

## Emergency and the Democratic Spirit of India (Bharat): Lessons for the Present and the Future

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### ABSTRACT

This study takes a closer look at the Indian Emergency of 1975-77 which is considered one of the most challenging episodes for India's or Bharat's democracy. Indeed, it was a time when constitutional norms seemed to weaken, with the executive, legislature, judiciary, and even the media often sidelined. This paved the way for authoritarian control. By examining this period through both political theory and historical lenses, this study reveals how it created a broader "Emergency Culture" within the nation. This culture was marked by fear, compliance, and uncertainty. Yet, the story does not end there. Popular resistance, culminating via the electoral verdict of 1977, signalled a remarkable democratic revival. It is argued that the lessons from this era remain crucial today. This study concludes that safeguarding democracy demands constant vigilance, active citizen engagement, and an unwavering commitment to constitutional principles against any authoritarian drift.

**Keywords:** *Indian Emergency 1975-77, Democratic Backsliding, Authoritarianism, Constitutional Morality, Indira Gandhi, Democratic Resilience, Civil Liberties*

India adopted Universal Adult Franchise in 1950, not as transplanting a western idea into the Constitution of India but reimagining democracy through its pluralistic principles. The story of democracy in Bharat is not a civilization experiment but also a constitutional journey.

In the Constituent Assembly, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar asserted that "Constitutional Morality is not inherent, it requires conscious cultivation" (Department of Public Enterprises, n.d.). It implies that the philosophical basis of constitutional morality is not something that develops on its own. It needs to be systematically developed. This statement pointed out that democracy in India is not just confined to periodical elections. However, it is envisioned as a way of life rooted in deliberation, dissent, and pluralism. On the other hand, history reveals these concepts to be brittle. The declaration of emergency in 1975-1977 is the most suitable example of this. It exposed the vulnerability of institutions and the dangers of authoritarian centralization.

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Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the then President of India, declared Emergency on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1975. In the press, “internal disturbances” were shown as primary reasons citing Article 352 of the Constitution. This proclamation was based on the recommendations of the cabinet led by then Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. She has changed the well-functioning parliamentary democracy into an autocratic regime. For the first time in history after Independence, the parliament has been just a rubber stamp. Judiciary succumbed to the “basic structure” of survivalism. The opposition party members were jailed in mass numbers. Fundamental rights were restricted, and the press—the so-called “fourth pillar” was censored. This time period in Indian history is widely remembered as the darkest hour of Indian democracy. The institutions meant to act as checks and balances were systematically weakened.

Eminent scholar Robert Dahl, in “theory of polyarchy” [mentioned in his seminal work “A Preface to Democratic Theory” (1956)], identifies this as a hallmark of authoritarian encroachment. Many similar frameworks from political theory are helpful in comprehending this. In his 1835 book “Democracy in America,” Alexis de Tocqueville warned of the perils of “tyranny of the majority. He also underlined the eventual demise of freedom under centralized authority. A comparable threat materialized during the Emergency. During this period the nation witnessed executive authoritarianism.

In this perspective, Hannah Arendt's opinions on authoritarianism are equally pertinent. She made the case in “The Origins of Totalitarianism” (1951) that the creation of fear and compliance frequently coincides with the breakdown of institutions. The Emergency's forced sterilization campaigns, censorship, and surveillance reflected this propensity to rule by fear rather than agreement or consensus.

Scholars have named this atmosphere of fear, conformity, and silence “Emergency culture.” The declaration of emergency was much more than a political incident. As the state apparatus adjusted to operating with almost no accountability, citizens understood the value of opposition. The moral voice of opposition, Jayaprakash Narayan, expressed the democratic suffering in 1975 when he declared: “The Emergency has struck at the root of democracy in India.” It has stifled freedom. It has put an end to disagreement. The people's rights have been violated. His demand for the “Total Revolution,” or “Sampoorna Kranti,” inspired student groups, underground presses, and civil society organizations that resisted authoritarian rule. Therefore, this time frame encourages research into the psychology of authoritarianism and how brief pauses in democracy can have a lasting impact on civic culture.

Ironical, yet important that this authoritarian shift has reawakened the democratic spirit of the people of Bharat. The democracy has always been by the people in Bharat and it proved in the 1977 general elections. For the first time since independence, the same very people overthrew the Congress government of Smt. Indira Gandhi. The peaceful transfer of power has reaffirmed faith of people in the ballot as the ultimate authority on legitimacy. Through the ballot, citizens reclaimed their sovereignty validating Dr. Ambedkar's statement that constitutional methods are the only legitimate path to bring a political change.

The lessons learned during the Emergency are still relevant. According to Levitsky and Ziblatt's (2018) argument in “How Democracies Die”, 21st-century democracies continuously erode through slow institutional degradation, such as court packing, media delegitimization, and diluted opposition, rather than through abrupt coups or overt crisis (European Council, 2018). Therefore, the Emergency serves as a historical mirror for covert modern threats due to its overt authoritarianism.

In sum, the Emergency is a cautionary lesson and a democratic milestone. It reminds us that democracy in Bharat shouldn't be taken for granted. It requires active participation of the people i.e. Jan Bhagidari and vigilance i.e. Satarkata. The Emergency brought to light the vulnerability of democratic practices as well as their potential for restoration. The lessons of 1975-1977 are still applicable now as Bharat continues to grapple with many difficulties but the real defence of democracy lies in the collective awareness and alertness of its citizens. For the scholars of political science, it will always be a relevant study where constitution, institutions and political will, were compromised to test the very soul of Indian democracy.

A closer analytical engagement with the Emergency also reveals why it continues to matter for contemporary India. Scholars of democratic backsliding argue that modern authoritarian tendencies rarely appear in dramatic or visible forms; they advance through subtle erosion of norms, institutional co-option, and executive aggrandizement. The Emergency remains a benchmark case that demonstrates how quickly democratic safeguards can fail when institutional cultures weaken. By treating the Emergency as both a historical rupture and an analytical framework, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how democracies drift toward concentration of power, how citizens reclaim democratic space, and what safeguards are needed for the future. It positions the Emergency not only as a past event but as an enduring constitutional lesson for twenty-first-century India.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As judicial developments and growing political dissent oscillated the legitimacy of the reigning government, the Emergency was proclaimed. Opposition to the then-government grew stronger in the early 1970s. In Gujarat and Bihar, protests gained momentum & thereby grew in strength. These were ably led by Jayaprakash Narayan. Discontent was propelled by student-led protests, unemployment, high inflation, and serious accusations of corruption. The Allahabad High Court's Justice Jagmohanlal Sinha declared on June 12, 1975, that Smt. Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister at the time, had misused government resources during her 1971 Lok Sabha elections' campaign. The court found her guilty and barred her from running for office for next six years as per the provisions of Representation of the People Act of 1951. Raj Narain, the socialist leader who lost to Ms. Gandhi in Rae Bareli, had brought the case. The historic decision came about as a result of his legal challenge. A conditional stay was granted by the Supreme Court. Although Ms. Gandhi was not allowed to vote, She was nonetheless allowed to serve as Prime minister and attend parliament. The political situation escalated with calls for her resignation (PIB, 2025b).

The political and judicial crisis outlined in the Allahabad High Court verdict provided the justification, but the state's response was not merely political. It was a comprehensive and brutal crackdown designed to neutralize the opposition and intimidate the citizenry into compliance. The declaration of Emergency became the legal cover for a wave of arrests and the suspension of the very rights that define a democracy.

Bose and Jalal (2024) underlines that among the opposition leaders, including the esteemed Jaya Prakash Narayan, an early morning raid had been carried out. Hari Vishnu Kamath, a prominent political opponent who had warned of the risks of the emergency provisions in the Constituent Assembly decades ago, was among the numerous people who were jailed. During the Emergency, a total of almost 1,10,000 political leaders from opposition parties, independent activists, independent editors and media reporters, and dissenting students and youngsters were imprisoned.

Courts were unable to consider writs of habeas corpus, and fundamental rights, such as the right to life and liberty assured by Article 21 of the Constitution, were suspended. A number of constitutional reforms that further limited judicial review of executive decisions were pushed through Parliament. Through the Forty-Second Amendment, the republic added two more terms or identifiers “secular and socialist”, to its name in the preamble to the Constitution.

Ghosh (2017) asserts that the emergency period from June 25, 1975, to March 21, 1977, is known as the "darkest period" of independent India. This is mainly due to the suspension of all civil liberties and the stifling of free speech and expression. The nation's democratic values, which it had valued since gaining independence, were heavily damaged by the emergency. The government tried to control and influence the press in order to silence general popular opinion. In this way, it imposed emergency and used press censorship. The press was India's only autonomous mass media since television and radio were under government control at the time of emergency.

The suspension of civil liberties was inherently connected to the need of the government to control the narrative. The state had to seize the nation's means of communication just to uphold its authoritarian grip. By this their aim was to hide the true extent of its repression from the public. The censorship of the press was, therefore, not a byproduct but a core strategy of the ruling administration.

The government-controlled media projected an image of a peaceful and compliant nation, but this was a deliberately crafted illusion. Behind the veil of censorship and propaganda, the Emergency triggered a wave of immense human suffering and state overreach. This was most horrifically reflected in the brutal slum clearances and the coercive sterilization campaigns that targeted the most vulnerable section of the society.

In his book “Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point”, author Gyan Prakash (2018) uses a number of topical chapters that frequently rush down to highlight a specific human drama as to underscore a theme in order to narrate the Emergency and Indian political history in general (Margulies, 2019).

Subramanian (2021) highlights that within a very brief span of time, by regulating the radio, film, and tele-communications media, the government was able to transform a democratic state into a fully authoritarian one. On March 21, 1977, the emergency era came to an end when Smt. Indira Gandhi called for fresh elections with the assurance that She would win, insulated from the public's realistic feelings by the media censorship She had put in place. Instead, an overwhelming majority of voters, voted her out of office.

Jha (2023) noted that the Emergency was the only period of dictatorship in India's democratic history, lasting 21 months. Authoritarian control was imposed in reaction to a powerful and determined citizen protest against Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi. They together called for her resignation due to the concentration of power, corruption, and rising costs, as well as in support of equitable labor salaries and unemployment, Jha (2023) further adds that from the perspective of legislative debates, Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr.'s 2017 book “The Emergency: An Unpopular History” offers a revisionist history of the Emergency.

To transition from a temporary period of authoritarian control into a potential permanent "dictatorship," as Jha (2023) terms it, the government needed to amend the very rulebook of

the nation. The regime therefore set out on a project of radical constitutional amendment, aiming to protect itself legally from challenge and fundamentally redefine or reshape the power dynamics or the balance of power between the citizen, the judiciary, and the executive. During the Emergency, Parliament proposed a number of amendments to the constitution that reinforced central authority. Courts were not allowed to challenge the President's decision to declare an emergency under the 38th Amendment. The 39th Amendment excluded judicial review from the Lok Sabha Speaker and Prime Minister elections. The 42nd Amendment restricted the Supreme Court's and High Courts' authority. It also prevented judicial review of constitutional amendments, and further optimized central authority by giving the Directive Principles (DPSPs) precedence over Fundamental Rights. Additionally, it increased the duration of the State Assemblies and Lok Sabha from five to six years (DDNews, 2025).

In India's contemporary political consciousness, the legacy of these constitutional changes and the trauma of the Emergency period continue to resonate powerfully. The modern Indian state, led by figures who were themselves part of the resistance to the Emergency, now officially commemorates this black period not just as a historical event, but as a foundational lesson in what must be eternally vigilantly against.

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi (2025) said that June 25th is celebrated as Samvidhan Hatya Diwas, a day when fundamental rights were suspended, press freedom was suppressed, and countless known political figures, social workers, college students, and common citizens were imprisoned. He further added that no Indian would ever forget how the very spirit of our Constitution was broken, how Parliament's voice was silenced, and how efforts were made to exercise authority over the courts. Particularly targeted were the underprivileged, disenfranchised, and oppressed. Their dignity was also violated. Additionally, he mentioned, "We reaffirm our commitment to fortifying the principles in our Constitution and cooperating to realize our vision of a Viksit Bharat" (PIB, 2025a).

Vinay Sahasrabuddhe (2025) brings to light that three important lessons must be learned by all Indians from the experience of the Emergency, which was carried out in a brutal way never seen in independent India. First of all, democracy is substantially threatened by dynasty-driven political parties. It is to be noted that the majority of India's dynastic parties first appeared on the actual political scene in the 1970s. During that decade, numerous dynasties strengthened their command over their respective parties. These parties were formerly motivated by a certain ideology but they turned them into family enterprises. The second key takeaway from the Emergency is the necessity of discussing a wide range of party reforms. The third lesson focuses on the most vile "safe play" strategy used by intellectuals, authors, and litterateurs. The majority of writers, poets, and theatre artists preferred to keep quiet and fell short of the public's expectations, with the exception of a select few academics and authors like Dharmaveer Bharati, Vishnu Pandya, Kamaleshwar and Durgabai Bhagwat.

These lessons about dynastic politics, intellectual compromise, and the urgent need for reforms are more than simply political observations. They are the subject of serious scholarly work that aims to interpret the Emergency's lasting impact on the Indian political framework. Contemporary historians argue that the events of 1975-77 are not a closed chapter but a crucial lens for understanding present day India's political trajectory.

The book titled "India's First Dictatorship: The Emergency, 1975–1977" authored by Christophe Jaffrelot and Pratinav Anil (2020), sheds light on some of the current political tendencies in India. It demonstrates the lasting consequences of the Emergency. This book

precisely asserts that this particular study of Emergency helps in viewing Indian history from various angles, where the oppressed and subjugated populace are constantly at odds. It does more than just provide a comprehensive and compelling study of the Emergency (India's First Dictatorship-Hurst Publishers, 2025).

Agarwal (2023) mentions that in India's democratic past, the period when Smt. Indira Gandhi imposed autocratic authority and restricted fundamental liberties remains a disturbing story. A clear reminder of how political expediency can triumph over the core principles of a democratic country.

While these works provide rich historical detail, the existing scholarship tends to focus on either the political narrative or the constitutional amendments, often treating them as separate analytical domains. What remains underexplored is how the Emergency produced a distinctive political culture that continued to influence governance even after 1977. This "Emergency Culture" is not simply a consequence of authoritarian rule; it is a long-term institutional and psychological imprint that reshaped the behaviour of bureaucracy, weakened intra-party democracy, and normalized executive dominance. This study bridges this gap by connecting the Emergency's institutional changes with the evolution of India's democratic ethos in subsequent decades.

A second gap in the literature concerns the lessons drawn for contemporary democratic governance. Although recent scholarship acknowledges the trauma of 1975-77, few studies connect these experiences to modern debates on democratic resilience, decentralization, and public participation. This paper addresses this gap by linking the Emergency's authoritarian legacy to present-era efforts at strengthening citizen-centric governance, transparency, and institutional accountability. Such a connection is essential to evaluate how democracies learn from crisis and how political systems prevent the re-emergence of authoritarian tendencies.

### **SOCIAL AND POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS: THE 'EMERGENCY CULTURE'**

The Emergency (1975-77) not only interrupted constitutional procedures but also enhanced a unique and detrimental political culture whose effects remain evident years after its official cessation. This "Emergency Culture" was marked by fear, sycophancy, compulsion, and the normalization of authoritarian tendencies in governance and society. Fundamentally, by substituting accountability with compliance and autonomy with compliance, it undermined the moral foundation of democratic existence.

The era cemented a culture of dynastic centralization, equating the state with the leader's character and branding dissent as betrayal. Leaders from the opposition were detained. Elections were halted. The parliament, formerly a dynamic forum for discourse-was reduced to a mere rubber stamp. The ideal of constitutional morality was thereby backtracked. Rather than acting as a constraint on authority, institutions were subordinated to consolidate it. Bureaucracy, rather than operating as an impartial and professional body, was utilized for authoritarian purposes, stimulating habits of sycophancy and compliance that eroded its democratic principles.

The strict and authoritative policies of forced sterilization and slum demolitions underlined the state's apathy towards the most vulnerable section of the society. Human dignity was subjugated to political expediency. On the other hand, repression suppressed writers, journalists, and artists. It crushed down the intellectual willpower of the nation. The fear of

retaliation created an atmosphere where conformity was the strategy for survival, and independent thought was declared unlawful. The repercussions of this culture were enduring. Despite the conclusion of the Emergency, many factors overshadowed the democratic progression of India. The distrust towards authority, the leftovers of state abuses, and the precedent of diluting federalism were the main factors. The Emergency represented not just a historical event, but a cautionary tale. It underlined that democracy can be undermined not only by foreign threats but also by the erosion of its own culture.

The lasting influence of this Emergency Culture can also be understood through the lens of institutional behaviour. Political scientists argue that once institutions internalize habits of compliance, they require substantial time and deliberate reform to restore autonomy. The bureaucracy's tendency to privilege executive preference over constitutional duty, the weakening of internal party democracy, and the growing personalization of politics in the decades after 1977 all reflect how authoritarian habits survived long after the Emergency was lifted. These continuities demonstrate that authoritarianism is not only a legal condition but a behavioural pattern that can infiltrate democratic systems.

Comparative research on democratic erosion further indicates that countries rarely collapse through abrupt coups; rather, they deteriorate when elected leaders normalize extra-constitutional shortcuts, silence dissent, and blur boundaries between party and state. The Emergency offers an early Indian example of this pattern. Its significance lies not only in its severity but in the precedent, it created that democratic institutions can be bent to suit political imperatives. Understanding this precedent is essential to prevent any future slide toward institutional overreach.

### **RECLAIMING DEMOCRACY: TRANSITIONING FROM POPULAR RESISTANCE TO DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL**

The conclusion of the Emergency in 1977 symbolized not only a change of government but also a significant reaffirmation of the democratic ethos in Bharat. The resilience of the common citizenry and the courage of the opposition leaders, constituted a pivotal moment in India's democratic progression. It ultimately led to the collective rejection of authoritarianism.

Common citizens, previously silenced by censorship, suppression, and fear, asserted their voice via the ballot box. They showed that ultimate sovereignty is entrusted with the People of India.

The collapse of the Emergency regime expressed a triumph of democratic accountability over dynastic authoritarianism. the mandate of 1977 served as a significant milestone in the rejuvenation of India's democracy. However, the lessons from that dark chapter have implications that reach well beyond its temporal context. Democracy calls for ongoing vigilance, active participation from the populace, and a governance outlook that is honestly answerable to the citizenry.

The post-2014 period in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership signifies a second wave of democratic resurgence. The Emergency centered on the concentration of power, whereas the current governance model in India emphasizes the decentralization of prospects and opportunities.

Social welfare initiatives like PM Jan Dhan Yojana have facilitated considerable financial inclusion. Through them the government is providing the most disadvantaged section with access to banking-credit facility, and most importantly along with human dignity. Initiatives such as Ayushman Bharat and PM Awas Yojana have provided social welfare directly to marginalized population. They have reduced bureaucratic obstacles such as systemic inertia and enhanced transparency.

Each of these policies functions not only as a welfare measure towards the beneficiaries (popularly termed as Labharthis) but also as an embodiment of democratic governance, wherein the state acts as a tool for empowerment rather than for control.

The vision of “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayas” has redefined governance as a participatory initiative. The PM Modi led NDA government has reaffirmed the very principle of Jan Bhagidari, or people's participation. This is also core to our constitutional ideals, as a fundamental aspect of democratic life through initiatives such as digital inclusion, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and micro (village)-level planning. This participatory spirit stands in sharp contrast to the imposed silence during the Emergency years. Currently, citizens function as stakeholders in governance rather than as subjects of state coercion.

India's democratic culture has been enhanced by policies focused on women-led development, youth empowerment, rural development. Cooperative-Competitive federalism via NITI-Ayog is ensuring the integration of diverse societal voices into the national mainstream.

As Bharat commemorates fifty years since the Emergency, it serves as a moment of both remembrance and renewal. The Emergency showcased the vulnerability of democracy when predominated by dynastic and exclusive groups. The contemporary governance outlook in Bharat exemplifies the strength of democracy when founded on inclusivity, accountability, and the empowerment of the populace. The period from 1977 to 2014 and beyond displays Bharat's democratic resilience, marking a transition from suppression to participation, silence to voice, and dictatorship to a collective identity of We, the People.

The democratic revival of 1977 was not merely electoral; it was pedagogical. It demonstrated that citizens are capable of correcting executive excess through peaceful constitutional means. This episode shaped India's political culture by reinforcing the idea that the ballot remains the ultimate instrument of accountability. It also compelled subsequent governments to operate within clearer constitutional boundaries, thereby strengthening the unwritten norms that sustain democratic life.

The contemporary period further illustrates how democratic systems evolve after episodes of crisis. Reforms in transparency, financial inclusion, targeted welfare delivery, and decentralized decision-making are not only socio-economic achievements rather they are democratic correctives. They reduce the monopoly of intermediaries, enhance state-citizen direct linkage, and create a governance structure that is harder for any actor to capture. When the state prioritizes inclusion, efficiency, and public participation, it addresses precisely the vulnerabilities that made the Emergency possible. In this way, India's recent governance transformations may be read as part of a longer historical arc of democratic strengthening.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Emergency of 1975-77 stands as a forceful reminder. It reminds us that a constitutionally mandated democracy could be undermined when political ambition jeopardized institutional integrity. However, its consequences reaffirmed that the true strength of democracy in Bharat exists not in certain individuals or dynastic parties. It is in the collective wisdom and courage of its citizenry.

In reflecting on this gloomy period, a fundamental lesson has also emerged. It is to be noted that sustaining democracy demands constant vigilance, people's participation. On top of that, steadfast adherence to constitutional principles is quintessential.

The architects of the Constitution, including figures like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Sardar Patel, and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, envisaged a political framework for Bharat. Such a framework blended liberty with equality, justice with fraternity, and rights with responsibilities. The Preamble summarizes this very vision. Fundamental Rights guarantee individual freedoms from arbitrary power. Directive Principles of State Policy outline the pursuit of socio-economic justice. Fundamental Duties emphasize that democracy blooms when rights and responsibilities are under equilibrium. The Emergency years disrupted this delicate balance, hence underlining the necessity of protecting these constitutional foundations.

Bharat's democratic foundations predate the post-1947 era. The foundations of our civilization illustrate a historical commitment to participatory as well as inclusive governance (Samaveshi Sashan). The councils of the Mauryas and Guptas, the enduring panchayat systems, and the village assemblies of South India exemplified democratic and inclusive decision-making processes.

The concept of Ram Rajya, as exemplified by Bhagwan Shri Ram during Treta Yuga, presents a moral framework for governance grounded in justice(nyaya), compassion(karuna), and accountability(uttardayitva).

Mahatma Gandhi conceptualized Ram Rajya not as a spiritual ideal, but as a vision of just and participatory governance. For him, in such vision the downtrodden were safeguarded and leaders adhered to dharma (righteous action). The Emergency, in contrast, epitomized the antithesis of Ram Rajya. Emergency was characterized by coercion replacing compassion and fear undermining trust.

The road ahead entails grounding democratic resurgence in our constitutional principles and civilizational values. Bharat, must consistently illustrate that democratic values serve as the foundation of prosperity rather than an obstacle to Vikas (progress). As the world's largest democracy, it is expected from India.

Inclusive governance, characterized by the principles of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas", has emerged as a guiding philosophy of the current era. It is truly embodying the participatory essence of Jan Bhagidari. A profound democratic awakening is seen via financial inclusion. Bridging the digital divide gap via digital empowerment has been another highlight. The welfare for marginalized section has remained the utmost priority. Beyond these, co-operative & competitive federalism via NITI Aayog represent the aspirations of the nation towards the goal of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

For Bharat to establish itself as a democratic superpower in the twenty-first century, it must consolidate the vigilance acquired from the Emergency period. The vision outlined in the Constitution and the principles of our cultural and civilizational heritage can boost this vision. This includes safeguarding institutional autonomy and enhancing citizen engagement. With this grassroots democracy will also get strengthened.

It calls for politics centered on the populace that rejects dynastic control and authoritarian measures. Most importantly, it requires adherence to the enduring principle of our constitution. The sovereignty of Bharat lies with its citizens, whose collective will serve as the supreme custodian of freedom.

The Emergency exposed the vulnerabilities of democracy, while the subsequent fifty years have demonstrated its resilience. The current and future objective is to guarantee that resilience is sustained rather than temporary. It is the duty of the ruling administration to ensure that Bharat not only retains its status as the largest democracy globally but also exemplifies democratic governance. This entails a country where traditional values of fairness and compassion coexist with modern ideas of freedom and equality. Thus, preserving the very essence of We, the People of India, for generations to come.

Therefore, the Emergency serves not only as a reminder of past excesses but as a constitutional compass for the future. It calls for institutional reforms that strengthen judicial independence, uphold federal balance, nurture intra-party democracy, and promote civic education that deepens public understanding of constitutional values. More importantly, it reinforces the principle that democratic spirit is sustained through active citizenship, not passive reliance on institutions alone. As India looks toward its future trajectory, the most enduring lesson of the Emergency is simple but profound that democracy survives when its citizens refuse to surrender their constitutional agency.

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