History Project Proposal

Team - Echoes of Ages
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Part 2 (i): Research Proposal

(1) Why is this research question relevant/important to study? - (By Sajja Patel)

The 1975 National Emergency in India is really important when it comes to understanding democracy and how our government works. This time in Indian history shows us how even strong democracies can become vulnerable when leaders have too much power. During the Emergency, they took away people's rights, controlled the media, and stopped political opposition. This should remind us that it's crucial to protect individual freedoms and human rights, and to make sure our leaders are accountable and open about what they do.

The impact of the Emergency on Indian politics is big, and we don't have a lot of records from that time, which makes it even more interesting. It shows us how important it is to keep our democratic values strong and to be careful about leaders having too much power. This part of history teaches us that we need to protect our democratic systems and follow some important lessons for all nations.

Our research project is all about looking closely at the 'Emergency 1975-1977,' which was a significant and controversial time in India's history. For 21 months, India faced restrictions on civil liberties, control over the media, and a lot of power concentrated in the government, with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in charge. Our project aims to dive deep into the history that led to the Emergency happening. We want to understand why it happened and what was going on at that time. This period played a big role in shaping Indian society and how the country was run. The Emergency had a big impact on how India works, and that's what we're looking into. We want to find new information and understand more about what happened during that time. We're using old documents and talking to people who lived through it to learn more about this important period in India's history.

(2) and (3) What work has already been done on it specifically and/or in the field more generally? Also, what primary source material can you use to answer the questions you are posing? - (By Pranav Gupta)

Various scholars, historians and researchers have extensively studied the Emergency Period of India 1975, giving us insights of that time.

1. Various books have been written by historians and journalists. Some of the Notable works include books such as "The Emergency: A Personal History" by Coomi Kapoor which is a personal reflection on the impact of Emergency on Kapoor and her family and "The Emergency: Indian Democracy's Darkest Hour" by A. Surya Prakash. Similarly, various research papers and scholarly articles have also been written in this context, analysing the effects on civil liberties and influence on political activism.

These works would be important firstly, these would help us to realise firsthand accounts and the personal narratives of the people of the time, which is exactly what our goal is in an Oral History Project. Secondly, these credible sources would help us to conduct a comparative analysis of different perspectives and opinions in Emergency, leading to greater resources for the last stage of the Project, i.e., examination and compilation of all work. Also, it would assist us in shaping the various viewpoints, thought processes, viewpoints and contradictions that existed in society at that time, contributing to a more rigorous examination of the time.

2. Several Oral History Projects have been conducted till date, which capture the daily-life accounts for people who suffered the circumstances of Emergency, the dark period of Indian History. Some of the Notable works include The Long Emergency Collection, which was primarily conceived as a series of oral history interviews documenting journalistic custom practices around the time of Indian History.

The second most important Oral history Project was the interview with Mark Baird held on May 5 and 6, 2010 which talks about the insights of a Person in the World Bank examining the ground-level economic impact of the Emergency Period in India.

The 1975–1977 Indian Emergency was extensively covered by him. He reported the political unrest that followed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's declaration of a state of emergency while working as the BBC's South Asia reporter at the time. Mark's research and interviews provide light on the censorship, numerous arrests, and suspension of civil liberties during the time. His accounts helped to bring attention to the historical events occurring in India on a global scale, along with those of other journalists. Mark's work is still cited by historians and academics studying the Indian Emergency.

These Oral History projects would allow us to firstly draw comparisons with our study and their study. It would allow us to serve as a template on how we present an Oral History Project. Secondly, this could be our starting point for search of historical documents since not many documents are available for this period. These projects capture accounts that would not be available in official records.

These works help us in understanding the various dimensions of effects Emergency had on Indian Society. Also, these works shed light on the Implications on democracy, civil liberties, and governance during that era.

(4) What methods and methodologies will you use firstly to access this material and secondly to analyse it?

We are using Oral History Methodology to access the material and also our research mainly focuses on what Oral History is, how it is carried out, etc.

Oral History - (By Hrishi Narayanan)

Due to the authoritative nature of the regime during the 21 month period, Emergency was characterised by the complete censorship of the press, suppression of records, arrest of political rivals etc. As a result, there is a clear vacuum of historical sources in the form of newspapers, written records etc. from the period, particularly those criticising the regime.

The lack of written resources from the period poses a significant historiographical challenge. To address this, in this project, we will be employing oral history as the primary approach for our exploration of the period. The findings of the project, based on oral accounts, will be supplemented by available written sources and vice versa.

In the following sections, we will briefly present the oral history method. Following this, we will elucidate on how we plan to apply the method in this study.

Brief Introduction to the Oral History Method - (By Hrishi Narayanan)

In essence, oral history is a sound recording of historical information, obtained through an interview that preserves a person's life history or eyewitness account of a past experience. Oral historians document the past by preserving insights not found in printed sources¹.

¹ https://www.library.ucsb.edu/special-collections/oral-history/oralhlec

Oral history is considered as the earliest form of historical inquiry. It predates the culture of written texts and even the written word. However, mainstream academic recognition for oral history as historiographical methodology is fairly recent. Specifically, organised mainstream oral inquiries did not begin until the twentieth century².

There are several merits that make oral history an important methodology for historiographical research. Primarily it fills the gaps in documented history and uncovers untold or forgotten narratives. Due to its nature, it enables people to share their stories in their own words. As various viewpoints from different individuals from different stations in life are considered, it lends a fuller and more accurate picture of the past.

The oral history method is particularly important in understanding incidents of social or political turmoil. Such events often fail to get captured properly by written documents. Even if the quantitative facts are somehow captured, qualitative aspects such as human experience and narratives often remain unrecorded.

The Partition of 1947 is an example of one such incident in history where oral history methods have been used extensively.^{3 4 5} This enables us to capture and preserve the human experiences and narratives during the dark period in history. Other prominent examples of oral history projects include The Voice/Vision Holocaust Survivor Oral History Archive⁶, The Sapru House Oral History Series⁷, and the South Asian Oral History Project⁸.

Using the Oral History Methodology in the Project

Data, Scope and Methodology - (By Hrishi Narayanan)

The sample group will be selected through the processes of judgemental/purposive sampling, as well as snowball sampling. The locations for the sample will be restricted to the cities of Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Kochi. As these cities are spread across the nation, it will help in a comparative study among the regions represented by the cities and lend a pan-Indian character to the project. For a pan-Indian analysis, a stratified sampling approach will be used, with each location as a strata, to reduce data biases induced by different regions. Around 5-6 samples will be collected from each location, and the overall sample size would be approximately 20-25.

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² https://www.eiu.edu/historia/Mariner.pdf

³ https://www.partitionmuseum.org/oral-history

https://in.1947partitionarchive.org/

⁵ https://www.neh.gov/article/story-1947-partition-told-people-who-were-there

⁶ https://holocaust.umd.umich.edu/

⁷ https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=2&ls_id=8489&lid=462

⁸ https://content.lib.washington.edu/saohcweb/index.html

As established earlier, the study aims to understand and analyse the social context during emergency and changes that occurred during the period. In order to get meaningful insights into the period of time, the candidates considered for the interview must be of an appropriate age during the Emergency, where they are old enough to understand and recollect the socio-political context and changes of the era. At the same time, the age range for consideration must not be too wide. This will ensure that there is no generational gap induced in the findings of the study.

Accordingly, the focus of the oral history component of the study will be confined to the individuals who were between 14 to 22 years of age during the period of Emergency, ie: have their current age between 60 and 70. Restriction of candidates as per this criterion address both of the aforementioned concerns. Furthermore, as the topic of study is closely linked with political rhetoric to date, the individuals directly linked with political parties will not be considered for the study.

In addition, given that the experience of social reality varies across genders, particularly in the case of lived experiences and narratives that the study aims to capture, the care will be taken to ensure that there are there is an even balance of male and female participants for this study.

As an oral history project, the primary data will be gathered through in-depth, open-ended interviews with appropriate candidates. An interview guideline, with a list of topics to be discussed and broad guideline questions, will be used to steer the conversation. Care will be taken to avoid any form of leading questions that may induce human bias to the study which may hamper the results.

Digital recording of the interviews will be done, and subsequently transcripts will be prepared for analysis. One of the primary aims will be to corroborate key findings obtained through review of literature (both primary and secondary) with the findings of the interview. As the overall project is a mixed-method study, with other primary and secondary sources, the data will be analysed both quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

Ethical Considerations - (By Hrishi Narayanan)

Since the period of Emergency is still a part of the political narrative and rhetoric of today, inciting strong emotions among various sections of society, participants may be subject to targeting for their views on the period. Hence, revealing the subject's identity in this study may result in compromising the subject's safety. Furthermore, this may also contribute to participants being extremely hesitant to express their opinions to the interviewers, which may reduce the efficacy of the oral history methodology.

In order to address such concerns, certain measures will be adopted throughout the project to ensure participant privacy. Prior to participation, the goal and nature of the study will be elucidated to all participants and verbal consent will be taken for using their data in the study. It will also be made clear to the participants that the study is completely voluntary, with an option to withdraw at any point of time. No personal identities will be disclosed at any stage of the study.

Semi-guided interview questions

Background Information, Awareness and Initial Reactions: (By Aishani Pandey)

- a. Would you kindly let us know your name, age, and residence during the 1975–1977 National Emergency?
- b. At that time, what did you work for a living / what were you studying?
- c. How did you find out about the National Emergency proclamation at first?
- d. How did you feel and think about the emergency at first? Have your perceptions or emotions evolved over time?
- e. Can you share any particular experiences or incidents that happened to you or people you know during the Emergency?
- f. How did the Emergency affect your daily life, your family, and your community?

2. Political Perception: (By Aishani Pandey)

- a. Did you or your family have any political affiliations during the Emergency? If so, how did these affiliations impact your experiences?
- b. Were you or anyone you know involved in political activities or movements during the Emergency? Please describe any significant incidents or experiences.
- c. How did you feel about the National Emergency proclamation made by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi?
- d. How did your community perceive other political leaders, both supporting and opposing the Emergency?
- e. How did the Emergency affect the functioning of political institutions, like the judiciary and legislature, in your perception?
- f. Were there any notable incidents of political repression or authoritarian practices that you witnessed or heard about?
- g. Were there any efforts to mobilize political opposition during the Emergency in your area? Please share any experiences or observations.
- h. How were protests, political rallies, or opposition movements planned, and how did the government react?
- i. Did you or anyone you know experience incarceration, other types of official control, or political repression during the Emergency?

- j. Do you have any personal accounts of people being arrested or subjected to persecution because of their political actions or beliefs?
- k. How did the general public perceive the political events unfolding during the Emergency? Were there any changes in public sentiment towards political leaders or parties as the Emergency progressed?
- I. How did the political atmosphere in your community alter before, during, and after the 1977 elections?
- m. How did the election results and the end of the Emergency affect you and the people in your immediate vicinity?
- n. In your perspective, how did the Emergency affect Indian politics and society over the long run?
- o. Now that several decades have passed, how do you feel about the Emergency? Has your viewpoint evolved with time?

3. Community and Interpersonal Dynamics: (By Aishani Pandey)

- a. Were political discussions common within your community during the Emergency? How were these discussions perceived or handled?
- b. Did you observe any changes in relationships among neighbors, friends, or family members due to differing political opinions or experiences during the Emergency?
- c. Were there any noticeable shifts in social attitudes or behaviors in your community during the Emergency, perhaps related to trust, political engagement, or fear?
- d. How did people in your community help one another out during the emergency? Did you notice any noteworthy community-led projects or activities?
- e. Did the Emergency have any effects on community social institutions like community centers, schools, or places of worship?
- f. How did interpersonal and community dynamics evolve in the aftermath of the Emergency? Are there any lasting impacts from that period that you observe in your community today?

4. Media and Information: (By Sajja Patel)

- a. What effects did the media censorship have on your ability to obtain news and information during the Emergency?
- b. Do you have any examples of how government censorship during the Emergency directly impacted newspapers, periodicals, or broadcasters?
- c. During the time of media control, did you or anybody you knew use alternate or covert ways of information dissemination?
- d. What effects does the lack of critical reporting or the inability to critique government activities in public have on social relationships and public conversation in your community?

e. Has there been any sustained shift in the public's trust in government communications and the media as a result of media censorship?

5. Comparitive Insights: (By Sajja Patel)

- a. What effects did the suspension of civil liberties have on your individual liberties and rights during the emergency, and how were they different from what they were before to the emergency?
- b. When the Emergency was abolished in 1977, what were the first political and administrative developments you observed?
- c. What were the differences between the activities done during the Emergency and any personal or community attempts to address the aftermath?
- d. How, in your opinion, did the Emergency era affect Indians' communal memory and historical consciousness, and how is this different from what happened before and after the Emergency?

6. Closing Thoughts: (By Aishani Pandey)

- a. Would you like to add anything else about your observations or experiences during the 1975–1977 National Emergency?
- b. Regarding this chapter of Indian history, what lesson or revelation would you like to share with the next generation?

(5) How long will you take to do this research and what will be its broad strokes timeline? - (By Pranav Gupta)

In this oral history project, the first step would be to first identify what all events took place during the Emergency Period. For that, we need to first have an initial level of understanding about what all happened in that phase. We can roughly estimate a time span of about 3-4 months to do research on that. Based upon that, we need to form a set of questions, and prepare the interviews keeping in mind the different kinds of questions to be asked, and that the kind of questions asked are general in nature, and not something too specific/political in nature. This would require another month.

Following this, the next step would be to involve identifying and reaching out to potential interviewees, and then conducting the interviews in a structured and sensitive manner. The practice of an empathetic and participatory approach would help us dive deeper to understand the complexities of the experiences and events that took place. This would take about 5 months because we would require at least 50-100 people to have a sample which would give us a picture of the events that took place in the past and let us identify the background as well as political identities of all the interviewees.

The final phase of this involves a thorough examination of the answers given by the interviewees and performing case studies and imaginative understanding about the observations made. This involves connecting the dots and realising the potential answers given by each person. This phase would take another 3 months or so. Following this, we need to compile all the work and show the results in a specific format for the final presentation of the research. This would again take about a month or so.

In total, adding up the time taken in all the phases described, it would take about 1-1.5 years to complete the project.

(6) What will be the output from it – both academic as well as societal (if at all)? - (By Pranav Gupta)

This project would enable one to dive deeper into the causes as well as the impacts of emergency by first-hand accounts. As we all know, first-hand accounts are the most reliable, one of the primary sources to be considered is therefore in our project, the people themselves! We would be able to have a humanistic perspective of understanding of the Project. Also, it might be an interesting topic to study the limitations of Democracy, how democracy was overthrown during the era, and how censorship was imposed everywhere. It can also be used to understand the economic aspects related to that time and can also be used to understand the international relations of India. It was also the time of Soviet Union's Economic Stagnation and the coming years led to improvement of relations of India with the West. We can also understand how Emergency might have contributed to the above points. It would be a record that would keep future generations informed and with this they would be able to learn from the mistakes we made. After all, there is a popular saying that "those who do not remember history are doomed to repeat it." To conclude, the output of the project would involve the creation of personal accounts of people of that time and their narratives.

Part 2 (ii): Annotated Bibliography and list of primary sources

<u>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY</u> - (By Aishani Pandey)

<u>Books</u>

VASUDEV, Uma. Two Faces of Indira Gandhi. Vikas, New Delhi, 1977.

Uma Vasudev's Two Faces of Indira Gandhi offers a detailed analysis of Indira Gandhi's political journey post-1972, leading up to the National Emergency of 1975-1977 in India. Serving as a sequel to Vasudev's earlier work, Indira Gandhi: Revolution in Restraint, this book delves into the shifts in political ideologies that

propelled Gandhi from being hailed as a foremost democrat to being labeled an emergent dictator. A notable feature of this book is the inclusion of Vasudev's interview with Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency, a piece that garnered attention when the stories from PTI and UNI were cancelled and withdrawn, hinting at the restrictive media environment prevalent during the Emergency. This interaction provides a rare glimpse into the mindset of key political players, revealing the tension between democratic ideals and authoritarian tendencies that characterized this era.

AGRAWAL, Chandra Prakash. Indira Gandhi (Then & Now) and Janata. Hindustan Exporters (Publication Division), Chandausi, 1978.

This book provides a thorough analysis of the series of events that led to the declaration of national emergency in India in June 1975, which was directed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at the time. Agrawal navigates through the social and political unrest that preceded the Emergency, highlighting the circumstances that caused Gandhi to make such an extreme decision. The narrative further delves into the aftermath of this period, illustrating how it significantly altered the political landscape of India. The author also endeavors to unravel the complex character of Indira Gandhi, tracing her evolution from a young girl to a political stalwart. A unique feature of this book is the inclusion of correspondence between the author and Prime Minister Morarji Desai, Gandhi's successor. This correspondence serves as a primary source, providing firsthand insights into the political discourse and sentiments prevalent during the transition phase post-Emergency.

DARBARA SINGH. Indian politics . Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1978.

Darbara Singh's work, "Indian Politics," presents a quick understanding of a crucial decade in Indian political history, categorically divided into three distinctive eras: pre-Emergency, Emergency, and post-Emergency periods. The text encapsulates the unfolding events in India's turbulent political atmosphere, leading up to, during, and following the National Emergency of 1975-1977. The pre-Emergency phase explores the escalating political and social tensions that set the stage for the ensuing Emergency. The Emergency phase delves into the authoritarian measures adopted by the Indira Gandhi administration, which significantly impacted the democratic fabric of the nation. One of the noteworthy aspects of this book is its discussion on the recommendations of the Shah Commission, set up post-Emergency to investigate the excesses committed during this period.

Prakash, Gyan. Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point. Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2019.

This book gives an account of the historic June 25, 1975, declaration of a state of emergency by Indira Gandhi, which resulted in the suspension of constitutional rights and the making of political arrests. The reader is transported back to this turbulent era which provides a thorough historical account of the

Emergency of 1975–1977 and examines its effects on Indian democracy. Through this lens, the book also reflects on the rise of authoritarianism in the global context, making it a relevant read for understanding contemporary democratic challenges.

Jaffrelot, Christophe, and Anil, Pratinav. India's First Dictatorship: The Emergency, 1975-77. Hurst Publishers, London, 2020.

The book sheds light on one of India's darkest moments, drawing upon a multitude of new sources to explore the constitutional dictatorship imposed by Indira Gandhi, which resulted in a 21-month suspension of democracy. Focusing on the authoritarian rule facilitated by various factions including Congressmen, Communists, and trade unions, the book critically examines the political culture of India during this period. It also discusses the role of Mrs. Gandhi and her son, Sanjay Gandhi, in implementing mass sterilisation programmes and the deportation of urban slum-dwellers. The detailed analysis provided in the book is commended for its meticulous research and contemporary relevance, making it a comprehensive resource on the Emergency era.

Articles

MORRIS-JONES, W.H. Whose emergency: India's of Indira's? World today 31(11): Nov, 75:451-61

Morris-Jones navigates through the events leading up to the Emergency, evaluating the political and social climate. The analysis extends to scrutinizing Indira Gandhi's role and the extent to which her personal political agenda of securing herself from the opposition leaders intertwined with the national narrative. He also talks about "unchecked power" and "media censorship" prevalent during that time in detail.

KLIEMAN, AARON S. Indira's India: Democracy and Crisis Government. Political Science Quarterly 96(2):Sum, 81:241-59

In his article, Aaron S. Klieman states that the emergency, and ever since it ended, India has claimed to be a vibrant democracy on the strength of its popular base, with citizen awareness manifesting itself through such functioning representative organs. What transpired during those two years, however, presents a serious indictment of this claim. India's Parliament was an embarrassment throughout the emergency, but especially in the initial stage when it proved to be a willing tool, acting as a rubber stamp for actions taken by Mrs. Gandhi. The same must be said for the Indian courts, although, to their credit, submissiveness came only after an initial struggle. Sadder part was ineffectiveness of the nation's press and other media to withstand the pressures of crisis

government. The power of the press as an agency for mobilizing public opinion made it one of the first targets for repression.

PALMER, NORMAN D. India in 1975: Democracy in eclipse. Asian survey 16(2) Feb, 75: 95-110

In his article, Norman D. Palmer explains the circumstances surrounding Indira Gandhi's declaration of emergency. The political landscape in India was beginning to increasingly resemble serious acts of violence. They demonstrated not only a breakdown of law and order but also the growing use of extra-constitutional tactics by political opponents of the ruling regime, which precisely provided Indira Gandhi, the prime minister at the time, with the justification to take such an extreme measure. He also discusses the J.P. movement, which was Mrs. Gandhi's most effective opponent. He also discusses the post-emergency era and how India's economic standing significantly improved during this time. He also throws light on the Constitutional and Legal Aspects of the Emergency , the foreign policies India adopted during that time inspite of facing matters in internal affairs and other political developments.

FRANK, ANDRE GUNDER. Emergence of permanent emergency in India. Economic and political weekly. 12(11): Mar, 12, 77: 463-75

This article proposes that the key causes and effects of the 'Emergency Rule' in India can be traced back to the ongoing crisis in Indian industry, and more broadly in the global capitalist arena, since the mid-1960s. It suggests that the steps taken by both Indian and foreign capital to address this crisis are crucial to understanding the Emergency. It further implies that the actions of the Indian government mainly reflect the political and economic desires of large industrial capital amidst a broader class struggle. The article also discusses how Indira Gandhi's conflict with her rivals within the same class revolves around the less significant question of who will carry out a largely similar capitalist policy, and in what manner. Andre Gunder Frank further states that any future government emerging from the current political turmoil in capitalist India will inevitably continue with the same political and economic approach, hinting at a lasting state of Emergency for the foreseeable future.

DUTT, V.P. The emergency in India: Background and rationale. Asian survey 16(12): Dec, 76: 1124-38

V.P Dutt states in his article that Indian developments must be viewed within the framework of three perimeters: norms of democracy, constraints of a developing country, and the imperatives of a diverse society. These are the perimeters within which India's political system must evolve and within which developments within India must be placed and considered. He also cites some extracts from the speeches made by Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, in which he and other political leaders call to paralyze the government. He criticizes them as they bid to strike at the

Roots of Democracy and abandoning the democratic system in their quest for power. He calls this as an "Unprincipled Opposition Stand".

LITERATURE REVIEW - (By Aishani Pandey)

The National Emergency declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi from 1975 to 1977 stands as a significant yet dark chapter in India's democratic narrative. The secondary literature surveyed provides a diverse range of viewpoints that together help to understand the intricate political, social, and historical foundations of this critical period.

Books like "Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy's Turning Point" by Gyan Prakash, and "India's First Dictatorship: The Emergency, 1975-77" by Christophe Jaffrelot and Pratinav Anil, among others, delve into the intricate political maneuvers, the authoritarian rule, and the societal ramifications that characterized the Emergency. These works collectively provide a holistic understanding of the Emergency era, shedding light on Indira Gandhi's regime, the suppression of civil liberties, and the consequent political upheaval.

On the other hand, Uma Vasudev's "Two Faces of Indira Gandhi" takes a personalized approach, exploring the dichotomy of Indira Gandhi's political persona before and during the Emergency. This narrative, enriched by first-hand interviews and primary source materials, offers a humanized portrayal of the key political figures of this era, thus adding a nuanced layer to the broader discourse.

Furthermore, the range of articles covering various aspects of the Emergency, from its inevitability to its impact on India's democratic structure, contributes to a detailed understanding of this historical epoch. These pieces, albeit scattered across different publications, echo a shared sentiment of analyzing a period that significantly altered India's political landscape.

The proposed research aims to build upon this foundation of secondary literature by undertaking a more focused exploration of the public's perception and reaction to the authoritarian measures implemented during the Emergency. While the existing literature provides a robust analysis of the political and historical dimensions, there appears to be a gap in understanding the societal response and the enduring impact on the collective psyche of the nation. By delving into archival records, newspaper articles from that period, and conducting interviews with individuals who experienced the Emergency firsthand, the research seeks to bridge this gap. Through this lens, the study aspires to offer a more rounded understanding of the Emergency's legacy

on India's democratic ethos, enriching the existing body of knowledge surrounding this pivotal period in Indian history.

In synthesizing the insights obtained from the secondary literature with fresh perspectives derived from primary sources, the proposed research aims to contribute a nuanced narrative that complements and extends the existing discourse on the National Emergency of 1975-1977 in India.