that is India. Had not described to Nehru its country like "an old palimpsesto in which layers on thought layers and ensoñación have been recorded, without no has been able to erase or to hide previously what it had been registered"?

And soon the spectacle of the poverty, that saw sitting in the back part of moto when they circulated around certain districts: naked children running by the streets, old making tintinear his escudillas, people who washed and made her necessities in the sidewalks. To Sonia a little to the poor men of their native Lusiana when she was young, in the Fifties remembered to him, those naked children in winter, those families who passed hunger and that her mother as much felt sorry, those tullidos in the

seats, old soldiers who had returned hurt from the Russian front... But what never it had seen they were deformities like which they exhibited some Nueva lepers Delhi which they watched to the cars that stopped in the traffic lights. The India of 1968 had so many lepers as inhabitants had Portugal, so many paupers as to populate a country like Holland, eleven million of santones, ten million smaller children of fifteen years married or widowers. Forty thousand children were born every day, a fifth part of which died before turning the five years. Even so, they were numbers better than when independence, twenty years before. The improvement, although weighs, of the sanitary conditions it was creating a still greater problem, and is than the reproductive age of the Indians was extended. As a result of it, the explosion of the natality was becoming the greater problem of the country because literally "the economic development ate". Every year, the population of India increased in an equal number to the population of whole Spain.

For Sonia, everything to his around was new strange v: the colors, the flavors, the people. "But rarest of everything they were the eyes of people, that glance of curiosity that followed to me throughout." Sonia was beginning in the world of India, discovering peculiar and the inquisitive thing that they could be his inhabitants, especially in those days when she did not have practically tourist. If a foreigner already of in case it called the attention, a woman still more, and if she were handsome and it dressed in miniskirt, that was the fashion in Europe that year, then one became an immediate pole of attraction. Or in opprobrium object. Sonia had to learn to control his gestures, their movements and their way to dress, but it was not always easy: "The absolute lack of privacy, the obligation to repress and of not giving loose rein to me to my feelings were a exasperante experience." The public samples of affection were bad views, not only in the street but also in the daily life. It could not give a kiss to Rajiv if there were somebody ahead, not even to go of the hand with him without it was scandalous. It discovered that India was the most modest country of the world, inheritance of Victorian England. Soon there were difficult things for an Italian: the food, for example. Sonia was not accustomed to the sharp one, seemed to him that she annulled the flavor of foods. Neither to so strong sauces nor to the bittersweet plate flavors certain. Or the custom of the social suppers, where it was spoken and much drank awhile during interminable, was had supper suddenly and soon the tablecloth did not exist, all went away in five minutes.

It did not take in realizing of which the glances that so very insistently settled on her not had only to that she was foreign, or a rare tiny beast, or a very handsome girl. It was Vista like a new member of a family who during years had lived facing the public. Everything what they did and they said, or on the contrary, which let do or say, was meticulously escudriñado, analyzed and judged. How can be lived thus? , it was asked overwhelmed.

But, even though of everything, Sonia it was not seen of return in Italy. This was a very different world, and was left much way to cross, to explore much. Of the hand of Rajiv, it was a fascinating day's work in spite of the stumbling blocks. In addition it was surrounded by the affection of the others. Sanjay treated like a a sister, between protector and amused to see adapt it. Amitabh and its family also. One felt wrapped and dear. For both, the idea to separate was simply inconceivable again. So that to waste more time, so that to return to Italy and to hope again, like another agony, to meet here or there? Rajiv could not consider to go to live to Europe, thought to enter in Indian Airlines as soon as it had removed "deals". Soon they could go away to live to an apartment. Here in Delhi it had it easier; the life in common was within reach. Sonia was the one who had to take the step, that had to risk because it had to back leave to his country and its family by an indefinite time. It had come to know India and its customs, but it did not need to know more because, at heart, before embarking in that airplane already it had made the decision to be faithful to its own heart. Although that meant to do something that went very against itself. The face of its father did not want nor to imagine when it said to him that it did not return, who married.

Indira was surprised when it knew that Sonia was arranged to remain, that they wanted to marry already. Exactly three years ago they had been known in Cambridge. They had fulfilled all the terms, they had done everything what there were saying to them, and now arrived the moment for making the decision. Indira was conscious that the arrival of Sonia had supposed a small revolution in the social Nueva world Delhi, although neither Sonia nor Rajiv had looked for it, on the contrary. Its mere presence, for being the fiancée of whom was and because it was the first time that a Nehru was going to marry with a foreigner of another continent, had given foot to all class of conjectures. Although it was the capital of a country of seven hundred million inhabitants, the society was small, conventional, and all the excellent families knew themselves among them. In their mentideros, the elogiosos commentaries were the majority - what handsome is! -. But others alluded to their lack of "pedigr" - he is not nobody or, worse, "it is of chaste loss" -; others to its way to dress - "it wants to call the attention" -; others to its mere presence - " what will see that boy in her? " -; others to a feeling of nationalistic ultraje - " is that it has not been able to find a girl better here". Without eating it nor drinking it, one had put against to very many handsome girls of the good society and their mothers, who saw how a foreigner, and above one intrusa, took to one of the unmarried ones of gold of the country.

"After one week - Usha Bhagat, the secretary of Indira- would say, Mrs. Gandhi occurred to account of that both went very in serious and which she would not don't mention it serve to wait for more. The fact that they were leaving by Nueva Delhi fomented the cotilleo and the best way to cut it was to leave them that they married." But when Rajiv suggested its mother to him which they would be changed to an own floor as soon as it

had work, Indira imposed its only condition to him: "A thing is to marry outside your community. But to live aside is totally in opposition to the India tradition of the united family. They would label to us as western, would accuse to us to leave all our traditions." If Rajiv had been European or western, probably it had disobeyed its mother and it had been going away to live with its woman. But he was Indian, and in India, the children accept the tradition. Mainly when there is to give example. The solution to the conflict in which it was happened because Sonia accepted a condition that most of western women had considered inadmissible. But to Sonia it was called on to him to adapt to India, it could not the other way around be, and in India the marriage is a familiar subject, than more individual, where the harmony between its members is valued more than the individual fascination. That meant to happen to comprise of the family of the husband. It would have to live in the familiar house, to the Indian style, sharing he himself ceiling with the mother-in-law, the brother and the family of the brother if this one married someday. All in number 1 of Safdarjung Road. Sonia accepted because she was blind of love. In addition, to live in family was not something that scared an Italian that its childhood in a town had lived where the Maino was a clan. Also one was convinced that being single would not be more protecting and that would allow him to adapt better. Everything it saw the positive side him: she is one of the advantages of the love, that acts like a drug.

They decided to fix the date of the 25 of February for the wedding. Everything very fast, but was worth more thus. Indira wanted to avoid that the wedding of its son became a national subject, since it had happened with hers. To Sonia and Rajiv it told them how it had been put to all the country against, as if each one of the inhabitants of the nation had felt with right to think. Thousands of letters and telegrams had flooded Anand Bhawan, offensive ones, the majority hostile, some of congratulation. There was an explanation, and it is that Firoz and Indira had transgressed two deeply taken root traditions: neither they had been put under a union arranged by the families, nor married "within its faith". This last one had infuriated to Hindu the orthodox ones. And now history was repeated. As if the children also inherited of their parents not only the physical characteristics and the abilities but their vital conflicts, their contradictions and their situations.

"Loved parents - Sonia- wrote to them. I am very happy. I send this letter to you for anunciaros that Rajiv and I married. I wait for to all here the 25 to you of February..." Sonia did not suspect that when arriving its letter, the news of the announcement of its wedding already had been spread by mass media of the entire world. A journalist of the newspaper turinés the Stampa went to visit the family to number 14 of Via Bellini. "The parents and the sisters live moments on extreme tension - he wrote. The telephone does not stop of sounding, journalists and photographers make tail in front of the door. The father, of fifty and three years, is man of few words: "All the life working to assure the future my daughters... of the best

wedding to speak when it has happened, or better would be not to have to never speak of it " - it declared in a tone that lets intuit that it is hurt. Her woman, Paola, of forty and five years, is not able to retain the tears. "It terrifies the idea to Me that my daughter is going away to live to a so distant place ", declared. Asked for the fiancè, they added: "He is a calm, educated and serious boy", and to the question of if they would go to the celebration, the father responded: "I am afraid that the desire of Sonia could not be made. My woman will only go, I have too much I work and I cannot waste time. I will be with my daughter in the thought. ""

It was going to be a civil wedding, could not be a religious wedding. A simple wedding, not an eccentric wedding "to the Indian" who lasts several days. Indira was opposite to the pomp and the wasteful unfolding of the weddings Indians, done to be conceited of relations, to be able and of money. The Nehru did not need to be conceited. But they needed space to live. The colonial villa that the government had assigned to Indira to the named being prime minister was too small, as much that the secretaries and the assistants worked under sheds in the garden. When giving to the new pair a fourth and small hall in the part of the bottom, with independent exit to the garden, would be still tight. So that Indira was in conversations with its cabinet to enlarge the house. Soon the workers initiated works.

The uproar of the preparations absorbed of blow to all the members of the family, specially to Sonia. It did not like anything to have to trocar its trousers fit by sari, an article in which it was ridiculous. It was not able to feel to taste because it lived with the fear on which at any time the six meters of fabric in which it was surrounded came down. It was seen like those tourists of very white skin who pavoneaban themselves shining saris chillones. Clear that for them it was a game, a disguise to become a photo and to teach it from return to its country; for Sonia, sari was much more. It marked the first time in its process of indianización. Sooner or later, it would have to be accustomed.

It was necessary to take care of multitude of details: lists of guests, to design the invitations, tests of hairdo, maquillaje, etc. Sonia was stunned, because in addition the English did not understand well of the Indians, impregnated of a strong accent. At heart, it was wishing that everything finished as rapidly as possible. Its proverbial timidity prevented him to feel to taste being the attention center, although it could not make nothing prevent it. Literally first exit in family was besieged by photographers the day of his, like official fiancè of Rajiv, to attend a parade of models of Pierre Cardin in the hotel Ashok de Nueva Delhi. An extensive news article gave account of the event in the Femina magazine. Sonia appeared very handsome, with the straight hair falling on his shoulders, covered by sari with printed silk, sitting between Rajiv and Sanjay while she spoke with Indira. A photo that let augur a perfect familiar harmony. When coming out, Sonia answered a insidiosa question of a journalist: "It goes to Me to marry with Rajiv the person, not with the son of prime minister." He

was inevitable which many saw it like one taken advantage of, an ambitious one that had fished a fat fish. Plaster sank in a state of deep sadness and indignation to it. When another journalist asked to him what thought on the fact to remain to live in India, so far from its house, Sonia raised the Vista towards Rajiv and using a timid smile, it said: "With Rajiv it would go to the aim of the world."

And was not India the aim of the world in those days? For the Maino family, it was it, and as soon as they had time to organize itself. In the end they were only the mother of Sonia, her Anushka sister and the uncle Mario (brother of its mother), who would celebrate of father having given the hand of his young niece. They arrived the eve from the wedding when it was celebrated, in the garden of the house of the friends where Sonia lodged, the ceremony of mehendi, that was equivalent as a single person to a goodbye of the fiancée. Although traditionally they must attend neither the fiancé nor his parents, in this occasion one became an exception and as much Rajiv as their mother was present because they wanted to greet the relatives who had arrived from Italy. Indira was warmly and extremely letter with Paola, who felt between intimidated and impatient to see his daughter. It throughout looked for it with the glance. When they indicated to him where it was, it was scared:

- Oh, marnrna mine!

The tears almost skip to him. It had not recognized because Sonia took it the head covered by a red and dwelled veil, went dressed in a skirt red until the feet, typical of Kashmir, and an embroidered red bodice. It took bracelets, necklaces and a tiara made with petals of linked nardos and jazmín - "floral jewelry shop" called it, and tilak in the forehead, the red point that symbolizes the third eye, that that is able to see beyond the appearances. Their hands, their arms and their feet totally were covered with peculiar tattoos done with henna, an extracted paste of the ground branches of a shrub, tattoos that drew graceful arabesque and intricate designs. When one had recovered of the scare to see his daughter of that stews, her mother embraced it: "Better than your father has not seen you thus!", it said affected. The poor man Stefano, to eight thousand kilometers of distance, was sad. To his friend of the soul, Danilo mechanic, confessed to him as a child in the bar, with regard to Sonia: "Will throw It to the tigers" What reason had the old shepherd of the Asiago mounts.

Immediately young girls surrounded to Anushka and to Paola and they were offered to paint the hands to them. While they applied henna to them, they explained the tradition to them: whatever more black left the drawings in the hands the fiancée, more love would have in the marriage. And the more they took in erasing, the more time would last the passion. Paola and. Anushka watched the arabesque ones of Sonia: they were black as if they had painted them with Chinese red.

The wedding itself took place on the following day, to six of afternoon, in the garden of number 1 of Safdarjung Road. Indira had searched carefully in its closets sari that loved that Sonia took, he himself



who had taken she, the one that Nehru had spun during his long hours of imprisonment, once she had accepted the will of his daughter to marry with Firoz. Sonia recognized it, she had seen it in the exhibition of London and the words of Rajiv came to him to the memory: " Hopefully you someday to it take" Then he had taken them to joke. Still it dreamed about marrying of target. Now was taken it as an honor and a signal from affection, without for a moment suspecting that when dressing that sari red pale entered to comprise, she also, of the history of India.

A small incident infuriated to Rajiv when discovering that there were two journalists between the guests. That one was its celebration, and it did not want interferences nor publicity. That day wanted to be only Rajiv, not the son of the Maxima authority of the country, the one that did not stop being a naive. One refused to leave the house until paparazzi was not expelled. Indira had to calm it, with much patience. When the nuptial march of Mendelsohn announced the arrival of the fiancée, it was tranquilized. Rajiv left to receive to Sonia to the garden, where there were about two hundred guests, between friends and known the family. When it saw it enter, of the arm of its uncle Mario, it changed the face to him. Sonia was splendid. It was the same image of the elegance, the hair gathered backwards in a subject monkey by a clasp of petals of jazmín, the shining skin by the mask of cúrcuma that hours had put him before, a simple bracelet of silver in the wrist, the eyes painted of khol and the face framed by earrings of flowers. They made good pair. It wore white narrow trousers, one long jacket color cream buttoned until the neck, a turban color salmon (like his friends and cousins), and shoes type slipper, with the curved end upwards, like a one and thousand prince nights. After the ritual interchange of garlands, they went towards a corner of the garden where, around a table protected by an enormous screen also done of flowers linked in hanging cords, were the next relatives. They signed in the civil registry and the ring interchanged. Sonia fought to control his emotions. Whenever it was crossed the glance of his mother, desire entered to him to cry. Then it preferred to look for the glance of Rajiv to find forces. The uncle Mario seemed lost; it watched at its niece with affection and something of condescendencia. Paola maintained the type, although on the inside that wedding without priest gave an infinite pain him. The words of Rajiv, that read verses of the Rigveda selected specially by its mother, put full stop to the ceremony:

*Smooth the wind,  
smooth blows flows  
the river,  
that the days and the  
nights bring  
happiness to us, that  
the Earth dust  
produces happiness,  
that the trees us*

*make happy with  
their fruits, that the  
Sun surrounds to us  
of happiness...*

And that was everything. The fiancès left the enclosure to be with a rain of petals of flowers and the fireworks roar wisely orchestrated by Sanjay. The ceremony could not have been simpler. To thus it had wanted Indira it, without paripé to have to content to Hindu the orthodox ones that they demanded a complete religious ceremony. When she married, Nehru had requested to him who accepted to do it by the Hindu rite, giving seven returns around interminable the sacred fire and listening to mantras, because she did not want to enemistar itself with them. It had acceded, but now revancha was taken. Indira was harder than its father. In fact, it had not cried during the ceremony of its own wedding. Nehru yes, the eyes had become damp him.

## 9

In the evening, Sonia had changed his equipment of the house where he had lodged to his new residence. The works had served to extend the main hall that Indira had furnished in tones pink pie and green moss; a sliding door gave to a place of enormous trees and shrubs between which birds and butterflies revolved.

After the celebration, one went to its new home, a great and comfortable room that had been added to the bottom of the house and that still smelled of plaster. Her mother had brought him clothes of Italy, a few books and discs and the newspapers of the airplane because she feared that its daughter's nostalgia entered to him. Sitting in the bed, Sonia threw a look to the holders. "The wind makes shake the Tower of Is above", "Lucia Bosé has asked the safekeeping of her children" and an interview the first man who had lived fifteen days with a transplanted heart, a called South African Blaiberg. They seemed to him the news of another planet. The news of a world that no longer was his. While Rajiv took off the spectacular turban in front of the mirror of the bathroom and several servants entered and left watching it reajo, Sonia felt vertigo when thinking that no longer she had returned back. The luck was thrown. How had arrived up to here? She herself was surprised of the force that had removed to obtain its intention. It, who always had been enemy of the confrontation, had had to tighten the cord with her family until an end del that had been believed incapable. To to have obtained happiness it, to the happiness to so close feel the presence of Rajiv, a deep feeling of surprise, and also of pain was mixed. Pain by its father. Pain of not being able to share the most important moment of its life with all those that it wanted, with its friends of the district, their old professors, their companions... Pain to have to say good bye to the childhood, the parents, the town, its country. Pain by his mother, because Sonia was able to guess in his glance everything what could torment it, from "the exotic" customs to the fact to live thus, in the familiar house, with the mother-in-law to the bottom of the corridor, by very prime minister who was. To the forced salary the situation, the familiar harmony of the Maino had cracked and Sonia felt like culprit. But the life had placed to him in that tesitura, and from the moment at which it was had obstinate at the hand of Rajiv in answer to its timid advance, back in the gardens of the cathedral of Ely, he was consequent with itself. To anybody that melancholy was strange to him because the India tradition contemplated the exit of a daughter of the house of its father to the one of the family of the fiancè as a little while of great anguish. Most of the fiancées Indians they cry and their friends and relatives are very grieved. Sonia was not going to cry, but she had the filled heart of pain, although the events followed one another to too much rapidity like taking pity itself of same himself.

To the following day in the evening a reception in Hyderabad House took place, a style palace anglomogol that the Nizam de Hyderabad ordered to construct in 1928 to give it to a lover hers to it, and that now, under control of the government, served as residence for foreign dignitaries.

Also great mediatic events or press conferences were organized there. Thousand people went - friends of the family, companions of the party, politicians, diplomats, journalists, artists, etc. -, all presenting/displaying to the entrance the gilded invitation that had received from the office of prime minister and eager to know near the foreign fiancée judging by themselves if everything what they had heard, so different and deformed by the cotilleo, were certain. Sonia, adorned with another splendid sari, felt like an animal in zoo. It seemed to him that the women crossed it with their glances, trying to guess of what paste was done. The majority had traveled to the foreigner were conscious of the different thing that it was the India of Europe. Some watched it with pity, others with envies, others with genuine affection. The hour arrived to have supper, in the ground, to the way of Kashmir. To they are of a small orchestra of classic music India, the invited ones tasted succulent typical plates with cinnamon aromas, cardamom, saffron and nail: lamb with nabo, chicken with spinach, fish with root of loto... Also there were potatoes in sauce of yogur or fried fresh cheese for the vegetarians. The relatives of Sonia could have supper Italian food, and the uncles of Rajiv, food parsi. The delicious green tea of Kashmir, the Kavha, used in the end. But it was not a ostentosa reception. "The budget was small", would confess Usha, the secretary of Indira.

It had not either estimated nor time for a trip of fiancés in conditions. Pero Rajiv wanted to show a little from India the relatives of Sonia, so they left all for Rajastán, romantic India, land of old feudales gentlemen, the most spectacular region of the subcontinent. It seemed to them incredible that so close of a city as Delhi medieval villages existed, without light nor running water , but of an overwhelming beauty, where in the seat of the market all the offices of India were elbowed: traveling salesmen of used clothes, dentists, farmers squatting next to its vegetable positions, tailors, blacksmiths, carpenters, jewelers... Goats, cows and camels teemed between piles of essences of all the colors - dust of yellow ocher saffron, cúrcuma, red guindillas ground. In way to the national park of Ranthambore, they saw by the field spots of yellow, red color, malva, rose, that were the turbans of farmers and shepherds who walked between the ocher dust which they raised its flocks. Their women went such dressed in tones; semiprecious jewels of old silver and stones shone and seemed princess instead of farmers.

Ranthambore was a natural park created in 1955 in a semiselvática zone to protect the survival of the tiger. An immense strength, that conserved in its interior temples in ruins, palaces and cenotaphs imprisoned by gigantic roots of ceibas, dominated the park from the stop of a promontory. Down, between hills covered with vegetation and silverplated water lagoons, red deers, antelopes, bears, chacales, cervids and wild boars could be seen. If there were luck, some tiger to the dawn. To Rajiv it liked that place because it combined two passions hers: the love to the animals and its liking to the photography. In addition it thought that the family of her woman would take a good memory of India because in that

forest human misery was not seen. Rajiv told them that he and their brother had lived the childhood surrounded by animals, enjoying authentic a zoological one in the gardens of Teen Murti House. Many of the animals were gifts that national Chiefs of State or politicians made their grandfathers. They had had dark-brown, doves, squirrels, a crocodile and a plain between two mountains of the called Himalayas Bhimsa, a gift of the state of Assam to its grandfathers. Also they had had three puppies of tiger. Rajiv adored them and one of its great misfortunes as a child was when his grandfathers decided to come off themselves one to give it to it to marshal Tito.

Of return to Delhi, they stopped in a village where a wedding was celebrated. It was an authentic Hindu, full wedding of colorful and noise. The fiancè, the face covered by one cortinilla done of flowers, appeared mounted in a skinny covered white mare with a gold velvet carpet embroidered. To they are of drums and panderetas, advanced caracoling towards its fiancée, who was waiting for it under a store. The families were very proud of which strangers attended the ceremony and immediately they entertained with tea and candies to them, while the boy disassembled. The priest invited then the fiancès to know itself officially. Slowly and timidly, each one of them separated the veil from the other with its free hand. The glad face of the boy appeared as opposed to the diminished glance of the fiancée, a girl who must not have more than twelve years, fragile and scared like a pajarito. Her family observed it with an emotion badly contained. Rajiv for of interpreter, not only with the language, but with the customs. That simple wedding, that it seemed so ingenuous and inoffensive, hid several evils of India, authentic social diseases. The infantile marriages as this one exposed children to be mothers, with the consequent mortality and problems of health for the mother and the boy. In addition the parents to the fiancée, who seemed poor farmers, surely had become indebted themselves during many years to pay the dowry, indispensable requirement to marry to a daughter. Yes, all that was very pretty and very colorful, but those customs maintained to the poor men sunk in the misery. It was there when Sonia heard by first time speak of the custom of sati, that still practiced sporadically in this region. The companions at table commented a recent case, not very far from where they were, that it had been a national scandal. A young widow had sent itself to the funeral pyre of the husband. The police had investigated the case without being able to find out the truth. The opinions of the guests to the wedding very were divided: they said that the widow was santa to have had the value of becoming sati, other that had been drugged and forced to jump to the bonfire so that it could not inherit none of the husband's properties... Rajiv inclined at this last one. How to be able to modernize this country? , it seemed to ask itself, thinking about the enormous task that it had touched to its mother, while it drived the car of return to Delhi.

At Sonia the hour arrived to him to take leave of its family. It accompanied them to the airport. Later to embrace its mother, and perhaps

because he guessed the break that felt when leaving its daughter, Sonia came down and broke to sob. For its mother, that one was the true goodbye: they returned to house, to the home of always; Sonia remained in that strange, single earth, without them. Like then had never been the reality with as much crudity, so much that made damage. Both were made a sea of tears, and they were not specially prone to the weeping, which still made the scene more heartrendering.

- It writes much, llámame often...

- You I promise it, mamma.

In the car that brought it from return to house, Sonia dried the face while came to him to the flash memory of happy moments of their childhood in Lusiana, when it left to milk the cows with his father and his mother, or when friends and cousins came to celebrate their full birthday of gifts. What far it seemed that life! Remaining in India, account occurred now of which it began of zero. As much tension and as much activity had left it exhausted and gotten depressed. It needed to see Rajiv as rapidly as possible. Only he could console it because he was the justification of all his sinking.

Pero Rajiv was not in house, was in its course, the flying club. Sonia went to his quarter. If he were not its husband, then it preferred to remain single, to ease up in the bed and to cry all the tears, to swear in the melancholy hoping its return. But nothing else to open the door, saw on upon the bed, with letterhead of the office of prime minister. It opened it. It was a note of Indira that said: "Sonia, all we want much to you." Then the face was illuminated to him. The melancholy evaporated as by enchantment, smiled and left its room.

## 10

The daily life in house of the Gandhi began soon, almost to the dawn. When Sonia awoke, it was already Indira to the bottom of the garden in his char it daily surrounded by the poor men who came to have his darshan. Soon one put in its official car, that took it office to its of South Block, where spent all the morning. In the afternoons it used to go to work to its personal office, that of ago seat of the Congress, and which was closely together of its house, in number 1 of Akbar Road, to about fifty meters of distance. It was an pleasant long walk by the garden, always green and with arriates of flowers and odoríferas plants. The government finished to him yielding this house so that all fitted in hers.

Rajiv also left soon for its classes of flight. It pass without difficulty of commercial pilot and now it made practical in the national company Indian Airlines. It piloted a DC-3, the famous Dakota, the airplane of its dreams of childhood. His Sanjay brother was engrossed in the task of designing a native car, adapted to the highways of India. Each member of the family took an independent existence, but Sonia spent long time single. A time that allowed him to observe the activity and the bullicio of a great India house and to adapt to the heat, that arrived suddenly. A dry, intense and burning heat that raised every day, irremediably, and that would continue doing it until June rains, if is that this year they arrived in time. It did not like the conditioned air because it feared that it caused asthma crisis to him; it preferred to be placed under the vanes of the hung ventilators of the ceiling. He understood so that the personnel on watch moved with as much slowness. At the outset they seemed to him sluggish ones; now it included/understood that the heat, similar to ferragosto of Italy, only which they were in March, relaxed muscles and softened the wills. The personnel on watch was little for a house of those characteristics. The normal thing is that there was a minimum of ten or fifteen servants, each one in charge of a specific task to its chaste one. Although Nehru and Gandhi had been in charge to officially suppress the chaste ones in the Constitution of the new independent nation, the reality is that they continued influencing the conducts, on everything in the lowest layers of the society and in the countryside. In no house of the Nehru they had been able to fight that hierarchial structuring of the domestic life, no matter how hard they had tried it. It was not easy with a stroke of the pen to erase thousands of years of history. So that the tradition continued reigning, and that served the table was not he himself who gathered it, the driver lead but it did not wash the car; the cook stewed, but she did not mop plates; those that swept the ground did not clean the baths, etc. The Nehru was contented with less service than the usual thing, but even so Sonia was not customary to the eternal presence of the servants, who when sliding without noise by the corridors stuck death scares to him. Perhaps what it bothered to him more is that it seemed to him that never was safe from indiscreet glances, not even in the privacy of its house. More of once, after to have locked up in its bathroom, had been frightened when discovering the one in charge of the

cleaning, a hoesudo man and of blackish skin that, squatting and with a rag in the hand, was put in a corner in a corner. Little by little it learned just like they had to learn the spouses of the diplomats settled down in India: to coexist with that cluster of people, that is to say to command to them, to have patience with sweepers, the street cleaners, who only move the dust from a place to another one, to go to everyone according to its rank or its religion so that at no moment they feel that “they lose chaste”, to take to the doctor if patients put themselves because social security does not exist, etc.

Not even the house of prime minister saved to trajín of the daily life in the cities Indians. To mid-morning, Sonia oía to the colorful traveling salesmen announcing from the street its merchandise with singsong voices. They pushed carts filled with vegetables and fruit, others loaded full candy drawers, others brought milk, or the newspapers... From time to time a man with a monkey dancer and bears called from outside offering his spectacle. Also table cloths fardos of and dinner service, weave, by hand smooth or printing went selling of fabrics with their, of the finest cotton or crude silk, multicolor or targets. The tailor seated in veranda sewing all the morning, while Sonia watched fascinated the polished crystal bracelets that offered a traveling salesman to him who the service had let enter thinking that it would distract it. The doors and windows opened to the garden let enter the aromas of the flowers and the turf just cut and humid, but that yellowed according to they spent the days.

Often Sonia appeared in the office where the two private secretaries of their mother-in-law worked. One of them, Usha, would remember that it came to do all type to him of questions on things Indians: How adjusts sari? How are celebrated the birthdays? What gift takes to the celebration of the first haircut of a baby? How is said “closes the door” in hindi? , etc. They took the hair saying to him that she did not have one, but three mothers-in-law. To the true one as soon as it saw it of the occupied thing that it was, although its presence always was made notice. She was the central person in the family. A day Sonia entered the office of Usha very altered. It took one note that had left him to Indira expressing its points of view on certain aspects, the majority critical, like the fact that Sonia refused to learn hindi or was so paradita before which did not know. “ By what me it does not say it in person instead of writing a note to me? ”, it asked Italian the tears on the brink of madness.

- To Mrs. Gandhi it costs to him to communicate - Usha- answered to him, is a woman enough introvert. But you do not worry about the one about letters, also one communicated thus with its husband and his father.

Perhaps the timidity of Sonia and a certain complex got to paralyze it as much that it became a problem at the time of taking care of visits important, or simply to the hour to socialize. Outside the friends of its husband and his brother-in-law, with whom already it had confidence, it cost to him much to break the ice and to open themselves to people. At heart, it continued being the small farmer of the mounts Asiago, the student of an



Italian city of provinces transplanted to another planet, the house of one prime minister, where always it entered and it left people all type and condition. "During long time, Sonia very was dissuaded - Usha- would count. It was a complicated task of persuading it of something." Indira, in spite of the occupied thing that was, did not lose of Vista the house subjects and it made an effort so that her daughter-in-law left her shell: "It would be wonderful if you could convince Sonia for that it comes tonight. But you do not force it if really it does not desire to him", said to a note hers to its secretary. As much Rajiv as their mother was characters rather reserved, so that they understood that Sonia needed to take his time to become acimated itself to this new life. They tried to press it less possible, because they saw that it cost to him to be accustomed. Here it could not make things simple, like leaving with a friend to take a walk, for example. The wide Nueva avenues Delhi were not made to walk, the distances were too great to cross them on foot. In addition, that part of the city was purely residential, were stores nor no commerce. The restriction of movements, the food, the heat and the distance of his caused nostalgia attacks to him that the Italian magazine Oggi that sent to its mother every week precise to him as soon as it was able to n1itigar. It was between two worlds without making foot in no of them. One remembered its father, and his warnings, and was moments at which had liked to take it the telephone and to speak with him, but Sonia he was strong and it knew that it had to hold. The presence of Rajiv, by behind schedule, used to calm its anguishes.

In May it was as much warm that Indira invited Sonia to accompany it to an official trip to the kingdom by Bhután, a small country in spurs of the Himalayas that totally lived section on the world, thinking that it would seat to change to him well of airs. In order to accompany also it invited it the daughter of the minister of Outer Subjects, Priti Kaul, that had the same age that Sonia. They were only two days of trip, but they amused much. Nothing else to lower of the helicopter, received king Dorje Wangchuk, very good natured, devotee man Buddhist and absolute monarch to them whom its kingdom closed to the outside maintained. It made a temperature perfect; they gave desire to drink the crystalline air. What lightening! , it thought Italian when feeling the fresh breeze of the mountain to caress the face to him, like when it went on trip to the Alps. Here there were telesillas nor restaurants, but pennants of no prayer that floated to the wind, scattering the Buddhist orations towards the mountain range of the Himalayas, that showed its tips acierated against an intensely blue sky. There was nothing could be considered "modern". The traffic rolled, except some motorcycles practically did not exist, and people dressed to the traditional way in a species of very colorful apron of colors. They went to horse or in cars thrown by oxen similar to yaks. The retinue arrived at the imposing monastery of Tashichhodzong, that dominated a luminous mountain landscape of white crests in whose skirts there were golden bancales of barley which they descended towards the valley like gigantic stairs. It was as a trip to the Average Age: the television did not

exist, was jail nor no delinquency, the only concession to modernity was the electricity, but only during two hours to the day. The own king accompanied his aposentos, three rooms and a bathroom, everything to them rather modest, explaining to them that they were his own ones. At the time hotel infrastructure in Thimpu, the capital did not exist, that seemed a pueblecito rather, so it yielded to his guests the best thing than it had. After the banquet, in which Indira and the monarch spoke of how democratizar the kingdom and at the same time to preserve it of the ominous influences of modernity, the girls returned to their quarter. Sonia discovered a hatch in the ground, underneath a carpet. Died of curiosity, the two raised and saw it a room with a rickety old bed, simple, seemed to the room of a monk. Suddenly a lantern ignited and glimpsed the king, light of clothes, that were arranged to lie down. They closed the shame trap died. They told it to Usha, that as well said it to Indira, afraid of which that incident could trigger a diplomatic conflict. Indira was limited to \*\*\*refl mng itself.

On the following day they flew in helicopter from Thimpu to the state of Sikkim, border with Tibet. The local king and his woman, a charming New Yorker called Hope were received by Cooke, in their palace. At night, when already Indira had lain down, the American arrived at the quarter of the girls with manjar that it more liked Sonia: smoky salmon. It remembered its time to him of England, where it had discovered it.

It was a brief parenthesis of coolness in the middle of the dog days that burnt the north of India. When they returned to Delhi, down in the plain mercury in the morning marked 43 degrees eleven. Asphalt melted. The trees seemed tired so as the men. People walked with opened umbrellas to protect themselves of the sun. The conductors of rickshaws hoped to their clients knocked down under any shade. In house, the flowers of arriates of the garden had been marchitado and the turf seemed dry straw. The servants watered the facade. Sonia had to learn to restrict his movements to the minimum to save energy. The nocturnal temperature became so intolerable that it had to waver before the conditioned air. They advised to him not to leave from house to the noon because the sun struck with too much force. Little it had to do this heat with ferragosto. The air was so dense that it was possible to be cut with a knife and the temperature later raised until the 46 degrees days. It was a cruel and ruthless climate. Sonia waited for anxious the return of Rajiv, knocked down in the bed and dreaming about the bucólico landscape of the Véneto, remembering the crujido one that their rubber boots produced in the snow just fallen, the water frozen that of girl drank directly of streams, the scent of the field after rain, the sprinkled green meadows of poppies in spring... But already he was here its husband, and hoped the dusk to leave to give a return in moto and to take an ice cream in one from the little places that served them in healthful hygienic conditions. It was necessary to have well-taken care of when eating abroad, because the heat altered the conservation of foods.

The tension in house increased to the heat proportionally, not by the discomfort that could be, but by its political repercussions. After all, that

one was the house of prime minister, and their work and its future depended in great measurement, that year, from which monzónicas rains arrived in time. The greater preoccupation of Indira continued being to fight against the hunger. It knew clearly that the food shortage was fought introducing new agricultural methods that had proven their effectiveness in other parts of the world, and fomenting the construction of fertilizer factories. To obtain an authentic green revolution, to do that India was sufficient car, that one was its main priority and to her it was dedicated hard. All the others, that were much, could come later: health, education, to improve estatus of the women, etc.

The problem is that that ambitious program needed time so that gave its fruits. While, people had to eat. And the bad luck wanted that India underwent three years of consecutive droughts. If that fourth year rains did not arrive either, the disaster would be served. To this it was necessary to add fiasco of the American aid. In spite of all the indications of the opposite, president Johnson had wanted to use the nourishing aid like handle to put under India his policy. Although Indira was arranged to make some concessions (facing a storm of protests in house), never had the intention to leave the policy of not-alignment of its father. Like retaliation by a critic that the Indian Secretary of State did to Israel by his attitude towards the Arab countries, Johnson began to delay the food shipments. It requested that all the grain shipment information passed by their office before giving the final approval them. Indira had a map of India in the wall of its office of South Block where it tracked the movement of each freighter with foods. Slowness was exasperante.

- Those Americans do not realize of which every day that happens supposes the death of much people! - it said in house, indignant, a day in which Sonia had prepared a paste plate. You you do not take it to badly, is not nothing personal - it continued saying to Sonia, separating its plate to him, but I have decided, and thus I finish it announcing in the Parliament, that I let eat wheat and rice in protest signal.

The parliamentary session had left it exhausted, and as soon as it had supper. One complained strong jaqueca. No of it prescriptions had been able to clear the persistent headaches to him that had been several days doing to suffer it. The problems of India were not for less.

- As rains do not arrive, hambruna will be another one.

- It goes to You to prepare a homemade remedy that my parents taught me to fight against the headache.

Sonia made an infusion of manzanilla and dampened gauzes that applied in the forehead of their mother-in-law. Indira continued speaking. It feared that another drought left in evidence its agrarian policy, to pound of the action of the government, who so good signals had begun to show. "It began to tranquilize themselves and to be better", would remember Sonia, who did not understand the shades nor the details of the enormous problems which her mother-in-law faced, but who yes understood her importance and its reach. Suddenly, Indira changed of subject.

- How you go with hindi? - it asked of sopetón.
- Badly - Sonia answered.

Indira wanted at all costs that Sonia learned hindi. In addition to for political reasons, because always it had accused the Nehru to be too much "British" or "western", Indira thought that it was genuinely good that her daughter-in-law could express itself in the language of the town because would also open to contacts and the doors to him of deep India. Was not the language the soul of a culture? Pero Sonia did not understand so that it had to learn a language that only spoke the service, since the English was what invited friends and always used. A particular professor who had insisted on teaching the language to him from the academic point of view, with much grammar had put him.

- The classes are aburridísimas - Sonia, satisfied confessed to him with to have been able to alleviate the pain to him.

Indira did not insist, but days later it left a note to Usha, its secretary: "It seems that the progresses of Sonia are nonexistent. The method of the professor does not work. Please, whatever more conversation in hindi you practice with her, better."

Certain habits of that house had been difficult to understand for anyone. By example, from always in house of the Nehru hindi in the lunch had been spoken of the English noon and in the supper, and every day, one of the meals was India and another western one. Sonia did not understand so that each one could not eat the one that it wanted and to speak in the language that it wanted. But like he was docile, was not blinded. And he was sufficiently intelligent like knowing that it had to find its place in that family although it was necessary to fold itself to exigencies that did not understand well. It accepted that that comprised of its process of adaptation.

June became eternal. It seemed that all the city was watching at the sky barruntando rain indications. Front page of newspapers showed in heavy characters the temperature records: 46 degrees in the Door of India de Rajpath, announced day 15, when the monsoon already must have arrived. A photo showed groups of children bathing in the public sources. The dry and burning air reseca the throat. The eyes itched as if they had river sand. A gray dust layer, that the wind had brought of the deserts of Rajastán, covered the garden with number 1 of Safdarjung Road. For Sonia, extreme it of the climate he was something novel. In Europe, the climate was to regulate, and the predictions served mainly to know if there would be snow in the mountain or sun in the beach the following weekend. Here the climate was something much more dramatic by its intensity and its importance in the life of the country, eminently agriculturist. The failure of the rice harvest could mean the death of a million farmers. For that reason these crucial days in the life of India were followed with as much attention by people and mass media.

Finally, to end of month, a atronador noise followed of an ardent air eddy that raised dust clouds and started the leaves of the trees

announced first storms. As if the night fell suddenly, black thicknesses nubarrones invaded the sky and the dry wind opened the way to a rain of heavy drops that hammered the ceiling of the house. The employees on watch seemed to revive after as much sleepiness. They went out to let itself soak and the smiles returned to illuminate their faces. It seemed that the high palms of the roundhouse also shook of emotion. The television showed images of the euphoria that was seizing of the country. People of different chaste religions and jumped and danced together in the streets, like children, wading in the water, showering under the sewers of the tile roofs. It was like a great celebration in which the monsoon had made disappear the differences between the men.

But to the intensity of the heat, now the intensity of precipitations happened to him. The water with as much force fell that the noise, within house, was deafening. The temperature descended from blow degrees, and a smooth breeze contributed a coolness caress. In the garden, the frogs crossed croando by the turf that turned green again like by magic art, but two days later the garden so was flooded that it seemed a lake. If many districts of shacks literally disappeared with rains soon to be reconstructed, the Nueva districts Delhi were not immune the consequences of the deluge. The elegant roundhouses of the vecindario of the embassies were flooded, as well as the tunnels, and many vehicles were stayed as deads, taxis and rickshaws with the drowned motors that loosen their last death rattles other people's to the efforts of their owners to take them again. Although the heat became less intense, the shame sensation was disagreeable. Sonia had the sensation to have the always humid hands; one changed several times to the day because the sweat soaked the clothes. It was astonished of which during days it did not stop to rain, as if the Gods of the climate took revenge themselves of the dry and ardent heat of the previous months. Now it understood so that the facades of so many buildings seemed dirty and with chorretones, so that there were so many caverns, and are that the climate devastated with everything and turned any task of maintenance a too expensive company for a so poor country.

The positive part is that rains brought to the house the joy of outside, as if the happiness of a whole gigantic country was strained by the windows and invaded each corner. A country that, when not starving east year, would perhaps be able to come out ahead and not to return to know atrocious hambrunas the past. Indira, very in syntony with the feeling of the town, seemed infected of that joy. In spite of so many other problems, it returned to be a radiating woman.

Perhaps because it did not perceive the dissuaded behavior of Sonia as a threat, in a period of surprising short time, Indira, that was rather of nature distrusted, got to take true affection him. The Italian was a discreet and direct woman, two qualities that at first had won him their immediate affection. But also he was hogareña and it liked "to make family". It did not push Rajiv to live in separated pair of the rest, since it had been able to think at the outset. On the contrary, it insisted so that they continued being respected the customs of always, like joining itself at the time of the meals, a tradition that went back to the times of Teen Murti House. Independently from where was each member of the family, all made an effort in returning to house to eat, unless there were some official act. Ever since they were young, Rajiv and Sanjay were had customary to leave what they were making to have lunch in family. To Sonia this seemed to him very well because the conversations in the table were always very animated, except for when Sanjay was entangled to speak of policy with its mother. The habitual era to interchange personal points of view, jokes and experiences. If Rajiv and Sonia went out at night with their friends, hoped to that Indira finished having supper doing company to him. Indira had a great talent for the conversation; she was fast in its observations, clear in its descriptions and had a fine sense of humor. Their interests were not limited the policy, but also the arts, the scientific innovations, the behavior of people, books, the nature... There were surprising things in her, that only with time were discovered. By example, it used to recognize a bird by its song, and is that in the fifty it had been member of an ornithological society and had learned much of birds. Also multitude of anecdotes of its trips told the foreigner. In Santiago of Chile the woman of a politician received it saying: "Uy, what fine and delicate it seems. It hoped to see a species of Golda Meir..." Sonia desternillaba with those histories. Like the one of the Kremlin, when after a banquet that Brezhnev and Kosiguin gave in their honor, at the time of the coffee it observed the Russian custom to secrete the men of the women, and Indira, for its great surprise, was in the group of the men... Or when Indira went to see Gandhi to speak to him of its wedding with Firoz, and old santón instead of animating it to have family, suggested her to him and Firoz followers were made of their married ideal stay celibate after married. Then so that to marry? , Indira, irritated had espetado him. To Sonia, who had the easy laughter, all those anecdotes enchanted to him.

When the Italian had understood the basic operation of an India house, she went replacing to Usha in the domestic subjects. Useful feeling and being occupied turned out the best weapon to fight against nostalgia. "Sonia was an organized person, was strong, although she maintained a profile low, but she knew what wanted", the secretary of Indira would say. The Italian behaved like really was: affectionate, always pending to please, fleeing from the confrontation, until a little submissive before the tremendous authority that emanated of its mother-in-law. "I understood that there was to give time to my mother-in-law so that she also was made to the

new familiar situation, although was not specially possessive with Rajiv. In those days, I was always to his side, ready to support it", later affirmed in an interview published in the Weekend Telegraph years.

In that house customary Indians, but cachemiríes and also English, Sonia contributed their contribution of subtle way. And it did it with a powerful weapon, that handled with determination. Sonia had learned of his mother the secrets of the Italian kitchen, and soon the house of prime minister exhalaba aromas of lasagna to forno, sauce to the pesto with taken basil of the garden and until of ossobuco to the Milanese one. It was impossible in those years to obtain Nueva cheese Delhi, but always a friend who came from Europe brought mozzarella to him or to gruyer rallado packaging to the emptiness. It did not lack some joker who said that instead of indianizar to Sonia, she was italianizando to the family... The joke era of doors inside, because if a commentary thus arrived at the press, knew that the opposition would use it with viciousness. The certain thing is that in the home of the Nehru-Gandhi it fitted of everything, to image and similarity of India, crucible of cultures and traditions always arranged to integrate the foreigner and to do it his. If Sonia adapted to the prevailing culture, also she fought her peculiar and quiet battle to leave her track, casserole in hand, that cosmopolitan home.

Later, it went learning to guess to the tastes and the preferences of Indira, like its liking by the flowers, for example, and always it guarded so that there were splendid branches in the tables. To both they liked specially the scent of the nardos, balsam that invaded each corner of that house decorated with an almost Spartan simplicity, but with pleasure. The curtains were of crude cotton, the carpets came from several places of the north; there were tribal objects, pictures of Indian painters, some antiques like a precious screen, and furniture of English colonial style. Sonia understood that simplicity and the economy were the keys of the personality of their mother-in-law. To Indira it did not like to throw nothing; on the contrary, it kept the affluent plastic bags doubled to use them again. Sonia learned to make the suitcases as it liked to Indira, taking advantage of the most mini hollow, without wasting space. If Indira needed something for the house, Sonia was in charge to obtain it to it. The salesman of the store The Shoppe in Connaught Place would remember that she saw it arrive a day, dressed in leather trousers and their pretty melena falling on shoulders. Mantelería of thread came to buy one to give it to it to its mother-in-law in its birthday. The only thing which Sonia did not share with Indira was the mysteries of the India policy, that to neither interested him nor delivered attacks to understand.

But in that kitchen that Sonia transformed o'clock neuralgic of the home, where all finished being although it only was for asking what surprise had to them prepared to eat, was spoken inevitably of everything.

- The family of maharajá of Jaipur has retired us the greeting - she arrived saying a Sanjay day, socarrón-. Those of Kota and those of

Travancore also. You do not count whereupon they invite us to no of its celebrations.

Thus Sonia found out that her mother-in-law had abolished the last privileges of maharajás. Rajiv explained to him that when their states integrated the India Union, maharajás received the constitutional guarantee of which they could conserve its titles, their jewels and their palaces; of which the State would pay proportional an annual sum to them to the size of its kingdoms; and of which one would exempt to pay to taxes and rates to them of import.

- But with so many so poor Indians and, to my mother and her government it seems to them that those privileges are anachronistic and are outside place - it continued saying to him. The case is that maharajás has been put military still on. The maharani of Jaipur, that is the local leader of a rightist party, has given instructions to its supporters to burst a mother meeting. But it has faced itself to them. Sabes what it has said to them? " Id and you ask maharajás how many wells have dug for the town when they governed its states, how many wagon they constructed, which made to fight against the slavery which they put under the English to us" The result is that mother has ended up devastating, as always.

Indira had done it because it had had to give a left turn in his policy, when seeing that the Americans had left it in the stockade. Not to continue losing supports in its party, the unconditional end of the American bombings had signed in the Soviet Union a treaty requesting on Vietnam. Johnson, furious, had delayed the food shipments still more. The poor men starved without suspecting that they were the price that paid its country to maintain its independence as opposed to the most powerful power of the world, that it wanted to use them like change currency. Maharajás had not been the only victims of that turn of political direction. The program of Indira gave chills most liberal, to the patronos of the industry, the businessmen , the aristocrats and really to the elites of the country because it also announced the nationalization of the bank and the insurance agencies. Sonia was witness of the euphoria of the level town before those measures. Employees and civil employees, taxi drivers, conductors of rickshaws, unemployed and those that never had been inside a banking branch danced in the street, to the house doors. Bold Populists were measured and who won to Indira an enormous political success because the government cleared the financial resources to the capitalists for entregárselos to the town. The farmers, the small retailers and traders also were contentments because they were going to benefit from credits in better conditions in the nationalized banks, and all the parties of left were aligned firmly with Indira.

In the first months of 1969, Sonia began to be bad. At the outset he attributed it to an nourishing poisoning, to some local virus, but the doctor immediately removed it from doubts. She was pregnant. The news filled of joy to the family. Indira felt very happy and redoubled the cares to its daughter-in-law. She was euphoric with the idea of being grandmother. The children always had been their weakness. Now it left notes of the type:



“Tomorrow parsi is navroz (New Year), but I go away soon of tour in the morning. I can go to dart a kiss right now” Indira deeply was thanked for him to Sonia by the stability that contributed to its life. No longer it returned from its debilitating tours or long sessions in the Parliament to the solitude of an empty house, but to a home with life. And that happiness saw breath by the news that, more than no other, caused in Indira an intimate and deep satisfaction. Its new agricultural policy began to give results. The grain harvest of the this year was being the double of habitual thanks to abundant rains of the last monsoons. The greater production was registered in the states of the Punjab, to the north, the country of sijs, an affluent community organized and worker whose farmers had planted new varieties of dwarfed wheat developed by Indian scientists from Mexican modalities. The new varieties of rice, cotton and peanut also had shown a spectacular result. The increase of the production was so hopeful that it augured that the endemic shortage could become thing of the past soon. What desire had Indira to take off the thorn of Lyndon Johnson...

Nevertheless, Sonia did not participate in that euphoria. Its happiness was dyed by a new feeling, that had not experimented previously, and that arose from deepest from its being. It was an atavic, diffuse and intense fear. Fear to give so to light far from its family, fear to take a disease rare, a tropical infection, fear to that the boy was born with some problem... It returned to feel nostalgia of his and until it thought about going to Italy to have the boy, but no, that was impossible because how to be far from Rajiv in a while thus? , what would say the politicians of here? That the daughter-in-law of Indira did not entrust in the India medicine (which was perfectly logical then)? That what was good for the town not was it for bahu of Indira? It wanted it or no, the policy interfered in the private life. Pero Sonia was sufficiently gracious to accept it and to understand that the hormonal transformations of their body were playing bad a last one to him, and that its mood would improve with the time.

But the five months of pregnancy it followed with constant mareos. As one physically were bad, the moral was also suffered. Sanjay turned upside down in attentions with its sister-in-law. When it knew that his brother was flying, he did not leave house without making sure that Sonia did not want to accompany to give a return to him, to take an ice cream in Nirula's, one of the little establishments similar to a western cafeteria, or to visit a friend. Pero Sonia did not have desire to leave. It preferred to remain in house, caressing during hours to the dogs Putli and Pepita, two Golden Retrievers, the favourites of the Nehru from the times of Anand Bhawan, and chucho Sona call that Rajiv gathered in a side street of the Old Delhi when he was young. When he returned its husband, they passed hours listening music. Rajiv hoarded in house an important disc collection that had reunited throughout the years and that dealt with extreme well-taken care of. It did not want that nobody touched to the equipment or discs without making sure before it would do it of as scrupulous way as he. From time to time they attended concerts of classic music India, where Sonia learned on

ragas (melodía classic) and ghazals (poems sung in urdu) and to distinguish instruments like sarangi or the table, precursors of the guitars and the drums of the West. Many Rajiv times it recorded the recitales of great teachers as Ustad Ali Khan or Ravi Shankar and soon added them collection to its, that it classified methodically. But they used to leave little and they were not become fond of to the celebrations, now that Sonia was fragile of health, still less. They never wanted to comprise of the Nueva jet Delhi nor to belong to no group or gang. Rajiv was to taste with friends of very different social extraction, from a mechanic of the flying club to its old colleagues of Cambridge who came to Delhi with certain frequency. Sonia, navigated and with nauseas, only acceded in the morning to give to a return Sundays by Khan Market, where they were the disc stores and the bookstores better provided of the city. It was a short return, that the Italian took advantage of to also buy fruit and some European product in one of her commerce, frequented by diplomats. To the five months, the smooth curvature of its belly, that saw with pride reflected in the showcases, was object of comidilla of the known ones which it used to cross itself, because in a certain sense Nueva Delhi was like a great town.

Five months it is a time interval in which it is considered that a pregnancy has passed its moment more critical. In the case of Sonia, it was not thus. In half of one night of heat, she was imprisoned of sharp pains in the belly, and felt that it lost blood in torrents. The pains were so acute and so hard the sensation to be draining on the inside that it thought that died at that same moment. Rajiv organized the transport to the hospital in the car of its mother. It so saw so pale Sonia and going that was scared to lose it. After the transfusion, when one had recovered, they said to him to Sonia who was lost much blood, but that now, once carried out a small intervention, was going to be better. “ And the boy? ”, she asked, terrified because at heart she knew what it had happened. The glance of Rajiv, that lowered the eyes to the ground, said everything to it.

It was the moment it last more until that moment in the life of the Italian. To the five months of pregnancy, it did not consider that it had had an abortion, but that was lost its son. To that deep pain an ill-fated feeling of personal failure was united . It seemed to him that it had failed its husband, to Indira, its own family and the entire world. It seemed to him that it was paying by all the happiness that the life had given to him, as if it had to expiar the sin of its extraordinary history of love. The medical explanations, that assured to him that his he was relatively current in a first pregnancy and that it did not mean that to the next attempt it went to happen the same, were not able to remove it from a deep melancholy. In addition, it badly did not lack some commentary of the personnel on watch on the augury that foretold resemblance mishap, or the rumor of the street that attributed the responsibility of the happened thing to Indira “because it pushed its daughter-in-law to move and to walk, obsessed whereupon it stayed in form and it did not get fat too much during the pregnancy”. In certain mentideros of the city, after all what it had passed with the nationalizations and the

abolition of the privileges of maharajás, it had been put fashionable to label to Indira of monster. Like she was to wait for, the family reacted as a fragmentation hand grenade and all surrounded to Sonia by attentions and affection. Indira very was affected. This him had remembered a similar mishap, when being born its second son, the 14 of December of 1946. The pains childbirth had arisen at night, of totally unexpected way. It was taken from urgency to a hospital where the English doctors got to fear for their life because he was bleeding. From the beginning, that boy had been a problem. Nehru arrived when finally the hemorrhage was controlled. At dawn a man was born, to whom Nehru named Sanjay, in tribute to a visionary priest who in the Mahabharata, the great epic of the hinduismo, describes the great battle with the blind king. Firoz, its husband, did not go more behind schedule until days. It worked in the city of Lucknow, and Indira finished finding out that it maintained a loving relation with a Muslim woman, daughter of a prominent family of the city. For that reason, the arrival of the small one had not been a as happy event as the one of first, Rajiv. And Indira, in its subconscious mind, felt like culprit for that reason. It had to think that it was unjust and that it had to repair it. All its life, seemed to him that it had something to Sanjay.

Little by little, the Italian was leaving the sadness ocean in which she was sunk, although did not return to smile until it was not left pregnant woman again, months more behind schedule. This time, her gynecologist was butcher: nothing of long walks nor of efforts. The more time happened fallen down, the less risk of another abortion runs. Decided this time to take the pregnancy to good port, Sonia arranged itself to spend nine months in bed. Its inspiration came to him world-wide from another Italian well-known one, Sofía Loren, who finished happening through he himself critical moment, with a happy end. It was a hard experience, but Sonia took it like a test that had to surpass. It counted on the support of Rajiv, that mimaba and took care of with great devotion. Luckily, it had not left to Firoz, its father: hogareño was, affectionate and of a fidelity to all test. It followed enamored with Sonia so as the first day. Or more, because now a deeper feeling was linked, that than is born of the mutual understanding, to watch it everything with the eyes of the other, of a life in common totally assumed and made.

Indira again was excited and luxury of details took care yet of the basket of the boy. "You are Always jactándote of the joys and "estatus superior " of being grandmother - Dorothy wrote to him to her North American friend Norman from an airplane that transported it to the south of India to celebrate the fourth centenary of the synagogue of the Jewish community of Kerala-, for that reason I divulge a secret to you: also I am competing by that estatus. Sonia waits for a boy for end of May. Is not exciting? Although when a daughter-in-law is of another continent, there are many complexities also." One talked about the fear of Sonia to give light in Delhi, and to new exigencies of its daughter-in-law, that arose like a reaction to the pressure of the surroundings. Suddenly Sonia declared that she wanted neither bred airplane nor to take care of the boy, and who

would do she herself. To say that was a little chiquillada, a way to affirm giving to understand: "I am European and in my private sphere I will make the things to my way." Indira and Rajiv therefore understood it, so they did not insist, convinced that that intransigencia would go to him when was born the boy. The reality would already take care to put the things in its site. It was going to him to be very difficult to Sonia to do without aid considering that it would have to be available to accompany to its husband or Indira in the official exits. But, in general, the joy to receive to a new member of the family compensated those slight domestic frictions. When Rajiv was working, their mother or her brother tried to alternate themselves to accompany to Sonia during the meals. They did not want that its spirit felt like single at no moment nor that decayed. Rajiv now flew of copilot in the turboprops Fokker Friendship de Indian Airlines, high-winged airplanes with capacity for about forty passengers, worthy successors of the DC-3.

Sonia spent long time with both brothers, who shared friends and I interest common, although to Sanjay saw itself him less and less. It was obsessed with its project to construct a "Volkswagen Indian". With a friend it had opened a factory in the periphery of the city and there, surrounded by rubbish dumps and culvert to opened sky, it persecuted its dream to become a "Henry Ford" local between pieces of metal and oxidized irons. The project to construct a produced popular car for the masses took more than ten years being discussed in the offices of the government, and finally the decision was taken to order its production to the private sector. Until then, two models, famous the Ambassador, retorts of the Morris Oxford only made in India under license that served as taxis in the London postwar period and which still today they continue making in the facilities of Hindustan Motors in the state of Bengal, and the Fiat Padmini, that would become the unique model of the taxis of Bombay (in Europe he was well-known like Fiat 1100). The car that it wanted to make Sanjay had to be totally native, would be cheap, reach the speed of eighty kilometers per hour and would consume five liters to the one hundred kilometers. The name that had chosen was Maruti, in reference to the son of the God of the wind in Hindu mythology.

In that then, Indira did not watch beyond its own race. A dynasty did not imagine familiar, as his father had not imagined to it either. In numerous interviews it repeated that their children did not have interest in policy and that would do the one that was in its power to separate to them from that world. It did not show desires to transfer the "familiar load to them". To Indira it did not like anything to mix the politician and the personnel.

But his Sanjay son, pawned at all costs on removing ahead his project, was going to trastocar that border that her mother had as much interest in preserving. So that it did not have the right to make a genuinely Indian car? , it was asked. It did not seem to him right that by the fact of being son of prime minister, resemblance company was vetoed to him. Indira was in a jam, torn between its feeling of mother and his to have of

governor. It had requested to him to Sanjay that did not present/display its project to the Ministry of Industrial Development, but this one had made ears deaf and had asked for the license formally, although not even its learning in the Rolls-Royce had finished and he was neither a businessman nor a manufacturer of cars. In fact, its history of love with the cars had been a constant source of headache for its mother. Being adolescent, more of once the police it had brought to him to house after to have discovered to him, along with a friend, leaving cars that had stolen previously of a parking to occur a return. Those gamberradas as a child mimado were adopting forms different when growing. In England, Sanjay had caused several accidents without physical damages, and several times it had been arrested to exceed the speed limit to the steering wheel of its old Jaguar or not to take a driving licence valid.

On the contrary that Rajiv, Sanjay was aggressive in its way to fight reason why it believed and it exerted a considerable pressure on its mother so that the license was granted to him . Indira presided over the meeting of the cabinet in which the minister of Industry granted to Sanjay a permission to produce fifty thousand automobiles to the year, entirely with native materials. And that although Sanjay lacked experience and could not present/display results of previous projects. It was clear that if had not been the son of prime minister, never they had granted it. By once, Indira its sacrosanct principle needed to put in front to have to its personal desire, an exception that would end up costing to him very expensive. A scandal and a general protest accompanied the birth by the project of national car Indira was accused in the press to practice the worse type of nepotism. A deputy of the opposition labeled the concession as “ a misfortune for the democracy and the socialism”. Others spoke of “corruption without limit”. Their own allies, the Communists of Bengal, were united to the alluvium of critics. Indira responded little of convincing way: “My son has demonstrated to have enterprising spirit... If it is not animated to them, How to ask other young people who assume risks” At heart, Indira believed blindly in its son and surely it thought that the Maruti was a gold opportunity so that Sanjay came out ahead and proved his was worth. It knew that he was young, immature, impetuous, but it believed it capable and strong. It thought that it would learn and that it could control it. Also it knew that that would be equivalent to expose to him to the public life. To Vista years, it meant that Indira, in spite of continuing repeating that did not want that their children entered policy, already saw its smaller son like worthy successor of the lineage of the Nehru-Gandhi. It was perhaps a way to feel a little less single in the exercise of the power.

In that fight against the solitude feeling that obstructed it from the most tender childhood, the birth of its grandson, the 19 of June of 1970, filled it of joy. Like in all the homes of India, the birth of a son was an event of great relevance. Rajiv attended the childbirth, which was unusual for a man in the India of then, and it made it with its camera in the hand to record the first weeping of its son, who had been born a little premature. Sonia was

exhausted, but his husband helped it much, changed to the boy and he slept to him between the takings. They behaved like modern parents, although eternal India already watched to the house doors when they returned from the hospital and santón hoped the baby to make him the letter astral the chosen name was the one of Rahul, proposed by Indira. It explained Sonia to him who was the name about which she had thought originally for its first-born son, although in the end she put Rajiv to him to please its father. Nehru had been receiving suggestions of names in the jail, and had chosen Rajiv because in sánscrito she meant “loto”, he himself meaning that Kamala, the name of its passed away woman eight years before. In the same way which Indira yielded to the desire of its father, Sonia yielded to the one of Indira and when doing it, a little became more India every time. Rahul was the name of a son of Gautama Buddha and in sánscrito it meant “the one that is able”. Although the family was not religious, the force of the custom caused that the boy was received with the corresponding Hindu rites. The ceremony of the first haircut took place three weeks after its birth, and all the friends of the pair joined themselves in house. They shaved the skull of the baby, leaving only a hair tuft that, according to the tradition, would protect its memory. To shave to him had the symbolic meaning to release to him of the rest of its last lives and to prepare to him to face the future.

Indira absolutely was captivated by the baby. It tried to return by house between sessions of the Parliament to see it and only to narrow it in its arms. The woman who was persecuting with hardness to aristocrats of India, that finished standing before the party to remain with the power, that expelled the companions who had not voted by her, was a grandmother who in front of melted her grandson. “ How it is looked like Rajiv! ”, it said, without nobody still found similar some him. In addition, that was not none fulfilled because there was counted thousand times the ugly thing that had been Rajiv when being born. But that creature touched the most intimate fiber to him and she remembered the times to him of its own maternity. Indira had given to light to Rajiv the 20 of August of 1944, not in a hospital but in house of its younger aunt, in Bombay, in precarious conditions. It had remained embarrassed in spite of its file of tuberculosis, of the warnings of the doctors and the opposition of its father to its wedding, so that that birth was lived like an authentic triumph on the adversity. Indira wanted at all costs that Nehru knew his grandson. Still they lacked three years for independence and was locked up in a British jail in which he would be his ninth and last imprisonment. When one found out that they were going to transfer it, Indira appeared to the doors of the prison of Naini in Allahabad, and in the interval that was between the door of the jail and the cellular van, it maintained to the small Rajiv in arms. “Under the tenuous light of a lamppost, my father discovered his grandson for the first time, and he was watching it the little time in which they allowed it”, Indira counted.

When Sonia had recovered, they traveled to Italy with the boy. Sonia had dreamed about that moment in numerous occasions during his

long convalecencia. The aroma of the delicious coffee nothing else to arrive at the airport, silence in the great places public, the lacerante cold, the comfort and the rapidity of the automobiles, the water that could be drunk of the faucet, the supermarkets that offered of everything... those simple things which it lacked in India astonished it. It seemed that it was the first time that stepped on its earth. It was a moment of intense joy for being with his, in its town. It was fused in a hug with its father, did not say anything, was not necessary. Stefano Maino was suddenly with the small Rahul in arms and only he already concerned the well-being of the boy. Was not worth that moment all the shortages of the past? , Sonia seemed to ask itself. Finally, it was reunited under he himself ceiling with all those that populated their heart.

## 12

They soon returned to Nueva Delhi, to follow with its calm familiar life, although it was a fictitious calm because always it was threatened by bumps of the policy. In spite of which Indira loved its grandson, almost it did not see it much of the occupied thing that it was. It spent long hours in its office of South Block, and when it returned to house, it was always tired and with the worried semblante.

- What is the one that happens? - Rajiv nothing else asked to return.

- They say that it is going to have a coup d'etat - Sanjay commented to him.

- Who says it?

- All the world. In the celebrations, in cocktails, the suppers it is not spoken of another thing... Mother knows it, and the worse thing is afraid.

Indira had become many enemies with its attacks against the well off class, that accused it to want to make of India a communist country. It had been put to all the right against, to the employer's association, the proprietors of mass media, to maharajás and their descendants, etc., and feared, like good part of the country, a violent reaction. But it did not want to make of India a communist country like which it had known in its trips after the steel drop curtain. To the opposite, it delivered great attacks to assure to the well off classes that their interests were not in danger. It had compensated to the great financial families with generous indemnifications by the nationalization of its banks. The freedom - individual collective, national it was a supreme value that was not arranged to sacrifice in the altar of the socialism.

But the rumor that the military prepared a blow had propagated like the powder in the great cities, Bombay, Delhi and Calcuta. The idea that India could survive neither as democracy nor as united country were holding fast in the elitist sectors the more of the society. The figures of Nehru and Gandhi began to be contemplated like relics of an idealistic past that already little it had to do with the reality. Indira, more and more isolated in the top of the power, began to feel paranoica. and it was not for less. To general Sam Manekshaw, parsi that was Indian Army Commander-in-Chief, they did the same question there to him where it went: When is going to take control of the power? It abstained to respond. What it hit to him more is that between that did the question to him, there were ministers of the cabinet of Indira.

It is satiated with as much rumor, that one had infiltrated until in its own house, Indira summoned to its office of South Block general Manekshaw. They were old friends; Indira been had married with parsi plaster always added familiarity to the relation. Sam across was sitting of his table of office in kidney form, the elbows supported on the table and the head between the hands. After greeting itself, she said to him with cansina voice:



- All say that you are going to replace to me... Is certain that, Sam?

The military man remained of stone, but to the few seconds she reacted: "I took steps towards where it was seated. It had a long nose, and mine also he was prominent, so that I approached my nose hers and I asked to him, watching it fixedly to the eyes:

" " And you what you think, prime minister? "

" You cannot do it, I answer.

" " Piensas that I am so incompetent? "

" "No, Sam, did not mean that. I mean that you will not do it. "

" "You are all the right, prime minister. I do not interfere in political subjects. My work consists of sending on the army and velar so that it stays like an instrument of first order. Yours it is velar by the country. "

" " My ministers say that a military coup is being plotted. Until my children they have heard it. "

" " Those ministers, you named them. Librate of them. You must trust me. "

The general had never seen it so worried and with the spirit so lowered as that day. "It had many political enemies - it would remember Manekshaw-. Constantly they plotted complots against her. But she was small a ready one. It came to say to me: "Sam, if you are thinking about doing something, that you know that I know everything to it. "

They were turbulent Christmases. Although of doors inside Indira it did the possible thing not to let traslucir its restlessness, was impossible to be immune to the tension of the street. Sanjay was the one who more often asked to him on which was going to do, but Indira responded with one of its famous silencios and took to the small Rahul in arms, as if in that simple gesture it looked for the answer complicated questions. What had made their father in those same circumstances? , she asked herself. In 1951, Nehru had been in a seemed situation, although not so extreme. And it had decided to consult the town. That same one was going to make Indira. He felt that his government, employee solely of the support of the left parties, would not survive the attacks of the powerful forces that had been united against her. It had the intuition of which the town, if he were consulted, would support it. But this time would separate the general elections of the state ones. Until then, always they had been made jointly, with the result of which local ethnic group and considerations chaste were mixed with great national questions. Now it wanted to make sure that they would be dissociated. It wanted to present/display an authentic national program before the electorate.

The 27 of December of 1970, to eight in the morning, after their daily meeting in the garden, Indira a tea with Sonia was taken.

- Today I will not come to eat - it said to him. I am going to go to see the president of the Republic and I am going to him to solicit that it dissolves the Parliament. It is going to be a day very loaded. Dile to Rajiv that I will speak tonight by the radio.

In effect, that same night went to the nation to announce that it advanced to the general elections a year. Sonia listened to it from the house kitchen: "The time is not going to hope to us - Indira with certain apocalyptic tone said. The million people who request food, lodging and work have haste by which we do something. The power in a democracy has the town. For that reason we went to him to request a new mandate to him." Just a short time after the announcement, a journalist of Newsweek asked Indira which would be the great subject of the campaign. Without doubting it, Indira responded: "The subject I am."

During the ten following weeks, as soon as it appeared by house, and if for it were to change of clothes and to return to leave. Sometimes that happened to the one of the dawn, and when hearing it, Sonia it awoke, arranged to help it to look for sari or to do a tea to him. It notified to him of the boy, and Indira spoke to him of the campaign. It was animated: "I like to be with people, with the town. The fatigue goes away to me when I am with them - it said while both dismissed the day. Sabes, Sonia? I do not see them like mass, I see them like many together individuals..." She was contented because the great alliance that agglutinated opposite parties - from parties of right to Socialists and who were their adversaries, had committed the error to choose eslogan that it reflected his deeper desire: "We end Indira."

- I have proposed another one eslogan: "Acabemos with the poverty" You do not think that it has more feeling?

Sonia agreed. Indira continued, in low voice not to wake up to the boy.

- That phrase gives to our party as opposed to the moral reason and an image of progress to a reactionary alliance. After all, the poor men are the great majority of the electorate...

- They will see You like its rescuer...

- Hopefully.

The campaign that made during the months of January and February of 1971 was very intense. Having frugales habits - as soon as it ate and it slept very little helped him in his effort. More than thirteen million people they attended his meetings and other seven million received it to both sides of the highways, according to official statistics. "In the forty and three days that I had to my disposition - Dorothy Norman- wrote to her friend crossed more than sixty thousand kilometers and spoke in about three hundred meetings. He was wonderful to see the light in the eyes of people." Still more wonderful it was to verify that, except in certain areas populated by untouchable and tribal communities, the type of poverty that existed twenty ago years no longer occurred. Deformations atrocious like long ago, nor young with bellies swollen by the undernourishment were not seen. "Perhaps a ceiling and a work do not have all, but people seem healthy. To the children the eyes shine to them", told Dorothy.

That one was its great pride, authenticated by the statistics. In five years, the annual production of wheat and rice had been duplicated.

“For the first time, I do not have the impression that the economy depends exclusively on the success or the failure of the monsoons”, had written a British journalist who traveled regularly to India. The Indian mass media, the majority into the hands of the opposition, did not speak of this, but the town yes pronounced itself, in the greater electoral call to date in the world.

The night of the results, the whole family was reunited in house. Sonia had been in charge of which there were candies and flowers in all the corners. The house was illuminated by outside, and in the interior the atmosphere era of contained enthusiasm. As the Electoral Commission shelled numbers and results, the euphoria went away untying. Two hundred seventy and five million had voted in this fifth call from independence. No individual had had to walk more than two kilometers to deposit its problem. Almost two million volunteers had acted of electoral agents. Sixty and six attempts of fraud had been entered, an insignificant number in a so enormous country. The tendency of the results was clear: the party of Indira won in all the circumscriptions. They began to arrive at house cars without stopping. A similar victory came accompanied from an inescapable cut of flatterers. People that did not doubt in crouching itself and touching the feet to him, way traditional to salute that the Nehru always saw as a servility sample when those that did it were of well off class. Their ministers, such who spoke to their backs on a military coup, were first in arriving and postrar themselves. Sonia learned to recognize these melifluos whereas they changed of jacket according to the political temperature. In that time its obsession was born to identify them and to maintain them to ray, an obsession that would never leave it. Also sincere friends came to congratulate to Indira, that entered and left its stuffed study of seated colleagues of the party in the ground with the crossed legs. Another room, near the entrance, was seen soon invaded of people. The telephones sounded without truce. The dogs also participated in the general excitation and they were strained between the legs of the visitors whom Sonia took care of with the small Rahul in arms. Indira tried to disguise its rejoicing, but in truth it had obtained for its new mandate a comfortable majority of two thirds. A victory that turned it more powerful prime minister from independence. In the venerated person more, more feared, more wanted and in certain atmospheres, the most hated.

But also it was a victory for India. The elections demonstrated to be a genuine unificadora force of the nation, over the differences and the diversity. The democracy was confirmed like the new religion of this so old country and so populated with Gods, a religion that helped to clear the way towards the future.

It did not have long Indira time to savor its triumph. Fifteen days after the announcement of its phenomenal victory, the Pakistani army mounted a ferocious attack against the bengalíes citizens of Eastern Pakistan. The images in the television showed a human tide, composed by million refugees, in their majority old women, children and, who crossed the border looking for refuge in the India province of western Bengal, already of

in case very populated, and whose capital it was Calcuta. Neither Sonia, nor Rajiv nor Sanjay lost an informative one. That tide of refugees remembered the tragic events of the Partition. They knew that Indira was as opposed to a crisis of enormous proportions. How a poor country as India can welcome so many refugees? , they were asked distressed. Will be necessary to take part in Eastern Pakistan to stop the flow from which they arrive? What will make mother?

- Is a civil war? - Sonia asked. They explained to him that it seemed it because it happened within a same country, Pakistan, but was a country made up of two separated organizations by more than three thousand kilometers of Indian territory, product of the partition of the subcontinent according to doubtful religious and communal criteria when the independence of the English. In fact, there was no real unit between those two nations, whose western part finished declaring the war to the Eastern one. The inhabitants of western Pakistan spoke urdu and were more well high and of clear skin. Those of Eastern Pakistan were low, of dark skin and spoke bengalí. The only thing that shared was the Islam, but this was not sufficient base to lay the foundations a nation. Mainly because, in spite of being the the most populated Eastern part, most of the resources - health, education, electricity were systematically off the track to the western part. Those of the west exploded blatantly to those of the east, that demanded the autonomy.

In resistance with India, where the democracy had survived political disturbances, hambrunas and war, Pakistan had been thirteen years of military regime. His president, general Yahya Khan, known by his liking the alcohol, had promised to celebrate the first free plebiscito in the history of the country in December of 1970. It could not anticipate the consequences of those elections that opened to the contradictions and the fragility of the well-known political organization like Pakistan. In the west Zulfikar won Ali Bhutto, a lawyer educated in England that had put in policy when returning to its country and that was leader of the PPP (Started off of the Town of Pakistan). In the east it devastated a party led by a charismatic personage, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, friend and ally of Indira, that had campaigned denouncing the colonialismo exerted by western Pakistan on the Eastern part. It gained a so overwhelming victory that it obtained the majority in the National Assembly of Pakistan. According to the logic of the results it must be named prime minister. But the general in the power did not have intention of which the Eastern part assumed the political power. Before the movement of civil disobedience that sent Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in all Eastern Pakistan, summoning an indefinite general strike, Yahya dictator Khan decided to repress the rebellion by the force. Suddenly and without previous warning, it sent forty thousand soldiers of western Pakistan to invade the Eastern part. The press news spoke of a ruthless and brutal attack. Many of the officials, boasting itself of which they were going to dedicate itself to improve the genes of the bengalíes children, violated to thousands of women, they sacked and they burned houses and

businesses and they assassinated to thousands of innocents. Any suspect of dissidence was persecuted and eliminated, specially if they were Hindu: students, professors of university, writers, journalists, professionals and intellectuals, nobody escaped to the terror of those high , strong soldiers and supplied well that degollaban without mercy. Not even the children escaped to the brutality: those that had luck were assassinated next to their parents, but other thousands would have to pass the rest of their lives without eyes or with members horribly amputated. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested and transferred western Pakistan, where it was jailed.

- Vas to declare the war, mother? - Sanjay at the time of the supper asked to him, like that asks if it were going away to go of trip or purchases.

- If nonencounter another way to fix the problem, I do not have left more remedy. Of all ways, tomorrow I will speak with general Manekshaw.

Indira knew that if the Pakistani dictator had acted with as much security, was because it counted on the endorsement of his main ally, the United States. The other ally was Chinese, that had declared the war to the India in 1962, and which in a lightning attack it had annexed border territories in the Himalayas. That had been a humiliation for India, and a mortal blow to the old idea of Nehru of the solidarity of the nations nonaligned. Also it had marked the principle of the aim of Nehru. Its health began to decay, and more of an observer it attributed its death to the affliction that produced the attack to him of the neighbors of the north.

- Sabes the one that is happening in Eastern Pakistan? - Sam Manekshaw asked to him to Indira his old friend, Army Commander-in-Chief, nothing else to arrive at a meeting of his government.

- Yes, there are slaughters - the military man responded.

- Telegrams of the border states rain to Us - Indira- continued. They say that the refugees do not stop to arrive. Sam, is necessary to stop the flow as she is, we do not have resources to take care of more people. If it is necessary to enter Eastern Pakistan, hazlo. Beam which is, but detenlos.

- You know that that means the war.

- It does not matter to me that there is war - settled prime minister.

The general happened to explain the dangers to him of an invasion. Monzónicas rains were on the verge of unloading, the transport of troops would have to be done using the highways because the fields would be flooded. The Air Force could not act in those circumstances. It said frankly to him that in that situation they could not win a war.

- The harvest has begun in Punjab and Haryana - the prudent general added. If the country goes to the war in season of harvest, I will need all the highways available, and that is going to cause problems in the food distribution, and perhaps hambrunas. Soon it is the problem of China. The passages of the Himalayas will be opened within few days... Will

remain with the crossed arms, they who are allied of Pakistan? What we do if they give an ultimatum us?

- They will not do it - Indira- said. I inform to him that we are on the verge of signing a pact of collaboration and mutual defense with the Soviet Union. A pact for next the twenty years.

So much was the rage of Indira - the military man remembered who its face went away blushing. It decided to interrupt the meeting and to resume it in the evening. The ministers left the room, but Indira asked Sam who remained. When they were single, the military man felt in the obligation to say to him:

- My to have it is to tell the truth him, lady. But to the light of everything what I have exposed, if it wants that present my resignation, I am arranged to do it.

- No, Sam Adelante. I have total confidence in you.

As of that moment, prime minister and the Commander-in-Chief worked in perfect syntony. Indira never allowed that nothing or nobody interfered among them. Sam had convinced to him that the military option would have to be the last one, and only if they were themselves forced it. The strategy now was the one to gain time, by the minus until the winter returned to the Himalayas and congealed the mountain passages , indispensable requirement so that the Chinese did not have the temptation to put in the conflict.

The tide of refugees was unstoppable. Up to one hundred fifty thousands crossed the border every day. They arrived in trucks, cars of oxen, rickshaws and on foot. Sonia saw Indira affected the return of a trip very that had done to Calcuta.

- I have visited the campings under a torrential rain - it counted in house, sitting to the table but without proving mouthful because the appetite had been cut to him. It thought that after the experience of the fields of refugees during the Partition, which would be prepared for was going to see. But no. I have seen men and women like small sticks, skeletal, old children transported in the backs of its children who walked through flooded fields... They remained standing up during hours in the mud because there was no dry place where to seat. My companions waited for words mine, but so it was affected that I could not speak.

Eight weeks, three million and means of refugees had entered India. Although the majority was Hindu, also were Muslims, Buddhist, Christian... People of all the social phantom and all the ages. It cost what cost - repeated Indira-, would not leave its luck to them. She and their advisors dedicated themselves meticulously to plan the organization of the fields of refugees. He wanted that his government turned upside down in lodging them, feeding them and to protect them of the epidemics. If again it had to go to request money by the world to assume that cost, were arranged to do it.

To Sonia the look scared a little to him that took the events, but it did not let it see. It had a blind faith in its mother-in-law. The press insisted

on which the atrocities did not stop and that the flow of refugees did not diminish either. Where will lead all this? , they were asked in house, patches in front of the television set at the time of the news. Throughout, oía a same outcry so that the government sent to the army. But in spite of the frenetic calls, Indira maintained the blood cold. As always in time of crisis, it remained control of the situation altogether. The familiar atmosphere in its Nueva house Delhi helped it to relax. To see grow to its Rahul grandson was for her a balsam. The decision making, mainly when it affected one sixth part of the humanity, could easily become a mental torture. To stay gracious and calm was fundamental, for her, the country and the world. In that, it found in Sonia a valuable aid. "Her daughter is a jewel", wrote to him to Paola. In public, it did not stop to do to him fulfilled. To a veteran journalist it said to him: "She is simply a wonderful woman, a perfect wife, a perfect daughter-in-law, a wonderful mother and a fabulous housewife. And the incredible thing of all this is that it is more India than any girl India" A day, all the family attended the projection of a documentary one that a friend of Indira, the journalist Gita Mehta, had made on the refugees and who were going to be spread in the United States. Sonia was affected by the images deeply. The documentary one showed and entrevistaba women who the Pakistani soldiers had maintained captive in trenches. One of them, of about fifteen years, must be violated two hundred times. They did not leave tears to him, was in state of catatónico shock. Also old and young were seen images of returning their destroyed homes, images of burned and devastated fields. When finishing the projection, Sonia realized of which Indira cried.

## 13

Indira was arranged to burn all the cartridges to avoid a war, or at least to delay it. It thought that only the intervention of the rest of the world could be able a Pacific agreement to stop the drain. The world-wide press became echo of the committed atrocities in which they began to call Bangladesh. The publishing commentaries were critical with the support that president Nixon gave the Pakistanis. The North American elite seemed united in its fort condemns to general Yahya Khan. In France, André Malraux proposed to give arms to the resistance of Bangladesh. The ex-Beatle George Harrison and the Indian teacher of sitar Shankar Rabbi organized a gigantic concert to collect bottoms for the refugees. Allen Ginsberg, the poet whom Indira had listened in London when it went to inaugurate the exhibition on his father, sang the suffering of the fields.

It did not have left to Indira another resource that to leave tour by the United States and Europe, being tried to galvanize to world-wide the public opinion.

- If in the West people saw the images of the documentary one that we saw the other day - she said to him to Sonia- I am sure that they would be mobilized.

It had the intention to spend several months traveling through the world. One went away with the certainty that the domestic front well was taken care of, which provided to him very needed tranquillity spirit. Thus it confessed it to an Arab journalist in one of its scales: "I do not have any anxiety by the family when Sonia is in house." Before starting off, her daughter-in-law had communicated him another happy news: she was again pregnant woman, and this time it did not seem that it had to remain other nine months in bed.

The tour began bad; its encounter with Nixon was sounded fiasco. Decidedly, Indira accumulated bad experiences with the North American presidents who considered too much izquierda, although Nixon seemed one hundred times worse to him than the gross one of Johnson. The discussions were dyed of mutual distrust and antipathy. Indira and Nixon were seated in armchairs with orejas to each side of the chimney of the oval office of the White House while their advisor and Kissinger, like individual assistants in a duel, listened seated sofas on the brink of madness the dialogue of their heads. Nixon refused to recognize the dimensions of the human tragedy that was knocking down Eastern Pakistan. One also refused to accept the suggestion of Indira to convince to general Yahya Khan so that it released to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and it established direct negotiations with him and their party, the only serious possibility to stop the conflict. Nixon did not take pity itself of the luck of the refugees nor of the one of Sheikh. The words of Indira seemed to slip to him. "It was a dialogue of deaf people", declared Kissinger when coming out. Soon it commentd out of which Nixon had said things "that were not reproducibles". Years later, when the documents of that time were declassified, he knew that Nixon based all his policy on that corner of Asia



in his affection personal by dictator Yahya Khan - "a decent and reasonable man" - whose loyalty to the United States had to be compensated helping him to repress the rebellion of Eastern Pakistan, and his aversion towards the Indians - "those bastards" - as she called them. Both were sure that they would not go to the war. They were poor until for that, thought.

To the following day, Nixon made wait for to Indira forty and five minutes in the waiting room of the oval office. Prime minister was full of contained wrath when they seated to speak. It was the head of a country of poor people, but of a great democratic nation with an enormous population and a millenarian civilization, and a similar treatment was not deserved. It faces had a personage who did not seem human, a man who, according to his advisor, "lacked moral principles". And a Kissinger that was "ególatra that was believed Metternich". So that to waste more time with that type of interlocutors? The luck of the refugees and the financial load that had to support to India had left them cold. "It had been an error to dribble on which the old witch told us", there was this deprived Nixon in to its advisor. They were clear allies of Pakistan, and Indira realized of which that was not going to change it she in that visit. So that in this second encounter, Indira gave back his grosería to him with subtility. It did not make any reference to the problem with Pakistan, as if the south of Asia was the most pacific region of the world and, in its place, asked on Vietnam and American foreign policy in other parts of the planet. Nixon took it like an insult. "That old vixen", therefore called it in private.

In spite of the tightened thing of its agenda, Indira obtained a pair in free afternoons for its private activities. Her friend Dorothy Norman found it exhausted. The tension of the meetings with Nixon and the continuous trips, the effort to have to control themselves always and to stay reasonable front to the provocation began to leave their track in the face of Indira. Dorothy had bought tickets to attend a representation of the New York City Ballet of a work of Stravinsky coreografiada by Balanchine, which it could more like its friend. At the last moment, Indira said to him that it could not go. "It seemed sad and nervous", would remember Dorothy, who did not understand what she happened to him. Indira tried to explain itself:

- I cannot, Dorothy. He will be too pretty. I will not be able to support it.

It was to point to lie down to cry. Dorothy remained worried, but on the following day she noticed alleviated who Indira "had restored its balance".

In the other countries, Indira ran into with he himself message. They requested to him that it had patience, that accepted the presence of observers of the UN and that found a solution pacific. "The greater problem with the one than I am - it said to the press is not the confrontation in the border, but the constant effort of the people of other countries in turning aside the attention on which it is the basic question." In the English television, one was like one prime minister the height of the circumstances. There was lost weight and in its factions they appeared characteristics of its

father, he himself urgent air, of great dignity, and a fire glance. When the journalist spoke to him of the necessity of India to be patient, Indira exploded: "Patience? Patience so that it follows the massacre? So that they continue the violations? When Hitler was attacking to everybody... you remained without doing nothing? Dejasteis killed all the Jews? How controls a similar exodus? If the international community had recognized the situation, the problem would already have been solved." It was not only to the journalist to whom went, but to all the world-wide leaders who ignored it.

When it returned to India, one found out that the number of refugees had ascended to ten million. Now it was convinced that the war was inevitable, but did not say anything in house. Omitting the tensions of the trips and of which it was approached, it told them that it had been able to scratch time to attend the Fidelío opera in Vienna where also it had seen a spectacle that it had liked much, the school of Spanish equitación. In Paris, it had had supper in house of friends where it had known Joan Watched and a called politician François Mitterrand who had caused very good impression to him. It seemed that it returned of a trip of pleasing instead of an exhausting and frustrating international tour. Pero Rajiv and Sonia were not let deceive. They perfectly knew the tension level that it was supporting and in the end Indira could not hide the truth to them: there would be war. To Sanjay it did not seem to affect the news to him, but Rajiv and Sonia were worried. The small Rahul moaned in its cradle.

- You will have acostumbraros to leave less and to live surrounded by greater protection, by the minus while all this lasts - Indira-said. The whole country demands a fast and effective action. The time finishes.

That night, general Sam Manekshaw came his friend, and Sonia and Rajiv could hear fragments of the conversation in which the general spoke of the preparations of the army, of the operational bases that had mounted inside Bangladesh and of how had protected the border of western Pakistan with defense units.

- I am afraid that there is to go to the war, Sam - they heard say to Indira.

- If we go, it already must be, taking advantage of the Full Moon of the 4 December. That day, we can attack Dacca.

Indira remained pensativa a little while. It never thought that it would someday be called on to him to initiate a war. But the world was become lost in thought of the problem and the situation became untenable, did not have more remedy than to take the subject in its own hands. One remembered words that his father said to him to a day: "I know the owner of your own life, your present and your future, consúltame if you need it, but decides you." It could not consult to him, but it could decide. It returned the head towards its old friend and it said to him:

- Ahead, Sam

In house, it tried not to let traslucir its preoccupation. In fact, all delivered the same attack. They feared for Sonia, who was in advanced state of gestation. The Nehru was customary to disguise their feelings when the thing was turned. In that, they were very British. And if they went away to Italy one season? The suggestion had come from a friend, but Sonia misestimated it. It did not have intention to leave to single Indira in that critical moment. That did not correspond with its concept of loyalty. Sonia knew his mother-in-law sufficiently well to guess that now more than ever she needed the heat and the proximity his. In addition, as much she corno Rajiv had confidence in the life, the future, in Indira and India, and it was never happened to think to them about the consequences in case of defeat. That eventuality simply was not contemplated.

What they did went to surround to Indira of affection, without doing too many questions and trying not to oppress it more than what was. They were very affectionate with her and when they saw it specially worried, Rajiv gave a long hug him.

Indira traveled to Calcuta the 3 of December of 1971, a day before the anticipated attack. In the great esplanade in center of which it was the capital of the British empire, one went to a means multitude million people: "India wants La Paz, but if the war explodes we are prepared to fight, because it is as much question of our ideals as of our security..." Just when she pronounced these words, an assistant raised podio and she passed a note to him: "Pakistani Huntings have bombed nine air bases ours in the northwest, the north and the west, including those of Amritsar, Agra and Srinagar in Kashmir." Indira finished its speech hastily, without announcing what finished reading. Nothing else to leave the meeting said to him to its assistant: " Thanks to God, have attacked they" The third war Hindu-Pakistani had exploded. And Pakistan was the aggressor.

That night, Indira flew of Nueva return Delhi, and its airplane was escorted by Indian huntings. The danger that existed the Pakistani Air Force located the airplane and demolished it. Pero Indira did not seem affected by the acceleration of the events. On the contrary, it took of its purse a book of Thor Heyerdal on the expedition of the Ra and was reading the flight throughout. Don't mention it it served already to put itself nervous: the luck was thrown. When it landed, the capital was sunk in the most complete dark, fruit of the blackout that had ordered the military administrations. Indira went directly to its office of South Block where, in the room of maps, it was informed into the damages inflicted by Pakistani aviation. Later one met with members of the opposition to inform to them into which it had issued orders so that the Indian army invaded Bangladesh. They described it "calm, calm and trusted". It was more of midnight when one went to the nation by radio to announce the Pakistani aggression and to warn on the great dangers that threatened that region of the world. That day did not sleep in house. The scaling of the military situation remained to all the night monitorizando. To the following morning, in the Parliament, it announced

the representatives of the town who had to prepare themselves for one long fight.

Sonia, to point to give light when the conflict exploded, more was worried about the childbirth that by a war that she perceived distant, in spite of to have had to spend the last nights in the dark by the blackout. If it felt anguish, at no moment it demonstrated it. Aside from an additional detent of the army protecting the house and of which now general Sam Manekshaw came to have breakfast all the mornings to inform to prime minister on the development of the conflict, the life ran with normality. To Sonia it liked to serve the tea to the general, a likeable and very courteous man, known by its liking the British military traditions. Every day, nothing else to rise to five and the average one, it liked to take a drink from whiskey, to listen to the news in the BBC and to take care of a little the garden before going to work. He himself calm and safe behavior of Indira, that tranquillity to all those inspired that surrounded - colleagues, the military, also welded repelled in house.

The sixth day, Sam arrived with the serious semblante. Sonia heard say to him that several units of their army had stagnated in bogs near Dacca, the capital of Bangladesh. They were losing crucial hours. The general informed to Indira of the precise number of losses and demolished airplanes. It seemed affected very. She made questions, always calmed and positive. "Sam, you cannot gain all the days", said to him as a consolation. Sonia saw them leave to the porch. There was no the minimum resquicio of anxiety in the face of Indira while it gave the hand to the Commander-in-Chief. General Manekshaw said that the anger of Indira was an inspiration for all. Sonia could verify it when she listened, of the other side of the iron door, to people to send victory shouts.

Not even that day let Indira be interested in the subjects of the family. When it returned to house after an exhausting day in the Parliament and its office of South Block, it was locked in with Usha to dissolve questions that deserved the same importance to him that those that had discussed during the day: how to organize the national celebration of the Day of the Republic without knowing the result the war, for example, or what to give to Sonia the 9 of December, day of its birthday, and to elaborate a list of gifts for next Christmases.

Perhaps the procession went on the inside and Indira was not so safe of itself as it wanted to pretend because at that time it began to ask for the services of astrologers and quirománticos. That night arrived its professor from yoga, a called gurú Dhirendra Brahmachari, good looking, with long beard and hair, always dressed in one kurta orange and footwear with sandals. Short while in a room with her was locked in length. Nine, while Usha, Rajiv and Sonia saw the news in the television on the troops flooded Indians, Indira entered the hall, with the a little anxious semblante. It finished dismissing the visitor. "It thinks that we are going to pass it bad until February", it said something insane.

The 6 of December, while the Indian army left the bog and it approached Dacca, Indira announced in the Parliament the official recognition of the new nation of Bangladesh. A sonorous ovación received its words. From all parts it received an unconditional support. The opposition and all the sectors of the society were united like a fragmentation hand grenade under their leadership. The town began to identify it with Durga, the goddess of the war that rides on a tiger and that overcame the demons after these had expelled the Gods from the sky.

Sonia would not be arranged to forget that 9 December in that she turned twenty-five years with a belly of eight months. Indira called mid-morning to saying that it would not attend the familiar food of celebration because a serious subject had arisen . Very serious it had to be so that Indira was not present in the birthday of its daughter-in-law, thought those that knew it. The news, that it came from the United States, caused that the world shook. Nixon had decided to dispatch to the Seventh Fleet to the bay of Bengal, headed by the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise. All a provocation that could trigger a world war.

While friends in private festejaban the birthday of Sonia of their house, Indira, excited, made an incendiary speech in the esplanade of Lila Ram in Nueva Delhi, in front of a multitude of hundreds of thousands of people. Indian huntings flew over the place to prevent any attack surprise with the Pakistani Aerial Force. Indira had disregarded the advice of its advisers of security to speak by the radio instead of doing it in public. He was brave; it seemed that nothing gave fear him.

At night, one met with general Manekshaw and his advisor. Without intimidating itself by the American provocation, Indira confirmed its decision to follow with the war. It thought that the gesture of Nixon was a light because the Americans would not be as crazy as to open another front in Asia after the one of Vietnam. But also it was certain that of a type as Nixon could be expected everything. It was turned towards general Manekshaw:

- Sam, now is imperative to capture Dacca before the arrival of the Seventh Fleet waters Indians - she said to him, You create It feasible?

- Yes - the military man without dudarlo- responded, unless the Chinese take part.

The advisor of Indira took the word:

- They are annoying with the situation, but they have not sent any direct threat - it said.

- Then - it continued Indira- I will command same to the minister of Outer Subjects to Moscow tomorrow to activate the treaty that we have with the Soviets and to assure its support to us in case an American or Chinese attack. My opinion, I repeat it, is that we must follow with the war. You agree?

Both responded with an affirmative gesture.

The visit of the minister of Outer Subjects Indian served so that the Russians dispatched a fleet to the bay of Bengal that in few days

followed the wake of the American boats. The situation had reached a tactically important point. From the White House, Nixon mounted furious attacks against the "India aggression". Its administration announced the suppression of the economic and military aid to India, but it continued sending war material to Pakistan, something that was denounced by the own North American press. Indira wrote a sharp letter to him: "This war had been able to avoid if the nations, the specially United States, had used their influence, its power and its authority to find a solution political. You, like president of the United States and representative of the will, the aspirations and the idealismo of the great North American town, at least hágame to know where exactly we have been mistaken so that their representatives and their spokesman deal to us with a so hard language." Indira spent the day doubting on if it had to send the letter or no. At night, it decided to send it. The North American would be an additional right to detest it still more.

The 13 of December, when its army was to the doors of Dacca, general Manekshaw sent an ultimatum to his homologous Pakistani in whom he gave three days him to surrender. To five of afternoon of day 16, Indira was more being interviewed by a reporter of the Swedish television interested in knowing what clothes it liked to put themselves and how it had been his childhood that in the course of the war , when suddenly it sounded the telephone. It was Manekshaw: "Lady, we have won to them. They finish surrendering. Dacca has fallen." Indira closed the eyes and tightened the fists.

- Thanks, Sam - it said to him.

Its interview finished hastily and it went to the Parliament. Before the assembly of expectant deputies, it began saying: "Dacca is today the free capital of a free country... " But an intense ovación mixed with joy shouts drowned the rest of its speech. " We have won! ", they vociferated until the deputies of the opposition. " Aplastemos to the enemy for always! ", they said others. " Long life to Indira Gandhi! ", the town cried out.

Later one met with the cupola of the army. The balance for the Indians was of forty and two destroyed airplanes and eighty and tanks; the Pakistanis were lost eighty and six airplanes and two hundred twenty-six tanks. The greater disparity resided in the number of prisoners. The Pakistanis had obtained a handful of prisoners in the combats in the west. India was with ninety and four thousand Pakistani prisoners. Indira was dedicated to calm the spirits of its generals, who were not in agreement with the unilateral cease-fire that she protested. The High Command became echo of a great part of the public opinion, that it wanted to continue collecting warlike victories "until the total defeat of the enemy". Pero Indira was pragmatic: "We must stop to us once reached our objectives, we do not give neither to China nor to the United States excuses to take part. It is necessary to give back the prisoners and to settle the conflict already." The military cleared one's throat, except Sam, who listened imperturbable, their long nose aiming at the interlocutors according to were speaking. Indira explained that its position was based on a political appreciation of the

situation and that spoke with the authority that gave the endorsement him of a unanimous cabinet. A time had finished, the military rose, greeted and said that they would carry out the instructions of the government. "This is something that had not been able to happen in many countries, and not only of the Third World", Indira would remember.

The strategy of Indira to gain time, their exquisite sense of the opportunity and the moment, the mutual understanding that maintained with general Manekshaw, their almost maternal way to harangue the troops was qualities unanimously recognized by all the sectors of the society. The international press spoke of her in huge terms. The Durga goddess had become the "Empress of India".

Indira had opened the light of Nixon. Indeed, the North Americans could not run to save to their ally the dictation! "Pakistani because they could not allow itself to open a new front in Asia. Nixon was furious with the outcome of the war. "We have been too soft with that damn woman - it said to him to Kissinger-. Sigh that to do that to them to the Pakistanis when we had warned that old vixen to him that did not put." Kissinger was irritated with itself by to have underestimated the military power of the Indians. "The Indians are so bad pilots who not even know to make take off their airplanes", he had commented its head when the visit of Indira. A commentary that to Rajiv had not made him any grace. But the opinion of the North American town, and the one of its press, it differed of the one of its leaders. In an opinion survey, Indira Gandhi was classified like the admired person more of the world.

The decisive action of Indira saved the life to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, that had been condemned until death in Pakistan. One of the conditions of the armistice agreement was the immediate liberation of the leader of the new Bangladesh. The 11 of January of 1972, Rahman made the stop at the airport Palam de Nueva Delhi, of passage towards Dacca. It came to thank to Indira and both pronounced individual full speeches of emotion: "Its body was locked up, but nobody could lock up its spirit, who continued inspiring the town of Bangladesh... ", she said. "Indira Gandhi is not only one leader of a country, is a leader of the humanity", declared Sheikh Mujibur. It was a little while of intense euphoria later of the accumulated tension of the last months.

In the days and the following weeks, to thousand of children born in India its parents they put the name to them of Indira. One of them, nevertheless, been born a day later of the triunfal visit of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Nueva Delhi, was not called thus. Their parents, Sonia and Rajiv Gandhi, put the name to him of Priyanka, that in sánscrito means "pleasant at sight".

ACT II

**THE EXTERMINATING ANGEL**

*What can the river against the fire, the night against the sun, the  
darknesses against the moon?  
Sánscrito aphorism*



Usha called by telephone to Indira, that was of tour in the state of Bihar, to announce good the new one to him. Year and means after the birth of Rahul, the family was proud with this new member. Prime minister was radiating. What plus could request? He was the unquestionable leader of the country, his position was inatacable' and above the life did the gift to him of a granddaughter, like a coronation. Arranged to mimar it much, one always stayed to as much of his necessities and, faithful to his style, sent messages to Sonia from the most unsuspected places with questions of the type: how has passed the night the girl? or continues having Rahul many snots? That moment of rejoicing remembered another equal one to him of intense, when it had decided to marry with Firoz. "I very feel a calm happiness within me who nothing or nobody can rob to me", she had written to him to its father. Nehru had responded from the jail, warming up the enthusiasm to him of his daughter from the height of his years and their experience: "The happiness is something rather fleeting, to feel made is perhaps a more lasting feeling." Nehru knew, and Indira already had learned it, that the happiness is as fragile as finest of porcelains. More bond to preserve it and to enjoy it while it lasts, because it is possible to be broken - or they can rob it.

Indira felt certainly made, and in the heat of possession of its faculties. It was had customary to the power, not reason why it derived from him in material terms, because their little necessities widely were covered and lacked ambition in that sense, but by the feeling of fullness that it provided to him. The feeling of which he was faithful to his destiny by the fact to belong to the family in whom it was born. The intimate conviction of which it fulfilled with his to have, that did not appear of a personal election, but of the moral inheritance that had received from its father, and this one of his. The messianic sense that Nehru had instilado him had finished piercing in more deep of its spirit.

But also Indira had learned that the power, the fame and the popularity do not last eternally. How to continue ascending when it has been arrived at the top? Or is that, once in the stop, it is only possible to be lowered? They were considerations that assaulted it at difficult moments, more and more numerous. "I feel like prisoner - Dorothy wrote to him to her friend Norman in June of 1973 - by the security equipment , that that thinks it can disguise its incompetencia with surrounding me by more and more people, but mainly because I realize from which I have arrived at a end, of which no longer it is possible to be grown more in this direction." In fact, it would have been concentrated exclusively in the subjects of international policy if it had been able, because they were those that really it liked. One felt with statesman soul: the great questions and the great challenges inspired it. It had signed an agreement with Bhutto that guaranteed one long peace with Pakistan; it wanted to solve the contentious one of Kashmir, the country of its ancestors; it looked for to standardize the relations with the Chinese. However, the internal policy, rifirrafes between parties, the

treasons, the forced alliances, the noise of the public life India crushed it. "There is days normal for one prime minister of India - no oía to say Sonia to him, while it served the tea to Indira and its Pupul- friend. Perhaps in a good day, there are two or three very urgent problems. Perhaps in a bad day, there is a dozen. After a time, you are able to live with it, although never you are accustomed absolutely. If it beams, then are better than you leave the position. Prime minister must be always a little to misfortune, always looking for a balance."

Personal level, the Durga goddess continued living to its austere way. Hardly it took jewels, reflection of its frugal personality His saris more appraised were those than his father in the jail had woven. It nevertheless had a pretty collection that used of "political" way, in the sense that one put according to the place and the population that thought to visit. There were them of all parts of the subcontinent. Also there were in its locker regional costumes that Lucia when it went of tour by the territories of the northeast, to make clear that sari was not the only article that took the women in India.

Sonia learned to recognize all that clothes and she helped it to choose it before each trip. During the conflict of Bangladesh, Indira one had inclined by the red one, as if the war had heightened its sensitivity to that color, that traditionally was striped to the widows. Indira had confessed during that time that outside saw everything it as if through a red filter and that that color had accompanied to him throughout all the war. But later it returned to its tastes from always, that is to say, all the colors except malva and the violet. It preferred the luminous tones to the tones pie, very specially the green one. Like it was difficult her to go of stores, Sonia and Usha approached saris to him house. Quickly Indira chose those that it liked. It knew to take them with style, and so elegant Lucia in simple sari of cotton woven by hand like in one recharged, done with silk of Benarés.

Sonia had become the indispensable presence in that house. Indira wanted it like the daughter whom it had not had. Now which there were more receptions and suppers of foreign dignitaries, Sonia assumed with his mother-in-law the role that Indira had when it lived in Teen Murti House with his father. She was very conscientious at the time of choosing the menus, in which meat of cow nor of pig was never included. The Hindu vegetarians did not eat milky eggs but, and strictest, the veganos, did not admit anything animal. Also it prepared halal food Muslim them and to kosher for the Jews. To take care of of which everything was in perfect order was not easy task, mainly when they came foreign. It was difficult to obtain products indispensable for a good western menu, even in the economato of the North American embassy. Sonia learned to plan the meals by far touch, mixing Indian and European plates according to the availability of the ingredients. The serious thing is that again there was basic food shortage. After six years of abundant monsoons, rains had returned to fail. The dust cloud that asphyxiated Nueva Delhi was so dense that Sonia did not move without his inhalant. It saw the disorder in the streets from the interior of its white Ambassador with black crystals. By anywhere there was

cut manifestations, routes, people who protested. “ Indira does not end the poverty! - reference said to a man armed of a megaphone in front of a small multitude in a Nueva crossing Delhi, doing to eslogan electoral of Indira-, but that is ending the hunger poor men killing to us ” The victory had not pardoned the winner, and India was wounded. The attention to the refugees had drained the barns of the country. The coffers of the State were to zero. World-wide the oil crisis had shot the price of the crude one and the inflation was desbocada. If before Sonia took twenty minutes in arriving at Connaught Place, now she had to anticipate more of the double by the returns that was to give, such era the disorder in the streets. The purchase for luxury banquets was paradoxical to have to cross the city doing while the poor men passed hunger in the streets. That one was a reality to which Sonia was not accustomed. From return to house, it controlled that each light bulb worked, and that the faucets of the bathrooms did not drip. One made sure that the high guests would have appropriate chairs and that the very short ones could count on reposapiés.

When it was in house, whenever Indira could continued using its small study in veranda attached its dormitory, although it had a great office in Akbar Road, to about fifty meters of distance. But within house, it felt near the presence of his, could listen to trajín domestic, it saw happen to Sonia with the baby in arms and that did the sweetest life to him. For her, the familiar work, leisure and duties were not bulkhead activities, but that flowed in the others. It rendered more when it was dedicated at the same time to several things. “The more beams, the more you can do” was its Maxima favorite. Their faculties worked simultaneously, perhaps and that was the secret of which it could much more dispatch work that normal people. Sonia observed that for their mother-in-law the work and the rest were not separated periods. Which one was was to make something different, although it was nearly time, like reading, to fix branches of flowers, to order books or clothes, or to speak with the family. During the lunch, Indira sometimes was dedicated to complete crucigrama, which seemed strange with the amount of problems that watched it. “It helps Me to relax to me and to organize the ideas”, it said. In house it followed with the custom to leave notes: “Today there are lost a pretty photo - it left to writing to Rajiv a day him. This morning in Akbar Road, two periquitos put long time in the branch of a tree. Also there was a pair of woodpeckers fluttering without rest. »

Sonia learned much of her, by the affectionate relation that both had woven and that consolidated with time. The problems of Indira, that to a great extent were the problems of India, finished being discussed in house. It was not spoken as much of the day to day of the political life like of the great subjects: the severe economic crisis that had begun in 1972 and which it threatened becoming most serious of all, the sobrepoblación that asphyxiated the development of the country, the eternal tensions between religious communities, the occupation by chabolistas of lands public in all the cities or the effects of the natural disasters, ether to us companions of the existence of the man in Asia. The love that Indira felt by the level town

also infected Sonia, to that affected the paper of its mother-in-law like leader of the poor men, an echo of its adolescent dreams with heroic missionaries. In addition, it admired it, not as much by its successes in the political life, but because he was spontaneous and informal, totally devoid of pride. The Italian appreciated "her capacity to want and of they give". "For us, he was somebody that generously shared its ample knowledge, their calidez and its presence. When it went of trip, it wrote on its encounter and their experiences to us. When it was here, it guarded by all and each one of us." Indira was taken very in serious the small events from the day to day of its grandsons, like the first tooth or the first steps. The extraordinary, as old as humanity and nevertheless always new phenomenon astonished to him, of how a boy develops his knowledge of the outer world, with that endless sense of the adventure, that passion by the investigation of everything what he surrounds to him... "You will see that very quickly the young one happens through millenia of human history, and unconsciously, and partly consciously also, the history of its race will live within himself", his father had written him once, and had wanted to show the letter to him Sonia. To the Italian it affected to him simultaneously that in spite of all the pressure of the outer world that received Indira, this one followed sensible the spectacle, small and huge, to see grow to its grandsons.

In spite of which he was very pending of the well-being of his mother-in-law, Sonia maintained his life deprived with Rajiv. That there was a supper in the main dining room did not mean that they had to also attend they. Sometimes they did it, other no. They had their familiar life very organized, as stable as it was it his relation. "They were always wanted much; I have never seen an equal pair of united from the day in which they were known", would say Christian, the friend who had presented/displayed to them in Cambridge. "Our marriage worked always very well, from the first moment. Sonia was always very comprehensive", confessed Rajiv, that had promoted pilot and now it flew an English airplane, Avro HS-748, another worthy successor of the famous DC-3 Dakota. Between its colleagues of the airline, it was had to him by a good professional, although sometimes they took the too meticulous hair him for being with the flight plans, the technical problems and the schedules. It did not support the shoddy work, but always position was arranged to become of a flight if for some reason a colleague please requested to him to replace to him. She was good comrade, frank and indifferent with the hierarchy.

## 15

About who was worried Indira was by his other son, Sanjay. "Rajiv has a work, but Sanjay does not have it and is put in an expensive company. It is looked much like me when it also had the same age - with its harshness, as much that gives to pain the suffering me that must support." Two years after to have been able the license of the government to make a native car, the company of Sanjay had not produced a single vehicle that could be commercialized. It had not needed aid, from the privileged position that the height of its mother provided to him. It had obtained that some politicians and businessmen, wishing to ingratiate itself with Indira, invested great sums of money in their company. They knew that in case of losing the investment political favors could protest. From head of government of state of Haryana, individual plump with glasses called Bansi Lal, that she looked for to approach the cupola of the power as she were, had obtained fifty hectares of agricultural earth to the outskirts of Delhi. "When huntings to the bull calf, are safe that the mother will follow to him", had declared with a primary logic Bansi Lal a friend. When the press opened that it was necessary "to reaccomodate" to more of a thousand of farmers raising the Maruti Factory, the Parliament reacted with virulence to which it called a new act of "flagrant nepotism". The obtained price was suspicious, and the location of lands, next to an old powder magazine of the army, broke the laws of the government that they prohibited to raise an industrial factory to less of a kilometer of a defense installation. But never it was possible to be proven that there was bribe. Indira stayed shut up, as if it was not with her, although his main advisor and man of confidence noticed on the naivete of the plans of his son and his inexperience to him with industrial projects.

- The failure of Sanjay in producing an automobile could affect your political position seriously - it said to him. The Maruti can be the crack that the opposition parties are looking for in your armor.

Indira raised the Vista towards its advisor, it watched seconds to him and it did not answer. It felt a mixture of faith and compassion by its son whom it prevented to see the reality so him and as it was.

But there was another powerful factor that contributed to the blindness in Indira: its immense one to be able. The men who Indira chose for excellent positions acquired, by the mere fact of to be designated by her, an enormous power to give favors and sponsorship. They counted on a gigantic source of corruption, that was the measures that the own party had started up to control the economic activity like part of its socialist program. In order to make any business, to open any company, to concern goods of equipment or spare parts sinfin of licenses was required, permissions and authorizations. A system that called License Raj, something as well as the "Empire of the Permission". There bureaucrats and politicians had the possibility of becoming rich interchanging favors by money or other favors. The Licen Raj it paid the land to still more high levels of corruption. And Sanjay was dedicated to fish in those waters.

Indira was conscious of the influence that the money and the power exerted on which they were to his around, but thought that certain degree of corruption had always existed and was integral part of the system. The important thing was that it was not uncontrolled. In addition, to close the eyes on corruptelas of its people was also a way to have tied them. Certainly, Indira was not the only case - in the India or the world of personally intachable political leader but who made the fat Vista before the corruption of the others. It seemed to him that they were compared subjects that had little importance, for example, with the numbers that finished publishing of which less of the 20 percent of the women of India they knew to read and to write, and in the state of Bihar only a 4 percent... Or that the population of the country was going to pass the threshold of seven hundred million, that is to say, more of the double of the population that existed at the moment of independence... To that rate, in few years, the India population would exceed to the one of China. Those yes was problems that demanded the Maxima attention. As they were it the big wave of strikes, the popular displeasure and the phantom of hambrunas. Until Rajiv and Sonia, that left little, they began to notice the corruption by the way to dress the women and the daughters of the members of the Party of the Congress, that now took saris of concerned silk, Italian diamond jewels and shoes when they went to the official receptions.

Very even though of the tacit support of its mother, the project of Sanjay did not take off. All the prototypes had defects in the direction, the gear box, the suspension and the circuit of refrigeration. A day invited Sonia to prove a prototype in the circuit around the perimeter of the factory. Sanjay strave in demonstrating that its vehicle was able to reach the one hundred kilometers per hour, but the land was so full of pockets and scrubs that Sonia, died of fear, requested to him that she reduced the speed. Although he was new, the car seemed old. The doors did not close well, the suspension was hardest and the noise of the motor, deafening. Pero Sanjay did not see those defects. As much era so, about May of 1973, it thought that finally it could present/display a model to the press and invited a journalist of the magazine Arises to prove it. The car warmed up and lost oil. In the factories, the journalist noticed that there were only five cars without painting and other fifteen in manufacture process. The motors were assembled manually and there were signs of a no production line. Account occurred of which the Maruti, in place of being the car cheap produced in mass that loved the government, was an artisan product of very low quality.

The problem is that Sanjay had collected much money and was entrampado. At the outset, like it could not either call directly to which could help him financially, used the services of one of the secretaries of its mother, a man with the engominado hair backwards combed and a wide mechanical smile called R. K. Dhawan (he had been the stenographer of Nehru) that saw a good opportunity, cultivating the contact with Sanjay, to improve its position with with respect to its female leader. It was in charge to call to industrialists and businessmen from number 1 of Safdarjung Road

and these went running because they did not want to lose the opportunity to make a favor to prime minister, via their son. It is possible that they thought that the own Indira was interested in these businesses, but in fact she ignored absolutely everything of tejemanajes of her piston rod.

More ahead, Sanjay requested a means deposit million of rupias to each one of the seventy and five concessionaires whom it had designated in exchange for the promise to give the first cars for the sale in the six following months. Also it had gone to the banks, nationalized recently by its mother, and had obtained credits without guarantee by value of eight million of rupias. But the car followed without materializing itself and the ineptitude of Sanjay left to shine. In order to defend itself of the attacks, more and more numerous, he attributed his failure to the bureaucracy and the amount of administrative restrictions that he had to draw for. Something of reason had, but somebody was at readiness to fight with the difficulties and the obstacles of the License Raj, were he. Even so, it chose to throw the fault to the others. But the protest of the deputies became very estridente and the newspapers began to speak of the Maruti subject relating to Indira to their old enemy Nixon. The Maruti subject, according to the press, was the Watergate de Indira.

At the end of 1973, distressed before the proportion that took the subject, Indira asked its minister of Economy that threw a look to the papers of the Maruti. Sonia saw it very worried. Her mother-in-law was convinced that the opposition used the subject of Sanjay to destroy it, and it did not seem to him just. It continued thinking that his son deserved an opportunity. A day told him that in his youth it had known a catholic priest who had constructed an airplane in two garages in Bombay and that used to walk to its friends being flown over the bay. "If that man could construct an airplane... So that Sanjay cannot construct a car? ", it asked.

The reasons of the incapacity of their son in emulating the catholic priest left to shine in the interview that took place between Indira, Sanjay and the minister of Economy, Subramanian, that had been the architect of the "green revolution". The minister requested to Sanjay the report of the project.

- It cannot have report of the project before being made the project - Sanjay answered.

The minister happened to explain to him that although he possibly could design a car, must have a report with the specification of each component, the way in which they would take place and the cost by piece.

- That no longer is necessary - Sanjay with its point of arrogance answered. Those are old ways to operate.

The minister said to Indira that his son, by very dynamic which he was, lacked the knowledge necessary to prevail in similar company. It promised to be able the aid to him of professionals to advise to him, but Sanjay was against to it with vehemence. It did not want that nobody made shade him nor lose the control of its business. Everything made foretell that

Indira would listen its minister, but it did not do it. Prey between his to have of governor and the faith blinds that it had in his son, not only ignored the advice of Subramanian, but that separated to the most critical advisors with Sanjay. The absolute power del that now arranged Indira demanded people without character and maleable around. It admitted shades, neither discrepancies, nor critical, although she was friendly. The power, that was poisoning the son and blinded the mother, only admitted submission.

To Rajiv never it had liked the project of its brother, whom the dream of a megalómano saw as that could damage the reputation of its mother, and by extension the one of the rest of the family. Both brothers had their first great mix-up of adults when Rajiv, when returning of a trip, found out that Sanjay had convinced Sonia so that signed several documents that made partner of a new company, Maruti Technical Services, with pay, advantages and expenses of trip including. Also they appeared like small partners the Rahul and Priyanka.

- How you have been able to do that? - it said to him infuriated its brother. I do not want to finish dipped in grease in your tejemanajes, nor that I put to Sonia and the children in messes...

- Messes none...

- Because no? How long you think that it is going to take the opposition in finding out this?

- He is not nothing illegal.

- Yes it is it. You have forgotten that Sonia, by law, must not right to have actions of foreign an India company for being.

Sanjay raised shoulders, as if that did not have the minimum importance. Rajiv also was gotten upset with Sonia.

- I have accepted to do a favor to him to your brother - it said to him. It has always been very affectionate, and if it requests a favor to me, it was not going to say to him that no.

- But you have signed that you are going to receive a pay, gives account you?

- I have signed blind people, did not know the one of the pay, nor I have never had intention to receive nothing, that you know you to it...

- You are going to see how sooner or later, the mess of the Maruti is going to finish splashing to us.

Rajiv was furious, as not very often it had seen Sonia him. Under the denomination of consultancy company, was in fact one created cover to turn aside money of the first company Maruti Limited at the hands of Sanjay and of which they had invested great sums in the factory of cars that did not finish existing. Now Rajiv only wanted a thing: to move away completely of everything what had to do with the Maruti.

Both brothers were servant in the same house, but from the most tender childhood they had shown marked differences. The teacher of infantile school that gave class them described to Rajiv like a courteous, docile boy, a correct student. However Sanjay was rebellious, destructive, porfiado, without interest some by the activities of the school, magnificent



with its professors and very difficult to treat. It grew like a turbulent and capricious adolescent, trasteando with cars and attracting doubtful friendships. Both entered in the Doon School, the most elitist school of the India, created to image and similarity of the great British educative institutions like Eton or Harrow. Pero Sanjay did not hold the discipline nor the rate of studies. It had so little interest by the reading that in one interview that did to him of adult could not name a single book whom it had influenced to him or inspired, not even the writings by its grandfathers. Only it liked the activities of the mechanical factory. It lived obsessed with the cars and the airplanes. In spite of being the one who was, it was expelled from the school. It was then when Indira, desperate, sent it to make a course of learning to the Rolls-Royce in England. "What liked more was to speak it of India policy and to make fun of of the English policy", his supervisor would before say to add: "Once, when I called the attention to him by an error that had committed, it said to me: "Sight, the British have jodido to India during centuries, and now I have come to joder to England. ""

Servant between prime minister who people flattered like a Gods, Sanjay ended up thinking that India was its personal dominion. It never knew deprivations, on the contrary that its mother and her grandfathers. Nehru, after a fight life, gave loose rein to his desire of mimar to his grandsons, as if doing she compensated it the sufferings that had suffered. Sometimes it did eccentric gifts to them, like a crocodile that became the preferred mascot of Sanjay until Indira finished sending it zoo when it almost bit the fingers to him. Sanjay either did not inherit of them its immense love towards the people of India nor her genuine compassion by the poor men. Never it was called on to see the skeletal faces to him of old crying its deads, never was called on to him to watch the eyes of the farmers who contemplated their fields cracked by the drought, never felt the quiet outcry of a town that centuries ago requested protection. To Sanjay it seemed to bother the delay to him of its country and it did not understand its complexity. He was a rebel against the tradition, impatient with the laws and the regulations. It happened to be affectionate and kind to brutal franc and in santiamén, but that abruptness was chocante in a country where the relations between people are impregnated of one old courtesy, as one slides, product of thousands of years of uninterrupted civilization. For him, the life was a game in which there was to win and the problems of the life were obstacles that were to cross to be able to arrive at the goal. And it was in a hurry. Haste to change the things, to arrive before, to accumulate a power that did not correspond to him. It had as much haste that to him the average ones did not concern to arrive at the aim.

His brother had grown in an opposite direction. From small he had been always more sensible to the suffering of the others. It had inherited the sensitivity of his mother towards the most underprivileged and her love to India, and that was pronounced in the photos that did. When younger, it visited the friends of its parents who were ill, of spontaneous form, without nobody pushed to him it. A day, when it was seventeen years

old, Indira was it when it went to give to the condolence to the family of a friend and veteran leader of the Congress that finished dying. Thus one found out that his son had to him been visiting the last days. Rajiv was the type of person who did not doubt in stopping and offering her aid if she saw an accident in the highway; and if it were necessary, it took to the victim to the hospital and soon one worried about its evolution. In the house garden, it watched a nest of petirrojos and if one were with a hurt young, it took it to the hospital of birds of Chandni Chowk, risking to arrive behind schedule at its work. Rajiv was happy with which it had, with Sonia, his children, their dogs and the luxury of being able to dedicate itself to its likings. It did not request more to the life, and indeed of that it consisted its wisdom. But her mother did not seem to appreciate it; more than wisdom, it saw in it lack of ambition, which did not provoke its admiration.

Nevertheless, Indira thought that a privileged existence did not mean that they had not suffered in his childhood. They had lived in a always full house of adults, whose atmosphere was impregnated of the gravity of the discussions and the solemnity of which it was dissolved in the offices, the halls and the studies of Teen Murti House. That they had not been become fond of to the reading perhaps was a reaction against that official and protocolic world in which it was called on to them to be young, thought she, always looking for an excuse to them. When they well really went it was when they were going to visit his father, the week ends and vacation. Firoz was extroverted, charlatán' affectionate and it gave its total attention them. It knew to play with its children and to entertain them. It taught to mount and to disassemble toys to them, to planting and taking care of roses, because he was very fan to its culture. Far from the severe formality of palacete of prime minister where they lived, Rajiv and Sanjay found in their father to a person with a capacity of overflowing diversion. In addition it knew to instigar the feeling to them of which they were very important for him, which caused a deep impact to them. Like in all the separated marriages, in the end they are the children who support the tensions of the parents, although they do not understand them. Perhaps But could Indira explain them to it? Could tell them that it did not live with Firoz because this one him had been repeatedly unfaithful? Because they were not understood and was fed up to fight itself? Its own dignity prevented it. The children saw that the grandfathers Nehru did not lodge affection some by his son-in-law, and they accused it. Perhaps, unconsciously, they blamed its mother from which Firoz was separated and it did not comprise of the home of prime minister . After the cremation, Sanjay, devastated, it threw in face to its mother to have neglected its father. It directly accused it of the infarct that had killed to him.

Indira fitted the blow. It had to feel guilty of which its marriage had not worked. And therefore guilty of which their children had suffered for that reason. Perhaps its weakness with Sanjay hid its will to amend that fault. To Sonia it hit to him that it, the woman more hard of India, was of a

so amazing weakness with her small son. Their numerous enemies would not take in realizing of which Sanjay was its heel of Aquilles.

Indira, that had a total confidence with Sonia, often chatted with her. She was perhaps the unique one of the house with that shared secrets. A day confessed to him that its marriage had known many bumps, but that had not been able to marry with any man except for Firoz. He was the unique one that really it loved. It often spoke to him of him, and with affection because it said that Rajiv remembered its husband to him. Both had the Earth feet, were sensible to the beauty of the nature and music, capable with their hands and practitioners in their way to face the problems. It never thought that Firoz would die so soon, so young. It is certain, it recognized that it had neglected it lately, but had done it thinking that both had the life ahead and that they would recover the lost time. They had reconciled in 1958, after a first infarct. So that one recovered, Indira organized vacations in family in a house-boat on the lake of the city of Srinagar, Venice of East, as it is known the capital of Kashmir. Firoz and the boys went it in great, swimming, mounting in boat and making photos. Indira took advantage of to begin to learn Castilian, a language that always it attracted to him.

The spectacle of the nature of Kashmir, the Earth of its ancestors, always filled it of emotion. The sun puttings on sparkling waters of the Dal lake were sublime. There was magic in the air. It seemed that martines fishermen were trained. One of them entered the house-boat and it settled on the shoulder of Rajiv. Soon they made a trip of several days to Daksun, a paradisíaco place where wild trouts in mighty rivers fished that lowered between meadows covered with flowers and forests of pines and firs framed by eternal snow summits. Firoz told him that it finished buying a land in Mehrauli, near Delhi, and spoke to be constructed a house someday. It would be its own house, not to have to live more in those on the government (Firoz, like deputy of the state of Uttar Pradesh, also lived in an official house). It was a beautiful encounter for Indira, after a so stormy marriage, with so many fights, treasons and humiliations, still more painful because the majority had finished exposed to the public light. Now the shade of the tips of the Himalayas acted of balsam that cured the wounds of the past. During that time in that they could enjoy La Paz of mountains, they returned to speak of a future together. It was then, in that interval of happiness, as fleeting as intense, when Indira decided, once that his father there was dead, to devote itself totally to Firoz. But the 8 of September of 1960 came the infarct to break the dream to him.

## 16

Sanjay no longer had the reputation of mujeriego that had won in England. Obsessed with the Maruti, it took a life of pure work. It left house before the dawn and returned to seven or the eight at night to see have supper to its nephews or to share tentempié with Sonia. Rare time with its brother or his mother, because so they were absorbed by the work who then let themselves see little in house.

From its return of England, Sanjay had had two relations, one with a Muslim woman, who lasted little, and other, more serious and longer, with a German, Sabine von Stieglitz, the sister of Christian, the friend who had presented/displayed Sonia to Rajiv, and that worked in Nueva Delhi like professor of languages. Sabine, discharge, blonde, handsome and cosmopolitan, were culturally English than German because almost all its life had lived in England. She was very friend of Sonia. They spent many afternoons together, taking care of the children, playing with them or reading stories to them. One of them, "the animals of my city", was specially graceful because it described to the elephant, to the monkey, the boa, the crow, the vulture, corneja... like the familiar animals. And it was certain, were everywhere. The quack of cornejas was the sound track of the life in India.

Sonia was very madraza, and very meticulous with the education of the small ones. It did not tolerate whims with the food, and knew to put limits to them in its behavior, without getting to be severe since it he had been Stefano with her and its sisters. It spoke to them in Italian when they were solo, and English if they were all together ones or in the presence of Sabine. In fact, Sonia was meticulous in everything, for that reason she wanted to make a course of old painting restoration. That liking cuadraba with its discreet, hacendosa personality, concientious lover of detail and. It thought to dedicate itself to it as soon as the children grew a little and they needed less.

Sonia lodged the hope of which the relation between Sanjay and Sabine would become stabilized someday and ended up marrying. Pero Sabine got tired to hope.

- Sanjay more is enamored with the Maruti that of me - it confessed a day to him to Sonia-. No longer I believe that it ends up committing with me. It only thinks about its project of business, does not fit nothing else in its life.

- What you are going to do?

- I become to Europe.

- What suffers. Tenerte of sister-in-law had been formidable.

- Also to me I had liked - she said to him to Sonia, while Priyanka and Rahul were fought by a cake.

Sonia accompanied it to the airport to dismiss it. What it did not know is that it would return to see two days later it.

- But what has happened? You were not in London?

Sabine told him that in the scale of Tehran, the pilot of the airplane of Indian Airlines sent it to call by megafonía. Sabine, surprised, went to the cabin of Boeing.

- Somebody wants to speak with you by the radio - they said to him. It was Sanjay. There, in front of a crew who did not leave her astonishment, they lived its penultimate scene of love. Sanjay requested to him that it returned to Nueva Delhi: "Démonos a last opportunity", him suplicó. Sabine could not resist to the man whom she loved and by that she had returned. It gave a little him shame to have yielded. Sonia was enchanted, and returned to dream whereupon her friend could become her sister-in-law.

But weeks later broke again, and this time for always. The dream of Sonia to have its friend surrounds disappeared, but only during one season. Sabine did not settle in England. It was had customary to live in India. In Europe, it missed the heat of people, the Asian courtesy, the life rate. "To me it happens to me the same", confessed Sonia to him. In addition, Sabine had a work that allowed him to live better than if it had left to London. So that, for great joy of Sonia, they returned to spend afternoons, and week ends together in the environs, like which it finished in a small tragedy when they approached a nest of wasps and finished covers of pecks.

Sabine ended up knowing one the professors of the Institute Goethe de Nueva Delhi and she married with him. Six years in the India capital lived. They did not have children until later, when they had been changed to Mexico, but had dogs that they joined with those of Sonia when they went away to the field, for delight of the children. Sabine kept from Sanjay the memory of a boy serious, with push, but too egocéntrico.

For Indira, he was better thus, because the fact that their two children married with two European had been politically most correct. It would have been like confirming publicly that the Nehru was made western absolutely and they always moved away for by his roots Indians, and by then Sanjay already had put in policy, not as much by vocation as to defend itself of the critics that rained to him everywhere as a result of their ominous management of the Maruti subject.

It was in a cocktail to celebrate the next wedding of an old friend of the school where Sanjay would know its future wife. He was the 14 of December of 1973, and the date it agreed with its birthday. That Sanjay day very was animated, and it was not by the alcohol because it never drank. But he was conscious of to be the unmarried one more coveted of India. Lady's man although to his twenty-seven years already had a baldness outpost, tried to have well-taken care of of not embroiling with women who suspected could be interested solely in becoming members of the first family of India. The friend who was going away to marry presented/displayed to a premium hers call to him Maneka Anand, a lanky, with regular and well proportionate factions, pecosa girl, sufficiently attractive like to have gained a beauty aid and that worked sporadically of

model for a mark of towels. Guapetona was and photogenic, with a vivacious and energetic character. Sanjay it attracted to him immediately and it passed the evening speaking with her. Maneka told him that it had left his studies of Political Sciences in the Sri Ram College de Nueva Delhi and that it wanted to become journalist. She was daughter of a colonel of the army, sij, and of its called wife Amteshwar, daughter of a landowner and cattle dealer of Punjab.

As of that day, Sanjay dedicated all its free time to Maneka. They were seen newspaper. As to him it let like to leave to restaurants or the cinema, it preferred to see it in the afternoons in house of one of the two families. To Sonia this new fiancée did not cause a great impression to him. Compared with Sabine, one was chiquilla immature that would last with Sanjay which this one took in realizing the ambitious thing which it had of being. Because now Sonia had infected itself of the distrust that comes with the power or the proximity to the power. Like its mother-in-law, it thought that all the one that approached the family did by interest. Most of the times it did not need reason. It thought that Maneka, more of those than courted to the unmarried one of gold of India, would be flower of a day.

But to 1974 principles, Sanjay invited it to eat to house, sign from which the boy was taking his relation more in serious of the habitual thing. The girl was very nervous because she had to happen through the critical moment to know prime minister. Sonia understood it perfectly, she who had had an attack of nerves the day that Rajiv had to present/display it to it. The difference was that then she and their together fiancée had been a year, and not a month, like Sanjay and Maneka. But it knew its brother-in-law, it knew impulsive and the impatient thing who was. Also, at the time of England, Indira was another woman, slower, without the oppression nor the tension of the power. Maneka, visibly intimidated, watched everything like a scared pajarito: the furniture, the pictures, the photos. When suddenly one was as opposed to Indira, it did not know what to say. It was put red and it begun to stammer. Indira broke the ice:

- As Sanjay has not presented/displayed to us, it tell me how you are called and to what you dedicate yourself - said to him.

Maneka continued stammering like could, omitting that for of model for a mark of towels, which did not seem to him worthy of mention.

Indira chatted awhile with her and, like she was customary to see march past to girls who Sanjay seduced, did not think anything about special, unless he were a little young. Although it had liked to find a daughter-in-law between the good families of Kashmir, did not put in the sentimental subjects of its son, as it had not either done it with Rajiv. A long time ago it had left the idea to organize a " marriage to him arranged" to the Indian. That would leave it for another life in which it had more time and more calmness...

They spent the months and seemed that Maneka was there for remaining. It was not a plus in the life of Sanjay. This one had fallen in love and, faithful to his impulsive character, wanted to marry already. Indira did

not have repairs, at the outset, in admitting it. That he was of a family which did not suppose a problem for the Nehrus, that had always announced the equality between the religious communities of the country. Pressed by the haste of its son, it did not have time to inquire on the family of its future daughter-in-law and fixed the date of the 29 of July for the requested one. Both families met in number 1 of Safdarjung Road where after a brief ceremony, all seated to celebrate eating it. Indira realized in followed of that were not educated people, neither cosmopolitan, nor cultured and in the mother he was able to guess the deep to have placed to his daughter in family the more coveted satisfaction of the country. It had been able to say something similar of the family of Sonia, but the difference is that those were simple, they were not conceited don't mention it and they lacked ambition. These were noisy and ostentosos, with a hortera taste in the way to dress and to exhibit their jewels. Of all ways, Indira was to the height of the circumstances. Nobility forces. The requested ring of that luda her daughter-in-law had #\*\*\*aed-refl mng it she. And it was a very special gift. It had belonged to Kamala, its mother, and had been designed by its Motilal grandfathers. It trusted secretly that someday that chiquilla would get to understand the deep meaning of so appraised present. Also it offered a joint gold and turquesa to him, as well as sari of a silk very fine and embroidered to Indian and Chinese the Tanchoi style, mixture of styles. A month later, gave sari to him of Italian silk by its birthday.

The fears on the family of Maneka were confirmed by the information that began to flow after the requested one. Indira found out that Arnteshwar, its future consuegra, were been ten years litigating with its brother by the inheritance of the father, who was a woman with a very elementary education and, according to which knew it, intriguer and codiciosa. Rumors that arrived to him the other members of the family were robust and shameless. Other sources labeled to them as self-seeking. The type of person had been strained in the life of right Sanjay that always had tried to avoid. Although rare time the parents are contentments with the election of the pairs of their children, now Indira was going to drink the same glass that he gave to drink his father when he informed to him into his decision to marry with Firoz. As in that case, also now one was families who came from opposed worlds, that did not share values such. But would serve as something to face its son, as Nehru had faced her? Not very often in the life it had passed it as badly as then, so that it was not arranged to do the same. It could not open a front more. The amount of problems with which it had to fight had gotten depressed it. It did not see how to remove to India from the poverty, plaster made hopeles it. Her faithful Usha secretary would remember that, when returning of a funeral at the end of July by the eternal rest of an old friend of the family, Indira confessed to him that was tired to live. It gave instructions him on the way to have its body when it had died.

- I do not want a funeral, Usha. It aims... I want that they put my body in a coffin and that they drop it from an airplane on eternal snows of

the Himalayas. Perhaps thus it is able to enjoy a peace that I have not enjoyed while still alive.

- Madam, the important thing is to have peace in this life, does not create? In the other it is guaranteed...

- Yes, I know it, but it is not in my hands and I do not believe that or possible.

- It must be it, lady. In addition, déjeme to say to him that nobody will agree in having its body of that way. If they were ash-gray still... but how wants that they throw a coffin from an airplane and that it crashes against the ground?

- Then I want neither to be buried nor that they burn to me - Indira settled.

In that mood , the perspective to marry to its son with a girl of seventeen years of a family who considered "ordinary" was not something that raised to the moral the only thing to him that could do was to delay the wedding. When one found out that in the fixed date Maneka it would not have fulfilled most of age, said to him to its son:

- You will have to hope to that it fulfills the eighteen. I cannot allow that you fail to fulfill the law.

The problem of the infantile marriages continued being a thorny subject in the India that had been denounced by Gandhi, Nehru and by all those that they wanted to modernize the country. Thousands of children finished "being negotiated" by their parents, married and turned servants of the family of the husband, without being able some to decide on the number of children whom they would have. The case of Maneka distaba much of this, but Indira was not arranged to that Sanjay did not preach with the example. In addition, gaining time, his son would perhaps end up recalling to mind.

But it did not happen. That summer, Sanjay had to be put under a small operation of hernia. After its matutinal classes, Maneka happened afternoon and leaves from the night in the deprived room of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, the sharpshooting Nueva hospital Delhi. Weeks after their convalecencia, the 23 of September of 1974, married in a civil ceremony in house of an old friend of the family, Moharnmed Yunus. The wedding was a demonstration of aconfesional India that always had defended the Nehru: the son of parsi and a Hindu married with a girl sij in house of a Muslim friend front to a catholic daughter-in-law. Indira was generous with Maneka: saris of the finest fabrics gave veintiún to him, some the gold jewels and, most valuable, one of saris of cotton that Nehru had spun in the jail with his rueca. It fulfilled on the foot of the letter with his to have of mother-in-law. In order to receive its daughter-in-law, it assigned to the new pair a dormitory that it gave to the main hall, near the front door, in the part of the house opposed to the quarter of Rajiv and Sonia. It decorated it and it fixed it with mimo, it placed objects and bottles on the table of the dressing table and chose bracelets that, by tradition, Maneka had to be put in its night of weddings and that left in the small table.



Just later of the celebration, Maneka entered the home of the Gandhi - Nehru just as Sonia it had done it with Rajiv six years before. "The wedding has passed calmly - that same night wrote Indira to Dorothy Norman, Maneka is so young that it had my doubts on the subject and it did not guess right to guess if it knew what it was doing. But it seems that it has fitted, and he is jovial and it cheers."

Pero Maneka was not Sonia and, although it came from a family who lived to a kilometer of distance, its adaptation was much more arduous than the one of its sister-in-law who came from the other end of the world. In spite of the desire of Indira, to the girl it cost to him to fit in that house. In order to begin, it smoked, a habit that was very bad sight. Sanjay hated the tobacco; Indira, that had been tuberculosa, detested it; and Sonia, asthmatic, was allergic to the smoke. Badly beginning. In addition, he was loquacious and it spoke in a high tone of voice. "In my own house éramos informal and sometimes foulmouthed - Maneka- would say. The Gandhi maintains the honor among them in all circumstance." Sanjay and it had diametrically opposite temperaments and added many ingredients for a married failure. It is certain that not always it had to be easy to communicate with Indira, an imposing presence. To times during the Maneka meals it was put to speak of books that had read or that were reading as if it wanted to impress it with its intellectual capacity. Indira raised the Vista, it sent a glance to him of reajo and it continued eating. "Fogosa and intelligent Era - Usha would say, the faithful secretary of Indira- but to the same time was ambitious and very immature." Several times it mentioned that Sanjay would be a day prime minister, which caused other people's shame in the others. Other times mustia spoke of the happiness with face: "It knew that one did not talk about a philosophical search - would remember Usha- but to its own infelicidad caused by the absence of Sanjay." What it really liked was to leave and to be Vista, indeed what his husband could not now allow itself, occupied as he were in leaving his track in the India society.

Consequently, Maneka became bored much in a house where nobody smoked, neither drank nor said palabrotas. It spent the hours died in the office of Usha asking for the program of its husband, who was always very loaded, and trying to discover the keys of that new world in which it was put. The traditional world, to that did not want nor to approach. When Sonia proposed to teach it to him to cook, although she only was so that she was distracted, because the nobody best one than she knew reason why it was passing its sister-in-law, Maneka answered to him that they interested neither the kitchen nor the things to him of house.

All quickly realized of which Maneka was a discordant note. To Rajiv to him it put nervous to find it knocked down it in a sofa of the hall smoking while Sonia was occupied with the house.

- Does not stick nor blow! - it said in low voice to Sonia-. Who is created?

Sonia raised shoulders, like saying: it is what there is. They either did not like their way to treat to the service, shouts and without respect, very

typical of the well off class India. To Indira also it displeased its vulgar behavior and chillón to him. The problem is that the only place where found protection against the hardness of the political life was its house, that now was insane. Number 1 of Safdarjung Road stopped being a peace backwater.

The humor of Indira reflected the one of the India, that did not raise head after the war of Bangladesh. Unemployment raised and with it the popular displeasure. The cadence of strikes and manifestations was infernal, and many finished in violent shocks with the police. For Sonia, the task of making the purchase could become an authentic one via crucis: cut streets, arbitrary deflections, reyertas to pedradas, stores closed by lack of food supply due to a strike of transports, etc. There was no a normal day, it was as if the country was lost the north and embraced the anarchy. In all national geography it was not spoken of another thing that were not corruption, disturbances, confinements, seating and strikes. To Sonia I impress much to him the scandal of *sugar* as one occurred to know, that I cause the death of much people, specially young. Retailers without scruples had on sale put a sugar mixture with ground crystal, that I am lethal and that removed to shine the lack of control and the complete laziness of the administration. Sonia who always remembered his children, asked itself horrified: and if that sugar would have finished in the day-care center of Rahul?

Before the devastating spectacle that offered the country, a hero of the liberation movement and old friend of the family Nehru, a fragile man of seventy and two years called J.P. Narayan, was able to unify different opposed groups from Indira. Its program pleaded for a federation of villages and tried to send a total revolution, a democracy without parties. It was a madness, the vague idea of a messianic idealist, but it served to galvanize to the multitudes against the party of Indira, corruption defendant. In fact, the seed of the fall of Indira already was planted and lay in the immense one to be able that had been able to accumulate and that it acted like a poison that flooded everything, until his own house through Sanjay. As a legal system of financing of parties did not exist, the congress depended on substantial private donations. Too many members of their party, conscious of the power that granted the fact to count to them with an overwhelming majority in the national Parliament and most of state parliaments, became codiciosos and experts in interchanging economic aid by political favors.

The J.P movement. it was able to organize several important strikes, that they finished in confrontations with the police. The protest I degenerate in a general revolt when it left to shine that a leader of the Party of the Congress had allowed an ascent of the price of the oil of kitchen in exchange for an important donation of the producers. It was the spark that exploded the popular fury. There was looting of houses and stores, fire of buses and destruction of goods of the government. Rajiv was several days without returning to house because its airplane had not been able to take off when closing itself the airports. Indira, incapable to control all the shoddy work and tejemanejes of the members of its party, felt threatened. Its fear was added to the paranoia that felt from the previous year, when the blow took place, supported by the company, that the Rescuing democratically chosen president Beyond overthrew in Chile, another Socialist. It knew well

which had orchestrated it, and feared that they tried to take advantage of the chaotic situation of India to try the same with her. Mainly, because Nixon finished being reelected, and Kissinger was again to its side.

What to do? One did not consider to resign, at least without fighting. It attributed the disturbances to the perfida manipulation of the opposition, pawned on expelling it from the power, and to a dark international conspiracy. It cost to him to think that the town was losing its faith in her. But it could not leave by more time than the anarchy extended as an oil spot, never rather. So I arm myself of anger to face the greater challenge of its race, a national strike of railroads that threatened paralyzing the country. To gain that pulse was decisive for her and India. One faced million and average one of railway workers whom they demanded, among other vindications, schedules of work of eight hours and an increase of pay of the 75 percent, concession this one that was impossible to grant. "In a country where there is unemployed million and many million more with precarious uses - it explained with boldness in a union conference, which is needed is a right distribution of opportunities. In this sense the workers would have to recognize that in our country to be used it is in itself a privilege." Words that inflamed the spirits still more, so that strike was summoned. A million railway secundaron it. Suddenly they raised the strip of its exigencies: "What we want it is to change the history of India and to overthrow the government of Indira Gandhi."

As always in these conflicts, it was in game the life of poorest. The paralyzation of the trains, when altering the transport of merchandise, was susceptible to cause hambrunas, something that Indira was not arranged to allow. So it applied one recent law (MASS, Maintenance of Security Act) that allowed to make police custodies. An unfolding never seen of police invaded railway colonies, the old districts created by the English to lodge to the railway and that were near the train stations. "It seemed a occupied country", would say a union leader that it did not leave its astonishment. The dawn, the police entered the houses of the railway and stopped to all the one that refused to go to work. Some families were expelled from their houses - they were property of the government and forced to live outdoors. The arrests were sometimes violent - a case in that had the police set fire to the hovel of a railroader and some strikers finished wounded. Altogether, sixty thousand workers were arrested. Indira acted as a general in the din of the battle. It commanded to the army and to navy to protect possible the railway facilities con sabotages. The military made work the signalings and the telecommunications, and handled the trains under the protection of armed guards. It was convinced that if squashed this strike, there would not be another one in fifty years.

Indira was very gracious, with total dominion of its faculties, like was habitual at moments of high tension. It trusted itself. It tried to make several things to he himself time, was its infallible prescription to relax and to find solutions to difficult problems. Behind schedule, while it took care of a press conference in the garden of his house and saw his Rahul grandson

entertained in the turf playing the war with plastic arms, an idea was happened to him. It thought that the moment had arrived for giving the authorization that the scientists took hoping years ago detonating a nuclear pump. It had been indeed the decision of Nixon to send a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to the bay of Bengal which had caused the acceleration of the Indian atomic program. It was not indeed an idea of grandma, but the one of a shining strategist. It privily maintained it until the moment of the explosion, that took place in Pokhran, in the desert of Rajastán, next to the border with Pakistan, days later.

So and as it had anticipated, the news caused the enthusiasm of certain layers of the population that lived it with authentic patriotic fervor. The deputies who rose in the great room of the Parliament to congratulate an a the others seemed to have forgotten the pressing economic problems and strike trains. Indira had obtained its intention, that it was to turn aside the attention of the country. The India, over-populated and almost paralyzed, whose rent per capita located it in position 102.<sup>0</sup> of the world-wide ranking, one became, to a great extent by necessities of internal policy, in the sixth world-wide nuclear power. The critics got worse abroad. Indira was defended: «... India does not accept the principle of the apartheid in any scope, and the technology is not no exception.»

It took twenty-two days in squashing strike with iron hand. Although the press condemned the brutality of the repression, the middle-class, the people who always had appreciated the puntualidad of the trains, praised the firmness of prime minister. The Chambers of Commerce also, although that did not mean many votes. For Indira, it was a bittersweet victory. Whereas the one of Bangladesh it had elevated it to the category of goddess, this one left a bitter flavor of mouth. Prime minister had demonstrated that she could be hard and until ruthless. Its way to repress strike left a deep wake of fear in ample sectors of the society. The counter-productive effect of as much severity was that the opposition was united still more against her. Until the more compatible political observers they had to admit that its popularity fell in mincemeat. In the elections anticipated for 1976, a defeat of the Congress appeared now like a real possibility.

The 12 of June of 1975 amaneció with black thicknesses nubarrones in the sky, that announced longed for rains, or perhaps predicted ill-fated times. The heat, to those hours in the morning, already was intense, but Indira followed with its daily routine to do twenty minutes of exercises of yoga in its room. The weeping of its Priyanka granddaughter caused the temptation to him to interrupt the exercise, but as immediately it sent, it thought that Sonia had risen already and was taking care of the small one. Soon one showered and it got dressed in five minutes “something that few men can do”, liked to be conceited. In their small table at night the books crowded. With days that lasted sixteen hours, it had time don't mention it, neither to be with the family nor to receive friends, nor by supposed to read, and it missed it.

It was having breakfast in its room in front of a tray with tea, fruit and toasted when its secretary R. K. Dhawan, that that was so I solicit with Sanjay, called to the door. It brought the bad news. D. P. Dhar, old friend and advisor of Indira, the man whom he had sent to Moscow when the crisis of Bangladesh to make sure the support the Soviets and that since then celebrated of ambassador in the USSR, had died minutes before being operated to install marcapasos to him. Another pillar of confidence and friendship disappeared of its life. Indira quickly went to the hospital to console the family and to help in the organization of the funeral rites.

It returned to house towards noon, where it waited for another bad news to him. His secretary communicated to him that in the elections of the eve in the state of Gujarat, the Janata Front, a coalition of five parties that included the supporters of J. P. Narayan, the idealist whom it loved to overthrow it, had won to the Congress. It did not surprise too much to him. The bad thing was that those results augured defeats in other states. Era perhaps the principle of the aim? , it was asked. Did not follow all the companies he himself model of evolution human that the one of the nature, that is to say, a phase of growth, another one of development, and a end? It had tried to make the peace with J. P., but its utópica idea to establish a government without parties was unacceptable because it meant the death of the democratic operation. Thus had been expressed it, but J. P. he was a revolutionary who continued believing in great abstract ideas. It did not move backwards in its persistence nor one was flexible in its demands.

- You will agree with me in which the government of Bihar is very corrupt? - it asked J.P to him. with its trembly voice.

- Yes, that we know all to it - Indira talked back.

- Because I insist on which you must dismiss it and summon new elections.

- I cannot do that, J.P. He is a chosen government democratically and I lack authority to dismiss it.

There was no reconciliation, on the contrary. Indira ended up accusing it to count on the support of the company and the United States to overthrow it, and he reproached to want to him to make of India a Soviet satellite.

Nevertheless, when finishing the meeting, J.P. it requested to see it solo, without its advisors. They happened to the hall and there, before the surprise of Indira, the man had a gesture of personal amiability, in spite of the aggravated thing of his political confrontation. It gave an old folder to him that had belonged to its wife and who contained letters that the mother of Indira, Kamala, him had written fifty years before in the din of the fight by independence.

- It had Them kept since my woman died - she said J to him. P. - with the hope of dárteles when it had the opportunity of verte.

To Indira it affected the gesture to him of that man who nevertheless was pawned on destroying it. Rare what is the policy - it had to think that it allows to hatred and the affection to he himself time and in the

same person. It always felt a tiny amount in the heart when it read those letters, that revived their mother, so fragile, so ill, and that now they revealed its infelicidad to feel the scorn of the sisters of Nehru who found it too traditional and religious. It thanked to him to J.P. of all heart, knowing full well that this one it would even fulfill its threat to intensify crossed his against her.

The third bad news of the day reached three of behind schedule. Rajiv, dress with its uniform of pilot, burst in into the dormitory of Indira. When returning from the airport, it had been crossed one of the secretaries of its mother who had put to him to the current of the news that finished arriving by the teletype.

- It has left the verdict Judge de Allahabad... - Rajiv said.

- And...? - a little asked to Indira, turning the head, as if it waited for the blow that was going to receive.

Rajiv read the text to him of the sentence that had given the secretary to him. She said that prime minister had been declared guilty of negligence in the electoral procedures of the 1971 suffrage. Consequently, the result of those elections was invalidado. The court gave twenty days to the Congress to take the necessary measures facing that the Government continued working. In addition, it was prohibited him to assume a public position in following the six years.

Indira sighed and night love song stayed. It watched the garden. Their grandsons played in the grass. Everything seemed so normal and calm, except by nubarrones that continued threatening unloading rain. Peculiar what was the life, had to think. Greater mazazo of their race occurred it in their native city, in such courts where his Motilal grandfathers Nehru did his more shining pleas. One became towards its son:

- I believe that another solution does not have left that the one to resign. The moment has arrived - it said without the smaller spying of emotion.

It waited for a condemnatory sentence, but not so out of proportion. The opposition had used one triquiñuela legal to corner it. The sentence corresponded to the denunciation that a political rival called Raj Narain, that was lost by one hundred thousand votes of difference, had presented/displayed four years before in the court of Allahabad. The accusations were trivial and personnel use of and transport talked about to the illegal property of the government during the previous electoral campaign. In prevailed, everybody, including their adversaries, recognized that the positions against her were ridiculous and who the judges had exceeded. According to the Times newspaper of London, he was equivalent "to dismiss prime minister by a traffic fine". But in the India of 1975, people lay down to the street to celebrate it.

His friend Siddharta Shankar Ray, head of the government of Bengal, arrived just a short time at house later. He was a man of confidence, Complete, the old guard of the unconditional friends. The party was shocked, said to him. Soon it continued:

- ... What the opposition has not obtained in the ballot boxes, tries to manipulate it through a legal sentence.

- I must resign - Indira, impassible loosen.

The man took seat. It watched Indira: its face let traslucir an infinite fatigue.

- You do not make that decision to the light one. We are going to think it.

Indira raised shoulders:

- Hay another solution?

- It is always possible to be appealed.

- It will take months... We know how justice works.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of two ministers, followed short time later by the one of the president of the party and several colleagues more. The house went filling of people. Sonia offered candies and drinks to them. With its own eyes, it saw how they were worried to lose the position, others the opposite, excited because the armchair of Indira was to the reach. The rumors, the uncertainty and the heat did that the air was irrespirable. They spoke with Indira, trying to dissuade it of that it submitted its retirement application; others did corrillos, measuring the forces of different leaders who could replace it. Still prime minister listened all, shut up. "I believe that it would have to resign immediately", it repeated.

In the evening, Sanjay arrived from the "factory". One had found out the news by the radio. Entering house, one was with its brother:

- What is going to do? - it asked to him.

- To resign. It does not have left another one.

- Not - Sanjay- said, that cannot be.

In a second Sanjay it saw its dream of being a great industrialist made pieces. If her mother yielded before her enemies, could take leave for always of Maruti Ltd. It entered the jammed hall people and, without hardly saluting to anybody like it was custom hers, it took to its mother of the arm and it requested to speak solo minutes to him. They retired to the contiguous study.

- There is this Rajiv to Me that you think to resign.

- We are hefting It. I do not have many options.

- You do not have to do it, mother. If you yield now and you resign by those so insignificant positions, when you do not have parliamentary immunity obtain meterte in the jail by any thing that are invented.

- I become aware calm. We are thinking about changing the papers. That the president of the party assumes the position of prime minister until my resource is transacted in the Supreme Court. While, I would be in charge of the presidency of the party.

- That is a madness, mother! - Sanjay said, and the shout was heard in the contiguous hall. You think that the president of the party, once is in your armchair, you will give back it later? It will never do it. They seem all very loyal very and friends, but you know better than I than their smiles



hide their personal ambitions. All want your site. All look for the power. You do not have to resign under any concept.

To accept the defeat was not something easy for Indira. Could retire with the tail between the legs by something so trivial, she who had dedicated her life to the policy and that had exerted of prime minister during almost one decade? One did not correspond with its concept of dignity. Could leave in the stockade its companions of party, to all those that depended on her? To the whole country? Did not say that India is Indira and Indira is India? Iba to allow that J.P. Narayan ended the democracy sinking the country in the anarchy? It is certain, it was tired, sometimes until gotten depressed not to find solutions to the evils of the country. If it only had to listen to its inner voice, that that requested calmness to him, perhaps it would decide on the resignation. By her, it would do it. But she was not single. It thought about Sanjay... What would be of him, if she lost the position? They would be sent like bloodhounds to simply devour it by having itself bold to being enterprising, or for being who was. What would be of the rest of the family? The power was revealed like a necessary defense against all the enemy s that that same power had created to the edge of the years. The power protected the family. Without that shield, they were in danger.

Indira returned to the hall. "I am determined to fight to maintain to me in the position", said to him to its lawyer. They were in which this one would ask for to the Supreme Court the postponement of the sentence until the court decided on his resource. The maneuver would allow to gain time and to stay like prime minister until being able to reunite to forces and supports. Nothing else to announce its decision, the tension in house relaxed. In order to disguise their deception, those that already were had bold to dream about releasing it fused in the most servile praises. Sonia was disturbed. At heart, it had liked that her mother-in-law resigned, because she missed one more a calmed life.

## 18

In the following days, Sanjay and its pal Dhawan secretary organized manifestations and marches of support to Indira. They did not have repairs in confiscating the buses of the municipal company of transports of Delhi to transport to thousands of demonstrators. All the apparatus of the party was mobilized so that it heard stop and fort the voice in favor of Indira. Trains chartered specially for the full meetings of supporters arrived at the capital.

Now Sonia and Maneka could not enter and leave house so easily because permanently the presence of Indira was a multitude to the doors protesting, that once left to the day to greet them. Neither to Sonia nor to Rajiv they liked the look that took the events. It was scared because the car that took a morning to it to Khan Market had received pedrada. It had only caused a scratch in the body, but it had been enough to put the fear to him in the body. In addition, the coexistence with Maneka him very difficult fairy. And Sanjay seemed another one. Hardly it saw him, but when for no longer he was as affectionate as before. One occurred account of which the presence of Maneka was poisoning the relations between the brothers, and her and Sanjay also.

- So that we do not go away to Italy one season - it asked to him its husband until the waters return to their channel?

To Rajiv it desired the idea to him, and it recognized that it would be good for the children. But one was worried.

- How we say it to my mother? We can leave it in a while thus?

Sonia remained become absorbed in thought, without answer. It was scared for the first time, by her and the children. It never had been the atmosphere so heated.

The 20 of June of 1975, Sanjay had the idea that the whole family attended a solidarity meeting that Nueva Club had organized in the Boat Delhi.

- It is good that they see us all together ones - had said.

- I prefer that you do not decide by us - him espetó Rajiv.

- He is by mother - his brother answered to him.

Positions in a commitment, Rajiv and Sonia acceded grudgingly. It was perhaps the first political act of Sonia. It made an impression to be to him in front of a multitude of more than one hundred thousand people. Dressed in sari khaki color, it was next to Rajiv, Maneka and Sanjay behind Indira. Thence, it gave vertigo to imagine the immoderation of its country of adoption. As much people, so many beliefs, so many religions... When her mother-in-law turned itself towards them, Sonia smiled to him. Suddenly it saw in contact with the town del it that always spoke, that privileged contact that justified all its sinsabores and that now were not something abstract, but real estate. He was, tired there on its feet. Sonia could verify the enormous popular support del that still enjoyed Indira, that exceeded much in the mere presence of the supporters paid by Sanjay. The hen skin was put to him when it listened his mother-in-law to say to the crowd that to

serve the country was the tradition of the Nehru-Gandhi family, and who committed itself to continue serving to him until her last sigh. It was the first time that Indira was flanked by its family and the meeting was a great success. Sonia realized much that Indira needed to have to the family to its side. No, it was not moment for leaving it.

The followers of J. P. they organized contramanifestaciones in front of the palace of the president of the Republic and in several cities of the immense country. Journalist Oriana Fallaci was first in finding out mouth of a leader of the opposition that glided to block the entrance of number 1 of Safdarjung Road with people hordes to turn to Indira in prisoner their own house. "We will encamp day and night there - the leader said. We will force it to resign. For always. The lady will not survive our movement."

In the morning of the 25 of June, Indira summoned to its office from house to Siddarta Shankar Ray, the head of government of Bengal, that accidentally was in Nueva Delhi, and that when public becoming the sentence had advised to him not to resign. It found it very tense. Its table was covered with information of the Intelligence service.

- We cannot allow it - Indira- said to him. I have information that J. P. Narayan, in a meeting this same night, is going to request to the police and the army that rebel. It is possible that the company it is implied. You know that I am in the first positions in the list of people hated by Richard Nixon... What we can do?

Ray was an expert in legal subjects, with fame of honest and duro. It continued thinking that Indira had to stay in its position. It continued describing how the country was sunk in the chaos.

- It is necessary to be able to stop this madness. I feel that the India democracy is like a boy and, of the same way whom sometimes there is to shake to a boy, I think that there is to shake to the country to wake up it.

- You are thinking about the state of emergency, emergency situation?

Indira agreed with the head. In fact, it did not look for advice on what decision to take, because he had already taken it the previous day. His Sanjay son had been mentioned it, but the idea did not come from him but from his protector Bansi Lal, the plump head of government of Haryana that had provided him lands to erect the factory. According to Bansi Lal and Sanjay, there were at least fifty politicians in the country that was necessary to eliminate of the public life. First, by all means, it was J. P. Narayan.

To declare the state of emergency, emergency situation was one fled forwards...

Pero what option had left to Indira? Between a dishonourable exit and the state of emergency, emergency situation, preferred the latest.

- I want to do it everything of an impeccable way from the point of view legal-needed prime minister.

- Déjame to study the constitutional aspect. Dame hours and I will say something to you.

- By favor, that is fast - she requested to him.

Ray went and returned to three of afternoon. It had passed several hours reviewing the text of the India Constitution, and the North American also.

- Under article 352 of the Constitution - he said to him to Indira-, the government can impose the state of emergency, emergency situation if there is risk of external aggression or internal interferences .

- The call of J. P. Narayan to that the army and the police they rebel is not sufficiently serious an internal threat?

- Yes, it is it.

- Then, when doing it, they have fallen in its own trap.

- In effect. They have given in silver tray the justification to you that you need to suspend the parliamentary activity and to impose the state of emergency, emergency situation.

There was a silence. The eyes of Indira shone in the dark.

It lacked a requirement, the company/signature of the president of the Republic, but this one was an ally and Indira did not doubt its loyalty.

- You accompany Me to the palace by the president? - it asked to him Ray.

- We go.

With the document of four lines that the president signed that same night in the splendid Ashoka hall in the old palace the virrey, and that ratified the proclamation of the state of emergency, emergency situation, the greater democracy of the world one became a virtual dictatorship. The government of India was now authorized to arrest to people without previous order, to suspend to the civil rights and the liberties, to limit the right of interference of the courts already to impose the censorship.

Rajiv had been two days abroad, flying, and in one of the scales of its route, a great surprise when finding out by the press took of which the eve her mother had declared the state of emergency, emergency situation. Nobody had said nothing to him. The measurement hit its Pacific character and, although he was not a political man, seemed to him that it went against the democratic principles of the familiar tradition. Mainly, the one that worried to him was that her mother had wavered before her brother. It knew the ascending one that Sanjay had on its mother. For some dark reason, her mother was incapable to resist the emotional blackmail to which his brother had it put under. And the nobody best one than he knew Sanjay, its strongpoints, their limitations and the danger that could represent. For that reason between it was disturbed and it alarmed, and the idea of Sonia to go to Italy one season returned to make the rounds to him by the head.

- I do not know what is what we would have to do - Sonia- said to him. The behavior worries to me much about your brother. More and more it is put in policy.

It told him that Maneka was in Kashmir, where had sent it Sanjay by indication of Indira, since it feared that the girl, so loquacious, could reveal its intentions with respect to the declaration of the state of

emergency, emergency situation, that maintained in a total secret until their promulgation. To him it continued telling that the Sanjay eve been had reunited in the office of Indira until very late with Dhawan secretary and the second of the minister of the Interior.

- Sabes what did? They were being put in contact with local heads of government and they sent halting orders to them. They had one lists black of "enemies". The worse thing is not that, the worse thing is than they did it in name of your mother.

- I know that they stopped to J. P. Narayan at daybreak, I found out in the airport - Rajiv said, sighing. A patrol of the police took newlywed to it to the jail. It seems to be that Narayan could not believe it to it; it seemed to him inconceivable that mother had taken a so drastic measurement.

Sonia to him continued telling that to three of the dawn, Siddharta Shankar Ray, later to have helped Indira to finish the rough draft of the speech that was going to announce the state of emergency, emergency situation to the population, she had to leave when she crossed herself in the corridor Dhawan secretary, who said to him: "The measures are already taken to cut the electrical provision to main newspapers of the country and to close the courts."

- Ray remained of stone - Sonia- continued, and it was put furious. It requested that they woke up to your mother, who was exhausted after a so long day. Then, Sanjay left, that began to discuss with Ray. Sabes what it said to him? It said to him: You do not know to take a country!

- As if he knew! - the Vista said to Rajiv raising to the sky.

- The case is that it did not leave until she appeared your mother, that it was astonished because she did not know anything of those orders of halting. It had given your brother them. It requested to him that it waited for minutes to him, and went away to speak with Sanjay.

- The one that Sanjay looks for with those measures is to protect itself to itself and its business, doing of seeing that also it protects to mother of the undertaken legal actions against her.

- Your mother can have authoritarian temptations, but she has principles. When it left the room in which it had been locked in with Sanjay, it had the red eyes of to have cried. It said to him to Ray who the newspapers would have electricity and any court would not be closed.

- But it is lie - Rajiv- said. Today there are no newspapers in the street because they have cut the light to them. Again, Sanjay has left with hers.

It had been a great success of Indira if the state exception had lasted just a short time, and mainly if Sanjay had not grown like a power in the shade. The first day, when the minister of Information, I. K. Gujral, a respected, cultured and smooth man in its modales, arrived at the office of Akbar Road, Sanjay ordered to him that all the bulletins of the news were put under to him before their diffusion. Usha, sitting in its office, was witness of the scene.

- That is not possible - the man said to him, the bulletins are confidential.

- Then of now in ahead, it will have to be possible.

Indira was in the quicio of the door and listened to the conversation:

- What happens? - it asked.

The minister repeated his explanation.

- I understand - Indira- said to him, if you do not want dárselos to Sanjay, I suggest an employee to you of your ministry brings me to me all the mornings so that it can see them.

The minister left with the firm intention to submit his retirement application, but he was summoned again in the evening to which already they called "the palace", that was not but the residence of Indira Gandhi. Sanjay requested to him that it expelled from the country the correspondent of the BBC, a journalist very known and very wanted call Mark Tully, by to have sent a chronicle that "distorted" the facts.

- It is not task of the minister of Information of arresting foreign correspondents - Gujral answered to him.

When followed act Sanjay reproached to him that the speech of its mother had not been spread in its integrity by the television, the minister lost the patience:

- If you want to speak with me, you will have to learn to do it with courtesy - it said to him. You are younger than my son and to you to not I must explanations you.

It did not give time him to submit its retirement application. Indira called that same night to him to release it of its position "because the ministry of Information needed to which it could take the subjects with greater firmness given the circumstances".

The new minister promulgated hardest laws of censorship, including the prohibition to mention to Nehru and Gandhi in his declarations in favor of the freedom of press, which did not stop being a cruel irony of history. One by one, the representatives of the international press were invited to leave.

The only one of its ministers whom the necessity questioned to impose the state of emergency, emergency situation was released of the position and replaced by Bansi Lal, the head of Government of Haryana and first in suggesting the necessity to impose the state of emergency, emergency situation... To the twenty-nine years, Sanjay, by the mere fact of being the son of its mother, was on way to become the most powerful man of India.

The press censorship was harder than the one than the British had imposed during the fight by independence. At least, at that time, the newspapers were authorized to announce the names of which they had been arrested and the jails where it had been locked in to them. Now people found out by rumors from where were their wanted beings, almost all members of the opposition. Approximately one hundred thousand people

were arrested without position some or judgment. The conditions of halting of the great majority were so unhealthy that twenty-two stopped died in their dirty and jammed cells. If the railway badly kept the memory from the way in which strike had been squashed, now no layer of the population was out of danger. The sounded arrests more were perhaps those of the maharanies of Jaipur and Gwalior, old princess whom they led in his respective divided states opposed Indira, and who was locked up in infame jail of Tihar, in Delhi, next to criminals and prostitutas. Gayatri Devi, the elegant maharani of Jaipur, complained the dirt, neither of the promiscuity nor of the stench. One complained the racket solely that made the other prey and it asked to him a friend who sent wax corks to him for the ears.

By another part, the Parliament granted to Indira the same immunity which the president of the Republic and the governors of the states enjoyed. Of retroactive way, prime minister was acquitted of the positions of electoral fraud that weighed on her, and which they had been the leading one of the present state of emergency, emergency situation.

Indira, again guided by its instinct of survival, was with the absolute control of the country, now more than ever, although the manipulation of the democratic mechanisms was winning him an increasing number of enemies, inside and outside India. But in the first times, the state of emergency, emergency situation was seen with lightening on the one hand of the population, mainly the urban middle-class. Until the own Sonia, when it was going to take to the boy to the school, it had the impression to be in another city, not in Nueva Delhi of the last times. The ambient one was of an amazing tranquillity. There were no traffic cuts , neither manifestations, nor seated, nor fits of violence against its mother-in-law. Until the taxis and the conductors of rickshaws they lead in the correct side of the highway. Like her, a great part of the population was contented of which strikes and the disturbances had stopped, and to be able to enjoy a certain peace. In the cities, people celebrated that it was possible again to be walked without fear, since the criminality index descended in perforated due to the greater police presence and to the hardening of the law. The civil employees, conscious of the new atmosphere of seriousness, made their days complete and worked with greater effectiveness. The trains and the airplanes were precise, for lightening of the users, and also of Rajiv, that now could enjoy a more stable familiar life, without the delays of the last times, that made him return to house to impossible hours. Enormous posters with the photo of Indira decorated roundhouses and seats: "The difference between the chaos and the order", said eslogan next to its photo.

The idea that Indira had recovered La Paz and the order in the territory gypsy dialect also in the foreigner. Usha, its private secretary, was the one in charge to bring and to read or to point the articles of the international press that they had to do with the India present time. Often it read the holders or the letters that appeared published sitting in the table of the dining room. "The authoritarian government ample desire acceptance in India", said a holder of The New York Times. But there were other openly

hostile holders who caused disquieting cautious crossings of between Sanjay and its mother. A day, Usha was single in its office when Sonia entered. The two women were appraised much.

- Usha, I believe that it is better than you do not read anything of the critics that leave in the foreign press in front of all, I do not say it by mami - as now it called to Indira- but because I do not want that they watch to you bad.

- Thanks to warn to me - Usha said to him, that also it had noticed that the atmosphere had changed and was afraid of the influence of Sanjay on its mother.

In India they could silence to the voices critics, but not abroad. Dorothy Norman, the old friend of the soul of Indira, was openly hostile with her. It reunited companies of North American personalities - the writer Noam Chomsky, the tennis player Arthur Ashe, the Nobel prize Linus Pauling, pediatria Youngest child Spock, etc. - to publish a text in the press deploring the hard measures of the state of emergency, emergency situation and demanding its rise. Between the signers, and for greater humiliation of Indira, it appeared Allen Ginsberg, the poet who had known in London when she had been going to inaugurate the tribute to Nehru and who years later she had sung the sadness of the refugees of Bangladesh. That hurt to him. The correspondence between both stopped, and it would not be started again later up to four years. Her other friend, Pupul Jayakar, faced Indira when she returned of trip: " How it is possible that you, the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, you allow this" Indira was not expected it and it remained petrified. Nobody dared to defy it openly.

- You do not know the gravity of which it is happening - it responded to him. You do not know complots that exists against me. TO J.P. it has never liked that she is prime minister. It has still not discovered his true paper. What wants to be? A martyr? Santo? So that it does not accept that it is not more than a politician and who wants to be prime minister ? - it answered to him.

Indira communicated to him that its intention was to only maintain the state of emergency, emergency situation during two months , and that of all ways that time was going to take advantage of to send it a program of twenty points to remove to the country from the subdevelopment. Between those measures, there were two that were revolutionary: the ilegalización of the enslaved work and the cancellation of the debts that the poor men maintained with the moneylenders of the villages.

Pupul realized of which he was useless to discuss with Indira. The only thing that could make era listen to it so that her friend felt frees to drain their heart with somebody of confidence. Pupul knew and knew it well the single thing that it felt. Although it was in deep discord with her, decided to stay close.



## 19

Indira had the intention to announce the aim of *Emergency*, as the state of emergency, emergency situation were known, the 15 of August of 1975, he himself day and in he himself place in which its father, twenty-eight years before, it had made the famous speech of independence: "The moment, rarely offered by history Arrives, when a town leaves entering the future the past, when a time finishes, when the soul of a nation, long asphyxiated, returns to find its expression..." At that time historical, those words had left it like paralyzed of emotion. It had declared the correspondent of the BBC: "It already knows, when one goes away of an end from pain to another one pleasing, one remains like entumecido. The freedom is something so great that it costs to assimilate it."

Now, while its car circulated around the wide Nueva avenues Delhi, of where the nomadic paupers and cows had mysteriously disappeared - he was one of the miraculous effects of the order imposed by the state of emergency, emergency situation, and one went to the Red Fort to give back the freedom to the town, that freedom that had been forced to kidnap, its head of protocol notified to him that shocked it deeply. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, its friend, the hero who it had restituted in the presidency of Bangladesh, had been overthrown in a military coup. But that was not the worse thing: Sheikh, its woman, three children, two daughters-in-law and two nephews had been passed to knife. The coup participants had made sure that a Rahman dynasty did not survive.

Indira was devastated. "I noticed that there was something rare at the moment in that began its speech - would count its Pupul friend who was between the multitude of the Red Fort. The timbre of its voice was forced as if it was trying to suppress powerful emotions. That voice had exiled the capacity to affect people." Pupul was listening to kindly the speech, in which Indira spoke of freedom, the necessity to make hard decisions, of the slight knowledge of sacrifice and service, of the anger, of the faith, of the democracy... but nor a word on the end of the state of emergency, emergency situation.

Pupul went to see it at night and it found it in shock state. Indira was convinced that the company it was implied in those deaths (what turned out to be certain). And it did not want to finish like Beyond, it had recently repeated to the leader British Labour Party member Michael Foot. It thought that the one of Bangladesh had been the first link in a chain of complots to destabilize the south of Asia and to change the ideological color of its governments. It was convinced that she would be the next victim. The head of the Intelligence service had confirmed to him that had discovered several conspiracies to eliminate it. According to Pupul, she was paranoica, it suspected all, each shade hid an enemy.

- Whom I can trust? - Indira- asked to him. My Rahul grandson has the same age that the one of the son of Sheikh Rahman. Tomorrow it could touch the turn him. They want to destroy as it is, to me and to my family.

It was the first time that Indira realized of which she was not only she who was in danger by the fact to be prime minister. All their family, including their grandsons, was in center of the morning call, thought. Was prisoner in a vicious circle that no longer knew how to break. About those conditions, it thought that it was not the moment for suspending the state of emergency, emergency situation. On the contrary, it was necessary to take measures to protect itself intensifying the haltings without judgment and the service operations of Intelligence.

Indira felt safe between the multitudes, but inside its house, now strongly guarded, it began to feel in danger. The truth is that it was ill of fear, tired by the exercise of the power, worn away by as much fight, discouraged by the lack of results. She was an intensely patriotic woman and it had an absolute faith in the destiny of India. But account occurred of which its leftist policy had been incapable to remove to the country from its delay. How to make of India a modern, prosperous and strong country? It did not know since it formulates to use, except the hard hand, that went against its own tradition. It had put India, to her family and itself in a alley del that did not know to leave.

Very instinctively one became towards its children. The greater one, Rajiv, could not helpful be to him. It had expressed several times its discord with the Emergency, and it had also done it in public, and whenever it could its friends in front of. The contact between both was reduced so much that he, that he worked much and he was little in house, found out the trips and the decisions of his mother by newspapers. In addition, Indira knew that it was not in favor of the work to take pity itself of her. Until Sonia it had been felt sorry of an old political rival whom it had given with its bones in the jail in the first big wave of haltings. "It must be terrible for you who your father is in the jail. Really that I feel much", it had said to him in a reception to the son of this politician, and the phrase arrived at ears from the others, that did not take in making it circulate around the mentideros of Nueva Delhi. Indira did not keep resentment to them for that reason; it had always thought that Rajiv was not used for the policy and that neither it nor Sonia were able to understand the deep reasons that had taken it to make that decision. On the other hand, it knew that Sonia insisted on going to Italy one season with the children until the situation was standardized again. Nothing infects so much as the fear...

It was left the small one, Sanjay, its favorite. It saw plenty of energy, fort, faithful it. Arrogant, certain, able to put the leg like anybody, but a son whom could trust, that he was next to her and who he assumed his problems. and that, thought she, always could control. In addition, there was another reason, that nothing had to do with the sentimentality of a mother. Sanjay was ferociously anti-communist and defended a liberal policy, that it fomented the private initiative and the enterprising spirit of the Indians. Its experience with the Maruti had convinced to him still more of the necessity to free to the country of as much bureaucratic restriction. Indira thought that it could use his son to open the economy and to give a right turn. And not

only by pure conviction, but by political necessity. In effect, radical Communists in their party who pleaded “to eliminate the property deprived like fundamental right” in the Constitution, among other measures of estalinista cut had infiltrated that they wanted to impose. Indira had stopped them the feet alleging that any short cut that did not respect the democratic procedure was dangerous. But they constituted a threat susceptible to cause a split in the Congress. Leaning in his darling I go Sanjay, thought that it could resist to them.

Indira was as much scared of that it happened something to him to his son who requested to change to him of quarter. “I do not want that you follow here, so near the main entrance and of the street, it is not a safe place”, said to him. “Better you change yourselves to the quarter of the bottom of the corridor, to the contiguous room to mine.” To a friend who asked the reason to him of that change, it responded to him: “I am not very well, I sleep in my room and Sanjay in the one of alongside. If it happens something at night to me, I can warn to him in followed.” Reality was that Indira surrounded with Sanjay like with one of those villas of pashmina of Kashmir that as much it liked and fairy to protect of cold that felt in the soul, without realizing of which that son was his greater problem and, in a certain sense, its greater threat.

Sanjay had remained without money and, convinced that no longer it would leave no Maruti vehicle the factory, it was selling the structure like scrap iron. It had left in the stockade the concessionaires who had become indebted themselves with the banks to construct showy stores and that now were forced to sell their properties to pay those loans. In case outside little, Sanjay commanded to both arrest only concessionaires who had osadía to demand the advance that had paid.

With the disaster of the Maruti, the cars had let interest to him. Now it gave him to fly, like its brother. Before the Emergency, the title had removed from private pilot and as it liked the speed, immediately it was become fond of to the acrobatic flight. Their weakness by more and more fast apparatuses and the excess of confidence that it had in his own abilities scared to most of their well-known and friends, who were scared to fly with him. Maneka finished being its only passenger.

Sanjay needed an excuse to operate of parallel way its mother. In order to justify its power extra-constitutionalist, Indira decided to put to him to the front of a dying organization, the Youth Congress (the youthful wing of the Party of the Congress) and in a ceremony in Chandigarh, the ultramodern capital of Punjab designed by Him Corbusier, was named member of the Executive Committee. But all interpreted the subliminal message: Sanjay was officially the heir of Indira. Prime minister, that had been ruthless with the princes because they put in front the birth to the talent, succumbed now to the same temptation and restored the dynasty.

Rajiv and Sonia attended astonished and displeased to the height of Sanjay, confused and often shyly other people's. The press labeled to him as “Mesías”, “the Sun” or “the voice of the young people and

the reason". They always saw him surrounded by flatterers who called chamchas, which in hindi means spoon, alluding to the curved movement that demands the manipulation of that place setting. They were individual flexible under a docile aspect, capable in the manipulation, without real knowledge of the challenges of the government, with little education and formation, like Sanjay. A mixture of politicians, friends and killers. The only thing that interested to them was to remove party to its relation with the power. They began being in charge to revitalize the coffers of the Youth Congress organizing itself in brigades that demanded donations, of intimidatory way almost always. The retailers of Delhi complained to Rajiv or Sonia of which the boys of the Youth Congress extorted to them. But the protests of Rajiv fell in broken coat.

- You are not created the lies that people say - his brother responded to him invariably.

The case is that nobody seemed to take responsibility of the bad thing, only of the good thing.

Because also there was something good in the intentions of Sanjay, that, immediately after being named in that position, it added four points more to the program of its mother, who he himself was in charge to carry out. The four points were: to fight against the illegal chabolismo in a campaign to embellish the cities; to eradicate the illiteracy and the system of the dowry and to foment the familiar planning.

In theory, nobody was in discord with those measures, mainly the fight against the overpopulation, caused partly by the success of the health programs that had managed to reduce to much the infantile mortality and that had made increase the life expectancy of twenty-seven to forty and five years in a pair of decades. In sum, there were more people living more reproductive years. The progresses in agriculture, the industry and the education could not follow the rate of the demography. There was more wealth, but also more poverty. More education, but also more illiterate. "Today, if a million jobs are created, already we have to ten million looking for those positions - there was this Sanjay-. Don't mention it they serve to the industrial development and the increase of the agricultural production if the population continues growing to the present rate." It was right, thus was no way to leave the poverty. It was not in the idea, that it was obvious, but in its putting in practice where Sanjay was by badly way, obtaining to completely discredit the passage and state of emergency, emergency situation, to its mother.

In the end they were the poor men, to whom one assumed that the state of emergency, emergency situation had to help, those that suffered more. The men of Sanjay chose sterilization like more appropriate method to reduce the population of India. The other methods of familiar planning had given poor results. The pill was not available still and the diaphragm was impossible to use for farmers who lived without privacy some. During one season you reduce them crystallized the hope to control the natality. At the villages elephants with shipments arrived from you

reduce that they had gratuitously to be distributed to people, but the children discovered that he was very amused to inflate them and to tie them to palitos to play, so that they intercepted them. To anybody the irony escaped to him of eslogan of the government who said that the familiar planning produced happy children... Masculine sterilization was the cheapest, effective and safe method. In addition, there was money of the West to carry out those programs.

Sanjay began to cross the country, animating to the local heads of government to go beyond which they did the others. "The head of Haryana has obtained sixty thousand operations in three weeks, to see how many you obtain!", he said to them. The objectives to reach announced the different heads from district, who were compensated if they exceeded them, or the other way around, they were transferred or degraded if they did not obtain them. A system thus fomented the abuse authority. Modest civil employees of the government had to be put under the bistoury of the surgeon to receive slow payments. To the truck drivers and the conductors of rickshaws the permission of circulation to less did not renew to them of than they showed a sterilization certificate. The same condition was applicable to the chabolistas that asked for a title deed of their huts to regularize their situation. Called anthropologist Lee Schlesinger was witness of how, after a visit lightning of Sanjay Gandhi to the village where it made his investigations, the campaign began. Local civil employees prepared lists of "candidates", that is to say, those that had or three or four children, and days later appeared light trucks of the police for llevárselos to the next center of health the more where, in exchange for 120 rupias, a kitchen oil tin or a transistor, left sterilized. Later, some men, when they found out that the light truck was on way, ran fleeing to mountains. Others nevertheless were made operate twice to obtain more of a prize.

In the cities, the fear seized of people. Delhi remained without workers, which was unusual in a city where people went of the field to look for work. The immigrants returned to their towns to avoid the fatal incision of their genitals. In November of 1975, the celebration of the birthday of Nehru, who free included meriendas for hundreds of children, had to cancel itself because the mothers refused to send to their children men by fear to that the "doctors of Sanjay Gandhi" sterilized them. Soon, the official certificate of sterilization became an indispensable requirement to draw for the necessities of the daily life.

He was inevitable which a campaign therefore ran into immediately with a strong resistance, mainly when extending the false rumor that sterilization led the impotence. In order to fight against that resistance, the government it established a system of quotas by which the pays of police, professors, doctors and nurses were paid to them only after they motivated to certain number of people to be put under a vasectomy. As she could not be of another way, the victims of this ruthless policy were the weakest, poorest, marginalized social groups more like the untouchable or certain Muslim and tribal communities that in principle they were those that

always had supported unconditionally to Indira. They did not understand how its goddess, to that always they had voted, could punish to them thus. Era that one the prize that received by their loyalty?

The Indians were not customary to that the State dictated the size to them of its families. India was not a dictatorship like China, where the decisions taken from the peak could be executed to the force. That dictatorial tradition did not exist. Here, the children were a very valuable resource, something as well as “ the social security of the parents”, because from small they worked in the fields, the factories, the textile factories, or begging in the streets. The families were great because to more children more arms and, like consequence, more resources. For the poor farmers, workers and paupers without home, the possibility of having children almost represented the only act of individual freedom del who could enjoy in the life. To clear to the poor men the pleasure to them to make and to have children was to clear the only thing to them whom they had. Sure, that could not see it Sanjay, whose heart was blinded to the suffering of the poor men. It did not have experience in governing either, in the art to manipulate to civil employees and bureaucrats. When trying to shake the stratified administrative hierarchy to make it effective, using methods as the threat of transfer, the doubtful incentives to sterilization or the threat of being investigated by the fiscal authorities, which obtained was that that tacit brotherhood of bureaucrats, that stayed united by invisible bows centuries ago, was still united more to defend itself of the attacks. On the one hand they flattered to him, by another one boycotted to him. And it was too ingenuous to realize it.

As far as its mother, it chose not to think what they told him. Completely moved away of the reality by the same cut of flatterers of its son who assured to him that the information of abuses were based on rumors nonverified, Indira saw the critics as personal attacks, and discarded them with a stroke of the pen.

- People exaggerate much - she said to him to Rajiv when they were crossed in house, becoming echo of the words of Sanjay-. It is not necessary to be believed what they say.

- I finish returning of Bhopal - Rajiv- insisted, and there the Muslims are terrified. They say that the Hindus manipulate the campaign in his against... It is necessary to tranquilize that people before they turn it a conflict between communities.

- The one that there is to do is to limit the population as it is. There is no exit for India if we did not obtain it.

Rajiv also realized of which to speak with its mother was impossible. It did not admit that nobody contradicted it. All it interpreted it in political key of vendetta, or supernatural key, which was specially worrisome. The influence of its professor of yoga, the gurú Dharendra Brahmachari, was greater than ever. The man took advantage of the solitude of prime minister. It got to have a easier access to Indira than its own Rajiv son. That proximity to the power, knew it to take advantage of as

much to its favor, because during the state of emergency, emergency situation it was kneading a small fortune, that allowed him to buy a small plane. In the city he was well-known like "flying santo". Rajiv and Sonia detested it because they realized much that was taking advantage of Indira. They had to him been observing: first it scared it speaking to him of complots supernatural against her and Sanjay, and next it convinced it so that it accepted to recite certain mantras and to protect itself that which they looked for its destruction. Of that way, it maintained a remarkable influence of which Indira was not able to get rid. When Sonia and Rajiv tried to put it in guard, she was locked in in one of its famous silencios. Sonia could not support the presence of the gurú in house, that demanded food and drink at will. He was more and more fat, fruit of its voracious appetite, and lacked modales.

- Is guarro! - they said disgusted when seeing to eat it.

- I do not know how my mother holds to him... - Rajiv- said. It lives locked up in an ivory tower, and if their only contact with the world is Sanjay and the gurú, we are made haste!

- Vayámonos to Italy, really, Rajiv, we give to the children a little normal life.

When they communicated it, the expression of the face of Indira changed completely, as much that immediately they regreted it at least to have mentioned. They included/understood, even before Indira had pronounced a word, that that was going to be difficult, not to say impossible.

- I understand You, Sonia, I understand that you are fed up to live in this atmosphere - Indira- said him, that you must listen to all those infundadas critics that are spilled on me, I understand that you have desire from marcharte to Italy... But you imagine what if would say here now you go away? They would interpret it like a desertion, like a dark maneuver mine... "Offer to the children to Europe, soon will follow she, is preparing fled his", I can hear what they will say...

- It is that we have thought that that is something that we can do now that the children are small - said Sonia-. Soon it will be impossible...

- You cannot wait for a little?

Sonia watched Rajiv and bent the head. It was pensativo. Sonia guessed the tear that had to feel on the inside. Indira continued:

- It is that it is so bad moment...

- I understand It, and the latest that we would want would be perjudicarte - said the Italian to him getting up itself, before at least from which Rajiv took the word.

- At difficult moments, the family must be united.

It is important that people, that the town perceives it.

Sonia made a gesture of approval with the head.

- You do not worry, mami, we remained - it said to him with an understanding smile.

What it was not mentioned in the conversation was equal of important. Aside from fear to that it happened something, Sonia wanted to

go one season because she was very fed up with the behavior of his Maneka sister-in-law, that contemptuously labeled it as "Italian" and which consorte to the shelter of its husband acted with a worthy insolencia of a queen, deus ex- machina of the state of emergency, emergency situation. On the other hand, Indira either did not mention the aversion that produced to him to separate of its grandsons, to that adored. It played with them, sometimes it took to its office, one was proud to present/display them to people. They were its great passion. The truth is that Indira had become one matriarca so possessive and protective as it had been its Motilal grandfathers Nehru, the old patriarch of the clan.



## 20

She was an individual poor man, with the soles of its sandals spent by the five days of long walk that had taken in arriving until the office of Akbar Road, that was on the awares of Indira on the reality of the abuses committed in name of the Emergeney. He was a young teacher of a school that came from a lost village. Man innocent, idealistic and fighter, that came to count to Indira how they had sterilized to him to the force, in spite of only having a daughter. The police had reduced to him to blows and it had taken to him to a clinic next to other neighbors of the village. It told to the desperation of its wife and all the family by already not being able to have more progenitura, mainly a son man. It spoke of whole towns that the police surrounded at night to persecute the men and to sterilize them. For the first time, Indira listened to of alive voice the testimony of a victim of its policy and left affected the encounter. "Yes - it admitted, perhaps Rajiv and so many others have something of reason, after all." It was horrified reason why it counted the teacher on other professors who had been struck by not being able to be able to fulfill their quota of volunteers for the vasectomy. Suddenly, the truth assaulted it with all its crudity by mouth of that brave and huesudo little man. More excuses did not fit: "It is necessary to send an urgent and sharp message to all the regional heads of government - it ordered its secretary saying that any individual surprised in harassment act while carries out the program of familiar planning will be punished." Finally Indira reacted.

Sonia thought then that she would adopt some measurement to stop the feet to Sanjay, but she was mistaken. It did not do anything. "How can the love by its son blind it as much? - it was asked. Will happen to Me the same to me with Rahul"

- I hope that no, that you never lose the objectivity - said Rajiv to him, that it more hardly supported to every time the situation.

It was already practically spoken neither with its brother nor with Maneka. It detested the methods and the style of Sanjay and felt impotent to change the things. Impotent before its mother: "The good thing of Sanjay is that it obtains results", heard say it Rajiv, alluding to almost the four million Indians who had been sterilized in the first five months of the state of emergency, emergency situation. To that rate the goal to reach twenty-three million in three years was in appearances to be fulfilled, for that reason Indira was, at heart, satisfied. The own Rajiv, thanks to the relations that it had with his colleagues and in the company, realized before its own mother, of the disaster that was approached. He knew that the accountants of histories, the begging wise people and the fortune tellers narrated in the four corners of this continent country, sometimes distorting and exaggerating the facts to give a épica dimension them, the abuses and sufferings that the sterilization campaign had untied. The terror that invoked those histories and the insecurity that they generated broke the confidence that people had deposited in her governors. The state of emergency,

emergency situation began to become against the power, against Indira. But prime minister did not realize it.

- My brother and my mother are betraying the legacy of the family  
- Rajiv to Sonia repeated, with a desperate tone of voice.

One was caught in a situation without exit. It could not go away, and to remain disgusted to him. It did not like that they identified to him yet what it was happening. Even though to have one of the most aseptic professions of the world, he was inevitable that the colleagues and people in general put to him in he himself coat that its brother. It did not matter to him to face Sanjay...

- You are betraying the grandfathers! - it loosen several times to him to the face.

- We are modernizing this country! - Sanjay talked back.

- You are lying down to people against! ... The aim does not justify means.

But to say to him the same to its mother, was to him impossible to Rajiv. An Indian son does not face his ancestors. A certain submission to the figure of the parents is a characteristic that comprises of deeper the cultural heap of India. Sonia knew it, for that reason she tried not to throw more firewood to the fire. It trusted that the passage of time would finish fixing the things. Fleeing from the latent tension, they took refuge in its rooms of the bottom of the house, participating the minimum in the common life. No longer they felt that that home belonged to them, as it happened before. The writer Kushwant Singh, an assiduous visitor of the house, arrived a day to see Maneka while Rajiv and Sonia celebrated the birthday of one of their children: "I occurred to account of that the children and each one of the women occupied moved away places of the house and which they had little to do with others." The fights of the dogs reflected the tension of their inhabitants. Two Sanjay and great Irish Maneka had lebreles "like donkeys", according to counted the writer, that it was several minutes paralyzed of terror in the hall when they left him with a tea cup in the hand next to the dogs. It was Indira that saved to him of that situation llevándoselos to the garden. In resistance, Sonia had a dog called sausage Reshma, and Zabul, a Afghan bellwether. When the dogs got involved, Sonia, horrified, took part to separate them, while Maneka contemplated the scene, imperturbable because she knew that their dogs were stronger.

In spite of the latent aggressiveness, inside the home of the Gandhi they tried to flee from the direct confrontation. The communication was reduced to written notes, always with courtesy, to express complaints and discrepancies: "You left the loose dog within house Yesterday, please you do not return it to do, that is scared the children." Maneka read the note, but it did not make case.

Rajiv and Sonia found support in their friends, between whom it was Sabine and his husband, as well as an Italian marriage just arrived, Ottavio and Maria Quattrochi, very dicharacheros and likeable and with those who often left to have supper. Also a pilot of Indian Airlines, an Indian

marriage made up of a businessman were member of that group and a decorator very friend of Sonia, a journalist and his publishing woman and some marriage more. Sonia ed \*\*\*reflx mng itself much with his countryman Ottavio Quattrochi, an experienced businessman, representative of great Italian companies, and that were equipped with a fine sense of humor. The friends helped to support the disagreeable familiar situation.

Sonia found out of which it was happening in the Old Delhi by a friend India who warned it by telephone. It said to him that their driver and his cook, both Muslims, had requested him aid, knowing full well that was related to the family of Indira. Both were horrified because, according to they said, "the men of Sanjay were devastating the district". They wanted that her "lady" interyielded to save her houses. Sonia did not know anything.

- We are Always the last ones in finding out to us. You already know how it is the situation in house, I do not know if we will be able to do something.

When it investigated, one found out that Sanjay had ordered the demolition of the district, a labyrinth of side streets, old buildings in ruins and unhealthy shacks. A dirty, congested and contaminated district but with soul of old city. It comprised of its program of "embellecimiento of cities". The neighbors had rebelled themselves, sending stones, bricks and until cocktails molotov against the excavators. A crowd of women had surrounded the clinic by familiar planning having coreando eslóganes and threatening to the workers sterilizing them. The police did not take in arriving and dispersed to the multitude with tear gases. One untied to a pitched battle that was settled with wounded hundreds of and a ten of deads, between that was a Muslim boy of thirteen years who watched the disturbances as if he was a film. In the end the police imposed the touch of is so that the demolitions could continue. When Sonia told all this him, Rajiv raised the roof.

- How is possible that my mother allows that they destroy that zone, one of the areas that same she protected when the disturbances of the Partition?

This time, Rajiv dared to say it to it to its mother:

- The program of embellecimiento of cities is causing an enormous malaise between the population, the poor men are forced to evacuate its shacks without time to gather its things... Hundreds of thousands of shacks have been devastated, call to us until the employees of our friends so that we do something...

Indira listened without hardly saying nothing to him. Rajiv continued:

- The grandfathers convinced those neighbors, in his majority Muslim, so that they remained and they did not flee to Pakistan. That, you know it, mother. It promised protection to them. And now its grandson is expelling them to woods!

Indira sent to call to Sanjay, that immediately it denied the accusations of his brother.

- Stupidities! - the young person intervened. To all the evacuated ones alternative lodging is provided to them.

Indira believed to him.

- In this country, there is a great resistance to the modernization - it whispered.

It always believed to Sanjay in street or policy subjects. It believed to Rajiv when something spoiled in house; only then its word was worth gold.

What there was this Sanjay was a truth by halves. In the Old Delhi, more than seventy thousand people, between whom were the cook and the driver of the friend of Sonia, they had been forced gun end to enter trucks to be lead to its new "residences", a eufemismo to designate very small parcels of earth surrounded by a wire fence to the other side of the Yamuna river, to about twenty kilometers of the city. Each family had right to a lot of bricks to be constructed her new refuge and to cards of rationing to buy materials and food. But while, they did not have ceiling to take refuge.

In the end, who made see Indira the truth on the barbarisms that were happening was their Pupul friend. It returned scandalized of Benarés, the sagrada city to borders of the Ganges. Amazing, the wonderful thing of Benarés, is that the life practically followed equal from the century I SAW a.C. Nevertheless, Pupul had seen with its own eyes how excavators destroyed old buildings to widen Vishwanath Gali, a narrow, serpenteante side street, paved with old stones of river that shone of one slides produced by the feet of innumerable generations of travelling and which it crossed the heart of the city. A street where the cows had preference from the dawn of the times, and that crossed santones with the body covered with ash and the entangled hair, farmers just married with their women of the arm, grandmothers with their grandsons and old who came very far from arriving at the temple of Vishwanath, the gentleman of the Universe. Considered most sacred of the world by the Hindu faithfuls, that temple lodged a polished granite stone, the appraised relic more of Benarés, lingam original, a fálico emblem that symbolizes the vital power of the God Shiva, representative of the force and the regenerative power of the nature. When prosternar themselves and when offering to him water of the Ganges, the Hindu faithfuls expressed therefore one of the oldest forms of the Hindu religious fervor. Benarés, and the temple of Vishwanath in individual, was the center of that cult. There was lingams and yonis (equivalent the feminine one) in all parts, the temples, the small altars embedded in the facades of the buildings, in the steps of ghats, those monumental stone stairs that sink in the borders like gigantic roots, sealing therefore the union of Benarés with most sacred of the rivers. All the mornings since the man had memory, thousands of Hindu greased with devotion the surface polished of lingams with paste of sándalo or oil. They braided crowns of jazmín and claveles of India that placed with care around the turgid stone next to petals of rose and bitter leaves of bilva, the preferred tree of Shiva.

- We want to widen the side street so that cars can circulate - the delegate of the municipal corporation said to him to Pupul that accompanied it. Pupul remained frost.

- And what you are going to do with the temples, the Gods, all these altarcitos?

- We will change Them of site, is predicted a concrete structure to put them all inside.

- But you cannot, are the guardians of the city, you cannot change them thus as well as. ..

Pupul was so indignant that it did not find the words. The man became the crazy person. Soon it added, explaining itself:

- It is that Sanjay wants to embellish the city.

- But it is not possible to be played with Benarés, is sagrada of the sagradas cities... It is not possible to be played with the faith of people.

Pupul understood that he was useless to try to convince the delegate, that it was limited to fulfill instructions. Affected and nervous, it requested to him that it suspended all activity of demolition until returned to Delhi and spoke with prime minister . The man acceded.

When Indira saw the photos of Pupul and listened to its story, "it jumped to the ceiling" according to its friend. "It had never seen it so infuriated. It offed-hook the telephone and it asked its secretary who put to him to the speech with the head of government of the state of Uttar Pradesh. It exploded when it spoke with him: " Is that you do not know what it is happening in Benarés? ", it asked to him, before ordering to him that it immediately went to see it Nueva Delhi. Soon it hung the apparatus and the face with the hands was covered: " What it is happening in this country. God mine, nobody tells nothing me."

When the head of the government of Uttar Pradesh found out of which they tried to do with Vishwanath Gali, it was speechless of estupefacción. It was not either to the current of which he was happening. Who had issued the orders? Everybody knew that they came from Sanjay, but its authority was diffuse and difficult to rake. It was impossible to obtain explanations hers. Rare time spoke in public, as soon as it gave interviews and when it did were laborious. Its company/signature never appeared in official papers. It was the shade that reigned in the dark of the state of emergency, emergency situation. The civil employees to subalter to us, in charge to fulfill their orders, redoubled of fervor to ingratiate themselves with him and interpreted the orders to their way still more being intransigentes of which he demanded himself to them. Many the power rose to them at the top and they became abrupt and uncontrollable tiránicos beings.

## 21

At the time of the Emergency, Rajiv happened of Avro to copilot of the Boeing 737, that of now in ahead would compose the thickness of the fleet of Indian Airlines. After one from its flights to Bombay, while it went to the hotel in the light truck of the company to spend the night, one long caravan of motos and cars of police, with the sirens ululando and the rotating light revolving lights illuminating the foggy air, forced its vehicle to stop. The unfolding was impressive. "VIP!", the driver said to him, alluding to the passage of an important personality. When it wanted to continue his way, a police turned aside to him towards an adjacent intersection. "Who is?", the driver asked the police.

- VVIP! - it responded to him. Shri Sanjay Gandhi!

Rajiv, seated in the back part, raised the eyes to the sky. Thus it circulated its brother, as if he was the most powerful man of India, although did not have formal authority neither in the Party nor in the government. The driver did not lose the occasion to bother his passenger:

- Small Brother happens, off the track older brother to the side streets... What seems to him?

- Thus is the policy! - Rajiv with humor, satisfied with not having responded at heart to comprise of that circus.

Prohibitive to the loss of heart caused by the critics of the opposition, Sanjay and Maneka they made tours by the country as if a real pair one was, supervising it everything, issuing to orders and instructions and being flattered by obsequiosos civil employees, ministers and regional heads of government. The press was in detail made echo of those trips. "Its image shines with own light", declared a weekly magazine. "Sanjay firmly is established in the hearts of people", said another holder. The reality was well different: at that time, Sanjay was perhaps the hated man more of India.

Test of its immense one to be able era for example that Bansi Lal, the plump head of government of Haryana and pal his, that had been named minister of Defense, before deciding to whom it would promote admiral, took to its two candidates before Sanjay so that this one entrevistase them. Or when Sanjay visited Rajastán and had to inspect five hundred arcs erected in its honor. A similar recibimiento hoped to him in Lucknow, and there it happened a very revealing incident of the dawn that emanated of its power. When it lost a sandal in the track of the airport, she was the very same head of government of Uttar Pradesh that was crouched, gathered it and was given reverencialmente it.

The family of Maneka, specially the mother, was itself catapult the estrellato. "Of being nobody one did not become the main lady of honor of the empress of India, Indira Gandhi - it remembers the writer Kushwant Singh-. It was made arrogant beyond of the imaginable thing." It knew a Sunday when, accompanied of its daughter, they went to visit to him. Both wanted to found a weekly review of information and entertainment and Sanjay had suggested went to see it to request advice to him and to involve

it in the project. Kushwant Singh accepted the order, flattered to be so next to Indira and its son. "I felt that Maneka demanded too much to Sanjay and that this one wanted to involve it in any activity that reduced the pressure that it exerted on him", the writer would say. The magazine, written, practically corrected and published by Singh, was a success, which gave to Maneka a power that it had not had before and a social relevance that made happy. Did not confirm the success of Surra, as its magazine were called, that was the worthy wife of the most influential man of the country? In house, that success was translated in a still more magnificent behavior. Compared with her, who was that Italian to that only it liked to cook or to remain in house? Now more than ever, to its brothers-in-law it made them feel its disdain. Not even the children got rid. A young member of the Congress was witness of a revealing scene of the character of "the first lady", as some called it. It sounded the telephone and this boy offered-hook, but immediately Maneka took off it of the hands. It was a call for its Rahul nephew. "Does not live any Rahul Here!", it exclaimed, simply because then it did not wish to be interrupted.

- How you can live thus? - it asked Rajiv and Sonia an intimate friend. So that you do not change yourselves to another house?

- I cannot do that to him to my mother - Rajiv answered.

It was certain, then at least could not. They saw that Indira was changing and to point to react. Sufficient information had filtered until her so that by aim it admitted the veracity of the abuses committed in name of the campaigns of his son. It began to doubt its advisors and to listen people of outside. Affected by the increasing wrath that felt to move between the town, no longer it found justification to follow with the repressive measures. Also they affected continuous requests to him of different personalities inside and outside from India to raise the state of emergency, emergency situation. Its uncle B. K. Nehru, ambassador in England, spoke to him frankly and without roundups of the bad image that now had the India, that no longer was considered a civismo light shining between the dictatorships of Asia.

Indira already had postponed the elections in two occasions, at the request of Sanjay, although the second time had done it grudgingly. It thought that to postpone them it was to send a mistaken signal to the society, as if it was scared to face people. It had proclaimed the state of emergency, emergency situation like transitory measurement, but it did not want to turn to India a dictatorship. The image of "benevolent dictator" who arrived to him from the foreigner disturbed much. What his father would say! Sometimes it seemed to him to listen to the voice of the deepest Nehru from of its being, being pushed it making a decision according to its conscience. In addition, Indira noticed that there was lost the intimate connection with that "extensive mass of India humanity", and wanted to recover it. It felt nostalgia of the multitudes, it needed to return to vibrate with the outcry and the love of the town. It missed its previous electoral successes... What far it was left the 1971 triumph tremendous!

Sanjay, like was to hope, final was against the aims of its mother.

- You are committing a terrible error - I sentenced. You can lose the elections, and what will happen then? The report which you have received from the Intelligence service assures that the Congress will lose...

- I do not entrust myself in those information - Indira- answered. The Intelligence service is infiltrated by Hindu extremists. They say what it comes to them in desire...

- You cannot hope before raising the state of emergency, emergency situation?

- Esperar to what?

- To that some political prisoners leave, to that the spirits calm. It is not that we are in against of the elections - Sanjay also spoke in name of its protectors and pals Bansi Lal and Dhawan secretary, who now was scared of being victims of possible retaliation... But he would be better to loosen to the opposition first and to wait for a year to that the problems forget and the rumors finish .

Indira remained it watching, in one of its silencios lengths, a thick silence that spoke of its determination with more forcefulness than if it had answered to him.

But this time Indira did not listen to him. On the following day, 18 of January of 1977, surprised all the nation announcing general elections after two months. "It will be an opportunity to clean the public life of as much confusion", declared. Sanjay was exhausted. It was the first time that her mother deprived of authority to him. It did it of new ordering the immediate liberation of all the political leaders and raising the press censorship. The opposition received those measures with distrust. At this point, they were not entrusted in Indira, they nourished suspicions on its deep motivation and were sure that one was some trap. But its old enemy J.P. Narayan, that had been stopped and locked up in a cell in the first times of the Emergency and that soon, for health reasons, had been authorized to return to house, confessed a friend of the Nehru: "Indira has been very brave. The one is a great step that it has given." Like him, many were not expected it.

The decision to act with as much rapidity, that it left overwhelmed Sanjay, was at heart an astute maneuver of an expert policy. One was to pillar by surprise to all the opposition, weak and fragmented, and not to give the opportunity them to organize itself. It was its better trick to gain those elections, because it did not have all with himself.

It wanted to think that the magic that had acted in other occasions also would act in this fight. It happened of the doubt to the conviction that the town continued wanting it, in spite of everything.

As always, it was sent to campaign with vigor, doing tours by all the country, sleeping little, traveling in any means of transport. Like in other occasions, it could have Sonia, always present, always arranged to help it to organize themselves and to make him the life easiest. Sonia felt sorry itself of his mother-in-law. It saw it exhausted persecuting a chimera: the affection and the veneration of the town. This time the seduction did not



work. Indira returned crestfallen of the meetings. It told Sonia who had listened to shouts against her, voices which they demanded its defeat, sometimes insults. It had seen people leave the concentrations, leaving it single forehead to a group more and more reduced of following faithfuls. It was called on to him to listen to many histories on the excesses of the sterilization program, on the tortures, the arbitrary arrests... It did not know if to be believed everything what they said, but it ended up realizing of which that privileged contact del that had enjoyed the town no longer existed. "I cannot support it - a day confessed. They have had to me locked up between these four walls." Sonia did not dare to say to him that she had not wanted to listen.

To swim con current debilitated to Indira and fell several times becomes ill, without being able to recover of a species of influenza that produced recurrent fevers to him. The blows that began to receive from their own companions of party sank it still more in the sinking. Suddenly, his minister of Agriculture, a well-known leader of the community of the untouchable ones, deserted of his rows to be united to the opposition. The political life of the country seemed to electrify itself. A panic wave crossed the rows of the Congress. Indira stayed impassible facing the gallery, but Sonia guessed the hurt thing that felt. That leader had been a personal friend, a route companion, a bastion of the party. Jagjivan Ram was called and had protested the immediate rise of the state of emergency, emergency situation. Later, Indira would discover that the true reason for which ram had given the back him was its opposition to the age limit that Sanjay wanted to impose to appear to the elections. To its sixty and eight years, ram - and many others were thus out of play. When Indira wanted to amend the problem, it already was too much behind schedule. Immediately later, a plethora of old comrades took he himself way and soon they followed the tráfugas. "What strange that you have shut up all these months... ", Indira said to Them, that it understood that the rats began to leave the boat... But did not know since the policy was done of treasons? Did not say Churchill who were three classes of enemies: the enemies, immediately; the enemies until death; and the party companions? What it hurt to him more was that her own aunt, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Nehru, left her political retirement and was sent to the rotation denouncing that Indira and the state of emergency, emergency situation "had destroyed" the democratic institutions. After making those declarations incendiary, it joined a coalition of competing parties that had formed under the abbreviations of Janata Party. For Indira, more than a treason, that it was a humiliation. It was then when it left herpes to him in the mouth that forced it to make its speeches with average face covered by the apron of his sari. "What it worries to me it is that soon I have left scars in the face", she said to him to Sonia while this one applied an ointment to him.

- I am tired of the policy - it confessed to him of sopetón, without drama, without exageración, almost without emotion.

To see Indira hurt in the soul caused that Sonia realized of which the high policy and the low passions were the two faces of a same world. It had never attracted to him, but now, when seeing its betrayed mother-in-law and suffering, it felt a total rejection. To its Pupul friend, Indira confessed to him: "I will fight these elections and soon I will resign. I am fed up. I cannot FIAR to me of anybody."

Before the fortification of the opposition, Sanjay again requested its mother whom it cancelled or at least it postponed the call. But it followed in her thirteen. His then son decided to appear like candidate to deputy to the Parliament by the electoral circumscription of Amethi, neighbor of the circumscription of his mother, Abrades Bareilly, in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It was territory of the Nehru and the Gandhi, where the victory was ensured. To gain a bench, Sanjay would be protected of the revenge of its innumerable enemies by the parliamentary immunity. Maneka and it were so ingenuous that in his first speech they praised the results of the sterilization campaign. They were booed by a group of infuriated women:

- You have turned to Us widows! - they shouted. Our husbands no longer are men!

Indira was with similar reactions all over the country. A speech his was interrupted by a farmer who increpó: "Everything what it tells us of his preoccupation on the well-being of the women is very well, but what happens with the vasectomies? Our men have become weak, and we their women also." In a place near Delhi, another farmer whom asked the vote removed to shine the subject of sterilization, and he did it in a suggestive language: "Lady, as what she serves a river without fish" Finally Indira realized of which in a country of Hindu majority, that venerates lingam (the fálica stone) like deity primigenia and source of all life, the campaign of massive sterilization had been a monumental error. And it knew that, in policy, the errors are paid.

After those debilitating trips, Indira returned to house with tears in the eyes.

The 20 of March of 1977, day of the call, Pupul went to see it their house. They were the eight at night and the Nueva streets Delhi never overflowed of a joy Vista from the celebrations of the independence of English the thirty years before. Groups of people touched to the drum, clowns walking on zancos distributed caramels to the children, the neighbors danced in the streets, smelled of the powder of the firecrackers and fireworks... The sovereign town had voted and celebrated the fall of the "Empress of India".

The house, without embargo, was surrounded in a disquieting silence. There was no activity neither lights nor cars parked outside as in previous guarded of electoral appointments. Children nor dogs did not see themselves. A secretary with face to patibular lead to Pupul to the hall decorated in tones beige and green clear. Indira was single, and it rose to greet it. It had aged ten years. "Pupul, I have lost", said simply. Both took

seat, and they remained in silence, one of the clamorous silencios of Indira that caused that the words exceeded.

Sanjay and Maneka were in Amethi, their circumscription. Rajiv and Sonia in its quarter, very worried. They knew better than nobody in that house the antagonism that had produced the Emergency in the society and were scared of the retaliation against its mother, her brother, and them also. They feared for its security, now that Indira had to evacuate the power. To this a pile of incognitos derived from the new situation was added: where to live? 'for example, because it was necessary to give back the house to the government. But, mainly, they were much scared by the children. Sonia very was affected. Now it felt zarpazo of the policy in own meat. It had seen it come, but what had been able to do she stops to prevent a similar outcome? A crew member interrupted to them calling to the door:

- The supper is ready.

The table of the dining room was put like any normal day. Sonia could not contain the tears. Rajiv was serious, dismal, shut up. They only ate a little fruit, while Indira abundantly had supper chuletas vegetarian with vegetable and salad, like if the defeat did not affect so much. Rather it seemed that a weight of above had taken off. Nobody opened the mouth. Oía the noise of the places setting on the stoneware, and the timid lloriqueo of Sonia. Only there was an interruption of secretary Dhawan, the pal of Sanjay, that came to announce last catastrophic results. Sanjay had lost in Amethi, and Indira in its circumscription. Never seen: the defeat was absolute and total, until in its traditional feudo. Indira did not perturb and fruit used as dessert.

They happened to the hall, and they followed without opening the mouth, except interchanging trivialities with a friend of the family who came to accompany to them. They were thus awhile, until which Pupul announced that it went away. Rajiv accompanied it to the door.

- Never I will pardon to Sanjay the salary pushed my mother to this situation - it confessed to him. He is the person in charge of everything.

Pupul listened to him in silence. Rajiv continued:

- I said to mother several times to Him the truth on which was happening, but it did not believe to me...

- Rumors that Circulated if had gained the Congress, Sanjay would have been named minister of the Interior and people was terrified with that - Pupul said to him.

- Me I create it. I am sure that it had tried it.

Pupul noticed, in the penumbra of the recibidor, that the eyes of Rajiv were dimmed of tears.

To midnight, Indira left house to meet for the last time with its ministers and to raise the state of emergency, emergency situation of formal way after eighteen months, although almost all the measures already had been annulled actually. It was a brief meeting, in which almost nobody spoke. All were lost their benches. They were the greater fiasco as opposed to than never it had happened in the party. For the first time from

independence, the Congress was not in the power. Of there, Indira went to the Palace of the Presidency of the Republic. Surrounded in the fog, the flashes of fireworks fleetingly illuminated the old palace of the British virrey. Once inside, it officially submitted its retirement application before the president.

From way to house, it saw people celebrate its defeat with joy - young and greater they followed in the streets those hours of the night, and suddenly it felt fear. It seemed to him that its house poorly was guarded. When arriving, one went at the room of Rajiv and Sonia. They followed wide-awake.

- He would be prudent that you went with the children to house of friends - Indira- proposed to them... this same night.

- We do not go to you to leave single.

- Only days, until the atmosphere in the city has calmed. Now there is much uproar. I will be calmer if you go away to another house.

- Vámonos all then, you also.

- I cannot. I Must have left here. In addition Sanjay returns tonight, so I will not be single. Marchaos, me would not pardon it if it happened something to him to the children.

To two of the dawn, Rajiv and Sonia, with Rahul and average Priyanka sleepy and surrounded in blankets, left house as if they were sheltered in a country in war. Indira had abstained to say to them that days before it had rejected the offer of the head of security to bring Nueva troops Delhi to protect it in case of losing the elections and of which the opposition decided to organize a march against its house.

- The crowd could be uncontrolled and assault its residence... - the security head had said to him.

- One does not worry about me - Indira- responded to him. What I request to him is that it guards by my children.

Perhaps Indira was believed never that it would lose, in spite of the overwhelming indications. Perhaps prote'ge'e by the dawn of her last names felt, almost of supernatural way, not to realize from which she came to him above. Perhaps it was blinded by the idea that it had of itself. To the question of the journalist and friend Sunday Moraes of: "Lady, will return to the policy? ") Indira responded: "No I feel that I have taken off a weight of above. I will never return to the policy." Perhaps the lightening that now felt was because the life had put it again in contact with the reality. But it was a hard reality to fit: to the fifty and nine years, one was without work, economic income and a ceiling on its head. In its life account occurred for the first time of which it did not have anything. The familiar house of Anand Bhawan had donated it to the State and now it was a museum. Although had remained it, had not been able to maintain it.

They were the four in the morning when Sanjay and Maneka arrived. They specially did not seem gotten depressed or affected by the defeat. They did not seem conscious of which it meant. On the contrary, Maneka told him that they had come from Amethi in the deprived airplane of

a friend and happened to relate to him how the own Sanjay had taken the controls to land. A perfect maneuver, added. "It was then when I realized force and of the character of the man with whom had married to me", it would write later. Neither one had found out still that the inhabitants of Turkman Gate in the Old Delhi had returned to their district, euphoric, and threatened sterilizing to Sanjay.

Indira gave one to them of its significant silencios and it went away to lay down. It was very behind schedule and she was exhausted when it was dropped in the bed. It thought about its grandsons. The important thing is that they were out of danger, at least momentarily. The distant spot, they continued oyendo the explosions of fireworks.

## 22

Definitively, Indira was an amazing personage. The naturalness and the entereza with which it assumed his defeat left to followers and enemies perplex. Few were the examples in the history of governors who had become harakiri politician with as much integrity. If one felt satisfied in spite of everything, it is because it had given back to India the confidence in the power of the vote, in a nation that now was more stable and more prosperous than before. In which to her it concerned, it had fulfilled its mission and it became aware calm. Of the suffering caused by his measures, person in charge did not become. The fault had the system, the bureaucracy, the dirty game of the opposition. "With these elections, India has demonstrated that the democracy is not a luxury that belongs to the rich ones", The New York Times in its defense said. In which all the observers agreed, national as as much foreign, he was in which the political race of Indira Gandhi had arrived at its aim. All were mistaken, except an old militant colleague of a left party that went to visit it and it said to him:

- You will already see, people will return to you...

Then Indira was turned towards her with eyes covered with tears and it asked to him:

- When? When it has died to me?

Her faithful Usha secretary did not know what expensive to put nor what to say when she went to work the following day to the elections. It never had been in favor of the state of emergency, emergency situation and their commentaries when reading critical articles almost him had cost the position, of not being because Sonia warned it that she did not continue doing it. It had not slept in all the night, the ear stuck to the radio. When entering the office, that was next to the dining room, one was with Indira seated to its table. Smiling, ex- prime minister said to him:

- Usha, you must give back the fat woman.

- The fat woman?

- Yes, the statue that rendered to us of the National Museum.

One talked about to a statue without head nor arms, and much value, that Indira had borrowed to the museum to decorate the hall its house. Usha found the receipt immediately corresponding and it put hands to the work. "It knew that Mrs. Gandhi had said that to relax the tension. He was very typical of her."

It was necessary to change itself soon because its successor, the hinduista rightist Morarji Desai, to weighing to have a great comfortable house in Dupleix Road, wanted to make of the residence of Indira its official residence. To throw it of house was a symbol of its victory and simultaneously a meanness. Indira was hurt. Pero what could do? They were already in house the civil employees who came to register offices and rooms with an inventory in the hand. To objects and apparatuses began to take that had been prerogatives of prime minister: secret telephones, typewriters fotocopiadoras, conditioned air apparatuses, tables and chairs

of office, and all that while Usha and Sonia classified documents, kept archives and desperately tried to put order in as much chaos.

Sonia, who to the few days returned with the rest of the family of the house of his friend Sabine, where they had taken refuge, was with civil employees taking movable, lamps, cuberterías and sets of dishes. All the decoration of its last nine years was being raised by schemers who acted with the arrogance of the winner. The neglect sensation became when noticing the absence of the official crew members still greater, of the secretaries put by the government, of the guards of the entrance and until of the gardeners who disappeared, some without not even taking leave. Died the dog, the rage finished .

Indira was owner of a earth parcel in Mehrauli, to the outskirts, that Firoz had bought in 1959 and which dreamed to retire with its family. Rajiv had invested part of its savings in constructing a field house, but it had remained without money to finish it. Of all ways, Indira did not want to exiliar itself in the field. It preferred to remain near its grandsons, in the marrow, Nueva Delhi. It knew the phrase a general of called Napoleón Desaix when the battle of Marengo: "It is certain that I finish losing a battle, but are the two of afternoon and before it falls the night I can gain another one." To these heights, Indira it as much knew that the success slight knowledge as of defeat they were ephemeral in policy.

He was an old friend of the family who saved it. The diplomat Moharnmed Yunus generously offered to evacuate his house of number 12 of Willingdon Crescent, where the wedding of Sanjay and Maneka had taken place three years before, to yield it to it to the Gandhi. This new house was enough smaller and Sonia wondered itself how they were going to fit all. The change lasted several days, which takes in transferring accumulated possessions during thirteen years, the properties of five adults and two children, five book dogs, innumerable boxes, rebosantes archivists of papers and documents, pictures, objects, memories of trip, etc. Indira was obstinate to throw nothing: each paper, each gift, each book was a memory. Of way that was accumulated boxes and trunks in the corridors. In the room of Indira it only fitted its bed and its favorite armchair, whose endorsement used to lean and to write. No longer it had stenographer, not even an own office. It received to people in veranda or the motley dining room. Sonia fixed them so that there was always a vase with gladiolos at sight.

Great part of the work of this enormous transfer fell to the shoulders of the Italian, that it had to buy or to ask lent his friends a refrigerator, several conditioned air apparatuses , radiators, casseroles, frying pans and earthenware vessels of kitchen. Its sense of the family had intensified living in India. It worked with a perfect sense of the organization, that it remembered to him to the one of its parents during its childhood, when they were poor in Lusiana and they had to work by piece to leave ahead. They returned to him to the memory its knowledge of horticulture and cleaned a part of the bottom of the garden that planted of lettuces,

marrows, tomatoes and vegetables unknown and exotic in India like brécol. The well-known salary difficult times now helped it to surpass the critical moment with more entereza than its husband, who did not pardon itself not to have been firmer: "I have been incapable to stop the feet to him to my brother", had confessed a friend to him of the family, without disguising its frustration.

As the cook had itself dismissed and Indira he was obstinate to contract one new one by fear to that he was infiltrating of the government who could poison to them, was called on to Sonia to be in charge to make the purchase and to prepare the meals. In that home they never tasted so delicious lasañas, paste to the puttanesca and risottos like in those ill-fated days. Also it had learned to cook Indian plates, that ripened with less sharp of the habitual expert Era in spinach with cheese and chicken with sauce korma with ground almonds, coriander and cream. To also cook era its way to mimar to the family and to contribute to relax the atmosphere, that was sinister. Did not say the monjita of its boarding school that Sonia had the quality of being conciliadora? That quality maintained to the family united during that time. Rajiv and Sanjay followed without being spoken, except for the indispensable thing, although now their respective rooms were as opposed to as opposed to each side of the corridor. Indira insisted on preserving the custom to eat at least together once to the day, but it was almost impossible to seat both to the same table to brothers. Rajiv made responsible to Sanjay of the landslide of estatus of the family, of to have happened to be respected to be pariahs. Also it was certain perhaps that they lived on the pay of Rajiv and the donations of the little faithful friends who had not left Indira, hoping that its loyalty was compensated in the future. Sanjay did not contribute anything, on the contrary, needed money to pay to the horde of lawyers who defended to him of sinfín of accusations that attributed the most horrible crimes to him. It could not contribute money to the familiar box, but he made up for alleging that one of the tycoons who helped them economically he was a young friend his, owner of a factory of Nueva refreshments Delhi. Maneka, faithful to same himself, did not help in the domestic tasks, on the contrary that Indira, that did not doubt in taking a broom and putting themselves to sweep. "Sonia cooked, Maneka ate", said a friend of the family. The result was that the relation between Indira and Sonia was made still more narrows during that time, which urged on the jealousy of the Maneka young person.

When they finished settling, Usha felt that no longer it had sense to remain. It continued going in alternating days, until it decided to take leave: "I am going to accompany to my sister Bombay", announced to him to Indira, that it guessed that one was an excuse and that would not return. Pero Usha did not dare to say the truth to him: perhaps it had remained if Sanjay and its pal, Dhawan secretary, had not continued standing out their wide ones with that magnificent air that Usha did not support. Indira outlined a sad smile when taking leave. It gave pain him to lose that woman who had



been her secretary thirty years ago, and with that had total confidence. It knew that Usha knew until you fold them more recondite of its soul.

Indira mental and was physically exhausted, worried about the general dispersed one, by the fights in house between its children, and by the retaliation that the new government, was safe, was going to take. It had blackish ojeras, and it seemed that all its body had shrunk. Like old prime minister, he had right to follow with official protection, but the new head of government and staunch political enemy Morarji Desai, Hindu orthodox, wanted to clear it to it since the house had cleared him.

- Of what it is scared? - it asked an ex- minister of Indira-. It is not good that it always goes surrounded by police.

- There is a hostile atmosphere against her and its son...

- No, it is not for that reason. It is by its vanity.

Immediately afterwards, new prime minister sent itself to one diatriba against the women in the power from Cleopatra to Indira happening through Catherine of Russia, arriving to the conclusion that all had been vain and disastrous like governors.

The harassment campaign that that man untied against the Gandhi returned in an authentic hunting of witches. At the outset, Sonia was surprised, when she went to the purchase, to always observe such individual that they followed it certain distance. The same thing happened with the other members of the family, including Maneka. Indira found out that they were civil employees of the CBI (Central Bureau of Intelligence, the central service of information of the government) that they had instructions to follow to them and to puncture its telephone conversations. Sanjay, with the arrogance del that never it had to face a mishap del that had not recovered, offered socarronamente to the intelligence agents who followed to take them to him in their own car to save gasoline. A day, they appeared in the house to means to construct of Mehrauli with metal detectors. "Pero what you are looking for? ", Rajiv asked to them. They did not answer to him, but more behind schedule it heard to them shout when the detector began to emit a whistle. They thought that they had given with the treasure that Sanjay had buried. The treasure finished being an empty oil tin to cook.

It was approximately at that time, in the heat of heat previous to monzónicas rains, when Indira appeared one night in house behind schedule of its Pupul friend. It came to often visit it, to escape of the house tensions. Again Rajiv had thrown to him in face that "Sanjay and Dhawan is those that has dragged to you until here". Indira had not answered to him, limiting itself to lower the head. It knew perfectly that the last person in charge of everything what it had happened had been she, for that reason excused to Sanjay. "I have come to seat to me awhile, to enjoy the tranquillity", said to him to its friend. And it happened awhile in silence, in veranda, being with she herself.

Another night of dog days arrived very anxious and with a desperate glance: "I have trustworthy information that they want to put to

Sanjay in the jail and to torture it.” Pupul remained of stone, without knowing how what to say. Indira was a cervine scared. “Neither my son nor I am the type of people who commit suicide, so if we appear deads, it is not necessary to be believed what they say... ” Which the new government, in his desires of revenge, looked for laboriously tests to take revenge itself of her through Sanjay were an open secret. That they had decided to torture to Sanjay was more product of its paranoica imagination that of a pre-established plan. The nobody best one than Indira knew that from a position of being able era relatively easy to manipulate to the information services. And the old empress of India felt desperately single. It saw politicians who were going to visit it daily, but could not count on no of them. Those that could help it not dared to approach their house from fear of the monitoring. On the other hand, the financial situation of the family, of as much cost of lawyers, took control untenable. The mass media, that so docilely had been folded to their exigencies when the Emergency had imposed - as much that a politician of the opposition, nothing else to rise the state of emergency, emergency situation, said of the paper of the press: “They requested to You that you folded, and you preferred arrastraros” -, now was dedicated hard to invent terrible histories, or to exaggerate rumors to make see that the Gandhi was a band of malefactors. “They accuse to Me of all type of crimes, until of to have killed to I do not know how much people... ”, Indira complained. It was certain, the minister of the Interior had said in the Parliament that Indira “had glided to kill all the leaders of the opposition that had commanded to jail during the state of emergency, emergency situation”. Five days later, the government ordered the formation of a commission of investigation to the Judge of Supreme Court J.C. Shah with the mission “to investigate if there were subversion of procedures, abuse of office, illegal use of the power and excesses during the state of emergency, emergency situation”. Another commission was created specifically to investigate all the relative one to the Maruti. The government was determined to make swallow to Indira and Sanjay the same bitter medicine that they had administered to the country during the state of emergency, emergency situation.

In that atmosphere, the news of the suicide of colonel Anand, father of Maneka, sounded like the first agreed ones of a drama ampler than it began to be developed in second term, like the first agreed ones of a funeral march. Its body was found of you brush in an embankment, next to a pistol and a note that said: “Unbearable Sanjay Preoccupation.” At the outset, one did not know well if it had been suicide or homicide, although Maneka and the next relatives were convinced that the colonel had taken off the life. It had committed a similar attempt a long time ago with an overdose of tablets and already had a file of mental instability and depression. It had not been able to support the fall in perforated of its reputation and its social position. Their innumerable friends of convenience had disappeared in the rarefied Nueva air Delhi. Immediately the rumor that arose the father-in-law knew too much on the cloudy businesses of Sanjay

and that its death was in fact a disguised homicide of suicide. But nothing could be proven and as soon as the mediatic attention disappeared, the case fell in the forgetfulness.

Indira was disturbed, and Sonia also. A death thus, at the moment at which a diffuse and deep fear took place, instilled, a mixture of uneasiness and alarm. The fall of the power had received a very near victim. The blood had arrived at the river, and where less they were expected it. Indira became paranoica still more, unconsciously relating the death of its in-law to the threats to Sanjay. Now than ever, it felt more that it had to protect its son as were. The news of the suicide extended to the foreigner and Sonia received angustiantes calls of his mother. Back in Orbassano, the Maino followed the events with an increasing frustration and a restlessness. Habladurías from Nueva Delhi, rumors that arrived to them Sonia and Rajiv they looked for to escape and that Sonia had requested asylum in the Italian embassy...

- Mother, nothing of all that is certain. We are well, the children also, but I cannot speak, already I will tell you...

And invariably, the conversation was cut. Sonia abstained to say to him to his mother who the government had seized the passport to all the members of his political family. Although there were beloved, had not been able now to travel to Italy, nor so at least by an emergency.

Indira was hard dedicated to work with its lawyers to defend itself of the Shah commission, while publicly it maintained a life very discreet. An English journalist called James Cameron entrevistó and found “the single and more apprehensive woman of the world”, according to the holder whom she gave to his article. “ It is resigned and it does not want to speak don't mention it. It seems a defeated boxer waiting for a miracle. But there will be no miracle for her”, wrote in The Guardian the 21 of September of 1977.

James Cameron was mistaken. The miracle that was going to make resurge to the bird fénix of its ashes produced in place a called Belchi, small and inaccessible village in the remote state of Bihar, surrounded by rice fields, mountains and cataracts. An idyllic landscape that had been the scene of an atrocious slaughter. The crime had taken place partly by the atmosphere of impunity caused by the new government, whose coalition included extremist Hindu elements, and in that Hindu of chaste discharge they again felt free to subjugate, since they had done it during thousands of years before independence, poor untouchable farmers. In Belchi, a group of landowners had attacked a community of farmers without earth, exterminating to several families and throwing the bodies to the fire. Between the victims there were two babies. The news took several days in occurring to know, before becoming cover of the national press. The government did not react. To its president, Morarji Desai, that considered the prohibition to kill cows and to consume alcohol like national priorities, did not seem to him that this class of events deserved high-priority attention. Not even haste in condemning the crime occurred.

Indira immediately saw the crack in the adversary. It knew what had to do. It asked to him Sonia who helped it to prepare his things to go to Belchi.

- All the world says that Bihar is a very dangerous place, that are groups of bandits who assault people... - Sonia said to him who, in effect, well was informed. Bihar was the slowst, anarchical and uncertain state of India. And poorest also. You do not have a security equipment, is very dangerous - the Italian insisted.

- I do not go single, I go with a group of faithfals of the party.

- But in Bihar the party has not obtained a single bench... Tendrán forces for protegerte?

- Clear that yes. You do not worry - Indira- settled will not pass anything.

Sonia did not insist. It knew it sufficiently well to know that nothing would make it change of idea. But it remained worried. In an atmosphere so loaded of antagonism as the one of those days in India, any thing could happen.

## 23

When it returned to house five days later, Sonia almost did not recognize it. Indira ran sari dirty, all she was covered with a layer of dust and chorreaba sweat. It had ojeras and it had become thin. It seemed a beggar. Pero Sonia guessed a spark of light in its eyes, like a life sparkle. Immediately it knew that the trip to Belchi had been a success. Indira told the odyssey him that finished living luxury yet on details. Sonia listened to it, embelesada.

- It rained as much that all the ways to Belchi were impassable. Of the five hundred supporters who had begun the passage with me, following to me in a caravan of cars, suddenly I realized that only were left two. The others had thrown the towel. My idea was to arrive at Belchi before the dusk, but the highways so were flooded that we had to change the todoterreno by a tractor, that finished as well sunk in the mud kilometers advanced more. My companions insisted so that we gave the return, but I said to them that I followed on foot. They watched to me as if she was crazy. I knew that they were not going to let to me follow single, and was right, were myself forced to accompany to me, although they did it grudgingly. After one it releases long walk, tired and soaked, we arrived at the river, and we realized of which it was impossible to overcome it on foot. There were boats under that weather, nor boatmen no ready to happen to people to the other side. My companions were arranged to return, but I asked villagers who had left from their huts when seeing us to arrive:

“It must have a possibility of crossing... Hay horses this way? “

“NonMadam..., said one to me.

“ A mule? A donkey?

“No, Madam. Only there is an elephant.

“ Where? I asked.

“In the village. It is the elephant of the temple. »

“ You can bring It?

“If, Madam, but..., the man seemed annoying, did not leave the words to him.

“But... What? I said to him.

“It is that we do not have howdah..., admitted finally, like being shamed.

“ Sabes the one that is howdah? - Indira asked to him Sonia.

- Is not the turret that is put on the elephant to take a walk to important personalities?

- In effect... Always in India, over practical considerations, is the preoccupation by estatus! It seems that he is the unique thing that it governs the relations between people. The case is that I said that it gave them just as they did not have howdah, then one of them announced triunfalmente that it would place a blanket.

Indira seemed one chiquilla deluded telling that adventure him to Sonia. To see it so alive and chispeante, so direct and near, was like miraculous. Indira was transformed.

- You know... it did not feel to me tired, and that that we were hoping more than one hour under rain.

- What happened with the elephant?

- By aim it arrived, was called Moti. The farmers helped to raise me first, and soon they raised to one of my companions, that seated behind me. When I occurred the return, I saw that it had the crazy eyes of pavor.

Sonia ed \*\*\*reflx mng itself. Indira continued counting:

- The other chose to remain and to organize the return. He was terrorífico, because the animal balanced itself very many and the waters of the river arrived to him at the height of the belly. The man was stingy to my sari like a boy to the skirt of his mother. I thought that one was going away to throw to cry...

Both prorrumpieron in outbursts of laughter. He was always graceful to hear histories where the women had the control of the situation. Soon the semblante of Indira became burdens.

--It was behind schedule when we arrived at Belchi - contándole followed. The survivors of the massacre were sheltered in a left average building of two floors. Suddenly I saw leave torches that illuminated the faces of which they took them: it had old with the expensive flood of wrinkles, young people widows, children with great shining eyes, men of dark skin, all very afraid and surprised... When they recognized to me, they were sent to my feet. I believe that they saw me like a divine appearance. I did not have anything to offer to them, except my time, but that people so scared did not stop to be thankful to me that she interested me in them, that had drawn for so many dangers to go to listen to them. They said that my presence was a miracle, gives account you? We remained several hours) and I listened to horrible histories of the slaughter. I left crying there... the poverty was so much, as much the pain the farmers when showing me the ashes of the pyre where they had sent alive to his relatives who I left destroyed. Was closed night when we left Belchi. There was noise of thunders, but it did not rain, of way that a boatman offered itself to pass us to the other side.

“ Sabes what happened then?

Sonia denied with the head. Indira continued:

- Like the load she was excessive, when approaching the other border, the boat upset.

They returned to explode of laughter. Indira continued:

- ... We were all wading in those black waters. I was able to overcome until the border. We continued walking until the main highway, where they waited for a whole to us land. We were soaked. Then it happened another miracle, Sonia. The farmers of the environs that had found out my visit began to arrive. They brought fruits, flowers and lanterns to us. Suddenly I heard a noise of drums and voices of women... Sabes that they sang? “We voted in your con. We betrayed to you. Perdónanos.” - they said. They came with dry modest candies and they offered its saris to me to dry or to change to me to me. Some requested to me until my blessing!

Sonia realized of which Indira had seen the light at the end of the tunnel. It had dived in "the mass of India humanity" and one had not felt rejected. On the contrary, it had returned to find its voice, and an answer.

Indira continued telling that on the following day it went to Patna, the destartalada State Capital of Bihar, to visit its old enemy J.P. Narayan, the man whose boycott had precipitated it to declare the state of emergency, emergency situation. He was very old, almost in the deathbed. Now that Indira had been defeated and vilipendiada, J.P. it pardoned it. They were reunited during fifty minutes, speaking of the many memories that shared of the times in which the wife of Narayan was the best friend of the mother of Indira. Also they spoke of the massacre of Belchi and the luck of the untouchable ones. Soon they put for the press. Indira removed from its fabric stock market a wrinkled newspaper and it showed the photo to him its daughter-in-law. It was an important photo for Indira, because it sealed its political reconciliation. Sonia understood that her mother-in-law returned to the rotation.

- But... you did not say less ago than two weeks that you retired of the policy? - Sonia asked to him.

- Still I have not returned, and I would like not to return, but how I can retire? ... While they love the skin of Sanjay or mine, I will have to fight to defend to us.

Breath, Indira decided to start off on the following day for its old circumscription of Abrades Bareilly, where the voters had forcefully rejected it less ago than four months. He was dangerous, because it could be with hostile multitudes, since that state had been objective preferred of the sterilization campaign , but, before its great surprise, thousands of people went to receive it under a justice sun. Also it knew here perfectly what had to do and to say. In plain language, it requested pardon by the excesses of the state of emergency, emergency situation , and soon it mounted an attack against the Janata coalition, that was in the power. People still more acclaimed it warmly that in Belchi. It decided to do a tour lightning by several towns of the state, repeating he himself message. In all parts, the recibimiento was multitudinal. It returned to exhausted, dirty house, exhausted but it contents.

The story of the trip of Indira to Belchi propagated like an echo by sub continent until reaching the villages linked in the skirts of the Himalayas, the mud huts of the desert, the cabins of leaf of palm of those of chaste the more losses, the plastic shacks and brass of the untouchable ones of the south... Beyond the distinction of races, chaste or religions, the voice of the poor men had eeted again with its source of inspiration and consolation. In spite of feeling that India had begun to pardon it, Indira continued very being worried with its situation and the threat of the Shah Commission. Voices in the government demanded a "species of judgment of Nuremberg" by their crimes during the Emergency.

- I am sure that they will find any pretext to arrest to me.

- They will not dare - Sonia said to tranquilize it than by conviction more.

- I have found out that the Janata government has promised not to judicially persecute my old ministers if they accept to throw the fault to Sanjay of all the slippings committed during the state of emergency, emergency situation. I know perfectly that they will betray to me. To Sanjay also they want it to put in the jail.

Those treasons hurt it deeply and they precipitated it to a solitude abyss that gave vertigo him. Sonia saw it so hard, and nevertheless so vulnerable. To the misfortune that their mother-in-law, most of the politicians was in policy by pure personal ambition, not by a sense of having. The meanness of that world disgusted to him. But account occurred of which the public life, the policy understood like service to the others, was the reason of being of Indira and of which never it would change. Although it liked to say that it dreamed about retiring of the world, Sonia already did not believe it. To retire was a luxury that Indira could not be allowed.

Before the wall of the government and the Shah Commission, Indira took the bull by the horns. Faithful to the Maxima of which there is no better defense than a good attack, traveled extensively to affirm his presence, to make contact with enemy with the greater possible number of people, to strengthen what she had obtained in Belchi, the pardon of the town. In the station of Agra, the recibimiento was so triunfal that there was an explosion that was settled with several wounded. Everywhere, it began apologizing to have harmed as much people, but also it remembered the profits of the state of emergency, emergency situation, mainly in economy and security, leaving well seated that had been she who had summoned elections, and that to the defeated being the verdict of the town had accepted with chivalry. Soon it was sent to denounce the errors of the adversary. In effect, the new government was incapable to restrain the inflation, that was being desbocando again, and to control the black market. It was a different coalition, that already showed signs to crack.

Their triunfales trips to Belchi and to Abrade Bareilly irritated that weak government, every time more alarmed before the spectacle of the masses venerating to his archienemiga. It was necessary to do something. The 15 of August of 1977, day of independence, the police arrested its secretary, the repeinado R. K. Dhawan, as well as to its old minister of Defense, the plump Bansi Lal, both pals of Sanjay. The wall was narrowed.

Sonia was scared. Rajiv was having problems in the work, seemed that the direction did not want to renew the license to him to continue piloting Boeing 737. It smelled of retaliation. Its clear position against the state of emergency, emergency situation was not had in account by the company, in spite of having a intachable and non-political reputation between its colleagues of work. To the misfortunes in Indian Airlines an inspection came to add itself that the ministry of Property opened against Rajiv. The inspection also concerned to Sonia, which to make a favor to his brother-in-law it had signed in 1973 documents that had made it proprietor



of actions of a fictitious company, Maruti Services Limited. That, that already had caused to one violent discussion between the brothers and tension in the marriage, was used like the ammunition by the government, pawned on demonstrating dark tejemanajes financiers who in fact never had existed. Sonia, for being foreign, did not have right to have actions nor to exert no position remunerated in an India company without the approval of the Central bank, approval that of all ways never existed. Therefore there had been no infraction. But now Rajiv was forced to demonstrate that her woman had not received single rupia of the Maruti and that always been she had broken ties with that company. To the maximum that could condemn it it was to a fine. The time that Rajiv did not dedicate to fly dedicated it to declare, to look for old papers, or if not to obtain them again, to undergo an authentic one via crucis considering the entangled thing of the India bureaucracy. But night watchman stayed at any moment. He became aware calm, the one of Sonia was a nimiedad and he always had paid his taxes religiously. To the Italian it disturbed the idea to him that they tried some dirty maneuver with falsified documents, for example. The fear was corrosive and was able to deform the perception of the reality. " And which was the reality" Indira had the clear ideas: "This is a war of nerves, a psychological war. It is necessary to hold, nothing else." Sonia did not want to add more paranoia to the atmosphere, but the thought of which could pay right by pecadores embarrassed it. When it saw his husband leave house to declare in the views of the Shah Commission, a knot in the stomach, and until which was done to him it did not return to house and it saw it safe and sound, did not relax. Those views were a very laborious test because they were developed in a hostile atmosphere disorganized and that remembered the Chinese popular courts more than to one cut of justice. Rajiv returned always anxious. It told that the room was to overflow with people who vociferated with great antagonism while some ate or dozed in he himself ground. The lawyers, dresses with black gowns and pecheras white, were seated behind small tables full of papers tied by a cord, under ventilated head of cattle that made fly loose documents. A yellowish photography of Gandhi decorated the walls. Whenever he or their brother tried to defend itself, an enormous booing drowned its words. The public did not let speak to them. Hardly they could distinguish the face of Judge Shah, after the volume rows of the Indian penal code and the legajos that covered their table. Outside the room, other peculiar ones followed the views through loudspeakers. Obvious Sanjay was the one who woke up greater inquina. Whenever it entered the room of views, he was received by strong whistles and insults. Several times the tension caused authentic pitched battles between its detractors and their followers. One of the sessions finished row in the heat of, with crossing of metallic chairs and interchange of puñetazos. Sonia understood it last that for Rajiv she had to turn out to support that, he whom always the confrontation had detested and it had always tried to take a discreet existence. But, aside from the unjust thing of the situation, as

much Rajiv as Sonia mainly was alarmed by the repercussion of as much hostility on their children.

Sanjay and Maneka, although were they the center of the attacks, took it nevertheless much more sport, in the sense as much appeared as real of the word. The 3 of October of 1977 were playing bádmington in the turf of the garden of number 12 of Willingdon Crescent when, to five of afternoon, they heard arrive a car from police. Two individuals called to the door. One of them was sij, stop, with red turban and excellent modales. Indira, that was conversing with its lawyers, opened the door to him.

- My name is N.K.Singh, of the direction of the Intelligence service - sij said, tightening the hands nervously. We come to inform to him into which you are arrested - you said watching the ground.

- Quiere to say that they take me to the jail?

- Yes. .. - the man stammered, visibly intimidated.

- It will be a good opportunity to rest - Indira loosen.

In fact, it had been to time hoping this moment, as it waited for the whole country to it.

- Can be known of what is accused to me?

The man read the positions to him. They accused it to have compelled to two companies so that they donated one hundred fourteen todoterrenos for the campaign of the Party of the Congress and soon to sell them to the army, which suggested bribe. Also of to have granted a contract to a company that had removed to aid one more a supply more expensive than others, which suggested corruption. Indira raised the eyes to the sky: it was all lie. " The horrors of the Emergency Were those! ", it thought for his adentros.

- Tomorrow you have you mention in the court and there we will take it - the man said.

- I want to see the arrest order.

The man gave papers to him. Indira continued:

- If it does not matter to him, I am going to consult it with my lawyers. Hope a little while, please.

One put in house with documents. It left one hour later.

The official sij hoped outside, seated in a step of the entrance.

- It lacks the First Information Report Here - Indira- said. I do not think to move until all the papers are in rule.

- Lady, will not don't mention it serve to make me the work most difficult of which already she is.

- One does not worry, I will be here when it returns.

- It is well, I will command to an official to by the paper that lacks.

- You Can wait for inside if she wishes it.

The man entered, between been thankful and uncomfortable. The house was surrounded by police and numerous peculiar they began to approach. Sanjay and Maneka had left their party and they had been locked in in its quarter. Usha, that found out immediately of which it had happened,

went rauda to Willingdon Crescent. "When I arrived, I saw a scene that saddened to me. Before, the police cord served to protect to prime minister possible of argument and manifestations. Now it was there for preventing the passage of people and arresting it." Usha was able to penetrate in the interior. Indira entered and left its room, very occupied. Much was glad to see it.

- Usha, what well that you are here! Please, so that aids to Sonia not to prepare my stock market of trip?

Sonia was in the quarter of Indira, with clothes of his mother-in-law unfolded on the bed. This time did not know very well what to put inside. This one was not a trip like the others.

- Where is going it to take? - Usha inquired.

- I do not know it, have not said it - Sonia responded.

- Perhaps Better we put a chal to him, take it to some site in mountains.

- I trust you so that you fix the hair well to me --Indira said from the corridor. I want to be most handsome possible.

- You do not worry for that reason - Sonia said to him, that she already knew that to its mother-in-law it did not like anything to go neglecting, not even inside house. But that eagerness of grooming, that seemed that the jail went to a wedding instead of a, was inaudito. "God mine - Sonia- was said. And to an India jail! ... So that it wants to go so peripuesta? ", it was asked.

- Mrs. Gandhi is thus - Usha said to him.

While they chose sari to him, Indira documented to the kitchen some that considered dangerous if they fell into the hands of the police or of the Intelligence service. The cook was in charge to destroy them of a very peculiar way, using the machine to make paste of Sonia like crushing machine.

Although the telephones were cut, Sanjay and the lawyers fixed to give them the voice of warning to companions of the party, who warned the press as well. Journalists with television cameras, followers of the Youth Congress de Sanjay and an increasing multitude of peculiar went to crowd themselves against the police cord .

The official sij, in the lobby, continued waiting for Indira, more and more nervous. It did not like anything the circus that was mounting around the house. Of all the missions that had entrusted to him throughout their race, this one was perhaps the one that repelled to him more. To anybody it likes to arrest a goddess. He was intranquilo and indeciso. The likeable one with Priyanka and Rahul tried to become, but the children responded to him with hostile glances.

Finally, to eight at night, it appeared Indira, well made up and better combing, dressed in precious sari white with green edge that Usha and Sonia had chosen to him. It was the same image of the distinction. The official sij did not leave his astonishment, that was like arresting an elegant grandmother... It raises, when Indira left house, in the garden it was

received with vítores and a rain of flower petals . Then, he became towards the official sij:

- I want that it puts the spouses to me - it said to him.

N. K. Singh remained perplex, with the half-opened mouth. “ Now the grandma requested spouses to him! ”, it thought horrified.

- Lady, by favor...

- I want to go out newlywed my house. I am not lengthy. Then póngame the spouses.

Sonia, who followed little distance with his husband and his brother-in-law, was equal of pasmada that sij. The police, on the brink of madness the attack of nerves, went to consult with its colleagues. It returned to the few moments.

- Lady, we are not going it to handcuff.

- If they do not handcuff to me, I do not move. Here I remain.

- Lady, by favor, does not put to me in a jam... - it said ashamed.

I am not authorized to handcuff it. Please make follow to me or we will have it to take to the force.

Before the determination of sij, Indira yielded and followed the police, while the multitude in the street sent flowers to him and it acclaimed it. Rajiv, before leaving the house with Sonia, requested to Usha please to remain taking care of of the children. It did not know what they would take in returning.

Before putting in the car, Indira went to a group of journalists. “It must tomorrow have gone to Gujarat to visit tribal communities. I request you that by favor you transmit my excuses to the town of Gujarat.” Asked for its halting, it declared: “I have tried to serve our mother country as the best possible way. The positions presented/displayed against me lack base. This one is a political arrest.”

The car started, preceded of jeep military man and followed of a caravan of vehicles in which their children and daughters-in-law, supporters and reporters traveled. Back, the children were crying, in charge of Usha. History was repeated again in the dynasty of the Nehru, like when the police came to arrest Jawaharlal and her daughter tried to prevent the access them.

They did not take infame jail to it of Tihar, where she had commanded to lock up to the maharanías of Gwalior and Jaipur and to so many others. Its “prison” was in reality the dormitory of a police station of police, relatively clean Spartan and. Very worthy, one took leave of its children and their daughters-in-law the entrance. It radiated serenity, because it intuited that by this time the news of its arrest, as if a common criminal it was, traveled already by mouth from the town to the moved away corners more of its immense country. It knew that if reason were able to occur to a martyr image - for which it had requested the spouses, would gain the game. Sonia, other people's to this maneuver, saw it with an immense pain and delivered attacks superhuman to contain the tears. The Nehru was not efusivos, and less in situations thus. It could not either sink

now. The guard police cuadraron themselves before Indira when it entered his "jail". It cost to them to assimilate that they had of guest that night. It was the world the other way around. In the interior, they offered food to him but it rejected it. It feared to be poisoned. One eased up in the bunk of its "cell" and was reading long short while a novel that Usha and Sonia had put to him in stock-market. It slept deeply and to the dawn already it was dressed, showered and list to face the court

To nine in the morning, Rajiv waited for it in the door of the justice palace, in Parliament Street, the Nueva center Delhi, accompanied by a lawyer. That morning was not the habitual salesmen of sarnosas and cane juice, nor the notary publics who by rupias wrote letters or pleas to the gotten involved illiterate poor men with justice. The news of the arrest of Indira had caused such commotion that to that hour the building completely was surrounded by people jamming. This time, the Janata coalition had commanded to its own demonstrators. Sanjay arrived at the front from his, so that when Indira entered the building, it did it listening to shouts of: " Long life to Indira Gandhi! ", on the one hand, and " Colgadla! ", by another one. But it held, stoic, and at no moment the head bent, not even when they sent a magazine to him that happened flying to little centimeters of its head.

In the interior of the diaphanous room, Indira rejected the chair that offered to him and it stayed almost two hours standing up, listening to the discussions on the positions that were imputed to him. When getting worse the heat, a beadle badly shaved dressed in dhoti white and dirty gave a pat to order that the hung ventilators of the ceiling started up. The shovels began to turn with slowness, hissing to stretch. Brisilla made shake the apron of sari of Indira, that felt a little lightening. He was in favor almost in a faint of the effort to stay standing up with that heat. Perhaps but it knew that the gesture of to have rejected a chair was being whispered of ear mouth by hundreds, thousands and more behind schedule, by million compatriots... " Stayed standing up! ", " Rechazó the chair! "... simple phrases that molded their imaginary mythical figure in the popular one.

Outside, supporters and detractors arrived at the hands. The police took part loading with his lathis, lengths woods of bamboo and, later, with tear gases.

In the end, the magistrate declared to innocent Indira and he acquitted it. Immediately afterwards, it ordered its unconditional freedom, sentencing: "There are tests no to confirm the bases of the accusation." Sanjay left running, shouting: " Sobreseído Caso! Is free! ", which caused the euphoria of and a rage of others, that returned to get involved. The police was itself forced to send more tear gas boats. Indira left the room of the court with the reddened eyes and covering the nose, but happy because it had won. Rajiv very was excited: "Not even mother had been able to dream about a better outcome", declared a journalist.

In effect, the farce of its arrest obtained that the news was carried of all national newspapers and good part of the international. The government obtained that Indira seemed a victim of an incompetent

administration. It obtained the adverse effect of which it looked for: it channeled to Indira in the way of its total political rehabilitation.

Sonia began to understand because of the eagerness of his mother-in-law to go immaculately adorned. It had been able to project like a martyr of justice. It at the same time admired that eagerness of fight and desapego of its mother-in-law towards the benefits of the power; now she was sure that Indira would return to the peak, although only was to again clean to its name and being the pride of his, mainly of its grandsons who adored. Sonia understood it because both shared a very deep and intense sense of the family. Nevertheless, it did not see the other side of the character of its mother-in-law, because the power had never attracted him. For Indira, it was a drug species. Had not said the own Kissinger that the power was best the aphrodisiac one than it existed? Of being a solitary girl feúcha and, soon a fragile and delicate woman of health, the power had made of Indira a formidable fighter, lasts and tenacious. It had gusanillo within himself very, and it felt it to be shaken whenever the possibility of reaching it, by very remote that was, blunted in the horizon.

So it did not lose a second, it knew that it had to take advantage of the moment. Again Sonia helped it to prepare his stock market of trip, and this time for length because Indira wanted to cross the whole country. In Gujarat, one went to people from small platforms erected to several kilometers of the others. According to the day passed, the garlands of jazmines and daisies were accumulated in the neck until covering part to him of the face. Fardo took off heavy before to enter the huts of the natives where it shared its food, on platanero leaves, speaking with them of its problems: the harvest, the education, the lack of sanitary attention, etc. One night, while a forest went in car crossing, asked the driver who stopped. It had heard a voice. Minutes later it arose a native, a naked average man with the hair hirsuto and the blackish skin. It took in the hand a garland of flowers. "Mother, I have been ten years hoping to see it", said him in his dialecto while it put the necklace to him.

Not always the recibimiento was triunfal or affectionate. The writer Bruce Chatwin, who accompanied it during part by that tour, was in a car that was confused with the one of Indira. A stone broke the windshield and hurt the conductor. Another one crossed its window and the chips of crystals did to the writer a wound to him in the shoulder. "That is what to them usually it happens to which they walk to my side", Indira said to him, that it took to his quarter to verify if the wound properly were bandaged. In another occasion, in the state of Kerala, Chatwin she was witness of how a multitude of a quarter of million people, totally soaked in the rain, approached to listen to it when the night had already fallen . Indira was located in a balcony of the last floor of a building, sitting in a chair that had been placed upon a table. A lantern between the knees was put, directing the light towards its face and torso. And it began to move the arms and to speak, while their supporters confused it with Lakshmi, the goddess whose numerous arms moved of ondulante form. The comparison was not trivial:

Lakshmi was the goddess of the wealth. After a good short while, one went to Chatwin, that was seated down in the table.

- Mr. Chatwin, páseme a few nuts of cashew more - it said bending the head towards him. The writer tended a handful to him, and it remained perplex when hearing to Indira to add: ... You do not have idea of the exhausting thing that she is to be a goddess.

## 24

Prime minister Morarji Desai recognized the error that had supposed to arrest Indira, and was not arranged to repeat it, in spite of the information of the Shah Commission that he proclaimed that the decision to impose the state of emergency, emergency situation had been unconstitutional and fraudulent not to exist “evidence of danger to the integrity of the nation”, a debatable conclusion. Between the evils that had caused the Emergency, Judge Shah emphasized the halting of thousands of innocent people and one “series of illegal actions that were in human misery and suffering”. The disadvantage is that the well-known tendency governmental pro of the judge reduced credibility to the report of the Shah Commission. It was a very subjective interpretation of the evidence, and in addition he was not binding.

So that they forgot Indira to concentrate itself in its son, who was not legally to safe, although never could be proven that there was deflection of bottoms public or bribe in the business of the Maruti. The case more problematic than weighed on Sanjay was a denunciation to have destroyed a satirical film called the history of two armchairs, in reference to the power that he and their mother monopolized during the state of emergency, emergency situation. The realizadora of the film had appealed to the Supreme Court to obtain that the judge gave the approval to the censorship and to obtain therefore the certificate of exhibition of the film. But then Sanjay and its pal the minister of Information had commanded to destroy copies and the negatives in an act that subspilled the process of justice. For that reason they were condemned.

So Sonia was again witness of the arrest of another member of the family, this time the one of its brother-in-law. He was much more fast that in the case of Indira. In five minutes they took to newlywed to infame jail to it of Tihar, where he himself had commanded to so many opponents to his mother. Indira, that was traveling by the south, took the first airplane of return to Delhi. It directly went to see it the jail there and one was with all the family and a nourished group of journalists and equipment of television. The hug that it gave to Sanjay gave the return to the world, thus like its advice: “You are not discouraged, I know brave, this is going to suppose your political Renaissance. And you do not worry, remembers that I, my father, all we have passed by the jail” Indira feared the effect that the prison could have on Sanjay. “What it gives me fear - it confessed to Rajiv and to Sonia- it is that they physically agreed to him.”

In spite of the tensions, the family reacted like a fragmentation hand grenade before the adversity. Sonia committed itself to prepare to his brother-in-law a food to the day that Maneka took to the jail. The young wife was excited with the new situation. It seemed to him that they were living an incredible adventure and at heart regodeaba in its new paper because one never felt more necessary that before its husband.

Throughout 1979, Sanjay was jailed six times, although it did not happen more than five weeks locked up. It happened like a its grandfathers



to him Nehru: the jail made remove the best thing him from itself. It did not have any prejudice in mixing type of criminals yet; it organized sport matches, games of equipment and turns of cleaning of the facilities. When some prisoner fell ill, Sanjay took care to take care of it. If it considered it necessary, it spent hours seated next to him Nothing else to enter in anyone of the penitentiary centers, became its unquestionable leader.

While Sanjay survived entering and leaving the jail and the courts, her mother made storing of forces, convinced like she was that she could recover the power, and with him the security and the dignity for her and its family. It was arranged to fight like a lioness to protect its puppies. Of mother lioness it was the message that sent to Sanjay the day of its birthday in the jail: "It remembers, everything what makes strong, hurts. Some are squashed or disabled, very few become conceited. I know strong in body and mind and learns to tolerate... »

Indira was trying to recompose its base, that is to say, the party, that was divided between the unconditional ones, arranged to follow it until the Earth borders, and those that they attributed to Sanjay the responsibility of the 1977 fiasco and which they did not want it in the organization. To this it was necessary to add the numerous ministers who had betrayed it before the Shah Commission, confessing lies in exchange for legal immunity. In those circumstances, to recompose the party became impossible. Then Indira take drastic measure. It decided to escindir the organization and to remain only with the very loyal ones. One thus became president of the Congress (i) - the I by Indira- and the chosen logo it was the palm of a hand, like a blessing. To its loyal ones, it also demanded loyalty to them towards its son. "Those that attack Sanjay attack to me me", had declared in several occasions. Its homing by the power unconsciously pushed it to be perpetuated in him, of there who the figure of Sanjay fed its dynastic ambitions.

Sonia thought that already the worse thing with the haltings had lived, the harassment, the fiscal persecution to his husband, but from the moment in which Indira announced the creation of its new political formation, the life in Willingdon Crescent was made irritating and uncomfortable much more. She was one marries open day and night. People arrived at any hour to visit Indira. The members of its party, with expressions that happened of the euphoria to the anguish, entered and left like Pedro by their house. Suddenly they met privily, they organized, they planned new strategies, they decided what tactical to use in each circumscription. To all this, it was necessary to add the frequent visits of lawyers who continued guiding Indira and Sanjay by the vericuetos of justice. Suddenly Sonia found in the dining room to members of the secret services that came to interrogate to their mother-in-law or her brother-in-law. No longer she knew if the people who teemed by the rooms were allied or enemy. It did not give to supply preparing teas and tentempiés for the numerous visits that Indira received in the turf, under carps improvised in the garden or the entrance of house, that sometimes seemed the waiting

room of a train station. Indira seemed happy as much with trajín; the promiscuity did not bother it. It was in its element, in the atmosphere in which girl servant had itself. In addition it counted on the presence of Sanjay that, if it were not in the jail or with its lawyers, worked patch to her very, seeing the way to use the Youth Congress to boycott the operation of the present government of the Janata Party.

- It remembers Me to the days of Anand Bhawan when we prepared some action of protest... - enchanted Indira said to Sonia, who was on the brink of madness the weeping.

Neither it nor Rajiv supported the lack of privacy. More of once, it happened to them to be in its quarter to members of the party discussing heatedly because they had not found a site better to do it. The shaken atmosphere disorganized and, the constant threats and the uncertain future irritated the nerves to them. That one was not the life which they had chosen for them and its children. Now not even their friends could come to see them. Where would receive them? As much racket made him fear to Sonia for the security of the small ones. " And if somebody in house with intention of secuestrarios is strained or to do damage to them? ", it was asked. In addition, the effect worried to him that the familiar tensions would have on them. Sonia and Maneka had let be spoken because this last one followed without collaborating in the domestic tasks. Pupul, that was a privileged witness of that time, wrote: "He is incredible that, in those chaotic conditions, Sonia could be in charge of all the domestic tasks without coming down."

The following step that gave Indira went to appear to the elections by a small circumscription of the south. Rumors that had arrived him the Janata government was preparing a law to impose penalties to the politicians who had committed crimes against the town, like the prohibition to vote and of being chosen. If Indira were able to enter the Parliament, would have the security of which similar measures would not affect when being prote'ge'e by the parliamentary immunity. It had chosen the taken care of circumscription with extreme. Chikmaglur was a small district in green hills of Karnataka, a state in the southwest of India, where in century XVII Muslim santo arrived from Mecca planted not known red seeds until then. It was the principle of the culture of the coffee, that followed three centuries later effective. For Indira, it was a perfect area: more than half of the electorate it was made up of women, of who half belonged to denominated "the chaste losses". Altogether, more than half of the population it lived under the threshold of the poverty. The zone was also a bastion of the Congress. His deputy by the district, that resigned to yield the position to Indira, was an old leader very respected.

The small villages encaramadas in hills were surrounded by a exuberante semitropical vegetation. Indira enjoyed that bucólico landscape. It visited the coffee plantations to speak with the recolectores and their families. She was simple people, satisfied with that they had, the little isolated thing of the political life of the rest of the country. Indira discovered

that the news of their defeat of 1977 had still not arrived at the interior of the region. A old recolectora nor at least had found out that no longer she was prime minister. When they said to him that it could finish in the jail if the positions against her were proven, the old one asked with tears in the eyes: "What positions?", as if the great ones of this world could not never make nothing bad. Those people were ingenuous and innocent.

Indira did not leave a single village without visiting. Everywhere, the welcome was very warm. The women approached to caress the face to him because they had never seen a so clear skin. They caught in its eyes a tacit understanding on which it represented to be woman, to carry the weight of the childbirths, the children, the hunger and the death. Greater they were thankful to him that his government had started up aid programs thanks to which they were able to eat rice for the first time. Before, they survived of the harvesting of wild wheat and many did not have nor to get dressed, went covers of banana tree leaves. That remote and slow it was Chikmaglur; that been thankful they were its women.

While their rivals made speeches on democracy as opposed to dictatorship and remembered the excesses of the state of emergency, emergency situation, Indira spoke of the spiral of prices, the basic food shortage and the increasing poverty. In that place, the Emergency had not noticed. In case outside little, their opponents smoothed the way to him when pifiar it of a way that had only been able to occur in India. In a multitudinal meeting, they placed an enormous poster in which Indira was represented in form of threatening cobra. Down, a text said: "Eye, in these elections a powerful cobra is going to straighten up." The effect was totally counter-productive. The authors of the campaign ignored that in Karnataka she venerated the cobra, considered a protective Earth animal. Another poster showed arrows of the Janata party killing a called serpent Indira. But in Chikmaglur, to kill a cobra was considered of terrible omen.

It rained to pitchers the day of the electoral call. Even so, three fourth parts of the population went to deposit their problem. Indira returned to Nueva Delhi and two days later, while it was with Sonia and Rajiv in the embassy of the Soviet Union celebrating the national day of the USSR, it was informed into which it had won by an ample margin of seventy thousand votes. The ambassador raised a glass to offer by the victory of Indira. In two years, the woman who had been overcome in the ballot boxes of humiliating way returned like deputy to the Parliament by a remote circumscription of the south.

Four days later, Indira flew to London. It had obtained a diplomatic passport for her and had wanted that Sonia accompanied it. She was the unique one that could do it, to have Italian passport. It had done it so that her daughter-in-law changed of airs and in addition because it was a way to thank for its dedication to him to the family. Lately, the discord in house had reached the paroxysm. The erratic and uncontrolled behavior of Maneka was a source of constant tension. It reacted before the pressure and the uncertainty exploding in frequent attacks of rage against everybody,

including its husband. In one of those fights, Maneka took off the ring that Indira had given to him in its wedding and it threw it to the ground with rage.

- How you dare to do that? - Indira- jumped. That ring belonged to my mother!

Maneka went away giving portazo and Sonia crouched itself to gather it.

- I will keep It for Priyanka - she said, and in effect, years later, her daughter would shine the ring of her great-grandmother.

The marriage of Sanjay and Maneka was explosive, the opposite who the one of Rajiv and Sonia. In that peculiar home, the Italian behaved like a perfect daughter-in-law India, and India like a exuberante napolitana. "In house the chaos reigns - Indira to its Pupul- friend confessed. Pero Maneka is hardly veintiún years old... They wait for long sentences to him of imprisonment to Sanjay. It is necessary to understand it and to pardon its hysteria to him. " The hunting of witches had obtained that all had to pay a high price in nervous wearing down, until the own Sanjay, in that they had done notches the thirty and five presented/displayed criminal complaints against him by the Janata Party in two years. A day, while the family had breakfast in house with relatives who were of visit, Sanjay protested because the eggs were not cooked since it had indicated it and threw the plate to the ground. Sonia was the one who had prepared them, so she left the gotten upset room. Indira did not pronounce a single word of critic towards its son, although was seen clearly it bothers.

When Sonia could not more, she went away with its friends, one of them decorator and another publisher, to eat to a small Chinese restaurant of Khan Market or to the American Embassy Club where they did not recognize it. Or it went to the garden with a hoe in the hand to take care of of the orchard. Brécol that had been able to cultivate caused sensation between its well-known ones.

The ten days from the trip to London were not vacations, but to Sonia it seated to him well to be abroad. London brought memories to him of a very happy time in its life. It thought that one would move away of the unbearable atmosphere of the India policy, but was not thus. The policy persecuted to them. Indira had accepted that trip to rehabilitate its battered international reputation, and was received with great sense of expectancy and much distrust. They warned to him that it could be with hostile hearings in the different acts from which would attend, so that in the first meeting with parliamentarians, Sonia was afraid the worse thing.

- Mrs. Gandhi, what failed in their state of emergency, emergency situation? - it asked to a deputy without preliminaries nor roundups to him.

There was a long silence. Indira rose, it fit to the apron of his sari, and took the microphone.

- We were able to alienate simultaneously to almost all the sectors of the community - it responded of simple and direct way.

Su franqueza it caused a general guffaw and it dissolved the tension of the atmosphere. Between the assistants she was a woman who,

although was in the opposed side of the ideological phantom of Indira, professed a great admiration to him. One was Margaret Thatcher, that was on the verge of becoming prime minister. Perhaps, for being woman, understood the mixture of fragility and firmness of Indira and understood many of her reactions in the exercise of the power. The future "Iron Lady" did not have repairs in admitting that she in front of was a teacher. That trip served to a great extent so that Indira recovered its democratic credentials.

Between encounter with press, with representatives of communities Indians and visits to politicians English - that excessively irritated the Indian ambassador as soon as there was time to go to the theater and the cinema, to make purchases in Woolworth's and to look for books in the famous Foyle's bookstore. Those strolls were for Sonia an authentic balsam. In those streets shining of rain nobody recognized it, felt safe, did not have to be pending of the escort, could move on foot and always not depend on the car... What luxury! In spite of all the difficulties of the last times, its relation with its mother-in-law was narrower than ever. Sonia did not have repairs in recognizing that she loved like a a mother to it. Although Indira did not show it openly, its preference by Sonia was well-known. A confidence inspired to him that never could inspire Maneka to him. But to weighing of it, always it defended it, at least in public. "Maneka supports a great pressure", said excusing it. The certain thing is that Maneka worked with ardor in the cause of its mother-in-law. It had been able to open a scandal that had affected the Janata Party. Photographers of their Surya magazine had obtained images of the son of prime minister, a married man of forty years, in the bed with an adolescent. In a country of so pudorosos habits, that scandal had the effect to put in ridiculous situation the persecution of the Janata Party against Sanjay and to own prime minister. Maneka was very proud of to have contributed its sand grain in this battle. But in his internal law, it felt that never it would occupy the place that Sonia in the heart of Indira occupied, and that disturbed it.

While they walked by Oxford Street, doing purchases of last hour for the children, neither Sonia nor Indira could imagine that in Nueva Delhi the government was delivering a last and desperate attack to demolish it again. As its political resurrection held fast, investigation commissions were multiplied to try to tie it to all class of crimes. The accusations went of the macabre thing to the absurd thing, "to conspire to kill an ex- minister" (who in fact had passed away of natural death) "to turn aside bottoms and to become rich illicitly" (what it was obvious false). Perhaps most absurd of the positions he was the one of to have robbed four hens and two eggs, an accusation that forced it, nothing else to return from London, to travel to the distant state of Manipur, in the east of India, a trip of three thousand kilometers, to appear before the local judge. The case was sobreseído and Indira returned to Nueva Delhi.

In the Parliament, where she was received between vítores shouts and, the Committee of Privilege, a group that the abuse authority of the governors watched, had presented/displayed a motion against Indira,

having accused it to have harassed, when she was prime minister, four civil employees who investigated the Maruti Limited. The report concluded that he was guilty, but before she was transacted before justice, the ringleaders of the Janata Party decided to punish it, making use of their majority in the camera. They approved a resolution of the Parliament requesting that "Indira was jailed one week, and consequently expelled from the camera". Now those that were committing abuse authority were the own governors. They condemned it before to be judged. It was pure revanchismo, that was explained by the fear which they had to see resurge it. A thing was to have to Indira crossing the country, another different good era to have announcing it in the Parliament. So that they used one triquiñuela to remove it: first jailed, which was not absolutely legal, soon to apply the law that it automatically expelled from the Parliament to all the one that it was condemned some prison sentence . In fact, they crossed the ray of the legality. and they made the day right in which in Pakistan, ex- prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto appeared before the Supreme Court to defend itself of a sentence until death dictated by a court inferior and urdida by Zia Ul Haq, a general coup participant who had organized a judgment maneuvers. The shade of that unjust sentence arrived until Nueva Delhi threatening at Indira and its son. If the governors skipped the rules of the game, everything became possible in that atmosphere of lynching. When acting of illegal way, the enemies of Indira covered with sand with the last vestiges of the moral superiority with which they had assumed the power like representatives of a nation traumatizada by the experience of the state of emergency, emergency situation. Suddenly, those were they that became tyrants who jailed without judgment, subvirtiendo therefore desires of the electorate.

Under the vault of the Parliament, Indira defended with controlled passion and fury: "Before in the history of no democratic country a single individual, that leads the main party of opposition, has never been object of as much calumny, political defamation and vendetta on the part of the party in the power." It returned to say that it deeply felt the excesses of the state of emergency, emergency situation: " I have already expressed my excuses in many forums public and I return it to do now. " Their words frequently were interrupted by a roar of alive and boings that resonated with force in the concave cupola of the building:

- I am a small person, but always I have been faithful to certain values and objectives. Each insult against me will become against you. Each punishment that you inflict to me will do more fort to me. My voice could not be silenced because it is not an isolated voice. It does not speak of me, a fragile woman and without importance. Speech of significant changes for the society, changes that are the base of the true democracy and a greater freedom.

Finished the speech, Indira rose and, giving the back to the deputies, it walked towards the exit. When arriving at the door, the return occurred and it watched to them long. They were seated with the crossed legs, surrounded in his kurtas of white cotton and in their villas of pashmina,

others took to the characteristic cap that Nehru used, others the Muslim fez; very few dressed to the western one. It seemed one cuts Eastern old and motley. It raised the arm, with the extended hand that was the symbol of its party:

- Volveré! - it said.

Sonia had prepared an exquisite paste to have supper. In addition, of dessert there were cream of guayaba and pastelitos of handle of Allahabad, that it liked much to Indira because they remembered its childhood to him. It arrived with one hour of delay, exhausted. The characteristics of their face reflected the tension that finished living.

--At any moment they will come to by me... - it said to Rajiv and Sonia to them, before telling the happened thing them in the Parliament.

Sonia was not able to prove mouthful. As it often happens, the near people suffer more than the own victims. The fear returned to seize of its soul, mixed with a disagreeable sensation of insecurity, as if they were living on moving sands ready to devour them to all. Again Indira would be arrested, this time would not sleep in a police station, but in the jail. Their enemies had won a battle. Rajiv and Sonia were downcast.

- So that flames to Priyanka and we did not play a scrabble game? - then Indira asked. It enchanted to him to play with its granddaughter, who was very wide-awake and gained a good percentage of times... What better company than the one of the girl of its eyes at those moments of uncertainty.

## 25

To the following day, Indira was arrested when coming out of the Parliament, in the middle of an enormous manifestation of support and shouts of “ Long life to Indira Gandhi”. This time did not request to be handcuffed. The cellular van where they introduced it opened passage with great difficulty between the crowd. It was lead to the jail of Tihar, whose single mention was able to intimidate the most seasoned criminals. But contrary to the maharaníes of Jaipur and Gwalior, it was not locked up in a cell in company of prostitutas and common delinquents. They such put it in large cabins where there was been imprisoned the head of the opposition when the state of emergency, emergency situation. She was single, everything a privilege. Two matronas were alternated to watch it. When they brought something to him to eat, one refused to prove mouthful.

- I do not think to eat nothing that has not been brought by my family - it said of fixed way, knowing that only it could FIAR of the hands of Sonia. Matrona left and went to discuss with its superior one. As always in India, they were long conversations that lasted an interminable time.

While as much, Indira was dedicated to observe the cell. Oía the row of the patio and the other internal ones. She was extensive and in general he was better of which it had been expected. It had a wood rickety old bed, without long cushion, and was bars in the windows, although crystal or blinds lacked. For much cold. To end of December, the temperature can lower at night of zero.

Indira was covering the hollow of the window with a blanket to protect itself of the cold and to try something of privacy when matrona returned.

- A visit Has .

Sonia and Rajiv were waiting for it in locutorio, a great room with chipped walls, some metallic tables and chairs and much people, the young and huesudos majority poor, men who came to see their spouses and locked up mothers. The low part of the walls was stained of red, vestige of the innumerable escupitajos of all those that chewed leaf of betel. It smelled of rust and rancid incense. Since they had already come to visit Sanjay, they were cured of fright. But they seemed affected very, and was Indira that it had to raise the spirit to them.

- I am well, really. I am going to take advantage of to read, let to me have up to six books... luck goes - it said with sarcasm. They have made a species of special washroom for me and I will be able to be showered in the morning with hot water. The cell is enough cleaning but everything is indescriptiblemente ugly, as you can see... How is the children?

- Priyanka wanted to come to verte, but we have thought that... To Indira the face was illuminated to him .

- Oh, yes! - it said smiling. Traedla, is good that it sees what is a jail. We them Nehru, from small, have been going to visit our relatives the jails... It is not necessary to lose the tradition.



They were ed \*\*\*refl mng. As always, Indira was not let win by the adversity. Nor a single time let traslucir the most mini sign of car compassion. It was enough to him to be convinced that the moral reason was of its side.

- I will come to traerte the food... - Sonia said to him.

- Tráeme little thing. I am not hungry.

Sonia was going two times to the day to take plates to him prepared in house. It had to pass it everything through a detector of metals. A watchman inspected the containers soon. The candies were prohibited because in an occasion a criminal had offered to his jailer a candy with some narcotic substance in his interior and had been able to escape. The bananas in the section of women were not allowed either : that puritanas and suspicaces they were the authorities...

A Indira day told Sonia who had received two anonymous telegrams. One said: "It lives frugalmente." and another one advised to tell the bars to him to spend the time. "There are Them counted, there is twenty-eight", it said to him. Also it said to him how it maintained a strict routine that helped it to spend the days. One awoke to five of the dawn and made its exercises of yoga. Soon it drank a cold milk glass - that Sonia had brought him the eve and returned to the rickety old bed until the seven. Later one cleaned up, a little meditation and it was put to read. The afternoons to him became eternal, but it did not complain. It took advantage of to think, to fall back in itself and, peculiarly, to rest. The best moment lived it when it went to visit it his granddaughter. All in the family said that Priyanka had left to its grandmother. It had character and she was willful and determined. Indira adored it. Rajiv and Sonia had to get involved in larguísimas discussions with the prison authorities to be able to happen to the small one. It was a glad meeting in a dismal scenery.

Before leaving, Indira asked a favor to him Sonia.

- It wanted that you sent of my part a branch of flowers to Charan Singh with a note of congratulation by its birthday.

- Charan Singh? - it asked astonished Sonia.

- Yes, the same one. You will do It, please?

- Clear - perplex Sonia responded.

Charan Singh was one of the ringleaders of the Janata Party, minister of the Interior and person in charge of its first arrest, and now relegated a ministry of smaller importance. Indira knew what did. They were left three years in front of Janata government, but information that had arrived him the members of the coalition were being fought until death. Charan Singh was suffered against prime minister Morarji Desai, that that had insisted on clearing the house and the protection to him to Indira, for being dismissed of its position of minister of the Interior. Indira thought that it could open a breach between both leaders, to urge on its ambitions so that the government fell like a rotten fruit. That one was the intention of the branch of flowers.

Nothing else to leave the jail, hoped a letter to him of Charan Singh inviting it to its residence to celebrate the celebration of birth of its grandson. In that reassuring and familiar frame a Machiavellian negotiation took place, in which both political adversaries outlined a strategy to knock down the government of prime minister Morarji Desai. In exchange for annulling the new law of Special Courts under whom Indira and Sanjay could be judged without habitual the legal protection, Indira offered the support of the Congress to overthrow to Morarji Desai. And once overthrown, it was committed to support to Charan Singh to make it prime minister, which would allow him to satisfy the ambition with all its life. It was Sanjay that was in charge to continue with the delicate negotiations taking care of itself of not leaving no fleco loose.

The result was that the coalition was broken and the government of Morarji Desai fell, but Charan Singh could not, or it did not want, to revoke the special law, so that Indira retired the support to him, and his government lasted less of a month. In order to get out of the the jam, the president of the Republic dissolved the Parliament and summoned new elections for January of 1980. Indira had maneuvered with experience, coldness and effectiveness. So and as it had said to him to the deputies after its speech, it was arranged to return, and by the great door.

Months before, it had thought about leaving it everything. Ella and Sanjay had spoken until retiring to a small city of the Himalayas. The wise person and Krishnamurti philosopher, personal friend of Pupul, had recommended to Indira that left the policy and she had answered to him who did not know how to do it, being twenty-eight pending causes against her. It did not want to finish like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who had been executed in the gift the 4 of April of 1979 in the patio of the central prison of Rawalpindi. The Pakistani, afraid dictator of which Bhutto revived politically as Indira in India were doing it, had been able to manipulate to justice to end his rival. Here that manipulation was not so easy, because India continued being a democracy. But the danger watched.

- I have two alternatives - there was this Indira to him to Krishnamurti-, to fight or that shoots like a a fair duck to me.

Now it had not returned back possible. The power was within reach. Indira, faithful to itself, went to conquer it. Navy of two suitcases that contained average dozen of saris of crude cotton, a thermus for the hot water and another one for cold milk, two cushions, several bags of dry fruits, an apple box and an umbrella to protect itself of the sun, was entered in the borders of the subcontinent. It crossed seventy thousand kilometers, it directed an average of twenty meetings to the day and, altogether, it reached a hearing of one hundred million people. It was Vista or heard by one of each four voters. Immediately, account occurred of which its second pass by the jail had made it immensely popular. Martyr and heroin. In comparison, the candidates of the coalition that composed the Janata Party seemed old dinosaurios. They competed not as much against a tiny candidate of sixty and two years but against a living myth, a legend dressed

in sari and dusty sandals that the passion of the town woke up. Its message was simple, far from abstractions and ideologies: "You vote by a government who works to you." Sonia could not imagine that, years later, same she would make use of that slogan.

Like in the good times, Indira devastated in the ballot boxes. Sonia was expected it because she had accompanied it in some by his routes by the villages and she had seen it move with total soltura between the desarrapados crowds of, saying an amiable phrase to a old one, having a detail with disabling, smiling to a woman, giving a flower to a girl. The memory of that prodigious campaign remained recorded in its mind and years later it would be to him of an enormous utility.

When the results became official, the house was invaded by friends, journalists, members of the party, great industrialists, retailers of the district and people of all the social phantom. There were flowers everywhere. With great difficulty, her Pupul friend could break through between the crowd. When they were, Indira almost lies down to cry. "Very a little was moved and going - her friend would count. Although account had occurred of which the tide ran to its favor, the commotion of the victory left it like noqueada." To assume that it returned to be prime minister and who with a stroke of the pen all their problems were solved, had been its time. But immediately it reacted.

- What again feels like to the being leader of India? - an European correspondent asked to him Indira . It turned itself towards him with a fire glance.

- Always I have been the leader of India - it responded to him dryly.

Another journalist, surprised before the massive affluence of humble people, commented to Indira that something very good must have done for them in the past so that so many went, to which she talked back of a little crítica way: "No, those to which we have helped are where they are not let see."

Sanjay was to its side, smiling, surrounded in a chal color salmon, like a young person Caesar. Also he had won, in the same circumscription that had scorned three years to him before. Now its power would have something of legitimacy. The life also smiled to him for another reason. Maneka had remained embarrassed months back, when the situation for both was very hard. They had been gotten to ask what sense had to bring a boy to the world in the middle of as much threat. Now that veil of uncertainty was raised and the future it announced radiating. Maneka, very excited, conversed with journalists and friends, shining with pride its naked belly between the bodice and the apron of sari. Rajiv, Sonia and the children teemed by the house. It seemed a great happy family again.

Those that they had been victims of the campaigns of nationalizations and abolition of privileges did not share that joy. The photo of Indira smiling next to Sanjay, that occupied the covers of main newspapers in successive days, caused that more than one in the immense

country it felt a fear chill. Mother and son returned to the load. In their already decrepit palaces, the heirs of maharajás received the news with cynicism... What could clear to them now that it had not cleared to them already? It was so the hatred that inspired Indira by many families of the old aristocracy of the country that once, being of visit in Bhopal, was invited to take the tea to house from the old heirs of begums, which they had governed the sultanato during generations. Indira never knew that the chocolate cake piece that tasted with fruición was impregnated of escupitajo, hidden gift of the lady of the house that, nobility forces, took care of on the other hand with the Maxima deference.

The 14 of January of 1980, Indira swore the position of prime minister before the president of the Republic, surrounded by its family, of some friends and companions of party, in the shining Ashoka hall the ex-palace of the virrey, whose paintings in ceilings and walls counted the mitológica history of eternal India. It was the fourth time that did in this same scenery, whose grandiosidad evoked the enormous one to be able that granted to him. This time did not swear on the Constitution, like in previous occasions, but in name of God. He had always been a little superstitious, on the contrary that his father, but now surprised the mention the Almighty. Perhaps it recognized in its internal law that its return to the power had more to the destiny than to its own merits or to the failures of its adversaries. Perhaps as much attack had made an impression on its armor, and needed consolation. It had always felt respect by the supernatural thing, inheritance that it attributed to its mother, a deeply religious woman. From always it had listened the astrologers. That same date had chosen it its professor of yoga, the gurú Dhirendra Brahmachari. According to him, it was a favorable day since it corresponded with the solstice of winter of the Hindu calendar. Twenty years ago this peculiar personage, who also professed the astrology, it indicated the ominous days to him of good omen or for certain activities. Lately its influence had diminished much. Indira saw him with mistrust because the Shah Commission had removed to shine his tejemanajes and questioned the origin of its fortune. Even so, it continued asking to him on good or bad days before making a decision. To its age and after which it had lived, Indira it did not want to run risks touching to the luck.

Just later of the possession taking, Indira was directly of the palace from the president to its old office of South Block. It could not have most of its previous ministers and colleagues because they had betrayed it. It either did not want to surround itself by figures that people could identify with the state of emergency, emergency situation. It had to choose the members of its cabinet between a mess of deputies without much experience, many of them of between the rows of the Youth Congress de Sanjay. For surprise of many and lightening of some, it did not give any portfolio to its son, in spite of its legitimacy validated by the ballot boxes. It did not want to expose it too much.

It preferred it to its side, it wanted to form it, it wanted to see mature it under its protection. It had total confidence in which Sanjay would be able to revitalize the party and to make sure that the projects of development in the rural areas would be fulfilled. And it did not want to repeat the errors of the past.

While as much, Sonia was in charge again of the change.

The victory of Indira meant that they returned all to number 1 of Safdarjung Road. It was made urgent recover space. Before nothing, Indira wanted to command to a dozen of Hindu priests to purify the house where Morarji Desai had resided while there was it been persecuting. One had found out that its rival one was assiduous medical instructor of the urinoterapia, an ancestral custom that consists of drinking all the uninformed mornings in a glass of first tinkles of the day. In order to make sure that it was not left a single glass of the old renter in house, Sonia and Indira strave in gathering them all, to place them in a box and to give back them to the administration. Also it sent to one group of bricklayers so that they destroyed to the bathroom to the Indian style that his rival had been made construct and they replaced it by one european style, with toilet and bathtub. When they were changed, it seemed that never they had left that house. "An air of renewed elegance reigned in all the rooms, that were full again of crew members and enormous vases of flowers that fell in cascade", Pupul would write. Sonia returned to assume his role of extraordinary housewife in that special home, where there was to organize suppers and receptions for a continuous parade of personalities: Giscard d'Estaing, Mobutu, Yasser Arafat, Andrei Gromyko, Jimmy Carter, etc. All came to narrow bows with one of the most powerful women of the world.

The familiar life returned to be pleasant. The new situation and a greater space relaxed the atmosphere. The fights and, still better, the silencios stopped. All were pending of Maneka, that was on the verge of giving light. During the pregnancy, Sonia had made the peace with his sister-in-law of tacit way. It had chosen to forget the old quarrels, the hirientes jumps of humor, commentaries to be centered in his to have of "bahú greater" - older daughter-in-law and to help to Maneka with its experience. He was pending of her at any moment. The family is first. Decidedly, Sonia was already very India. Although both sisters-in-law were like the water and the oil, obtained to a species of entente cordiale. Indira, that did not fit in himself of joy when thinking about its new grandson, had already chosen him name: Firoz, like its husband. Maneka was not convinced, and wanted to call it Varun. Sanjay settled the subject. The small one would be called Firoz Varun.

Rajiv no longer had to spend almost all its time free, outside the flight hours, in the office of taxes of the ministry of Property. Again it could be dedicated to its family and her hobbies, as the photography or the radio. He was padrazo. A function of the school, or the reading of a story was never lost if it arrived at house before the children were laid down. The photography distracted to him much; it was I relax after the concentration

that to him their flights demanded, to slight in impossible hours. Its liking had grown with time. It liked to experiment with filters and with new equipment, an exhibition was not lost and it was paid to specialized magazines. It animated to its children to that they were become fond of. It taught to develop its visual sensitivity to them requesting to them that they identified several tones of green in the garden. Later, it advised to its son to that it wrote down the time of exhibition and the speed at which took the photos to be able to correct them and to improve. Its camera was always present in all the special occasions: birthday, familiar anniversaries, celebrations, etc., and if it were in house when some photographer came to portray his mother, took his camera and participated in the session. It always enjoyed a special comradeship the photographers. To its mother it gave an album to him in folding miniature that it took with himself in all her trips. "Rajiv, please more recent photos", requested to him repeatedly when it got tired to always see the same ones. To Indira they enchanted the photos to him of its grandsons. It chose those that it liked in the leaves of contacts and it requested to him to Rajiv that extended them and it framed them. Its office was full.

By the nights, Rajiv was locked in in its factory and made contact with the enemy with radio hams of the entire world. It had bought a transmitter of automontable radio in kit and nothing him made happier than to connect with Pier Luigi back in Orbassano, the friend of the childhood of Sonia, the clear nights without interferences. Prote'ge' by the anonymity, to speak by radio with people of the entire world was another form to travel and, at the same time, to forget itself and to relax.

The 16 of February of 1980, a month after the taking of possession of Indira, it happened in India an extraordinary phenomenon that was not repeated almost a century ago: a total sun eclipse. Rajiv installed a telescope in the garden, helped by Rahul and Priyanka, that were very excited with the idea. In addition they had black glasses, that Rajiv had obtained of a colleague pilot. Sanjay was entertained fitting the airplane controls controlled by radio. The liking to the aeromodelling had come to him after the government retired his license to him of pilot without mediating reason some. Now it was to the delay to recover it to return to which one had become its favorite liking: to fly. It was left far the passion by the cars, buried by fiasco of the Maruti. Pupul, that had been invited by its friend to be present at the event, took a cup from tea in veranda. When the hour of the eclipse approached, Indira, influenced by the shady predictions of known astrologers who had announced in periodic earthquakes, floods and disasters of all type, commanded to Maneka to its quarter. Considered as a direct threat towards the boy nonborn, no pregnant woman had to be exposed to its ominous influence. Even in subjects that nothing they had to do with the policy, Indira was in syntony with its electorate. Most of people it chose to hide in its huts. The Hindus do not go out during the eclipses, considered detrimental because, symbolically, the light is hidden. They ayunaron, others made offerings or recited mantras to swear in the danger.

When the moon began to invade the sun, a mysterious light surrounded the house and the garden and the shades disappeared. Indira rose, and went to lock in itself in its room until the end of the phenomenon. Gurú Su Brahmachari she had said to him that the eclipse was specially dangerous for her and Sanjay, and she preferred to believe to him. Rajiv, Sonia and the children, all with black glasses, attended extasiados the passage of the moon in front of the sun. Pupul followed Indira to its quarter. "This one was not the robust Indira of the days previous to the state of emergency, emergency situation - it thought. It surprised the influenced thing to me that was in favor of the ritual and the superstition. Of what it was scared? What shades, what the dark walked next to her"

The following months were marked by the familiar harmony and the happiness to return to enjoy a normal life. The attentions that Maneka received from its mother-in-law, of its sister-in-law and of its husband, who accompanied it to all the medical revisions because he said that the physical suffering terrified it, made it feel in the glory. Like his Rajiv brother, Sanjay participated in all the process of the childbirth. Firoz Varun was born the 13 of March of 1980 without greater problem. It was the sour cherry of the pie of the familiar bonanza. As of that moment, the pizpireta Maneka began to enjoy its paper of mother and wife, advised by Sonia, to whom they fell the first well-taken care of ones of the boy. Indira was so contented that it demanded it in his quarter to sleep with him. It gave him equal not to stick eye.

Again Sanjay, by the proximity to its mother, enjoyed an irresistible power. Inmiscuía in all the aspects of the India life, from the air corridors of the capital to the congestión in the hospitals, from the plans of rural development to the protection of the animals, causes favorite to which her woman had dragged to him. The hoax by Nueva Delhi ran of which before a year, he would be prime minister, but her mother was not arranged to it. When the members of the legislative assembly of the Congress de Uttar Pradesh chose to Sanjay like their leader, they requested to him to Indira that him head of government of that state named, the greater one of the country. Maneka already was seen enjoying them prebandage that came with the position, including living in a loaded palace of crew members. Pero Indira refused fully. To the admirers of its son it said to them that it had left much to learn before being able to become position of similar responsibility. Sanjay protested and discussed with its mother, but it did not give her arm to twist. In the end, it tranquilized itself and he did not return to insist.

Although it followed surrounded by one cut of flatterers, Sanjay was not he himself of before. Until its detractors they began to admit that, in effect, it had qualities that the country needed in that difficult critical moment. They recognized its enormous ability to work and its proven aptitude to make hard and unpopular decisions. In fact, it was happening to him what him it had happened to its grandfathers Nehru and Indira. All in the family had taken time in maturing like adults, and they had obtained it

after facing great challenges. To the thirty and three years, Sanjay was on way to become a responsible man, without the aberrant estridencias nor behaviors of the past. Her mother was convinced that, after a good political learning, his son would happen to be an inexpert and impulsive young person to a visionary and energetic politician. It had the genes to obtain it, thought she. The incredible thing has been that many in India also believed it thus, something unthinkable for only six months. Or the country had become amnesic or the popular pull of the Gandhi continued representing the only possibility of salvation for million Indians.

Rajiv, Sonia and his children spent those months dreaming about the vacations. They had decided to spend days in Italy, and had thought to do it in June, when it gets worse the Nueva heat Delhi. They thought to agree with its friend Indian actor Kabir Bedi, who in those years was world-wide known by his stellar paper in the Sandokán series, and that had promised to visit them. In addition this time they thought to travel by the north of Italy. They had thought to rent a car and to visit the region of Asiago and the village of Lusiana, where Sonia had been born. It wanted to teach to the children the place where servant had itself, to present/display to the neighbors and the relatives to them who still were there. A plunge in the other familiar roots.

Day of game, before to dismiss, Maneka taught him to Sonia stock market, that contained something that it had bought, with intention to begin to use it.

- You you are not going it to believe...

- And what is? - Sonia, intrigued asked.

Maneka removed from a stock market a kitchen prescription book. An outburst of laughter entered to them both. It was the last time that saw them laugh together.



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Of not to be interrupted, they had been perfect vacations: relaxed, amused and interesting. The children perfected their Italian, Sonia bought up to date itself in his purchases of European clothes and Rajiv did the same with its photographic material. In the end, not even they had to rent a car, its Anushka sister lent a convertible to them that made the delights of the children. In him they crossed the north of Italy, in the opposed direction of the one of the patriarch Stefano when its native town of Lusiana in search of a better future in the industrial belt of Turin had left. Thirty and five years later, their daughter and her grandsons returned to the Asiago mounts, like a normal family of Italian in vacations. Of way, they stopped in the gorgeous lake of Garda, surrounded by olive groves, fields of lemon trees and dense forests of cypresses, took a walk in Verona by the wide red marble streets, they were let seduce by the enchantment of Venice and they bathed in beaches of the Adriatic. They promoted the Asiago mounts by a landscape that reflected the splendor of the spring. Wild flowers malvas, white and yellows grew in the roadside ditch of the highway that wound between forests of birches. The fields where the cows grazed had dressed in green an intense one and to the the Alps bottom the Vista of the Himalayas remembered to them from the plain. In Lusiana, the original village of the family, the air was crystalline, desired to drink it, the temperature was perfect. Pensear that now in Delhi, the grandmother, the uncles and mainly the small Firoz would be supporting 45 degrees to the shade, to the delay of the arrival of rains! From the car, Priyanka and Rahul were ed \*\*\*reflx mng reading the labels of the businesses: "Bakery Maino", "Trattoria Maino", "Maino Coffee", "Powerboat Maino brothers"... How they had prospered the different branches from the family from the times of the postwar period! , Sonia thought. Enormous affection and curiosity were received with: all wanted to know the prodigal daughter of the town whose extraordinary destiny followed through the press. All it surprised to them the same: the simplicity of the family. Sonia went dressed in taste, with fit trousers and t-shirts without sleeves, a luxury that could not be allowed in India, where a woman could teach the gut but it was bad sight that taught shoulders. Photos in front of the familiar stone house were made, the last one of the Rua Maino, that had been three decades vacated. Splendidly they were entertained, as much that they did not have time to accept all the invitations, all the visits.

They returned to Orbassano, where Stefano and Paola hoped to them with many desire. They had passed it so badly following the present time of India during the past few years that now felt a tiny amount in the heart whenever their daughter and her grandsons left, although went to the Véneto or simply to happen afternoon to Turin. To that restlessness the one was added that they felt by his small daughter, Nadia, who had married with a Spanish diplomat who finished being destined Nueva Delhi. On the one hand, they were contentments because the two sisters were going to become company; by another one, they did not like to have them so far.

They joked saying that they could not escape of karma of India. The greater daughter, Anushka, than lived in the floor on underneath the villa on Via Bellini, had the intention to open a store of India crafts in a commercial center next to Orbassano. To its greater daughter it had put to him of Aruna name.

Rahul and Priyanka also were happy for returning to house of the grandparents, indeed because their cousins, the children of Anushka, lived down, so that the children passed it in great in that great familiar house, playing in the garden or the street. They played just like Sonia of girl, when it drew with a chalk in asphalt the days of the week and spent hours jumping from a square to another one. Stefano felt very happy with those familiar meetings. Had not constructed the house to have under he himself ceiling to all its daughters and their families? They joked saying that she must have been Indian in another life of as much that it liked the family... The known ones Sonia were surprised of which her old friend continued having a so humble attitude, and dressed a so simple way, with small and discreet jewels. "To the "Cenicienta de Orbassano " - the laughter said to a neighbor holding has not risen the head the wedding to him that has done." To thus it described the local press it from his marriage: "Cenicienta de Orbassano", a name that caused in Sonia other people's shame: "Slight cursilada", said. For Rajiv also the vacations in Italy were the best relief than it had been able to wish. To flee from Nueva Delhi was a luxury. To jump in the Vespa orange of Pier Luigi and to go to the store of electronic Allegro in the Re Privateering Umberto to buy pieces for its radius that were not in India and not to be recognized were a pleasure, like was it to visit in family the fabulous Egyptian Museum - where Sonia, of adolescent, was with his friends to avoid the cold of the street without being immediately surrounded by a people cloud requesting an autograph or indicating with the finger. But the pleasure would last little. At the end of June, the visit of Sandokán to Orbassano caused an authentic commotion. Suddenly the children and the young people of the town approached Via Bellini seeing of near this prince of Borneo that had sworn to take revenge itself of the British in the imagination of Emilio Salgari. As much commotion formed that Sonia proposed to leave the house. They finished afternoon in one pizzería of the near town of Avigliana, happy and ing \*\*\*refl mng itself.

And suddenly, to the dawn of day 23 of June, it sounded the telephone. Sonia felt a knot in the stomach. It was not one zone time, and immediately it thought that it could be a call of India. Her mother confirmed it, of finishing nails and in low voice, not to wake up to the rest of the family: "It is a conference... of Nueva Delhi." Sonia rose, she bundled up with its Albornoz and she went to take the telephone to the hall. It recognized between interferences the nervous voice of one of the secretaries of its mother-in-law. Now she was sure that they would be the very bad news: "Madam... Sanjay has suffered an accident... It has passed away." Sonia remained with the mind in target, without listening to the run over explanations of the secretary. When it hung, it was stunned. It returned to its

quarter. Rajiv was stretching. It hoped seconds to say it to it, as if it wanted to give him second more than a happiness than, once totally wide-awake, would not return to know. In more deep of his being, Sonia knew that that catastrophe was going to affect deeply to its life and the one of its family.

Hours later, flew towards Rome to connect with the flight of Indian Airlines that made the route London-New Delhi. They traveled in first class, next to other known friends and, between whom were the mother and the sister of Maneka, whose vacations in the British capital also had been interrupted. Also an old minister, an industrialist and a businessman, all old friends of the family traveled in the airplane, very affected by the circumstances. Each one of them had compiled information on the accident and during the long flight they could reconstitute what it had happened.

Sanjay had crashed to the controls of its last toy, the Pitts S-2A that had acquired thanks to the mediation of the corrupt gurú Brahmachari. To seven the morning one had appeared in the Nueva flying club Delhi and had invited to a companion pilot to make exercises of acrobatics. His friend was obstinate to fly with Sanjay because he knew that he lacked experience, but before its insistence, he ended up accepting. They were making curls in the sky and falls in itched on Nueva Delhi during twelve minutes, soon flew on number 1 of Safdarjung Road, where there was been speaking with its mother hardly one hour before.

- Ten taken care of much - it had noticed Indira- to him. They say to me that you are very imprudent...

- You do not make case - Sanjay had answered him.

According to a witness, the small plane raised like an arrow towards the sky, and soon it initiated a mincemeat as if it go to take inertia to do looping, but could not recover. One crashed in the diplomatic district, in an open of terrain, to less of a kilometer of number 12 of Willingdon Crescent.

A month before, the chief of a main directorate of Civil Aviation had informed to his superior ones of which Sanjay pertinazmente violated the security protocol and that therefore put in danger its life and the one of the others.

- The aviation director commented the minister of the Air, that was in speaking it with your mother, but, for the reason that was, it did not do it.

- If nobody did nothing, it went by fear to go against Sanjay, I imagine... - Rajiv said

Later, they would find out which had happened with exactitude.

The report of the director of civil aviation had fallen into the hands of Sanjay and this one had reacted, faithful to itself, forcing the civil employee to take a voluntary excedencia. It had replaced it by its second, a docile man who would not put problems to him. The case is that Sanjay had died by imprudent and magnificent, because its thirst of being able era so that did not accept any limit.

The dusk in flight was fastest, by the speed of the airplane and the rotation of the Earth. They had to be on Syria, or perhaps Turkey. Down, lakes were seen turquesa color and the lucecitas of the cities that were embracing the night. Nobody followed the film. The group of the friends and relatives had not wanted to prove mouthful. Amteshwar, the mother of Maneka, visibly was shocked. "Widow to the twenty-three years... and with a boy of three months", the woman repeated. In less than three years, there was lost to its husband and his son-in-law. It had happened to be in the summit to be the condemned to the ostracism, and soon in the summit of new... And now what would happen?

- You must do the possible thing to maintain both families united - the three friends of the family advised to the mother of Maneka-. Now that is not Sanjay, you must make fragmentation hand grenade around Rajiv.

To Sonia the end hairs were put to him when it listened to that phrase. It was on the verge of sending "No" sonorous, but it was contained. It already knew that they would try to convince to Rajiv so that it occupied the emptiness that had left its brother. Sonia knew it very clearly: that meant the end of the happiness. It was arranged to fight with nails and teeth to prevent it.

The airplane landed in Delhi to two of the dawn. An intense heat big wave gave the welcome them. The ardent chapel was installed in the house of Safdarjung Road where a people row - ministers, friends, strangers had throughout marched past the day before the mortal rest, ordenadamente and in silence. Indira, very nervous, had been going from a room to the other all night, asking if there were the news of which they were traveling, because unconsciously it feared that another misfortune could happen.

Rajiv, Sonia and the children already had been informed into which they were going to be but, even thus, the shock to arrive at house in those conditions made an impression to them vividly. When they saw the body of Sanjay tended in féretro in the hall, in the middle of those walls where it seemed that still the echo of its frank and nervous laughter resounded, Rajiv and Sonia collapsed. And when Indira saw Rajiv very heartbrokenly crying, also it broke to sob. Once recovered serenity, Sonia observed Indira: it had the reddened eyes and inflations behind its sun glasses, the complexion ash color, he walked a little bent, as if it cost to him to stay raised. "After this, where I go, daughter?", it asked to him with the broken voice. It had said it tightening the hands on the gut, in a gesture that the poor farmers do when they cry to its deads. They returned to embrace itself, and they were long time in silences. Less ago than ten days, Indira had installed to Sanjay in its first official office, after it to have named Secretary General of the party. Now, suddenly, only there was a yaciente body: it had remained without son, companion, advisor and successor. Soon Sonia saw Maneka, whose movements seemed unconnected. All the day had gone crying, repeating: "Sanjay no, by favor... Anyone less Sanjay..." Rajiv embraced it and it said affection words to him. Sonia could

not either repress the tears when embracing it. The children, tired and shocked, held stoically. The distant weeping of its cousin the small Firoz Varun tore silence.

Immediately Sonia put itself to take care of which was guarding the body. It helped to place long cushions in the ground so that all the near friends and relatives could rest. Also one made sure that there was tea, toasted and sweet.

After the effusion of the encounter, Indira told the details them of the funeral ritual that had organized for the following day.

- We will make the cremation in Shantivana, next to the mausoleo of the grandfathers...

- I do not believe that it is good idea, mother - Rajiv- suggested. Would not be more prudent to do a funeral deprived, more restricted?

- Perhaps, but sheik Abdullah, head of government of Kashmir, and all the state heads of government have requested me a memorable funeral.

- Sanjay did not have an official position in the government. Causarte can problems do funerales to him of State. Imagínate the protests!

- I know It. But also it is truth that Sanjay had many followers, and I do not want to disappoint them. It would be like disappointing it to him.

Rajiv let insist.

The cremation took place on the following day, to borders of the Yamuna river. It was too much near where it had taken place the cremation of Nehru, the father of the nation, and his son, no matter how much Indira did not want to see it, such did not deserve honors that its father. Many saw in this gesture of Indira another sign of abuse authority. Again, the advice of Rajiv had disregarded so that he chose another site, not that sacred place of peregrination for million Indians. Pero Indira was let take by the insistence of the companions of Sanjay. It did not have forces to fight against them, and surely it agreed in paying an excessive tribute to its son, as if thus its loss could compensate a little.

Indira, the eyes and all the pain that prote'ge's by their enormous sun glasses contained, was seated next to Maneka in first row, in front of the pyre. Sonia, dressed in sari white immaculate, sobbed while she remembered the days of just married when their brother-in-law, their husband and she were an inseparable trio. Behind, people saw themselves until the line of the horizon. To Rajiv it was called on to him to fulfill the rites: it planted the torch in the fire and gave several returns around the corpse of its brother, to are of mantras that the Hindu priests intoned. His Rahul son watched to him with certain apprehension. His father had said to him that he would touch him, like first-born, to carry out the rites of the cremation when, by life law, one of its ancestors left east world. Until that day, never the boy had thought that that could happen.

In the evening, Rajiv took ashes of its brother in a copper ballot box to bury it under a tree in the garden of Akbar Road. When seeing the ballot box, Indira could not be contained and broke more in sobs. For the

first time, it cried very heartbrokenly and without inhibition in public. Rajiv embraced it and it maintained it still on, because the woman, literally, collapsed. Its pain seemed not to have limit. Sonia had found out that the morning of the Indira tragedy had left the hospital where the doctors mended the corpse of Sanjay to return to the place of the accident. It had returned twice. The bad languages said that it had been going to look for the clock and the key ring of Sanjay because one of the keys was with certainty the one of some full strong box of everything what the prodigal son must have robbed . In the cover of the clock, always according to the rumors, the number of a secret account in Switzerland would be recorded. But patraña was pure. To Indira they did not interest the personal objects to him, that in addition already they had been gathered by the police. At heart, which for was to look for its son; it unconsciously tried to recover it to him, not its things. Hurgando with the glance between calcined irons, Indira had realized enormidad of the loss. All their dreams, their great plans of future also were facts pieces between the ruins of the small plane.

Under the shade of the tree of the garden, Indira was able to control the weeping and to recover with amazing rapidity. Soon they went to the hall. The place where been it had placed the body now was covered with flowers of jazmín. They seated in the ground of that room that smelled well and seemed purified, the legs crossed and in silence, listening to sing to the priests versicles of the Ramayana, the great epic of the hinduismo.



































In the following days, the supporters of Sanjay erected statues in their memory, baptized whole streets and seats with their name, as well as districts, schools, hospitals and until hydroelectric power stations. The whole country lived with frenzy a posthumous cult to the personality on the prodigal son that most flattering got to compare with Jesus Christ, Einstein and Karl Marx. That unfolding of assumption affection was plus a desperate attempt on the part of its political allies and pals to follow with its privileges and to stay near the power, next to Indira, that an authentic demonstration of national pain. Many others, between which were the old victims of their policy of birth control , lived that death with lightening. For them, it had been a providencial accident, that had saved to the country the cruel destiny to

have to Sanjay of prime minister, which all thought that it was going to happen sooner or later.

For Indira, the only positive of the tragedy was that it served to recover old relations and to reconcile with relatives and friends who had given the back him during the Emergency. A letter of its old friend felt particularly happy when receiving Dorothy Norman: "For as much that we were not written that at certain level I do not know to whom I am writing; in another level, I write to the person that I knew. How I would like that we could speak, although silence perhaps, is more revealing than any word. ( ... ) Control this letter like a bridge. The friendships are most valuable in this sometimes so hard world." Indira answered saying to him the moved thing to him that its letter had felt when receiving and that had so many things that to tell him that it did not know by where to begin: "The past is the past, we let be it. But I must clarify certain things. The falsification, the persistent malicious campaign of calumny must be refuted..." Indira Never admitted the badnesses or the errors of Sanjay.

In house, Maneka had left and the small Firoz Varun, that slept in the quarter of Indira with the other grandsons from the death of Sanjay. The grandmother went lengths moments observing the baby as if behind each gesture she recognized his son. Rajiv and Sonia also had left, whose marriage had survived the physical separation, the cultural difference, the opposition of the families, the stress of the Emergency and the continuous infiltration and corrosion of the policy in its lives. They had two intelligent, handsome children and of good character. Until the accident of the Sanjay uncle, most serious than it had happened to them to the children had been to see the grandmother in the lost jail and have a dog. "Quedaros with the memory of when you played with her, much that was amused and what we amused all when we removed it... - Rajiv had written them in a full letter of paternal tenderness, that finished with an advice. You must learn to live knowing that at some time all we must die."

The perfect familiar life that enjoyed seemed something too pretty and good to last.

**ACT III**  
**THE SOLITUDE AND THE POWER**

*Whenever it take a step ahead, you are destined to disturb something. You shake the air while you advance, you raise dust, you alter the ground. You are running over things. When a whole society advances, that upsetting becomes in a much greater scale; and each thing that you upset, the created interests that you want to suppress, everything becomes an obstacle.*

**MAHATMA GANDHI**



Twenty years before, after the death of its husband, Indira it touched bottom and it took long time in leaving afloat. When his father died, he entered another deep existential crisis, that lasted long months. But now, less than seventy and two hours after the death of its son, it was again in its office. " People come and she goes away, but the nation follows lives", declared to the press, locating the familiar tragedy in a national context, as if beyond that way the misfortune could go. One had been convinced that the hercúlea task to govern India could not be neglected. But their attitude and car control were only superficial. At heart, she was irremediably wounded. Sonia saw defeat on the inside it, with the spirit made pieces. By the nights, oía to rise and between dreams looked for Sanjay, and when it awoke it put to cry repeating the name of its son. Its face aged, its glance became harder and began to drag a little the footsteps when walking. No longer she was so picajosa with his atuendo, nor asked Sonia advice to him on its hairdo or the accessories that had to combine with saris. On the contrary, it backwards took the prim hair of form neglected, and it did not seem to matter to him.

To its immense sadness its preoccupation by Maneka was united, that spent the days without doing nothing.

- I fear that the ambition of its mother pushes Maneka to want to occupy the place of Sanjay - confessed its Pupul friend.

Aside from melancholic, Maneka she was uncomfortable because its position in that house had become very delicate. Without the protection of its husband, one felt vulnerable. Or it could not use it like shield to defend itself of its mother-in-law or her brother-in-law, who in the bottom continued it intimidating. Its only force was the baby. On the other hand, Indira so was devastated that it lacked energy to console to the others. In other circumstances, one had turned upside down with his daughter-in-law, but now, its own pain absorbed it completely. Although when seeing the young so single and so lost widow, in a fit of Indira compassion it offered aid to him. In fact, it feared that Maneka, boring and isolated, finished leaving house, because then would let have its grandson surrounds. That eventuality tormented it:

- Quieres to work of secretary mine. It could take of trip with me to you, and I believe that that would distract to you...

At the outset, the supply seemed to satisfy to Maneka. Soon, perhaps influenced by its mother or simply because the smoke rose to him at the top or for being immature, it saw in it a maneuver to separate it from its natural right to become position of the inheritance of its husband. Its life next to Sanjay had given the illusion him of the power, and the supply of its mother-in-law, after thinking it, to it seemed him almost offensive. Not even it responded to the offer. " Mírala! ... What will have been believed? ", it confessed to one of the nearest friends of its husband speaking of Indira.

To Sonia it did not do grace that supply either to him. Although it had pardoned to Maneka its contemptuous treatment of the first times, did not want to imagine to it controlling it the agenda of Indira. It saw the

inexperience and the arrogance of its sister-in-law like a potential problem for its mother-in-law, and a threat for the delicate familiar balance. That it did not help in the house tasks, could be accepted, but that parapetara after the power of Indira and began to move threads to benefit its own family, to whom Sonia feared so much, was a danger that was to avoid at all costs. Communicated it to Rajiv.

- I will speak It with my mother - it said to him.

- Better I leave a note him - Sonia responded.

When reading it, Indira realized of which Sonia was right. Maneka of secretary, so close, could in effect be plus a problem that one helps. It feared its impulsividad, that still made more unpredictable. And also it distrusted of the Anand family and his tejemanajes. Nevertheless, of which Indira was very conscious, even surrounded in its cloud of suffering, was of the necessity that it had of Rajiv and Sonia. After all, Rajiv was its blood; and to Sonia it loved like a a daughter to it. So that it did not insist more, and the supply fell in the forgetfulness.

The young widow, on the other hand, found a way to distract itself that at the same time she gave sense to his life: it was concentrated in the project to make a photographic book on its husband, a species of tribute that would include photos of family and her political life. It asked to him its mother-in-law if it would want to write the preface. Indira acceded.

But then it happened an unfortunate incident, that had one long and undesired repercussion. The writer Kushwant Singh, who had helped to Maneka and its mother to send the Surya magazine, published in his journalistic column a text in which he suggested the mantle of Sanjay had to fall naturally to shoulders of his young wife, "that had to him been supporting and that had shared its vision of India, since Rajiv never has shown to interest some by the policy and her woman detests it". The idea had its foundation. The article ended a phrase that, more than any other, untied the paranoia of Indira: "Maneka is like its late husband, brave and decided, the reincarnation of Durga riding on a tiger." That image of Durga, that extensively had been attributed to Indira and that incarnated a symbolism that belonged to him, upset it deeply. How could live two Durgas under he himself ceiling? It thought that Maneka had been confabulado with the writer to beam that article, that was maneuvering to its backs to do the competition to him, to rob the inheritance to him of Sanjay. It began to see it like a an enemy in its own house.

Inevitably, and before the frustration of Sonia, all the glances were gone towards the natural heir, Rajiv. Indira had its doubts: "Nobody can occupy the place of Sanjay - it confessed its Pupil- friend. He was my son, but also it helped me like an older brother." It saw too soft and sensible Rajiv for the world of the policy. In addition, it was married with a foreigner, which was considered, in terms of national policy, like an insurmountable obstacle. And if it resigned of Indian Airlines, on what it would live? Sanjay was very frugal, however to Rajiv and Sonia they liked to live well, to the European, without excesses but comfortably.

In this scene of a family hurt in the peak of the power, not only the individuals decided, but by very powerful that were. As important as the will of Indira it was the opinion of its acolytes, its friends, its relatives, its companions of party, its advisors, its flatterers, its gurus, the whole country. After to have intoned the funeral march as a result of the death of Sanjay, that choir of voices began to salmodiar one melodía familiar, the same one that sounded when Indira was called for the first time to preside over the party or when they courted it so that it later accepted any portfolio in the first government of the death of his father. The same voice that in its day had said to him "you are the daughter of Nehru, too valuable for not tener in the government", demanded a successor now, as if instead of a democracy one was one old imperial cut. It was as old a choir as the same India, whose mythology counted the history of an uninterrupted saga of hereditary monarchs. It was a call that came from deepest from that continent country, so inclined to confuse the temporary power with the divine one. Like in the tragedies of classic Greece, the choir demanded a victim propiciatoria. It was necessary to respond to the urgent necessity that the town had of stability, continuity and, by what no?, of eternity. That to only guaranteed a dynasty it.

As far as Rajiv, one stayed most distant possible. Its relation with its mother was different from the one from Sanjay. The affection was very deep, but almost British in the forms, without hardly intimate relation. It spontaneously did not offer itself to help it, and she requested it either never, at least directly. But when Indira went giving account of the enormidad of the emptiness that had left Sanjay, as well as of the urgent necessity that had of support and physical proximity, it confessed a day to him to its Pupul friend: "Rajiv lacks the dynamism and the preoccupations that Sanjay had, but could be to me of a great aid." "... It could be to me of a great aid": more words were not needed to start up the gear that the choir of voices had announced already.

Those that began to speak to them, to him and Sonia were the friends of the family, of the solitude of Indira, the necessity that it had to lean in somebody that completely without information could trust, to have a person who maintained the windows to him of the world open... and that somebody only could be its son. Sonia rebelled itself against that idea.

- We know the one that is the policy, the assumption glamour, the flattery - it said altered. We have seen of near the politicians, with its double language, the constant peloteo, the manipulations, traiciones' the inconsistency of means and people... We have seen what the power has done with Sanjay and Maneka. We perfectly know how it will be the life of Rajiv if one puts in policy.

His husband shut up; and who shuts up, it grants. It was completely in agreement with the arguments of Sonia. But it could not prevent it: the image of its mother, single, destroyed, with fardo of a country like India to its backs, weighed to him in the conscience.

The situation of Indira with Maneka, after the article that appeared in the newspaper, could not improve. The young person put when feeling the hostility of his mother-in-law nervous and who its presence was not wished. Its life as a married person in the middle of an atmosphere had lived on highest political excitation, and now it was not arranged to sink in the anonymity. Account occurred, although he was not able to verbalizar it, of which that one was the condition that it had to fulfill to coexist with Indira under he himself ceiling. It was the price of La Paz. But it was not Sonia, detested the simple idea of being a housewife, to go the day locked up between four walls giving orders to the crew members or receiving them of her mother-in-law. To take care of the boy, with the aid that the well off families have to their reach in India, left long free time him. During all these years, he had observed how their husband and his mother-in-law, how they planned each maneuver with much advance, and she worked also began to plan their future, pushed by their own choir of voices, the one of their family and the one of the old friends of Sanjay. " By what you to being right would not have the heiress of your husband? You have perhaps not given the best years him of your life? You have perhaps not participated in everything what he has done? Perhaps did not want to you? You know more of policy than his brother... " They wanted that it reacted before Rajiv was forced to do it. And the choir of voices made an impression on the maleable spirit of the young person.

The book on Sanjay was the horse of battle of the relations between Indira and Maneka, that almost did not dare to speak with its mother-in-law. It noticed it distant and fries, and it was more scared to him than ever. When it was going to go to her, they did not leave the words to him, like when it arrived at that house. It only obtained from Indira the attention due when it spoke of the boy. Of the rest, nothing. A day, finally dared to suggest the idea to him that made the rounds to him by the head.

- Like I have seen you so occupied, I have thought that, for quitarte work, instead of which you write the prologue, better than does journalist Kushwant Singh being based on an interview with you.

Indira remained it watching long short while, in one of its silencios that did not let foretell nothing good.

- Nor to speak - it said to him by aim. That you must it have done immediately after the death of Sanjay. I had had then time to write something. But you did not consult to me. Now I am not going to write nothing and that man is not going to me to interview.

It was its peculiar revenge against the article that as much had irritated it. It was also a way to put to its daughter-in-law in its site. The war had begun.

Maneka left destroyed the interview with its mother-in-law. "If the prologue does not write, never I will direct the word more to him", threatened all the one that it wanted to hear it. Soon, in the solitude of its quarter, it was put to cry. The scale model of the book, with photos that it had chosen with extreme taken care of and love, was unfolded on its bed. "

By what it does not want to help me? Perhaps is not its son? ", it was asked between tears.

When one had calmed, Maneka tried a last approach. It took the scale model from the book to the quarter of Indira and it left it upon its bed. Perhaps, when seeing it, her mother-in-law would recall to mind.

They had happened more than six months from the death of Sanjay, and to return to see those photos later of an exhausting day in the Parliament shocked deeply to Indira. The angel face who Sanjay had of small, the photos of its games as a child, of when it caressed to his favourite mascot - his tiger, of his cars of toy, its strolls to horse with Nehru, of him and embraced Indira... all that past that suddenly returned in torrents, like a reopened wound emotionally, left it devastated. It did not stick eye in all the night. To its Pupul friend it said to him that the book well was conceived, but that was determined not to write the prologue. "It had erased to Maneka of between its wanted beings", would write Pupul, that observed a symbolic and revealing detail: the door that it gave to the quarter of Sanjay was closed and the one that it gave to the quarter of Rajiv, opened. Indira had passed a page of its life and it was arranged to open another one.

## 28

- Rajiv, me aterra knowledge that you are flying... - it said to Indira a day to him in the hall house.

- Mother, you are an intelligent person and you know perfectly that, by statistic, there are more probabilities of dying hasty crossing a street that flying in an airplane.

- I know It, but I cannot avoid to think about...

Rajiv remained it watching. Her mother, surrounded in sari white of mourning, seemed a ruin of itself. And it did not pretend; intranquila was really seen it. The death of Sanjay, that projected its long shade on the present, had made of Indira an uncertain being, and the fears that always had tied down it now magnified. To Rajiv, to see it therefore gave him an infinite pain. The simple thought that she needed to him and who it could not - or he did not want to help it, began to torment to him. Indira continued:

- Sabes that a newspaper of Gujarat predicted that Sanjay would die in June?

- Mother, by favor... If there were to believe the predictions of all the astrologers whom there are in India, nobody could live.

- I am receiving innumerable letters warning to me that the danger makes the rounds to you, for that reason gives to fear saberte me in the air.

- Sabes the best thing than can be done with those letters? To throw them to the fire...

- You do not say trivialities, Rajiv - it talked back with the face altered by an expression of shady hopelessness. What it has happened to him to Sanjay is because we did not make anything to avoid it, we did not pay attention to the predictions that guessed right with the exact date.

- No, mother. The one that it has happened to him to Sanjay is because looked for it.

Indira remained it watching. She was not customary to that Rajiv contradicted it.

He continued:

- ... It did what it gave the desire him, and when the Director of Civil Aviation admonished it not to fulfill the regulation and to put in risk his life, Sanjay threw it of its position instead of listening to it. You have to do the reality as it is, mother. It worries much to me that you let yourself influence thus by the astrologers...

Indira lowered the head, like giving to understand that it was folded before the arguments of his son. Rajiv understood that her mother tried to look for a sense the tragedy that had been lowered on her, and that sense found it in the hidden forces that their enemies had sent against the family. That old paranoia hers was more alive than ever.

- Mother - Rajiv said to him to ingratiate itself with her. If there are forces you vitiate, surely that also are positive forces that they protect to us... Or no?

-Perhaps was able to protect your brother? - she asked.

Rajiv raised the eyes to the sky like saying: "Again..." Indira followed:

- If I had died me, I had been part of a natural process. .. I have sixty and two years, I have lived a total life, but your brother was so young...

Rajiv remained crestfallen. Her mother was inconsolable. They kept silence a good short while. Of soon, Indira rose:

- I have left three working hours. I go away.

- You are exhausted and you would have to rest - Rajiv said to him.

- If I do not make that work now, I will have to rise to four of the dawn to do it. Good night.

Rajiv remained pensativo. It saw its mother go away towards its room like a bent bird, dragging the feet slightly. It seemed to go to the drift, seemed a shipwreck... Where was their overflowing energy, their eternal optimism? He was desazonador to see it in those conditions. And the question that besieged to him was the logical consequence of it: "Tengo really right to deny to help it to me"

When him it made contributor to Sonia of his feelings with respect to his mother, to the Italian the tears jumped to him, perhaps because at moments of lucidity account occurred of which it fought a lost battle beforehand. In addition it felt that his husband lived a dilemma that was making him suffer.

- Vas to throw overboard everything what we have obtained? ... Your race, the time with your children, your hobbies, our happiness?

By first time, there was tension in the marriage. So much that a day, desperate, Sonia said to him:

- If you think meterte about policy, I will request the separation and I will become to Italy.

Never, in fifteen years of marriage, they had had a fight. They never interchanged one more a word higher than the other. Sonia had never arrived so far. "I fought like a tigress by him, us and our children, the life that we had been constructed, by its vocation to fly, our simple friendships and, mainly, by our freedom: that simple straight human one that so careful and consistently we had conserved", would write later.

But the forces against which Sonia fought were much more powerful that its arguments in favor of the individual happiness and of the familiar harmony. What weight could have the bourgeois well-being of a family of four members compared with the destiny of India? Those forces, that arose from the deep history of the nation, spoke in name of a country of more than seven hundred million people. They were the same forces that in its day they had pushed Indira to the rotation of the policy and which now they demanded the presence of Rajiv. Two months after the death of Sanjay, three hundred parliamentarians, all members of the Congress, signed a request requesting to him that it assumed the position of his brother and appeared like candidate in its circumscription. The fact that it was married with a foreigner did not seem to suppose a problem, perhaps

because in the popular mentality a woman acquires the identity of the family of the husband.

It was the principle of an intense and constant public pressure. As of that moment, there was no day in which the press did not predict its entrance in policy. When the journalists asked Indira on the subject, she stayed impassible: " I cannot speak of it. Rajiv is the one who it has to decide." The deputies began to besiege the house. They came "to visit it", that is to say, to try to convince it. Sonia was itself forced to prepare tea with cardamom for all those "vultures" that, according to her, came to carve up before their eyes the familiar happiness.

Not only the public pressure began to be well-known, the personnel also. T.N. Kaul, uncle of Rajiv, diplomat of intachable reputation, were not a man whose advice took lightly themselves. Kaul was the last name of the woman of Nehru and T.N. it had been always very united to Indira. Its loyalty had resisted the attacks of the last years. His son was a likeable individual and vivacious, he had studied in Cambridge with Rajiv and he comprised of the circle of intimate friends of the marriage. The Kaul was very near relatives, and very wanted.

- The life of your mother and the one of your brother closely were interlaced, still more of whom it seemed - it said T.N to him. Kaul to Rajiv in the first meeting that maintained. Sanjay was its nexus of communication with the leaders of the party, for that reason she is so isolated from its death. Somebody needs to close, somebody that is able to act of effective form to maintain the loyalty of the party. And you already know that it is not entrusted in anybody, except of very the close friends.

- I know It, but also I know, and everybody knows to it, that I am not done for the policy... In addition, already you know the position Sonia on the subject.

- I understand that Sonia has that vision, because been she has exposed to the worse aspects of the public life, but everything is not despicable nor bad in policy. One assumes that he is noblest of the tasks...

Rajiv made a gesture of irony. Kaul continued:

- One is to serve the town, to dedicate in body and soul to the others... since your grandfathers did, since your brother did, as your mother is doing it.

- ... As they want that I do.

- Clear. You take it in the blood.

- I am not sure that he is as hereditary as you create. I have all those to lose...

- If you have all those to lose, you that you have sucked the atmosphere of the policy from always, imagine the others... On the contrary, you have all those to win. You could be a day prime minister.

- No, thanks. I have seen my mother cry after older, faithful and wanted his collaborating they denounced it to be saved they, I have seen partners his, people in whom it had deposited all its confidence, give the back him and become bloodthirsty critical... Thanks, but I prefer to continue



living my life in cattle tenders next to my woman and my family, who give everything me what I need.

- Rajiv, you know as well as I who are two types of people who put in policy: the minuses are those that consider the power like an average one to make advance the society, and the pluses, those that sees it like a weapon to obtain advantages for them and for their group. To this second type, which matters to them is everything what the power surrounds: the brightness, the flattery, that the feet kiss and they venerate like a a God, everything what detests Sonia.

- And which is compensates it for the others?

- Only one. The satisfaction to see itself made like being human.

Rajiv shrank of shoulders. It was a too blurred and abstract answer for its pleasure. Soon it asked:

- What says mother?

- It has said to Me very textually that it does not want to influence your judgment, that you do what it seems to you.

- She knows that you have come to speak with me?

- Yes. I asked it... and it said to me that if wanted hablarte, by her there was no problem.

There was a silence. Rajiv showed to notebooks and books to him that it had unfolded on the table.

- Sabes that I am on the verge of fulfilling one of the dreams of my life?

- Ah, yes?

- Indian Airlines is finishing renewing the fleet, and there will only be jets. Until now it flew of second in Boeing 737. The month that comes I examine of commander. They will raise the pay to me and I will be able to request the route Delhi- Bombay, which will allow me to have more decent schedules.

Kaul walked the glance on the compass, the computer, the letters unfolded with annotations of off-course corrections and pencil calculations written in the margins... Soon, with the serious semblante, one became towards Rajiv:

- Then I understand that your answer is "not"?

Rajiv agreed with the head, and added:

- For me, to enter policy would be like entering the jail. When feeling the glance of its fixed uncle in him, loosen:

- ... In addition, not even I have the membership card of the Congress.

- Piénsalo, Rajiv. It thinks about all the sacrifices that the family has done by the country. When you were small and you went to live to Teen Murti House, you did it because your grandfathers were single and needed aid. Like now your mother. She sacrificed her personal life to serve it. It did it because she was a woman. Your to have as man is to help it and to support it in which you can.

The arguments of the Kaul uncle were forceful and appealed when having filial and to a certain sense of the predestination, to a supposed familiar and national mission enrolled in the stars. Those of Rajiv were rational and practitioners. They spoke of simple things like the daily life, the vocation, the familiar affection. But the reality was more complex, was a mixture of emotions and ambitions of much people, fears and doubts, dreams and hidden pulsiones, history and policy. During months, the pressure continued on Rajiv, and therefore on Sonia. "I spent hours and hours trying to convince it so that it let to his husband put in policy, but no argument seemed sufficiently good to him - Nirmala Deshpande, a friend of the family would say. To each attempt, Sonia, very educated but with firmness, said that no." A day, the Italian got to confess to him: "I prefer to have to my children begging in the street to that Rajiv puts in policy."

For the marriage, it was a terrible year in which both felt like every day more impotent as they approached the abyss. It invaded perverse the strange feeling to them and that suddenly its life did not belong to them. They had passed to be owners of its existence to victims of a maneuver of harassment and demolition in name of great principles and noble causes of which, then, they felt other people's. As if that so gigantic country could not live without them. Rajiv was torn by the conflict between his to have of son and its own happiness. Sonia was caught between his husband and his mother-in-law, two people who adored. "At the same time - it wrote late more was furious and suffered against a system that, so and as saw it, demanded a sacrificial lamb. A system that would squash it and would destroy it - of that absolutely it was convinced."

Rajiv became thin and as soon as it slept. Its sense of having pushed to help to him its mother. Their love by Sonia and the commitment that it had acquired with her threw to him in opposite direction. All were their right, all was valid, and it was, confused and unfortunate in the middle. Then one took refuge in its studies to be examined of commander of the Boeing 737, the only thing that allowed him to become lost in thought itself of a reality that to him became unbearable. He, who always had fled from conflicts and confrontations, lived distressed being the target on all the exigencies. "Will never diminish this pressure? Will never finish this hell?", it was asked when seeing that they happened the months and the choir of voices became deafening.

"I waited for a miracle - Sonia-, an acceptable and outside right solution would say that for all we."

But that miracle did not take place. On the contrary, every day that happened, the main actors of this drama were worse:

Indira, every time single and crushed by the problems, that crowded, Rajiv and Sonia, every day more tormented.

- I cannot follow viéndote thus - it said to Sonia a day to him, embracing with force I do not want verte so badly to him. ..

- It is as if our life had robbed us...

- Rajiv, forgets what I said to you when so it was gotten upset. Olvídalo all. If you think that you must help your mother, hazlo... I do not want verte so unfortunate. We are being consumed.

- I do not think to make no decision without you.

- Hazlo - Sonia said to him crying, the head supported in the chest of his husband. It advanced. The life changes, to me costs to me much to accept it... Perhaps at heart, I think that I am going to finish perdiéndote, but am egoísmo mine, I do not know... What I know is that we cannot follow thus.

“Era my Rajiv - Sonia- would say, we were wanted, and if she thought that she had to offer its aid to its mother, I would fold myself before those forces that already were too powerful for which I could fight them, and would go there with him where took to him.”

Sonia demonstrated, once again, that its love by its husband mattered to him more than any other consideration. Was not loyalty the same essence of the love? Had not always followed to him? Had not left to its family and her country by him? Had not become an impeccable daughter-in-law India by him? If all its life had turned in winch him, if a day had promised to him to follow it the aim of the world, now it was called on to fulfill that promise. It would follow to him where it was, to the hell of the policy if it were necessary. Although both ended up burning in their flames.

After four larguísimas and very intense visits of uncle T.N. Kaul, Rajiv ended up saying:

- ... If mother wants that she helps it, I will do it.

Kaul sighed.

- It is a judicious decision - it said. We are sure that you can gain the elections of Amethi, the circumscription of your brother, which will give the legitimacy you necessary to work next to your mother.

- But I do not want to comprise of the government, that one is my condition. I am only arranged to work within the party, because I realize of which there is an emptiness and I do not see which it can overwhelm it.

- The important thing is that you gain your bench by Amethi.

- And if I lose?

- You leave the opened field to Maneka and to the followers of Sanjay, and that is very dangerous, dates account.

- Maneka does not have twenty-five years, the prescribed age to be delegated of the Parliament.

- But it will have it in the next elections. It cannot have two heirs different from Sanjay Gandhi. Of there the haste so that you accept. And it is fundamental that you gain Amethi.

There was a silence. The face of Rajiv had aged. Almost in low voice, it added:

- ... There is a sense of inevitabilidad in all this, no?

- When your mother went to help your grandfathers - Kaul- did not say to him, comprised of the government either - a pause, conscious of

the enormous sacrifice made that this decision demanded of the family. What says Sonia?

- It had not made the decision without her. I will try to arrange my race of pilot with the policy, while it can. Soon we will see what happens.

- It is a sensible solution - Kaul concluded.

After as much accumulated anguish, the decision was a species of liberation, but without joy. As always in the familiar history of the Nehru, which had prevailed had been the sense of having over the other considerations. Sonia locked in itself in his quarter and she did not leave in four days. Their children were not able to console it. They said that the time went crying.

When it emerged from that well of suffering, she was haggard and in the bones. During the following days, as soon as it ate and it let get dressed the elegant and coqueta way with which it used to do it.

## 29

Rajiv ended up fulfilling its old dream and pass to obtain the title of commander of Boeing 737, but the pleasure to furrow skies in jet planes was going to last very little. The term to appear by the circumscription of Amethi, the one that was prepared to inherit of its brother, approached inexorably. The law of incompatibilidades prevented that Rajiv had a public use (Indian Airlines was a company of the State) and at the same time it appeared deputy. As it were clear that from it could not here arrange its race with the policy, it did not have left more remedy than to make of the policy its race. So a warm day of May of 1981 made its decision. It arrived at house after to have spent the day flying, one took off the necktie, the jacket and the trousers of uniform, got dressed in one kurta white, the "uniform of the politicians", and one went to the central offices of the airline to give its accreditation of pilot already to take leave of its colleagues and their heads. Sonia saw him leave with the timid heart. It was definitive good bye to the life that he had chosen, in England, when it looked for the way to gain the life to marry because he was in favor crazy of her.

Like it was foreseeable, the life of the marriage changed as of that day. No longer they could be let at night see Saturdays in House Medici, the Italian restaurant of the luxurious Taj Hotel, or in the Orient Express, the new hotel Taj Palace. They changed from the schedules to the way to dress. Rajiv used kurtas because they had suggested to him would be good for giving one more to an image "India", and not so European. So one took leave for always of the tejanos that took when it did not go of uniform, it said good bye to the Italian shoes that Sonia bought to him when they were of vacations, and she wore with sandals, although she conserved its sun glasses Ray- Ban, made oval and of metallic mount, that was fashionable in those days. The truth is that the India clothes were more pleasant to take and was more appropriate for that ruthless heat that the western one. Kurtas of crude cotton put on trousers type pajamas or chowridars, those wide trousers in the hip and that are narrowed until finishing in you fold on the ankle. It also took the typical cap of the members of the Congress, and to Indira it seemed to him that with the age he was nailed its father, to Firoz.

Once Rajiv had made the decision, no longer it returned the Vista back. If the destiny put to him in that critical moment, better to remove benefit and to do it well, best the possible thing. Old ideals of that his grandfathers spoke in the table when they were adolescent - the fight against the poverty, in favor of the equality, the aconfesionalidad, etc. -, those principles that her mother had inherited, also did his. He did not send himself to the rotation to accumulate wealth or power, because they had never attracted to him. It lacked personal ambition, but it had ideas for India. If now it could contribute its grain of sand to the life of the nation, better era to do informed well it.

But it cost to him to come off itself its world, that was the one of the technology, the one of the proven facts, of the concrete things that are

governed by well-known and comprobables laws. An airplane flies because the air sustains its wings. What sustains the success of a politician? The possible answers, many were many the variables, but no certainty, except in their case: it had a last name that was a reconocible mark. The intellectuals and the adversaries of Indira lay down it in face: "the only qualification that has Rajiv is their genes". The privileged classes were disturbed reason why they considered a new act of nepotism on the part of Indira. But the "great mass of India humanity" saw it its way, under the prism of the tradition, according to which the children follow the vocations of their ancestors. During centuries, in the villages and the cities of India, teachers craftsmen, musicians, notary publics, cooks, palafreneros, healers, architects and politicians they transmitted to its piston rods the secrets of its profession. When attracting Rajiv to the political life, Indira and its coreligionists of the party did not do more than to follow affluent a tradition established.

During his first campaign, Rajiv had to deliver a great attack to fight against its own timidity. For somebody so jealous of his privacy, being constantly the attention center and to face the questions of mass media was difficult to support. "The policy never has been mine - a day to a journalist declared who asked to him so that she appeared. I appear because of some way it had to help my mother... " Its naivete turned it object of escarnio, and soon it learned to measure its words, to always give clear answers that they could not be lent to malentendidos or to slanted interpretations.

To speak in public without notes was not easy either, because there was to find the way to not only say what wanted, but to connect with which they came to listen to him. The meetings took place in the seat of the town and the organizers not always had average placing an awning that protected them of the heat. The majority of the times, Rajiv was in front of a multitude of a thousand of sun people total. Many were seated on esterillas in the ground, the majority standing up to the bottom, and all came to have darshan of a man who already comprised of elenco of personages of the mythology of India. There were many poor farmers, because Amethi was a very slow zone of the state of Uttar Pradesh. But also there were tenderos, workers, notables of the town, industrialists sijs whose turbans emphasized between the multitude, many vacated young people, clusters of children, some with the abraded uniform inspired by the uniforms of the English schools, Muslim women with the covered face, Hindu farmers with saris multicolors... They were all very tight to weighing of more than 40 heat degrees. It smelled of sweat, flowers, dust and the smoke of bidis, those cigarettes done with tobacco puncture that are known like "cigarettes of the poor men". Before speaking, Rajiv took off the garlands of orange clavelinas that had faded on the whiteness of his kurta and it placed them on a table or it gave them to an assistant. It had a style very different from the one from its brother. Neither he was grandiloquent nor it harangued the multitude. On the contrary, their humility and its curiosity pushed to him to make many

questions. In its constant trips, put in the cabin of the airplane, Rajiv it had dreamed about a country righter, more prosperous, more modern, more human. Now, ground evenness, the reality was seen of another way: the delay was tremendous; the lack of resources, exasperating, and the poverty, carries far. How was possible? Where failed the system? At the moments of rest, it removed from a black stock market a silver-plated invention that caused admiration:

- It is a revolutionary invention - Rajiv- said. A day will be as popular as a computer or a typewriter, already you will see.

- So that it serves? - it asked a young member to him of the party.

- For many things. I want it to use to have a data base and to make the pursuit of the improvements that we are going to impel here in Amethi.

It was a laptop, one of first that was seen in India. The method of Rajiv consisted of identifying the deficiencies soon to know where it could take part to correct them. Some problems were obvious, like the lack of highways, that forced the small electoral caravan to walk, sometimes during one hour or more, by close dirt roads between fields worked by emaciated oxen, to accede to the small villages. Most of the houses they were huts of marinated that the farmers had to raise again after each season of rains. Those villages did not have any type of communication with the outside. " If at least them a telephone connected via satellite could be put! ", Rajiv was said. Nevertheless, there was a hope light: when poorest it asked to them what is what they needed more, they never requested food, or money, or a hut where to lodge, or that there was a potable water well in the village - all urgent necessities. Poorest they wanted schools for its children mainly. In the first place medical education and, immediately later, clinics.

Like it was to hope, Rajiv won by an ample margin. Sonia was first in congratulating it. They were fused in a hug. That triumph gave to its husband a very necessary accolade, and Sonia guessed it in the expression of his face, suddenly more relaxed and trusted. It was the justification to many months of torment. Sonia felt that Rajiv it began to like the experience, although she missed the past: "Before, our world was reconicable, intimate - Sonia- would count. There were days of concentrated activity and soon long periods of leisure. Now it was the other way around. Our life filled of people, hundreds every day, politicians, workers of the party, all pressing with its exigencies and their urgent problems. The time stopped being flexible and the hour that Rajiv happened with us was more and more valuable."

Which Rajiv followed without being accustomed was to the siege of mass media. It responded with hesitations and interruptions. "You them journalists rush yourselves on the politicians like tigers", loosen once, overwhelmed. But simultaneously it felt that it began to be appreciated by a number every greater time of people. The resistance with the personality of its brother was so refrescante that it made him gain followers. If Sanjay had

left the memory of an abrasive individual, ruthless and vulgar in the ostentation of the power, Rajiv was all the opposite: a smooth man and of impeccable modales, a born conciliador that the sense common used to dissolve conflicts, and mainly a man without strange contacts nor suspicious associations. "I want to attract a new type of people the policy - it declared to the Sunday Times-, intelligent, young westernized without feudales ideas, that they want to make prosper India more than to prosper they." It showed always its true face, the one of a honest , amiable man and of good heart. Soon they would call Mr. to him. Clean. In case outside little, he had a pretty and photogenic family, although Sonia was much more obstinate who he to let itself photograph and still less to give interviews. Their fear and hatred towards the press and mass media had become a constant in their life.

Rajiv swore its position of deputy three days before turning thirty and seven years openly, declaring themselves in favor of the modernization, of the freedom of company and to open the country to the foreign investments. Chorreaba sweat under the same vault that had given back the echo of the speeches of its grandfathers and his mother. Probably Nehru had felt disturbed when seeing his grandson in that enormous room like a representative more of the town. But also contented when verifying that, like him, Rajiv thought that the solution to many of the evils of India was in science and the technology properly applied.

Indira returned to smile. He felt that his son, who assumed the role of personal advisor with surprising effectiveness, was the suitable person to be in charge of an ambitious project in which the government had embarked, conscious of the necessity to improve the image of the country. One was to organize the Asian Games, that had to be place in Delhi two years old later. The project contemplated the construction of hotels, freeways, several stages and a district to lodge the athletes. The initiative would take advantage of to extend the cover of the signal of the television in color, that could only be caught in center of the great cities. To take to good aim the project required a mind with capacity of organization, enterprising and imaginative. Indira felt that for its son it was a challenge that, if it came out well, would improve its image and it would serve to him as shuttle in the national policy. Suddenly Rajiv was coordinating architects, constructors and financiers, and supervising an enormous budget.

Sonia did not have ambition some to become a hollow in the public life - that that Maneka wished so much, or was of volunteer in humanitarian subjects or host of personalities. It was contented with its position in the shade of its mother-in-law and one strave in which the house of prime minister worked of the possible most effective way . In those days, Sonia got to be next to Indira of which there was it been never. "Knowing the deep thing that they were his wounds, Rajiv and I became protective still more with her." Her mother-in-law deeply was thanked for to have them close. It spoke by far to affection and recognition of the way in which Rajiv "had been offered to be in charge of some of its responsibilities relative to the work in the party". When the period of mourning of a year finished, in



which Indira had only taken saris white, black or of color cream, Sonia chose precious sari to him color gold with embroiderings in the style of Kashmir for the inauguration of an important conference of Asian countries.

- Sight, this sari matches with the decoration of the room where it is going away to celebrate the conference... You like?

- It enchants to Me - Indira- said... he is perfect for that they follow the event from its television sets in color.

When surrounded it seeing in saris again colorful, her Pupul friend said to him:

- I am glad of which you are it surpassing.

Indira put a gravity expression and it did not answer to him. But on the following day it sent a letter to him: "You have dropped a phrase on which it could be surpassing my pain. One can surpass hatred, envies it, the negative and autodestructivas greed and so many other emotions. But the pain is something different. It is not possible to be forgotten nor to be surpassed. It is necessary to learn to live with him, to integrate it in the own one to be and to make it part of the life."

## 30

The discordant note put Maneka, that saw displeased how the inheritance of its husband was to him snatched by the brother, although knew perfectly that it could not have presented/displayed not to have the required minimum age. It had always felt a deep scorn towards Rajiv, and now it was put to make declarations to the press labeling to him as “indolent brother-in-law, incapable to rise before of the bed of the ten”. Implicit the idea that went it, inheriting of the last name Gandhi and mother of the only son of Sanjay, was most suitable to happen a day to Indira in the peak of the power. “ How can Rajiv assume the mantle of its brother if never it has liked the policy and is married with an Italian? ”, it said publicly. Maneka was first in using the foreign origins of Sonia against the family. Rajiv and Indira, that immediately smelled the danger, requested that it finished the proceedings to him to acquire the India nationality, to that had right by marriage. It must it have done a long time ago but always it postponed it by pure laziness. In his naivete, Sonia had thought that she was enough with feeling like India and fulfilling the customs and the rites of the society to be India. It had already relegated its carved skirts, their trousers, their tejanos, their shirts without sleeves and their suits escotados to the dark of the closets. One only got dressed European when it was going to visit its family to Italy. In India, it only used saris or the Muslim version of the Indian national suit, salwar kamiz, wide trousers of cotton or silk covered by a camisole with many bellboys. But that was not enough, now needed the official sanction, the nationality, the passport. So that a morning went to the Department of the Interior and passed several hours filling up papers and responding to questions of courteous civil employees. Weeks later it received a letter: “Hereby, the government of India grants to Sonia Gandhi, born Maino, his citizenship papers and declares that the aforesaid one has right to all the privileges, duties and responsibilities of an Indian citizen... ” Next, between the papers that accompanied the passport, it was the number and the direction of the electoral office where it would correspond to him to vote.

The only thing which Maneka obtained with its foolish declarations went to still more irritate its mother-in-law. When the young person showed a first unit to him of the book that she had designed on his late husband, Indira raised the roof, alleging that it leaves from the text and of the photo feet they were pernicious and distorted the truth. Thus it could not be published.

- But is predicted its presentation stops within three days!
  - You before must have taught the final scale model to me, not in the last moment. You will have to postpone the presentation for when the changes are introduced.
  - I cannot, already is everything organized.
  - I will not allow that it leaves the book so and as is now.
- Maneka, rabid, left the room giving portazo.

- Maneka! - Indira- shouted. Ven here immediately! The young person returned. This time, it did not seem chocho scared. It had the challenging attitude of an rebellious adolescent. It maintained the glance of its mother-in-law.

- The things cannot follow thus, Maneka. I cannot allow your trivialities with the press nor that you publish what it seems to you on the family.

Maneka doubted between responding or holding the regañina. Indira sent a light, intuiting that her daughter-in-law would intimidate itself:

- If you want irte of this house, you yourself - it said to him with firmness. Maneka vacillated before the temptation to use the only weapon that could strike a lethal blow to Indira: to snatch its grandson to him. Indira continued:

- If you follow thus, our relation in the future will be as if it had never known you. You choose: that, or to continue being friends.

Maneka tightened the fists perhaps and the language bit, was not the moment for doing without that so prestigious relation. It lowered the glance:

- It is well, I will delay the launching of the book, will change the photo feet.

Indira breathed alleviated. He was conscious of to have won a battle, but safe that she would not be the last one. At the moment, the crisis had been avoided.

Persistent Peleona and, Maneka became expert in tightening the cord. One had been convinced of two things: one, no that place for her in the structure of being able was presided over by Indira, and two, that could get to compete with its mother-in-law. Of way that decided, on the one hand, to redouble its challenging and provoking attitude and, by another one, to develop its own base mobilizing to the followers, now overthrown, of Sanjay. Maneka had accepted to go to give a speech to the city of Lucknow, State Capital of Uttar Pradesh... in front of a group of dissidents of the Congress, commanded by an old friend of Sanjay. Indira threw smoke: "They are defying to Me with a mini revolt", said to him to Pupul, after Maneka had let him know that it had obtained the adhesion of a hundred of members of loyal the legislative assembly of the state of Uttar Pradesh to Sanjay. Indira sent a message to him: "If you go to Lucknow, you never return to my house." Maneka gave reverse gear and it apologized, but already it seemed clear that a confrontation was inevitable. To Indira, that "flexible and stubborn niñata" that did the impossible life to him removed it from quicio as their powerful political adversaries did not obtain to it, much more experimented and Machiavellian.

In order to try to fix the things, Indira took it from trip to Kenya with Rahul and Priyanka. But the trip that really it had liked to do to Maneka was the one that made Rajiv and Sonia to London for the wedding of prince of Wales with Diana Spencer. Indira had commanded to them in name his, to present/display in the foreigner to whom would end all probability

happening it. That one yes was a trip with glamour, elbowing itself with the power and the most seeded of the world-wide society. However to Maneka it was called on to him to go with the children "to see animals". It began complaining which she was the unique one of the family who lacked diplomatic passport. It almost did not speak with its nephews in all the trip and as soon as it answered its mother-in-law when this one called or tried to animate it it. At any moment one stayed separated, with face mustia, because at heart it did not want to be there. When, in the embassy in Nairobi, the moment arrived for greeting the representatives of the numerous India colony, it did it lethargically and coldly, as much that it gave other people's shame. Taciturn, one did not know very or if one felt boringly or simply that nothing interested it. Or if it were plotting something. Or the three things simultaneously.

Who was plotting something was its mother. Something explosive. It was negotiating the sale of the Surya magazine to a well-known supporter of RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) to backs of Indira. When this one found out, it mounted in rage. The RSS was a hinduista political organization of extreme right with a discipline almost military man, whom been it had involved in the massacres of the Partition. Indira always had considered to the RSS the "greater threat for India" by its fanatical and excluding hinduista character. It was convinced that that party could a day take the country to the perdición. Had not been one of the assassins of the Mahatma Gandhi member of the RSS? That sale, that ended up being made, was a provocation in all rule. Although the property era of Maneka and its mother, Indira was very conscious that the magazine had been able to see the light and to work thanks to its contacts and their influence. The familiar tension arrived at an algid point. Months ago Rajiv avoided to be with its sister-in-law in house. Now it was clear that Maneka could not continue living there.

Indira, that saw that the conflict with its daughter-in-law was going to deprive it of its grandson, depressed much. Of all the treasons that had lived, it felt that that one was most serious, most harmful and cruelest, because it came from the interior of the family, sacred territory, and affected the son of its favourite son. The imminence of a new crisis, this definitive time, robbed the energy to him and it made feel exhausted. By its grandson, it delivered a last attack. It commanded to its old professor of yoga and gurú, Dhirendra Brahmachari, that continued visiting it from time to time, to negotiate the repurchase of the magazine, whatever the cost, to the new owners. But these rejected the supply. Indira was in an impasse. Hundreds of million people, the whole country, waited for expectant the outcome of this live soap opera, reality show before their time.

Indira was in London, inaugurating the Year of India, a colossal effort of its government to promote the cultural, industrial and commercial interchange between India and the West. It had wanted that Sonia was with her. The opening celebration it attended elenco numerous of politicians, scientists, personalities of the world of the culture, the aristocracy and the

mass media. Indira lived a stirring moment when Zubin Mehta, who by the way was parsi, like the father of Indira, directed the orchestra that touched national anthems of India and of the United Kingdom and the hearing it was put still on. It had a special meaning because it was the first time that the Indian national anthem was heard in public in London, the old capital of the Empire. Until Sonia it felt emotion chills. Indira, exquisitely adorned thanks to the cares of its daughter-in-law, was radiating during the different receptions and suppers that accompanied the inauguration. As much that it had been impossible to guess that on the inside was anxious and anxious. The messages that arrived to him from home announced that Maneka was arranged definitively to leave the familiar home and that had decided to defy it openly. Sonia shut up, expectant, before the inexorable moment of the rupture.

In effect, Maneka had calculated the date with precaution, having taken advantage of that Indira and Sonia were of trip, and that Rajiv, too much trim in its task, did not step on the house to avoid to agree with her. The young person had not made case to Indira and had gone to Lucknow, where, before the followers of his husband, she pronounced an ignited speech, but taking care of itself of not seeming disloyal to prime minister. "Long life to Indira Gandhi!", "Sanjay is immortal!", they said the posters that organizing of the encounter had hung everywhere. "I will always honor the discipline and the reputation of the great Nehru-Gandhi family to which I belong", had concluded Maneka.

But that sample of false loyalty did not moderate to Indira, that returned of London in the morning of the 28 of March of 1982, decided to be made respect. When Maneka went to greet it, Indira cut it in dry:

- We will speak soon.

Maneka was locked in in its quarter and waited for length short while, until a crew member called to the door:

- Ahead - Maneka said.

The man appeared taking a tray with the food.

- And that?

- Mrs. Gandhi orders to me to say to him that she does not wish that you one to the rest of the family for the lunch.

- Llèvesela. I do not think to eat in my quarter because she says to it.

The man obeyed. One hour later, returned:

- The lady prime minister wanted to see it right now - she said obsequiosamente.

To Maneka the legs when crossing shook to him the corridor. The hour had arrived from the truth, but there was nobody in the hall. It had to wait for minutes that became ether to us and in that it returned to eat the nails like when she was small. Suddenly, it heard noises and it appeared Indira outside himself, walking takes off, accompanied by the gurú Dhirendra Brahmachari and secretary Dhawan, the repeinado one. It wanted them of witnesses.

In normal circumstances, Indira had fought east subject with its customary ability, having hoped the suitable moment to act. Now, perhaps because the thought to separate of its grandson dimmed the reason to him, Indira fell in the trap that had tended him its daughter-in-law. Hardly their words were understood. Nevertheless clear stop was heard and when, indicating it with the finger, it shouted to him: " Salt of this house immediately"

- So that? - Maneka with innocent air talked back. What I have done?

- I have heard each word of the speech that you have pronounced!

- You gave the approval.

Maneka alleged that had been sent it to Indira for its approval. In effect, Rajiv had sent it by telex to London. Her mother had read it, but she had not answered. It had decided to hope the return to pronounce itself.

- I said that you did not have to speak to You in Lucknow, but you have made your santa will and you have disobeyed to me! There was poison in each one of your words... You think that I do not realize? Vete of here! Vete of this house right now! - it screamed. Vuelve to house of your mother!

- I do not want to go to house of my mother - challenging Maneka responded.

- You are going away to go with her. Since you have confabulado yourselves with the dreg of this country, to those who you have sold the magazine that you mounted thanks to the contacts that I provided to you, I do not want to return to see to you, neither to you nor to your mother.

Maneka began to cry but it added:

- I need time to prepare my things.

- You have had all along of the world. You will go away when it is ordered to you. Your things you will send them later. You and your mother you are dreg! - totally loose Indira sent.

Maneka was moving away towards its room, giving voices:

- I will not allow that you insult my mother!

Pero Indira was resolute to expel it. It could not be controlled, all the accumulated offenses since Maneka had entered that house exploded like the floodgates of a prey when bursting.

- Vete! Lárgate right now! And you do not take anything of this house that is not your clothes!

Maneka was locked in in its quarter, from where it called to his Ambika sister to tell the happened thing him, in order that it gave the voice to the press and to request aid to him. The writer Kushwant Singh found out of which it had happened by a call of Ambika requesting to him that he went to house of prime minister.

The stormy relations between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law comprise of the millenarian culture of India, until the point of which many productions of Bollywood are based on histories that recreate luxury of

details yet those domestic conflicts. The one that it happened in house of the highest authority of the country exposed to all the family to the public scrutiny of a way that the most experienced producers of cinema not even had been able to imagine.

Towards the nine at night, a multitude of photographers and journalists, including a nourished affluent representation of foreign correspondents, congregated itself before the iron door from entrance to the house.

The police, whose reinforcements had unfolded in the environs, did not know very well to whom to let pass and to whom no. So that Ambika and the brother of Maneka entered without difficulty, after eight years to go of visit. They were to its sister in its quarter, done a sea of tears, putting in disorder all the one that could in suitcases. Suddenly, when they were explaining how to come, Indira burst in into the room:

- Vete already! ... I have said to you that you do not take anything.

Ambika, whose viperina language was well well-known of Indira, took part:

- Will not go away! This one is its house!

- This one is not its house! - Indira with crazy eyes shouted. i This one is the house of prime minister of India! - and indicating to Maneka, it added: People without my permission cannot be brought here.

Ambika was going to speak, but Indira interrupted it.

- In all case, Ambika Anand, I do not want to speak with you.

- You do not have no right to speak to him thus to my sister! - Ambika sent, without intention some to let itself intimidate. This one is the house of Sanjay and my sister is the woman of Sanjay! So this one is its house. Nobody can throw it.

Then Indira drove crazy. What their aggravated enemies had not obtained more those two sisters obtained. The shouts of Indira alerted to Sonia, that it ran to warn Rajiv to his office of Akbar Road. Rajiv tried to control the situation, with the aid of a cousin who helped him in his political tasks. They asked to him the security head, sij high and fornido, that the favor made expel the sisters from house. The man, cautious answered:

- Sir, I only can fulfill that order if the receipt in writing. Rajiv was arranged to sign a written order but his cousin took part.

- You do not do it - it said to him. Nonfirm nothing that soon can be used by the press against yours or of the family. You like or no, Maneka must right to be in this house. To only sign an expulsion document can traeros problems.

Rajiv watched sij, that it made a gesture with the head, altogether agreement which the cousin ended to say.

- He is not prudent - his cousin added.

- It is well - the towel said to Rajiv, throwing and returning the Vista towards the bottom of the corridor from where, suddenly, a deafening roar arose.

The two sisters, locked up in the quarter of Maneka, had put in the reproducer of video a film of Bollywood to all volume so that Indira, that was defeated in the contiguous room, occurred by found out that they would do what they wanted. While, they exactly planned its strategy and the hour like which they would leave. Dhawan secretary and the gurú Dharendra Brahmachari had to do of messengers. Whenever Dhawan entered to request to them that they went away, they did a new request to him. First they requested the supper, that was served to them in the room. Soon they said to him that the dogs also needed to eat, and the secretary commanded to feed them with the bad luck of which Sheba, lebel Irish of Maneka, excited by the hostility atmosphere that was in house, bit to him slightly in the arm.

Thus they were a pair of hours, until the sisters commanded to remove their trunks, suitcases and packages. When they already were outside, Dhawan, this time accompanied by the gurú arrived again:

- I feel it, but we have orders to register its properties.

- Very well - Maneka- said, if you are going to register to me, that is here outside, so that it sees all the world it. And it began to open the trunks deliberately, removing clothes, shoes, books...

Suddenly, crepitar of the flashes of the photographers, from the fence, illuminated the night like small fireworks. Indira appeared in the threshold, and it said to him to its secretary who did not insist on the one of the registry. Account had occurred of which her daughter-in-law had gained him the game and began to yield. Maneka had not made but apply a lesson of its mother-in-law: "It leaves enemy do them what they want against you, but always to the public light, so that they show its worse face." When the lamentable spectacle of the registry arrived at its aim, Maneka and its sister returned to their quarter, demanding that were in advance sent their properties and their dogs to their new address. The last one of the conditions was that they would not go away without the small Firoz Varun.

In that disastrous night, the worse mistake of Indira was the one to try to remain with its grandson of two years. Before the fight it had issued order of which they took it quarter to its. It had spent the day with tenth of fever. When the crew members went to by him, Indira refused to give it.

- My grandson remains with me - he said in an attack of irrational blindness.

Maneka let him know that if did not give the small one, it would make a sitting in the door of the house until obtaining it. Very capably, the young widow arranged itself to operate her paper of victim using the weapon of the Mahatma Gandhi, the civil disobedience. The fight of Indira was to the desperate one. It made come to P.C. Alexander, its main official secretary, who to the being waked up in the heat of night thought that some international conflict had exploded. "I never saw so afflicted, so worried, so anxious, as tense as that night - the man would say . Its face reflected a indescribable anguish."



- Madam - Alexander said to him, has had you who to face so many crises in its life, to so many political battles, the death of its son. So that you put yourself thus now?

- Alexander, this girl wants to clear to me to Firoz Varun. You know my relation with the son Sanjay. He is my grandson. Me they want it to clear.

Indira followed outside its squares. The suffering that produced the loss to him of its grandson dimmed the judgment to him. There was no way to make it enter reason, of convincing it that the right was from its daughter-in-law. By very prime minister who was, nothing against the fact that could Maneka was the mother of the small one. Did not reign in India rule of law the right state? The lawyers who made come in half at night to see how to remain with the boy they agreed in which there was nothing no to do.

- Lady - finally one of its lawyers settled, if you it remains with the boy, its daughter-in-law will present/display a denunciation and you will be you forced to give it to the police, that will give back it as well mother to its. I suggest to him saves all that mess.

The battle was lost. Indira went to its quarter, and it remained watching the boy, who slept in the cradle with a rhythmic and well audible breathing. The woman was a sea of tears. Rare time in its life they saw it cry as much, so exhausted. For her, that was like the second death of its son. When the nursemaid went to take to the boy, Indira did a gesture to him with the hand, removed it from the cradle and it narrowed it in its arms, long, conscious that it was the last time that would see it. Soon was given it, broken on the inside, cleaning to the tears of the face with the end of his sari.

They were more than the eleven at night when Maneka, taking to the disturbed one and semiwide-awake Firoz Varun in arms, left finally house and it put in a car accompanied by its sister. An explosion of flashes illuminated all the sequence of its game. In agreement photos to the image that it wanted to give, the one of a loyal daughter-in-law treated cruel by its powerful and authoritarian mother-in-law. "Maneka saluting to the journalists from the car", said the photo foot that left to the following morning in all newspapers of India and leaves from the foreigner. The newspaper Indian Express published an article comparing the efforts of prime minister to expel to Maneka with the act "to kill a wasp to axes blow". Indira had lost and it knew it.

To Sonia the soul was left to see to him so sunk it. Also it suffered with that outcome, although she saw it come, perhaps with more lucidity than the own Indira. It suffered because much of the small one had taken care, from its birth. She had been one second mother for him. The arrival to the world of the small one evoked memories of a eeted again familiar happiness after the frights of the Emergency. The harmony had lasted little, only until the death of Sanjay, but it had left a deep impression in all the members of the family. Priyanka and Rahul also were had

customary to the presence of that primito, so near that they considered a brother rather. During the following days, to all the one that got to see it, Indira said to him: “ Sabes? Maneka and Firoz Varun have gone away of house”, as if it had been the consensuada decision of two adults. All the country knew with hairs and signals which had happened.

## 31

To paint. To concentrate itself in each pincelada, without the pulse shakes. To mix and to return to mix the painting in the trowel, to look for the correct tone, the color just. To take off the glasses and to return to put them to it. To advance slowly, pasito to pasito. Rascar with the spatula, to smooth, to clean, to stain of color, to return to begin... For Sonia, their courses of restoration of old paintings to the oil in the National Museum were like a therapy that allowed to forget him during hours trajín of its home. Those robbed moments provided an intense one to him and intimate satisfaction and now was sure that that one had been its real vocation if the life had not taken it by another map course. It was an activity that allowed to develop its potential him, its character of perfeccionista woman to which it liked to fix, to rehabilitate, to mend. In order to recover it had to be made invisible. One was not to invent, but to interpret the intention of the original artist. It was not for rebels who ended up imposing their criterion. It was for personalities like hers, maleables, little loving of the confrontation and rather docile, that always finished adapting of the best way and removing the best party to which there was. Now it could be dedicated to his liking because its home returned to be a peace backwater, like before Maneka entered to live in her. And that peace helped Indira to calm, little by little, surrounded by the affection of the grandsons whom it had left and with the security of which Sonia was in charge of the house, which implied, for example, to organize a supper for Mitterrand and its séquito, or a reception for Muslim leaders to noon and another one for heads of the party in the evening.

Sonia always tried to fit to his schedules and their commitments to agree with the free short whiles of Rajiv and its mother-in-law. It felt that both, to resist the harshness of the political life and perhaps to cure themselves of the commotion that supposed the fight with Maneka, needed now more than ever the direct and frank stability, privacy and relations that found in the familiar universe. Between the four walls of the home, neither Rajiv nor Indira had to measure their words, nor to worry about which they said or to whom said it. Sonia guarded a sanctuary to them so that they protected themselves of the racket of the policy. So that they enjoyed the rest of the soldier. “It was dedicated to my husband with an unconditional love”, would say. The same it had been able to say of Indira. Rajiv deeply was thanked for him of which it had accepted to take the step and to change of life, and let it know: “Corno says the Hindu tradition, a man is only average person and her woman is the other average. With you, I feel exactly thus”, left to writing a day him in a note before going away to work.

At that time Nadia, the small sister of Sonia, it went to live to Nueva Delhi with its husband, Spanish diplomat. She was a girl of fine

characteristics, colored person, with an undeniable natural distinction. She was introvert, it liked to read and the influence of its husband made him be become fond of by Spanish Literature. Its ambition was to become translator of Italian to Spanish. Now too much it was occupied with its small daughters, but it left it for the future... For Sonia, he was wonderful to have it so close, to be able to organize exits of weekend with the children of both marriages or to attend suppers of friends, where cosmopolitan Indians joined themselves and European residents in the city. Nadia and his husband had much more intense a social life that the one of Rajiv and Sonia, because they comprised of the diplomatic circuit in the capital of India. Meals, cocktails, receptions, inaugurations of exhibitions, book presentations, concerts, parties of pole, etc., were seen participating them in many acts and nothing made foretell the differences that were arising in the marriage. At Sonia some rumors arrived to him, but as her sister had not said anything to him, it cleared importance to them. She would be crazy if it were entrusted in the local rumorología.

But a day Nadia went to see it one hour early, while it finished fixing itself.

- What so I have left? - Sonia asked, alluding to sari that she took.

- You are guapísima - her sister with dull voice said to him.

- Here only use saris, attacks to us with that of which I am Italian, you know? The truth is that I feel equal of comfortable of anyone of the ways, of European or of Eastern.

- You can pass perfectly by an India, if it were not because your jewels are discreet, to the opposite who those of the ladies of here... However, if I put sari, I seem a tourist dressed India.

- A time, the woman of a politician approached to see the cross that I take hung to the neck and asked to me that so that took a so fine small chain when cadenote can be taken more visible... Here the ostentation is valued, fijate, in a country with as much poverty...

Sonia smiled when remembering the scene, and when the return occurred, after being placed sari, she was its sister crying.

- Pero what happens to you?

Nadia did not dare to say nothing. It stammered. Sonia had to use all his ability to sonsacar to him what it happened to him. His husband deceived it. The voice in the Nueva world had been run Delhi, which added humiliation to the pain.

" How can be so irresponsible? ", Sonia, furious asked itself.

The diplomat had been something frivolous. Not even one made an effort in disguising its messes. Most recent, the one than had had with a diplomat of the Danish embassy, caused that Nadia came down.

- It has promised to Me that it is going to break, but I do not know if to believe to him. For Sonia, it was a blow to see it thus. It requested to him that it had patience, that gave a new opportunity him, if it is that had been promised it. It was had customary to have them in Nueva Delhi and it

gave pain him that they had to leave. Hopefully the situation with its husband was fixed. Decidedly, all were not like Rajiv. The Spanish brother-in-law it began to take odd habit to him.

Like the one of Nadia with its husband, the life is done of small tears. At the beginning of 1982, the family lived the separation on Rahul. Following the custom inherited of the English, it was sent to a boarding school that was in spurs of the Himalayas. It had been founded by an English professor who had remained of director after independence. Doon School was an institution of excellent reputation, created to image and similarity of the British schools, where the children and grandsons of the privileged classes attended their studies. At the outset, Sonia had been against the idea. To separate of its son to the eleven years does not comprise of the Italian tradition, although Rajiv remembered to him that their own parents had sent it commits to the school of nuns of Giaveno.

- Already, but that was to twenty kilometers of house.

Doon School was to seven hours of Delhi, which, on scale of India, was a short distance. Even so, he was hard to separate of the boy. It was he himself suffering that had suffered the Motilal great-grandfather and the grandfathers Nehru. At the time, the well off families sent to their piston rods to England when fulfilling the seven years. Rajiv so was convinced as its great-grandfather that separating of its son, by very painful who was, was a experience that would help the boy to grow, to being and more hard independent. What it worried to him, as much as to Sonia, was that Rahul was the sufficiently mature thing as to bear the attacks and the extreme cruelty of its companions. They had already had to fight with that kind of problems when the Delhi school in and as much Rahul went to as Priyanka was victims of pullas of some children who mofaban themselves of the family. Only that then the parents were close for offering their support to them. " If they put there with them far, who will console to them? ", Sonia asked itself, troubles. "To times they will say all type of silly things in newspapers on the grandmother, mother or me - Rajiv to its son wrote to give security him, but you do not have preocuparte. Perhaps you are with some boys in the school who use it to put with you, but will discover that most of those things they are not certain... You must learn to fight with those provocations... not to make case to which it can irritate to you, not to leave it affects to you."

Which one found out the boy by the periodic ones was of the numerous trips that carried out their parents. Then, Indira traveled much, and whenever it could it went accompanied of its son and Sonia. Together they went to New York, where Indira lived the joy to eet again with its old friend Dorothy Norman, who described it thus: "There it was, the woman who highly led a complex society of more than seven hundred million people, the majority poor and faced problems of all type; a woman still crushed by the lost pain having its son, sadder that before... »

- Yes, I am calmer, sadder - Indira- confirmed to him. But would be right to request more? The life has been splendid with me, as much in happiness as in pain. How can be appreciated the one without the other?

Dorothy would remember to Rajiv and Sonia by far affection by the way in which they behaved with her. It saw very proud Indira of its son: "Rajiv has made a magnificent work with the Asian Games", told him. The games, inaugurated the 19 of November of 1982, day in which Indira turned sixty and five years, had been an organization feat. Six stages, three hotels of luxury and a whole district with lodgings for the athletes had risen in a time record. The appearance of the south of Delhi changed for always. Rajiv had come out unemployed well his first test, with an image of effective, modern leader, and of good manager, although the press denounced the conditions of life of the workers, in its majority immigrants of the south, skinny men and women of dark skin that vilely were operated by the legion of intermediaries, work contractors , heads, constructors, cement, brick manufacturers and of steel that handled the budget. It was not task easy of modernizing India. Yes, vanguardistas buildings rose, but a society made medieval, where the children worked of sun sun by an amount of money that was to them robbed by those who contracted them. Rajiv had realized of which the challenge was in changing that decayed social structure by the corruption. An immense challenge, because the India society dragged thousands and thousands of years of vices, of operation of chaste ones by others, classes by others. If in a budget a pay of one hundred rupias to the day were assigned to a worker, all knew that it ended up receiving thirty rupias, in the best one of the cases. The rest it had left to the contractor or the intermediaries. Soon there was a revealing detail of the poverty of the country. Great part of the analyses of blood conducted the Indian athletes indicated anemia presence. How tried to compete with Japanese, Korean, Malayan? By all that, the games had been for Rajiv a bittersweet victory.

Although Rajiv could not always accompany its mother, Sonia did whenever Indira was requested. It never traveled as much: it crossed several countries of the East, Indonesia, the Fiji islands, Layer, Australia, the Philippines, as well as other places of South America. When the trip was to Europe, it took advantage of to give a jump to Orbassano and to embrace to his. Sonia always avoided the cameras and it did not like anything that the civil employees dealt it with a special deference being the daughter-in-law of prime minister, which used to please so much to the India delegation as to the foreign guests. In Washington, Sonia could verify that Indira followed without connecting with the North American presidents. This time was Ronald Reagan, whose Indira attention was not able to maintain more of some minutes, as if the damage of the disease that later would attack to him had begun already. " Gives account You? - it commented to him to its daughter-in-law later of the scale in Moscow and of to have interviewed with Brezhnev-. The future of the human race it is into the hands of two old, firm ones in its positions, without flexibility nor desire to initiate a dialogue." But then to Sonia it worried to him plus the health of Indira that the future of the

world. It had noticed that its mother-in-law, when it was tired, it had a tic in the eye, and their eyelids were put to shake uninterruptedly. And it slept very badly. Suddenly it said rare things: "When I close the eyes, I see a old deformed that it wants to do damage to me."

Of Nueva return Delhi, Indira said to its Pupul friend:

- I have received secret information of which somebody carries out tántricos rites and of black magic to destroy to me. Pupul, you think that there are forces you vitiate that they can be released through tántricos rites?

- Although that is certain - her friend answered to him. So that you react thus? When doing it, you only obtain that those forces become more powerful...

- Then Tengo that to ignore those information that receipt every day? What I do?

Pupul and Sonia were perplex. Era that behavior product of the feeling of inner solitude that at heart never had left it from girl, since it hoped single in house to that their parents returned from prison or the sanatorium? It had not seen its grandson Firoz Varun almost two years, and as much Sonia ago as Pupul guessed that the pain the separation made damage in the heart of Indira. It maintained its composure stoic, but at heart it was so wound, that perhaps she was becoming crazy.

Sonia did not believe it thus. Madnesses of Indira always attributed them to the ominous influence of the gurú Dharendra Brahmachari, that continued making the rounds by house, dressing in kurtas color orange. It was like moscón that, no matter how much one tried to separate it, always returned. He was heavier, the gray hair and greñoso it fell to him on shoulders and it had been let grow the nail of meñique, that so long and was acierated as a blade and that made sick to Sonia to him difficult to disguise. All knew that the gurú scared to Indira with those assumptions "secret information", but nobody knew what to make to avoid it. He was incredible: prime minister of India believed with more force those "information" that those of the department of Statistic of the government. The certain thing was that at its moments of depression, frequent and more and more intense, the supernatural thing acquired a worrisome importance.

There was another reason that explained so that it used the services of the gurú, and is that another one santón, sij Brindanwale call, of thirty years, had sent more serious the political challenge to him of its life. That man was a simple preacher of town, a fundamentalist who exhorted to purify the sijismo, to give back it its old ortodoxia and to fight by a mother country sij. The conflict with sijs went back to the Partition that, with all its collection of horrors and massacres, caused a trauma in the conscience of this community, born in century xv to fight against the idolatry and the dogma of the two dominant religions at the time, the hinduismo and the Islam. In 1947, the Partition tore the mother country of sijs, the Punjab, "the country of the five rivers", one of the most beautiful and fertile regions of India, a landscape of gilded fields of wheat and barley crossed by silver-

plated water rivers. The border between Pakistan and the India drawn up by the English cut its territory by half. Western Punjab became partly of Pakistan; Eastern Punjab remained in India, with a population half sij Hindu half. Like reaction, a strong separatist feeling made an impression on the population sij.

The peculiar thing of Brindanwale is that it had discovered Sanjay to it. Worried about the advance of the moderate nationalistic party that cleared many votes to the Congress in Punjab, Sanjay thought that when supporting and promoting to Brindanwale it would be able to divide and to debilitate the nationalism sij. The problem, that nobody knew to anticipate, is that Brindanwale became uncontrollable and ended up becoming a monster that now threatened its mother.

It seemed santón left the Average Age directly, with a black beard, releases and silky that fell to him until the waist. It had penetrating dark ojillos, a nose of eagle, a severe and lean face, and always went hairdo with a turban. She dressed one long blue túnica, and Lucia with pride his kirpan (saber) of a meter of length to cinto. With its two meters of height, its presence was impressive. Their speeches, impregnated of a fanatical ardor, excited to many sijs that they dreamed about an independence of the rest of the Indians. It had left his woman and children to lead a legion of followers, as extremist as he Sanjay did not have counted with the fact that, when growing its influence and when combining more people to his around, also would grow the ambition of Brindanwale and its desire of autonomy. Shortly after the elections of 1980, in which it participated in the campaign supporting to the Congress actively and until it shared podio with Indira in an occasion, santón decided that it did not want to be plus a puppet of the Gandhi and broke its bonds with the party. The time, it and its followers ended demanding the creation of a sovereign State called Khalistán, “the country of the pure ones”. The country of sijs.

The problem is that they did it using the violence like pressure and intimidation means . In 1981, Brindanwale was accused to order the murder of the owner of a newspaper chain of the Punjab whose publishing line very critical era with its activities and their ideario. But its imprisonment caused a big wave of so violent and destructive manifestations that the central government took part. Vacillating, without really knowing what course to take, the own Indira ordered the minister of the Interior that released it when only three weeks had passed. It made it indeed not to make a martyr of Brindanwale, but already it was too much behind schedule. It had entered the jail as a preaching fanatic of provinces and left like national hero. It did one turns by the great cities in which it demonstrated its immense popularity between sijs of the diáspora. But its return to the Punjab agreed with an increase of the violence. Every day they appeared, in the Hindu or Muslim side streets of Amritsar or Jallandar , degollados corpses of. In several temples, Hindu faithfuls discovered horrified heads of their sacred animal, the cow, distances on the feet of the altars. To these bloody provocations black lists published by Brindanwale in

newspapers with the name of the adversaries were added that thought to eliminate. And it fulfilled its threats. The son of the owner of the newspaper chain assassinated was lowered as well, which seeded the terror between mass media and the population in general. Sijs that dared to criticize it was white of their attacks. It returned to the jail, but their followers continued killing opponents. When it left, he and their army intrenched in the complex of the Gold Temple, in Amritsar, the city santa of sijs.

Constructed in means of waters shining of an ample ritual pool saved by a bridge, the Gold Temple is a materialized white marble building of copper adornments, silver and gold. The cupola, entirely covered of panels of gold, blanket the original manuscript of Libro Santo of sijs, the Granth Sahib. Around of the pool they circulate faithful always in the sense of the needles of the clock; they walk with the barefoot feet on the brilliant marble, they take the head covered with turbans of colors and shine luengas beards and thick moustaches. The followers of Brindanwale occupied this place of peace. They put in the annexed buildings to the temple, from where they left the orders to the terrorist commandos so that they assassinated, you would pillasen, they profaned and they set afire in the villages of the Punjab. While Indira followed without knowing how how to fight with this grotesque creation of Sanjay, Brindanwale received to equipment of television of the entire world that treated to him as to an authentic mediatic star. The police, that had the moral by grounds due to the increase of the delinquency and the violence, did not dare to enter a so sacred place.

Other buds of violence in Kashmir and Assam gave the impression that the nation went direct to the chaos and the disintegration. The murder of a police inspector while it said in the Gold Temple, the 23 of April of 1983, by the firings of the men of Brindanwale, hidden after the grates of the windows, forced Indira to make a decision. Pero which? Asaltar the temple with the army and to risk to cause the fury of the others sijs? Sitar the temple until the terrorists did not have more remedy than to surrender? Indira tried to negotiate with leaders of the moderate nationalistic party, while the looting and the murders continued, but any agreement that did not contemplate the total independence of Khalistán was striped systematically by Brindanwale. This one, to its time, envalentonado by the indecision of the central government and by the fact that the murder of the police inspector was unpunished, intrenched in the Akal Takht, the second more sacred building of the complex. It obtained sophisticated armament paid by sijs of the foreigner and turned the temple an authentic strength. Indira, Rajiv and its advisors patiently hoped to that the leaders more moderate than Brindanwale finished prevailing, or they were distanced of the fanatical preacher. They thought that the time would play its favor, but spent two years, and the terrorists followed intrenched.

- Can the army assault the temple without causing too many damage? - Indira the head of the army, the general Sundarji asked, who had replaced to his old friend Sam Manekshaw.



The general unfolded on the table aerial photos taken the eve showing that all the windows, doors and other openings of the building were protected by earthly coats or had been tapiadas. It explained to him that the terrorists were able to supply themselves of arms, foods and the ammunition through a labyrinth of tunnels that united them to the outside. Thus, they could stay eternally.

- The possibilities of causing extensive damages are very high - the general sentenced

Conscious that the religious susceptibility in the country with more religions of the world could explode like a powder magazine the fragile balance of the nation, the parents of independence had settled down a tacit agreement by which the sacred places were all untouchable ones. Behind that agreement Brindanwale had been parapetado, insurance of which the army never would dare to take part. It opposite had, hurt tired, afraid a woman in the soul, worn away by the power, that soldier lacked the seriousness and the ardor who had made it prevail in the conflict of Bangladesh.

To feel like hostage of terrorists who did not leave the minimum margin to the negotiation made hopeless it. With an increasing frustration, Indira realized of which the only solution to that challenge happened through the use of the force. The situation remembered the crisis to him of Bangladesh, when also it knew that it would end up having to declare the war. Only that then did not exist internal problem religious some. The enemy was external and the consequences could be measured better. Now they were unforeseeable. When her Pupul friend, seeing so lowered it, asked to him if all that were not too much for her, Indira at the outset did not respond, but soon it said: "I do not have exit. It is my responsibility."

In 1983, a year after Rahul entered in Doon School, was called on the turn to him to Priyanka to go internal to equivalent the feminine one of the school of its brother, Welham School, also in mountains, to about two hundred kilometers of Delhi. Of soon, Sonia was with more free time del than she had never had, but she could not either dedicate it to itself. It had to accompany its husband to Amethi, its electoral circumscription. Maneka had decided, now that it had fulfilled minimum the age legal, to snatch the bench to him in the following elections in the circumscription that had been the one of its husband. A challenge in all rule. That it had disappeared of house did not mean that the sister-in-law had disappeared of the map. In its routes by the zone, one appeared like the widow expelled from house with a baby in arms, and forced to look for the life by its evil brother-in-law and his foreign wife. It was not certain, but it sounded to those simple and domestic histories of injustice and envies relatives who as much please the town. It was presented/displayed by his in Amethi like "a triumph of the anger". Now which it did not fear to see them to it with Indira personally, its behavior was made aggressive still more. It put in circulation letters of the family critics with Rajiv and in a speech, Maneka compared to Indira with the Kali goddess, "the blood drinker" - it said very textually, taking to the paroxysm habitual the bad relations between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. It was thus taken revenge to see itself excluded by the family of all the official commemorations. To the second anniversary of the death of Sanjay, it was not invited, and it reacted either summoning a meeting of widows and organizing a gratuitous distribution of clothes. The challenge of Maneka was more for so depressing prime minister or than the challenge, much more dangerous, of the crazy person of Brindanwale. But it hurt more because it touched the intimate fiber of the family.

"Mother also comes to Amethi with me - Rajiv to its son wrote. It is going to be difficult for her, because at the outset it will be the target of all the glances and one will feel uncomfortable until it is accustomed. He is very brave." For the first time, Sonia realized of which it was the life of an Indian politician in campaign. To cross sinfín of kilometers by wagon floods of caverns in automobiles of the hardest suspension, to hold the heat, the dust and the flies in the numerous villages, to see themselves forced to accept a tea, and soon another one, and soon other not to hurt the susceptibility of people... The good thing is that now hindi spoke with soltura and could chat with the farmers, who asked to him for their children, their mother-in-law, and everything what had to do with turbulent familiar history: " Will be able Indira to return to see its grandson? ", the women asked to him, or " Is certain that Maneka does not have nor to eat" Of which they were not nothing convinced the farmers are that Maneka was the genuine heiress of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, as they demonstrated the results to it in the ballot boxes. Again, it returned to gain Rajiv.

To 1984 principles, Rajiv appeared like a politician in height. Their management of the games, together with the effectiveness

demonstrated in their position of Secretary General of the Congress, won a genuine respect to him, independently of their political lineage. Its office was a model of good organization, a corner created to its image and similarity. Compared with the old dinosaurs of the party, in its majority corrupt flattering, Rajiv it was a model of virtues, mainly of effectiveness and integrity. It had broken with the cloudy individuals that had teemed around their brother, and it was surrounded by technocrats, of young people with briefcase and suit of executive, examples of a modern generation that believed in the technology, the statistics and the computers. Many had been classmates his in the Doon School, others in Cambridge, and all were more to taste speaking English than Hindi. They lived the present, were not intellectual but pragmatic and totally other people's to everything what had to do with the religion, the ideology or the superstition. As much they as Rajiv were against the passive attitude of Indira in the subject of the Punjab. Prime minister, following the advice of her gurú Dhirendra Brahmachari, had begun to make offerings with the hope of which some miracle could solve the crisis of the Gold Temple.

- It is necessary to move away it of house for always - Rajiv said to him to Sonia, speaking of the gurú.

It needed Indira more doses of esoterismo neither the more fears added to the black thoughts that populated their mind. On the contrary, it needed to have cold the affluent head and the gracious vision. It followed sunk in a deep depression. Too many challenges, too much fatigue. Sanjay had cultivated the friendship with the gurú, because it did not believe in his hidden powers but because he was to him useful. "Santón flying" had been able to buy small planes, to deal with arms, to contract sicarios and to launder money, plaster was abilities that Sanjay admired and used if it considered it necessary. Rajiv, direct and honest, was the antithesis as much of its brother as of santón, vague, astute, dishonest an individual perspicaz, and nothing westernized. Sonia and Rajiv no longer supported more to it.

- What we can do?

- I am going to try that they cancel its weekly televising program to him and to trim the subventions to him to his ashrams.

As their stature of politician and its influence had grown, it obtained it. Not to hurt to Indira, Sonia and the next advisors of their husband praised the profits of Rajiv, and Indira finished convinced that the strategic plans of their son represented the only solution to fix the evils of India. Little to little, it was forgetting the misticismo the gurú and let make offerings to the Gods to swear in the crisis of the Punjab. Before the great lightening of Sonia, the gurú disappeared completely of the familiar table. Almost imperceptibly, Dhirendra Brahmachari saw its access denied prime minister. "I feel, Madam does not have time to receive to him", said the service to him when it tried to return to see it.

The month of February of that year was the unique one in all its life in which Indira did not enjoy the spring, its favorite station, between the

cold of the winter and the tremendous premonzónicos heats that begin to punish in March. During that month, the full city of color, the vegetation of the trees becomes from green an intense one, and arriates of flowers illuminates the gardens. The temperature is exquisite and a smooth breeze accompanies the nights. In the past, in spite of all the difficulties and the problems, Indira always one had felt euphoric at this time of the year. Now no. Isolated and sad, santón sij entrenched in the Gold Temple cleared the dream to him. It listened all, and it followed without knowing how what to do. In insoluble situations, it was only possible to gain time, to hope and to maintain the confidence, repeated Indira to its next collaborators.

Following the advice of Rajiv, Indira delivered a last attack to find a negotiated exit to the crisis of the Punjab acceding to many concessions of the independentistas, but it ran into as much with the intransigencia of the members of the moderate party like of Brindanwale. Most of seven million of sijs so they were disturbed before the situation caused by the extremists as he were it the government. Instead of negotiating, the leader of the moderate party took the definitive step that sealed the rupture, a step that only could lead a catastrophe. It announced that from the 3 of June, anniversary of the martyrdom of the gurú Arjun, indeed the one that had raised the Gold Temple, all export of electrical energy and grain outside the Punjab would be interrupted. The irony of the threat could not be escaped to him to Indira. If the Punjab were the barn of India, were because the region had benefitted more than no other from “the green revolution”, the ambitious plan of agricultural development that Nehru, and she later, had sent to end of once hambrunas. And now it was that a handful of fanatics not only threatened breaking the State, but also with killing of hunger the poor men of the rest of India, if the central government were not folded to his exigencies. The situation had arrived at a point without return. Very its grief, Indira faced the inevitable thing: to remove by the force to Brindanwale and to its followers of the temple.

Before nothing, before at least to consult with the head of the General Staff, wanted to speak with Sonia:

- Sonia, I believe that he is better to remove to the boys from the school... I fear for them. The Intelligence service has warned to me that they are white of the terrorists. Nothing new in that. Target of those fanatics we are it all. But as the situation in the Punjab continues deteriorating itself, it is more and more difficult to guarantee the security in the schools. They have advised to remove them to me from the boarding schools and to bring them to Delhi.

- But you only have a guard armed for protegerte here when salts by the mornings to speak with people in the garden!

- That is going away to finish, are going to reinforce the security here also, by all means.

- It is well, tomorrow same me I bring them. We will already see how we organized ourselves to escolarizar them here...

A secretary of Indira interrupted to them. The Army Commander-in-Chief was waiting for it in the hall. The man came with his information of Intelligence under the arm.

- Lady, is armed until the teeth. The entrenched terrorists continue obtaining very sophisticated arms. They arrive to them hidden in milk cans and grain coats, and the shipments take control of the money of supporters sijos of the foreigner.

Indira remained thinking. Felt Tenía to continue waiting for a miracle? Soon one went towards its chief of staff and it asked to him:

- How we would have to come with the attack?

The man resopló. He was uncomfortable. It cost to believe to him in the success of the mission.

- There are many risks, lady. She is my to have to warn it. My opinion is that more bond a fast and massive attack, with all the necessary force...

- Better than to surround them? - Indira interrupted.

- They are already surrounded, lady, and the arms to them continue arriving. I trust more a fast and forceful attack.

- Of how much time we are speaking?

- Forty and eight hours. To less time, less low.

- The presence of officials and soldiers is essential sijos in the attack units . This like an ethnic aggression is not due to interpret, of Hindu against sijos.

- Without doubt. The commander is commander Kuldip Singh, of the ninth division of the Army, sijos.

- It is necessary to give instructions very precise to avoid to damage the Gold Temple. The community sijos us would not pardon it.

- We will instruct the troops. But those terrorists are hard of pelar, Madam, I cannot guarantee nothing.

- That God protects to us.

The 30 of May, day of a suffocating heat, the troops surrounded the city of Amritsar. The bullicio of the streets vanished as by enchantment. Invaded by a frightful silence, the city santa became a ghost city.

The 2 of June, the mass media announced that Indira would speak to the nation that same night, to eight and half. Sonia had breakfast with her, and she noticed insane person, pessimist and still indecisa. It did not like anything the idea to have to attack "a house of God". It confessed to him that it did not leave the speech to him. Of fact, it was making so many changes of last hour that its appearance in television had to be delayed until the nine and quarter. Finally it spoke, in a serious tone) the expression of the distressed face: "This one is not time of rage - it said. The unit and the integrity of the mother country are being questioned by a handful of men who have taken refuge in sacred places. Again, I make a call to the moderate parties so that they do not yield its authority to Brindanwale." It ended up appealing to the common sense of all the inhabitants of the Punjab: "You do not spill blood, deshaceos of hatred. Unámonos to cure the

wounds. ” When listening that speech, its Pupul friend realized of which the next days were going to be tragic for Indira and the country. In effect, while prime minister spoke, troops of the army took positions around the enclosure from the Gold Temple. It was on the verge of beginning the Operation Blue Star, stars blue.

To the following day, the foreign correspondents were invited to leave the Punjab. The traffic of buses, trains and airplanes was interrupted, as well as the lines of telephone and telex. The region was isolated of the rest of the world in final preparation for an assault. From its sanctuary in the Akal Takht, the contiguous building to the Temple of Gold, Brindanwale, now with a cartridge belt crossed to the chest on its blue túnica, a pistol in the left hand and its saber in the right, declared to a handful of local journalists: “If the authorities enter this temple, we are going to give such lesson to them that the throne of Indira will collapse. We will cut them in small pieces... that comes”

To four of afternoon of the 5 of June, officials of the army armed of megaphones issued order to all the civilians to evacuate the complex, and to the terrorists, to surrender. They left one hundred twenty-six sijs, in its majority men who had gone to say and travelling, but no follower of Brindanwale did it. By the night, an advance party of special commandos was entered in the complex, while the helicopters flew in circle upon the temple. They ran into with a ferocious resistance. More than half of the ninety members of the commandos they were lowered by the fire of the extremists.

The head of the General Staff informed immediately into the losses to prime minister. The beginning of the assault could not be more discouraging. But no longer there was possible reverse gear. The luck was thrown. Indira did not sleep in all the night, conscious that a sacrilege with the venerated symbols more of a religion was being committed . So that the destiny in that tesitura had put him? What price would be necessary to pay reason why was making the troops? It felt a chill to cross the back to him. Of something she was safe, and it is that neither their government nor she would leave undamaged that situation. Karma always finishes to you catching. But to eight in the morning of the 6 of June, perfectly fixed and adorned, it was in the garden taking care of a journalist of the Sunday Times. The temperature already cleared the 40 degrees. The journalist found it tense and tired. Its last question was:

- Lady, what thinks that it will happen in India when you no longer are prime minister?

- India has lived a long time, very long - thousand of years and my sixty and six years count well little. India has passed many vicissitudes in its long history and it has always left ahead.

While the interview took place, to five hundred kilometers to the Nueva north Delhi the battle by the Gold Temple caused damage. Under a infernal temperature and a sun of justice that made refulgir the golden cupola of the main temple, the Indian soldiers were lowered like ducks of

fair under fire of the men of Brindanwale. Again, more than one hundred men they fell in the attempt to take control of the building where the terrorists were entrenched.

The received instructions so that the soldiers restricted the use of the force to the maximum, and so that they inflicted the minimum possible damages to the main temple, made no sense already. Control, that did not see another solution that was not the one to continue the assault, in the evening sent to the artillery supported by tanks and armored vehicles. In order to be able to neutralize Brindanwale and its men, they did not have more remedy than to bomb the Akal Takht, inflicting enormous damages to the temple, constructed paradoxicallally by the fifth gurú, an authentic apostle of peace that had insisted on raising it at an inferior level to the others in humility sign.

After a day of bloody fight, the Akal Takht was almost totally devastated. When well late at night of the 6 of June generals they went to inspect the place, it was not left a single column still on and the marble walls were blackened and itched by the shrapnel. In the cellar they found the body of Brindanwale, its long túnica no longer was blue but black of blood. Thirty and one of their men lay next to. There were no survivors who had been witnesses of the martyrdom of the terrorist preacher. In another room, the soldiers found documents surprising: the list of all the victims who Brindanwale had commanded to kill, and an enormous stock market with admiration letters, not only of Indian citizens, but of fans of the entire world.

The cost of the victory was much more high of which the Army Commander-in-Chief had foretold. Much more high of which Indira and Rajiv, that were horrified, had imagined. The Operation Blue Star was in fact one hecatombe. More than half of the thousand soldiers sent to the assault they perished. As far as the civilians, a thousand of travelling who could not be evacuated died. Aside from the human losses, the library of the main temple, that that did not have under any concept to be damaged and that contained the original manuscripts of gurús sijs, burned by the four flanks. For the community sij in general, that attack was comparable to which it had been an invasion and destruction of the Vatican for the catholics. An unforgivable sacrilege. Indeed what Indira had wanted to avoid.

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- It gives fear Me that plays in the garden - Indira said to Sonia when seeing Rahul from the window of the dining room to retozar in the turf with one of the dogs. The children had returned to Nueva Delhi, after the warning of the Intelligence service, who had found their names in a black list of an extremist group sij. All the mornings went, strongly guarded, to their respective schools. Soon they passed the rest of the day in house. Rare time they left. A simple invitation to a birthday involved a complex operation of security. "He is as if a shade had entered our life", Sonia said to him to Rajiv. Indira, very conscious that the attack had caused a collective wound in sijs of the Punjab, was convinced that they were going it to assassinate. It was first in those lists. Another group had sworn to take revenge the sacrilege of the Gold Temple assassinating to Indira and its descendants until the hundredth generation. Thus one said to Rajiv and Sonia to it, that waned. Pero Indira wanted that they were taken very in serious the safety measure draconianas that were imposing to them. It put a vest bullet-proof under the bodice of sari whenever she left house, following the advice of the police. It wanted that Rajiv and Sonia did the same.

- It is not joke - it said to them.

- Already I know it - Rajiv- answered. And you do not worry, me I will also put it.

There was a silence. Indira acquired a melancholic expression and a shady tone of voice.

- When it happens, I want that you scatter my ashes on the Himalayas. I have left instructions written for my funeral. They are in the second drawer of secreter of my quarter.

- You do not advance events - socarrón said to Rajiv in tone, to relax the atmosphere. Still we are not in that critical moment.

Pero Indira was anxious. Later it wanted to speak solo with its Rahul grandson, who already was fourteen years old:

- I am scared of which they want to you to make damage. I ask to you please to you and your sister who you do not play beyond the iron door that leads to the offices of Akbar Road - it said to him indicating the place in the garden where it had seen him play with the dog. I feel much that you must suffer these restrictions, but me it would not pardon it if it passed something to you.

- What is going to us to happen in here, grandmother?

- They can kill to You, that clear.

The serious tone of Indira caused that the boy contemplated it with cautious of incredulity, as if the grandmother was exaggerating.

- By favor, hacedme case and you do not move away - he continued diciéndole-. There are many haceros fanatics who very would be satisfied with damage. to make us damage to all. What they can do me to me to not matters me. I have done everything what I have had and everything what I have been able in the life, but to you... I do not want nor to think it.



Rahul was now crestfallen and compungido. Indira continued. It left its protective tone and it continued speaking with gravity, of a form that his grandson did not know him and whom he impressed to him.

- If it passes something to me, I do not want that you cry by me, is worth? When it arrives the moment you must be brave. Me you promise it?

The boy raised the eyes towards his grandmother and agreed.

During those months of 1984, Indira it made many trips by the subcontinent, trips that sometimes seemed goodbyes, by the way in which spoke of itself and how would like to be remembered. In some interviews, it made balance of its existence, in others spoke as if it was over the national policy. One had always felt with statesman soul, and now its global vision arose and it was pronounced in impregnated speeches of wisdom. "When to a as old country as this one him catapult to a new technological culture... What happens with the rural mind? Will be able to survive the mystery and the asylum? Something within me says that India will survive with its intact values." At the beginning of October, after last monzónicas rains cleaned the sky and the trees and the plants turned green again, Indira spoke in Nueva Delhi before a always enormous multitude, a dialogue more of many than it took maintaining with the town of India in the two last decades. It spoke of the anger as supreme value to accept the greater threat than were hung over the country: the pressure of the sectarian forces, the chaste ones or the religious groups to break the unit of India. It was a speech that it had liked its father. Yes, the unit of India was the supreme value because it guaranteed the state of right for each individual, independently of his social, ethnic or religious origin.

The 11 of October it happened a fact, to thousands of kilometers of distance, that still sank it more in its dark prefeelings. Margaret Thatcher, which it had known in London, was object of an attack with pump of the WRATH in the heat of convention of the Conservative Party. One got rid of the death by the hairs. Indira called it immediately. It understood better than nobody the vulnerability and the panic of its colleague. Although the Iron Lady was impassible facing the gallery, on the inside so was altered as she can be expected of which she happens through similar critical moment. The difference between these two prime minister, who had been eight years being friends, is that for Margaret Thatcher the attack had supposed a revelation and a surprise. Nothing similar had never happened in England before, clearing the murder of Lord Mountbatten, also builds of the WRATH, but this one had had by objective to a retired man while it took a walk in boat with his grandson, not a Chief of State in active-duty. Indira, nevertheless, was much more customary to the violent death. It had seen die to Gandhi, Sheikh Rahman and to Sanjay. It did not do so much, the murder of Salvador Beyond in Chile had traumatizado it and still it continued tormenting it. It always thought that its life would finish equal. Nevertheless, when the minister of Defense tried to convince it to change to the police by the army to increase his protection, she talked back:

- Nor it is happened to you to consider that option. I am female leader of a democratic government, not of a military government.

Days more behind schedule, Ashwini Kumar, head of the border patrol, it issued the order of which all the guards of security sijs destined in the residence of Indira were released in their functions and replaced by others of different confessions. Pero Indira was against and vetoed the order. The measurement went against its more intimate political creed, that is to say: that in a lay state distinctions between religions do not become. Ashwini Kumar remained perplex and frustrated. " Prime minister is very well protected of an outer attack - she said, but... and if the attack comes from the interior" Indira as soon as it paid attention to him and answered to him: " Perhaps we are not aconfesionales"

That autumn was also the autumn of its life. In November it was going to turn sixty and seven years. She was imprisoned of badly a prefeeling that the attack against Thatcher had worsened. Without saying it to it to anybody, in the middle of October it wrote up a document that soon was rescued of between its papers: "If I must die of a violent death as some fear and a few plan, I know that the violence will be in the thought and the action of the assassin, not in the fact of my death, because sufficiently dark hatred like making shade to the love does not exist that I feel by my people and my country; force able does not exist to turn aside to me of my intention and my effort to remove this country ahead. A poet has said of the love: " How I can feel humble with your wealth to my side" The same thing I can say of India." Were these the words of a depressive mind? Or was a premonition? In any case, they showed that Indira felt that had made the correct election to the determined salary continue with the familiar legacy on watch to India instead of dedicating itself to look for its personal accomplishment.

Diwali, the great Hindu celebration of the lights arrived, that in this country where everything is myth and symbol means the victory of the light on the darkneses. The sky of the city was sprinkled of a myriad of brilliance while the noise of the firecrackers oía to the distant spot. Throughout light bulbs, lamps , candles centelleaban. The districts of shacks seemed belenes and the houses of the great Nueva avenues Delhi exhibited garlands of distilled and showy lights. Rajiv returned from Orissa to pass the celebration in family, like did precise every year. Faithful to the custom, Indira ignited an oil lamp before the figure of Ganesh, the God elephant, the God of the happiness, that was in a altarcito in the entrance. Soon all the family followed with the ritual to illuminate the house with candles and lamps of oil, and the children began to ignite firecrackers. On the roar of the celebration, Indira listened Rajiv to say that it had to leave soon to the following morning.

- Where you go? - Indira asked to him.
- To Bengal...

- Bengal? Peculiar what, you know that there they think that the souls of the deceaseds begin their same trip today, the day of Diwali? There people ignite lamps to indicate the way to them...

At the moment, the words of Indira did not provoke answer some. Their relatives were already customary to hear say phrases to him that attributed to their depressive state. But to Sonia they affected it and so much became distressed that that night had an asthma crisis. The four of the dawn were when it ignited the light of his small table and it rose to go to the armario of medicines, having taken care of of not waking up to Indira, that slept in the quarter of alongside. Pero Sonia was surprised when seeing to appear to its mother-in-law, in nightgown and with a lantern in the hand.

- Déjame ayudarte to find your medicines - Indira whispered to him, that had obvious not slept anything.

It found them and it went to by a water glass for Sonia.

- Llámame if you are bad again - Indira- requested to him.

It tries to rest.

- That I to you say to you, that you rest... You are not able to sleep?

- Not... I am thinking about going to Kashmir the weekend to me. I want to see chinars in flower. You have seen Them sometimes?

Sonia denied with the head. Indira continued, in whispers:

- It is the tree prettier than it exists, and one only occurs in Kashmir. It is as a mixture of banana and great maple, and in autumn is put of spectacular colors... red, orange, brown, yellow. It is a spectacle that remembers me to my childhood. Del is one in Srinagar that I am enamored since she was young. Most beautiful of all chinars ". I have desire to return it to see.

"That tree seemed to have a special meaning for her - Sonia would say--. Era perhaps the necessity to take leave of its roots, the memories and everything what represented Kashmir for her" Indira doubted in remaining more than one night in Srinagar, because it was worried about the asthma of Sonia. But her daughter-in-law animated it and in the end Indira took to the grandsons. It wanted to teach that beautiful earth to them like the paradise of where they were native. And of step the tree.

They were thirty and six hours in Srinagar and its environs. But, for its great deception, chinarr of its childhood had died did just a short time. The news affected it. Superstitious like it was, the recent death of this chinarr centennial could not more be than a signal of the destiny. It did not let traslucir its frustration and it had time to take to its grandsons to give a return in shikara, those barquitos in gondola form, on sparkling waters and covers of lotos of the Dal lake. It told its last vacations them with the Firoz grandfathers in one of the boats qualified like hotelitos. It spoke to them of its love by the mountains, that had inherited of its father, and how Kashmir had always represented, for Nehru and her, a certain idea of the Edén. Soon it wanted to show a forest to them that exhibited the fire colors of

chinars and later it left them in the hotel. Accompanied by a single guard of security, one went away to promote a sacred mount to visit a temple where an old wise person lived. They were together hours. "Indira said to me that it felt that its time finished and that went up to around the death to him. I also felt it", would confess the wise person, whom she did not love to lose the opportunity to request to him that she went to inaugurate an attached new building to ashram. "I will return if I follow lives", it was the answer of Indira.

"The 28 of October Returned to Delhi and Indira passed a calm evening with us in the hall - Sonia- would write. Since it used to always do, it brought of its study its wicker stool and its folders, and it was put to work, throwing a look of time in when to the television or chatting with us." Indira had the intention to summon general elections in a moment, perhaps in two months. By the night, Sonia helped him to prepare the clothes that would be put on the following day to travel to Orissa, in the coast this. Indira chose sari bordeaux. The actor Peter Ustinov was directing a documentary one for the BBC on India and was going to film it in his tour by the state, one of poorest of the country. In Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa, prime minister made a touching speech in which it spoke of the great moments of the history of India, from the old times to the fight by independence. Suddenly, towards the end it changed the tone of its voice, as well as the expression of its face: "I am here today, can that is not here tomorrow - said. It does not matter to me if alive or I die... I will continue serving to my town until my last sigh and when it dies, each drop of my blood will feed and fortify to my country, frees and united." Later, one went to the House of the Governor where it thought to spend the night. The governor was surprised by the reference a violent death.

- I am only being realistic and honest - Indira- said to him. I have seen my grandfathers and my mother die slowly and with pain, so I prefer to die standing up.

The conversation was interrupted with the news that the todoterreno in which their grandsons went to the school had undergone a small accident that same morning. Nobody had been hurt. Pero Indira was put lívida and very nervous. Her eternal friend, that old paranoia, arose again. It decided to return immediately to Delhi.

Sonia was wide-awake when her mother-in-law reached three from the dawn.

- How is the children? - Indira, distressed asked.

- Well. They are sleeping. Nothing has passed them.

His main secretary went to see it. It found it very tired. It continued running bordeaux, wrinkled and dusty to he himself sari. Indira was convinced that the mishap in the morning was part of a plot to kidnap to its grandsons or to attack them, and nothing of which said its secretary served to make change it of opinion. Soon it insisted on discussing to urgent subjects on Kashmir and the Punjab.

- Does not prefer to leave it for morning? - the man suggested.

- No, we speak now. Tomorrow I want to rest a little.

I have an interview with ex- British prime minister James Callaghan, and at night an official supper here in house in honor to princess Ana...

- He is all ready one for the supper, you do not worry - Sonia-said. I only need that you say me where you want to seat to people.

- Tomorrow same I will do a note to you.

Sonia made a gesture of goodbye and she went away to lay down.

When Indira finished dissolving the pending subjects with its main secretary, it called to the other, the Dhawan faithful, to whom gave instructions so that she cancelled all the appointments of the following day, except which she had with Peter Ustinov, whom she loved to interview it in the morning, and the anticipated ones with the British delegation by behind schedule. Very it was tired.

Two hours more behind schedule, to six in the morning, one rose. It made its exercises of yoga, one showered and it chose precious sari of silk in brown tones and saffron with a black edge. It chose those tones because the autumnal colors of Kashmir remembered to him and in addition because they had said to him that they were well in television. For the same reason the vest was not put bullet-proof that forced it to take under the blouse since the threats against their life were multiplied. Probably it did not repair in which the color saffron was the color of the resignation according to the Hindu belief, and particularly sij. Soon one had breakfast toasted and one tea cup in its room while it stared at the press. Their grandsons Rahul and Priyanka went to chat a moment with her, before going to the school. When Priyanka gave a goodbye kiss him, it was surprised of which her grandmother so strongly tightened it against her body. It attributed it to the fear that must have felt with the small accident of the eve. Soon Indira called to Rahul and it said to him: " You remember of which I said the other day to you, of which if it passes something to me, I do not want that you cry by me" The boy agreed and, surprised, he was let embrace.

After the breakfast, Indira went to its vestidor, where it was put into the hands of two made up evenness of the equipment of Ustinov. Sonia happened to see it to inform to him into the menu of the supper. Indira always was taken care of of the same not serving the guest who repeated in house. They did not have long time to speak because immediately Dhawan secretary went to warn the one that the television equipment was waiting for it in its office of Akbar Road.

- We will complete the details at the time of eating - it said to him to Sonia when leaving.

Indira crossed the dining room, the waiting room, and left house. It was a precious day, a clear morning, without fog, luminous. The sun dyed of gold the lujuriosa vegetation of the garden. The temperature was perfect and the breeze, a balsam. It smelled of flowers and turf just cut. It walked by the way that separated its residence of the office of the party in Akbar Road,

between bulks of flowers and scrubs of perennial leaf. A police walked to its side, taking a black umbrella to protect it of the sun. Dhawan secretary followed steps behind, and soon an escort. They happened in front of a great maple that exhibited yellowish and reddish leaves. At the end of the footpath, now bordered of bougainvilleas, Indira it recognized its escort Beant Singh opening to him the small iron door that it gave to the garden where were the offices. It was difficult not to see it, because Singh was a giant, sij of the Punjab, hairdo with a turban to game with the khaki color of its uniform. It went accompanied of another escort, also sij, that Indira as soon as it knew. When approaching them, it interrupted the conversation that maintained with its secretary over the shoulder to greet them. It did it to the traditional way, joining the hands to the height of the chest, inclining slightly the head and saying: "Namasté." Like answer, Beant Singh, its faithful escort of last the five years, unholstered a pistol and it pointed it against her. There was a silence that lasted the eternity of half second, interrupted by the song of a bird in the high branches of nims. " What you are doing? ", Indira asked. Then, Singh fired four shots point-blank to him. Indira raised the arm like protecting itself. The escort turned the head towards its companion and shouted: " Dispara" The other escort sij drained the shipper of its automatic gun Sten - twenty-five bullets in the body of Indira. The impact rotated it on itself before collapsing on the humid Earth of the footpath. It had the open eyes. They seemed to watch the glasses of the trees, perhaps the sky. They were the nine and sixteen minutes. It fell in the exact place where, days before, it had seen play its Rahul grandson with one of the dogs.

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Another escort, that followed Indira to certain distance and that it did not comprise of the conspiracy, ran towards her but, before reaching it, a burst gave him in the ankle and fell of you brush. The other companions, paralyzed, fearing to be shot, were crouched like parapetando itself behind the body of Indira. They waited for the worse thing. Soon they heard the voices of other agents of security who arrived running from Akbar Road. They thought that a violent shooting would begin but then both escorts sijs threw the arms to the ground. "I have done what had to do - said the giant Beant Singh in punjabí-. Now you do what you must do." It was his way to say that, in name of sijs, he had taken revenge the sacrilege of the Gold Temple. The police that had maintained the black umbrella rushed on him and it threw it to the ground while Dhawan secretary, that of miracle had left undamaged the last burst, was able to leave his stupor, to crawl towards Indira and to put itself squatting to his side to take care of it. Immediately they arrived more welding from the body of border patrol, that was on duty in a sentry box in the street, and neutralized to the other killer escort. They took them to the sentry box, where there was a skirmish. One says that they tried to escape. The case is that they were shot to his time. Beant Singh died in the act. To the other, seriously wounded, was going it to transfer to a hospital. Later, one knew that outside its hours on watch Beant it was used to frequenting gurdwaras (temples sijs) of Delhi and that chatted more with the raised elements. The other finished spending a month of vacations in its town of the Punjab, in the same cradle of the nationalism sij.

The personal doctor of Indira, that one of the crew members had nothing else warned to hear the shooting, arrived resollando and he strave in making resuscitation exercises. "The ambulance, express!", it shouted: "Llamad to the ambulance to take to Mrs. Gandhi to the hospital" An ambulance always was parked as opposed to the address, like part of the routine attendance to prime minister. But at the critical moment he was not available.

- The driver has been going away to take a tea! - a crew member said.

- Because a car! Traed a car already!

They were able to bring a white Ambassador that they maneuvered and they put in the garden. Dhawan secretary and the police took hold the inert body of Indira and they took it until the automobile. They knocked down it in the back seat, and they seated ahead. The car was on the verge of starting when Sonia arose, in Albornoz, demacrada' the hair wet and shaken and the frightened glance. The shooting had surprised it in the shower. At the outset it had confused it with firecrackers, like which the children send in Diwali. But the shout of one of the maids made realize him of which something terrible had happened.

And there it was the confirmation of its fears: her mother-in-law lay on the back seat, without life. The woman who from small had identified itself with Juana de Arco as well had been betrayed and taken to the death

by people of her confidence. Sonia put in the automobile. " Oh, mami! God mine, mami! ", it said when kneeling down in the back seat to take in its hands the head of Indira and to embrace it, to speak to him, to worry the last blowing of life and to perhaps revert the inescapable course of the destiny. The car left making fun of in the direction of the All India Institute of Medical Science, he himself hospital where they had taken to Sanjay after crashing in the small plane. Sonia would remember that passage of only five kilometers of distance like longest of his life. The traffic was very dense and seemed that they would never arrive. Nueva Delhi no longer was the same city that when it arrived; either almost there were vehicles no thrown by oxen or camels, nor elephants, in the streets. The population had been multiplied by four and the rolled traffic was dense. Indira bled in its hands and Sonia felt impotent. " God mine, faster! ", it repeated, while it passed the sleeve of its Albornoz over the face of Indira and tried to wipe the wounds to him. Like a driven crazy pendulum, its mood oscillated of blackest to the hope: " And if he is simply unconscious? ", it was asked suddenly while the car tried to break through to blasts. " Fast! - it said to him to the driver. Perhaps can save it" But by many attacks that the driver delivered , it was impossible to draw for the traffic. Could imagine those conductors lethargic that in that white Ambassador that not even had siren the corpse of the woman lay who had governed her destinies more ago than twenty years? In the mind of Sonia questions acted hastily, in disorder, like a volcano in eruption: " Where is Rajiv? How him warning? Where is the children? Tengo to command to by them! God mine, mami, you do not die" There was blood throughout: in the Albornoz of Sonia the spots were of red an alive one, in pretty sari of Indira had acquired a brown tone. The upholstered velvet seats also were soaked, forming an enormous black spot. But, even so, Sonia continued refusing to think that the worse thing had happened, than already everything had finished for the woman who until that day had been the pillar of her existence. At heart, already it had a feeling that the bullets of the assassins had made other victims: its happiness and the one of its family.

At the nine and thirty and two minutes, that is to say, sixteen minutes after the attack, arrived at the hospital. But nobody had warned from house to say that prime minister was on the verge of arriving. When the medical young people of the service of urgencies recognized it, the panic entered to them. One of them had the presence of mind to more behind schedule call to an expert cardiologist and minutes a team of the most veteran doctors of the hospital they lowered to take care of Indira. They made a traqueotomía him to make arrive oxygen at its lungs and they placed several routes to him for a blood transfusion. They decided to raise it the operating room of the eighth plant. There, the electrocardiogram showed weak signs of beats of the heart. They let it know to Sonia, that she was single, in the waiting room. A tenuous light of hope shone in its humid eyes. They said to him that the doctors were giving a vigorous massage to the heart of Indira, but they abstained to explain to him that he was in favor



sure of the expansion of the pupils, that the brain irremediably was damaged. The bullets had perforated the liver, the lungs, several bones and the spine of prime minister. "It is a strainer", said a doctor. Only the heart had been saved. Even so, during four hours, the doctors tried to make a miracle.

Sonia as soon as it could control its tremor. The idea that the enemy was within house was terrorífica. Of whom FIAR? And if some crew member, some employee, some secretary were compinchado? It was as if all the certainties of the life had crumbled of blow. That sensation to be Again on moving sands, where nothing is what it seems and everything can change from a minute to another one! " God mine, and the children" He could not avoid to think about the murder of Sheikh Rahman and all its family. The son had the same age that Rahul. Will have gone to by the children to the school? If it only could speak with its sister! Pero Nadia was not in Nueva Delhi by those dates.

It was Pupul Jayakar, the friend of the soul of Indira, that arrived first and that tranquilized it. The children were in house, out of danger and were all the night watchmen who could be in those circumstances. Pupul said to him that the news had still not extended and that the movements of the street were normal. "I found to Sonia in shock state - it would count late more. It almost could not speak. It began to shake and I did not want to make questions." Pupul had brought him clothes and Sonia troc6 the stained Albornoz of blood by sari. In the following hour, they began to arrive other friends, members of the party and the government. To Sonia it had liked to throw to them to all of the room, all less to the intimate friends and the companions who had shown their unshakeable loyalty towards Indira, so few that could be counted on the fingers of a hand. But that was to forget that Indira not only was the mother of its husband, but of a whole the town. Its murder had an extreme gravity. The country was left without a leader, without helmsman. Not yet nobody knew if the attack had been an precise revenge against Indira or if it comprised of a ampler plot to finish in coup d'etat. About that they dealt with the whispered conversations in the corridors about the hospital between members about the government and the opposition, while the vice-president conversed with high civil employees of the Government in a quarter of the inferior floor. They conversed on the future of the country, because Indira already was the past. It was on the verge of entering history. To two and the twenty-two of afternoon, five hours later to be lowered to shots by men whose mission was to protect its life, the doctors declared that Indira Gandhi had died. Ten minutes later, the BBC notified to the world.

To three thousand kilometers of distance, the Ambassador de Rajiv the more quickly ran possible by a narrow and full highway of pockets of the state of Bengal, drawing for elephants, carricoches, motos, stuffed trucks of merchandise and people, much people. It wanted to arrive at Calcuta as rapidly as possible thence to fly to Delhi and to perhaps arrive in time to take leave of its mother. Its route of electoral precampañ had been

interrupted when, to two hundred kilometers to the south of Calcuta, its car was intercepted by a Jeep of the police. An agent gave a note to him: "There has been an accident in house of prime minister . Cancel all the appointments and you return immediately to Delhi." By the radio of the car that circulated around a landscape of sparkling rice fields and villages of marinate, Rajiv found out that her mother had been shot by her escorts and transported to the hospital, where the doctors tried to save it. It reacted with seriousness and tranquillity, perhaps because still it lodged one slight hope of which it survived. After two hours and average of resounding trip, when they were to about fifty kilometers of Calcuta, a helicopter of the police intercepted its car. Rajiv raised the apparatus, that left it in the airport, where a Boeing de Indian Airlines was hoping to take it to him to house. It made the trip in cabin, with the pilots, who were in contact with the enemy by radio with the capital. The absence of the news made him feel that no longer it would return to see lives it. It was through a full communication of interferences as one found out finally that it had passed away. It remained quiet, without speaking, crying. The Nehru does not cry in public when they are struck, that had always taught to him . Perhaps it seemed that the news had not surprised to him, because obstructed a certain sense to him of the fatality similar to which had its mother.

In the hospital, after the announcement of the doctors, Sonia it requested to Pupul that accompanied it to house to by clothes dressing to Indira for its last trip. In addition, Sonia was wishing to see his children and to leave that invaded hospital of people. It was, the activity of the streets seemed normal. The news had still not extended.

When it arrived at house and its children they asked to him: " How is the grandmother? ", Sonia came down. Their sobs drowned their words. But were necessary the words? Rahul clung to its mother and Priyanka ran to the interior of the house and returned with the inhalant. Sonia did not need it and little by little she was calming. Soon, after giving all the explanations, Pupul and Sonia them they went to the vestidor of Indira. For their final trip, saris, old pink color, and a bodice chose one to him of favorite his that had been a gift of an old wise person who she admired much.

The children did not want to remain in house. Also they wanted to see for the last time their grandmother, and they did not want to leave to its mother in that state, so that Sonia and Pupul took them to the hospital from return. The atmosphere of the street had changed completely. The stores were closing. "We saw men with anxiety faces pedaleando quickly to return to house", would say Pupul. As they approached the hospital, they more and more saw people walk in the same direction. So much was the affluence that the police blocked the main entrance, so that they had to use an entrance on watch.

To the same hour, Rajiv landed in the Palam airport with a knot in the stomach. They were neither Sonia nor his children to receive to him, the only ones whom really it had loved to see then. However, in the track, on

foot of stairway, they waited for its assistants, some friends and, mainly, many politicians to him of the Congress. They already were there. Rajiv knew immediately what they came to request to him. They came to demand to him that, it liked or no, was next prime minister of India.

Friends lead it to the hospital. Also they were in agreement with the idea that he had to happen to his mother. Nobody seemed to dissent of which he was considered like life law. In addition, it was the best thing than it could pass for its security and the one to him of its family, because it would have all the power of the State to protect to him. It was a powerful argument, that made an impression on Rajiv.

- But that has it to decide the party and the president of the Republic - it objected. The president is the one in charge by law to choose the person who must form government.

- It has already made the decision.

- But is not in Delhi!

- It has already let it know. You must accept, Rajiv, is the best thing for you.

In the airplane in which he returned of an official trip to Yemen, interrupted by the news of the murder of Indira, the president of the Republic, old friend of the family Nehru, already had made the decision to request to him to Rajiv that was prime minister . And in addition that assumed the position immediately, right now, without letting pass more time. The moment was of one extreme importance. The death of Indira at the hands of gunmen sijos made fear an outbreak of violence between communities, the nightmare of all Indian leader. For that reason he was urgent to avoid the emptiness of being able, to maintain the country united front to similar threat that could end the constitutional order and, really, with India like nation. Thus was let know it to the member dean of the party, in he himself airport: "We do not have to leave the throne empty, is very dangerous." When, more behind schedule, the president of the Republic explained the reasons of his election, he said that he had to choose to new prime minister of the Congress, because it was the party with overwhelming majority in the Parliament. And the who best one than Rajiv, than had a intachable reputation and was young and intelligent? Another reason, that existed it did not have anything to do with the professional merits of Rajiv, and is that that election is the one that it had liked to Indira. "It knew its way to think and what wanted - confessed the president, although never we discussed it specifically. Simply, it knew how she was she." So that Rajiv was in an impasse. From beyond, the voice of its mother resounded in its ears. If it had never left it while still alive, was going to do it in the death now? Had already not made the decision to enter policy? Was not what the logical consequence of it requested the country to him? It had never wanted to be prime minister, at the most to have a position in the government, but sometimes the life is accelerated and it does not let choose.

In its route by the corridors of the hospital, Rajiv went finding with all a series of personages who had comprised of the life of their mother,

including a a tearful Maneka, to the indescribable gurú Dharendra Brahmachari, that repeated that Indira must to him have listened to swear in the danger that was hung over its life, to ministers and civil employees, assistants and secretaries who cried in small groups of people. The barons of the party were all in the hospital and took advantage of their arrival to let know that they wanted it like new leader of the Congress and, consequently, new leader him of the nation. All gave by fact that spoke the future with prime minister. "You must accept - they said to him. If not by you, hazlo by your woman and children, your security. And by your mother, the memory of your grandfathers, the family, India."

They were the three and quarter of afternoon when Rajiv arrived at the attached room to the operating room. It was fused in a hug with Sonia, who broke in sobs. Perhaps first appointment with Indira in London remembered that, when a cervine panic had entered him to know it. Who was going to think then that it would want so much to it, and that it would leave them thus, single before the abyss?

Rajiv soon embraced the children, who very were scared. The terror wave that the attack had untied had propagated like an epidemic. Had not sworn a group of fanatics, after the Operation Blue Star, to exterminate to the descendants of Indira until the hundredth generation? Who would be the next one? «... Papa, mother, we" Who knew if behind any nurse, of any visitor, anyone of many that crossed the corridors of that hospital did not hide another terrorist assassin? Where would stop the avenging fury of the extremists sijos?

It did not have long time to console its family because people solicited to him constantly. The country demanded its attention, without at least giving time him to cry the death of its mother and to tranquilize to his. "Memory which I felt the necessity to be to single with him, although was a little while", only would say Sonia. Took it to a corner of the operating room, to few meters of where the doctors were sewing the corpse of Indira. It smelled of formol and ether. The white light of neons showed with all its crudity the devastated factions of the once smooth face of Rajiv.

- They are going to Me to make prime minister - it said to him in a whisper.

Sonia closed the eyes. It was the worse thing than it could have listened. It was like the announcement of one second death in he himself day. Rajiv took both hands to him, while it continued whispering the reasons to him that forced to him to accept the position.

- Sonia, that one is the best way to protect to us, créeme. We will have the Maxima protection. Now, it is what we needed.

- Vámonos to live to another site...

- And you think that we will be safe in another country? We are all in the black list of the extremists, and those fanatics are able to strike in any place. No, Sonia, we do not have left more remedy than to live prote'ge's constantly, by the minus until the threat sends.

Sonia cried very heartbrokenly. It knew what that meant.

It means to have to live in claustrofóbico surroundings, that the children could not enjoy a normal existence... Era that to live? And the happiness in all this? That happiness to which they were had so comfortably customary?

- You the suplico, Rajiv, you do not leave do this to you - Sonia requested to him.

- I assure to You that it is by our good.

- By our good? But that system of protection del that you speak has demonstrated to be totally ineffective. One prime minister shot in its own house, and neither at least the basic emergency equipment the more by hand...! Gives account You?

- They warned It that sijs had to do without its guards, but did not make case...

- What you mean , that looked for it?

- It must have listened the head of the police and the one of Intelligence. It would follow now with us, if it had done it.

It embraced it again. She continued:

- God mine, will also kill you to you.

- I do not have election, will kill to me of all ways, is or not in the power...

- By favor, you do not accept, deals that not...

- I cannot, my life. You imagine to continue living as if nothing, always with fear, here, in Italy or where it was. It is what would pass if nonacceptance. Thus it is as you have to do it. It is my destiny. Our destiny... There are moments at which the life does not let to you choose because there is no possible election. Ayúdame to accept it.

- Oh no, God mine, no! ... - immersed Sonia in a sea of tears whispered. They will kill to you, will kill to you... - it repeated while the official secretary of Indira, P.C. Alexander, came to interrupt to them. The wheel of the succession could not hope. He was urgent to put it in march. It took to Rajiv of the arm.

- We must organize the possession taking - it said in low voice.

- I am going to house to change of clothes - Rajiv- answered to him. I will be before the six in the palace of the president of the Republic.

Then Sonia knew that there was nothing no to do, that she had again to fold before forces that exceeded to him and that never could control. What could do she against a country that had remained orphaned and that demanded the head of the son? When Rajiv gave a kiss him in the forehead and it separated slowly of her, Sonia, prey of an indefinable sensation of melancholy, felt a tear in the entrails, like when it was in the Ambassador maintaining the head of a dying Indira between his arms.

In the evening of that same day the ceremony of taking of possession of Rajiv took place Gandhi like sixth prime minister of India in the Ashoka hall the Palace of the President of the Republic, he himself place where their grandfathers and his mother had been invested for he himself position. Of six prime minister, three had belonged to the same

family and the other three had been very brief. In thirty and six years of independence, the Nehru had been prime minister during thirty and three years. Indira had been third in dying in the position, but first of a violent death. It was not an animated ceremony, as it would correspond in normal circumstances. There he was a young man, to whom they had not given time him to assimilate the death of its mother and her repercussion in the nation, pushed to accept the most difficult and demanding paper to which it could inhale any citizen of India. Without wanting it nor wishing it.

Before accepting, Rajiv had made that it would maintain the government previous, without members new nor changes of portfolio clear. Next his first cabinet took place, in whom the debate turned around the funerales of Indira. They decided to install the ardent chapel in Teen Murti House, the old residence of Nehru, palacete where Rajiv had passed its childhood. Usha, the faithful secretary, was of first in arriving and thus it described to its old female leader, tended in féretro, the shrouded body but the discovered face: "Its face was swollen and without color. Better than it had not seen itself thus because she had not pleased herself, who always went so well neat and that she took care of his appearance as much." The same Sonia had to think. The television caught a short and intense moment, a gesture that was left engraving in the memory of million Indians and that spoke, more than any declaration written or expressed orally, of the bond that united to both women. Sonia, night love song, passed a handkerchief through the comisura of the lips of Indira to dry the brightness to him of the skin. Like if instead of dead she was alive and it continued needing its cares. Loyalty survived the death thus.

Passed the eleven at night, new prime minister appeared in television, a speech that was relayed by radio to the entire world. Sonia was in the recording studio, the heart divided when seeing how the power had kidnapped to its husband, using without scruples the Nehru-Gandhi last names to maintain the country united in time of crisis. Was not a cruelty to have requested to anybody with so little veteranía in policy as its husband who accepted a position that needed as much experience, at least in those so difficult times?

"Indira Gandhi has been assassinated - it began saying Rajiv before the cameras. You know how near its heart was the dream of a prosperous India, united and peacefully. To cause of its premature death, its work has been interrupted. To us it is called on to finish it to us."

Its speech, and the tone of contained emotion with which it pronounced it, remembered to many the speech that his grandfathers did Nehru after the murder of Gandhi. Then Nehru was scared of which the Muslims were blamed of magnicidio, for that reason he hurried in saying clear stop and that the culprit had been a Hindu fanatic. Thirty and six years later, Rajiv Gandhi did not make reference some to the assassins of its mother, or to their reasons. It alluded to the religious nature of the murder when it made a call to the calm and the unit, saying that nothing would hurt

more to him to the soul of Indira Gandhi who a bud of violence in any place of the country.

But the violence already had exploded. First it began in the neighborhood of the hospital, when several taxis lead by sijs were stoned and a temple sij, set afire. Any enturbantado man suddenly seemed suspicious. The neighbors sijs gathered their children of the streets, locked in themselves in house, lowered the blinds and extinguished the light, trying to become invisible. The women watched stampedes between the cracks. Some sij ran to look for refuge. For others, there was no refuge. They knew that the murder of Indira Gandhi had turned them target of the wrath of the town. When falling the night, groups of people in the side streets, the majority formed Hindu, some with woods in the hand, others urging the hunting of sij. It was one night black, still darker by the big wave of hatred and terror that was lowered on the city, that as soon as it slept. The intensity of the slaughters increased as rumors that arose sijs had poisoned the potable water tanks of the capital, or of which a full train of Hindu which they came from the Punjab had been attacked. They were not truth, but people believed them. Bands of gamberros, that to the principle destroyed to houses and commerce property of sijs, removed after their homes to men and children with turban to break them to machete blows in front of to their horrified women. In the streets, killer groups rushed themselves on sijs, to which they gave death beatings or they there were dew of gasoline to set fire to them. Whole families were stabbed in trains and buses. The police did not dare to take part, by pure laziness and also because in the bottom they agreed in taking revenge itself of that turbulent minority. During three days, while thousands of people marched past before the body of Indira Gandhi, between whom were stars of cinema, political Chiefs of State, leaders, friends, relatives and thousands of citizens who never had known Indira but which they felt deeply its loss, orgía of violence continued extending. More than two thousand cars, trucks and taxis they burned, as well as a rosary of factories property of families sijs, as the one of Tail Stands out, the India answer to the Coca-Cola, that belonged to an old friend of Sanjay that had helped them in the days of shortage. The journalists documented a particularly atrocious episode in a district of the right margin of the Yamuna river, where an organized affluent group gave to death of systematic way to everything sij as opposed to the passivity of the police. Not even they gave the opportunity them to be saved because they inside set fire to the houses with its inhabitants. One of the journalists who were witness of the happened thing called by telephone to Pupul: "By favor, you do something, the situation she is tragic", it said to him with scared voice. Pupul remained perplex. Until it did very just a short time, had known what to do. It would have taken the telephone and it had called to its Indira friend, who would have acted immediately. But now it did not know to whom to go. So that it called to the minister of the Interior that was accidentally reunited with Rajiv in number 1 of Safdarjung Road. It explained the massacres to him, the violations, the horror of which was happening to less

than ten kilometers of where they were. "It speaks with prime minister", it said to him, and immediately afterwards it happened to him to Rajiv. Pupul repeated to him what already it had counted. "It was difficult to direct to Me to me to Rajiv like prime minister, was difficult me to understand that the enormous one to be able and the massive authority of Indira now fell to him" Rajiv made it go to their house, where Pupul counted on more detail everything what knew. Prime minister seemed disturbed and indecisive.

- What I do, Pupul? - it asked to him.

- She does not correspond to me to say what must do prime minister - it answered to him. I can say to you what your mother had done. It would have called to the army and it had maintained the order at all costs. It would have appeared in television and the prestige of its position had left well clear yet that under no concept it would allow the massacres.

- Ayúdame to write up a speech like which my mother had done - Rajiv requested to him while it accompanied it until the door. Please, hazlo already, is urgent.

Pupul did it, but when it seated the television set in front of, it did not appear Rajiv, but the minister of the Interior. Pupul thought that it was not a sufficiently forceful presence to calm the spirits. It seemed to him that the speech lacked the anguish of the son and the authority of prime minister. In fact, the army was not called to take part that night by fear to inflame the spirits still more, so that the terror and the barbarism continued. That indecision was attributed by many to the inexperience of Rajiv. But the truth is that it was surpassed by the events, still under the lost trauma of having his mother and being with the reins of the power, without really knowing how the means of that power worked.

Between sijs such panic spread that for the first time in their life, many of them took off the turban and to the beards and the hair were cut to be saved. About one hundred thousands fled from the capital. The writer Kushwant Singh took refuge with his woman in the embassy of Sweden: "What the crowds looked for were the goods of sijs, the television sets and the refrigerators, because we are more prosperous than the others. To kill and to burn alive people were only part of the diversion." At dusk, groups of sijs dispersed by the city looking for refuge. Two of them arrived at house of Pupul, and surprised the woman of dhobi, the launderer, who to those hours had to be participating in the disturbances. Before the shouts of scare of the woman, sijs left running, but Pupul had given to shelter that night them, since many families also made Hindu. Of the same way that very few sijs had been following of Brindanwale, very few Hindus wanted to take revenge themselves of sijs. But those that did it were of a cruelty that remembered the times of the Partition. In three days, about three thousands were massacred.

In the evening the 2 of November, Rajiv appeared finally in television demanding the aim the violence. "What it has happened in Delhi from the death of Indira Gandhi it is an insult to everything what she defended", said clearly. On the following day, by aim it commanded to take



part to the army, that imposed the touch of is and entered with light tanks the most conflicting districts with order to shoot all the one that outside surprised in flagrant crime of aggression.

The 3 of November, while La Paz prevailed by the force, took place closely together the cremation of Indira of where it had taken place the one of Nehru and the one of Sanjay, in the shore of the river. Rajiv gave seven returns to the funeral pyre of its mother, before planting a torch between the trunks of sándalo. The flames were catching while the sun dyed of orange, red and gold the sky. It attended impressive elenco of personalities, between which they were George Bush father, the Mother Teresa, members of the European royalty, artists and writers, tycoons of the businesses, scientists and Chiefs of State. For an elegant lady dressed black, these funerales had a very particular importance. Margaret Thatcher remembered the warm words of Indira when few weeks back it called it after the attack of the WRATH. "We must do something against the terrorism... ", it had said to him.

The silhouette of Rajiv between the flames that devoured the body of their mother was recorded for always in the eyes of a whole town, as a hope torch. "Everything was chaos to his around - a well-known journalist wrote but he gave a confidence image, seemed to control the situation." The British Iron Lady commented: "I have seen in Rajiv he himself car control that had Mrs. Gandhi... " The one that was absolutely heartbroken, and not it hid it, was Sonia. "If somebody had painted the scene - Margaret Thatcher- said, his own pain had been enough to communicate the general feeling. " Paradoxicallly, there was no an enormous multitude of humble people, of million that had venerated to Indira like a a goddess. The fear to the argument and the atmosphere of violence that reigned in the city dissuaded to many to go to pay their last tribute to him.

Faithful to the instructions who had received from his mother did just a short time, a Rajiv morning took the bronze ballot box that contained ashes v embarked in an airplane of the India Air Force. After one flight hour, it flew over the mountain range of the Himalayas, a crest of white tips that extended to where the Vista reached. They opened a floodgate to him in the ground of the airplane that let enter a frozen air. Rajiv, hairdo a cap of astracán, dressed in chaquetón skin, thicknesses covered gloves and wearing an oxygen mask, took the ballot box, also surrounded in a skin stock market so that its content was not congealed, opened it and dropped ashes on mountains, so and as it sends the ritual, so that the death returned to the life, thirteen days after which Indira Gandhi had entered history.

Rajiv did not have a minute to stop to swear in its own pain. The political life continued and the heads of the party advised to advance the general elections to him. They wanted to capitalize the affection vote that the murder of Indira was susceptible to cause. Rajiv understood that those elections were very important for him, because they would serve to him to acquire popular legitimacy and not to seem solely that it had been designated to finger by the followers of his mother. So that it fixed the date of voting for the 26 of December of 1984. He wanted that Sonia again accompanied to him to campaign in the circumscription of Amethi, where Maneka, with his hijito in arms, appeared like rival candidate. Sonia was now the first lady of the country, and to only think gave it to him vertigo. The destiny could not less have chosen anybody ready to assume that role. A paper that had filled of pride and satisfaction to the majority of the women, but that to her produced melancholy to him, because made him long for its old life. What luxury was to live surely! What luxury to be able to dedicate itself to recover pictures, to leave with the friends, to be free and to take an anonymous life! They were still so traumatizados that before the trip to Amethi, and agreeing with the 68.<sup>0</sup> birthdays of Indira, Rajiv and she wrote up footpaths instructions: "In case of my death or the one of my woman Sonia in accident, inside or outside India, our together bodies must be repatriated to Delhi and be burned, according to the Hindu ritual, in a place to open sky. Under no circumstance our bodies will be burned in crematorio electrical. According to our custom, our Rahul son will have to ignite the pyre... It is my desire that our ashes are scattered in the Ganges, in Allahabad, where they were it the ashes of my ancestors." Did not say will refrán that the cobra bites always twice, that is that a misfortune never arrived single?

Sonia, dressed in saris white, as she corresponded to the mourning by his mother-in-law, discovered that now she was much more to taste between the multitude of Amethi. " I became regular of that place - it would write more tarde-o Conocía people and its problems, and no longer it felt a stranger to me among them." But the absence of Indira was made feel cruel. It had been the center of the familiar universe, a strong, trustworthy personality, always present to guide, to advise, to animate and to surround to his. The empty one was abysmal. Rajiv had remained orphaned, without the last figure of its family. A day, Sonia was looking for to him in house, but nobody seemed to know where it had put. Finally it found in the old study of Indira, observing objects and photos of its mother, as if it was tracking its track. "It seemed very lost and very single - it would write Sonia-. Quite often it felt intensely its absence." He was inevitable. There where it went, even in the most remote borders of the subcontinent, it saw posters with the face of its mother, always polished with its tuft of white hair visible good and saluting with the palm of the hand upwards. Somebody always spoke to him of her, of the last visit that had made there, of which had done by that community, of the children whom it had blessed and until of the civil

employee who had reprimanded. Indira had left its track in all the country, and to Rajiv sometimes it seemed to him that it followed lives, that was on the verge of appearing to comfort it and to give spirits him. It did not have left more remedy than to make storing of its reserves of anger and mental strength to face stoicism the memory of its mother.

The electoral tour of Rajiv by the whole the country had been triumfal but for a serious accident that happened in the city of Bhopal, in center of India, when a poisonous gas escape of a factory of pesticidas, property of the North American multinational Carbide Union, extended by the poorest districts of city, causing thousands of died and hurt. Considered the greater industrial accident of history, the tragedy of Bhopal, just at the outset of its race, it was Vista by many like badly an augury for the man whom it at all costs loved to develop the country and to narrow bows with the elite of the businesses. Rajiv immediately decided to visit the ill-fated city. It preferred that Sonia remained in house, not it go to being who the poison of the factory still walked floating in the air, but she refused and was with him. Nothing else to arrive, they were made an impression by the effects of the envenenamiento. The hospitals were crowded of people who were lost the Vista, of mothers who cried the death of their children, orphaned children and desperate men by the destruction of their families. Before similar tragedy, his diatribas on the industrialization of India and its call to prepare the country for century XXI seemed hollow words. Rajiv realized problem that the own development was able to generate. So far, it did the only thing that could do, unblocked urgent aid for the victims and it was committed to that the government would give a right compensation them. But that never consiguió\*.

*\* Midnight in Bhopal is seen Era, of Javier Moro and Dominique Lapiere, Planet, Barcelona, 2001.*

Rajiv devastated in the elections of December of 1984, with a better result del than never had obtained to their grandfathers or his mother. Sonia congratulated to him efusivamente, even though to intuit that that news approached a little more on the brink of madness to them the precipice. During the three last years his husband had been delegated of the Parliament responsible solely for Amethi, and one of the Secretary Generals of the party. Now it had to its position five hundred forty and four circumscriptions and the responsibility to sometimes govern immense, volatile and an unmanageable country gripado by a gigantic apparatus of State. Had not written an English politician who the mountain range of the Himalayas seemed small compared with the load that supports prime minister from India to its backs? The dynasty had received the mandate of the town, a mandate on national scale, but Rajiv did not become illusions on the reasons of its success: "It has been mainly by the death of my mother... Nobody really knew me, which has done has been to project in me the expectations that had puttings in her. I have become symbol of its hopes." Who lost resoundingly was Maneka, to weighing to have campaigned very dynamic. The wave of affection by Rajiv, and perhaps the fact that she was

daughter of an origin family sij, swept it of the map of the policy, at least momentarily. Now it was clear who was the true heir of the mantle of the Nehru-Gandhi.

To Sonia and the children it was made them still more above costs to fight to recover of the trauma of the violent death of Indira because, after fifteen years living in the same house, they had to leave it and to change themselves to safer and more appropriate other considered as it calls to account official of prime minister, and that was close, in Race Course Road. Now which the terrorism had become an inescapable reality of the political life India, the family was itself surrounded the twenty-four hours of the day of an impressive force deployment by security. Partly one was an unnecessary show, unfolded to compensate all the failures that had committed with Indira. The responsibility to protect prime minister no longer fell to a paramilitary force, but to a specialized professional group, the Special Protection Group, created indeed as a result of recent magnicidio. "Its presence put aim to which it was left of our privacy and our freedom", Sonia said. Suddenly, a day, a scare when it was in the garden, with his scissors to prune in the hand , and saw in the branch of a tree a species of Martian, totally dressed black stuck, with knitted caps, vest bullet-proof and metralleta in ristre. "I am on duty", said the man to him. In another occasion in which he had to quickly leave to buy something to the American economato, another Martian, in the door, prevented it.

- Lady, cannot leave now.

- Because I cannot? I need to go to the American embassy, I have guests tonight...

- Lady, must get used to warning to us with a little time. We cannot react of unexpected way. There are about three hundred agents in charge of the protection of its family at this moment.

" To good hours! ", Sonia thought, that she did not have more remedy than to call to his sister Nadia so that please made him buy what needed and bring it to it to house.

Although he was exasperating to live thus, was no more remedy than to be accustomed. To Rajiv, the security agents wanted to prevent him that she followed with the inherited custom of his mother and of his grandfathers to receive to hundreds of visitors in a moment by the morning that to him questions did and they listened to him seated in the turf. But he insisted on maintaining it, although it was only three days per week. It was important that it could take the pulse from the town. and also hindi took advantage of to perfect his, that spoke sometimes with pronunciación and syntax errors.

In house they awoke in the morning to six with morning tea that served to them in a tray. To eight and the average one, all the family was reunited to have breakfast. Rajiv went away immediately and Sonia remained organizing the house and, if she had time, reading and trimming the press. Their children had let go to the school the day of the murder of the grandmother. According to the police, he was too dangerous that went

to a place where a armed man could penetrate with facility. So that now particular professors arrived towards the ten to give class them in house. Sonia took advantage of that moment to leave to make purchases or to go to some exhibition. It went always immaculately adorned, because he was conscious that her person was put under an implacable public scrutiny. "Saris Has more than Imelda Marcos shoes", said a rumor. What had was the collection of saris and villas of Indira, in its majority gifts that, in its quality of prime minister, it had accumulated in all its routes by India. Sonia had inherited them.

In the afternoons it remained with the children and looked for ways to distract itself without leaving, like seeing video films. Sundays it wanted to maintain the custom to invite to his intimate friends to brunch, although rare Rajiv time could attend, by the occupied thing that was. But it seemed important to maintain the normality appearance to him . All the visitors, including their sister Nadia and the Quattrochi marriage, had to be registered and to pass a triple barrier of metal detectors before being admitted. They were joined in the garden and it was chatted gladly in Italian, French, English and Spanish while they tasted delights Indians served in thalis, typical platitos of brass. Sonia surprised with some plates difficult to cook in India, like garlic sauce prawns , that became a favorite of Sundays.

Aside from those robbed moments, normality was a chimera. Any small delay of Rajiv, that made an effort in eating in family whenever it could, caused great scares. The only moments of normal life had them when they went from vacations to Italy, in summer and for Christmases. Also there was monitoring, although not so exhausting there. In Nueva Delhi, they lived like prisoners.

What the photography had to leave totally Rajiv were its likings specially , in which had obtained a good professional level. It did not have left time to listen to its favourite songs nor to attend some concert of classic music India with Sonia and his children. But he was resolute to continue being a competent pilot, because it was its passion and in addition it gave a certain security him before the uncertainty of the policy. It asked a colleague who warned to him when she was on the verge of expiring its license of flight to renew accumulating it the necessary hours, which always could do piloting he himself the airplanes in which she traveled crossing the country. But the time finished to him for which it was not his activity of prime minister: "For me only there was time for the action". I sent myself to recover the confidence, to recover the friendship and the brotherhood between communities that had lived together during centuries", declared.

Rajiv had received from its mother a poisoned inheritance, the problem sij. It was fundamental to be able to solve it to recover the general coexistence. It thought that first it was necessary to reduce the tension, so that it began loosen ballast: it declared that he was open to any commitment to always solve the problem and when did not constitute a threat to the integrity of the nation; it released to the extremists arrested during últinl0s months of the regime of its mother, and it was committed to initiate an

investigation on the slaughters of sijs in Delhi. The leader of the party sij moderate, so eager to obtain La Paz as prime minister , ended up signing the prolegómenos in an agreement. Immediately later, Rajiv announced elections in the Punjab for September of 1985, with the aim to transfer the administration of that state to sijs moderate and to make them responsible fight with the extremists. But the terrorism continued, with small pumps in Delhi and in the environs and, mainly, with the explosion of a Boeing 747 of they Indian Airlines in the heat of flight from Toronto to Delhi. The attack, that cost the life to the three hundred twenty-five passengers to I embroider, was attributed to two extremist groups sijs. That night, Rajiv was reunited with its government, and Sonia hoped to him wakes up until the four the morning. He was very conscious of the magnitude of the threat that was hung over its husband and as much she as their children lived terrified. They saw the members of the Special Protection Group with skepticism. It is certain, were always present, perhaps too much, but before the boldness of the terrorists sijs... would be really effective?

While he waited for Rajiv, Sonia spoke on the telephone with his family in Orbassano. From the death of Indira, their parents were very anxious reason why he could happen to them and lived very pending on the news. Any spying of pride that Paola, his mother, could feel by the fact that her daughter was first lady of India was darkened by the fear to another attack. Sonia always tranquilized to them, although her mother was able to recognize the fear to him in the voice, in spite of the distance and the interferences. That day her mother doubly was worried. Her daughter Nadia had announced him her return to Italy.

- What luck you have, mother, you are going to be near the children... - Sonia- said to him. However, I am going to throw much of less to Nadia.

- Very I am displeased. You do not think that they are possible to be reconciled?

- No, mother... Sometimes he is better thus... - it responded to Sonia, guessing the anguish to him of its mother. His Spanish brother-in-law had continued deceiving his sister, and this one, is satiated already, had decided to request the divorce. No longer it had sense to remain in India. Sonia remained single, in a while delicate, in an apocalyptic atmosphere. It had to be brave, was no alternative.

Rajiv maintained the blood cold and it did not yield to the temptation to respond to the violence with more violence, since perhaps her mother had done. It granted to the Punjab the exclusive use of Chandigarh, the city conceived by Him Corbusier, like its capital, in exchange for a commitment of loyalty on the part of the moderate party sij, and announced economic measures, like the construction of a hydroelectric prey to alleviate the problem of the lack of energy in that state. It wanted to play bottom its trick to gain to the moderate ones.

But the 20 of August of 1985 everything came underneath new. The leader of the moderate party that crossed the towns and cities of the

Punjab requesting the support of people, “selling” to his the agreement with Rajiv, was assassinated to shots. Again the tragedy, again impasse. The fanatics imposed their tyranny, boycotting any negotiated solution. In the Nueva Parliament Delhi, one began to doubt the ability of Rajiv to obtain a fast solution to the problem. But it did not intimidate itself and decided to follow ahead with the elections in the Punjab. In the same way which the murder of its mother had to him catapult to the power, it thought that the murder of the moderate leader sij would create an affection big wave towards that party. It was in the certain thing. For the first time in the history of the Punjab, the moderate ones devastated in the ballot boxes. The result was a clear victory against the extremism.

But the fanatics sijs were not going to disappear without fighting. In a new attempt to create tension, they returned to intrench in the Akal Takht, the temple devastated during the Operation Blue Star and that soon had been reconstructed. They alleged this time that the reconstruction had profaned the temple; in fact, any pretext was valid to resort to the violence. Again, arms by the runners and the tunnels arrived to them from the complex. In the outside of the Gold Temple, extremist young people redoubled their attacks against Hindu and against all the one that was not considered sufficiently devotee, as for example the barbers and peluqueros whose activity hit of plenary session against the rule sij never to cut the hair, since what God had created she had to be respected, including the hair. They were erased of enemies of the town sij and in consequence they were white of the attacks of most orthodox.

“The resource to a military action Only fits... ”, when hearing this phrase, Sonia lay down to shake. It had heard it once, in mouth of its mother-in-law. At sight it was the result... The son was suddenly in the same crossroads. Necessary Era a new sacrilege, when the previous one had not solved the problem? Where would finish this spiral of violence? In case outside little, the events were repeated with macabre similarity. Like in the previous occupation, a police was shot near the temple, putting to the government against the cords and forcing to Rajiv to intervene in the affair.

- What you are going to do? - Sonia, distressed asked to him.

- To surround them until they surrender.

From its Nueva office Delhi, it directed the Operation Black Thunder personally. It issued strict orders to the army and the police of not entering the temple under no concept and sealing to the enclosure, blocking all the secret corridors, as well as the routes of entrance and exit of merchandise. The delay became releases, eternal. The first days, the terrorists shot to the air and sent to bursts intimidatorias. Outside these skirmishes, in the Gold Temple absolute silence reigned. The waters of the sacred pool reflected like a mirror the adjacent temples, and everything was so immovable that it seemed that the time had stopped. The terrorists waited for an attack, until caused it, but they only obtained the echo of its shots by answer. To the army and the police always the doubt that fitted to them they could be supplied by some channel that escaped to its control,

which maintained to them in a state of extreme tension. Outside, the inhabitants of the Punjab said in silence so that their sacred places again were not profaned. Sonia followed everything from house, in Nueva Delhi, and whenever it sounded the telephone, the heart gave an upset him. Finally, after ten days, the voice of Rajiv to the other side of the earpiece notified good to him:

- They have surrendered, already is. The strategy has worked. There has been violence nor no necessity to enter the temple.

Sonia sighed, alleviated, although not absolutely relaxed. To live without tension was a luxury outside its reach. The terrorists had failed in their attempt to cause the government. As always when it is wanted to repeat history, this one finishes in parodia of itself. This time they left its guarida dead of hunger and thirst. More than two hundred they surrendered. The victory of Rajiv was made still more patents when the press published photos of the interior of the temple, that showed the little respect of the terrorists towards that so sacred place. There were rest of excrements everywhere, broken piles of clothes, objects and spots of blood product of its own fights. The disrepute was complete to eyes of its coreligionists.



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The critical of Rajiv, that they accused to him of lack of character, had to admit that their qualities of conciliador gave result. Its great advantage was indeed in the difference of style with its mother and most of the Indian politicians in general. It contributed new sap. It thought that the socialist policies of their mother and her grandfathers gripaban the operation and the development of the economy. It was convinced that the License Raj, that her mother had collaborated to prop up, drowned the enterprising spirit of the Indians and fomented the corruption. To make agile permissions against a bribe was practical current between the civil employees. Like pilot of a state company during fourteen years, Rajiv had undergone its well-known incompetencias and knew of which it spoke. Its effort to make that the administration was more effective and relax the controls was worth the reproach to him of the intellectuals of left. According to them, to liberalize the commerce and to relax the controls would make of India a country excessively employee of the foreign capital. They identified more to him with the increasing middle-class that with deep India. They standing up accused to him to have been born, to speak better English than hindi and until taking to its political family from vacations to the national park of Ranthanbore. To take vacations was bad sight in India, mainly for a politician. Pero Rajiv wanted to invite its father-in-law to see tigers in he himself national park where it had passed with Sonia the honeymoon.

Finally Stefano Maino had acceded to visit his favourite daughter. They were first and only vacations of their life, an opportunity that Rajiv was not going to waste, for that reason turned upside down in entertaining to him. Also the old friend of Stefano , mechanic Danilo Quadra comprised of that trip. Sonia was happy for being able to receive to his father after so many years. He intuited that it would be his only visit to India because Stefano never had been loving of the trips and because now he suffered of the heart and he was fragile.

- Always it is scared by you, even from before the murder of your mother-in-law - Danilo to Sonia confessed to him.

The fear had Stefano put in the body from before Sonia escaped to him of the hands, from the distant day in which it had commented his woman: "They will throw It to the tigers." Also it felt fear by Rajiv, that Bravo ragazzo as it called it. Too brave to so exert of politician in a place convulso and poor man as India, Stefano thought. The spectacle of the misery shocked it, perhaps because it remembered his childhood to him, when he was shepherd of cows and the time ran with exasperante slowness and the gut was empty. It seemed that the things were not going to never improve and that the shortage, the boredom and the limitations would be eternal, as it saw it reflected in the glances of the young people in the villages Indians. Sonia recriminated it constantly because he was very inclined to give generous alms: "As you follow thus, you are going to have to all the paupers of India persiguiéndote" said she to him, remembering to him that most of the paupers they worked for the Mafias and that were more worth to directly

give money to which they took care of the poor men. But this sparing man in words and that seemed so hard did not make case because the smile of a boy could not resist who put the hand by the opened window of the car. At the end of the trip, when they returned to Nueva Delhi, his Danilo friend confirmed to Sonia, raising shoulders in impotence sign: "It is nothing no to do, likes to give money to everybody." Stefano Maino was always faithful to his own memory.

Rajiv was too much "western" like being able to disguise it, and until very british in its modales and the way to contain its emotions. Once, defending itself of an attack of the opposition it said that this one wanted to make return to India to the Average Age, a modismo that belongs to European history and not to India. Also it was certain that its degree of identification with the poor men was not as intense as the one of its mother or her grandfathers, but thought that if the urban middle-class became rich, that would end up benefitting to the poor men from the villages. The old dinosaurios of the party remembered that the important era to him to maintain the loyalty of the voters, who in their immense majority were poor of solemnity. What sense had to make a policy that did not benefit to them in the short term? Perhaps wanted Rajiv that the party lost the next elections? The young person prime minister was caught between giving greater freedom to the industrialists to make money, and to maintain the fidelity of the base, the poor men. That one was its great challenge, and knew that it was not going to be easy to gain it. In order to fight against the sambenito of "prime minister of the privileged people" who their detractors wanted to hang to him, and that in a poor democracy of very detrimental era, it did what her mother had done: to cross the country of exhaustive way. Until it participated in a great peregrination to improve its image with the masses. According to Sonia, who accompanied to him in many by his routes, his husband was untiring. "It walked so fast that it had to request to him that slowed down the step so that the others could follow to him. Since it were had customary not to sleep more than four or five hours to the day, it used to throw a cabezadita between the different shutdowns, being given me instructions to wake up it if somebody were hoping to him. Sometimes, it let to him sleep minutes more... Soon it protested, but at least it rested. " Sonia was witness of the feeling that woke up in the town. "People responded more to her personal enchantment that to since she incarnated. It gave just as one was in a tribal village of the north, a city in Tamil Nadu, the heart of the rural Punjab or in the shacks of Bombay. Rajiv did not belong to any chaste one, ethnic group or group. He was Indian and all considered one him of his." It lead his own todoterreno in the countryside. There where there was people hoping, one stopped to chat. "If we were delayed - Sonia- would count, they continued hoping to speak to him patiently with him, to see it. In remote sites, well late at night, a farmer approached an old lamp of oil his face and I saw arise a sparkle in his eyes when recognizing his smile. It requested us that we accompanied to him to present/display us to its family, to put name to him to new born his, to wish

luck to the young marriages of the village.” What distant spot saw the Nueva life Delhi from those remote corners... from the huts where they shared its little food, where they kindly listened to the description of its deprivations and where they made questions them to find out how to be able to help them. “I see much love in the eyes of people - it said Rajiv-, and friendship, confidence, but mainly hope.” Rajiv firmly believed that the technology could eliminate, or at least to mitigate the poverty. One remembered its mother, and the efforts that had made to start up the green revolution, taking to scientists to the field and organizing encounter with local politicians and farmers. When they criticized to him to destine great sums of money of the budget of the State to scientific research centers , it was defended saying that the farmers of the Punjab never had been successful of not to have had access to cultures of weaves and genetic engineering. “We can have failures if we experimented - it said, but if we do not do it we will never arrive nowhere.” The contradictions of India were bleeding: How was possible to send satellites to the space and not to be able to provide with potable water the population? , it was asked. It was discovering that it was not by lack of technology, but by the incapacity to apply the technology to the problems of the poor men. From an idea arose there hers that called Technological Missions, an ambitious research program in six areas that Rajiv, after its routes by the countryside, identified like high-priority: potable water, renewable milk alphetization, immunization, production, telecommunications and energies.

As always it happens with that it shakes to old structures and ideas, was object of escarnio. In Nueva Delhi they labeled to him as ingenuous, to want to jump of the car of oxen to the movable telephone, something that nevertheless would finish happening thanks to its vision and its push in those first years of government. Three decades more behind schedule, the photo of mahut speaking on the movable telephone from the stop of an elephant that transports trunks would turn the advertising image of a company of India telephony. She was under the government of Rajiv Gandhi, and thanks to the intervention of Indians who lived abroad, mainly in the United States, that was implanted a system of interurban and international telephony that works via satellite and that has taken the telephone to all parts, doing it reasonable to those poor men who lived in the most complete isolation.

Also in the capital they made fun of of his eslogan “a computer in each school of town for century XXI”. It seemed the dream of a papa son because, in effect, many schools in the villages did not have at least of electricity, or a slate. But certain it is that Rajiv immediately understood the potential of the computer science, that years later would serve as locomotive the economy of India, Thought that the industrial revolution had obtained that Europe acquired its preeminent position and it did not want that India lost the car of another revolution, the one of the electronics and computer science. Less of a month after being named prime minister, it reduced the tariffs of import of the computer science components and the

computers. Soon it was eliminating many controls of the computer science industry and promoted the use of computers in schools, banks and offices, giving a strong stimulus to the local industry. Under its mandate the economy began to liberalize: "We must free to us of the controls without leaving the control", said. The middle-class lived an expansion wished during long time. People could buy household-electric television sets, radios, cameras, clocks and that previously were prohibitive because of the highest tariffs, so high that most of those objects they acquired themselves of contraband. They were good years for the consumers and the businesses. By first time from independence, the wealth creation was not considered a crime or a sin.

The repercussion of these measures in the life of Sonia was immediate, facilitating its work of first lady. In forecast of the official suppers, no longer it had to start off in peregrination by the Nueva markets Delhi to obtain cheese, for example, or olive oil or a beater. Little by little, the outer world began to penetrate in millenarian India and this one, as well, to open itself to the world.

But in the Eighties the country continued being a swarm of conflicts, and the work of prime minister could compare to the one of a fireman extinguishing fires. Later of the Punjab, it was dedicated to pacify the region of Assam, altered by the influence of Muslim refugees who continued getting from Bangladesh fifteen years later of the war to look for work, and to obtain La Paz with the tribal communities of the northeast, like the destinies, gorkhas and the mizo, in a series in agreements which they were able to diminish and until stopping the secessionist violence. In those visits, it did not have repairs in touching itself with spectacular hats or to get dressed in very colorful local suits in friendship symbol, exactly since Indira had done it. It was ed \*\*\*refl mng thus of itself when seeing itself, and held very sport that they took the hair him. It never lost the sense of humor, and it remained perplex when anybody did not catch its jokes. When Rajiv returned to house, it hurried to teach to Sonia and to the children the objects that had given to him in those trips, or was an old pipe of woman of the Mizo, a wicker basket or a carved shell, and that soon kept in its office like authentic treasures. In his internal law, it knew that to obtain to La Paz and the security of the different towns from India it also meant to obtain them for his family, or at least that believed until the 2 of October of 1986, when the conflict sij gave last coletazo.

That day, while they attended a ceremony to celebrate 117<sup>o</sup> anniversary of the birth of the Mahatma Gandhi in the mausoleo dedicated to its Nueva memory Delhi, they heard an explosion clearly.

- It is I blow up of a moped - a member of the Special Protection Group said very surely .

Rajiv and Sonia seated in the ground while the priests recited the orations in memory of the father of the nation. When the ceremony finished and they rose to leave, they heard more explosions. The guard next to Sonia was hurt in the forehead. The panic spread. The multitude shouted

while it dispersed. Rajiv protected to its woman with its body when other police surrounded to them and they moved away them of the place. “ ... Whereupon a moped! ”, indignant Sonia repeated. The killer frustrated one immediately was captured. He was sij, that had shot from the stop of a tree. There were no wounded, but for Sonia the attempt was a reminder of which they could not lower to the guard nor a second. She very returned altered to house, with enormous desire to embrace its children to verify that also they were well, because always it was left the possibility that the attack comprised of one more a ampler conspiracy. But this time was not thus, sij had acted single.

Suddenly, it seemed that Rajiv had gotten fat. Will be them all'arrabbiata penis of Sonia whom as much it liked the people in charge of that prominent belly? , their friends asked themselves sarcastically. No, the fault of that torso enlarged under a cotton shirt was the heavy vest bullet-proof that was forced to take from the last attempt of attack. From now on, it made its trips in one of two groups of identical cars, so that nobody knew in which traveled. and whenever it left, hundreds of police patrolled the city in alert status . The young ones already only saw a reduced group of children of friends of their parents of all the life, who, in spite of being known the security guards , had to be put under meticulous friskings before penetrating in “ the strength”, as they called to the familiar residence. Sonia left the courses of restoration in the National Museum, that had resumed in its little free time, and it was put to compile letters between Nehru and Indira with the idea to publish them a day. It was a work that could do in house and that in addition could serve its husband, always in search of good phrases and ideas for its speeches. Diving in the familiar memory, it recognized many of the conflicts and problems which his husband faced because, of another way and in another time, Nehru and Indira also they had had to fight with them: how to control the power of the bureaucracy, how to calm the regional tensions, how to remove the country from the poverty... The scorn to the personal security seemed to be a characteristic common in the family. Neither Nehru nor Indira nor Rajiv felt much respect by “the security” in general, because she distanced to them of the town and she remembered the more a dictatorship to them that to a democracy. They thought that if somebody really wanted to kill them, always it would find the way to do it. Sonia was not convinced. Account was occurring of which if Rajiv had not finished of prime minister, yet the power of the State protecting to them, now would perhaps be all dead. They gave cold sweats him to only think it. The circumstances of the life had put to their family in a spiral that forced to them to flee towards ahead. As possibility did not exist of stopping nor of backing down, Sonia did not have the more remedy that to change, to accept its paper and to ingeniar them to it to adapt and to remove benefit from which this life offered to him. It was not easy, because the atypical situation of the family created unexpected problems to them. For example, Rahul and Priyanka were arriving at the age in which they had to enter in college. Where to send them? Sonia gave by fact that was not going to be more safe from the revenge sij abroad that in India, so that the problem became source of great anxiety. It was then when Rajiv suggested to send them to the American College of Moscow. Of all the countries, the USSR was of safest and in addition sij was no community. To Sonia the idea, so did not do grace to him at the moment they misestimated it.

Like first lady, Sonia accompanied to his husband the foreigner. They traveled on board of a Boeing 747 specially formed to accommodate to the séquito of prime minister, composed of assistants, ministers, journalists and by all means of a unit of agents of the Special Protection

Group. During the long flights, Sonia was involved in the reading of a book, his great liking from the childhood, while Rajiv reviewed speeches with its assistants, adding a touch of last hour or some suggestion inspired by some of letters of Nehru or his mother. To Rajiv it liked those trips in which it slept little and it worked much. It gave the impression that abroad was more to taste than in house. "It is good for being between friends", nothing else said to him to Margaret Thatcher to arrive at London. Sonia tried to become invisible possible. It was not easy to refuse to attend receptions in which its presence was required or to elude to make speeches. "She is a woman very reserved to whom it does not like to be in the front sight", his husband explained, excusing it. Another reason existed: it was not good facing the internal policy that it was spoken of Sonia, because automatically would leave to shine its foreign origin, weak point that Maneka first, and the Hindu fundamentalist right later, was using to discredit prime minister.

Pero Rajiv felt like fish in the water between international statesmen. At heart, servant among them had itself and spoke his same language. It did not give the image of a dark politician of the third world, but the one of a modern and progressive man with own ideas able to be moderate with any world-wide leader. It went endorsed by the profits obtained in his first two years of mandate, that added more than those of no other prime minister in a comparable time interval. When they criticized to him because its policy of economic opening it approached to him United States or vice versa, when in the West they accused to him that India inclined towards the Soviet Union, to him liked to repeat a phrase of its mother: "We stay rights, we did not list towards no side." Rajiv obtained that president Ronald Reagan made an exception in his policy from not selling to India technology that could be turned aside to countries of the East. It loved an American supercomputer to help to predict the evolution of the monsoons with a high degree of precision, something that thought would be of inestimable aid for the farmers. Reagan understood it and acceded to the request.

For Rajiv, those trips supposed to attend interminable round tables, ceremonies, conferences and companies in agreements. It enjoyed mainly visiting laboratories and sharpshooting companies that produced the last technological advances and it always asked how they would be possible to be applied in India to alleviate the poverty. In Japan, Rajiv praised to the "first Asian country in to have assimilated the scientific knowledge" and emphasized the profits of its own country: "In 1947, nor at least we produced winches; today we constructed our atomic reactors and we sent our satellites to the space." Specially it was satisfied with to have left windy which the greater challenge of its mandate considered, the drought of the 1987, catalogued como most severe one of the century xx and that affected to two hundred fifty and eight million people and one hundred sixty and eight million cattle heads. It firmly took the subject in its hands, maintaining a close contact with local civil employees responsible for the aid and development programs, making sure that the excesses of

reserve appropriately were distributed and of that the expenses of the urgency aid became investments for the development, for example helping to dig water wells and making irrigation works. Its dedication and the planning almost military man, who remembered to many the organizational capacity of his mother, caused that the country did not have to concern grain and, for the first time in its history, India left a drought to national scale without hambrunas, epidemics, died and with a national product gross positive. " Was a great satisfaction for him! ", Sonia would say.

In other fronts, the results were not so encouraging. In foreign policy, Rajiv had inherited a situation vitiated in Sri Lanka, created partly by its mother. The old island of Ceylon was a country populated by seventeen million inhabitants, most of Ceylonese culture and Buddhist religion, except a minority in the north of two million and means of tamiles, of Hindu religion, that had forts racial and linguistic bonds with the fifty and five million tamiles that populated the Indian state with Tamil Nadu. This minority had always felt marginalized by the Ceylonese majority. Treaties like citizens felt of second, mainly since the government, in years fifty, declared the Ceylonese official language of the island. Years of resentment ended at the sprouting of a guerrilla, the Tamiles Tigers, that the independence of its territory in the northeast end of the island looked for. During years, the Tigers counted on the discreet support of India. The head of the government of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, an ex- film actor of Tamil reconverted to Populism, provided arms, money and refuge to them. Indira made the fat Vista for reasons of internal political strategy, since this man was his only ally in the south and needed his political support.

In 1983, the Tigers were so strong that they intensified the armed warfare. The government of Sri Lanka reacted with all means to his reach and of brutal way, of form that the conflict entered a terrorism spiral and repression that he still reinforced plus the desire of independence of the tamiles. The highest levels of savagery and cruelty of both sides offered a bloody resistance with the paradisíaca beauty of the island. The calm expression of the Budas carved in stone by the old inhabitants of the island seemed suddenly outside place.

When Rajiv arrived at the power, it was with the problem that an avalanche of refugees crossed to India, fleeing from the offensive of the army of the island. Aside from the logistic problem that supposed to feed and to lodge to thousands of people, the risk existed of which the displeasure of the tamiles of the island infected to those of the subcontinent, feeding desire on independence of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, one of the states with very noticeable own personality, and creating more secessionist tensions in India, as if it did not have enough.

- You remember Me to your mother, when it had to face the first big wave of refugees of Bangladesh - Sonia- said to him. At the outset it did not know very well what to do.

- The one that there is to do is to fix the problem in its origin, is what she had thought. It is not necessary to give reasons to the tamiles of



Sri Lanka so that they come. The problem is necessary to fix it in Colombo. Like my mother, whom it had to fix it in Bangladesh.

Rajiv dispatched a series of special envoys to Sri Lanka, whose mission was to convince the government of the island so that it granted a certain degree of autonomy to the tamiles, being left to understand that if the government made the peace with the tamiles, India committed itself to completely cut the aid to the guerrilla. But the government of Sri Lanka, embarked in a military solution, made ears deaf. It continued with its offensive and it imposed a blockade to the peninsula of Jaffna, the territory of the tamiles in the northeast of the island. Gasoline, foods and medicines began to be scarce.

- They do not make case. They must understand that India cannot remain of crossed arms. If they do not invite to us to collaborate in the solution of a problem that threatens to us directly, we will take part without requesting permission.

- Another war? - Sonia- said. Piénsatelo well.

Rajiv planned the play well. In the blockade it saw the opportunity that once and for all India prevailed. It decided to send five transport airplanes escorted by huntings in the direction of the peninsula of Jaffna to aid to the population, being sent forty tons of rice, medicines and provisions several. It was an animated gesture of an authentic humanitarian reason and at the same time for the will of India to affirm like being able regional.

The pressure worked. The president of Sri Lanka finished signing an agreement with Rajiv, according to which the Ceylonese government granted an ample autonomy to the tamiles. The agreement also stipulated that a force of peace India would be transferred to the island. The army of Sri Lanka would retire to its large cabins, and the militants of the Tamiles Tigers would be persuaded - or forced to lay down the arms. "This agreement not only ends the conflict - Rajiv- declared, also it brings peace and it makes justice to the minority communities of the island."

- Your mother would feel proud of you - Sonia said to him.

But it was not like the victory of Indira in Bangladesh. Rajiv had sold the skin before hunting the bear.

The Ceylonese , afraid majority of which their interests were harmed by the done concessions the tamiles, reacted of violent way to the terms in the agreement. When Rajiv traveled to Colombo at the end of the month of 1987 July to ratify it, the agents of the Special Protection Group who accompanied to him tried to dissuade it to review to the honor guard as she required the protocol. "It can be dangerous - they said to him. They can have infiltrated uncontrolled elements, is much tension in the island... »

- How? Here we are for signing an agreement that guarantees its peace and security... and you are going to say to them that I am scared to greet the honor guard?

His escorts, that knew the stubborn thing that could be its head, did not insist. Short time ago, one of them had undergone the wrath of prime minister in own meat. It had dared to complain which Rajiv lead too

much faster than its own Range Rover, gift of King Hussein of Jordan, with which it liked to move from its address to its office in the Parliament, and that could not follow to him by the New Delhi streets. Rajiv had found it too much makes insolent and had requested its transfer. The pressure of the position made arise in Rajiv characteristics of cabezonería and determination that their brother and his mother remembered to those of.

So that it followed with its program and it accompanied the president by Sri Lanka to review to the honor guard, with music of a military band, martial greetings and all the equipment. Suddenly, a soldier, dress of the white uniform of navy, broke the rank and he was rushed on him, with the intention to strike to him with the butt of rifle in the head. Rajiv was noticed of the attack and it was crouched just in time to avoid the blow that him had burst the skull, and that received completely in the shoulder. Everything happened so quickly that those that were present not gave account of which had happened. Rajiv wanted to diminish the incident and rejected to be taken care of by the doctors. It remained listening to the national anthem, holding the pain, and continued with its program, imperturbable. Until one did not put in the airplane for the return trip was not let treat by its doctor. It had wanted to hope to personally say it to Sonia, so that it was not scared, but the television had made arrive the images at the entire world. Sonia and his children had seen them in the hall house and were of new with the heart in vilo. Another small incident came to remember the constant danger to them in which they lived. "During long time - Sonia would count could not move the shoulder nor sleep over the left side."

Rajiv in Nueva Delhi had not landed when the Government of Sri Lanka solicited to put in practice the clause of military attendance. A force of peace of several thousands of Indian soldiers was dispatched to the island with the intention to supervise to the cease-fire and the disarmament of the guerrilla and, once fulfilled the objective, to return. But the troops were seen with distrust by both sides, the Ceylonese majority that accused them to violate the sovereignty, and by the Tigers, that until then had thought that India was of its part. When the soldiers of the peace force requested to them that they laid down the arms, the tamiles suddenly added conditions that were inasumibles, ruining the agreement. They returned to the forest, from where they mounted bloody attacks against the peace force. When having to defend itself, the Indians still finished more implied in the fight, assuming the paper that had the army of Sri Lanka previously. Rajiv got to send almost seventy thousand soldiers, which made spread the panic in the Nueva Parliament Delhi:

- Prime minister is turning to Sri Lanka the Vietnam of India! - they accused to him from the bank of the opposition.

Rajiv had been very ingenuous when thinking that the tamiles would play fair. "They failed to fulfill each one of the commitments that they had acquired with us - would declare Rajiv-. They were deliberately sent to destroy the agreement because or they were not able, or did not want to

make the transition of the armed warfare to a democratic process.” Rajiv it had gambled everything a letter, but the tamiles left him in the stockade. When clearing to them the support del which always they had enjoyed in India, saw him like a traitor their cause.

Frustration, disappointment and exasperación were also the lot of prime minister, mainly when the results of regional elections seemed to confirm the predictions of the hawks of their party, that had put to him in guard against a policy that did not give results immediate to the poor men. In 1987, the Congress lost in several states, causing an increase of the displeasure between the old guard, who began to question the leadership of Rajiv to the front of the party. To the problem of Sri Lanka and the electoral defeat a scandal was added that caused an irreparable damage to its image of Mr. Clean. The 16 of April of 1987, the Swedish radio announced that million dollars had been paid for commissions to Indian civil employees and members of the Congress by the armamentística company Swedish Bofors in connection with a contract for the sale of four hundred ten mortars to the Armed Forces Indians. The contract had been the result of the decision of Rajiv to improve the equipment of the Indian army, the fourth greater one of the world after the one of the United States, the Union Soviética and China.

Rajiv and its government reacted ferociously against the allegations of the Swedish radio, denying several times that had paid commissions. The opposition smelled fear in the rows of the government and mounted an attack against prime minister with all means to its reach. The press got to accuse it veiledly to have received a commission through the family of Sonia, alluding to the proximity between Turin and Geneva like letting understand that opaque Swiss accounts handled by the family or friends of the family had been used. Until were journalists who called by telephone to the parents of Sonia back in Orbassano, and the poor man Stefano Maino saw itself suddenly involved in a supposed plot of traffic of arms and collection of commissions! Only that did the those calls were to alarm them still more, because the distance exacerba the anguish, and the fear to which could already happen to its daughter and her grandsons to him was great. When investigating in the subject, the India press removed to shine the name of a businessman who been had involved in several contracts of sale of helicopters and armament of Italian companies to the Indian state. Ottavio Quattrochi, the exuberante friend who years ago belonged to the intimate circle of Rajiv and Sonia, would have received surely a substantial commission in the Bofors subject. Of insinuating there that Quattrochi had passed them part of that commission abroad, only there was a step, that the journalists gave gladly. What more substantial scandal!

Although no publication could contribute tests, the damage was done and the naivete and lack of experience of Rajiv did not do more than to aggravate it. Instead of ignoring unfounded accusations, it left to defend itself in the Parliament: “I declare categorically in this high forum of the democracy that neither my family nor I have received commission some in these transactions of Bofors. That one is the truth.” But the truth already

gave equal. The important thing for the adversaries of Rajiv was that there was mincemeat, that instead of ignoring the allegation from the principle, had reacted with as much impetus that had opened to the box of Pandora of the hints and false suspicions. It denied again that commissions had been paid or that any Indian citizen had benefitted from that contract, and when doing it he sank still more in the mud of the scandal. En un país donde hasta un cartero cobra una pequeña mordida por entregar el correo al pobre de una chabola, donde la práctica del intermediario existe en todas las facetas de la vida y es tan antigua como la propia cultura, resultaba difícil creer que en un contrato de mil millones de dólares nadie hubiera cobrado un céntimo. Although a joint parliamentary committee concluded that the process of elaboration and evaluation had been objective and correct, that the decision to adjudge it to Bofors had been based only on the merit and that did not exist evidence of intermediaries at the moment at which the contract was signed, Rajiv already was put under a public verdict, and that verdict accused to him to be hiding something. "Perhaps it is certain that Rajiv was not surrounded in the corruption - recognized the press. But then will be involved in camouflaging it! ", it proclaimed immediately afterwards. When a journalist of India Today asked so that Rajiv did not respond to this last allegation, this one answered irritated: " Tengo to answer any dog that barks" Later, Rajiv recognized that neither he nor their cabinet had known to handle the problem. In reality, it had reacted like a decent man. It had not done it since a politician had made it experienced, looking for I inform expiatorio and loading the faults to him. It did not count whereupon one developed in the dirty world of the policy where the truth was not the important thing, but its manipulation to seed doubts and to split head open the image of the adversary. Sonia was in favor sad of him, and furious by to have seen implied of so ridiculous but so destructive way, to traverse of his family and of the Quattrochi, in similar nonsense. Account occurred of which it had become target of all the critics and that not even in the privacy was free. They finished brunch of Sundays. Neither Maria nor Ottavio Quattrochi nor no of the businessmen or diplomats who knew returned to the residence of prime minister. Unjust what, thought Sonia. Mainly because she had been witness of first hand of the general terms of the negotiation. They had taken place around one lasaña that had cooked personally for the occasion. January of 1986 ran, and Swedish prime minister Olof Palme, of Nueva visit Delhi, had been going to eat to house. He and Rajiv had become friends during conferences on disarmament in the seat of the UN in New York. Also Rahul and Priyanka were present in that food, in which both statesmen openly discussed the terms of the contract and Rajiv insisted on his I veto the intermediaries, indeed to lower the price of the cost of the transaction.

How could forget Sonia to Olof Palme, so it jeopardize with the problems of the Third World and that shared with Rajiv so many points of view, as the opposition to the regime of the apartheid or the support to the countries nonaligned? Less of a month after that supper, Sonia remained

frost when finding out by the television, the 18 of February of 1986, of the murder of the Swedish leader, in the middle of the street, when she left the cinema with his woman. God mine! Is that no longer no safe place in the world exists? If something thus happens in Sweden, what can pass us to us here in India?

By soon, the Bofors subject became one crossed that used the opposition to throw to Rajiv of its position, although the journalists and the publishers of press felt frustrated by their own incapacity to contribute a definitive evidence of embezzlement on the part of the government. Nobody seemed to know who had received of the Swedish company, not even the government, and less still Rajiv. But all admitted since the clause of the contract that vetoed the intermediaries had been violated. Had received members of the Congress broken ties with the government and the money had been going to stop to the coffers of the party? Had received Ottavio Quattrochi using its proximity to the power? Era that possible one without the maximum person in charge knew to it, that is to say, prime minister ? Rajiv maintained whenever no, but the doubt weighed like a slab. The uncertainty climate pulverized its credibility. During the first two years of its mandate, it had enjoyed a favorable press and it seemed incapable to do something badly. Until the opposition it found difficulties in criticizing its actions, limiting itself to criticize its style: "The India policy no longer smells poor man as in the days of the Mahatma Gandhi - a famous journalist of a rival party had declared; now, with Rajiv, it smells of after-shave."

"At the outset nothing of which it did was bad - Rajiv- would say.

Suddenly, nothing of which did was well. By all means, no of the two things was certain." to call Mr. to him. Clean, happened to call peyorativamente to him I go, with the intention to compare to him with their mother unfavorably. " Conseguirá the I go to be to the height" it was the subject of a daily editorial of press.

In fact, most of the problems of Rajiv they had to do with its political inexperience and its candor like being human. It cost to him to fix the limits between loyalty to the friends and the public good. The name of the Bachchan brothers, friends of the childhood in whose house Sonia it had lived his first days in India, saw associate dark financial scandals. More prudent prime minister had been distanced of them. Pero Rajiv did not do it, on the contrary, was suffered because they criticized its friends. Her mother always said that in policy the social relations do not exist, but he was too good friend to be good politician. At the outset, one refused to admit that their friends could fail to him and before he preferred to see a conspiracy of its political adversaries who the truth. Nevertheless, many friends of confidence that he had named as advisors ended up disillusioning to him. One of them, a pilot, the one in charge to remember to him when its license of flight would expire and to take care of the subjects of its circumscription of Amethi, was accused by the press to be constructed a marble swimming pool concerned of Italy in its house. Again Rajiv, instead of being distanced of him, left to defend to him and commentd out that caused more political

damage to him than if it had really committed a government error . It dropped that many pilots of aviation had houses with swimming pool, a declaration that, said in any country of the West by a Chief of State that in addition had been airline pilot, had not caused rage some. In India it raised blisters. The opposition threw in face its lack to him of respect towards "India sensitivity". Very it was criticized by the custom to take days of vacations in New Year with its family in sometimes exotic sites, like the Lakshadweep islands, in the Indian Ocean, or the Andamán islands, in the bay of Bengal. In the West there was reasonable similarity that somebody that worked as much deserved a rest, that the children who lived enclaustrados all the year could enjoy days of freedom and security, but in a poor country like India, that the maximum agent chief executive went it well was bad sight. In reality, Rajiv and Sonia followed with the custom to meet in family in Christmas and New Year, but in 1988 they let do it in Italy. In October of that year, Stefano Maino had fallen thundered against by an attack to the heart and thought that he was better to invite to the family to some place that did not remember the old meetings to them around the patriarch.

Sonia moved to Orbassano for the burial, practically of incognito, and she was almost not let see. To the security problems a logical feeling of deep desolation was united and the desire to be in family, with its mother and her sisters, diving in the memories, being consoled mutually. When hearing the noise of the first earth shovelful that the enterrador threw on the box, Sonia shook. A part of its life was buried for always. No longer it would listen to its advice of mountain wise person who, now realized, had marked it more than what he had always believed.

From return to house, it was chatting with Danilo Quadra, the old friend of Stefano, who recalled the last moments of the life of the old shepherd of the Asiago mounts. It told him that there were been playing dominated as a child in the bar, in the seat of Orbassano, since they daily did it years ago, and that nothing else to return to house, that house that stops Stefano was the symbol of its triumph in the life, fell thundered against. That it died without suffering. Days later, Danilo told him that Stefano was irritated since he had found out the new outbreak of the attacks against Sonia in the India press.

- "To my daughter they do not want it there because it is of here", it said to me. Is certain that?

- I do not create it - Sonia- said. Those that they do not want to me are those that is against my husband.

- It annoyed to Him that by the fact that you are Italian, the Indian government avoids any contract with companies of here - continued telling Danilo- him. Days before dying, it said to me that Fiat had made a supply very good of sale of tractors, but that in the end the contract had taken the Japanese to it... by fear of the government of your husband to be accused to favor Italian companies. Is that certain one? - it returned to ask Danilo to him.

Sonia watched to him with his black eyes, swollen by the fatigue and the pain, and agreed. When it remained single and one went away to sleep to that it had been its room as a single person, it was asked, like surprised of itself, I am really of here? His father had shaken itself in his tomb if he had heard say it something thus, but felt an indefinable sensation of surprise, of not belonging already to that scenery that had been the one of its youth. As if the death of its father had precipitated the uprooting feeling. To Sonia it cost to him to recognize itself in the country of its childhood. Its mind was too much far from the daily preoccupations of the people of Orbassano, like so that it could be identified with them. In the bottom, it had lived more years in the India that in Italy, more years in an atmosphere overturned in the problems to govern to one sixth part of the humanity that in an atmosphere oriented to the mere individual well-being. A long time ago its heart had let oscillate between both worlds. It was of there, and the death of its father came to confirm it to it, of a secret way, as if the disappearance of that had more been against its aim made him see with greater clarity of what side really was.

It remained locked up several days in house, without desire don't mention it. Not even it had forces to go to see Pier Luigi; it did not want to speak with anybody, to give explanations, to count its life... Era possible to count it? How to try that somebody understood the life that took? To only her next family could understand it, and now not even her father. They assaulted dark thoughts to him... "It must have been more affectionate with him - one said, it must to him have insisted so that it came more times to Delhi, perhaps salary been nearer him, to have taken him to the doctor and had been able to avoid the infarct..." Era a litany of reproaches caused by lost the immense pain of having the man who, next to Rajiv, plus wanted it. When it closed the eyes, the cosquilleo of the moustache of its father in its cheek, its scent to soap, its smile remembered and its frown, its always judicious words, impregnated of very basic a common sense. He remembered when he took it to visit a finished work, and it was it with the pride of the affluent work done. "So that one has gone away so fast?", Sonia asked itself. One remembered Indira, that there was lost its husband of an infarct, that is like when the blow light is extinguished. Or when it operates a pump and it leaves a crater. They say that he is better to die thus, but to Sonia it had liked to take leave of him, to say much to him that it wanted to him... although it only was once. It seemed to him so strange that his father no longer was there that one night rose and went to the cemetery, to say on his tomb. One was with its sister, that it had had the same idea. They wanted to be with him, because sometimes the unconscious one takes in accepting the inevitable thing. To the few days, Sonia left to Nueva Delhi and nobody never returned it to see in Orbassano.

History was repeated. Rajiv Gandhi could not be prime minister without causing the same animosity that had provoked previously their grandfathers and his mother. In 1989, divided of right and left they were allied with members of the old Janata Party, the coalition that had been born to defeat to Indira, with the objective to present/display a front common in the general elections and to obtain a same goal: again to remove to a Gandhi from the power. During the campaign, an episode of ferocious violence in the state of Bihar between Hindu Muslims and dimmed still more already of in case worn away image of Rajiv. More of a thousand of it had died before Rajiv could be in charge to appease the disturbances.

Soon it continued crossing the country in the style of its mother, accumulating meetings and kilometers and selling the profits of its government. The difference is that her mother went surrounded by little protection, which allowed to narrow hands, to give hugs him and, in definitive, to be in physical contact with the enemy with people. Each displacement of Rajiv, however, implied the mobilization of about three hundred agents of security, who did not allow him to approach as much, safe in situations absolutely controlled. From time to time the protocol skipped, although it had to discuss with his escorts, but in general each movement his implied as much logistics that there was to think it to it or if were worth the trouble or no. It knew that as much limitation made him appear as a distant leader before the masses and for that reason struggled to free itself of the monitoring. "I have never been scared by me", declared in an interview. As always, who was more conscious of the danger was Sonia.

In campaign, Rajiv traveled in a Boeing of the army, paid for by the party, that took off of Nueva Delhi before the dawn and that allowed him to visit three or four states in a day. In order to accede to remote places, it used helicopters that the eve of the trip had made practical of landing in fortune tracks. The day finished after midnight and it remained to sleep hours in the airplane, or a lodging of the government. Only somebody with the resistance and the sport sense of the life that had Rajiv could support a similar rate. Without a doubt the Indians did not profess by him the same adoration who felt towards their grandfathers, nor the almost reverencial respect with that they surrounded to Indira, but appreciated this decent man who fought to be worthy of the dynastic load that he had inherited. In several occasions it accompanied its Rahul son to him, an adolescent with glasses who looked itself much like him. For the young person, it was the baptism of multitudes. People wanted to touch to him since S.A. to do it were infected of the magic and the power of a Gandhi. Priyanka was not less going to be than its brother, and insisted so that she and their mother went to the circumscription of Amethi, of which Rajiv was deputy, to go the whole hog. Priyanka enjoyed much campaigning next to its mother. Both very popular and were very wanted between the million and average one of inhabitants of Amethi, who enjoyed the prosperity now that had promised to



Rajiv in his first campaign to them. Amethi could now boast to have all the asphalt roads; almost all their villages had potable electricity yagua and a small industrial boom had reduced drastically unemployment. Those were the advantages to have their deputy of prime minister. Mother and daughter were received by far affection and efusividad. Sonia was the main attraction of the farmers, eager to place a garland of flowers around the neck of this foreigner who intrigued to them because always she went dressed in sari and she spoke hindi with fluidity. "It can which she is daughter of Italy, but I am daughter-in-law of Amethi", it said to them to explain his origin, and its smile let see its graceful hoyuelos. As to Sonia it did not like to speak in public preferred to go of house in house, or hut in hut, and to animate to people to vote by its husband. Also mother and daughter improvised meetings in the roadside ditch of the highway, where they explained the same there that Rajiv and Rahul explained to thousands of kilometers of other farmers still more poor men. They distributed to stickers and standards to the young people, and the sticky women bindis (the point in the middle of the eyes) with the logo of the Congress, the palm of the open hand. "I only want that you realize of which it has improved the situation of your villages since Rajiv was chosen parliamentary eight years ago... - Sonia said, before adding to them. Brothers and sisters, if you want that we continue working, you vote by my husband."

His husband already was not the a little green politician of five years back. The flattery did not do he himself effect to him, as soon as it was shamed of the songs that dedicated to him nor of the flowery adjectives with which they described to him. He was impatient to make understand the obtained advances, the new policies and the novel undertaken initiatives. Desgañitaba explaining itself how it had solved great part of the conflicts inherited in 1984 and how it had been able to place to the economy in the footpath of a growth of the 6 percent, four points more than when it governed its mother, but gave the impression him that there was lost to be able of persuasion and that its words the wind took to them. It irritated to him to have the feeling of it to have made well and at the same time have to constantly defend of attacks and malévolas hints. The certain thing is that its image had happened of "brave son who assumed the mantle of his mother" to "European señorito that lived at the cost of the town". He was inevitable that after appeasing old conflicts arose new, but the important thing was that India remained united, was a country respected internationally and the economy took off. Without embargo, the opposition hammered to him with an avalanche of calumnies. Sonia was a favorite target of the critics: a manipulating foreigner who turned aside resources of the Indian poor men towards capitalist paradises with the aid of friends and relatives in the purest gangster style, so of its country. The problem of its nationality was so thorny that they advised it not to go to receive to the Pope in his Nueva scale Delhi. It was not considered politically correct that million Indians saw it make the reverence and kiss the ring of the maximum Pontiff of the catholic Church. In fact, neither the politicians nor the masses

nor the mass media were customary to glamour of a pair in upper steering position. The tradition of the Kennedys, a Blair did not exist in India, because all previous prime minister had been widowers, beginning by the grandfathers Nehru.

At the end of the campaign, Rajiv escaldado and was disappointed. It began to have doubts that their work and the sincerity of their intentions ended up prevailing, as thought at the outset. "The real world is a jungle - it wrote to its Priyanka- daughter but not even it works the law of the forest when you are in the public life." Its aspect reflected its loss of heart. No longer it had the calm face and the expression relaxed of the past. With the age, their factions had irritated, his to walk heavier era, the voice lost firmness, although she continued being warm, because he was a good natured man.

In the opposition, a exultante Maneka Gandhi also put in practice, to its way, everything what it had learned of his mother-in-law. Revancha campaigned in a neighboring circumscription to the one of Rajiv the vigor of its youth and its desire to take itself yet . Indira had been scandalized from beyond when discovering that her daughter-in-law had become one of the Secretary Generals of a new version of the Janata coalition, the abbreviations under which had been able to be overcome and to be taken to the jail. In addition, Maneka exerted of journalist and reporter specialized in environmental subjects, mainly the protection of the animals, a very compatible subject to the ideology of the Hindu right, always very worried to protect the sagrada cow. The influential magazine India Today described thus its style to campaign: "This one is the real Maneka: mature, trusted itself, an untiring policy that exactly knows how to gain the rural heart. It takes saris with the colors green saffron and of its party and the always covered head; the perfect image of a hidden, but decided widow." Some in using its bond with the family did not have scruple to support to the opposite party. Eslóganes, written in walls and walls of marinated, offered a peculiar panegírico of "cuñadísima": "The storm of the revolution: Maneka Gandhi" or "the brave daughter-in-law of Indira will give its blood by the nation", as if its relation with the family was enough to turn it potential martyr.

The elections took place from the 22 to the 24 of November of 1989. The greater voluntary mobilization in the world of men, women and material with a single objective culminated with few interruptions and little disturbances. Three million and means of civil employees supervised 589,449 electoral schools so that five hundred million people deposited their problems in the ballot boxes. All the process, that was lived like a great celebration, was reason for pride for the great majority of the population, which it found in the democracy a new God that united to them over its differences of chaste, race or religion. Rajiv returned to win in Amethi, but the Congress, for the first time in its history, did not obtain the absolute majority in the national Parliament. The analysts agreed in which the Bofors subject had played an important role in the results. Those elections marked

the end of which the “system of dominant party” was called because never plus no party it has returned to obtain the absolute majority of benches in the Parliament.

The rumor that had run Rajiv had a reserved flight to go to Italy in case of defeat, but was not certain. Shortly before the elections, an intimate friend, also become fond of music, had asked to him:

- We are going to suppose that you lose the elections...

- For me, it would be La Paz - Rajiv- answered. I will seat to listen to music with the children. I will retake my old likings, as the radio and the photography.

But it had said it to the light one, taken by the fatigue and the wearing down. As much it as their family, after all the made effort, was disappointed. Priyanka, that had inherited the character fighter of Indira, did not occur by won.

- Papa - it said to him, if the Congress has obtained the greater number of benches, you must right to form government... So that not it beams?

In effect, Rajiv had right to form government, but it decided to abstain. Although it had had sufficient support between the minority parties, thought that it was not moment for following.

- I believe that he is better to stay went - it said to him. I am going to resign, now is called on to worry to them to the new ones. I interpret the results because the town is not all the satisfied one that it had to be. It is logical that after so many expectations to the principle, now a reaction has existed against...

Section of the power by the pendulum of the democracy, Rajiv felt a great frustration. Not by the verdict of the town, but by not to have been able to do everything what one had seted out, and by its incapacity in developing in the nest of vipers of the India policy. Now that knew the difficult thing that it was to construct something, to change to the concepts and the ideas, it gave vertigo to think him about the facility with which its work of the last years could be destroyed. Perhaps its vision of India had sinned of innocent: in five years, it wanted that its old nation, so afraid of the changes and at the same time so eager of them, undertook a trip of several centuries towards the future. Was not to request to him too much to this old Indian elephant? For a moment, Sonia thought that perhaps she would leave the policy, but when seeing so disheartened it she was she who animated to him to follow in the breach. A journalist who asked to him Rajiv if finally she had accepted the policy like profession, he answered of the good humor:

- Yes, only that sometimes desires to me to take a rest me. I believe that he is something very human.

Sonia knew that it was impossible to return to the life from before. When his husband watched towards back, he did with nostalgia, but assuming that that was the past: “I am he himself of always - it said in an interview in television, but what it has changed he is all the others. It had a

very comfortable life, a small family, an affluent work paid by far free time... but all that finished." Rajiv was imbued of a fatality feeling that made him think that a man does not apostatize of his destiny. The last years had let him grow in a direction that it had placed to him in a different plane in the life. Now the challenges were much greater and the expectations were different. Mainly, the responsibility to improve the life of eight hundred million people had been transformed into something high-priority for him. "That responsibility weighs as much that it changes everything what did and what I do now. What it is not going to change is my commitment with the town of India to improve its existence, and so that the nation has its place in the world." The defeat had not altered its faith. It knew that its name was, for its party, shaken by several defeats in different states, the single and only resource. Its plan was to continue reforming it to turn it one more a more democratic organization, like was it in the days of its grandfathers. A confessional party able to include all the tendencies and the beliefs. A common house that it would be the best antidote against the increasing religious factionalism that lived the country. In order to make that work, he was better to be in the opposition.

- With this coalition between Communists and the Hindu fundamentalist right - it said to him to its daughter, always very interested in the day to day of the political life... it will happen what it happened with the grandmother and the Janata... It will fall by its own weight. It is only time question before their leaders fight themselves by the power, you will already see it.

Rajiv resigned the 29 of November of 1989: "The elections gain and they are lost... the work of a nation never finishes. I want to thank for to the town of India the affection that has given to me with as much generosity." They were words that evoked those of the testament of their grandfathers, in that Nehru had affirmed to feel affected by the affection that all the classes of Indians had professed to him. They were words that sounded to goodbye. The appointment that Rajiv Gandhi had with the destiny approached inexorably.

So and as it had predicted it, both more important leaders of the new coalition got involved in a fight with regard to the designation of new prime minister . It was badly a beginning that foretold a stormy day's work. But between the new members of the government was a specially euphoric person that she had comprised of the familiar dynasty of the Nehru. The named being finally minister of Environment and Bosques, Maneka Gandhi saw fulfilled her old dream. It already was in the power. Revancha had been taken already, and thought to take it very far. It was one more a humiliation for Rajiv, although it was cured of frights on the torticeros vericuetos of the policy and nothing of that world surprised to him. For rest of family, that had seen how Maneka used its last name with a total lack of scruple, was a bitter pill that only the certainty that that government would be flower of a day was able to sweeten.

For Sonia, lost salary the elections meant a new change, this time the last one. They had to leave the residence official of prime minister and occupied another white villa of style colonial, a single plant and surrounded by an ample garden. One was in number 10 of the avenue Janpath, the old Queen's Way, one of the great Nueva arteries Delhi bordered of flamboyanes and nims, trees with branches very opened and leafy, and whose bitter leaves, according to the popular belief, "cure everything". Perhaps its protective shade was responsible to cure the melancholy to them produced by the defeat because, nothing else to change itself, the atmosphere in house was animated. The life became a little calmer, lighter, as if they had taken off a weight of above, the weight of the power. Rajiv continued very being occupied with its work with the Parliament and the party, but to a more bearable rate. "He was relaxed - it would write Sonia-, almost alleviated. Again it enjoyed simple and daily pleasures like uninterrupted meals, to remain in the tablecloth with us, to see of time in when a video instead of locking in itself in its office to work." Chef of the exquisite Indian restaurant Bukhara, where long ago they used to go in family to the buffet of Saturdays, received to them with the open arms when it returned to see them after so long interruption. There they went to celebrate the birthday of Rahul, and their imminent game to the United States. The children no longer were young, but young all-consuming newspaper adults and very interested in everything what happened around to his. As they could not continue studying in house because they had already finished the equivalent one to the baccalaureate, Rajiv and Sonia had decided to command to their son to the university of Harvard, thus ending the tradition to educate to the children in England, since they had made it three generations of Nehrus. Priyanka preferred to remain in Nueva Delhi, studying psychology in the Jesus and Mary College. Its obsession by the policy worried to its father as much who commented it with Benazir Bhutto, when they were for the last time in Paris, invited by president Mitterrand to attend the celebrations of the bicentennial of the French Revolution.

- By favor - Rajiv- said to him, when you see it, tries to convince it that it does not put in this.

to listen somebody, it knew that her daughter would listen Benazir, whose own father had been assassinated after one parodia gives judgment under the orders of a military dictator. It was another example. Next and terrible, of the destiny that hoped to that they were let seduce by the policy. "Account of the dangerous thing does not occur that is this", Rajiv insisted before Benazir.

He thought that, being outside the power, the threat that weighed on him and their children would diminish, but the information who arrived to him on their security always had to him worried. The threats against their life had been multiplied. In 1984, it was first in the list of three terrorist groups. Five years more behind schedule, it was it in a dozen of organizations, including the Tamiles Tigers. The problem of the Punjab seemed to have

solved, but there were other conflicts, specially between Hindu and Muslim, potentially equal of dangerous. "Both you have lived in very difficult circumstances during long time, five years in a space limited the house and the garden - Rajiv to its children had written them in an occasion. It is the time of your life in that you must have lived in freedom, to have known people your age, discovered salary the world as it really is. Unfortunately, the circumstances have not allowed ofreceros a normal life us." That letter at the same time came off fatality and culpability a feeling. Rajiv was conscious that he was not owner of his destiny. What it had to him catapult to the policy had been an accident, soon an attack had taken to the highest position of the government of the nation, and, finally the Bofors scandal had placed to him in the opposition. It had not been able to change the course of the events and in that letter it seemed to apologize by the suffering that it could have caused its children.

In fact, the defeat in the elections was a blessing for Sonia. In August, days to Mussorie went, in mountains, and Rajiv drove its own car. First escape together in nineteen months was his and there, with the mountain range of the Himalayas of bottom, they celebrated the one that would be the last birthday of him.

Soon, in Christmas, when Rahul returned from Harvard, all the family went to spend one week from vacations to the house of field of Mehrauli, the one that had bought Firoz Gandhi with the idea to live its last years calm with Indira. They had never been able to release that house, whose details of Rajiv construction had supervised during years and paid for with their savings. "It was the first time that we remained to live in a house that was entirely ours", Sonia would write. Rajiv was in charge to put it to point. Their children helped to remove the furniture from garden and to clean the very old interior while he prepared something to itch, because he preferred it to the formal meals. They hid the chocolate to him that as much it liked because it seemed to them that since had left the power it had gained weight. The celebrations of Holi remembered that had happened there in the childhood, throwing themselves dusts of colors until finishing all lost ones. They played bádmington and the scrabble and Sonia it began to clean of strubbles a part of the garden with the idea of planting a huertecito. It threw the field to him, from always, from its childhood in Lusiana. How it had liked to have to its father with them in those vacations! How it had liked that house! One remembered him much. In its weekly calls to its mother in Orbassano, almost it was let take by the reflection to ask for its father.

"We enjoyed much every minute the six days that we happened there - would remember Sonia-. It brought memories to us of our life so and as it was at the outset, and the flavor of which we would have had if we had been able to choose it by our account." Many friends were surprised of which they followed enamored so romantically as the first day. "Me he did not surprise to me because always they were wanted much - Christian von Stieglitz would remember, the common friend that she had presented/displayed to them in Cambridge and who went to visit them

during those days the house of Mehrauli-... For work reasons, it went much to Delhi then, and was a pleasure to see always so carameled them after so many years of marriage. In prevailed, they did not stop to occur kisses and to take the hand." The 9 of December of 1990, day of their birthday, Sonia received a gift of Rajiv with a note: "For Sonia, whom it does not change with time, that is still more beautiful today that when I saw by first time seated in a corner of the Varsity restaurant, that so pretty day... »

But, like always, the happiness parenthesis closed the political events, that hurried more quickly of which Rajiv hoped. India slid by a dangerous slope, pushed by one of the parties of the coalition in the power, BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party), the old Hindu fundamentalist right that as much had fustigado to Indira. The party had grown until becoming the most dangerous adversary of the Congress and a potential danger for the unit of the country. Supported by the RSS, an extremist militant organization, the BJP demanded a "Hindu India" where the minorities would have to live supeditadas to the majority, not still on of equality. Its philosophy was diametrically opposite to the one of Nehru and the Congress, because it apostatized of the founding principle of the modern India, that is to say, of the aconfesionalidad that announced the separation of the State and the religion, and the equality of all the religions before the law. The height of the BJP agreed with the new outbreak of the religious violence in the north of the country. They were disturbances that were not appeased single, but that lasted until the police forces squashed them. The origin of those disturbances was always he himself and used to trigger it an insignificant detail, as a dispute by you are contiguous them of a land, by a space in a sidewalk, a pig tinkling in the wall of a mosque or a found dead cow near a Hindu temple. In any case, in whatever the spark jumped, the violence propagated of flashing way fed by rumors, always false) that they magnified the original incident, transforming a simple collision between two individuals into a war santa between religions. The communitarian organizations and the politicians who identified themselves with one or another one of the factions fed the fire on the discord, so that of the words she went to the puñetazos, soon to the knives, and thus until cocktails molotov and the shots.

In India, the religion and conflicts chaste began to retroalimentar themselves from the Eighties, in particular after all the population of a town of untouchable in Tamil Nadu made the decision to become to the Islam to escape of the rigid Hindu system of the chaste ones. Those poor men changed until the name of the town, that of Menashkipuram happened to be called Rehmatnagar. The Hindu fundamentalists raised the roof - " The hinduismo is in danger! " - and they accused the countries of the Gulf to be financing the Muslims of India. The reality was that the untouchable ones reacted finally to centuries of oppression at the hands of the landowners, who in that zone were Hindu of chaste discharge.

Soon, an apparently inoffensive event still more inflamed the spirits of the Hindu fundamentalists: the broadcasting in 1987 of a series based on the Ramayana, the more popular Hindu epic, the most seemed than the Hindus has to the sagradas writings. The adaptation for the television, a mixture of soap opera and mythology, consisted of one hundred four episodes that relayed Sundays in the morning. The success was so flashing that the state television ordered to another producer of Bollywood the accomplishment of the epic of the Mahabharata. Both series



were the soap operas of greater hearing throughout the world. A 85 percent of the Indian viewers saw the totality of the episodes, a unique number in the history of the television.

When they emitted the series, the activity of the whole country became paralyzed. Taxis, bicycles and rickshaws disappeared of the streets. The telephones let sound. The orations and the rites of cremation were postponed. Civil employees, housewives, water tenderos, prostitutas, criminals, salesmen, street cleaners, children, poor men who hurgaban in sweepings... all left their tasks to stand in front of a television set in house of somebody, a commerce, the seat of the village, or watching at hurtadillas after the windows of the houses of the families who had the privilege to count on that extraordinary invention. Many spectators were believed juntillas on foot what they were seeing, as if the Gods that left in the screen inhabited the world of the men. When the God Rama left in the series, they ignited an oil lamp and they were put to say there same. In India, the worked against layers more of the population are indifferent to the western distinction between history the last and present time, between truth and myth. For them, everything is truth. The most experienced politicians, beginning by Indira, always knew to use to their favor that tenuous border between people and Gods.

The series triggered an authentic tide of hinduista fervor. In fact the fervor had existed always, and it had been exacerbada with independence, like a reaction to so many centuries of domination by mogoles and soon by the English. Nehru and Gandhi, very conscious of the danger of this type of fundamentalism - similar to the one of sijs or to the one of the Muslims, or to the one of the Christians in other parts of the world, but more dangerous still in India because it was the majority religion, they made an effort in preaching the virtues of the aconfesionalidad and in emphasizing the unit between Hindu and Muslim. The Mahatma Gandhi paid it with its life: it was assassinated by militants of the RSS, organization who later was affiliated with the BJP. Indira, very conscious of the problem, at the beginning of its mandate had to face firmness naked hundreds of santones that demanded the prohibition to kill cows to the doors of the Parliament.

Rajiv and other members of the Congress were witnesses of how the BJP operated with political aims the religious feeling created by the broadcasting of the series. In 1987, the BJP, in common agreement with two powerful ideologically compatible social and paramilitary organizations, initiated a campaign who called of "I make amends for historical". The objective era to demolish one old mosque constructed in the old Hindu capital of Ayodhya by a general of the emperor mogul Babar in 1528. They alleged that the mosque had been constructed in the location where the God Rama had been born.

For the Indian Muslims, the campaign of the BJP and its allies were a frontal attack to its rights and their religion. To prevent that the Hindu

hordes destroyed the mosque became symbol of its survival. The ingredients for a complicated and violent conflict were served.

In 1989, after the elections that cost the position to him to Rajiv, another associated Hindu fundamentalist organization to the BJP sent a national campaign so that each town of more than two thousand inhabitants offered a brick destined to the construction from a temple to Branch to less than thirty meters of the location of the mosque. It was a provocation to the Muslims. In the Parliament, Rajiv was urgent to that the government intervened in the affair. New prime minister commanded to the forces of the order to interrupt the construction of the temple, but he was not able to seat in a same table to the different leaders to negotiate a pacific solution to the conflict. On the other hand, Rajiv made the gesture go to visit santón Hindu very venerated that lived to borders of the Ganges, a man who thought firmly that India was the common home of many religions, and that had to continue being thus.

A year more behind schedule, the hinduista BJP gave a new return of nut to the provocation. One of its leaders, an individual high, serious and charismatic call L.K. Advani, made a call so that thousands of volunteers of all the country converged in Ayodhya with the idea to galvanize the chovinistas passions of the Hindus. Same he headed a peregrination that left a small city of Gujarat, and it on board did it of a motorized vehicle that exhibited great pictures of the Gods and whose loudspeakers recited verses of the Ramayana. The farmers rubbed the eyes, incredulous, when seeing to pass that courtship followed of volunteers dressed just as the heroes the series exactly that had seen in television. That march elevated so much the temperature of the communal tension that the government, in principle obstinate to take part against one of the members of his coalition, commanded to interrupt the procession of Advani before this one arrived at its destiny.

Like retaliation, thousands of volunteers of the BJP assaulted the mosque of Ayodhya, armed of arcs and arrows. A panic chill crossed the whole country. What would happen if in each district, each village, each city of the subcontinent began a war of religions? Had not served the violence triggered during the Partition to vaccinate to India against confrontations based on the religion? The consequences could be so terrible that it gave fear to imagine them: atrocities against innocent people, the dismemberment of the country, perhaps a civil war. But the leader of the hinduista party seemed immune to the common sense. Everything was worth so with gaining votes, including on the brink of madness placing to a nation of eight hundred fifty million inhabitants the abyss.

The police did not have more remedy than to act with forcefulness to protect the mosque of the destruction. There was a dozen of died between militants and police. The hinduista party attributed to the police the violent outcome and his leader, Advani, announced that he retired his support to the government. Long before which Rajiv had anticipated, the first government fell who had replaced to him.

- Was to request that elections are summoned? - her daughter asked to him.

- No, the party is not ready still. I do not believe that we now remove more votes than in the previous ones. I prefer to hope.

Rajiv, head of the party with greater representation in the Parliament, was again in a key position. A rival leader of prime minister who finished falling asked for his support to form government. Rajiv accepted to give it to it, but from outside, without comprising of the new cabinet. An astute maneuver, that provided control to him without having to assume the responsibility of which they made the members of the new governing coalition. The truth is that Rajiv did not trust much this leader, nor in its ministers, between whom was Maneka Gandhi, and associate did not want to see itself its management, that it anticipated was going to be a disaster. It was convinced that in a matter of months people would desperately request the return of the Congress to the power. Then it would be the moment for summoning elections.

The predictions of Rajiv became reality. The cabinet constituted by new prime minister offered a collection of granujas of most depressing until for the standards of the third world: "An extraordinary collection of the most ruthless and immoral opportunists who never have entered the political sand India", according to the description of the settled down English Nueva writer Delhi, William Dalrymple.

The rupture did not take in arriving, and happened of somewhat strange way. Sonia was again very ofuscada with the subject of the security because, when losing the elections, the new government had retired them the escorts highly trained of the Special Protection Group, as if the fact that Rajiv was not in the government made disappear the threats. The change had been so drastic that Sonia and Priyanka lived in a state of perpetual fear whenever Rajiv went away of trip. to happen to be protected by hundreds of agents in each displacement, it left house accompanied by a single escort, a good man, faithful and servicial, call Pradip Gupta: "If something happens to him to Rajiv, it will be by upon my corpse" said to him once to Sonia when so on edge seeing it. But it was a poor consolation. Rahul shared the same anguish. It often called from the United States to make sure that nothing had happened to him to its father. So it was worried about the details that her mother told him on the chapuceras that were the safety measures that insisted much on going to spend the vacations from Passover to house, in March of 1991. It accompanied to its father in a trip by the state of Bihar and it remained pasmado when verifying the absence of forecast, the lack of means and the exposed thing by itself that was Rajiv to any aggression. Sometimes the police were separating to a crowd and him they left single in the car, other times they did not go ahead the sufficient thing and Rajiv was exposed again. Before embarking for States again Together with, Rahul said its mother words that at heart it did not want to think, but that they were premonitorias: "If you on the matter do not

do something, I am afraid that the next time that returns will be for the funeral of papa.”

The problem was not only the lack of support of the government, but that Rajiv was obsessed with the idea to stay near the town. They had said to him that there were lost the elections because it had given the distant and almost arrogant one image of somebody. The bodyguard presence was an impediment at the time of working an image of accessible politician, that it was what looked for. “To live under a terrorist threat or a threat on death never it has worried to me - it had declared. I have never left interfered in my way to think. Yes, it has caused problems to me by all the annoyances that the security implies... but it is necessary to die reason why one creates, would not doubt it.” Christian van Stieglitz was days with them in those days, next to Pounding, his Spanish woman. “To pound Nueva Delhi did not know, so Rajiv took to give a return to us. We put in a small Suzuki that he himself lead, and left, its escorts at full speed following to him as they could in a white Ambassador, until it was able to confuse them. Did not have to be easy to be escort of Rajiv Gandhi! I could not let think that too much risked. Memory that one behind schedule we went to the Qutub Minar, the monument upper of the city. Rajiv was between my woman and I chatting with us while we walked between the ruins. In a while dice, I occurred the return and I saw that they followed thousand people to us, to certain distance, without daring to approach too much. They were sorprendidísimos to see Rajiv take a walk more like a tourist. We continued walking and suddenly Rajiv crouched and gathered of the ground two white florecitas. One approached the multitude and one occurred them to a girl who watched to him agape with great black eyes.” When Christian commentd out to him on the risks that assumed, Rajiv answered to him: “I cannot distrust of the man of the street. I must live the life.”

The one that did not live she was Sonia. She was she who paid attention, in a weekend that happened in the field house of Mehrauli, in two individuals that watched the house and that were not the habitual escorts. Communicated it to Rajiv, and this one left to ask to them who had issued the order to them to watch them, and thus discovered that she had been the head of local government, an individual that belonged to the party of new prime minister. Irritated and disturbed reason why it considered an unacceptable intrusión in its deprived life, Rajiv it called to prime minister and it demanded that they cleared that monitoring to him, as well as the resignation of the head of government who had issued that order. “Era a confidence question - Rajiv- declared. It had deposited my confidence in this man, and we supported its government. And now I discover that we are not of FIAR and they put two police watching our house. What means this” New prime minister tried to diminish the subject and tried to appease the ignited spirits of Rajiv, because he was in an impasse. Facing its own party, it could not dismiss civil employees or local heads of government at the request of the leader of the Congress. On the other hand, if Rajiv cleared the support to him, it would lose the control of the Parliament. Pero Rajiv

insisted on purifying responsibilities. As the man did not respond to his requirements, Rajiv threatened boycotting the Parliament. Of way that four months after to have sworn the position, that prime minister was itself forced to submit his retirement application to the president of the Republic.

Now yes, the moment had arrived for celebrating new general elections, that the electoral commission fixed for the 20, 23 and 26 of May of 1991. India was in total crisis, which could facilitate that an opposition party as the Congress returned to the power. Aside from the height of the Hindu fundamentalism, Kashmir lived a scaling on violence. In the front of the economy, the management of the last governments had been disastrous. The inflation, produced by the increase of the price of the crude one because of the Gulf War, was desbocada and threatened creating serious social problems. Rajiv proposed a program based on the stability and the economic reform, including more privatizations and less controls to the industry and the commerce. The enemy to beat in the ballot boxes was the BJP, the hinduista party, that was outlined like an organization in height with a potentially dangerous program for the stability of the country. The other parties, including those of the salient coalition, only could aspire to a limited number of benches.

Again Rajiv started off in campaign, insurance of its victory. Thus it was the policy, like a reflection of the same life, where nothing is permanent and everything changes incessantly, to times at a speed of vertigo. He wanted to initiate the campaign next to Sonia, and same he piloted the airplane that the 1 of May of 1991 settled in Amethi. It was first of six hundred scales that it had to do in twenty days. A multitude was waiting for the slope to them of the airplane, between which there were many women who went to give the welcome to Sonia. One of the reasons of its immense popularity in Amethi is that Sonia had a prodigious memory, and remembered the names and the faces of women who had perhaps seen five minutes in previous trips. The Italian identified itself totally with those farmers who were called on it with an almost infantile curiosity to verify that era of meat and bone like them. It had the intention to pass three weeks encamping in the circumscription of its husband, solicing the vote marries according to house, while it would cross the subcontinent. At the end of the day, before raising by the stairway of the airplane, Rajiv went to its voters and it said a very simple phrase to them, but that in the end turned out to be prophetic: "I do not believe that he can return again here, but Sonia remains to guard by you. " Sonia felt a jab in the heart. Not by fact to be single, because the calidez of people and the attitude solicit of the local members of the Congress made it feel like in house, but because it was the first time in twenty-three years of married that were going to spend as much time separated, almost three weeks.

That night, while it tried to conciliate the dream tended in charpoi, a camp bed done of braided cord, within a tent and fighting against the heat and the mosquitos, Sonia remembered the last time that was been in Amethi. It was in February, the month in which they turned its wedding

anniversary. It had come to inaugurate a campaign of vaccination against polio. It thought that they could not celebrate together the anniversary, because Rajiv had predicted to travel in those dates to Tehran. It went with the idea to send a diplomatic initiative to end the Gulf War. But one night like that one, although less warm, him had arrived a note from Rajiv having requested to him that it cancelled his commitments in Amethi and that please returned quickly to Nueva Delhi to accompany it in that trip. "I feel like... that it desires to me to be with you, solely you and I, single we, without hundreds of people revoloteando to ours around as always", said the note. When Sonia arrived at Nueva Delhi, to the edge of the midnight, was with a nervous Rajiv because she thought that they would not arrive in time to take the flight. It discovered that already it had made the suitcases. Everything was ready for the trip. In Tehran, after the official commitments, they went to have supper single to a restaurant. For how much a long time that they did not allow to resemblance romantic luxury? Neither they remembered or... Rajiv gave a gift to him that had brought from Delhi, precious and simple slopes as it liked her. When they returned to the hotel, it took its camera, with which always it traveled, and they became a photo with the automatic firing mechanism , something that never had done before.

- Madam, Madam.

A whispering voice outside the store interrupted its ensoñación. Sonia rose, a dressing gown was put and left. A young man, a supporter of the party, gave to him on. It came from Nueva Delhi, era of Rajiv. Sonia opened it and found a rose, with a written note by hand. It read it, it smiled showing its hoyuelos, and it returned to charpoi. "Era a love message", would confess later.

Priyanka later arrived days at Amethi to accompany it. They visited an average from fifteen villages the day. They listened to the complaints of people by a pension that did not arrive, a young blind person that needed money for an operation or a old one that complained which after the previous elections, those of the Congress ignored them. Sonia took notes and gave instructions to his assistants. "You have faith - it said to them to suplicantes-, I am going away to order of solucionaros this."

In one of the villages, Priyanka was witness of an extraordinary event, considering the aversion that had its mother to speak in public. Without Rajiv had requested it, Sonia dared to make his first speech in front of a multitude of several thousands of people. "My husband has worked much by your well-being and I work for my husband... Only the Congress can with dignity representaros, you narrow the hand of my husband... " Priyanka was ed \*\*\*reflx mng to see exhort it people to vote by the Congress, and in addition amusingly. The phrases in hindi with a slight accent left to him with facility, smiled and seemed to enjoy perhaps, because there were no journalists, all were humble people who did not intimidate it. Most well-known it was that proprio had done it motu, as an act of delivery to its husband.

Both returned to Nueva Delhi day 17 of May, exhausted, sudorosas and full of dust, but optimistic on the final result of the elections. When the night following Rajiv arrived from its tour and entered by the fore door, they remained stupefied. "He was exhausted. It could not speak nor almost walk. It had not slept nor it had eaten decently during weeks. It had been of campaign twenty hours to the day. Their hands and their arms were full of scratches and marks. It hurt all the body to him. Thousands of admirers had touched to him, had given brotherly squeezes of hand, hugs and pats him in the back. The heart was divided to see it to me in that state." Their fingers so were swollen by the amount of squeezes of hand that had had to clear the alliance. But he was contented, the heart filled by so many tests of affection, therefore enthusiasm. Its deficient service of security had served to him to go to the encounter of which their grandfathers and his mother called "the love of people", and returned moved because people responded. "In Kerala and Tamil Nadu they have the custom of pellizcarte the cheek, for that reason I have so red and fan - it told to Sonia while it placed reposapiés to him so that she could stretch the legs... and sometimes, in Muslim zones, they give kisses , already you know you, one, two, three kisses and soon that special hug that divides the back to you... It hurts all the body to me, but it does not matter." Impressions were chatting calmly during a good short while, interchanging on their mutual experiences. Rajiv was satisfied because it had been able to demonstrate that it concerned people to him. But he was not safe to win: "It is going to be a hard fight", confessed to him. That night slept five hours, everything a luxury, before leaving for Bhopal, where the 19 of May in front of gave a meeting one hundred thousand people. The city followed traumatizada by the 1984 catastrophe. The multinational responsible for the accident had reached an agreement to pay a sum in concept of compensation to the victims, but the money did not finish arriving at hands from the needed ones. He was turned aside by corrupt and intermediary civil employees. Again the system was what failed.

After Bhopal, already only it was left the south, "territory friend", as they called the members of the Congress. First a returned marries and so was tired that it remained slept in the hall, alleviated when thinking that the campaign was arriving at its aim. Three days more, and all reunited would be there same, because Rahul would go to spend the vacations of summer. It had predicted to arrive the 23 from May. Sonia and Priyanka also were contented. They were safer than Rajiv that this one would gain the elections by an ample margin. The whole family had turned upside down in the effort to return to place at the top to a Gandhi and the Congress of the country. Indira had felt proud of all of them: that was "to make family".

The 20 of May, Rajiv and Sonia left from seven house to and average in the morning depositing their vote. To those hours, the temperature was still bearable. Cornejas seemed to greet them from the branches of the trees with their bitter quacks. Rajiv, white dress with one kurta and a handkerchief tricolor around of the neck, drived the car by the

wide avenues, that were almost desert, but to the entrance of the electoral school it waited for a crowd of people and a television equipment. Sonia was splendid in salwar kamiz red. They saluted right and left joining the palms of the hand to the height of the chest and Rajiv signed some autographs while they hoped that it opened the school. Behind, the row was growing. A young volunteer of the party approached Rajiv with a tray in which there was incense, sugar and petals of flower with the intention to make same one bid up there (an offering) to begin the day with a note auspices to in their honor. Sonia, whenever he was with his husband in a public place, observed all the one kindly that approached, trying to guess some hidden intention, a suspicious bulk, a inhabitual gesture. The paranoia did not give truce him. Perhaps for that reason so much was scared when the man of the tray, intimidated by Rajiv, dropped it in a noise that made be frightened to all. Sonia irritated itself, soon began to sweat abundantly. Rajiv was noticed of the malaise of its woman and requested that they brought a water glass to him. When it was called on to him to vote, so it was altered that it did not find the problem with the symbol of the Congress. For a moment it thought that one would go away without voting. When coming out, going towards the car, was told it Rajiv, that it was ed \*\*\*reflex mng: "It took the hand to Me - it would remember Sonia- with that warm and reassuring touch that always helped to dissipate any feeling of anxiety." It was perhaps the last occasion in which Rajiv was present to calm its woman, because after leaving it in house, it left for its following tour. In the evening it had predicted to return to Nueva Delhi to change of the helicopter to an airplane and to start off to the south, where the elections would be celebrated two days later.

But that behind schedule, Rajiv gave the surprise them to pass itself by house. Sonia and Priyanka were happy outside for seeing it, although nearly time. Rajiv showered quickly, pricked something and called to its son to the United States: "I call for darte spirits with your examinations, Rahul, and for decirte contented it that I am from which you return soon... It is going to be a good summer... I want to you... Good bye." Soon it gave a kiss to Priyanka. Again it had to go away, but the good thing is that that one would be the last scale of the electoral tour. He was calm, it went to the south, the safe, not like north , convulso and so dangerous territory.

- You cannot leave it already? - Sonia- requested to him. This trip will not change the results...

- I know It, but already he is everything organized... Spirit, a last empujoncito and we will leave winners... Only two days more and again together - it said to him to Sonia with its captivating smile.

" We took leave tenderly... - Sonia- would remember and it went away.

I remained watching between the cracks of the blind and I saw move away him, until I lost to him of Vista... This time for always."



## 40

To the following day, 21 of May of 1991, Rajiv embarked in a helicopter to visit several cities of the state of Orissa, in the east of the country. It was a debilitating day, and at night one was so tired that it thought to recover little of slow dream and to cancel the last visit that had predicted a town of the neighbor been of Tamil called Nadu Sriperumbudur. In addition, a report of the Intelligence service to the central government had specifically advised to him not to attend meetings in Tamil Nadu after the dusk, because the Tamiles Tigers arranged in that state of a considerable support between the population. He was hungry, and the local leader of the party, a young professional who he had recruited for the Congress, invited to him to have supper to his house, but it remained thinking about which they were hoping to him in Sriperumbudur, all the effort that their companions of party had invested in organizing the meeting, and in the end did not want to defraud them and declined the invitation to have supper. The affluent party deserved a last effort.

- Already I will sleep to loose leg with Rahul, Priyanka and Sonia to my around - it said to him to its companion.

-Then you are not going to pay attention to the report to the Intelligence service?

- If it had to make case to all those information, it must long ago have left the campaign . In addition - it added, the political violence is little common in the south of India, that we know all to it. Here the elections are looked more like town celebrations that to serious political events.

When entering the airplane, one was with the pleasant surprise from which the local leader had made him arrive pizza and empanadillas. Hardly it had given a first bite to its supper when they communicated to him that the apparatus could not take off by a technical problem. "Better - Rajiv was said, that cabezadita- only thought about throwing one. Then we remained here." Under the airplane and one put in a Ambassador that lead to him to the lodging of the government. But, of way, an official car reached to him.

- Sir - a police by the window said to him, already has been solved the failure, the airplane is ready for the takeoff.

During a fraction of second, Rajiv doubted in if it had to follow way or to return to the airport. In the end, it was let take by the events and it said to him to the driver who gave average return. Again in the airplane, it took seat, the belt was fastened and when the apparatus began to roll by the track, that occurred to account of had forgotten the food in the car.

It arrived at Madras to eight and average at night, it attended one short press conference, drank a refreshment and it followed trip by highway. It went seated ahead, alongside of the conductor, with the open window. In the salpicadero of the Ambassador, there was a small fluorescent light that it gave him in the face so that people could see it in the dark at night. One stopped in an average town in which it gave a meeting of twenty minutes and to nine and already was in another one giving a new speech. In the

passage, it took advantage of to chat with journalists. That day went accompanied of Barbara Crossette, correspondent of The New York Times and specialist in Asian subjects. When crossing the villages, the car broke through between the multitude slowly and people, with expression of frenetic joy in her faces, sent flowers. "We waited for good results in this zone", said Rajiv to the journalists. Nothing else to leave the car, their followers struggled to place garlands to him around the neck, while others gave handkerchiefs and villas to him. In a while dice, stopped to greet a woman who was being squeezed by the crowd. It placed a scarf to him of silk around the neck and it said words to him. The woman covered her face with her hands and tightened the scarf against her chest. Barbara Crossette was surprised of the little protection which she had: "More than one hundred times, anyone of the hands that had put in the car to touch the arm or to give him the hand to him had been able to stab it or to shoot to him."

They followed way. Throughout the highway, there were lights of colors and placards giving him the welcome. From time to time, Rajiv indicated the driver who was more slowly or than she stopped the car to leave and to narrow more hands while she requested the vote to them for the Congress. The peculiar thing is that it said it in English, because did not speak tamil. When more length had to explain something, an interpreter did the work to him. The notes and letters that were gathering of people put them in a gray stock market of air lines that always took with himself. Barbara Crossette did her last interview to him. It asked if it did not take vitaminic supplements or if it took a special diet to hold that unfolding of energy, considering the heat to him of 40 hard degrees and it that were the highways... Rajiv prorumpió in outbursts of laughter. " These Americans! ", he had to think. "Most of the time not like anything. I stay with this... ", it answered, indicating a pair of thermus, one of coffee and another one of tea. It indicated to them that the only concession to the comfort was the white slippers of sport that took. Soon it conversed on its favorite subjects: "People are frustrated because the system is not effective, it does not feed its aspirations. We must be able to improve it drastically. But, mainly, I am determined to end all the controversies on the religion. We want a complete separation between religion and policy. The mixture is explosive, not only here, but anywhere in the world."

To ten of the night, the local leaders of Sriperumbudur, an agricultural pueblecito without greater interest, announced the arrival of the leader. People were seeing a spectacle of typical dance of the region, very colorful and noisy, something normal in the electoral meetings, since the important candidates never arrived precise. The two hours of delay on the predicted schedule did not clear the desire to the people of corear it and sending firecrackers to celebrate their arrival. Rajiv was scared when hearing the first explosions, but they explained to him that it was the habitual way to receive an important dignitary in Tamil Nadu. Normally, in an act thus, in the north, there had been an arc metal detector to the entrance of the enclosure. But nothing seemed existed here, except the

efforts of the faithful escort Pradip Gupta to separate to people and to avoid that they touched to his prote'ge'. Rajiv stopped in front of a statue of its mother and it placed a garland to him of claveles ceremoniously. The multitude was compound on everything of men of warm aspect, dresses with longhis, fabrics coiled around the waist, and of niquis or kurtas without neck. After the tribute to Indira, Rajiv walked on a red carpet towards the estrada one where they waited for the local leaders to him of the party, seated around one long table. It accepted with its eternal smile the garlands that were to him putting, one stopped to give a handshake, responded to the one greeting, took off garlands accumulated in the neck and it sent them to the women, it discussed with the local police that they tried to maintain separated to the multitude, it was ed \*\*\*reflx mng and it joked with all. It in this way removed its incredible energy from the contact with people , connecting with the example of its grandfathers and his mother.

Between the multitude there were two women of about thirty years. One of them was short, of dark skin and took glasses. Dhanu was called. It dressed a cattle jacket on a punjabí suit color orange that consisted of a long skirt on wide trousers, contrary to the rest of the women of the south, which usually they take saris. It seemed to be pregnant. Nobody suspected that the reasons of their corpulencia had to that under its jacket a battery of nine volts had patches to the body, a detonator and six grenades with shrapnel surrounded in a material plastic explosive. The other girl was called Kokila, and was the daughter of a civil employee of the party. Rajiv affectionately put the arm to him by upon the shoulder while she recited a poem in her honor. Dhanu, with a garland in the hand, was able to break through and to be placed behind Kokila. When the girl finished the poem, the turn arrived to him at Dhanu, but just when she was going to give his garland to him to Rajiv, a woman police stopped it with the arm. Rajiv smiled to him. "It leaves each one has its turn... One does not worry, calm." The police stopped and the return occurred, without suspecting that of that way it was saving the life. Then Dhanu approached Rajiv to place a wood shaving garland to him of sándalo carved in form of petals of flower around the neck. Rajiv thanked for it with its beautiful smile and, following the tradition, the garland took off to give it to a companion of the party that was behind him. While, Dhanu was crouched to touch the feet to him. Rajiv also did, to show it humility, like saying that it was not worthy of that greeting. But the woman deceived to him: it was not touching the feet to him in veneration sign, but throwing of a cord that activated the detonator.

The explosion was apocalyptic. "When I occurred the return - it counted Add Dubey, assistant of Rajiv and old friend of the family I saw people fly by airs like a slow motion ." Barbara Crossette, who had remained back, saw "a very intense explosion... and soon people falling around, in circle, like the petals of a flower. In the place where one assumed that it was Rajiv, there was a hole in the earth." The shrapnel had ended the life of the assassin, Rajiv and seventeen people more. The panic seized of the multitude and the police, that did not know if that one would be an

isolated explosion or if there would be more. The dust and the smoke dissipated to in the open leave the spectacle of the massacre: dismantled bodies, black and smoky earth, calcined objects. Peculiarly, the estrado one followed still on, which had jumped in pieces had been people.

“ It was looking for something of white color - it would count Add Dubey-, because Rajiv always went of target. But everything what saw was black, calcined matter.” Other companions of party went away approaching and found to Pradip Gupta, the faithful escort of Rajiv. It followed alive, it was fallen down and with the very open eyes, undergoing in own meat the prediction that Sonia had done to him: “If something happens to him to Rajiv, it will have to be over my corpse... ” It died seconds later. Underneath its body, somebody found a sport slipper white. Era of Rajiv. A colleague of the party tried to turn what it was of the body, without obtaining it because she undid. Rajiv literally had been eviscerado by the explosion, the skull was fractured and was lost almost all the cerebral mass. It had died in the act. Fifteen minutes after the explosion, it sounded the telephone in number 10 of Janpath.

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Who offered-hook the apparatus was the secretary of Rajiv, that worked in the deprived office of its head, in a wing separated from the house. The family slept. In his dormitory, Sonia heard the telephone between dreams and she sounded to him like a howl.

- Sir, has been an attack with pump - a difficult voice said, splashed of interferences.

- Who speech?

- I am of the Intelligence service. I call of Sriperumbudur.

To the secretary a knot in the throat was done to him.

- How is Rajivji? - it asked.

The man did not respond. The secretary heard how his interlocutor cleared one's throat to clarify the throat before returning to speak.

- Sir, is that... - it began saying, without finishing its phrase.

Nervous, the secretary urged on to him:

- So that it does not say to me of once how is Rajiv?

- Sir, has passed away - the man loosen then, and nothing else to say hung it the telephone.

The secretary remained with the earpiece in the hand, the lost glance, trying to assimilate the one that finished hearing. The slight hope of which it had been the false news evaporated when, nothing else to hang, it returned to sound the telephone. A member of the Congress de Tamil Nadu came to confirm the news to him. No longer there was doubt. In followed the other lines they began to vibrate, in an unbearable cacophony. The secretary left hurried.

- Madam, Madam...

One was with Sonia in the corridor, that the Albornoz left his quarter tying itself.

It almost could not be on the awares. It had the scrambled hair. It knew that a call in half of the night could not announce nothing good. It had recorded in its memory the one that had received one night in the familiar house of Orbassano having announced to him the accident of Sanjay. Now she was imprisoned of a similar feeling and a knot in the stomach was done to him. But what he left frost it was the scared air, almost histérico of the secretary, a habitually sober and been moderate man.

- Madam, has been a pump... - it stammered.

Sonia sent a severe glance to him. It had the swollen face of dream.

- Is alive?

The secretary was incapable to answer. They did not leave the words to him. They did not make lack either, Sonia had let listen to him. All its body was contracted as if it had received an electrical unloading and from more deep from its hurt soul of death a guttural shout arose, hoarse. Seven years after conversation that had maintained with Rajiv in the operating room of the hospital where were sewing corpse of Indira, and in

that him suplicó not to accept since her mother had left vacant because they would kill to him, the prediction had been fulfilled.

- ¡Nooooo...!

Its shout woke up to Priyanka, that appeared in the corridor, also surrounded in an Albornoz, the exhausted aspect, the overwhelmed glance. It was speechless, incredulous, lívida. It took hold its mother and it took it to the hall as it could. In its nineteen years of life it had never seen it in that state of desperation. Nobody had never seen it cry of that way. As much they lasted and so strong they were the sobs that the first companions of party which later they began to arrive at the house heard them from the street.

Priyanka was not able to confortar it. Suddenly, Sonia began to toser and to suffocate of such way that the secretary feared that he lost the knowledge.

- It is an asthma attack - Priyanka said.

It was so violent that much was scared.

- Immediately I return! - it sent.

It ran towards the bathroom of its mother and laboriously looked for the inhalant and the antihistamine ones. When it returned to the hall, it almost saw sitting it in a armchair with the eyes in target, the open mouth and the head thrown backwards, looking for air like a fish outside the water. It thought that one died. In fact, a part of her had died with its husband.

The medicines made their effect and were able to stop the cough, but not them sobs. By much that her daughter tried to calm it, Sonia was inconsolable. Its weeping grew on itself, insistent and regular like the waves in its harassment to the beach. Priyanka went to the secretary:

- Where is the body of my father? - it asked.

- At this moment, they are taking it to Madrás.

- By favor, ayúdame to make the managements pertinent so that we pruned to move to us until there - it requested to him.

Priyanka was done position of the situation, demonstrating a maturity, a cold blood and an admirable sense of the organization. It conversed with the first friends of its father and leaders of the Congress who went with perplex air and desolate, some crying to alive tear. Until it spoke with the president of the Republic by telephone. It requested to him that it put an airplane to disposition of the family. In the bottom something within her prevented him to think that his father was dead. It was like a reflection that it protects of the pain and it allows to act. Unconsciously, it cost to him to accept something so catastrophic without verifying it, for that reason it needed to see its father as soon as possible.

- Creéis that is prudent desplazaros until there? - the president of the Republic said to him.

- By favor, president, I insist. My mother and I have the firm intention to go this same night to Madrás.

- It is well, I will speak with the army to make your available an airplane of the Aerial Force. Soon I will pass by your residence for daros the condolence.

- Thanks, we will hope to him.

Now it was called on to notify to him to its brother, that it was in Harvard. There it was lunch time . He obtained that a companion transmitted the message to him of which he had to call urgently to house. One hour later, its sister and her mother notified worse to him of their life.

- Knew It, knew it! - the boy said crying and biting the lip. It knew that it was going to happen.

That feeling of frustration and impotence accentuated the pain all the family.

- We did the one that we could...

- You create?

- Clear that yes.

They said to him that it came in the first flight, that was beginning to organize the funerales, that hoped to him.

They were more or except the eleven at night and already the news had run by Nueva Delhi. A multitude was congregating itself before the house iron door. From the interior, Priyanka and Sonia heard histéricos shouts and moans. They continued going friends of the family, companions, ministers, police, etc. An invasion in all rule. The press took positions in the iron door and the street. People still did not know against whom to direct its rage: against sijs, the Muslim or Hindu fundamentalists, the Tamiles Tigers, the asameses, dalits...? They did not lack offenses in that so motley country. So far, they directed it against the international equipment of national television and. People congregated there began to insult them. Some friends who to the steering wheel of their car crossed the fence were received from bad way: Ottavio and Maria Quattrochi were booed and received some that another pedrada, and the same happened with the leaders of the opposition, which they came to present/display his condolencias. The fury of the multitude extended towards all the adversaries of Rajiv. A crowd tried to assault the neighboring house of one of its more ferocious critical when it was in the government, a leader of a chaste one of "untouchable". Such era the atmosphere in the streets that the president of the Republic could not arrive until the house. One was with a frenetic and desperate crowd. People threw themselves on the hood of her automobile, crying and sobbing.

- We dispersed Them? - the safety officer asked the president.

- No, we give average return. I do not want that they become inflamed plus the spirits.

From return to his residence in the old palace of the virrey, the president called by telephone to Sonia. He was a little calmer, and it could thank for its condolencias to him and the facilities that had arranged to that singular trip.

Dressed in salwar kamiz target, the hair combed backwards and gathered in a monkey, nothing to hang more left house with Priyanka. It was hoped a car to take them to them to the airport. The Kaul uncle lead, the one that so many efforts had made to convince to Rajiv that it followed the passages of his brother. The car broke through with difficulty between the multitude that crowded itself around the house. The streets were more and more anxious. Groups of people crowded around themselves in the corners and the roundhouses, in a mood that oscillated between the rage and the pain.

- I hope that the government acts with prontitud and it does not allow what it happened after the death of Indira - commented the Kaul uncle.

The flight lasted three hours and average, the time that a jet takes in crossing the subcontinent of north to the south. Down, in that black sprinkled land extension of light small points that indicated the cities and the towns, India slept. Within hours it was going to wake up with the tragedy of another political murder. Within hours, they thought, the country would be sunk in the affliction. Nobody spoke during the flight. The sobs of Sonia were only heard.

It continued being at night when they landed in Madrás to four and average of the dawn. The airplane rolled until the old terminal, illuminated and surrounded by an enormous multitude. There it was the body of Rajiv. By indication of the president of the Republic, they had taken it until avoiding there that Sonia and Priyanka had to move in car until the city. A humid and sticky air nothing else surrounded to them to leave the airplane. They were very nervous because the moment approached. The moment for seeing it for the last time. What were going to be? Was prepared for it? Would support It? Those questions became while they lowered the stairway and they saluted to the personalities that had gone to receive them.

Also the authorities feared here that disturbances exploded, said the governor to them. The multitude looked for I inform expiatorio and the spirits in the city very were heated. For that reason they had arranged the necessary measures so that the flight took off before the dawn. When he recognized Add Dubey, old and loyal friend of Rajiv that had left unharmed the attack miraculously, Sonia lay down to cry in his arms.

But they did not see Rajiv. They could not. They said to them that its body so was destroyed that it had been impossible to embalsamar it. The only thing that saw was two coffins. One contained the rest of Rajiv and the other the one of its bodyguard, the good one of Pradip Gupta. From then, everything was very fast. Taken hold one to the other, mother and daughter they saw how they put them in the guts of the airplane. They returned to raise by the stairway. Once inside, Sonia requested that they placed the coffin to his side. With a hand it put a garland of flowers on féretro, while with the other the face with a chal was covered to wipe its tears. Priyanka, when seeing the coffin moored thus, had to admit what its subconscious



mind refused to better accept, that in that box was its father, or saying, which was of him. Then it could not be contained more and one crumbled. soon account of which it would not return it to never see, that occurred never would be more let rock by the affection and calidez of its father. It was embraced to the box and it remained sobbing long short while.

The airplane rolled already by the track. They add Dubey and Sonia they tranquilized it, they made it seat and they fastened the belt to him. Then Sonia had a gesture that without a doubt Rajiv had appreciated. When occurring account of which the coffin of the bodyguard Pradip Gupta was without anything, went to place a garland to him of jazmines.

It was by day when the airplane took off, of return to the India capital. The last trip of Rajiv began Gandhi.

**ACT IV**  
**THE HIDDEN HAND OF THE DESTINY**

*You do not know the limits your force, you do not know what beams.*

*You do not know who you are.*

**EURIPIDES**

## 42

It already is. Everything has finished. Although it did not show any official position, sixty and four countries have sent an official representative to the funerales. Rajiv had something special, that very made him be wanted by that they treated to him.

The ash-gray ones already travel towards the ocean, dissolved in the Ganges, mixed with those of the great-grandfather Motilal, those of the grandfathers Nehru and those of their brother. The individual pain is only one part of the so great emptiness that it has left. The security and maintenance staff sad and is disoriented. Until the house dogs they are mustios. The handle to which all could cling before the swings of a chaotic and uncertain world has disappeared. How to think that no longer it is? Sonia and his children feel their presence at any moment, mainly at night, in dreams. The unconscious one goes slower than the reality, costs to him to reach it, for that reason you will wake up them are specially hard. Other times keep awake frightened and they occur of you brush with the reality, and then they realize of which that one is the worse nightmare.

The important thing is that everything has passed peacefully. The blood bath, not like after the murder of Indira has been avoided. The government has removed the army to the street to time and has decreed seven days of national mourning. What it has not been possible to avoid they have been several cases of suicide and inmolaciones inside the country. Eternal India follows lives in the hearts of people.

Now, until its political adversaries they agree in which Rajiv has been a decent man. In the death, they praise the leader that has denigrated while still alive. Also the press, that first encumbró and soon vilipendió, makes its examination of conscience. A morning, Priyanka teaches to its mother an article of the Hindustan Times.

- Read it, mother, publish a tribute here that she looks for to excuse the attitude that the means have had with papa.

Sonia is proud of his children. They have been to the height. Thank heavens which it has had to Priyanka it surrounds to organize it everything, to maintain the house in sequence, to go to receive to Rahul and to choose the place of the cremation. It had not been able. It is impossible to make decisions when one feels while still alive dead. It thinks that Indira also would be proud of them.

Sonia is placed the glasses and she is put to read. The text has the merit of the franqueza: "We took the hair Him by its shoes Gucci, its glasses Cartier, its cattle tenders of mark, its trips with its woman in the jumbos of Indian Airlines... We made fun of of his hindi, although ours he was worse... The truth is that we were full of resentment and of envies... We knew in our internal law that it had traveled more than all together we and whom one better vision of the problems of the India had that the one that we could have, pontificando in our columns. Their natural elegance, its good aspect and its modales gave an unjust advantage him on all the others. It had so much reason why to live, as much that to make in spite of

our repairs and our critics.” Sonia cries when she gives back the article to him to his daughter. “ So that it has had to pay to a so high price a good man that above it had made well its work? ”, it is asked. The so little questions are so many and the answers that Sonia is hopeless. What that knows is his husband has finished being victim of a system that has demanded him the impossible thing. Ah, if one had not put in policy, if they had left to Maneka the heiress paper... Maneka, that appeared in the funeral next to Firoz Varun and that with tearful eyes whispered condolencia words .

Now Sonia and his children want to know who has assassinated to him. The police says that has been terrorist of the Front Tamil de Liberación Nacional... But is safe? When will be able to confirm it? and mainly... When will be able to be made justice? The justice is a poor consolation, but at this point he is the unique thing that is.

- Lady, has a call - she interrupts a crew member to him. It is a conference.

Ever since their sisters have returned to Italy after spending days in Nueva Delhi, wrapping, Sonia speaks to them every day on the telephone with some of them, who insist so that she returns. They think that with time account of which no longer it has sense to remain to live in Nueva Delhi, aside from which will occur is dangerous. Pero Sonia knows it clearly and already was said it to its mother. India continues being its reason of living, although the heart has robbed him. Here it is where their dreams are buried.

- This one is my life - Nadia to the telephone repeats to him to his sister. No longer I can leave this country and to install to me was, where I will be always a foreigner. I realized it when papa died.

- By the minus, cámbiate of house...

- So that? You also think that she is gafada? Here it is what the press says...

- No, I do not believe in those trivialities, I say it because in that house all it will remember Rajiv to you...

- It is indeed for that reason reason why I do not want to change itself. You know, to remain widow is not like divorcing. In addition, from the point of view of the security, this house is adapted.

The security! Hollow what seems that word from the distance. Two murders, and Sonia continues believing in her. How stubborn it can be a sister... But the fear is only understood if it is lived from within. The threat of sijs to Indira to kill until the hundredth generation of its descendants has remained recorded in the mind of Sonia. How to forget a similar threat, that in addition one has been confirmed with the blood of its mother-in-law? Now, with the one of Rajiv, it knows that the revenge thirst does not have limit. She nor their children will never be able to live in a complete peace, for being who are. Never, neither here nor in Italy nor in no other site. Better to accept it. At least, in India, it returns to have all the apparatus of the State to protect to them. “The security of the family Gandhi is of national interest”,

has declared pomposamente the president of the Republic one week after the attack. To good hours, Sonia thinks... The case is that prime minister in functions, by indication of the president of the Republic, has assigned to the Maxima protection to them. They return to have the service of the Special Protection Group, that already demonstrated its effectiveness when Rajiv was prime minister. Sonia has not been able to avoid to comment out bitter:

- The police has let me know that if you had not retired him the protection of the SPG to Rajiv, to which it had right, it had been saved of the attack.

- Soniaji - it has responded without altering prime minister to him, you know perfectly that if Rajiv had insisted, the government had given back it.

- I am not so safe.

How to be it? How to believe the word of a politician? It is certain, Rajiv had not asked for it, but she yes. It had insisted several times, always in vain. Priyanka had insisted. Rahul also. The reality is that no politician had special interest in providing to Rajiv a greater protection: those of their party because it separated to him from the masses and therefore reduced their possibilities of success, those of the opposition because if it passed something to him to Rajiv, they ended the superiority of the Congress. All won leaving defenseless Rajiv.

After as much activity, to see as much people, of so many spilled tears, Sonia undergoes the counterstroke. Little by little it is been based the new situation, from where a frightful question arises: How to continue living without Rajiv? From where removing forces to be without him? Now it touches most difficult, to invent a life. As little it serves the consolation to him of the religion. It says that it believes in all the religions because perhaps it does not believe in any. It has the consolation of which his Rahul son remains to spend the summer. The boy is exhausted. To the lost sadness of having its father, a strong feeling of culpability is added by not to have removed sky and earth, by not to have faced him and him to have forced to demand more protection... Sonia and Priyanka also feel a little guilty, but what could do against the will of Rajiv and the apparatus of the State? The case is that the familiar house returns to be the strength of before, with its fences in the street, its arcs metal detectors, their cameras of monitoring, their turrets, their sentry boxes and their hundred of armed police making the rounds by the zone. The security.

The attack has not interrupted the elections, have been only delayed the two last days. The Congress has devastated in the south, because of the "factor empathy" caused by the murder, but it has been defeated in the north. Maneka also has been defeated in its circumscription and loses its bench in the parliament. The great surprise of these elections has been the spectacular advance of the BJP, the hinduista party that Rajiv had identified like the "enemy to beat". It has multiplied percent its benches. A spectacular and terrorífico height. How not to feel fear when the leader of a Hindu paramilitary group, ally of this party, has homenajead to the

assassin of the Mahatma Gandhi? Is not something that would be prohibited in most of the democracies? , Sonia, scandalized like most of the visitors asks who receive. Can one load so easily against the pillars of a nation with total impunity? With the excuse of the condolence, many deputies and members of the party are going to drill it, sometimes until good late at night. They go to discuss who would have at the top to be the definitive successor of Rajiv of the Congress. They already do not dare to say to him that she would have to assume that position, that if it did it would be hope to fight against the advance of the religious sectarianism. They know that she does not want to hear it. Did not reject of sharp way the presidency of the party, that went to offer to him in silver tray being the still hot ashes of Rajiv?

Sonia, without embargo, listens to them with attention: that if fulano it represents too much the rich ones and it has bad image between the poor men, that if zutano is disloyal and it is not possible to be trusted him, etc.

- To you what seems to you? - they ask to him.

- I would incline more by Narasimha Rao, I believe that he is the one that Rajiv would choose... Pero so that you do not decide who will be the next leader?

- Because this party, with as imposing personalities as Nehru, Indira and your husband, it has never had the necessity to develop a successory mechanism and want that somebody guides to them... You, for example - one dares to loosen one of them, watching it fixedly.

Sonia struggles to stay finds out and calm. Does not understand that I am not interested? It has said one hundred times to them that that does not want to make policy, it is not going to participate in any event or event related to the policy. If to them it continues receiving, is by fidelity to the memory of its husband, because it thinks that to him it would like. To maintain those relations is to maintain it a little while still alive. It does not want to cut the umbilical cord that it ties it to the world of Rajiv, of Indira, to the inheritance of the family. It does by her and her children. A friend hers sees itself in the obligation warn which arrives. "You do not displease to Madam speaking of its entrance in policy. It hurts much to him. You remember that it is in mourning by a husband whom never it loved to enter policy."

Many will remember it dressed in sari white and a black bodice, without jewels, as it sends the tradition at time of mourning, except the alliance, sitting in the edge of the sofa in the study of Rajiv, with the pictures of the family watching to them from the walls. The office table is exactly just as when it left it. It has not wanted to displace no object and nobody feels in its armchair, now covered with the flag that surrounded his féretro. Nobody will do it never, nor at least she. In spite of its elegant bearing and its effort to stay it finds out, from time to time escape tears to him, that it disguises going a handkerchief through the face. Of as much crying it has perpetual ojerias and it has had left a glance watery. It has thinned much, the

marmórea pallor of its complexion is grained of gray, has an expression of infinite sadness in the glance.

But its opinion weighs. Weight as much that she herself is surprised.

In the end, the deputies listen to it. Once convinced that Madam prefers to Narasimha Rao, they fix an internal election so that the deputies vote to him. The party ends up placing to this old friend of the family Nehru of prime minister of a government of coalition, minority because it has needed to the Congress 30 benches to reach the majority. To the press one does not escape to him east to be able of influence, that denominates the Sonia factor. To the Italian it happens to him what to Indira when Nehru died, who automatically has inherited something of the power of the family. For one is the "charisma" for others of the "last name". If that day arrives to have mentioned another name, is probable that Rao had not left. It is not as easy as it seems to come off itself the policy. The power persecutes it, the power wants it. The power needs it.

The government of Rao seems weak. So and as they are the things, nobody bet by its survival, nor by the one of the party. What is the Congress without a Gandhi to the head. An organization the condemned to disappear, giving foot to that hinduista party, the BJP, is appropriated the lost land. He is serious, because that party defends the dangerous idea of "a Hindu India", that stops many is the prescription of the disaster. And nobody dares to imagine the consequences for the country and the rest of the world of a disaster on the scale of India... For that reason they redouble the pressures on Sonia. For the political people in charge of a Congress in the heat of disagreement, and for a great part of the population, she represents the last sentry of a struck dynasty of death.

- Some favor, something that you need, some service? - thus, with tintineante voice, the minister of Social welfare when entering the familiar address of the Gandhi announces.

In the direction of the Congress, they do not know what to invent itself to gain it to it, so that it recalls to mind and it accepts to enter the fold.

Those are so many that they want to see the one that decides to restore a schedule of visits, from five seven of afternoon. The mornings dedicate them to answer the thousands of condolencia letters that she and their children continue receiving from the entire world. It insists on reading them all, and tries to answer those of the well-known ones personally. To the others, it sends a note to them of gratefulness printed and signed of its fist and letter, in English or hindi. The afternoons, after the visits, it is when the feeling of loss and solitude is made more duro support. Per moments one forgets that Rajiv no longer is going to return that night. So many years customary to wait for its return that it has had left the reflection of that vain hope. Luckily it is surrounded by its family. Her mother, Paola, live now with them, and continue hoping that secretly Sonia decides to return to Italy. But it does not want to insist more, the last time that has done it, Sonia has been put nervous. Priyanka and Rahul are very pending of their mother.

From time to time some friend appears to have supper and the atmosphere is animated while they prepare the food.

The intimate friends are little, the faithfuls. Among them they are the Bachchan brothers (one of them, Amitabh, has become the greater star of the Indian cinema), a decorator who nothing else knew to arrive and her husband, a pair of journalists and publishers, old companions of Indian Airlines, old friends of the family as Dubey and its wife Add... The Quattrochi has returned to Italy, although if they were here, it could not see them... Their friends do not speak with the press, do not count anything that could be interpreted by Sonia like a treason to its confidence. They know that she is a very jealous woman of its privacy. It does not want that its pain appears in the paper magazines couché. Very it is irritated with the foreign press that projects to Priyanka like the heiress of "the dynasty". To the reporters who followed them during the campaign in Amethi not the magnetism of the young person escaped to them, with that penetrating glance, and no resisted to compare it with its grandmother.

Many foreign dignitaries of passage by the capital also want to see it and she is contented to receive them, because thus she shares memories of the numerous trips that did next to their husband. In the ministry of Outer Subjects they do not understand so that Yaser Arafat, Nelson Mandela or king Hussein wants to meet itself with a person who does not have an official position " What happens with the protocol? ", they ask. But prime minister Rao deprives of authority those objections. While the foreign dignitaries therefore wish it, the government does not need to raise the question of the protocol, responds to them. The power treats it, to her and her children, like members of a ruling family. The Gandhi, died or alive, to them it is continued reverenciando, as if India recognized the divine right to them to reign on her. Now, next to the great pictures of Indira that adorn the buildings public, the photo of a smiling Rajiv also is from beyond. The family follows very present in the mind of million Indians.

Little by little, their children and their friends help it to find a sense to the life without Rajiv. Sonia is conscious that she needs to standardize his existence the sooner, although only is by their children, whom they will have to return to the university. "What it has happened it cannot be an obstacle so that they take a normal life." It is obsessed with that idea. All its life has not wanted another thing, and still it speaks of it as if it could reach it. Soon it is corrected, and it said: «... the possible most normal life". Yes, that one is the goal, only the viable one. And although no longer it can live with Rajiv, yes can live for him.

For its memory. So that its dream does not disappear. Their friends propose to him to create a foundation, a little in the style of the North American presidential foundations, that keep the legacy from each president. It would be an answer to the terrorists who assassinated it, a way of which their ideas and their vision survive. Sonia chooses the date of the 20 of June to sign the act of constitution of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, because also it is a way to give sense to the birthday of Rahul, that that day



turns veintiún years. Surrounded by its children and friends, they put its company/signature in the document that consecrates the creation of an institution destined to promote the application of science and the technology to the service of the poor men. To Sonia it gives the impression him that of that Rajiv form it follows alive in the death.

The 20 of August, the day in which Rajiv had turned forty and seven years, are going to pay a tribute to him to samadhi, the mausoleo in form of flower of loto erected in the location where its cremation has taken place. It is not far from samadhi respective of Sanjay, Indira and Nehru, symbols all that remember the considerable price of the power. Sonia runs sari white bordered of black, has the misled glance and seems that his spirit is very far, in some place that only she knows. Perhaps it is let take by the ensoñación and it formulates plans of life with Rajiv, like before, and is able to scratch therefore seconds of happiness, although they are fictitious. It smells of the incense that burns the priests in unexpected braziers. Standing up between Priyanka and Rahul, the three seem become absorbed in thought and engrossed in their thoughts, while the Hindu religious cánticos are shelled like an endless litany. To the bottom, the noises of the city are heard. Suddenly it appears Maneka, single, the last person that wishes to see there then. Sonia irritates itself while her sister-in-law approaches samadhi and deposits a floral offering on the polished marble. Soon it follows with the tradition to give a return around the mausoleo and happens in front of Sonia and of his children, but they are not greeted. Its presence is broken the serenity of the act. Sonia, irritated, decides to finish and to return to the car.

## 43

Five months after the attack, the electoral commission announces local elections in Amethi, and again it begins to hear the choir of voices. The choir that protested to Indira after the death of Nehru, and to Rajiv after the death of its brother, protests now to Sonia. Old companions of their husband make a call to prime minister so that he convinces it that he appears in Amethi like the successor of Rajiv. They know that Sonia has a special bond with the people of that circumscription. The flattery arrives at improbable ends when a member of the party declares without shame: "If Sonia wanted to take shoes done with my skin, would be offered it without doubting." But the family loses the patience: "What are created these militants? - Priyanka exclaims, outside himself. What we must continue sacrificing our lives? Already coarse of policy" It seems to them aberrant that the balance of a nation of almost billion inhabitants rests on an Italian widow, but therefore they create it in the peak of the government, and the party.

Before the failure to convince it, they prove with other means. The government of Rao decides to grant a donation of ten million of rupias, payable in five years, to the Rajiv Foundation, as if of that way he wanted to compensate the loss of the husband. Sonia becomes infuriated still more and sends a letter to Rao: "We are thankful to Him personally, as well as to its colleagues, this generous supply, but it would be better than the government designed his own projects and humanitarian programs and financed them directly, thus making honor to the memory of my husband." But it is behind schedule, the scandal already is served. Nothing else to be made the news public of the supposed donation, the opposition has attacked against which the Rome Raj calls, the "kingdom of Rome": "A government who can rob the poor men to give to ten million of rupias to the family of Rajiv Gandhi is able of any thing."

He already satiates with as much maneuver and manipulation, this new and unnecessary scandal that the opposition expresses with fruición, of as much pressure that does not respect nor its pain, of the press that speculates incessantly on its paper, Sonia decides to follow the advice of his children to leave from trip to Europe and the United States during one season. The trip serves to distract itself to him of the racket of India, to rest mentally and to put order in its ideas. She is more determined than ever to maintain the inheritance of Rajiv without having alive to put in the bog of the policy. But is that possible one?

When it returns, the police announces to him that it has identified the authors of the murder of Rajiv. The investigation has been possible thanks to the heroic work of a local photographer of Sriperumbudur, a young Haribabu call. That ill-fated night, the reporter had waited for with impatience the arrival of the leader. Nothing to lower Rajiv of the white Ambassador more, Haribabu had bombed to him with its flashes, as much that the escort Pradip Gupta did a gesture to him so that let tease. But the photographer, little worried in saving film rolls, followed with his work. Who

knows when would return to that lost place as an important personage as Rajiv Gandhi? Its persistence cost the life to him. The body of Haribabu finished burst by the effect of the rarefaction wave. Their rest appeared to twenty meters of the place where originally it was. What the police discovered was its camera between the smoky rest of the deflagration. She was miraculously intact. When revealing the spool contained in their interior, appeared the last faces which Rajiv had seen while still alive, between which was the one of Dhanu, the suicidal terrorist.

- The photo Watches well - the police head says to him. This one is the assassin of its husband.

To Sonia the hands sweat to him when it takes it to observe it. He is deeply disturbing to see therefore the face of the person who as much damage has done to them. Of being an abstraction in the mind, the assassin appears to him like an apparently normal woman. " How has been able to commit resemblance barbarism? ", Sonia says itself fixedly, watching it, as if she looked for some outer sign of his badness, as if she could penetrate in his mind, scrutinize his soul, guess so that she decided to kill it. The police indicates with the finger the face to him of a dark man of skin, sureño, in a corner of the photo.

- The equipment of special investigations of the police has been able to identify it. One is a terrorist known like Shivarasam, is a leader of the LTTE (Tigers of Liberation of the Tamil Mother country). Lady, this comes to confirm what all we knew: that his husband fell victim of a plot of the tameses extremists.

- Its murder was the revenge of the tameses against the armed intervention in the island, is not thus?

The police seats.

- The extremists became to him against, lady, indeed like a tiger that gives zarpazo him to which it comes to give his food him.

When thinking it, Sonia discovers that a horrible guideline in the deaths of the family exists, like if his members were the architects of his own destruction. Indira has died by a problem that Sanjay triggered when creating the monster of Brindanwale to control politically to sijs; Rajiv has died by a problem created originally by Indira, that during years facilitated support to the Tigers to win the votes of the tameses of India and not to lose electoral base. Had not heard often say to Indira that the worse thing in political era, by fear to lose support, not to do what one at heart thought that had to do? Both have ended up paying the committed error at some time of weakness, of lack of faith, the error in the long term to put in front political considerations to short term to the general interest of the country. And the errors are expensive in policy. To Sonia, to Priyanka and Rahul the heart when thinking it freezes to them. It is the most expensive lesson of its lives.

Contrary to the Congress, the Hindu fundamentalists very are satisfied with their electoral results. They realize of which the campaign to destroy the mosque of Ayodhya and to replace it by a Hindu temple dedicated to the God Rama, has given important political yields. The

disturbances have become votes. Then, so that not to follow? In October of 1991, the extremist hinduistas organizations affiliated with the BJP fix them to buy lands around the mosque. Immediately later works of leveling of the land begin. To make matters worse of the provocation, they announce that the 6 of December will initiate the construction of the temple. When the Muslims raise the roof, the government sends to Ayodhya an equipment to evaluate the situation, and this one is with a great concrete platform raised by the extremists next to the mosque. It is a flagrant violation of the law that after the last disturbances it had prohibited to alter the things. The team of the government is consternado of which the local government has made the Vista fat, but the explanation is very simple, its head is member of the BJP.

Worried about a possible scaling of the violence, the minister of the Nueva Interior Delhi sends to twenty thousand men, who settle in different located quarters from less than one hour of the mosque. But, on the other hand, they are arriving one hundred thousand hinduistas militants, disguised like the heroes of mythology, with tridentes, arcs and arrows, and encamp in the zone. Some leaders of the BJP invoke symbolic the pacifist character and of the concentration.

- Tenemos our own service of order! - they argue before the authorities.

These decide not to command to the soldiers to the enclosure in the morning of the 6 of December, the announced date to put the first stone of the temple. "We have not wanted to cause", will say later, when the gravity of that error leaves to shine.

In the environs of the mosque the police of the state is only present, a little force, bad motivated and worse supplied to contain the spirits of a gigantic multitude. Eleven and the half one in the morning, while santones average naked ash places setting begin to intone cánticos and orations in the concrete platform, some militants approach the mosque in threatening attitude. When they try to stop the feet to them, only that obtain the service of order and some policemen are to be stoned by the angered multitude.

- Levantaremos our temple right here! - the militants shout with fervor.

An intrepid young person is able to jump over the police and to scale the walls of the mosque until arriving at one from his three cupolas. The multitude perceives the gesture as an attack signal. Armed of axes, tips and shovels, an avalanche of militants is sent on the mosque. The police flees terrified.

Half an hour later, the militants walk by the ceiling doing to wave flags vítores color saffron and sending. While they send tied hooks to a cord to nail them in the ceiling of minarettes, others attack the base with maces, hammers and tips. To two of afternoon, first minarete collapses, and with him a dozen of men who were destroying the ceiling to axes blow. But it seems that it gives equal, the human life does not matter, which is worth is to end the symbols of the Muslim neighbor. One hour later, falls the second

minarete. Soon the last one, and finally the central cupola. In a single one behind schedule, a monument that has been witness of innumerable convulsions of the history, that it has supported whips of more than four hundred monsoons is reduced to rubbish by the fury of fanatics.

Most of the Hindus of the country they are not in agreement with which a minority of extremists is able to fold the State to its will. If the forces that had been able to stop that sacrilege are by hand, so that the order has never arrived them to take part? In those days of terror the Indians are many who miss to Indira; with her in the Nueva power Delhi, they think that probably this never had happened. They attribute to an act of cowardice of the government of Narasimha Rao, whom she does not love to be perceived like in opposition to the Hindus in a country in which they are majority.

The demolition causes six dead between the militants and a fiftieth one of wounded. The leaders of the BJP are arrested by the police and positions under protected safekeeping. An influential local priest expresses the desire of which Ayodhya becomes the "Vatican of the Hindus" and makes a call to the violence. The first step, adds, is to clean the city of its minorities. The militants respond with ardor to this shout military and the houses of the Muslims are sent to one soon orgia of violence, setting afire and whole districts. Soon, the violence extends all over India. The Muslims go out, attack the police stations of police and pledge fire to buildings with the government. The excited crowds use arms of all type, from acid to guns, happening through tirachinas and daggers. The press relates cases of alive burned children, of women pestered point-blank by police. The phantom of the Partition returns to appear.

There are thousands of died by all India. The army imposes the touch of is. The country is paralyzed by the fear. The airplanes do not take off, the trains do not circulate. The nightmare of Nehru and Gandhi, the one of hatred between communities, is becoming reality before the overwhelmed eyes of the town, that sees how the coexistence between neighbors is replaced by the hostility and the mistrust. No longer the Muslim and Hindu children play together since they have been coming it doing for already more than thousand years. The parents do not deal among them, let be related. The Muslims one begins to them to demand that they prove its loyalty towards India. In the parties of críquet against Pakistan, it is demanded to them that they unfold the national flag in the facade of its houses, and that animate to the national equipment. They are forced to stay to the defensive, but in Kashmir, where they are majority, the papers are reversed. There the Muslim extremists send one jihad against the community of pandits Hindu, of which the Nehru is native. More than one hundred thousands are forced to exiliar itself. Both processes retro are fed, while the people, who are not customary to make in terms of faith and religion political, become multitude of questions: can be trusted a government who does not assume his commitment to protect an old place of cult? , can be trusted a community that it expels from so drastic way to

which they profess another faith? "Like minaretes that crown this old mosque - Time Magazine- writes the three pillars of the Indian State - democracy, aconfesionalidad and state of right run the risk of being demolished by the fury of the religious nationalism."

During three years, Sonia been has locked up in house, overturned in the task of organizing the file of the family. A stirring book has written on its husband for whom it has had to dive between one hundred thousand photos, five hundred speeches and innumerable notes. Voracious reader, has lived her period on mourning between books, legajos, photos and documents. Also it has published the second volume of letters between Nehru and Indira, an intense and stirring correspondence. "You cannot librarte of the familiar tradition - Nehru to his daughter wrote from the jail because she will persecute to you and, you want it or no, she will give a certain public position you that you have not made anything deserve. He is unfortunate, but you will have aguantarte. Although, after all, it is not bad thing to have a good familiar tradition. It helps us to face the future, it remembers to us that we must maintain lives a flame and that we cannot reduce to us or envilecer to us." Sonia is not able to take off that letter of the head. Written and other circumstances formerly, its echo resounds in its interior because it contains an inescapable truth.

Now, which happens to his him around revuelve the entrails.

That the government, headed by prime minister of the Congress, has not been able to prevent the catastrophe of Ayodhya hurts to him in the soul. It is an insult to the ideario, the same essence of the party. Is possible that the sacrifices of Gandhi, Indira and Rajiv have not been used for anything? - it is asked disturbed. All that pain has been useless?

In a meeting of the patronage of the foundation that takes the name of its husband, it proposes to emit one lasts declaration from sentence to the government.

- The foundation is a non-political organization - it says one to him of the patronos, an old member of the Congress and old friend of Rajiv-. There is no necessity to comment out on a political subject.

Sonia denies with the head.

- To Rajiv and the other members of the family, it is identified to us with the laicism, the will of not mixing policy and religion. It gives the impression me that if the foundation does not express its sentence we are betraying the inheritance of our family.

- But if it beams, you are putting in policy. You must know that if you put against which the Congress does, you are giving bellows to the adversaries, to the Hindu extremists...

- One is not to make policy or no. It is a question of principles. I cannot remain impassible before which it is happening.

It does not think to shut up itself, gives him equal who is in the government. It repeats that hers it is a moral authority, nonpolitical. Has not committed prime minister Rao he himself error in the management of the crisis of Ayodhya that committed in their Sanjay day with sijs and Indira with

the tamiles? Is that don't mention it they serve the lessons as the past? It is clear that Rao has not commanded to the army in time to prevent the destruction of the mosque in order not to alienate the Hindu electorate. La Paz of the country by an electoral benefit has sacrificed in the short term. That one is not the policy that Sonia is arranged to support, falls who falls, although is the Congress.

So that he follows ahead with his idea and he writes up a declaration of sentence in severe terms, in which he imputes a great part from responsibility to the own government of Narashima Rao. Inevitably, a political storm unties. " Is putting in policy and it does against us? ", they are asked in the government, overwhelmed. Like it was to hope, the opposition enjoys the spectacle of this internal fight of the Congress, that is added to others between different leaders. In the party the others devour an a, is an authentic nest of vipers. The Hindu extremists applaud.

Pero Sonia knows it clearly. To follow faithful the commitment to preserve the memory of its husband and the family nothing has to do with the luck of the men of Rajiv in policy, mainly when reasons do not exist to support them. It thinks that to remain of crossed arms it is to be disloyal and Rajiv continues being very present in its mind. Everything what has done in the life, has done it by him. Now also, in that the death has not changed anything. He lives in her. It is its reason of being.

And in addition it has another offense against the government of Rao. The judgment against the conspiradores arrested by the police does not have appearances to never begin. Like result of the interrogations to the prisoners, the police has discovered a plan meticulously drawn up to end the life of Rajiv. They know that it was designed in the depth of the jungles of Sri Lanka by the colegiada direction of the terrorist organization, who used the quarry of activists whom they have in the south of India because they needed local tamiles that could not be identified by the accent of the island. The police has discovered all a network of support to the terrorist organization, with a structure where those that only lent the frank floors knew that they fought by the cause; those that they were more near the direction only knew that the mission consisted of assassinating to a hostile politician "to the fight of the Tigers"; and the leaders knew solely who was the target. Those leaders feared that if Rajiv had returned to the power, would have sent again to the Indian army to the island, which had harmed to them.

Sonia and his children are disappointed and annoying because all that good work of the police runs the risk of being in water of borrajas by the inaction of the judicatura.

- Delay little more, is necessary to have patience... - the old companions of Rajiv repeat to him .

- Justice, if she is slow, is not justice... We do not know all to it? - another phrase says to Sonia , repeating that has heard thousand times in house when Indira lived.

- It is not the moment for attacking the Congress. So it is debilitated that he would be fatal. Mainly if the blow comes from you.

- Neither my children nor I will continue waiting for long time.

Sonia, overturned in the work of the foundation, crosses the country as she has never done it before. It is a redescubrimiento of deep India, this single time and with other eyes. Either to inaugurate the Lifeline Express, a train turned mobile field hospital to operate the blindness, or contributing material from aid to the areas the more affected by the disturbances, sending alphabetization programs or opening a oncológico hospital in a countryside and separated, its presence attracts an increasing number of people who invariably give an enthusiastic welcome to him. When feeling beloved, learns to being more communicative, not with the press, of which she continues being afraid, but with the women with those who she shares the tea and char it, and with the children to whom she embraces and she offers gifts. Its work satisfies it deeply. It assumes with vigor and effectiveness the old familiar commitment with the poor men of India, and it does to its way.

But one is it jeopardize with people, has principles and the power that gives to belong to the family of Nehru, can be shut up before the inefficiency and the laziness of the authorities, is of the sign that are?

Is not equivalent silence to approve the behavior of the government, who has placed the country on the brink of madness the abyss?

The 20 of August of 1995, date of the birthday of Rajiv in the fourth anniversary of their death, Sonia, are already satiated to hope, worried about the height of the confrontations between communities, it enters the arena, and it does in Amethi. Ten thousand people in delirium corean: " Sonia, saves to the country! ", while it slowly raises the stairs of the estrada one, the head covered by the apron with his sari. The hands shake to him of the nervous thing that are and seem uncertain, in resistance with their Priyanka daughter, who salutes relaxed to the crowd.

- Mother, watches what of people! You do not think that you would have to greet them?

Sonia makes case to his daughter and raises the arm. The atronadora answer of people envalentona. Flanked by Priyanka, it gives free course to its rage: "For four long years, the government has been incapable to arrest and to take in opinion to the assassins of my husband - he declares in hindi almost perfect. If the summary on the murder of ex-prime minister takes as much time in making progresses, what will happen to him to the common citizen with the pending subjects before justice? Surely that you understand what I feel." In the middle of a hurricane of exclamaciones, it continues: "Today, the ideals of Nehru, Indira and Rajiv are threatened. There are divisions everywhere. The hour has arrived to recover its principles and I will be with you in that effort." " Sonia, saves to the country! ", the people respond to him, who feel affection by this brave



and worthy widow. They admire it by its self-denial, its fidelity to the family and its sacrifice. Before putting in the car, a journalist approaches to him:

- Its speech marks the return of the dynasty of the Gandhi the political scene India?

- Not - Sonia- answers, does not have political ambitions, Always speaks in quality of president of the Rajiv Foundation Gandhi.

But whole India has heard its message. On the following day, its photo with the raised arm, accompanied by its children, is in cover of all national newspapers. To eyes of million Indians, Sonia lets be perceived as the housewife that lives in the shade of its husband and his mother-in-law, and happens to be the public figure responsible for the legacy of the family.

To Sonia it is happening to him what it happened to him to Rajiv and Indira.

The contact with people animates it, comforts it, the extraction of its existential anguish, makes forget the contradiction him that supposes to assume the legacy of a so political family detesting the policy. The result of the following elections, those of 1996, does not surprise it absolutely. It is so well informed that it already knows that the party is not going to reach the two hundred deputies. But it does not reach nor one hundred forty, an historical disaster. Rao dissolves the government, resigns of prime minister and leader of the party.

Few days later, it receives the visit of a group of dissidents of the Congress who come again to ask for their advice to choose the next president of the organization. Pero Sonia refuses to give its opinion. This time, conscious of its power, "the factor Sonia", not even mentions which would be the favorite successor. It does not want to be manipulated.

Who has left victorious in these elections has been Maneka, that has obtained of new a bench in the Parliament. Going and coming from her position, the sister-in-law has worked an own image of defender of the animals. Environment minister is named again, but the joy lasts to him little. Because of the pressures of the enemies of the coalition, new prime minister is itself forced to release it days later. It does not stop being ironic that the daughter-in-law India of Indira, prattling policy and, fights as much by a parcel of being able whereas the timid and non-political foreign daughter-in-law continues having to reject supplies of leadership.

Because the leaders of the Congress return to the load, conscious that the absence of the widow is the most important presence of the party. The situation is catastrophic, say to him, the party is disintegrated, the Cafre country towards the abyss of the religion wars. There is no day that does not come anybody to repeat it to it. The internal fights in the greater political organization of the world are draining it of the best militants, than they desert in mass. The new leader who leaves chosen at the cost of bitter disputes is an individual that does not inspire respect. One spends the afternoons in its house, knocked down in the ground, the head over a pillow, drinking whiskey, smoking without stopping and speaking of policy, chismorreos and sex. Sonia knows that that man is not the solution, to the

opposite rather. Before the constant pressures, it follows without giving her arm to twist. " And Priyanka? ", they ask, as if the daughter was worth equal the mother who. What is, but that is a Gandhi, he is the unique thing who can save the organization. Only a Gandhi can agglutinate the different tendencies, the different egos. Only a Gandhi can galvanize the battered moral of the supporters. In once the all-powerful Congress, a party with one hundred twelve years of history, spreads the desperation. "Million militants of the party are arranged to give their life by you. How you can allow that the Congress crumbles before your eyes? ", they repeat to him. As much they say it that Sonia begins to feel a vague culpability complex, the conscience afflicted by a species of pain. I can follow like a dumb spectator forehead the disintegration of the party by which Rajiv gave its life? The question disturbs it. Suddenly it is as if the earth it needed under its feet. In addition, it is tired of as much pressure, to which it has not let be put under since Rajiv died. Also it is satiated with as much flattery. But, mainly, it is tormented. If the Congress is disintegrated , the familiar inheritance finishes. To think that the sacrifice of Rajiv has been in vain clears the dream to him. Her daughter shares her sinking.

- It is necessary to do something - Priyanka- says to him, if the BJP will not end up destroying everything what we have obtained, from the grandfathers to papa.

When it comes to visit it an old friend of the family, Amitabh Bachchan, in whose house it was living when it arrived at Nueva Delhi and that one has become the more popular film actor of India him makes contributor of his frustration.

- I ask S.A. to fail to him to the Congress, I will not be failing Nehru to him, to Indira and Rajiv - it confesses to him.

- You do not confuse them with the leaders of now - Amitabh- responds. These are a plain between two mountains of vultures that are wanted to take advantage of the call power of your family for their political aims. You do not let yourself deceive, you do not yield.

- Clear, you are right - it says to him.

Pero Priyanka is not in agreement with Amitabh.

- Then - it says to him to its mother when are again to single, we are going to leave the country collapses without doing nothing?

Sonia answers to him with another question.

- Does not seem to you that the family already has made enough by the country?

But the doubt presses it like a dismal hug, as if it guessed that its resistance is to point to waver before the irremediable thing.

Months more behind schedule, another visit of another old friend of Rajiv finishes seeding the doubt in the mind of Sonia. He is one of the leaders of the Congress better valued, a complete man called Digvijay Singh. Its opinion always weighed in the days of Rajiv.

- We go of head to the disaster - it says to him of sopetón-. With this new president, we are not going to obtain nor one hundred benches in the next elections. Sabes what means that?

Sonia makes a face of misfortune. The man continues:

- The disintegration of the party, the end of the Congress Means. And perhaps of India like nation.

There is a long, dense silence.

- I know your position and the one your children with respect to assuming the mantle of your family, but before the extreme gravity of the situation I have come in name of the companions of Rajiv to pedirte that you do it. I already know what you think of the policy, we know all to it. I know that you are going to me to say that no, but I would need to have if she did not insist. And it would not do it, if it thought that there is a solution better.

- I always have thought that you had pull, that you could perfectly be a good president of the party - Sonia says to him.

- I do not have sufficient supports. Perhaps in the future it has them, now no. At this moment of Maxima gravity, the solution happens through you or your children.

- You are saying to Me that if I do not enter policy, I am needing my responsibility?

The man does not dare to respond.

- I want hacerte to see another aspect of the problem - it continues. Let us suppose that the Congress disappears... What will happen with your security? Do or you do not make policy, is much people whom as sees you a threat reason why you represent. Those that they are against the principles founders of the Congress are also in against yours. And unfortunately they are legion, every day more. Although never you want to make policy, the fact of haberte been to live in this house is in itself a political act.

Sonia does not answer. The head gives returns him. Digvijay Singh continues:

- If they took off it to Rajiv, they will clear you you, that the smaller doubt does not fit to you. If the Congress disappears like political force, who is going to pay for the enormous unfolding of security that you and its children you need?

Sonia shakes, because she knows that his interlocutor is right. Would dare to leave them unprotected? Everything is possible in this dirty world of the policy. There are enemies outside, and also within the party, such that retired the protection to him to Rajiv. For a reason, others by another one. It is clear that if the party sinks, they are defenseless. But it accepts and it enters policy to save it, is not to touch the devil? Is not to expose itself still more to the bullets of any crazy person? There is no exit in the labyrinth of its life. Everything is ended up mixing in its head: the sense of the responsibility and the fear, hatred to the policy and the necessity of security. For the first time, Sonia is realizing which not only the power needs her; the family also needs the protection the power. If no, it is clear: the

legacy will let exist, the sacrifice of Indira perhaps and Rajiv will fall in the forgetfulness and they - Sonia, Priyanka or Rahul- also will let exist.

## 44

While Sonia struggles in a sea of doubts, the India policy continues disintegrating itself. The concept of “nation” created by the Party of the Congress during the fight by independence, and which it pleads for a nation plural, lay, and diverse (the other way around that Pakistan, a nation created around a religion), continues withdrawing of alarming way. Such opposing against that they fought the Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru, Indira and Rajiv are those that now followers with their idea of a Hindu India gain, like an involuntary echo of Pakistan. What will happen if they take control of the power? Will be an ethnic cleaning? Soon it is the lamentable spectacle of the corruption. A hundred of Nueva parliamentarians Delhi has a “criminal past now”, which means that they have been accused of several crimes, but not condemned formally. If Nehru raised the head! Once they are chosen is practically impossible to condemn them, for that reason the policy is becoming an important incentive for delinquents of all nature.

The corruption is so grotesca that a leader in rise of the greater party of “untouchable” of India, a middle-aged woman called Mayawati and that has become rich of the night to the morning alleging that their supporters are “very generous”, has been pillada in fraganti granting licenses to his construction friends to raise a gigantic thematic park around the Taj Mahal. The scandal has forced it to leave the project, but any vote has not reduced him. The press publishes photos hers receiving to its interlocutors seated in an authentic gold wrought bread wood throne covered in its house palace of Lucknow. It has celebrated its birthday to the great thing, using the official machinery and bottoms public. And she is not the unique one.

It seems that, instead of progressing, the country backs down to the corrupt times of maharajás. It returns to the old ways, like when it was made up of a myriad of kingdoms that were fought among them, being debilitated mutually, facilitating the invasions of mogoles and British. If the Congress finishes chalking in the next elections, will die the only great national party. Now only they are left kingdoms of taifas that fight not by their ideology, but to win the favors of its voters, more and more grouped in chaste or regional communities. The policy is atomized. Until where will arrive that fragmentation? Until the disintegration of India? The analysts do not discard it. Some say that India was the Nehru, who without them India is not even a nation.

In one of his nights of insomnia, Sonia again feels a pressure in the chest. Sometimes it is the cold which triggers an asthma crisis, other times it arises without apparent explanation, others stress. The bronchi narrow and make difficult the passage of the air to the lungs. The breathlessness sensation, of which when inhaling air does not enter, is distressing. The chronic asthma is not cured, one learns to coexist with the disease, since Sonia has done it. It recognizes that yoga is to him of a great aid. Yoga teaches to breathe. When that night notices the first symptoms, it is already looking for its inhalant and its medicines. But it finds them in its

habitual place, are not neither in the armarito of the bathroom nor in the small table at night. "I must of to me have left it in the office", is said. One becomes involved in its Albornoz and it leaves its quarter.

In effect, the inhalant is in the table of the office. Sonia feels, puts it in the mouth, tightens just at the moment of the inspiration and gives deep ones pierced. In followed it notices the effect. It already is, can breathe. One relaxes. The house is in silence, except by the noise of the wind in the foliage of the trees of the garden and the one of its deep exhalations and inspirations. The room continues smelling cold incense, like when Rajiv lived. It liked to ignite rods when it worked. It said that they helped him to concentrate itself.

Suddenly Sonia raises the Vista and she is with the picture of Indira. And the one of Nehru. And soon the one of Rajiv. " So that you watch to me with that insistence? With that enigmatic smile" That night, in the penumbra, it seems to him that they are alive. Sonia keeps his inhalant in the pocket and, before extinguishing the light, she returns to watch the pictures. It is not able to maintain to those glances and low the Vista, like ashamed. It extinguishes the light and it returns to its quarter to lie down. But it does not conciliate the dream and a tablet does not want to take itself not to be accustomed. It gives returns in the bed, it is entangled in the sheet, it ignites the light, it tries to read, one gets tired and it extinguishes it again. It cannot separate from its mind the photos of the office. "I am failing to Them - it is said to same himself. I am betraying to them. God mine, what I do"

It needs to speak with its children. Rahul finishes arriving from London, where it has found a job in a financial organization after to have finished his studies in the United States. Priyanka has fiancè, a boy who knows since she was small. On the following day, around the table of the breakfast, Sonia tells the sensation them that the photos of the office have caused him.

- Every time that passage in front of them, gives the impression me that they are watching to me, as if they waited for something of me...

- She is that they wait for it, mother - him espeta Priyanka-. To me happen to me the same, gives I shame to have left to me without doing nothing while everything comes down. What would say the grandmother? I am sure that it would not like... We must avoid the setback of the party.

- And how is made that? - his brother asks.

- Campaigning by the Congress in the next elections - Priyanka answers.

Rahul shrinks of shoulders.

- We do not put in that field of eggplants.

- I believe that there is to think it well to it - Priyanka third, that has the feet in the earth. You know, mother, I I have reached the same conclusion that you, although by another way. We cannot remain of spectators. It is like... like immoral!

Little by little, they are shuffling the pros and cons of a decision that apparently trampled everything, but that ends up showing its deep logic.

- There are times in which there are to leave the preferences that one has of side, you do not create? - Sonia asks, with the serious semblance.

Their children do not answer. She continues:

- It would be arranged to campaign by the Congress to try to save the organization, but not to assume no steering position. You will help Me?

- Clear that yes - her daughter says to him.

- You remember of which the great-grandfather said to him to the Indira grandmother in that letter? ... That it could never be come off the familiar tradition. What reason had! I believe that we either cannot. It is like one second skin, we like or no.

To Rahul it costs to him to accept the decision of its mother, because it does not see it contents. It knows that she is going to enter herself in a footpath that at heart repels to him. It knows that it does because it has inherited he himself sense of having that they had Indira and Rajiv. But in the end the boy understands what is in game.

- Mother, I will leave the work and I will accompany you to all the meetings - it says to animate it to him.

To Sonia it likes to serve to she herself the tea which they come to see it. This time is not a habitual visit, has been she who has summoned to the leader of the Congress and old friend of the family Digvijay Singh, that that a few months ago said to him that they went right to the disaster. He is a high man and good looking, with a natural elegance heightened by a white set of kurta and trousers type pajamas. It has gone without delay, in spite of to have had to spend one night in train. But if Sonia calls, case, because is done to him usually it never calls. The Italian gives the tea cup to him, that comes off effluvia jazmín. Before seating, a fast look throws to the photos of the walls, as if it requested the approval to them before the audacity which it is had to propose.

- What would happen if I campaign by the Congress? - loose suddenly.

The man burns the lips and he is choked. Will be truth what it is oyendo? , it is asked. It did not have nor idea of which it was going to be, for that reason the question him pilla off guard.

Silence, a dense silence becomes, that Sonia takes advantage of to offer a thread napkin to him embroidered with a G.

- Madam - it responds drying the comisura of the lips, that would have a galvanizador effect in our rows. We would sweep in the ballot boxes.

Sonia is serious, meditativa. To the man the eyes are illuminated to him.

- You create It of truth?

- I am convinced.

- For me, it is a decision very difficult to take.

- I understand It perfectly, Madam.

Sonia continues:

- I am not a leader cream, already you know it, is not something natural in me...

- I do not believe that the capacity to lead is something innate. It watches the example of Indira. She was timid and at the outset it spoke fatal. Or you husband. Everything is learned. And in policy it is learned still more fast.

- You think that that can be learned?

- I am safe. Fíjate in the amount of people who go to verte to any act. It seems that they drink your words... In addition, we can prepare to you. You have the advantage to have to your disposition the great reserve of talents that exists in the Congress, unless the party is disintegrated so quickly that all finish leaving before the elections. But still we have to the best specialists in fields like the economy, the administration or science and the technology.

Sonia remains it watching, but she does not say anything. It has the hermetic expression of which it has been resigned to accept the irremediable thing.

Just a short time after that meeting, Sonia makes a discreet management, to his n1anera. The form goes to the seat of the party in Akbar stuffed Road and that accompanies the request by adhesion to the organization. With membership card in hand, that still more ties Nehru, to Gandhi and all those whom they fought by the ideals of an independent India and frees, returns to its house. One puts in the office and, before keeping it in a drawer, it directs its glance to the pictures. It outlines a timid smile, as if no longer it felt shame to watch them to the face.

The 28 of December of 1997, Sonia announces publicly his decision to enter policy and to appear like candidate of the Congress in the next elections. The news gives the return to the world. Nobody understands the reasons of this pirueta, neither its mother nor her sisters nor their friends nor the public in general. The leaders of the party do a great spectacle giving him the welcome, but some are distrustful because they know that this "neophyte" will end up commanding to them. The bad languages escupen their poison: Sonia puts in policy to escabullir itself of the Bofors scandal, say. Sonia wants to be prime minister, say others. Finally it shows its true colors, cries out third. Maneka Gandhi does not lose opportunity to add its sand grain. "It salutes like the windshield wiper of a car", says alluding to the greeting of Sonia to its enthusiastic followers to the exit of the seat of the Party. And it adds in an interview to the Panchjanya weekly magazine: "Sonia will not leave chosen because she is foreign... The only thing that it wants is to be a day prime minister to have a given life. That position is like a toy for her, is not conscious of the difficulties that it involves... »

Sonia rejects to comment out any on his ex- sister-in-law. What tries is to armor against the critics and the ridicules, they come from where



they come. It has always known that it would be put under still more intense a public scrutiny than before. Form leaves from the life of a politician. For that reason the possible thing wants to prepare itself best. Conscious by its limitations, it is surrounded by the best specialists: a historian, a sociologist, an expert jurist in constitutional right, an ex- director of the Intelligence service, an expert in political sciences... In general, they consider a "student applied" who for example quickly learns the parliamentary customs and uses. But it commits some failures. When they present/display to him to an influential leader of a chaste one of the state of Uttar Pradesh, a shining man, with an analytical mind able to explain the delicate balance to him of the chaste ones, Sonia comments to him with naivete: "In the Congress, I want that the considerations of chaste are diminished." The man rises of blow and says that he will return when Sonia has more idea of the important thing that del is the subject that it is speaking. Gajes of the office.

The moment of its entrance in policy agrees with the wedding of its daughter. Priyanka house with a jewel designer, son of a tycoon of the brass of a city next to Nueva Delhi. To Sonia not him for much grace that union; the fiancè has not finished the university and, worse still, some members of the family have bonds with Hindu extremist organizations affiliated with the EJP. But to Priyanka that does not seem to matter to him. It is enamored with a man, not of its family, about that thinks like a European, not like an India. It has made a decision and it is going to follow ahead.

- Priyanka is being very faithful to the familiar tradition - Rahul says to him to its mother, with sarcasm. House with somebody with that does not have anything in common. What has of bad in it?

- That one is indeed the problem.

- Problem? What had to do the great-grandfather Nehru with the great-grandmother? Nothing. The Indira grandmother with the grandfathers? Nothing either. The Sanjay uncle with Maneka? And you with papa... you yourself there are saying, you were of very different worlds. Sometimes it works, sometimes no, that never is known.

- If your sister and you you confabuláis against me, I do not think to open another front - Sonia says to him, that she returns to smile.

To the wedding of Priyanka, daughter, granddaughter and great-granddaughter of three prime minister, go most distinguished of the society. Sonia, very elegant in sari of silk bordeaux color and gold, receives the president of the Republic, to prime minister and the high positions of the party. The atmosphere is loaded of sense of expectancy in this event described by the press like the "wedding of the year". Never as today " the ruling" family has been source of so many and so many commentaries and chismorreos. From which Sonia has announced his entrance in policy, they predict its imminent failure, others show its satisfaction to have found a leader able to make resurge the Congress. They say that the mother has accepted to make the sacrifice enter policy by her children, authentic natural heirs of the dynasty. Between the companions at table also is a high boy

and good looking, who Priyanka has insisted on inviting. He is its cousin, Firoz Varun Gandhi, the son of Maneka, that is studying in the London School of Economics. It comes single, without its mother. Or Priyanka, Rahul or Firoz, the leaders of the party have an absolute faith in them. Leaders consider born, charismatic and able to decide the destiny of million people. Now that the mother has taken the first step, they are convinced that the future of the Congress, and the nation, it will happen through them. One does not escape to them that Priyanka, radiating, shines splendid sari done with the cotton that his grandfathers Nehru spun in the jail. He himself who took Indira in his wedding, and soon Sonia in hers. Everything a symbol, that sari red.

Everything a symbol also, the fact that Sonia begins his campaign where its husband finished hers, in the city of Sriperumbuduro Tiene to control to the emotion to be in the place who Rajiv saw for the last time, to its timidity, its nervousness and its attacks of asthma at the time of speaking in public. "I am in front of you here, surrounded by safety measures, in this same place in which Rajiv was single and unprotected front to its assassins. Its voice has been silenced, but their message and the ideas that defended follow more alive than ever." No longer it makes reference to slowness of justice with the inquina of before. Finally, in January of 1998, the judge who presides over the court against the defendant to assassinate his husband has dictated sentence: capital punishment. The condemned has appealed to the Supreme Court, but their possibilities that they exchange the pain to them are minimum. It is not a consolation for Sonia, who always has been against the capital punishment. It would prefer that they maintained them between grates.

Making reference to its foreign origins, the weak point that their opposing ones already use in his against, it adds: "I became partly of India thirty years ago, when I entered the home of Indira Gandhi like wife of its older son. It was through its heart as I learned to understand and to want India." They are phrases simple, said in a natural and amiable tone, entrecortadas by a weak smile. It repeats them throughout a month, in which it crosses thirty thousand kilometers, one of those beatings which it has seen be put under several members of its family. In its speeches, that hindi directly reads in alphabet, it also speaks of sacrifice, stability and mainly of laicism. It explains that it has been sent to campaign as reaction to the anguish that produces to him that there are politicians requesting votes in name of the religion. "You must choose between the forces of the harmony and the progress or those that they look for to operate our differences to win to be able." It does not let take advantage of any occasion to apologize by the errors the past, like the Operation Blue Star in Punjab or the demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya. It assumes the failures of the others with total humility. Speech with the feeling to be imbuida of a mission. The multitudes attend their meetings not only by the tremendous curiosity that provokes, but because Sonia is able to combine the emotion with a forceful political speech. Its campaign contributes a newness and

coolness note to the general panorama. The most skeptical leaders are surprised of the effectiveness of Sonia at the time of filling the meetings and to galvanize the electorate. To the term of the campaign, the Times of India titles in cover: "Of aloof empress to undergone wife and powerful policy, the transformation of Sonia Gandhi seems complete."

Sonia does not devastate in the results, but she obtains 146 benches for the Congress and that the participation of the voters increases significantly. That is to say, it is able to avoid the catastrophe. Recognized like rescuer of the party and so that in the future the organization does not disappear in trifulcas internal, the leaders they decide to apurar it to the presidency. Sonia Gandhi becomes the fifth member of the house of Motilal Nehru in assuming such position. Ah, if Stefano Maino raised the head! ... What distant spot is left the Asiago mountains, the evenings to the heat of the chimney with their sisters hoping zuppa to have supper, the eternal masses of Sundays in the church of Lusiana, the scent to snow of end of autumn, the dreams of girl to want to live in a city and in the field not being milked cows... and everything, by a crossing of watched in a restaurant in Cambridge.

Eleven months after its wedding, Priyanka runs into in the newspaper with the news on the assassins of its father. One of the accused terrorists is on the verge of being executed in the gift next to three accomplices. One of them is its husband. The terrorist, well-known with the name of Nalini Murugan, has married with him in the jail of Vellore, a city of the south, and have had a girl. All the afternoons, the small one, accompanied by its grandmother, it is going to visit its mother to the prison during half an hour. Priyanka, deeply grieved by the news, speaks it with Sonia and his brother. Is really necessary that more people die? Has been no enough tragedy already? Hay to leave a girl orphaned? Sonia and Rahul equal of are altered. No of the three is in favor of the capital punishment . Justice has become, to a certain extent that has served to reconcile with the lived drama. But that an act of State leaves orphan to a girl by the misdeeds of its parents, he is something that seems unjust to them.

- He is not going to contribute no consolation to us - Sonia says.
- More good to the opposite - Rahul- adds. What we can do?
- To request mercy for the mother - Priyanka- suggests and to obtain that the execution of the others is posponed indefinitely.

When the president of the Republic receives to Sonia in special hearing in his residence of Rashtrapati Bhawan, the old palace of the virrey, remains overwhelmed reason why it hears, after all what Sonia has protested by the slowness of justice. "My children have remained orphaned of father, and with that coarse one - Sonia- says to him. Our argument is that no other boy must remain orphaned. We do not want that the tragedy generates more tragedy. I request to him that it does the possible thing to obtain I pardon for Nalini Murugan to aim that can raise to its daughter."

When they come to remove from its cell to the young terrorist, it is convinced that it is for its last trip. But they take it before the judge of

Vellore, that announces to him that its capital punishment has been exchanged by the one of life imprisonment. “Hopefully this is used for something, although it only is for calling the attention on the futility of the terrorist acts, that lead solely to the destruction and the death”, Rahul to the press declares. Soon, thanks to the mediation of Sonia, Nalini obtain a visa so that their hijita and its grandparents to pater to us can travel to Australia, where are welcomed for members in exile of the tamil community. The girl will be able to be educated in an atmosphere nonestigmatizado by the situation of her parents.

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Sonia has given back the hope to the greater party of the world, although she does not give back it to the power . It has not been able to stop the height of the hinduistas of the BJP, whose results allow him to lead a coalition to form government. Seguirán urging on the rivalry between communities? Seguirán pushing the country towards the abyss? Thank heavens that new prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, is a cultured, moderate man, very respected in political circles. Conseguirá to control to most extremist? The whole country becomes these questions, on all at sight one of the program, that is for making shake to anyone: a Hindu India, reforms of the Constitution, construction of the temple Branch in Ayodhya, etc.

It is logical that many have deposited their confidence in Sonia, to whom is called on to him to assume the role of leader of the opposition for being president of the Congress. Back in Italy, relatives, friends and neighbors crowd themselves their television sets in front of to follow the history inconceivable of this Earth daughter. The Cenicienta de Orbassano has yielded before the pleas of its cortesanos and it is sent to fight by the power of the kingdom... Pero does not give vertigo him? Is not scared to that they kill it? Does not fear for its children? So that it does not leave everything it and it comes here to mount a decoration store and to live calm? They do not understand what crosses the mind of this woman... that one has fallen in love with a prince and it can finish turned queen.

Eight years after the murder of Rajiv, to Sonia the doors of the Parliament are opened to him. When raising the perron, comes the memory a phrase to him from its mother-in-law, who said that hers she was not a normal family, "because of us miracles are expected". Was not a miracle to be in that singular, round, immense building, in the Nueva heart Delhi, where converge the aspirations of a nation that now counts with billion inhabitants, where Nehru, Indira and Rajiv defended its ideas? Where now it is called on to defend hers to him, she who comes from so far, that one dies of shame when they watch it, that has accepted that challenge so in opposition to its temperament to protect the family of the man which it has wanted more and to save the country of the integrist yoke. Will be able to make those miracles?

How much crossed way, how many joys and illusions, how many spilled deceptions and tears. Mainly, how much love by that husband, whose warm presence she feels in this place that it frequented. In its memory it is concentrated, him asks protection to him when, the 29 of October of 1999, must make their first speech. All its body is in tension. It has gone five times bathroom thinking about the critical moment that the delay. He is conscious that one of its movements are five hundred pairs of eyes escudriñando each, a torture for a woman of a sickly timidity. But she does it by he himself sense of having by which his husband sent itself to the policy. It does not do it in vain, but by love. From that incommensurable love it removes the energy to go to the con, to overcome themselves to same

himself, to hold the glances of which they occupy the tribune of the press, the one of the visitors and the one of the diplomats, who are to overflow. In the bank of the government it is Maneka, just named minister of Culture of the coalition led by B JP. Both sisters-in-law represent the most opposite factions of the ideological phantom, like a metaphor of the division that undergoes the country. If Indira could see it! In the bank of the Congress, it has by except a dozen of ready companions aiding Sonia, in case it needs a data, in case it is mistaken, in case it puts the leg. It is the same image of the elegance, with her black and shining hair falling in a smooth curl on her shoulders, his sari of green silk in tones pie, her arrogant bearing, her direct glance.

It is placed the glasses. It comes prepared with a text printed in very great letter so that it does not seem that read, an old trick of the family. A text in which denunciation that the present regime attributes reforms that in their origin were promoted by the Congress, and in particular by Rajiv. It does not make case to the booings and whistles that send to him from the bank of the coalition in the power. On the contrary it follows ahead and it denounces the last maneuvers of the government to discredit to its husband in the Bofors case. "They are not possible to be sent to suspicions on a man whom is innocent and that in addition is not here for defending itself", it exclaims. Its emotional speech causes a very favorable impact in its deputies, whom they state that Sonia is able to take the bull by the horns in a as delicate subject as the one of Bofors. Suddenly, it is as if the memories of a smiling and jovial Rajiv reappeared. But all are asked the same: What is going to happen when it must attack or defend certain economic options? What will happen when its speech does not have emotional load?

Throughout several months one dares to make short harangues in the Parliament relative to the present time of the moment, although it avoids to pronounce itself on economic subjects. That, it trusts a man totally who has known when the first government formed after the murder of Rajiv. Call Manmohan Singh, old student of Cambridge is sij, brilliant economist, architect of the reforms that have been able to remove to the country from the economic crisis of the ninety, known by their irreproachable reputation of honesty. It has followed the wake of Rajiv and it is it jeopardize with the modernization of the economy. Its influence on her is so great that the old Socialists and leftists of the Congress watch it with distrust. " Will not be separating to us from the old socialist principles to embark to us in the route of liberalism? ", they are asked alarmed.

At the outset, its paper as leader of the opposition confuses so much to his companions of party like a his adversaries. As it fears to face thorny subjects, it distributes them between different deputies, considered specialistic, or in foreign policy , political economic, legislative subjects... But those of opposite attack with viciousness that fragmented opposition, without rudder, weight, forcefulness. In the rows of the Congress, the deputies get to fear the parliamentary sessions as much or more than the own Sonia, who defends itself bad of all type of accusations, sent

unfounded some to reduce their image. The worse ones are those of Maneka, that in its quality of minister of Culture is suddenly over the beneficial and familiar institutions that Sonia administers and who, to leave their power well clear, orders a series of audits alleging suspicions of financial irregularities. Finally it enjoys the flavor of the revenge. But its extreme cruelty is so, its rage and their personal inquina against Sonia notices so much that the other parties of the coalition protest by that gratuitous persecution. So that, in a steep maneuver, it is separated from the position and putting at the top of the statistic department, where its inquisitorial activity is neutralized.

The deficiencies of the paper of Sonia like leader of the opposition (“a leader that hides”, as they accuse those of the government) are compensated by their effectiveness the hour to direct the party. Old sátrapas that thought that they could manipulate it gives quickly tells that it is not left. It has been too next to Indira like not to have learned the lesson. But, in addition, Sonia undertakes thorny reforms that always were postponed by the previous headquarters. For example, it obtains that the Congress is the first party that reserves a quota of the 33 percent to the women in all the levels of the hierarchy. More difficult he is to attack the corruption, but Sonia does not vacillate. Under new mantra of integrity and transparency, it obtains that the party only accepts check donations to facilitate the accounting and demands that all the members with certain weight pay their quotas precise, of proportional way according to its position in the hierarchy. The high positions are forced to pay a month of pay to the party. They are deep changes, that many perceive like personal triumphs. “The Congress is prepared to clean the system”, says with threatening tone before deputies skeptical and, in many cases, corrupt, that they already conspire to throw it.

They take advantage of that its paper as leader of the opposition leaves much to be desired. Sonia does not dare to communicate directly with the other competing leaders by shame and timidity, which causes a great descoordinación. It is clear that it does not know the political game. It costs to him to disguise its lack of experience and of confidence in itself, which turns it a easy target for the attacks of the coalition in the power, that defies it and it humiliates it whenever the opportunity appears. “ Does not know of which I am done! ”, it says a day to him to its children when leaving a session of the Parliament in which it has been beaten. It has caused great shame because it has been speechless when prime minister has asked to him which is the position of the Congress in subjects of nuclear dissuasion, a subject that did not know. So that it is sworn to itself that it will not return to him to happen, and it summons to the best experts in nuclear security and defense, including which they do not comprise of think tank of the Congress, to understand the shades and the intricado thing of the subject. When one is safe of itself, it returns to the Parliament. It seems another one: “In the last session, honorable prime minister ed \*\*\*reflx mng itself of me because I did not answer its question... But it is a too important subject like

answering it between the outbursts of laughter of its deputies. Now I to him ask you: Which is its position on the matter? ... You only mention three words: minimum credible dissuasion. Cree you who those three palabritas conform a serious policy”

In May of 1999, the government of the BJP loses the majority in the Parliament and the advisors and old leaders of the Congress think that the hour of Sonia has arrived. Create to be able to articulate the formation of a coalition to govern. They need the magical number two hundred seventy and two deputies and are convinced that they have it. They already dream about the distribution of portfolios: that if fulano will be fought by the Department of the Interior, that if zutano will go to Outer Subjects... Humor in the rows of the party is exultante. So safe they are to obtain the power, that they urge Sonia so that announces that it can to form an alternative government quickly. For Sonia, it represents the opportunity to remove the thorns from the constant attacks against her. Finally it is going to be able to stop the feet to its adversaries. When he leaves the old palace of the virrey, where the president of the Republic has summoned to all the parties to invite them to that they form government, is itself surrounded by television cameras. “We have two hundred seventy and two”, assure. In fact it has meant that, when being most of deputies against the BJP, an alternative government it is possible. But the press announces it to its way: “Sonia Gandhi is going to head a new government.” The country suddenly seems inflamed by the perspective of which the Italian assumes the power, but the suspense lasts just a short time. Sonia does not obtain the magical number because many opposed small groups to B JP, in concrete the Socialists, refuse to support it like prime minister because of their foreign origin and of the strong feeling against the Congress that exists in many parties. Fiasco is as great as the provoked expectations. It is bad with the supporters, and in ridiculous situation in front of the whole nation. Its precipitation lets see the public light its lack of experience in the political rotation as well as the so great dependency that it has of his advisors.

- Mother, déjalo already - Rahul says to him.

- Now? You think that I can? I do not think to go without defending to me to me.

Little by little, Sonia is learning. “There is a fighter in her and that is something very good for the organization”, says one of its companions of bank. It is forced to fight because the political press and its adversaries redouble the attacks. They are ed \*\*\*refl x mng of the accent of “the Italian”, as they call it contemptuously. They assure that he is arrogant and it fries, tell that hindi does not know the alphabet and that their speeches are transcribed to the Latin alphabet, which is lie. “Lee their speeches as if she read the list of the purchase”, writes a well-known journalist. But as something they serve the enemies is for learning of them, and Sonia learns to do it tenaciously. Little by little, it puts heat and passion to him to its speeches, multiplies the trips, the encounter, the personal communications. It maintains that he is not arrogant, but timid. But it is a fight that wears



away, because he is sterile. It is based on prejudices, a machista attitude and an exacerbated nationalism that the will of its adversaries masks at all costs to separate it from the power. In the most extremist atmospheres, they get to accuse it to be an agent of Rome, as if she was a spy of the Vatican infiltrated in the labyrinth of the Hindu policy... His father had a prophetic vision when he said that they would throw it to the tigers. Well, she is its daughter there, in center of the amphitheatre, avoiding zarpazos.

Nothing affects so much to him as the challenge that comes from his, of members of its own party. A day, receives a letter signed by the head of the parliamentary group of its party and two deputies more, in the one than they put in doubt his capacity, views his poor benefits like leader of the opposition, in being able to be a day to the height of the position of prime minister. In the letter, they suggest reforms the Constitution to reserve the high positions of the State, president of the Republic and prime minister, solely to the birth Indians. After fiasco of the insolvent coalition, this one is a blow under which Sonia accuses with bitterness. Because they do not want to prevent to be a Maxima day agent chief executive him, to which of all ways neither it aspires nor it wishes. But it hurts the lack to him of confidence, hurts to him that they want it like fair reclamation, immediately. Like announcement for the elections, like a laborer who lends his last name - and its whole life to a party that in the bottom despises it. It hurts to realize to him of which she is single when friend was believed in land.

When that behind schedule returns to house, it only must in mind be with Priyanka and Rahul. Her daughter immediately realizes the hurt thing that is its mother. Rahul is irritated:

- Deja already the policy once and for all, mother! - it says to him.

- I believe that my brother is right - Priyanka- adds. It does not have sense to follow thus.

- The moment has arrived for throwing the towel - Sonia- admits. Please, ayudadme to write up a letter to the parliamentary group of the Congress --it requests to them.

Priyanka takes a paper and a ball-point pen and together writes a very clear and concise text: "Some colleagues have expressed the idea that by to have been born in the foreigner, I am a problem for the Congress. It hurts its lack to me of confidence in my ability to act in the best interest of the party and the country. In these circumstances, my sense of loyalty to the party and my to have towards the nation force to me to submit my retirement application of the position of president of the Congress." More down, it adds: "I came to serve the party not to acquire a position or to have to be able, but because the party faced a challenge that it questioned its mere existence and it could not maintain to me impassible before which it was happening. As I cannot either stay of arms crossed now." Sonia sighs long: " Finally frees! ", it is said.

The fiasco. Its letter causes an authentic cataclysm in the rows of the party. His next collaborators are consternados by the decision. With which he has cost that assumed the reins, and now barons that see their

power threatened within the organization throw everything by the hut! When the members of the parliamentary group request to him that it reconsiders his decision, it responds to them that very she is suffered with the xenophobia unfolding that surrounds the subject by its origins.

- That that happens in the BJP, an ultranationalist party, or between the Socialists, it is already quite sad - it adds Sonia-, but agreement, it was had to defend to me as long as it felt that the party endorsed to me. What I never could imagine is that my own companions would attack to me of that way. So I go away

Ministers of the states governed by the Congress begins the parade of chief that come to render pleitesía to him to their house. They threaten resigning in mass: "Sainas heads of government thanks to you. So that to follow if you are not? ", they say to him.

The seísmo caused by its resignation is so enormous that thousands of supporters encamp in front of the iron door of number 10 of Janpath to request to him that returns. " Sonia, saves to the Congress! Salva to India! ", they corean. Behind schedule in that Rahul returns to house with a friend, several leaders of the party intercept to him: "You must convince your mother so that it retires its resignation." Between the multitude that blocks the street, there are women who cry requesting that Sonia does not leave them. A morning, when coming out of its house, while its Ambassador breaks through between the multitude, Sonia is intercepted by an old Muslim who approaches to him:

- You have thought about the luck of the minorities in a government directed by the BJP? Is that you do not want to fight by us?

Sonia does not answer and raises the window to him of the car, while the words of the man resound in their head...

The overflow of the desperation of its followers symbolizes a young man, one of whom encamps their house in front of. It tries to immolate itself with fire, which causes a considerable commotion. The police and the guards of security rush themselves on him and are able to drown the flames before they end his life. The cameras of the reporters record the scene so that the whole country at night contemplates it in the news. So that all the subcontinent knows the passions that the Italian wakes up "" that all create to have. Because Sonia belongs to them, because she takes the magical last name of Gandhi. And for that reason it is not possible to be marched.

The tragic incident precipitates the events. Again Sonia receives in his house, the office of Rajiv, to the cupola of the party, a group of men of certain age, dresses with kurta and wide trousers of cotton.

- Another leader does not exist who can maintain to us united like you. There is no another able one to obtain the votes that you obtain. For that reason we requested to you that you remain of president. The party is with you. It listens to the outcry of the street.

In damper, they hear eslógenes in favor of Sonia who the supporters crowded before the iron door corean of a regular way. One of the heads of the party continues:

- You do not despise the affection samples that to you people lavish... Those that sent that letter to you not even represent a minority within the party, they do not imagine than themselves more, more than to its own ambition.

- There is no place for them in the organization - another one adds. We have expelled to them. No longer you have nothing to fear.

Again they offer the power to him in silver tray, listens to such arguments, the same flattery, cantinela of always again...

- I must speak it with my children.

It is arranged to maintain her resignation, an idea of the pleasant thing that has been made already it would be to return to his collection of Tanjore miniatures that as much it likes, and to recover his old liking to the restoration of pictures and furniture. Pero Priyanka and Rahul are affected by the sudden outbreak of emotion and solidarity. They were not expected a similar mobilization. To the three it obstructs that peculiar feeling to them of which the last name that takes to not belongs them, that belongs to India, to the multitudes that demand their leadership, and of which are not owners of his destiny. Sonia vacillates, although now she knows that if returns it is by the great door. Their friends finish convincing it so that it remains. It cannot leave by the attack of three rivals who want their position. Their resignation, says, it will only reinforce to which have written the letter and to all the xenófobos of India. Again Sonia thinks about Rajiv, its children, the family, the tragedy of the power, the fear to lose the security, about the sense of having... and again it yields. It does grudgingly, but the result is that it returns to assume the maximum position within the party with more force and authority than before. It announces its return in a jammed stage. As much, that a member of the party comments a companion:

- You imagine as much together people without a Sonia Gandhi?

- Simply east meeting would not exist - it answers the other to him. Without Sonia, there is no meeting; without Sonia, there is no party.

“Although I have been born abroad - Sonia says as soon as the sonant and larguísima ovación lets it speak I have made of India my country. I am India and I will continue being it until my last sigh. Here I have married, here I have had my children, and here I have become widow. In my arms Indira died. If I have decided to return today it is because the party has given one me renewed confidence and hope. I want a ready party that is prepared to follow to me and to die by the principles that I have decided to adopt.”

Thus, little to little, with sinsabores, Sonia Gandhi is become to the game of the policy. Certain reflections come to him unconsciously, not by vocation, but by I infect, by to have lived so many years in that broth on culture. It has cleaned the party of its black ewes. Now it has more influence on the organization who the one that had its husband. It has obtained it

without having the ability to distribute to be able, and only with a remote hope to someday obtain it, the one that demonstrates the demoralized thing that they were the rows.

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With time a public image is able to become of obstinate policy to the policy, the one that transmits the press. But it lives in a state of perpetual terror towards mass media . Each word hers meticulously is scrutinized by its adversaries to discover some sign that it is not so India as tries. It lives locked up in its shell, intrenched in number 10 of Janpath, one more a strength more difficult to cross than all the residences where it has lived previously. It lives without freedom, taking care of from the dawn committees, to members of the party, compromisarios that come from all the corners of the country to request advice to him, to ask for its opinion Maxima as guide. Only the visits of their children contribute heat to him. Her mother passes invier to us in Nueva Delhi, and the sisters and the old friends are periodically going to visit it. But they are visits that so that maintains privily, they do not accuse it of “foreigner”.

The single mention of its name is able to animate most boring of the suppers or social act, dividing with vehemence the opinions between which they admire it and those that despise it. Two known deputies their party are lamented in each cocktail to have as leader to “an Italian housewife without studies”. Not much compared with the poison of some member of the coalition in the power, like the Hindu fundamentalist Narendra Modi, who the fault publicly of “Italian vixen”. Sonia knows that its condition of foreigner is its heel of Aquilles, and the coalition in the government, nationalistic and ferociously hinduista, does not lose opportunity to put the finger in the sore. Its negative radical to grant interviews must to that it does not want to define itself. It thinks that thus it can let to its adversaries without arguments to attack it. It does not want to have to say that she is catholic, although does not practice. It wants to have to speak of its native Italy, neither of its memories of childhood nor of its friends nor of their family. To the opposite, it seems to him essential that is it comfortable with the traditions of its country of adoption. One makes an effort in visiting santones in great Hindu temples, like made Indira. When the BJP gets worse their attacks in the Parliament against their “foreign origins”, Sonia takes refuge in the temple of the Mission Ramakrishna de Nueva Delhi and spends whole afternoons with the Swami Gokulananda, santón very respected that ties a red cord to him in the wrist in brotherhood sign . Sonia has much faith in that cord, is becoming a little superstitious, like was it his mother-in-law. Whenever there is a familiar celebration, it summons the priest of the family, who lives in Benarés, so that she goes to celebrate pertinent the religious rites. When his first grandson is born, the son of Priyanka, pandit makes sophisticated offerings reciting his orations. In the same way which Indira chose the names of its children, now Sonia is the one in charge to choose the one of his grandson. “ Rajiv? ”, it proposes. Priyanka fears that that name condemns to its son to be compared all its life with its father. Sonia suggests a name that begins by R. In the end, they are decided by Rehan, a name parsi, to connect with the tradition of the Firoz grandfathers Gandhi. Pero Sonia insists on calling it Rajiv. In the end, it

remains in Rehan Rajiv. Thanks to God, horóscopo that prepares santón to him predicts fame and fortune for the sprout, but not a political paper for the sixth generation of the Gandhi. Mother and daughter sigh of lightening.

But before the constant provocation, the Swami Gokulananda is forced to come out in defense of Sonia: "It is so India as anyone - it declares. It takes a disciplined life and I do not see anything bad in its foreign origins." In Gujarat, the state del that Narendra Modi, its ferocious adversary, is head of government, a big wave of attacks ends the life of several Christian missionaries, accused by the hinduistas to foment the conversions. "You do not leave cause to you - their advisors say to him to Sonia, want that you come out in defense of the Christians, you do not enter the rag, you do not do it." She listens to them and chooses to shut up herself, but then the critics change of direction. " So that one moves away of the catholicism? - their adversaries with perfidia- ask themselves. So that she is with a complex of its own religion? " Sonia realizes of which, she does what does, their religion and its Italian origin are estigma imborrable. Obsessed to disguise it most possible, tired of the campaign of the hinduistas on their faith, the 22 of January of 2001 decide to make a gesture symbolic of great religious meaning. During the Khumba Mela, the great Hindu religious celebration that reunites every twelve years to tens of millions of people in the confluence of the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Sarásvati to the outskirts of Allahabad, the city of the Nehru where they went to throw ashes of Rajiv, Sonia decides to occur a ritual bath puts in the water dressed, standing up, and makes an offering of flower petals to are of mantras and ulular of the conches of sea that make sound pandits in the border. Next to her there is great santones Hindu, and also representing of other religions, like the Dalai Lama. The sand esplanade between the rivers is full of people to where the Vista reaches. It is a as impressive multitude as it is it the order and the total absence of disturbances or violent episodes. The service of security of Sonia is so strict that the police does not allow to approach anybody to less than two hundred meters of the border where is.

In the following days, its photo doing bids up it to the Gods, published in newspapers and in panfletos, it is Vista by million farmers in hundreds of thousands of villages. Sonia thus hopes to neutralize the critics of his adversaries. Of all ways, it is convinced that the town does not give the minimum importance to the fact that has been born in Italy. In addition, it is asked... What means to be Indian? Between an inhabitant of the Himalayas and another one of the south, the differences are abysmal: neither they speak he himself language nor they eat equal nor they venerate Gods such. Nor at least they have he himself color of skin. Nevertheless, both share the pride of being Indian. The tolerance is essential part of the culture of sub continent, if not... How had been able to survive so many centuries that chaste amalgam of towns, traditions, cultures, ethnic groups, races and that are called India? In a place that always has known to assimilate the diversity, the foreigner notion loses

sense. Their advisors give arguments to defend themselves him. They remember to him that when India reached independence, she was English a its first Chief of State: Lord Mountbatten was called, was the last virrey of the Empire. The leaders of the party remember that in 1983 Sonia its desire wrote up a testament expressing of which their body is burned according to the Hindu rite. In that then, it was not probable that Rajiv Gandhi finished of prime minister, and still less than Sonia assumed no political role someday. It did it because it believed in it.

At heart, and that knows Sonia well to it, is Indian who feels like Indian. And it repeats it without stopping: "I am India. When entering this family I have become daughter of the land of my husband, in daughter of India..." It is convinced that the town perceives its love to the country. When they ask to him from where it removes the moral principles when it must make a decision in the scope of the family or the policy, does not want to lie and it responds innocently: "I suppose that of the catholic values that follow there, at heart of my mind: - and it adds: I am an ardent defender of which India continues being a lay state. By lay state, I talk about to which includes all the religions. The present government is not in favor of that work." The ferocidad of the campaign against Sonia finds in Orbassano an unexpected echo. An Indian immigrant, an engineer sij that works in Fiat, has been chosen municipal councilman of the small piemontesa city. If sij can participate in the political life of an Italian city... how is that an Italian cannot participate in the political life India? , a deputy of the Congress asks. The answer of the BJP is furious: " Dejarían that sij finished of prime minister of Italy? - a nationalistic deputy asks. Clear that no" In its support it mentions the mayor of Orbassano, that has declared to the press: "I ask myself if we in Italy would accept a foreigner, a woman for more inri, like leader of a party that has symbolized the fight by independence against the foreign domination and that continues enjoying great popular support, although less than before. That a part of the Indians trusts their destiny to Sonia says much on the tolerance of India." In this debate that extends continent, an Italian journalist reaches his own conclusion: "No, their origins do not count because it has been absorbed, indianizada, transformed. In that sense, no longer she is Italian." Perhaps India was made of truth when in the middle of an asthma attack it remained watching the pictures of the family in the office of Rajiv and then it accepted to send itself to the policy. It was then when it totally assumed the legacy of the family.

Now the alluvium of critics on their lack of experience and the campaign of hatred on their origins are making it mature to forced marches. Its personality is changing subtly as it gains confidence in itself and it strengthens his determination to solve the problems of the party, to which it dedicates in body and soul. From 1998 to 2004, while two successive coalitions led by the BJP govern India, and surprising of a very moderate way thanks to the influence of prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Sonia takes care to regenerate the Congress, simplifying the process of decision making and looking for the consensus. For of way very different from its

mother-in-law, who was more urgent in her style and that fomented a cut culture palaciega. Sonia surrounds itself by his children and the experts who exist in the quarry of the Congress, without letting itself influence by the process of demonización in his against. Too much it is occupied in choosing the suitable candidates and making sure that they are gaining please the town, state to state, without haste but without pause. Many of their decisions base them on which it has learned of his mother-in-law and her husband, but by far taken care of to avoid the errors that to them cost to them as much. For example, it does not change to the heads of government of the states at will, like made Indira. On the contrary, he supports them unconditionally, he lets to them do, and they thank for showing it to him a loyalty without fissures. It only has a problem with the head of government of Orissa that, after the murder of a missionary, is aligned with the arguments of the Hindu fundamentalists: "It is necessary to discipline to the Christian missionaries", declares. Sonia dismisses it in the act, showing that does not shake the pulse to him at the time of making a decision. But except some precise problem, under its mandate the party returns to be a force that there is to take into account. In 2002, and thanks to the patient spade work of Sonia, the Congress obtains the power in fourteen states, that add more than half of the population. In March of that same year, it sweeps in the Nueva policemen Delhi, obtaining three fourth parts of the benches. In all parts, the desertions of the affiliated ones stop and the tendency is reversed : the number returns to grow.

The 11 of May of year 2000, India celebrates a strange feat. The government chooses a called girl Aastha Arora, born in Nueva Delhi, like the baby number billion. The news that the country has reached that magical number causes a bud of dyed popular fervor of nationalism. As everything in India is celebrated, also in this occasion people leave to the street to throw firecrackers and festejar. Hordes of journalists and reporters of television hurry to the hospital and invade the pavilion where is the girl, rising the beds and the tables to obtain a picture of the chosen one. A journalist of the Indian Express is consternada: "The baby billion has been received by so many million flashes that the doctors fear that its skin has been affected."

But even though from the demographic explosion, finally, in the threshold of the new century, the hope arises to leave the poverty. The results of the economy, that has continued liberalizing from the times of Rajiv, are buoyant. India lives with optimism a big wave on nationalistic fervor encouraged from the government led by the BJP. Does not repeat the press that this one is going to be the "century of India"? It seems that the country well is channeled in the footpath to become the great power that promises to be. After so many years of controls and limitations, all the contained energy and the vitality are overflowed. The universities and the technical schools founded on the time of Nehru produce a million engineers to the year. They are many, compared with one hundred the thousands of the European and American universities. A new generation of industrialists



blooms in the shade of the computer science revolution and the telecommunications. Soon India rejoices when following of near China in another record, the one of being the second economy with greater rate of economic growth of the world. It seems that the old Indian elephant stretches. The BJP and the hinduistas attribute all the merit. From the bank of the opposition, Sonia denunciation that the economic progress only benefits to a mighty middle-class that a new God adores , the one from the consumption.

- In prosperous Nueva Delhi - it remembers to them leaning in numbers of a published recent study in the press, one of each four children is obese, but in the field half of the children of less than three years undergoes some type of chronic undernourishment! What progress is that one?

It repeats to them that the new wealth does not arrive at the enormous mass of population that lives in the villages. Rural India continues undergoing unemployment, the excesses of the system of chaste, the shortage, the lack of opportunities, with the aggravating one of which the expansion of the television allows to see them with its own eyes how the other India lives, the one that amuses itself, prospers and consumes in the great cities. Sonia remembers the government to him who India, that so proud country of its sharpshooting centers of investigation and development, lodges the 40 percent of the poor men of the world.

- It is not necessary to let itself take by the euphoria untied by the propaganda of the government on the benefits of the reforms. Something does not go well when the economy grows to the rate of suicides of the poor farmers, who take off the life because they are become indebted with local moneylenders and they do not see exit to his situation.

But it seems that most of the deputies it does not want to believe its words, uncomfortable in the bottom because the dream of prosperity and nationalism dim in which they live. Sonia preaches in the desert, but she gives him just as they label it as kill-joy: Nehru and Indira felt a strong commitment with the poor men and she is conscious that its party has survived by to have aligned with most underprivileged, those whose voice nobody wants to hear. It perhaps, because she conserves the essential innocence of a foreigner, is still sensible to the terrible spectacle of the poverty that many Indians who accede at a better standard of life simply do not see. It is like an unconscious reflection that blinds to them to the surrounding misery. Eyes that do not see, heart that does not feel... Not to watch is not to suffer. Pero Sonia has the open eyes affluent.

And its voice is heard more and more high and clear in the Parliament: it invariably refutes the profits of which the Government makes finery. If it has returned La Paz to the territories of the northeast, it is not by the action of the government, but by the efforts of Rajiv to forge a peace accord that has allowed that the separatist leaders, who long ago were insurgent in the forests, today have become respectable politicians chosen by the town. If the situation has calmed in the Punjab, it is not either by this

government, but by the “agreements of the Punjab” that were work of Rajiv. If the moderate nationalists sijs have realized advantage that tolerates to belong to the India Union and have returned to the footpath of the democracy, it is thanks to its husband.

But the moment summit of its interventions it happens in March of 2002. Suddenly a leader who speaks without fear and complexes, with the forcefulness arises that gives the deep conviction him of its opinions. Sonia directly accuses the government to have fomented a new bud of religious violence that has returned to put the country on the brink of madness the abyss. It is an act more in the tragedy of Ayodhya, initiated by members of that same government today in the power. After the destruction of the mosque, the Hindu fundamentalists ran into with the rejection of the judicial authorities to any attempt to construct in that location a temple to the God Rama, indeed not to add more firewood to the fire. But the militants did not occur by won and several groups pertaining to compatible organizations to the government continued traveling periodically Ayodhya to insist on their vindication. “ Was not enrolled in the program of the government of the BJP? ”, they asked. When returning of one of those trips, it happened a Muslim argument between one of those groups of hinduistas demonstrators and traveling salesmen in the station of Godhra, in the state of Gujarat. The salesmen refused to sing songs to the glory of the God Rama, as the Hindu militants conminaban to them so that these began to insult them and to throw to them of the beards. Immediately the voice was run and Muslim young people who worked in the neighborhood of the station ran in defense of their attacked coreligionists. The Hindu militants rose the train, that started under a stone rain. Kilometers beyond, the convoy stopped. A column of black smoke was raised in the sky. A fire was declared on board with the result of fifty and eight carbonized people, the majority militant hinduistas.

Although later investigations would determine that the fire was caused by the accidental explosion of a gas small furnace, the Hindu extremists did not doubt in accusing to have caused Muslims it. The news that hinduistas were burned alive untied the revenge of the population. The head of government of Gujarat, the Hindu fundamentalist Narendra Modi, ally of the government and archienemigo of Sonia, declared the 28 of February a day of mourning for which the funerales of the passengers could be celebrated by the streets of the city. It was a clear invitation to the violence. The Muslim districts became mouseholes. Thousands of Hindu infuriated undertook against commerce and offices and set afire the mosques. Instead of acting forcefully to appease the violence, Narendra Modi declared: “To each action a reaction corresponds.” Those words, interpreted by the Hindu extremists like a endorsement of their leader to justify the revenge, marked the one principle orgía of comparable violence the one of the tragic events of the Partition. But this time, thanks to the television, all the country is witness of atrocious images of battered women and violated by infuriated militants, and later forced to in front of drink

queroseno its husbands and children, whom they force to see as well how they pledge fire to them, before being assassinated. Everything has happened before the impasibilidad of the people, who seem to celebrate that revenge that symbolizes the fire of the train of Godhra. The journalists who have covered the slaughters are convinced that they have not been spontaneous, as tried the local government, but that have been planned. They have seen Hindu extremists, with electoral rolls under the arm, indicating houses and huts inhabited by Muslims in the mixed districts. They have seen indicate to commerce property them of Muslims who have taken the precaution to adopt a Hindu name. The effectiveness in the persecution and the murders makes think that there has been certain degree of planning. Altogether, more than two thousand Muslims they have been assassinated and more than two hundred thousands have remained without home.

Sonia is the voice that more ardent denounces the facts. In the Parliament, it gets to accuse the government to foment the genocide. "Lady, does not use so strong words", talks back prime minister to him. Pero Sonia does not shut up. It denounces the cloudy performance of the police. "In certain cases, one knows that until they have helped the militants to find the directions that they looked for." Appointment in its support information of the investigations of groups of defense of the human rights that demonstrate that the police had received orders of not interfering. "What this massacre has removed to shine, Sir prime minister - Sonia- says to him, is sectarian and horroroso face of its party, the BJP, that you have had so much taken care of in disguising during your years in the power, but that now jumps to the Vista... In addition how is possible that you have not deigned to immediately visit the places devastated by the violence? So that it has hoped a month to do it? We already know that Mr. Narendra Modi is behind these slaughters, And we are afraid much that the central government also is it" By first time, Sonia gives the stature of great policy, denouncing to the government with authentic and felt passion, shaking to prime minister with his invectives, not leaving puppet with head. The atrocities that has seen in the television have scandalized it: "That is not India. That does not represent my country", declares. Their interventions cause that the inherent values to the Congress stand out more than ever. The pretension of the oldest party of India to represent Indians of all chaste and the religions not only is seen like something attractive, but like something indispensable. The decency of the principles of the Congress is overlapped in imaginary popular with the image and the voice of this accidental policy that speaks with the heart in the hand.

But prime minister does not obtain that his companion of party Narendra Modi resigns, a thought measurement to pacify the country. The others do not leave him. Better to hope to than decides the town, say to him. The great surprise is that in the state elections of Gujarat, that are place two days old after the bloody disturbances, the frightful Narendra Madi returns to devastate. The reason is that that state is mainly Hindu. Its

campaign, that has been based on a single principle, hatred to the Muslims, seems to confirm the old belief of the BJP: the disturbances based on religious hatred, if well they are orchestrated, become votes. Modi has revealed to be a prestidigitador magician in this art. One has taken advantage of which Gujarat makes border with Pakistan, which favors the policy of the fear to the Islamic enemy.

After the hopes provoked by Sonia, the moment arrives now from a massive deception. In the seat of the Congress, the gathered frown and the put glasses, Sonia read the report of the Secretary General of his party on the elections in Gujarat. The atmosphere is shady. "The Congress has not gained a single bench in a radius of one hundred kilometers around Godhra, where a train wagon has been set afire, killing half hundred of people. The Congress are lost all the benches in the zones next to the state of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan..." The conclusion is that, now like when the destruction of the temple in Ayodhya, the policy of communal confrontations is giving dividends. The Hindus, the great majority, yield to the fear and racism. How to avoid that that model advances in other parts of India? Nobody has the answer.

Now which everything seemed to smile to Sonia, the result of the elections in Gujarat is jarro of cold water that opens a question on its future. However, the government, encouraged by his victory in Gujarat, decides to advance the first general elections of century XXI to May of 2004 to take advantage of the tailwind and to revalidar his mandate by other five years. The critical of Sonia within their party allege that if the forces coaligadas with the BJP continue taking terrain this rate, she will not be enough to neutralize them. Is not perceived it like sufficiently solid. That under their direction fourteen states have changed of political color begins to see itself like something insignificant. Sonia is again vulnerable. They reproach to him that it has not been able to project like a policy in the line of Indira or Rajiv. Until most optimistic within the Congress they lodge doubts on its capacity to take the party to the victory. "We have made the decision adapted when inviting it to lead the party?", they are asked now such that they pushed it to accept. Some of their followers until now loyal comment their companions of party that Sonia is good, but not it enough. All recognize that it has improved much, but that it does not give the stature nor will never give it. And it is that in the Congress they are in a hurry to return to the power. The party that more time has governed India takes more than seven years separated from him. It is the greater time interval in all its history, and agrees with the presidency of Sonia Gandhi. Little by little it is forged another conspiracy. The proximity of the general elections stokes the personal ambitions. If this time Sonia leaves undamaged that plot it is because the ringleader dies in a traffic accident. But the displeased queen in many sectors of the party.

While the debate on its abilities as leader and his lack of experience continue, Sonia dares to present/display a motion of censorship against the government, accusing it of a series of positions that go of the

anarchy to the corruption. It attacks front, mixing the aggression with some occurrence, speaking with soltura and grace. For being minority in the Parliament, the motion is rejected, but Sonia is able to give the image of a leader who can be an alternative to the present government. It is left far the deputy primeriza who looked for the words, was speechless before a question, or sonrojaba when they attacked it. The elections are around the corner, and there is no another leader able to galvanize to the bases. The luck is thrown. No longer there is return back, neither for Sonia, nor for the Congress.

Nueva Delhi, 10 of May of 2004. The fifty and seven years, Sonia continues being a very handsome woman, like when he was young. But it is a beauty that takes the marks of the tragedies that have struck it, and for that reason its face has an expression that can seem hard. It, who when younger as much laughed to outbursts of laughter, appears always serious, with a smile that does not finish convincing because it arises from a dense forest of sadness. Not only its face has changed; its corporal language is now different. His to walk vigorous, the way in which moves shoulders under the weave of his saris, everything in her remembers Indira. Sonia has become India until in the gestures.

When it is tired, a crispation gesture arises. And today, in this morning of Monday, while Sonia Gandhi makes up the eyes with a fine one pincelada of khol in front of the mirror of his dressing table in his Nueva house Delhi, one feels exhausted. It almost takes to several weeks of intense electoral campaign in which it has crossed thousands of kilometers by all the Indian subcontinent, the distance of a return to the world, supporting the dog days of those dates. The majority has crossed them in car, in helicopter and on foot, but also it has had to make ten kilometers in camel to arrive until a small community of the Rajastán. And it has made it to arrive hardly at a village of two hundred inhabitants where they waited for it with the open arms because no candidate had never deigned to move until there. Those days one has remembered much its mother-in-law, of its eagerness in arriving at the heart of the town, in reaching the most remote village, like that time in which it had to cross a river at night to elephant backs to arrive at Belchi, a village of untouchable traumatizados for being victims of a slaughter. Like his mother-in-law, Sonia has not scrimped efforts to make arrive his message at the most remote places. And although it does not gain these elections, will not be able never to be reproached not to have gone the whole hog. As always, the encounter with the poor men has been him very rewarding from India. At moments of hesitation, the words of the Mahatma Gandhi who a day read in the wall of a rural clinic return to him to the memory: "When you doubt or you questions, you test following: the face of the poorest man remembers and weaker than you have never seen and pregúntate if the step that you are on the verge of giving goes to series of some utility. Ganará something with it? Will give back to certain control on its life and its destiny to Him? ... Then you will see that your doubts will dissipate."

An electoral campaign at national level is hard for which never it has disguised his aversion to the power. To live in that contradiction intensifies its sensation of brutal fatigue, that it prevents until changing of sari this morning him to go to vote. The one decides to leave itself that wears. After all, he is white, the color of the widows in India, and today, electoral day, to run that sari will be a way to maintain the memory of Rajiv alive. That it is like helping itself to same himself to stay lives. Because everything what does, continues it making guard its memory for want of

being able to caress it. and by its children, Rahul and Priyanka, who as much have supported it in the campaign, in the life. Nothing unites so much as the pain before the loss of the dear beings.

She, whom it detests to call the attention and to be protagonist; it, who has only given two interviews in all her life, has seen itself inflaming multitudes of up to one hundred thousand people six times to the day in different places suddenly. It has spoken in hindi with soltura and a slight accent, and has pronounced speeches to the style of Indira, making an effort in convincing to six hundred million voters for which they vote to the Party of the Congress. Sometimes it costs to him to think that it is to the head of the greater democratic political organization of the world. If some fortune teller had predicted it in his youth, when still he lived in Italy, he had labeled it as prattling.

What has said to them to those million voters who have listened to it engrossed? It has spoken to them of its political family, a family who has governed the India for more than four decades, but that has been seven years outside the power. It has spoken to them of the values that always have represented the Nehru-Gandhi: freedom, tolerance, laicism and unit. It has insisted on that these are not ordinary elections, but an historical confrontation between different values, between ideologies diametrically opposed. A fight between the light and the oscurantismo; between an India where all fit and all the religions, and another medieval and excluding one. What is in game, has repeated to them, is the coexistence between the innumerable cultures, ethnic groups, chaste and religions that compose India. In definitive, the mere existence of the country like nation.

The cities are papered with electoral posters. The BJP very is satisfied with his eslogan: "India shines", that alludes to the good march of the economy. With a country that grows to the 9 percent two seasons of abundant monzónicas rains and relations finally distendidas with the old Pakistan enemy, calm and they are trusted. They think that his rival, the Party of the Congress, is finished, incapable to appear again of its ashes, squashed under the weight of its own bureaucracy. They are convinced that Sonia is not a leader the quite capable thing and experienced like for resucitarlo' and less still so that obtains sufficient benches in these legislative elections. First, because she is foreign and, second, because they think that it has neither the charisma of his mother-in-law nor the enchantment of his husband. They say that never it has expressed an original opinion on international events or the economic directions of India. Third, because they create to have obtained that gudiya is perceived by the public opinion like simple gungi, a dumb wrist, manipulated without scruples by the old dinosaurios of the Party of the Congress. And did not say that same of Indira Gandhi in his first elections?

Perhaps but their adversaries had followed it close by during these weeks of campaign , would not be so prepotent. They had been

witnesses of the tremendous recibimiento that hordes of women and men gave to Sonia and his children, covering to them with roses and claveles, coreando its names in a species of frenzy. "This is not politician, is emotional", commented a day an European journalist to Rahul, that to its thirty and three years appears for the first time like candidate by the circumscription of Amethi, the one of its father. If Sonia loses, he is already its son in the line of exit. Nobody escapes to the destiny of the last name.

"For whom India shines? - Sonia in his speeches asked. For the farmers who commit suicide drinking raticida because their debts cannot pay" The multitude received its words with approval roars.

To they eslogan "India shines", directed mainly to an urban middle-class composed by about three hundred million voters, Sonia has opposed one less bright, but destined to those seven hundred million that have still not tasted the fruits of the economic prosperity: "You choose a government who works to you", he repeats to them. It is eslogan of Indira, that used in several campaigns. To the modern way to campaign of the party in the power, that has sent a message of voice of prime minister to one hundred ten million fixed and movable telephones in all the country (reaching three hundred fifty and five million smaller voters of twenty-five years, an authentic technological feat), Sonia has opposed the traditional style to cross India narrowing hands, giving hugs, connecting with people, submerging in the sentimental adoration of the masses.

Quite often, the stuck Tata Safari in which traveled had to stop up to ten times in one hour when being totally surrounded by farmers, the lean faces and thin bodies to the windows. Sonia had to make force to open the front door and to put themselves standing up without lowering of the car, while the crowd was crowded together still more, sending to joy shouts, stretching the arms with the crazy hope of being able to touch it.

In this campaign Priyanka has been seen that their children wake up the same passions, mainly, that already is thirty and two years old. It has been a revelation to verify to what extent captive the multitudes, that have gone in mass to hear speak it. And that that it has not appeared to any bench... It finishes having a daughter, Miraya, that next to the greater one, Rehan, has it very occupied. For that reason it has only helped to its mother and her brother sporadically. But it was enough that it saluted so that immediately hundreds of hands gave back it between joy acclamations. Rahul also woke up the ardor of the masses: nothing else to open the window, they filled the car to him of rose petals. A day, the motor gypsy dialect, and the driver was not able to take it again. The man left and opened the hood, while Sonia repeated: "What chaos, what chaos!", trying to see through dirty windshield of sweat and squashed petals if the conductive one were able to locate the failure. "Mother, quédate in the car", repeated her son giving him a light tap in the shoulder, scared which then her mother had the occurrence to leave, ignoring the security protocols. In the end the conductor returned and obtained that again the motor rugiese.

- What happened? - Sonia asked.



- The flowers, Madam - the man responded. The daisies had blocked the fan belt !

That one does not seem the image of a political dynasty that goes of head towards the failure, as their adversaries foretell, and until certain companions of party. It is rather the image of a woman and a family who are able to be in tune with the town, although few want it to recognize. The certain thing is that Sonia has gained the respect and the affection of his country of adoption to have accepted to live the same life that killed its brother-in-law, to his husband and his mother-in-law. The town, rocked for thousands of years by great epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata where the feats of the men compete with those of the Gods, has been seeming to recognize that sacrifice to him and is demonstrated it whenever the occasion appears . And she does not lose opportunity to give back the affection samples to him. During the campaign, after four days long and warm, was it relaxed in a single occasion when, in the middle of a dusty plain, it commanded to stop the electoral retinue and went walking single towards where it had seen a group of nomadic women under a shed of woods and black plastics. Those women did not have the minimum idea of whom she was she. Sonia did not understand his dialecto. The photographers had remained back and nobody was going to capture that encounter. But there, far from the crowd, the press and the meetings of the party, Sonia Gandhi enjoyed embracing to poorest of India.

She does not think that she is going to win; nobody almost believes it in the party, and still less outside of the party. The soundings agree: the Congress is not between the favorites. "She there are not chance", says the press. It does not have possibilities. But it cannot avoid that people ask to him if will get to be the first India of foreign origin in becoming prime minister. In theory yes it can, if the Party of the Congress and its allies obtain most of benches necessary and soon they designate like Maxima agent chief executive to it. Legally also, because the Constitution does not stipulate that only the individuals born in India can aspire to the highest steering positions. Conscious that the world of India is greater than the own India nation, those that wrote up the Magna Carta two years after the Partition left the opened possibility all; and they did it because the tragedy of the Partition had caused as much flow of refugees of Pakistan and Bangladesh whom they preferred not to put limitations, not to add anything that could urge more division.

At the moment, with these elections, Sonia only tries to stop the feet to them to the Hindu nationalists and to aapar to the Congress, to remove it from marasmo in which she is sunk. That would be enough to occur to him by satisfied. It would have fulfilled his to have towards its family and the ideals that always defended their members, and that today they are seen so threatened. The weight of that immense inheritance would take off a little that takes to its backs. And perhaps a little could rest.

Also, although it does not confess it, good results would taste pleasant of revancha against all those that slander it, those that humiliate it

without truce since in 1998 it decided to accept the presidency of the Party. As it has been approached the date of the voting, the attacks have broken out again. Their detractors have offered him a blow under: they have brought to light that Sonia decided on the India nationality in 1983, that is to say, a year before his husband became prime minister. "So that it did not do it before, if it took married from 1968 and it says to feel like India so. It made it to help its husband to gain the elections, aim pérfidamente. His tried "indianidad" it is pure thirst of being able", add. It is a deceptive argument that it looks for to soil its image showing it like an ambitious one. In fact it made it disrupt an offensive of Maneka, that was first in shaking the phantom of its "italianidad". Perhaps in addition, in 1983 Sonia India did not feel absolutely, perhaps its process of indianización has been slow and has grown in the shade of the years, and the familiar tragedies... but to whom it concerns the truth to him? Their origins have become horse of electoral battle.

The attacks are so low that the Supreme Court, at the beginning of April, it took part with a law proposal to prohibit the "calumnies" in electoral times. But already it was behind schedule; the spirits too much were heated. La Paz of the ballot boxes will continue being an unattainable dream. For two days, Sonia has been trying for the last time to settle the critics on his origins. In a multitudinal meeting of campaign aim, one has gone to its thousands of followers in Sriperumbudur, the city where Rajiv was assassinated: "Here I am, stepping on this earth mixed with the blood of my husband. I assure to you that greater honor does not fit to me than to share its destiny by the good of India." The town does not seem to doubt the sincerity of its words, knowledgeable of which in Sonia Gandhi the politician and the personnel are intimately overlapping. In the end, been moderate of its reactions and immense dignity that has shown as opposed to the dirtiest attacks make him seem India still more, worthier of its confidence.

Today she is aphonic, for that reason it responds with a gesture and a smile to the butler when this one warns to him that already they are hoping to take it to vote. Sonia, fixed and with his hung purse of the arm, remains nailed in front of the television set, whose informative matutinal she shells the news of the world: today it does ten years that Mandela, the man who she admires more already who knows personally, acceded to the power in South Africa, and another electoral campaign, the North American president Bush in front of accumulates advantage the democratic candidate John Kerry, to weighing of which the popular support to the war of Iraq is at its lower moment... Not only in India the policy is full of contradictions and surprises.

But what hopes with anxiety it is the electoral prediction of the astrological well-known Ajay Bahambi, that became famous when Hillary Clinton requested to him that it read the hand to him. By aim it appears in screen, and with the tone it signs and determined of that very is convinced of which it says, oráculo bearded assures that the party at the moment in the power will revalidará its mandate with more than 320 benches. That

means a humiliating defeat for the Congress. The precision of the data and the tone of sufficiency of the man leave downcast Sonia. It does not fear the defeat, but yes it fears to be swept and to make the ridiculous situation. It energetically pushes the button of the remote control to extinguish the television set and one rises. Before leaving, it passes by the kitchen to give instructions. Today they will come to eat its children and their nietecitos. The exquisite Italian restaurant of the Hyatt Hotel had preferred to meet with them in the Piazza, since usually they do Sundays or when there is something to celebrate. But as it does not want to stoke the controversy on its "italianidad", it prefers to remain in house. It is not the moment for appearing in a photo eating paste.

It hopes to that they are the nine to leave. By force of living in India, a little have been infected him the local beliefs and according to a deputy of the party that has called to him this morning from Kerala, in the south, the Rahu Kalam today falls between the seven and average and the nine in the morning. This one is a little while of the considered day little favorable to undertake any activity. The astrologers calculate meticulously and they publish it in the Hindu calendars. It is not that Sonia creates on feet juntillas in those superstitions, but never is known, so and as they are the things best to put everything of its part...

Nothing else to cross the door that it gives to the garden, feels a hot air slap. It only lacks a month so that they unload monzónicas rains, and until then the temperature it will continue raising, inexorably. It is placed its durances and great glasses of sun and around throws a look to his: the turf yellows, parterres of flowers that engalanaban it in February have been marchitado already. But the shade of the great trees protects the rest of the vegetation. Today mercury marks 43 degrees, which does not prevent that, across of the mud wall of his house, a group of supporters has been hours waiting in the sidewalk to have his darshan. But they will not be able to see it. With so many safety measures, Sonia cannot do what Indira did, that remained to talk awhile to the doors of its residence with which they came to see it. They were other times. Now, the Intelligence service has let know that a "permanent threat" against her exists and its family on the part of Hindu marginal and xenófobos groups. Sonia is customary to coexist with that fear in the body and she has not had more remedy than to accept it after so many years and so many scares. But hardest, to which never it will be able to be accustomed, it is to think that something to its children could happen to him, and now also to its grandsons.

The soldiers of guard in the sentry box of its residence as soon as they have time to greet it when its armored Ambassador color cream leaves at full speed with squeaking of tires, followed by its escorts in another automobile with a rotating light revolving light in the ceiling. Sonia has lowered the smoky crystal window and makes a fast gesture with the hand from the interior of the vehicle, but she goes so quickly that she is not sure that their admirers have seen it. The passage from its house to Nirman Bhawan, a complex of buildings of the government where it is the office in

which it must deposit the vote, is short. One does not take more than ten minutes, mainly today, holiday for being electoral day. And it is pleasant because the wide avenues are bordered of great always green trees, many of them in flower. The city has changed much, has happened of three million inhabitants when Sonia reached more than fifteen now. There are colorful powerboats with annexed store like in Europe, department store, commercial centers, cafeterias, restaurants of all type, a plethora of luxury hotels, supermarkets where one is of everything, from salmon smoked of Scotland to wine of Rioja. But the central nucleus follows equal, mainly when there is no traffic. Everything is memories for Sonia. Each corner, each street, each commerce: in that confectionery it bought to Rajiv its favorite dessert to him; in this seat her Sunnite friend lived; in that intersection, that he gives to the Akbar avenue, it took the children to the day-care center; in that embankment the small plane of its brother-in-law crashed... And around these same avenues the day circulated in a Ambassador similar to this one that changed the life to them. It seemed to him that that car never arrived. The blood of Indira soaked the upholstered velvet seats, forming an enormous black spot.

For that reason it feels that its heart belongs to these streets, this city, this country. In order to defend itself of as much calumny, it has ordered to stick posters in the circumscription of its husband that show different photos from their life in India, beginning by its arrival when she was fiancée of Rajiv. "What India tradition I have failed to fulfill? - the text asks. Like daughter-in-law, wife, widow or member of the Congress, what tradition I have let observe" Sonia follows traumatizada by the virulence of the attacks against her.

The accesses to Nirman Bhawan strongly are guarded by police and soldiers in forecast of their arrival. The guards in the entrance iron door greet it joining the hands and taking them to the chest whispering traditional namasté. Everything is smiles. His it is the only authorized vehicle to enter the enclosure. In front of their electoral office, number 84, is waiting for expensive well-known and a cloud to it of journalists, photographers and supporters. "How feels an Italian voting in India?", an old malicious journalist asks to him who does not disguise his political tendencies. "I feel like India. I do not feel Italian, not even a little", loosen Sonia to him with the hoarse voice.

The proxy of his electoral table greets it with a wide smile and he hangs a garland to him of clavelinas around the neck:

- Companions of the Congress said us that he would come in the morning to seven - says to him.

- I feel to have delayed to me. I apologize.

- It does not have of what, please... - the man responds, ruborizado-. You are it sixteenth voter of this table... It is a good number, lady, will bring luck to him - it adds while it shows Sonia the operation of the flaming machine to vote electronic, pride of the India technology. More of a million these plastic boxes, as large as a small suitcase and that works to

batteries, has been distributed for the first time along and to the wide thing of all the territory - in the most remote places, to backs of elephant, with the hope to accelerate the count and to fight against the fraud. No longer there will be more hurt deaths nor during the fights between rival political factions who mutually accused themselves to deal with the content of the ballot boxes. Now simple bip after pressing the adjacent key to the name and the symbol of the chosen candidate indicates that the vote has been registered in a control unit. This way novel Sonia emits his vote, like a plus between the million Indians who today will listen to he himself sound during the last day of the general elections. The press suddenly becomes towards a old one that goes to vote, seated in a chair that relatives take in volandas. It is one hundred eight years old, is a Burman refugee who responds to the journalists with trembly voice: "I have always voted by the Congress because it helped us to emigrate to Chinese India when declared the war to Burma." It tightens the key and... bip!

When coming out of Nirman Bhawan, already from return to house, there is as much people dancing the jaleo the one that the car as soon as way is able to open itself. So that it asks the conductor who stops. Low Sonia of the automobile and immediately their escorts surround it and they indicate to him that it returns to put in the vehicle, but she refuses and makes a gesture with firmness so that they separate. It does not think to go away without saluting to all that aroused crowd that cheers its name and that repeats without truce eslóganes that glorifies it. It is the minimum that can do by all those that they are hoping under this sun of justice. Other people's to the nervousness of its escorts, one goes to the multitude, it greets with the head, together the hands in stop, thanks, it smiles... all they want it to touch and it wanted to embrace them one by one, if she could. It recognizes the same current of affection that always has existed between successive generations of Indians and the members of its family, an almost electrical current between her and the town who is translated in an interchange of glances, sometimes a handshake, a communication that arises over all the barriers.

When it returns to put in the car, suddenly it is asked if the astrologer this morning in the television will not have exaggerated in his negative prediction. But it is a fleeting thought. She knows better than nobody than elections can be lost , although a million people have been acamándote the eve.

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To this first call of century XXI goes six hundred seventy million voters, a size of electorate twice greater than the one of their next rival, than would be the elections to the European Parliament. In order to obtain such organizational feat and to guarantee the security of the voters, this call in four days throughout three weeks has been divided, the last one being today, 10 of May of 2004. Four million civil employees have been mobilized in seven hundred thousand electoral tables to obtain results that will affect the luck of one sixth part of the world-wide population during next the five years. The technology has been the great newness in these elections. In those of 1999, there were only three television channels; today it has more than a dozen than they relay twenty-four hours to the day, and that without counting those that are seen by satellite. Five years back it had near a million and average one of moving bodies; today there are thirty million. The television has relayed the smiles, the atuendos, the expectant expressions of fatigue, joy, of stupor of the candidates, their glances and also some that another gesture that him has cost to a politician its popularity. But nobody knows at heart what party will benefit more from the television.

The count will begin day 13 of May and the first results will occur to know the 14, at the end of week, thanks indeed to the rapidity that provide the new electronic ballot boxes. But, for the candidates, it will be one week long. It would already like Sonia to go away days to enjoy the coolness of mountains, but it cannot seem that desentiende of the great fight. Their own companions of the Congress would not understand that he did not stay in his position, the capital, first row, defending themselves of some attack of last hour, galvanizing to their companions, correcting to some of their *díscolos* deputies...

Thursday 13 of May of 2004. This morning the first results are expected. In the villages, the farmers take advantage of the heat to take a break in their tasks and to group around a transistor or a television set. In a country where all participate in the celebrations of the others, the great spectacle of the democracy is lived like one more a *fiestividad*, perhaps because to celebrate the supreme value of the individual it still more acquires value in so a densely populated place. In the numerous villages outside the reach of the waves, it will be necessary to wait for the arrival of some traveller with the news; there, the results can take up to two weeks in knowing itself. In Nueva Delhi a great sense of expectancy in the headquarters is lived both on great parties, both in center, where the strategies have been decided and the guidelines have been marked. They are diaphanous rooms bathed by nirvana of the conditioned air, full of monitors of television, computers, video cameras, printers and all the technological equipment. Young people dressed to the western one strive between the stuck offices, cellular telephones to the ear and, like concession to the tradition, a tea cup with milk in the hand. In the headquarters of the Congress, there are more journalists than members of the party; these hide in their houses, overwhelmed by the defeatist

speculations of the radio and the television. Some, most optimistic, hairdos with the famous cap that popularized Nehru, chat and gesture with journalists who are on the lookout of the first reactions.

Not very far of there, in the residence of Sonia, the atmosphere is loaded of tension. A thick silence surrounds the house, decorated with objects brought of all India, many of tribal them, gorgeous fabrics and some old paintings on crystal to which Sonia very is become fond of. Nothing evokes the ostentation or the fact that it is the home of a special family, except the study, that follows such and as it left Rajiv it. The photos, in marks of silver on the tables, show shared moments of the Nehru with the Kennedys, Gorbachov, Of Gaulle and other illustrious personages of century XX. And there they are the famous pictures of Nehru, Indira and Rajiv, hung in its wood marks on the white walls, that today also seem to have own life, as if from beyond they were participating in the suspense of the moment.

Seated in the sofas and squatting, the collaborators of Sonia willingly accept the tea with cardamom aroma that offers the host to them. All observe an uncomfortable silence and is that Sonia prefers to have the dull television. It is scared to the results and it wants to save the agony to be knowing numbers partial. It prefers to know it everything of blow, when it must be. So near the end, it is scared to defraud "the family". It knows that, if wins, it will be the victory of Sonia Gandhi, who has projected before the electorate like which she is, a vulnerable woman, sincere and audacious; if it loses, it will be the defeat of the "widow of Rajiv" or of the "daughter-in-law of Indira", the "Italian" that does not have been to the height of the circumstances and that it lacked ambition as of political talent as much. "Really is deserved to win? ", it seems to ask itself at this moment in that they assault all type to him of incongruous thoughts and until contradictory.

The portable one of its Ambika friend, Secretary General of the party and the companion who more hours has happened with her lately, sounds with the refrain of the Congress. The woman puts her tea cup on a small table and sticks the moving body to the ear. Immediately it outlines a smile, and it hangs: "Sonia, our allies in Tamil Nadu have won." Good the new one relaxes a little the atmosphere. "There we will not make the ridiculous situation", thinks Sonia. Tamil Nadu is a great state, certainly important in the final result, but all are impatient to know the numbers states key like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra or Karnataka. Sonia burns in desires with knowing it and at the same time she does not want.

Seconds later, it sounds another moving body. " Sonia, we have won in Maharashtra! ", it announces another member of its equipment. The sound of the fax is added to the one of the moving bodies: the machine escape newspaper photocopies with messages that come from several delegations of the party... and all with the good news. At a moment, the study is invaded by a cacophony of noises, sounds and fragments of conversation. Sonia is disturbed, until she receives a call by the deprived telephone of house:

- Enhorabuena, Soniaji! Not only we are winning, we are devastating. In my name and the one of all the members of the Congress, I transmit ours to you more sincere enhorabuena.

- We still do not send the bells to the flight, is necessary to be prudent... - she says.

- Yes, you are right, but already we know the tendency...

Sonia walks his glance by the members of his equipment, with a smile that revives its famous hoyuelos, those that always appeared when it felt happy.

- I am going to ignite the television... - it says when rising.

What shows the screen is a very familiar place: the Akbar street, where are the offices of the party, to less than five minutes of its house. Aroused supporters carry support placards and shout eslóganes: " Alive Sonia Gandhi! ", " Alive the Congress! ", while others ignite firecrackers, they dance and they drink in the street. " Has labeled It as foreigner, but the town has given a forceful answer! ", saffron, green and white affirms to a supporter taking a flag with the national flags. " This is a gift of the Almighty! ", it declares a well-known member of the party with tears in the eyes. That first reaction of joy leaves all overwhelmed ones, but for which Sonia is not prepared it is for hearing a shout that arises between the multitude: " Alive prime minister Sonia Gandhi" It remains of stone, as if the reality of its new situation assaulted to him from the screen of the television set. Stunned by the enormidad of which one comes to him above, one feels in the edge of the sofa. It wants to disguise its sinking, but so it is made an impression that to him it becomes impossible.

- You are well? - Ambika asks to him.

Sonia breathes deep, and the chest is indicated, as if it had a crisis principle.

- Quieres that it goes to by your inhalant?

- It is not necessary ... one already goes to me.

At heart it says so that it does not give an asthma attack him. What has is anxiety, an anxiety that the shouts of the supporting aroused ones of the Akbar street do not do more than to aggravate: " Sonia Gandhi, prime minister"

The presenter returns to the results. When shelling them by states, it is as if the voice of the different towns from India penetrated until the interior of the office, like an echo that comes from very far, of the villages that populate tibetanas slopes with the Himalayas, of the mud huts of bishnois of the desert of Thar, of the tribes who inhabit manglares of the south, of the fishermen in their immense beaches of Kerala, of the Muslims of Gujarat which they survived the recent slaughters of the Hindu fundamentalists, of the million chabolistas of Bombay and Calcuta... and the voice of the town is repeated, astonishing to Sonia, to his collaborators, their adversaries, India, and also to the world. A voice that defies the predictions of the experts in policy, of the institute and television magnates of opinion. A voice that is rebelled against the tried dominion of mass media



on the masses. Nor a single expert has been able to barruntar the spectacular defeat of the party in the power. The results also sweep of plumazo the credibility of so many astrologers, quirománticos and supposed magicians who have seeded of deceits and lies the life of the country. The famous astrologer Ajay Bahambi has been covered with glory.

The initial surprise becomes soon in euphoria, when the television announces that the Congress is on the verge of obtaining 145 benches, which allows him, next to its allies, to reach in coalition the magical number of 272. That is to say, the capacity to govern. The 272 which Sonia announced prematurely in 1999, now yes have obtained them. To the anxiety a feeling of deep satisfaction is mixed. And as it hoists of this triunfal day, the news that jumps Rahul has left chosen deputy to the Parliament by the circumscription of Amethi, worthy heir of its father. Double victory that it recovers in the power to the admired and vilipendiada family more of India. Immediately, the shouts of the crowd that has been approached until the house and that acclaims to Sonia from the street drown the sound of the television. In the seat of Akbar Road, the person in charge of security of the party calls to the Nueva police Delhi so that she sends reinforcements to number 10 of Janpath in forecast of great concentrations of people.

The BJP loses in twenty-four of the twenty-eight states of India. It loses until in the bastions that believed unconquerable, like the city santa of Benarés or the own Ayodhya. This time, its conviction of which the communal disturbances are translated in votes has turned out to be a terrible error.

- The town has reacted - Priyanka says when it comes to congratulate his mother.

Each minute that happens, they eslogan of hinduistas, "India shines", seems more ridiculous still, as if the voters had opened to the falsification of that triunfalista propaganda, that left out of play to most of the town, that that does not see in the cities but that now revancha takes his from the ardent plains and the lost villages. The expression in the glance of Sonia translates feeling of its coreligionists: triumph, pleasure, laughter and, in a while given, tears. She who sent herself to the electoral race with the only hope of not being coiled, reaches the goal like absolute winner.

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“Impressive commotion”, titles the cover of its special edition the Hindustan Times, the read newspaper in English more of Nueva Delhi, on the following day, Friday 14 of May. In the residence of Sonia, the enormous amount of support and congratulation messages has colapsado the fax. Letters, telegrams, SMS... of all parts and at all costs messages of enhorabuena for future “prime minister” rain. Car it Marroni, mayor of Orbassano, it sends a telegram to him in name of the twenty-five thousand inhabitants of its city: “We are proud of you and we wished him that it follows by the way of the development and solidarity in the greater democracy of the world. We shared with you, his India, those values that unite us to all.” Paola, the mother of Sonia, has found out the triumph of his daughter from his house of Via Bellini by a local journalist. Soon it has received a alluvium of calls. “, Yes clear that I am satisfied - repeats disguising its uneasiness, but I feel besieged and I do not have anything to say.” How to say that it fears that to its daughter it happens to him just like to its son-in-law? For that reason Paola prefers to shut up itself, and decides not to answer more the telephone.

Now the task of Sonia is the one to strengthen a coalition able to govern. It does not doubt a moment in appealing to its old friend, the shining economist sij Manmohan Singh, its gurú in economy subjects. With him, it is dedicated to write up an agreement of minimums to obtain the firm adhesion of the other members of the coalition, that counts with more than twenty parties. What far is left the times of Indira, or Rajiv, when the Congress governed with absolute majority! The policy is now like a gigantic kettle where they move the more and more diverse dreams, aspirations and interests, even faced, of one sixth part of the humanity. And Sonia suddenly is in the cook position head. It must also decorate well the stew, contenting to the Communists of the front of lefts and to the liberal ones, the regional parties and the representatives of chaste... But the task not it pilla off guard: it takes to months weaving alliances, speaking with and others, smoothing the way. Its work of spade, hair net, now gives its fruits. As they already pointed the nuns of the boarding school of Giaveno, where it studied, has talent for the consensus: in that, it is not like its mother-in-law, who was more prone to the authoritarianism. To Sonia which of truth interests to him they are the great questions of State like reducing the poverty and assuring the economic growth; or like obtaining La Paz with Pakistan and solving the contentious one of Kashmir. It does not happen the same with its partners. The authentic majority is sátrapas, ringleaders of regional parties with egos greater than their organizations. Everyone approaches the live coal its sardine demanding specific of support to the their chaste their voter or ministerial, political portfolios members. The well-known leader of one of the poorest states demands, in exchange for his support, the ministry to him of Railroads, very important because he uses to more than ten million people. And all think that Sonia will be prime minister. Some until demand it, because they do not want to remain without that valuable leadership that is

going to allow to them to enjoy its parcel of being able; they think that without her the coalition will have a very short life.

After the announcement of which the party is going to name it leader of its parliamentary group, the whole country gives by seated that the Italian will assume the position. In case there was some doubt, when a journalist asks to him if it is certain that the leader of the parliamentary group will be next prime minister, Sonia responds: "Normally, thus it is." Three words that are like other so many slaps to their adversaries. A sweet revenge, that immediately receives its retort when a leader of the defeated party declares in television that seems to him a shame that a foreigner governs India. Another leader of he himself party adds that he will boycott the act of investiture of the coalition if Sonia Gandhi is prime minister. A nationalistic earthquake shakes the country, and affects until a members of the own party of Sonia. A female leader of government of the state of Madhya Pradesh, a middle-aged woman called Ballot box Bharti, a Hindu extremist affiliated with the BJP, announces her resignation alleging that "to put" to a foreigner in the position upper it is an insult to the country and puts in danger the national security. Another woman, one respected leader of the defeated party, call Sushma Swaraj, asks for an interview with the president of the Republic, the Muslim scientist Abdul Kalam, to express the "pain to him and distresses" that she produces the subject to him. "If Sonia finishes of prime minister, I will shave the head, I will get dressed in white clothes, I will sleep in the ground and I will make a hunger strike indefinite. I will mobilize the nation against her", when coming out threatens of its interview in front of mass media.

But without a doubt the event that causes greater impact is the suicide in a town near Bangalore of an activist of the defeated party, a father of family of thirty years called Mahesh Prabhu, who before swallowing a raticida boat has left a note explaining that "cannot support the idea that in a country of thousand one hundred million it has not been possible to find a single leader Indian to direct the nation". The man leaves to widow and a son of eighteen months, and to a perplex country.

Too much racket, too much division, too much hysteria...

The consequences of their victory begin to scare it. It has touched the fiber of the nationalism, an irrational feeling that quickly can clear madness. Although the result of the elections has demonstrated that little they concern his origins to him to the town, the subject continues being explosive. So it is learned lesson and she is so cautious that to an interviewer of the Italian television it responds to him in English and not in its maternal language, sinking to the journalist in the absolute perplexity. How to make understand to which it interviews five minutes to you that you cannot speak to him in its language, although you want? How to explain what means to be foreign in India and to be so near the power that you feel its burning heat? How to count the violence that has decimated its family and that watches like a seized animal? How to explain as much mourning, as much pain, as much anguish and as much fear? How to count all that,

without which nobody can understand its reactions? It would have to begin of zero whenever it speaks with a journalist, and never is time for that.

In order to increase the restlessness still more general, the index of stock-market of Bombay, the Sensex, collapses in the greater fall in the financial history of the India, fed by the fear a government in whom the weight of the left ends the reforms until now obtained. Sonia is urgent to his man of confidence, Manmohan Singh, to that she makes declarations to calm the markets, hoping that the waters return as rapidly as possible to their channel.

It needs to think. To the following morning, accompanied by his children, it leaves house discreetly, but the police is nervous and its habitual escorts, still more. It was foreseeable that after their electoral victory the safety measures clipped his still more almost nonexistent freedom of movements. Now it must warn with more anticipation of its displacements so that, in addition to its personal escort, the police of Delhi is alert.

A light fog surrounds the empty streets by this time early. It is the best moment of the day to avoid the heat and to circulate quickly. The car of Sonia crosses the wide avenues of the new part until arriving at the gardens where they are the mausoleos of the family. The song of the birds is heard on the hoarse murmur of the new freeway that crosses Delhi of north to the south. The three take shelter moments and soon each one makes its offering floral, sending rose petals on the mausoleo. What would say Rajiv of this unexpected victory of their woman, who returns to put to all the family in the candlestick? She, who fled from the mediatic attention like of the plague, now remembers the moment at which, being his husband prime minister, him left planted with an equipment of the French television that insisted on having planes of the reunited family... "Nor at least I can make change it to seem", was this Rajiv to the journalist. Now his husband must be ing \*\*\*refl mng itself in the sky. It must be surprised, like all in India; and proud also, surely; but mainly scared, by her, her children and the grandsons who have not known. Eye with the victory, that can become against and destroy everything what it is put ahead. Eye with the dark side of the triumph, does not know what hides. " And you, Rajiv, what you would do in my place"

In the successive interviews that that day with different members from its coalition makes, it avoids to mention the subject of the leadership. To a journalist of the BBC it loosen to him: "I do not have in mind any position."

To the following day, 15 of May, the leaders more respected of the party, scared before the idea to remain orphaned of leader, request to him, whatever their decision, that delays hours to it. They want to gain time so that all the messages arrive from support that the allies send from the last corners of India. Normally the candidate to prime minister goes to the president of the Republic with that endorsement to receive the official authorization to form government. It is a step that it will have to give shortly, taking in its portfolio those messages that praise it and that make see that

he is the indispensable leader without as the coalition makes no sense. Allied partners and hope that Sonia finishes yielding: the party needs to prove to its bases that his guide has found. To this the emotional pressure of its friends is added, with whom it has shared so many sinsabores and difficult moments. It has the impression that it will leave wire drawings them if does not accept the position. It is not easy to say to them now: no longer game. Will be able to understand it? In order to tranquilize it they assure to him: "We will accept your final decision." Sonia is still three to think it to it.

In the evening of day 15, after formally to be chosen unanimously leader of the parliamentary group of the Congress, Sonia Gandhi goes to his deputies: "Here I am, in the place occupied by my great teachers, Nehru, Indira and Rajiv. Their lives have guided my route. Their value and its whole devotion to India have given the force me to continue their way years after their martyrdom. I want to remember them today, I want to homenajear them today. The town has reaffirmed that the soul of our nation is integrating, lay and united. It has rejected the negative policies of personal attacks and campaigns. It has rejected the ideology of the fundamentalist parties. Soon we will have here, in the central government, a coalition led by the Congress. We have prevailed against all prognosis. We have prevailed in spite of the ominous predictions. In name of all you, I want to express my gratefulness from all heart to the town of India. Thanks."

The room prorrumpen in one releases ovación and next the deputies arrange themselves to congratulate it personally. All want to approach the creator of as much joy and as much sense of expectancy, the person who has the key of the power. In that room that has been witness of so many national dramas, of so many bitter discussions, now breathes a festive atmosphere. Sonia is radiating. There is as much row that the deputies must keep tail to narrow the hand to him or, better still, to interchange some commentary that is the sufficiently ocurrente thing like so that she it remembers it... everything can serve in the future. Between the last ones in waiting for its turn one is a young boy, white dress with one kurta and wide trousers, its Rahul son, who has revealed itself in these elections like a promising leader of youths of the party. Sonia affectionately smiles while she tends the hand to him, like a the others to him.

Nevertheless, the veterans and nearest Sonia are worried because in all his speech he has not said a single word on his paper in the new coalition. When they suggest to him goes on the following day to the president of the Republic to ask for permission formally to form government, Sonia gets away saying that the block of lefts has still not confirmed its support, which does not stop being a coarse excuse. The truth is that it wants to use all along available to think.

After passing a whole day in house with their children hefting the situation, Monday 17 of May meets with their next allies. It has something important that to say to them. They see it come, and they are not mistaken: "I think that I do not have to accept the position of prime minister." It does not say it of sharp way, as if its decision was firm, says it as if it wanted to

measure the reaction. "I do not want to be the cause of the division of the country", adds, leaving them to all perplex discomforts and. And it happens to suggest a salomónica solution, that causes certain irritation: its idea is that it continues in the presidency of the Party... and Manmohan Singh is prime minister. She is one devises revolutionary because it supposes a bicephalous direction, an experiment in the art to govern.

A deep silence welcomes its words. Sonia continues: "He is honest, it has an excellent reputation like economist, has experience in the administration... I am convinced that he will be great prime minister." But the suggestion leaves colds them. Well it is known that Manmohan Singh does not have charisma. He is a serious man, a technocrat, not a politician. "It is like saying that this victory has not been used for anything. The coalition will not be maintained without a Gandhi, without the only leader able to agglutinate so different groups", comment one of his. The idea either does not excite the most veteran leaders, some of which have been fifty years of militancy in the party. Manmohan Singh as soon as it has been fourteen years, is an upstart. In addition he is sij, representative of a minority that hardly adds the 6 percent of the India population. It would be the first time that a nonHindu assumed that position from independence. How will take the Hindu majority?

- The town has voted by a lay, secular India, where the religion does not have to influence in the policy - Sonia remembers to them.

But it is on all the fact of not having a Gandhi in the key position what worries - and much to its people. At this point, the mystic of the last name counts more than all the others. "He will be the shortest government of history", predict. Others do not occur by won and request that it recalls to mind. Until both members of its party that complained in private having as leader to "an Italian housewife without studies" suplican to him now that he accepts to be prime minister. In one week, it has happened to be a vulgar "housewife" to "a friend, a guide, the rescuer of the nation".

At the edge of behind schedule Manmohan Singh to number 10 of Janpath, hairdo with its everlasting blue turban arrives, with its white beard, its full black ojillos of intelligence and their air of fragile bird. With great difficulty it is able to open to passage between the multitude of deputies and supporters who have gone to the call of which they are reunited with Sonia, and which they block the entrance. There are so many no longer fit in house. They hope in the garden or the street, under a sun of justice and to 43 degrees in the shade, to that his leader pronounces itself. To Sonia, the situation is to him familiar; it has the impression of it to have lived already, when they pressed for that accepted the presidency of the party. But before it was difficult to say "not", now that what is in game is the power, is practically impossible. No matter how much it tries to argue it, they do not accept its decision. They do not understand that the greater position of being able can be rejected, than is the dream of all the politicians. It is to them unacceptable, in spite of knowledge that stops Sonia the power never has been a goal in himself. They know that it is in policy by personal

commitment, because the destiny has wanted it thus. "It would be a disaster for the party, the coalition, the country... ", they repeat incessantly. "Sonia, you do not leave to us."

Faced an authentic rebellion in his rows, Sonia requests that they give all his time him. But the situation so arrives to be aggravated, the opposition so hard - one of them threatens burning itself to bonzo if it rejects the position, that Sonia is scared and given reverse gear. Perhaps two hours after to have suggested it would not accept the position of Maxima agent chief executive, Manmohan Singh goes to the garden and announces with his vocecilla: "Mrs. Gandhi has accepted to meet tomorrow morning with the president of the Republic." Uf! ... An approval murmur arises from the multitude. The announcement is able to distender the spirits. Those that begins to go away do it convinced that the pressure has worked, that its criterion has prevailed. To the end, the leader has accepted to assume his responsibility. The Congress of new will be installed in the power, into the hands of a Gandhi. History is repeated. The multitude disperses peacefully.

For Sonia, the problem is how to make swallow that bitter pill to which they venerate it, to that wait for everything of her. How to make them enter reason? How is happened to them to think that it can govern single east country? The opposition will not give truce him, a day yes and another one also will throw in face the subject to him of their origins. Some crazy person will end up killing it, is convinced. In addition, it does not have experience either and it would be burned in a moment.

What needs now is to be single. In its room, it opens the windows before lying down. The warm air breathes deep. Headress wood so that it does not give an asthma attack him. All its childhood has slept with the opened windows, even though of the cold. Today it feels again that old anguish. It is a breathlessness sensation that returns whenever it must make an important decision. Whenever it feels an unbearable pressure.

It extinguishes the conditioned air and it leaves the window open. The breeze swells the visillos, that move like cotton ghosts. But it is a hot breeze, that does not alleviate. A reddish fog illuminates the contaminated sky of the city. The dogs bark. In the avenue, some moto car with the broken exhaust pipe blows up.

Finally the silence is made, that as much it yearns for. These last days the house seemed a hen house. As much noise does not let hear. It needs silence to make contact with enemy with itself, to be listened to. In order to know how what to do tomorrow. Or rather, how to do it.

## 50

Tuesday 18 of May is a day that the members of the Congress will not forget easily. About two hundred deputies of the party hope in the chamber of the Parliament, the same room that has been witness of the election of twelve prime minister of India, to that Sonia Gandhi announces their decision.

When it makes his appearance, followed of their children Rahul and Priyanka, both with the serious and hermetic semblante, some are afraid since the news will not be good. Sonia comes without the folder that would have to contain letters and messages of support that hundreds of leaders of the Congress have sent to animate it to him to assume the position. It is a tradition that previous prime minister has always fulfilled. Perhaps it is failing to fulfill it by whim, dare to think those that resist to lose the last resquicio of hope. They are the optimists, those that think that he will not be able to reject the position after as much pressure.

A burial silence invades the room while Sonia, impeccable in sari siena color, the carefully combed hair backwards falling on shoulders, greets to several companions joining the hands to the height of the face while passage is opened towards the microphone. One puts the glasses to see its notes and it says to them: "Since six years ago I entered with reluctance the policy, I have always known very clearly - and I have declared it in several occasions that the position of prime minister was not my objective. I always have been sure that if found me someday in the position in which I today am, it would obey to my inner voice." It makes a pause, and silence becomes tenser, if it fits. Sonia raises the head and watches his children, soon to the rest of the attendance: "Today that voice says to me that I must humbly reject that position."

A violent earthquake had not caused more commotion. A deafening outcry invades the room. Sonia elevates the tone while with the hand she requests silence to be made listen: "I have been put under many pressures so that it reconsiders my position, but have decided to obey my voice. The power never has represented a temptation for me..." A choir of moans and energetic protests interrupts it. "You cannot leave to us now!", they cry out. "It cannot betray the town of India... - it exclaims Peanut Shankar Aiyar, old friend of Rajiv and influential politician. The inner voice of the town says that you must be next prime minister of India"

- I request to You that please you respect my decision... - Sonia with firmness says, but they interrupt it again.

- Without you in that position, lady, it will not be our inspiration either.

A dozen of deputies is alternated to make their speeches, in which they invoke the example of public service of his husband and his mother-in-law. "Haga you the same! - they repeat to him. Is to the height"

During more than two hours it continues the confrontation aggravated between the irresistible desperation of the deputies and the unremovable determination of Sonia. The speeches oscillate between the



reprimands that label it as egoistic and certain admiration by the gesture unusual to resign to the power. Some accuse to give it the back to the mandate that million Indians have deposited in her. Sonia listens that horde of orphans, impassible, the dark jaw. In the end, the deputies present/display a joint resolution so that she reconsiders his decision, but she, of elegant way and with a always enigmatic air, says to them that she does not think that it is possible. "You have expressed your points of view, your pain, your anguish by the decision that I have taken. But you have confidence in me, permitidme that maintains it."

It is question to insist, think. Many remember the 1999 crisis, when it announced his resignation like president of the party. It ended up yielding after the leaders requested to him that he returned. The problem now is that the time finishes. By law, it is necessary to form government before the week finishes. A deputy of Uttar Pradesh remembers to them that the decision of Sonia has a precedent in the history of India: "Lady, you have given an example like which she gave to the Mahatma Gandhi - said talking about to when the father of the nation resigned to comprise of the first government after independence. But that day the Mahatma Gandhi had to Jawaharlal Nehru. Who is the Nehru of today"

Sonia nonspeech of Manmohan Singh, S.A. in the sleeve, although the pluses close friends know that that one is its play. When it leaves the room leaving to his afflicted and disillusioned deputies, the press is crowded around around its children: "As member of the parliament just chosen - I declare Rahul-, would like that my mother was prime minister, but like son his, respect its decision." Priyanka is less diplomatic. When they ask to him if it is certain that she and their brother has influenced to their mother with the argument of which "there are lost a father, we do not want to lose a mother, is a family subject", she talks back saying a great truth: "We have never been owners of our family. We have always shared it with the nation."

The members of the Congress do not throw the towel so easily.

When returning to house, Sonia is with a multitude that requests to him the same, that it changes to seem. They demand it to shouts, some with tears in the eyes, others throwing itself on its feet. As much flattery the null and void one. It is like the other face of the hatred that their detractors show to him. So unhealthy he is the one as the other. When entering house, one is with another challenge, a letter mountain of the members of the Committee of Work of the Congress and affiliated others that announce their resignation if it does not accept the maximum position. It was, in the street, a supporter who threatens cutting the veins in the act is reduced by the police. It seems that madness has seized of Nueva Delhi.

But in this pulse Sonia it does not yield. By common sense, by intimate conviction, because she is sure that its decision is wisest for the country, the family, her. Until the last moment everything tries to fold it: the plea, the requests, the guarded threats, but Sonia has become more fort than all, and she does not succumb. On the contrary, the support makes

sure other members of the coalition so that they accept prime minister who is not a Gandhi. She marks the time, and all, until most skeptical, end up it following. That force is compensates it of its triumph.

In addition it counts on the unexpected support of the press, that seems to redescubrir it and that it undoes in praises: "Sonia extinguishes the power, ignites the hearts", titles the Asian Times. "Resignation to the power, reaches the glory", says the Times of India. When saying "not", the popularity of Sonia goes off. When "abdicating", it has introduced the notion of sacrifice in the vocabulary of the India policy. And it happens to be leader of the Congress to leader of the nation. An authentic miracle.

Rashtrapati Bhawan, the old palace of the virrey, is the scene of a short, but full ceremony of meaning, and that at the end of that turbulent week it gives by settled the crisis of being able. Saturday 22 of May, after three days of Numantine resistance against the heads of his own party, Sonia Gandhi is witness of the oath of Manmohan Singh like prime minister, in the presence of the president of the Republic. He is a little while historical because it is the first time that sij is named head of government. The man has not stuck eye during the night because a multitude of coreligionists is it been celebrating as opposed to their residence. How they have changed the things since sijs was persecuted like animals in the days that followed the murder of Indira!

After swearing the position, in a gesture that alludes to the agreement which they have reached, Manmohan Singh approaches Sonia and inclines the head slightly. As if she wanted to make clear that it governs, but it reigns.

He is a little while historical for another reason, loaded of a symbolism that demonstrates the diversity of India, its capacity for the coexistence and its increasing social mobility. Sonia Gandhi, servant like catholic, yields the power to prime minister sij, been born in 1932 in a very humble family of the Punjab western, today pertaining to Pakistan, and known by his irreproachable honesty. and it does in the presence of a president of the Muslim Republic called Abdul Kalam, born in a very poor family and expert in nuclear physics. Less ago of a century, nobody had been able to imagine that this could happen in the country where until recently the birth, and not the merit, determined the course of the existence. And for only a month, who had been able to predict resemblance ceremony between three representatives of minority religions?

In few days, Sonia has caused a quiet revolution, whose impact will feel during years. With its resignation, it has demonstrated that the policy not always is equivalent to the greed. Also it has demonstrated that one does not become Indian only by an accident of birth. To be Indian is obtained loving the country, committing itself with him and being strong to put in front the interests from the nation to the own ones. By his historical gesture, Sonia Gandhi has remembered the Hindus that the authentic force of its nation is in its tolerance, in its traditional opening towards the others, in its belief that all the religions comprise of a search common of the

humanity to find a sense to the existence. By curiosities of the life, it has had to be a Christian the one that has given back to the dignity and the confidence to the great majority of the Hindus, those that never have felt represented in the previous government.

That night, Sonia returns to house with the satisfaction from having fulfilled. It has preferred to stay behind the throne, galvanizing to the town but leaving the power to its great enturbantado vizier and of white beard.

Finally it is going to be able to rest after this driven crazy week. But, before taking shelter in its dormitory, it passs by the office, to perhaps feel the presence of the man who continues wanting like the first day, more, if the love could be moderate. With as much heat, the flowers of the garland around the photo of Rajiv are little withered ones.

- Tomorrow I will change them - it is said.

It remains watching the image of its husband. It closes the eyes and it is concentrated intensely, until it revives it in its mind. It has it so close seems to him to be oyendo its velvet voice, modulated well, with its impeccable English accent, whispering to the ear love words to him... Until it seems to him to smell its skin, with that scent to clean that it is mixed with its own perfume of jazmín. And that transports it to the past, to the lost time, to their better memories, those than Sonia keep in their heart because it is a treasure that have made together.

The ensoñación, painful placentera and simultaneously, last little, but she is very intense because the deads live in the hearts on the alive ones. When it reopens the eyes, its glance by the other photos takes a walk. It has seen million them times, but today it likes to return them to see, time and time again, perhaps because they remember the sense to him of its life. Rajiv and its smile to him continue causing a tiny amount in the heart, always will be thus; Indira also, with its capacity to \*\*\*reflx mng themselves of itself, not to forget a birthday or the disease a boy in the middle of the preoccupations of the subjects of State. Now than ever, Sonia account occurs more of which the "mystic of the dynasty" has inherited of Indira and that is applying everything what it has learned of her: the patience and the tenacity, the audacity, the anger and the sense of the opportunity... Its glance stops in a small photo on the table in which Gandhi with Nehru sees itself the Mahatma. In those sad days after the death of its mother-in-law in whom its correspondence took refuge in, as if of that way could communicate with her, also learned, without knowing it, something on the essence of the political leadership. It found a text of the Mahatma Gandhi to Nehru, who was between the papers of Indira: "You are not scared, pon your faith in the truth; it listens to the necessities of people, but at the same time asegúrate of which you acquire sufficient moral authority like for hacerte listening; I know democratic, but it values the only aristocracy that really matters: the spirit nobility."

The trip has not been easy from the placid existence of a housewife satisfied with its domestic life to the frenetic center of the political

activity. As she herself defines it, it has been a history of light and shades, mystery and the hidden hand of the destiny. A history of inner fight and torment, of how the experience of the loss can contribute a deeper sense to the existence. But, in spite of all the sadnesses, the humiliations, the difficulties and the bad short whiles, tonight feel made like never before. As if suddenly it understood something that intuited deeply, but that without embargo it escaped to him, and that it has to do with its deep reason of being. "The family with whom first I committed myself when marrying to me was restricted to the limit of a home - Sonia will write late more. Today my loyalty includes one more a ampler family India, my country, whose people have received to me so warmly that they have turned to me one of them." Sonia is honest when she says that no longer she is Italian. It is not it because it has happened to be part of the Nehru-Gandhi family to become the heiress of the dynasty. And the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty is India.

## EPILOGUE

Paradoxicallly, when resigning to the power, Sonia Gandhi has been made still more powerful. The town, that admires the altruism ideals and resigns so linked in the Hindu religion and the philosophy, has happened to consider it a leader political to venerate it like a goddess. Plaster turns it the most influential person of India. In the world, its stature does not stop to grow. The magazine Forbes classifies it between the three more powerful Earth women. He is not bad for that always it has despised the power.

It is wanted by the town not only because it has built the miracle to give back the aconfesional character to a country that was in a dangerous drift, not only because it has at the top placed of a corrupt and chaotic democratic system to a man of the great intelligence, irreproachable integrity and deep experience, but because it has managed to connect with the man and the woman of the street. They value their sacrifice like mother and wife; they, the sense of its fight. All admire their delivery to the ideals of the family. They understand the suffering that widow, of so tragic way, a so young and so good husband has suffered when losing to Indira and soon when remaining that she never must have found in the firing line. They are identified with her.

The pain before the loss of the wanted beings more provokes the compassion of whom they suffer every day, anonymously and in silence, a life of deprivations. But to the Gandhi so much is not wanted to them to belong to an exceptional family, but reason why they have in common with normal people. For example, the familiar quarrels: the scorn that Nehru felt towards the husband of Indira; or the tensions between Indira and the woman of Sanjay; or the hostility between the sisters-in-law... nothing of that has to do with the greatness of spirit, but all the opposite, with the daily life worldwide. If most of the families these domestic dramas live in private on their homes, the Nehru-Gandhi has always lived them to the public light, and above handling the destiny of the greater democracy than it has never been known. How not to feel fascinated by so normal personages that nevertheless so extraordinary circumstances live? How not to feel interest by that family that now is divided and in the antipodal ones of the political phantom, Sonia and his children dedicated to the Congress, Maneka and Firoz Varun to the BJP? That one is the same material del that is made the great sagas of mythology which they nourish the imagination of the town from the night of the times. For many inhabitants of the villages and the fields of India, the saga of the Nehru-Gandhi, that lasts from century XIX and has appearances to last well entered the century XXI, it is the bridge that ties its feudal past to the democratic present and, hopefully, to a future that is guessed more prosperous. If before the dynasties served to preserve the social order, now they serve to reinforce the bond of the inhabitants of a same nation. They help to unify the country, to lay the foundations it in imaginary the popular one. They have a little the paper that assume the ruling families in the constitutional monarchies, like in the United Kingdom,

the Scandinavian countries or Spain. It is the case of the Bhutto in Pakistan, the Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka, or the Rehman in Bangladesh. It is a tradition deeply anchored in the countries of Asia, although nonexclusive of that part of the world. In the United States, the political dynasties have produced senators, governors and presidents with regularity, since it has been the case of the Roosevelts, the Kennedys, Bush or the Clinton. In other countries, the family does not govern but the mantle has happened of father to daughter, as in the case of Even San Suu Kyi in Burma. It is in Asia where without a doubt the political dynasties find the ground most fertile to reproduce.

In India, those are many that little criticize the dynastic policy of "the family" labeling it as democratic, but that is to forget that, although a great part of the electorate is illiterate, does not mean that is ignorante. In the modern dynasties of the democratic countries, or they are the Kennedys, Bush or the Gandhi, the position does not inherit itself automatically, is necessary to now gain it, since Indira has done it, and Sonia to it. If formerly the dynasties were dominated the subjects, today those are the citizens that decide to follow governed by clans or families. Which is the reason? For, it has to do with certain nostalgia that impels the Indian town to recreate the governing class of the past with its horde of nababs, you crack, frogs and all the panoply of king-emperors and sátrapas. Others explain it with marketing research arguments: the last names are as reconocibles marks as those of dentifrica paste or detergent plaster helps to orient itself in marasmo of the local policy. Others think that perhaps it is a reflection to protect itself of the abuses of the power, hoping that those that already are in the summit are compasivos and magnanimous and they are not dedicated to the looting and the robbery, a own behavior of the upstarts.

A logical effect of the resignation of Sonia to the power was that the prestige of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty left fortified. In 2006, in a conference of the Congress in Hyderabad, the unconditional ones of Sonia demanded a greater paper for their son within the organization. The choir of voices, now so familiar, demanded the presence of Rahul. Sonia responded to them that she did not think to influence in his son, who he was free to choose his way. And Rahul requested time. But, in September of 2008, the torch has begun to change of hand, to the being named like one of the Secretary Generals of the Congress, in a conceived maneuver to mix youth with experience in the direction of the party in views of the next general elections. Now Rahul comprises of the directive committee, the organ of decision making of the Congress. In many years a number two in the organization exists for the first time who counts on the total endorsement of number one. For months, Rahul has been crossing the country galvanizing to its followers and, just as its father, it is beginning to neglect its personal security. Several times, the agents in charge to protect it have complained which Rahul confuses to them or it does not make case to his instructions. It realizes, like his father, of which it is impossible to make political without bathing in multitudes. Many of the conflicts that arose in the days of Indira

and from Rajiv have solved or are on the way to solution, but a public personage, especially if it belongs to "the dynasty", always it is in danger to be attacked by some fanatic. Without going more far, in February of 2007, the police arrested to a man armed of a pistol in a meeting that gave Sonia in the city of Almore. It was that the man, a local employee of Post office, did not comprise of any conspiracy, simply suffered psychic upheavals.

Recently, the murder of an old friend of the family in the Pakistan neighbor has come to remember the fragility and the tenuous thing to them of its existence. Benazir Bhutto has died of way similar to Rajiv. Both were outside the power but they were to point to return to conquer it. Both neglected their security for the sake of a greater contact with the town. The Gandhi knows that the attack against Benazir Bhutto is a reflection of which it can happen to them at any time, if they commit the error to lower the guard. Will have learned Rahul not to let itself take by the sense of the destiny? The Sanjay uncle would have followed alive if he had been more cautious. Their political maneuvers to control to sijs created a monster that devoured its mother; Indira did not make case when either they said to him that sijs had to undo of its escorts. To Rajiv, the own Rahul intuited what was going to happen to him... Will have learned the members of this new generation the lesson of their predecessors? At the moment, Sonia follows there to remember it day to it after day, so that they never forget it.

Priyanka is remote of the policy and takes Nueva to a calm existence Delhi, taking care of its husband and his children. In February of 2008, it made a trip to the south of the India that put it in the candlestick. It wanted to do it of incognito, but in followed it was located by the press. It had been time with the idea to visit Nalini Murugan, the woman who fulfills life imprisonment by to have participated in the plot to assassinate to Rajiv. Almost twenty years have passed from the attack in Sriperumbudur, but the suffering by the loss of a father does not stop with time. They are hurt that never heals absolutely. Priyanka wanted to see itself solo with the woman who helped to save of the capital punishment when she made take part to his mother so that they exchanged it. So that it went to see it? "It is a purely private subject - it declared to the press, a personal visit that is fruit of my own initiative." Both women broke in sobs when they were in front as opposed to in the destartalada room of visits of the jail. One knew that, at the end of the encounter, they spoke of its experiences to give to light its respective children, since to both it had to them to practice a Caesarean one. They spoke more of the life than of the death, which suggests Priyanka had pardoned it. Is not justice and the pardon stages essential to reconcile with a tragedy? At the end of the encounter, Nalini confessed its own brother who felt "as if all my sins had been washed by the visit of Priyanka". The hinduismo standard that the pardon is not weakness signal, but of force. It is a way to free themselves, to find La Paz. "My encounter with Nalini has been my way to make the peace with the violence and the loss that I have lived." That one was the declaration of Priyanka, so concise and simple as heroic, that finished of the following way: "I believe in the rage,

neither in hatred nor in the violence. I refuse to leave those feelings dominate my life." The Gandhi always has known to become conceited with the adversity. God protects to them.

Sonia lives an existence shut in in his strength on number 10 of Janpath, although Paola, his mother, passes invier to us with her. All Sundays it is possible to be seen in mass of ten in the church of the Nunciature. Aside from his children, Sonia surrounds itself by few intimate friends, such whom she had when Rajiv lived. It is not let see easily, except in the official acts. It is not mixed with farándula of Nueva Delhi, nor frequents the diplomatic atmosphere. One meets with the ministers of the Congress and other leaders of the coalition so many times as they ask for it. From average, in its quality of president of the party and leader of the coalition in the power, it can get to see thirty people the day and to examine tens of information. Its small office in the Committee of the Party of the Congress is always full of poor people who come to request aid. Her secretary has instructions to take care of them all.

Faithful to the custom that inherited of its mother-in-law, tries to ayunar a day to the week and to do exercises of yoga all the mornings. The woman who a day confessed to feel badly dressed India has trasformado today in one elegant lady who only dresses saris. To him they continue fascinating fabrics as well as the traditional crafts and the antiques. It would like to have more time to read. It takes advantage of the days of vacations that every year are taken in June to rest in house of an old friend of the family, the journalist Add Dubey, in Kosani, spurs of the Himalayas, and is when it is bought up to date in the slow readings. It likes those mountains that remember the Alps to him of their childhood and dreams about being made a house own to flee from the premonzónico heat in company of its children and grandsons. The trips that the foreigner does usually are officials or to give some lecture. Now is seen it less irritated. It has declared that is "comfortable" in policy, although it could do hers the words of Benazir Bhutto: "I have not chosen this life. It has chosen me to me." Perhaps it does not have the reins of its life, but it has well grasped those of the country. Until its opponents they admit that it does not give a false step. As much their detractors as their supporters agree in recognizing their ability to handle the rules of a coalition government, something that neither Indira nor Rajiv were seen in the obligation never learn. Sonia has been able to develop a harmonious relation with some next political collaborators, a relation based on mutual loyalty. Indira could never have had a relation like which it unites it to Manmohan Singh.

One of the great profits of Sonia has been the fight against the corruption. Did not calculate Rajiv that the 85 percent of all the expenses of development in India finished in the pockets of the bureaucrats? In order to avoid it, Sonia and prime minister Manmohan Singh managed that the Parliament voted a law that allows any citizen to examine the supplies of contracts of public licitation and to avoid therefore the prevarication and the bribe. The people On guard of being able now are forced to be much more



cautious at the time of making her fiddles, because the real possibility exists to fall in the networks of justice. As much Sonia as prime minister knows that she is in the capacity to reform the State, to modernize it and to clean it of corruption, where the key of the development of the India lies, that in spite of everything, during last the fifteen years, it has been the country of the world that more quickly has grown after China. If those reforms are obtained it anticipates that in a pair of decades the India economy will be the third world-wide economy. The country will have left back its past archaic and will have conquered a future led by science and the technology. The old dream of Nehru will be fulfilled then.

At the present time, the poor men only have the consolation of the official projections that by then augur a greater rent to them per capita thirty and five times. They are the greater preoccupation of Sonia. Perhaps it is the result of its catholic formation, or because it remembers very that was born in a humble family back in the Asiago mounts, but to him they continue hurting the resistances of India. Did not say Indira that everything what it was said of India, and the opposed thing, was equally certain? Bombay counts on the greater district of shacks of Asia and the greater infantile concentration of prostitutas of the world, but it finishes turning the fourth city of the planet in number of billonarios - one of them has given a Airbus to its woman for its 44.<sup>0</sup> birthday. How to be accustomed to those differences? How is possible that the State is incapable to construct latrines in the districts of shacks, or to provide to chalk to the schools or clean syringes to the rural clinics and, without embargo, the space program is considered as good as the one of any western power, or perhaps better? The day in which it is accustomed will be the day in which it must leave the policy.

What Sonia has done has been to surround by experts developing like the activist Aruna Royo the Belgian economist Jean Dreze, who lives in a district of shacks of Delhi with his woman India. Together they have outlined a plan of aid to the countryside that the greater effort never made by the Indian State means to improve the situation of the populations of the field. But the obstacles to put in practice these programs of development are enormous. India, with its destartalados airports, its worn down highways, their enormous districts of shacks and their impoverished villages, needs all its resources to construct infrastructures of all type, and in that race towards the development the luck of poorest follows without being high-priority in the mind of the technocrats who direct the country. The idea that prevails in the government, the one of which the development will finish including every time to more people and than therefore will end the poverty, was the idea that defended Rajiv. "Pero when? ", Sonia asks, who does not forget the commitment acquired with the poor men who have voted it. One excessively resists before the arguments technicians of its own allies, the men who same it has aupado to the power, including the powerful minister of Finances. For him, those programs move away of ortodoxia economic; for her, they are essential to give sense to the power that the

town has trusted to him. Did not say to Victor Hugo who “all power is to have”? Sonia remembers it very, and noneyebrow in his fight. In the districts where he has obtained that the program of guarantee of one hundred days of use is put in practice, the farmers have noticed the difference. It is the difference between the poverty and the misery. The program them extraction of poor men, but does not avoid that they fall in the well of the misery, that is when to the material shortage the hopelessness is united. It is the difference between the life and the death. The other program is more difficult to implement. One is to give to the farmers banking credits to interest very reduced to release them of the tyranny of the debt that they have contracted with the local moneylenders and whom it often pushes to them the suicide. It is a problem that comes from distant spot, and Indira already wanted to sink the tooth to him when it was in force the Emergency. It is difficult to solve because the majority is illiterate and they do not know what is to go to a bank. The important thing is to give an exit them, a hope light, that knows that nobody must take off the life by not being able to give back a handful of rupias. Thanks to Sonia, the “poorest ones of between the poor men”, as it calls them according to the expression popularized by another European that left its mark in India, the Mother Teresa, have a faithful ally. An ally that has them property in possession, every day and at any moment, is in the peak of the power, or outside him.

## GRATEFULNESS

I feel not to be able to mention here all those that have helped me during this long investigation, in Italy and India, because they prefer to remain in the anonymity. Of all heart, thanks for the provided information without which it had not been able to write this book.

I specially want to express my deep gratitude to my Situated woman by its support, its company and its good humor during the trips of investigation and the long months of writing.

Without the effective and valuable support of my publisher Elena Ramirez throughout the elaboration process , and without its enthusiasm, this adventure had been much more arduous. To you, Elena, my more felt gratefulness, like a all the equipment of Seix Barral and of the group Planet that has participated in the preparation of the book.

Thanks to Dominique Lapierre, who always believed in this history and she animated to me to write it, counting me of step its anecdotes with Indira Gandhi who used to receive in his trips India to him.

All my recognition to Michelguglielmo Torri, university professor of modern and contemporary History of Asia of the university of Turin, eminent specialist and enamored with India, by its advice its aid and its generosity at the time of investing his appraised time in dissipating my doubts yen to correct the text.

Thanks also to Eva Borreguero; Alvaro Enterría by his meticulous and perspicaces corrections; to Bernadette Lapierre, Christian and Patricia Boyer.

In India, I have a special memory for Kamal Pareek, that left us in September of 2007. I will throw always much of except its explanations, their availability, its way to tell me to the things Indians difficult to understand for a western one, and mainly the pleasure of its friendship.

My recognition to Ashwini Kumar to tell its anecdotes me on the time at which it governed Indira Gandhi and to provide valuable contacts to me, as well as to the Major Dalbir Singh, national secretary of All India Congress Committee. Either forgetfulness to Peanut Shankar Aiyar, companion of Rajiv Gandhi and minister in the present government, nor to his Aryan niece Pallavi Aiyar and her husband Julio.

Thanks also to our old friends Prancis Wacziarg and Aman Nath to be always there.

And to Christian van Stieglitz to have shared so generously with me its memories of Rajiv and Sonia, as well as to Josto Maffeo so at great length to tell the life me in Orbassano.

Thanks also to Alex Ehrlich, Farah Khan, Josefina Young and Nello of the Gatto by its aid, its company and its hospitality. To They also add Dubey, to do of messenger. And to Andrés Trapiello and Laura Garrido.

Finally, I want to thank for to Susana Garcés and airline company KLM its continuous support and collaboration.

# NOTES

## I CAPITULATE 6

P.

**69** "Seeing with its misery and overflowing gratitude them, I felt a mixture of shame and pain - it wrote, shame of my easy and comfortable life and the politiquero of the cities that ignores to this vast multitude of children and half-naked daughters of India, and pain before as much degradation and unbearable poverty."

*Nehru, Jawaharlal, An Autobiography, Oxford University Press, Nueva Delhi, 2002.*

**74** "At the outset, to spin he is very boring but as soon as you put yourself to it, you discover that it has something of fascinating. [...]"

*Extracted of Gandhi, Sonia, Two alone, Two to together, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 2004, p. 404.*

## I CAPITULATE 8

**94** Firoz was son of parsi call Jehangir Ghandy [...] At the end of the Thirties, changed the spelling of its name by the one of Gandhi, the last name of a chaste one of perfumistas, a current last name in chaste the Bania of the Hindus of Gujarat, of where the Mahatma was native.

*Asaf, Ali Aruna, Private Pace of to Public Person, Radiant Publisher, Nueva Delhi, 1989, p. 35, note 11, mentioned in Van Tunzelmann, Alex, Indian Summer, Henry Holt, New York, 2007, p. 86.*

**100** Had not described to Nehru its country like "an old palimpsesto in which layers on thought layers and ensoñación have been recorded, without no has been able to erase or to hide previously what it had been registered"?

*Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Discovery of India, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 2004.*

## **I CAPITULATE 12**

**147** - No, Sam. It advanced. I have total confidence in you.

*Scene between Sam Manekshaw and Indira Gandhi, extracted of Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 1995.*

## **I CAPITULATE 13**

**160** "We have been too soft with that damn woman - it said to him to Kissinger-. Sigh that to do that to them to the Pakistanis when we had warned to that old vixen of not putting."

*Mentioned in Guha, Ramachandra, India to after Gandhi, HarperCollins, New York, 2007, p. 460 (of documents in Smith, Louis, Foreign Relations of the United States, South Asia Crisis: 1971, Department of State, Washington, D.C., 2005).*

## **I CAPITULATE 14**

**167** "You will see that very quickly the young one happens through millenia of human history, and unconsciously, and partly consciously also, the history of its race will live within himself."

*Mentioned in Gandhi, Sonia, Two alone, Two to together, op. cit., p. 476.*

## **CHAPTER 15**

**169** "Rajiv has a work, but Sanjay does not have it and is put in an expensive company. It is looked much like me when it also had the same age - with its harshness, as much that gives to pain the suffering me that must support."

*Correspondence of Indira Gandhi. Papers of P.N. Haksar (mentioned in Guha, Ramachandra, India to after Gandhi, op. cit.)*

**178** It was then, in that interval of happiness, as fleeting as intense, when Indira decided, once that his father there was dead, to devote itself totally to Firoz.

*According to Vasudev, Ballot box, Indira Gandhi: Revolution in Restraint, Vikas, Nueva Delhi, 1973.*

## **I CAPITULATE 19**

**210** “It must be terrible for you who your father is in the jail. Really that I feel much.”

*Mentioned in Kidwai, Rasheed, Sonia, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 2003, p. 34.*

**214** Called anthropologist Lee Schlesinger [...]

*“The Emergency in an Indian Village”, Asian Survey, bowl. 17, n.O 7 (1977 July), mentioned in Guha, Ramachandra, India to after Gandhi, op. cit.*

## **I CAPITULATE 21**

**225** - VVIP! - it responded to him. Shri Sanjay Gandhi!

*If a VIP is a Very Important Person (English term to designate to dignitaries or to excellent people), a VVIP is a Very Very Important Person, that is the summm. The Shri word means something as well as “Excelen company”.*

**226** When it lost a sandal in the track of the airport, she was the very same head of government of Uttar Pradesh that was crouched, gathered it and was given reverencialmente it.

*Mentioned in Guha, Ramachandra, India to after Gandhi, op. cit., p. 508.*

**226** “I felt that Maneka demanded too much to Sanjay and that this one wanted to involve it in any activity that reduced the pressure that it exerted on him.”

*Mentioned in Singh, Kushwant, Truth, Love & To Little Maliee, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 2002, p. 286.*

**228** “Indira has been very brave. The one is a great step that it has given.”

*Mentioned in Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 314.*

**231** “ Lady, as what she serves a river without fish”

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 318.*

## **I CAPITULATE 22**

**235** - When? When it has died to me?

*Mentioned in Asaf, Ali Aruna, Indira Gandhi: Statesmen, Scholars and Friends Remember, op. cit., p. 41.*

**238** "I have been incapable to stop the feet to him to my brother"

*Bhagat, Usha, Indiraji through my eyes, Viking-Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 2006, p. 239.*

**240** Again Rajiv had thrown to him in face that "Sanjay and Dhawan is those that has dragged to you up to here".

*Mentioned in Dhar, P.N., Indira Gandhi, the Emergency and Indian Democracy, Oxford University Press, Nueva Delhi, 2000, p. 355.*

## **CHAPTER 23**

**252** While they chose sari to him, Indira documented to the kitchen some [...] the cook was in charge to destroy them of a very peculiar way, using the machine to make paste of Sonia like crushing machine.

*Mentioned in Chatwin, It brushes, What I here do? , The Aleph, Barcelona, 2002, p. 330, according to the interview that Chatwin made the cook.*

**257** Not always the recibimiento was triunfal or affectionate. The writer Bruce Chatwin, who accompanied it during part by that tour, was in a car that was confused with the one of Indira.

*Chatwin, Brushes, What I here do? , op. cit., p. 339.*

## **CHAPTER 24**

**259-260** "It remembers, everything what makes strong, hurts. Some are squashed or disabled, very few become conceited. I know strong in body and mind and learns to tolerate..."

*Gandhi, Maneka, Sanjay Gandhi, Vakis, Feffer & Simons, Nueva Delhi, 1980.*

**261** "He is incredible that, in those chaotic conditions, Sonia could be in charge of all the domestic tasks without coming down."

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 355.*

**262** In case outside little, their opponents smoothed the way to him when pifiar it of a way that had only been able to occur in India.

*India Today, 16-30 of November of 1978.*

**263** In one of those fights, Maneka took off the ring that Indira had given to him in its wedding and it threw it to the ground with rage.

*Yunus, Moharrned, People, Passions and Politics, Vikas, Nueva Delhi, 1980, p. 45.*

**264** "In house the chaos reigns... They wait for long sentences to him of imprisonment to Sanjay. It is necessary to understand it and to pardon its hysteria to him."

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 384.*

## **CHAPTER 25**

**272** - I have two alternatives - there was this Indira to him to Krishnamurti-, to fight or that shoots like a a fair duck to me.

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 376.*

**278** “This one was not the robust Indira of the days previous to the state of emergency, emergency situation [...] What shades, what the dark walked next to her”

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 403.*

## **I CAPITULATE 26**

**288** Hurgando with the glance between calcined irons, Indira had realized enormidad of the loss.

*Frank, Katherine, Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi, HarperCollins, London, 2002, p. 446.*

**289** “The past it is the past, we let be it. But I must clarify certain things. The falsification, the persistent malicious campaign of calumny must be refuted... »

*Gandhi, Indira, Letters to An American Friend, HBJ, New York, 1985.*



## CHAPTER 27

**294** “ Mírala! ... What will have been believed? ”, it confessed to one of the nearest friends of its husband speaking of Indira.

*Mentioned in Chatterjee, Rupa, The Sonia Mystique, Virgo Publications, Nueva Delhi, 2000, p. 56.*

**295** “Nobody can occupy the place of Sanjay - it confessed its Pupul- friend. He was my son, but also it helped me like an older brother.”

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 417.*

## I CAPITULATE 28

**302** “I fought like a tigress by him, us and our children, the life that we had been constructed, by its vocation to fly, our simple friendships and, on everything, by our freedom: that simple straight human one that so careful and consistently we had conserved”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, Viking-Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 1992, p. 6.*

**307** “Era my Rajiv - Sonia- would say, we were wanted, and if she thought that she had to offer its aid to its mother, I would fold myself before those forces that already were too powerful so that I could fight them, and would go there with him where took to him.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 7.*

**308** - ... There is a sense of inevitabilidad in all this, no?

*Nugent, Nicholas, Rajiv Gandhi - They are of to Dínasty, BBC Books, London, 1990.*

## I CAPITULATE 29

**313** “Before, our world was reconocible, intimate [...] The time stopped being flexible and the hour that Rajiv happened with us was more and more valuable.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit.) p. 7.*

**315** “You have dropped a phrase [...] Hay to learn to live with him, to integrate it in the own one to be and to make it part of the life.”

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 424.*

## I CAPITULATE 31

**330-331** “Sometimes they will say to all type of silly things in newspapers on the grandmother [...] Tienes to learn to fight with those provocations... not to make case to which it can irritate to you, not to leave it affects to you.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 8.*

**333** - Then Tengo that to ignore those information that receipt every day? ... What I do?

*Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 440.*

## I CAPITULATE 32

**344** “If the authorities enter [...] we will cut Them in small pieces... that comes”

*Part of this sequence is nourished of Tully, Mark and Jacob Satish, Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's last battle, Castrates, London, 1985 and of Sing Kushwant, Truth, Love & To Little Malice, op. cit.*

### **I CAPITULATE 33**

**350** - Nor it is happened to you to consider that option. I am female leader of a democratic government, not of a military government.

*Malhotra, Inder, Indira Gandhi, to Personnel and Political Biography, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1989, p. 304.*

**352** “The 28 of October Returned to Delhi and Indira [...] Since it used to always do, brought of its study its wicker stool and its folders, and it was put to work, throwing a look of time in when to the television or chatting with us.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 8.*

### **I CAPITULATE 34**

**356** “I have done what] had to do [... Now you do what you must do.”

*Tully, Mark and Jacob Satish, Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's last battle, op. cit., p. 2, mentioned in Frank, Katherine, Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi, op. cit., p. 493.*

**359** The bullets habian perforated the liver, the lungs, several bones and the spine of prime minister. “It is a strainer”, said a doctor.

*Frank, Katherine, Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi, op. cit., p.494.*

**360** “There has been an accident in house of prime minister. Cancel all the appointments and you return immediately to Delhi.”

*Merchant, Minhaz, Rajiv Gandhi: the End of to Dream, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 1991, p. 135.*

**368** “Please, you do something, the situation she is tragic”, it said to him with scared voice. Pupul remained perplex.

*Account Pupul east Jayakar episode in Jayakar, Pupul, Indira Gandhi: To Biography, op. cit., p. 493.*

**369** “What the crowds looked for were the goods of sijs, the television sets and the refrigerators, because we are more prosperous than the others. To kill and to burn alive people were only part of the diversion.”

*Adams, Jad and Philip Whitehead, The Dynasty - The Nehru Gandhi Story, Penguin, New York, 1997, p. 319.*

### **CHAPTER 35**

**372** “It seemed very lost and very single - it would write Sonia-. Quite often it felt intensely its absence.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 10.*

**373-374** “It has been mainly by the death of my mother... Nobody really knew me, which has done has been to project in me the expectations that had puttings in her. I have become symbol of its hopes.”

*Adams, Jad and Philip Whitehead, The Dynasty - The Nehru Gandhi Story, op. cit., p. 323.*

### **I CAPITULATE 36**

**382** “Sometimes, it let to him sleep minutes more... Soon it protested, but at least it rested.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 12.*

**383** “I see much love in the eyes of people - it said Rajiv-, and friendship, confidence, but mainly hope.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 101.*

### **I CAPITULATE 37**

**391** - How? Here to be us to sign an agreement that guarantees its peace and security... and you are going to say to them that I am scared to greet the honor guard?

*Adams, Jad and Philip Whitehead, The Dynasty - The Nehru Gandhi Story, op. cit., p. 337 (of an interview of journalist Vir Sanghvi to Brooks Associates).*

### **I CAPITULATE 38**

**408** “He was relaxed - it would write Sonia-, almost alleviated. Again it enjoyed simple and daily pleasures like uninterrupted meals, to remain in the tablecloth with us, to from time to time see a video instead of locking in itself in its office to work.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 13.*

**408** “Account of the dangerous thing does not occur that is this.”

*Ali, Tariq, The Nehrus and the Gandhís: an Indian Dynasty, Bread Books, London, 1985, p. 324.*

## CHAPTER 39

**414** “An extraordinary collection of the most ruthless and immoral opportunists who never have entered the political sand India.”

*Mentioned in Ali, Tariq, The Nehrus and the Gandhis: an Indian Dynasty, op. cit., p. 320.*

**418** When they returned to the hotel, it took its camera, with which always it traveled, and they became a photo with the automatic firing mechanism, something that never had done before.

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 14.*

**422** “We took leave with tenderness [...] - Sonia- would remember and it went away. I remained watching between the cracks of the blind and I saw move away him, until I lost to him of Vista... This time for always.”

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit., p. 15.*

## CHAPTER 42

**438** “We took the hair Him by its shoes [...] It had so much reason why to live, as much that to make in spite of our repairs and our critics.” *Hazarika, Sanjoy, “For we shall to never sees Young again>, in Hindustan Times, 2 of June of 1991, mentioned in Chaterjee, Rupa, The Sonia Mystique, op. cit., p. 130.*

**442** “You do not displease to Madam speaking of its entrance in policy. It hurts much to him. You remember that it is in mourning by a husband whom never it loved to enter policy.”

*Mentioned in Chaterjee, Rupa, The Sonia Mystique, op. cit., p. 136.*

## I CAPITULATE 43

**447** “ What are created these militants? - Priyanka is exclaimed, outside himself. That we must continue sacrificing our lives? Already coarse of policy”

*Mentioned in Kidwai, Rasheed, Sonia, Penguin, Nueva Delhi, 2003, p. 57.*

**447** “We are thankful to Him personally, as well as to its colleagues, this generous supply, but it would be better than the government designed his own projects and humanitarian programs and financed them directly, thus making honor to the memory of my husband.”

*Chaterjee, Rupa, The Sonia Mystique, op. cit., p. 141.*

**451** In a single one behind schedule, a monument that has been witness of innumerable convulsions of the history, that it has supported whips of more than four hundred monsoons is reduced to rubbish by the fury of fanatics.

*Mentioned in Ghua, Ramachandra, India to after Gandhi, op. cit., p. 630.*

**452** During three years, Sonia been has locked up in house, overturned in the task of organizing the file of the family. [...] Has written a stirring book on its husband

*Gandhi, Sonia, Rajiv, op. cit.*

#### **I CAPITULATE 44**

**466** "Sonia will not leave chosen because she is foreign... The only thing that it wants is to be a day prime minister to have a given life. That position is like a toy for her, is not conscious of the difficulties that it involves... »

*Mentioned in The Indian Express, 14 of May of 1999.*

#### **I CAPITULATE 45**

**475** "In the last session, honorable prime minister ed \*\*\*refl x mng itself of me because I did not answer its question... But it is a too important subject like answering it between the outbursts of laughter of its deputies. Now I to him ask you: Which is its position on the matter? ... You only mention three words: minimum credible dissuasion. Cree you who those three palabritas conform a serious policy"

*Mentioned in Kidwai, Rasheed, Sonia, op. cit., p. 92.*

**478** - You have thought about the luck of the minorities in a government directed by the BJP? Is that you do not want to fight by us?

*Mentioned in Kidwai, Rasheed, Sonia, op. cit., p. 165.*

**480** - Simply east meeting would not exist - it answers the other to him. Without Sonia, there is no meeting, without Sonia, is no party.

*Mentioned in Kidwai, Rasheed, Sonia, op. cit., p. 170.*

#### **CHAPTER 46**

**484** "I ask myself if we in Italy would accept a foreigner, a woman for more inri, like leader of a party that has symbolized the fight by independence against the foreign domination and that continues enjoying great popular support, although less than before. That a part of the Indians trusts their destiny to Sonia says much on the tolerance of India."

*Mentioned in Naravane, Vaiju, "In Maino Country", in Frontline, 8 of May of 1998.*

**486** A journalist of the Indian Express [...]

*Ganapathy, Nirmala, "Billion baby put through hell", 12 of May of the 2000, mentioned in Ghua, Ramachandra, India to after Gandhi, op. cit., p. 619.*

#### **CHAPTER 50**

**524** The trip has not been easy from the placid existence of a housewife satisfied with its domestic life to the frenetic center of the political activity. As she herself defines [...]

*Gandhi, Sonia, What India There are Taught Me, Nexus Institute, Tillburg, 2007, p. 16.*

**525** "The family with whom first I committed myself when marrying to me was restricted to the limit of a home - Sonia will write late more. Today my loyalty includes one more a ampler family, India, my country, whose people have received to me so warmly that they have turned to me one of them.)

*Gandhi, Sonia, VVhat India There are Taught Me, op. cit., p. 16.*

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