

# **Fifty Years of Indira Gandhi's Emergency: Lessons for Indian Democracy**

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## ABSTRACT

The declaration of Emergency on June 25, 1975, by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi remains one of the darkest periods in independent India's history. As citizens' liberties were curtailed, political opposition muffled and incarcerated and free media put under severe censorship, the Emergency demonstrated what autocratic power meant for India's civic and political life. Though it ended in 1977, Emergency's footprints on Indian politics, institutions, and society still endure. This paper revisits the Emergency on its fiftieth anniversary, tracing its origins in political crisis and judicial challenge, its authoritarian excesses—from preventive detentions to forced sterilizations—and its eventual repudiation through the ballot box. The paper reflects on how the Emergency reshaped state-society relations, institutions, and the media, while situating present-day concerns over press freedom, institutional capture, and democratic backsliding against its enduring legacy.

**Keywords:** Indian Emergency, Indira Gandhi, Indian democracy, authoritarianism in India, Narendra Modi, Janata Party

# **Cincuenta años del Estado de Emergencia de Indira Gandhi: Lecciones para la democracia india**

## RESUMEN

La declaración del Estado de Emergencia el 25 de junio de 1975 por la primera ministra Indira Gandhi sigue siendo uno de los períodos más oscuros de la historia de la India independiente. Con las libertades ciudadanas restringidas, la oposición política silenciada y encarcelada, y los medios de comunicación libres sometidos a una severa censura, el Estado de Emergencia demostró lo que el poder autocrático significaba para la vida cívica y política de la India. Aunque terminó en 1977, la huella del Estado de Emergencia

en la política, las instituciones y la sociedad indias aún perdura. Este artículo revisa el Estado de Emergencia en su quincuagésimo aniversario, rastreando sus orígenes en la crisis política y el desafío judicial, sus excesos autoritarios —desde detenciones preventivas hasta esterilizaciones forzadas— y su posterior repudio en las urnas. El artículo reflexiona sobre cómo la Emergencia transformó las relaciones entre el Estado y la sociedad, las instituciones y los medios de comunicación, a la vez que contextualiza las preocupaciones actuales sobre la libertad de prensa, el control institucional y el retroceso democrático con su legado perdurable.

**Palabras clave:** Emergencia india, Indira Gandhi, democracia india, autoritarismo en la India, Narendra Modi, Partido Janata

## 英迪拉·甘地紧急状态五十年：印度民主的教训

### 摘要

1975年6月25日，印度总理英迪拉·甘地宣布进入紧急状态，这至今仍是印度独立后历史上最黑暗的时期之一。公民的自由受到限制，政治反对派被压制和监禁，自由媒体受到严格审查，紧急状态彰显了专制权力对印度公民和政治生活的影响。尽管紧急状态于1977年结束，但它对印度政治、制度和社会的影响依然存在。本文在紧急状态五十周年之际重温其历史，追溯其政治危机和司法挑战的根源，其专制暴行（从预防性拘留到强制绝育）、以及最终通过投票箱的否定。本文反思了紧急状态如何重塑了国家与社会的关系、制度和媒体，并将当今人们对新闻自由、制度束缚和民主倒退的担忧置于其持久影响之下。

关键词：印度紧急状态，英迪拉·甘地，印度民主，印度威权主义，纳伦德拉·莫迪，人民党

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**T**he days June 25-26, 1975, seen through any ideological prism, are a blot in the annals of Indian democracy. Democracy was defined memorably by Jawaharlal Nehru as tolerance of not only those who agree with us, but of those who do not. His daughter Indira Gandhi, who took on his

mantle barely 20 months after his death, however, not only chose to upend his values but negate them. As a politically besieged Prime Minister, she convinced then President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to issue the Emergency proclamation under Article 352 of the Constitution of India, which allows declaration of a na-

tional emergency in case of war, external aggression, or internal disturbances. The Presidential proclamation cited a vague threat from “internal disturbances” as the justification for the Emergency through which the executive acquired overriding powers and state authority was brought under central control. A government press note that accused individuals, including opposition mentor Jayaprakash Narayan, of provoking the police and armed forces to defy orders, preceded the decision. Mrs Gandhi, in a radio broadcast to the nation, justified the decision as necessary to restore order on the ground that the country was facing “grave danger” to national security and economic stability from within and without.

The cabinet was informed *ex post facto*. Not a single minister opposed the Emergency at the cabinet meeting on the morning of June 26, 1975, even though they had been caught by surprise by the midnight proclamation. Under Article 77 of the Constitution, a meeting of the cabinet was necessary before the President could issue the Emergency proclamation. While there is a provision that the Prime Minister can take a decision without taking it to the cabinet, whether the President should not have insisted on cabinet consultation before such an important decision was taken is another matter. It is clear that the decision was PM Indira Gandhi's alone, at the prodding of a clutch of legal and political aides, including her son Sanjay Gandhi.

The Emergency (1975–1977) was certainly a dark period in Indian de-

mocracy. It brought significant changes to India's constitutional, legal and administrative systems. Fundamental rights were suspended along with suspension of civil liberties; mass preventive detentions enabled suppression of dissent; and restrictions were placed on the media characterized by widespread censorship. Constitutional amendments altered institutional powers (see later sections for details). Democratic India had not seen anything like this since British colonial rule and its 21 months marked a watershed in the country's chequered history. This was the third Emergency in India's history, but the first one declared in peacetime. Earlier proclamations were during wars with China (1962) and Pakistan (1971).

Fifty years later, such a cataclysmic event hardly creates a ripple in Indian polity anymore, save for a clutch of newspaper articles by a dying breed of journalists, politicians and retired bureaucrats who lived through those tumultuous times. Many among the younger generation came to know about this dark chapter in India's democratic evolution, ironically, through the eponymous Bollywood film, starring actor-turned-BJP MP Kangana Ranaut that was panned for its “selective storytelling.” Yet two generations of Indians have grown into adulthood since Indira Gandhi, in a midnight crackdown invoking the then Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) on June 25, 1975, curtailed fundamental rights, jailed political and other opponents of her rule, and imposed press censorship in the enforcement of her Emergency rule.

B. N. Tandon, an aide of Mrs Gandhi in the Prime Minister's Secretariat who went on to write his memoirs after his retirement from government service, was to maintain that personal freedoms had been assassinated. He asserted that the foundation of a free and democratic society that had been laid by Nehru were "under attack by his daughter, which was the biggest irony of the situation" (Tandon 2003: 414). Nehru not only favoured the concept of constitutional democracy in principle—he tried hard to maintain and develop the institutions of democracy at its best. He never interfered with the autonomy of the institutions and believed in a free press and constructive dissent. Even within Parliament Nehru always inspired the opposition to raise difficult questions and engage in the debates. M. C. Chagla, former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court, called the Emergency "a conspiracy by the Prime Minister to put the leaders in jail, to have press censorship and to deprive the people of India of their civil liberties" (quoted in Noorani 1978: 404).

### **Personal Experience**

**F**or a rookie copy editor working on late-night duty in the newsroom of the United News of India (UNI) news agency—one of the country's two news agencies then run professionally by largely nonpartisan trusts—the period marked a loss of political innocence. The first startling reports had started to come in: of the closure of newspaper printing presses; switching off of power and seizure of newspapers

from places as far apart as small towns in north and central India like Jalandhar and Indore; sightings of unusual security movement at many places, including downtown Connaught Place in the capital; rumours of midnight arrests of opposition leaders; and then the first call from a leading opposition figure of his impending arrest.

Acting on a tip-off, a colleague, Arul Louis, who now works as a journalist in New York, and I—in the absence of any senior reporters at that hour—rushed to the nearby Parliament Street police station to get the latest information in an era where there were no mobile phones and landlines worked fitfully. It was past 2:30 a.m. and the city was asleep, blissfully unaware of the retributory machinations of a democratically elected Prime Minister, who was going to such lengths to subvert democracy to stay in power in order to trump an adverse judicial verdict holding her guilty of electoral malpractices.

The Emergency was declared against a backdrop of mounting political unrest and judicial developments that shook the legitimacy of the ruling leadership. In the early 1970s, opposition to the then government had intensified through student-led agitations, and protests against unemployment, inflation and corruption led by socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, gaining great momentum in the states of Bihar and Gujarat. The fraught political situation electrified when on 12 June 1975, Judge Jagmohanlal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court, resisting covert political pressure and blandishments,

ruled that then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had misused government machinery in her 1971 parliamentary election campaign. The court found her guilty under the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and disqualified her from holding any elected office for six years.

Raj Narain, the maverick socialist leader who had lost to Mrs Gandhi in Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, had filed the case. His legal challenge resulted in the landmark verdict unseating her from her constituency. The Supreme Court granted a conditional stay that Mrs Gandhi could remain Prime Minister and attend Parliament but was barred from voting. The political crisis intensified, with demands for her resignation growing, when a clutch of close aides, including lawyer-politician Siddhartha Shankar Ray, reportedly put forward the idea of emergency proclamation to Mrs Gandhi. Sanjay Gandhi, who by then had started taking active interest in national politics in support of his politically beleaguered mother, also backed the idea.

Following the proclamation, constitutional safeguards were systematically suspended. On 27 June 1975, Articles 358 and 359 were invoked. Article 358 suspended protections under Article 19, affecting freedom of speech, expression, assembly, and movement. Article 359 allowed the state to suspend enforcement of fundamental rights under Articles 14, 21, and 22, including equality before law, right to life and liberty, and protection against detention. Citizens were barred from

approaching courts for redress. Opposition leaders including Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the last two were later to become prime ministers, L.K. Advani, who was a Deputy Prime Minister under Vajpayee, and others arrested under MISA that was used extensively. Nearly 35,000 people were detained under preventive detention without trial, as per the Shah Commission that was set up to inquire into the excesses of the Emergency.

## Midnight Swoops

Outside the sprawling white-columnnaded police station at Parliament Street, just a stone's throw from Parliament House, the British-era circular building in the heart of New Delhi, there was unusual activity at that hour and riot police were being driven out in police trucks. The air was taut with tension. The two of us, who stood amid the grim phalanx of security personnel, were asked to leave, but we hung around in the midnight shadows. The defiant wait proved journalistically rewarding, as very soon a white Ambassador car drove up in a flurry of escort vehicles. Wedged in between two plain-clothed police officials was the familiar sight of Jayaprakash Narayan. Hailed as "Lok Nayak" (people's leader), he had the day before given a call to the military at a massive public rally in Delhi to act on their conscience and disregard unconstitutional and immoral orders. He had called for a programme of social transformation, which he termed "Sam-poorna Kraanti" (total revolution). As the tough-looking cops tried to shield

the frail, gangling man, Narayan gave his terse reaction with words that were to prove prophetic: “Vinash kale vipreet buddhi” (reason takes flight as doom nears). We rushed back to our office to file the breaking news. From then on, the few of us who were privileged to be on the nocturnal beat worked feverishly to a climactic dawn. With the printed phone directory on our laps, every opposition leader worth his salt was rung up at that hour, from the secluded confines of then UNI General Manager G. G. Mirchandani’s room, and the tracking efforts proved rewarding. Mirchandani, though a former government information official turned media executive, encouraged us to keep the truth flowing and the public informed till government censors arrived in the morning and took charge of the editorial operations as censorship set in.

Aides of Morarji Desai, who was to later become the prime minister in 1977 heading a short-lived government, said he had been woken up by police and was being taken to jail. Similar stories were heard from the homes of Vajpayee, Chandra Shekhar, Charan Singh, all of whom were to become Prime Ministers later. Sikander Bakht, who later became a cabinet minister in the Morarji Desai government and later one of the stalwarts of the BJP, said he had hidden in his bathroom when the police came calling and appealed to us journalists to save him from arrest. Tales of midnight knocks and police swoops on homes of targeted people came from around the nation as every conceivable opponent of Mrs Gandhi was rounded up and put into

prison cells. A few, like Subramanian Swamy, were tipped off by colleagues and escaped in time, catching the first flights to the freedom of the West from where they organised opposition to the repressive regime. Dissenting teachers, students, journalists, and intellectuals were all put behind bars as India experienced its first time living in an authoritarian system. The crackdown came a little later on newspapers and news agencies, with power supply to their offices cut off without notice, as authorities belatedly realised what havoc unrestricted information flow about the crackdown had caused which, in the pre-internet analogue era, would have otherwise been a swift, silent operation in the dead of the night.

## **Information Control**

**T**he Emergency saw strict control over the press and public information through institutional mechanisms and administrative orders. From 26 June 1975, pre-censorship was imposed on all newspapers. Editors were required to get government clearance before publishing political or nationally sensitive news, editorials, and photographs. The government appointed a national censor along with regional censors to monitor press content. Photo transmissions were also brought under government clearance. On 5 July 1975, telex messages by foreign correspondents were restricted and subjected to prior screening. On 20 July 1975, the Board of Film Censors was restructured under the Cinematograph Act to tighten control

over cinema. On 1 February 1976, the government merged four news agencies, namely Press Trust of India (PTI), United News of India (UNI), Samachar Bharati and Hindustan Samachar—the first two English and the latter two Hindi into a single entity named Samachar (Hindi for news) to centrally monitor and control the flow of information under executives who were directly answerable to the Information Minister Vidya Charan Shukla. The Press Council of India, a statutory media watchdog, was abolished.

Parliament passed a series of constitutional amendments during the Emergency that weakened judicial review and institutional checks. Among them, the 38<sup>th</sup> Amendment barred the courts from questioning the President's decision to declare Emergency. The 39<sup>th</sup> Amendment excluded the election of the Prime Minister and Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, from judicial scrutiny. The 42<sup>nd</sup> Amendment further increased central powers. It gave primacy to Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights, barred judicial review of constitutional amendments, and curtailed the powers of the Supreme Court and High Courts. Through the 42<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Amendment, the term of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies was extended from five to six years.

One of the most hated and controversial aspects of the Emergency was the forced sterilisation campaign. The campaign began in 1975 as part of an intensified population control effort

by Sanjay Gandhi who said that India's principal problem was its runaway population and sought to limit the number of children in each family. Over 2.6 million sterilisation procedures were conducted in 1975–76. In 1976–77, the number rose to 8.1 million. Over two years, over ten million sterilisations were performed on mostly unwilling people in an authoritarian measure to control India's population. Several states linked access to essential services with sterilisation. People were denied rations, housing, jobs, healthcare and loans if they had more than two or three children and refused to undergo the necessary procedures.

The Emergency came to a formal end on 21 March 1977, following Mrs Gandhi's somewhat unexpected announcement of elections. General elections to the Lok Sabha were held between 16 and 20 March 1977. The ruling Congress party was defeated, and the Janata Party—a patchwork of opposition parties from the ideological left of centre to the right—formed the government on 24 March 1977.

The elections were a fitting riposte to Mrs Gandhi and her son's political calculations. There was an element of utter disbelief when results showed that Mrs Gandhi, her son, her acolytes, and countless cheerleaders of the Congress party had all been routed. The repressive regime went but the scars it left took a long time to heal and in some cases caused lasting damage to the body politic. The credibility of the vital pillars of the nation, like the judiciary, stood badly eroded, corruption

became institutionalised in the name of party mobilisation, and politics became the last refuge of the criminalised and the lumpen as long as they served its political ends.

The Shah Commission of Inquiry was set up in May 1977 to examine abuses of power during the Emergency. Its mandate was to investigate excesses committed between 25 June 1975 and 21 March 1977. The Commission examined the misuse of government power, preventive detentions, press censorship, and the sterilisation campaign. It collected evidence through public hearings, testimonies, and official records. The Commission submitted three reports between 1978 and 1979.

As a result, the Janata Party-led government in 1978 enacted the 44<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment. It replaced “internal disturbance” with “armed rebellion” as grounds for proclaiming Emergency. It also restored judicial review and introduced legal safeguards against future proclamations.

## **Triumph of Democracy**

**T**he Emergency rule made heroes of some but revealed the clay feet of most. BJP patriarch L.K. Advani, then leader of the Jana Sangh party, which merged later into the Janata Party, made the telling comment on cravenness to authority when he said that people when asked to bend ended up crawling. The remarks applied to journalists, officials, industrialists, and all those who displayed a singular lack of spine in standing up to Mrs Gandhi’s dictatorship and instead ended singing

paean to her virtues lest they also were arrested. Advani called the Emergency a great crime not only against the country, but also against the very idea of democracy.

It is said charitably by many historians that it was a tribute to the innate democratic spirit of Indira Gandhi that she decided to lift the Emergency after 21 months and ordered free elections in the hope that people would endorse her move. Intelligence agencies had told her she would win 340 out of 543 seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, and even her senior party leaders had assured her she would return to power, sweeping the country’s largest state, Uttar Pradesh.

But Indira Gandhi’s sharp political instincts had given her other signals on the campaign trail and she realised “there was something wrong,” and on one occasion in western UP, where thespian Dilip Kumar had come to campaign for her, “people started to walk out after he finished speaking, not waiting for the prime minister to begin her address” (Chowdhury 2023: 26).

There are other reports that said that she was made aware by some trusted sources about the flourishing underground movement against the Emergency that could pose a threat to her life, as that of her son Sanjay, the gross abuses of power by police and other regulatory officials like demolition of slums and forcible sterilisation, and the widespread criticism abroad, particularly the West, which particularly stung her. *The Guardian* ran an anguished op-ed titled “India goes to Sleep,” by

the journalist James Cameron, accusing Gandhi of turning a personal crisis into a national one and ending democracy only to perpetuate her rule. Cameron predicted that India would never be the same again (quoted in Tandon 2003: 426).

Mrs Gandhi did not trust too many people, except for her sons and a close coterie of loyal aides around her. In addition, she had the least trust for journalists, who she thought were pathologically opposed to her. She thought newspapers were generally biased and she told editors she never read papers because she already knew which newspaper would say what. The crackdown on the press emanated from her disdain for the media, a disdain she shared with Sanjay who thought the press was a purchasable commodity and wanted “troublemakers” among them to be bought up or silenced. “Gagging the press was important,” wrote veteran columnist and editor Kuldip Nayar, writing on the Emergency. “As both Mrs Gandhi and Sanjay had often said at the family breakfast table, it was the newspapers which were to blame for lionizing their opponents and creating an atmosphere of distrust against the government but they were paper tigers and could be made to behave” (Nayar 2013: 36).

Information and Broadcasting Minister I. K. Gujral, a decent politician who maintained good relations with editors and journalists, was shunted out as Sanjay Gandhi found him unequal to the task expecting of him in managing the media and using them for effec-

tive propaganda of the virtues of Mrs Gandhi's Emergency rule. VC Shukla, who was no favourite of Indira Gandhi, was brought to replace Gujral by Sanjay, who spent 90 minutes every morning with Shukla at the PM residence discussing media management. When *Hindustan Times* did not plough the line there was a move to arrest its editor, B G Verghese, but Mrs Gandhi perhaps had second thoughts and the nod for his arrest finally did not come (quoted in Tandon 2003: 427).

## Emergency's Lessons

That fateful March 1977 election vindicated Indian democratic traditions and proved the triumph of freedom over bread. Ballot after regular ballot has shown that just because a man is poor and perhaps cannot read does not mean he does not care for his liberty and human rights. Democracy and freedom of choice were very much Indian values; the Indian people can be gagged, but their inborn democratic spirit can never be crushed. Kuldip Nayar, who was jailed during the Emergency, notes

[L]ittle did they [intelligentsia in India and people in the West] realise that the poor loved their liberty as much as anybody else. Their approach might not have been sophisticated or ideologically pure but their faith in what they considered democracy was unflinching. A vote gave them the power to select the people they wanted and they used it prove that they were the real

masters; Mrs Gandhi and her party had taken away that right. This was their judgement against such high-handedness (Nayar 2013: 36).

Half a century later, as two generations have matured into adulthood since those dark days, there is a creeping feeling of *deja vu* among old-timers as the nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi—while seeking to publicise the ills of the Emergency by a Congress regime and paying lip service to the BJP’s commitment to democracy—seeks to stamp out dissent against his majoritarian policies by reviving preventive detention against government opponents, has worked to “bend the judicial system” and has tamed the fiercely independent press in seeking to perpetuate his strong-arm rule (Mashal et al. 2023).

“Large sections of the mainstream media appear to have been turned into subservient mouthpieces,” wrote *The Guardian* on 4 May 2025. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta, one of the few independent and fearless media voices in the country, was quoted in this article saying: “Never since 1975–77, when former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed an ‘emergency,’ has media freedom been so shackled and constricted in the country.”

Reporters without Borders, in its India report, states that India’s media has fallen into an “unofficial state of emergency” since Modi came to power in 2014 and engineered a spectacular rapprochement between his party, the BJP, and the big families dominating the

media. Reliance Industries group’s magnate Mukesh Ambani, a close friend of the prime minister, owns more than 70 media outlets that are followed by at least 800 million Indians. Gautam Adani, once proclaimed as the world’s third richest man, has taken full control of the much-respected *NDTV* news channel with majority holdings, easing out anti-establishment journalists and replacing them with government-friendly journalists and editors. He has also taken over a well-regarded digital platform a news agency that was functioning independently (see <https://rsf.org/en/country/india>).

Through pressure and influence, the Indian model of a pluralist press is being called into question. The Prime Minister does not hold press conferences, grants interviews only to favoured pro-government journalists while those who do not demonstrate fealty to his government’s ideology and policies are dubbed “anti-national.”

Under Modi, media freedom in India has come under serious threat, with journalists trolled, harassed, and even arrested for doing their jobs. Proponents of Hindutva, the nationalist ideology of the Hindu right, call for popular revenge against critics branded as “traitors” and “anti-national.” Terrifying coordinated campaigns of hatred and calls for murder are conducted on social media, campaigns especially violent when they target women journalists, whose personal data is divulged. The situation is also very worrisome for journalists covering environmental topics or news in Kashmir, where po-

lice and paramilitaries, with some being subjected to so-called “provisional” detention for several years, often harass reporters (Jain 2023).

India’s ranking on the World Press Freedom Index has been consistently falling since the Modi government came into power in 2014. According to the 2023 report of the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders, India slipped to 161 out of 180 countries from 150 just a year ago (*The Hindu*, 4 May 2023). More recently, under the pretext of identifying fake news, the Modi government has proposed a fact-checking unit to monitor social media, which many journalists fear will widen the scope of censorship (CNN, 7 April 2023).

Not only is large sections of the media willing to toe the government line but also has allowed themselves to be weaponized against opposing voices. Terms like “urban Naxal,” “anti-national,” “fake media,” and “Lutyens Delhi media” are freely used on news channels and pro-establishment podcasters to categorize and discredit intellectuals, liberals, and anyone being seen critical of government actions. The term “Urban Naxal” (Naxal is a moniker used for left-wing insurgents) is being used by Modi himself (*The Times of India*, 10 October 2022).

Reporters recount the harassment of colleagues, particularly if they are from minority communities, especially if they are trying to investigate perceived government wrongdoings. During the 2020–2021 farmers’ protest, several senior Indian journalists were charged with colonial-era sedi-

tion laws over their reporting (Human Rights Watch 2021). Government agencies are systematically deployed against media outlets that do not fall in line, and the police to intimidate individual journalists use a range of laws.

Since Modi’s 2014 election, the number of sedition cases filed has increased by almost 30 percent (Purohit 2021). At least 15 journalists have been charged under the anti-terrorism law, the 1967 Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, according to the International Journalists’ Network (IJN) (Zaffar and Thakur 2024), and over 36 journalists have been detained (*The Guardian* 2025).

It is just because Modi pays lip service to constitutional democracy that media continues to function at his government’s sufferance. He has accused the media of spreading “negativity”—euphemism for criticism of his government—and through his trusted lieutenant, Home (Interior) Minister Amit Shah and *de facto* deputy in the government, managed to mobilise an impressive army of media cheerleaders of him and his government’s actions. Independent media deride this right-wing pro-government media cohort as “godì” (lapdog) media.

As a result of this systematic and sustained assault on critical and independent media, Siddharth Varadarajan, editor of *The Wire*, a digital news and opinion platform that has managed to survive so far, noted how,

[a] large section of the media has fused itself with the ruling power

vertical and is doing all it can to enable and accelerate the democratic backslide and the communal targeting of Muslims that is an integral part of this process. Another large section is unwilling to use the freedom it has to report on what is going on. This unwillingness of the media has contributed in no small measure to the crisis of democracy in India (Varadarajan 2022).

The last word in media management has still not been said, particularly

the leveraging of social media and shaping the political narrative to their advantage, mentored as they were by an authoritarian leader who, quite simply, changed the rules of the media-government interface, and gave his own twist to the rules and norms of constitutional democracy—without having to resort to any emergency-type promulgation. This disdain for institutional accountability, a key mechanism in a democracy for citizens to hold their elected representatives to account, does not bode well for the future of democracy in India.

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