



## **Emergency Retold**

*Kuldip Nayar*

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It all started with a by-election in Orissa in 1972. Nandini Satpathy was elected to the state assembly after spending lakhs of rupees. Gandhian Jayaprakash Narayan raised the matter of corruption with the Prime Minister. Her defence was that the Congress had no money even to run the party office. When he found no response, he took the issue to the nation. One thing led to another until JP gave the call that the battle was between the people who wanted the government accountable and the government which was not willing to come clean.

Acclaimed author Kuldip Nayar, says the true story behind Emergency, why it was declared and what it meant is relevant now since the driving force was corruption and corruption is the watch word again. With a new preface, the author reacquaints the current reader with the facts, lies and truths in an easy-to-understand, analytical style. He reveals the untold atrocities committed and the chief perpetrators and their modus operandi. A revelatory must-read on the 18 dark months of Democratic Indias history.

About the Author: Kuldip Nayar

A veteran journalist and former member of Parliament, Kuldip Nayar is India's most well-known and widely syndicated journalist. He was born in Sialkot in 1923 and educated at Lahore University before migrating to Delhi with his family at the time of Partition. He began his career in the Urdu newspaper, Anjam and after a spell in the USA worked as information officer of Lal Bahadur Shastri and Govind Ballabh Pant. He eventually became Resident Editor of the Statesman and managing editor of the Indian news agency, UNI. He corresponded for the Times for twenty five years and later served as Indian high commissioner to the UK during the V.P. Singh government. His stand for press freedom during the Emergency, when he was detained; his commitment to better relations between India and Pakistan, and his role as a human rights activist have won him respect and affection in both countries.

## **Emergency Retold Details**

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# **From Reader Review Emergency Retold for online ebook**

## **Megha Sreeram says**

4 Stars because the option of 0.5 doesn't work. I prefer 3.5 stars though.

The book is an account, a live third person account of the Emergency. Kuldeep Nayar was a journalist, who was imprisoned during the Emergency and had to undergo the injustice inflicted upon the masses.

The narrative is apt and the facts presented are amazing. The book has been written with a lot of background research and interviews with stakeholders and the affected parties. It critically examines the effect and the impact of Emergency in shaping up of the political destiny of the country. It does not mince words when describing the tyranny of Sanjay Gandhi during the phase or of the inability of Indira Gandhi to accept the truth of Sanjay.

I have read a similar book authored by Shri.P.N.Dhar, who was Indira Gandhi's secretary during Emergency. I had the feeling that Dhar was sympathetic and too soft towards the Gandhis and was in denial to see what really happened during the Emergency. This book by Kuldeep Nayar does not do that mistake and gives us a neutral and blunt view of what is what.

Despite a few editing errors here and there, the book is good. Readers craving masala, stay away, for this one is dry and boring if you are expecting drama.

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## **Jimeetgandhi says**

**A MUST READ FOR EVERY INDIAN!**

Kuldeep Nayar, veteran journalist, brilliantly recounts the compelling saga of the what, why and how of the dark nights during the Emergency period.

The more I read about the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, the more my hatred for them increases and the more I become aware of their astounding need for power.

Sanjay and Indira Gandhi seem to be absolute dictators, and it is only too well that the BJP is in power today. The book unabashedly explores the shame and the blot on Indian democracy, on how people were tortured and detained, how they were sterilised.

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## **Mitesh Patel says**

I am so glad I read this book and am so glad that I was very young to have experienced it in the free India. I have read this book at a crucial juncture when the Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi has announced demonization of high value currency notes to crack down on corruption, counterfeit notes and terrorism. Many in the society have dubbed this drive as a financial emergency. Unfortunately these are the same people whose fathers, grandmothers, husbands had the audacity to plunge the country in the real emergency in 1975. Mr. Nayar has done a very thorough job of what the emergency was like. The atrocities committed, their own coffers filled to the brim have never been before even in the captive India prior to 1947. I really

though that this dynastic party was capable of anything including murder but still had some doubts. Not any more. They can go to any length to stay in power and this book describes it in so much graphic details. I was sure that I would never support Congress again but now I am absolutely certain that I will never even think about voting for them - ever. Anyone who wants to understand what India has become after decades of decay must read this book to really understand as to who caused this decay.

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## **Anand Mehta says**

### Emergency - Retold

Emergency - Retold written by Kuldip Nayar is the comprehensive description of India's darkest phase. Kuldip Nayar - veteran journalist and former member of Parliament was a reporter at the Indian Express at the time of Emergency. He is an author of more than a dozen books and continues writing weekly columns.

On 25th June, 1975 shortly before midnight, President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed under the advise of the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency. This was in the backdrop pf the Raj Narain case where Justice Sinha of the Allahbad High Court held Mrs. Gandhi to be guilty of electoral malpractice. Mrs. Gandhi's win in the election was declared void and she was asked to vacate the position of the Prime Minister and thereafter a ban was imposed for 6 years barring her to participate in active politics. Internal Emergency was imposed so that she would not have to vacate the office.

The series of events which took place afterwards were never thought of. Almost all the leaders of the major political parties who were not in line with the ideology of Mrs. Gandhi were arrested and put behind bars for indefinite period. The fundamental rights were suspended and the period was used to settle personal scores with people. Mass atrocities were carried out on the population. Sanjay Gandhi the son of Indira Gandhi though he was not part of the government machinery went over each and every file that came to the Prime Minister's office.

Sanjay Gandhi rose above the ranks at this time and he was seen to be the successor to Mrs. Gandhi. He was seen as an implementer and a man of action. He committed mass atrocities on the people living in the slums for the beautification of Delhi and razed them to ground. The sterilization project that was carried out by him was a barbarian act. Headmistresses were given power to detain children and force their parents to undergo sterilization. Numerous deaths occurred due to forced sterilizations. Sanjay Gandhi used to travel at the expense of the government and was feared by everyone. He used the income tax and excise authorities and the Central Bureau of Investigation to investigate those who didn't fall in line.

The constitution was amended so as to let Mrs Gandhi off the hook in the Raj Narain case. Another amendment was made so that the detention could be made legal. Writs of habeas corpus were suspended. Numerous complaints were sent to the Prime Minister's office but none were taken into consideration.

The jails were flooded over their maximum capacities and the prisoners were tortured. The political prisoners who were held under detention were treated in the same manner. The legislature, executive and the judiciary were all controlled by one person and one family. The media was censored and nothing was published until and unless it was cleared by the censors that is the people authorised by the government

The aftermath of this Emergency was seen with the ousting of the government by the JP movement. JP Narayan convinced all the opposition parties to come together and fight the Congress. He was a Gandhian

and had played a significant part in the Independence Struggle.

The 21 month long period of the Emergency is considered the darkest phase in the history of India and a blatant attack on the democracy.

Mr. Nayar has described the whole phase in a very lucid manner and the reader can easily get a good idea of Emergency. However he has not been very accurate about the timeline and has mentioned dates here and there. It is a good book to get an overall idea about the Emergency and the events in the aftermath

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### **Baidhurya says**

A well researched, fast paced account of Indian emergency

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### **Sanjeev Sekhar says**

A smashing read! For someone who only knew the superficial details of the Emergency this book was a real eye opener to the excesses and horrors of that dark period. As a kid I had always heard the late Sanjay Gandhi's name taken in only negative tones at home. I now understand why. He was the defacto Prime Minister and clearly iron lady Indira Gandhi had come to depend on him and his cronies a tad too much for her own good and to great detriment of the nation. I've also developed an immense respect for leaders like JP and George Fernandez for their strong convictions to uphold the democratic values of our country in spite of the torture and threats that they faced. A special annexure at the end also delves into details of the Maruti project. Once again my naivety took a beating as truth behind Sanjay Gandhi as the hero of that project is laid bare and in fact brings to light the exact opposite picture. The page turner of a book moves like a Frederick Forsyth thriller and is a must read for anyone who wants a quick but detailed experience of this blot on independent India's democratic history.

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### **Satya says**

Emergency Retold by Kuldip Nayar is a third person narrative and includes his findings, interviews, reports regarding emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, former Prime minister of India.

It all started when Raj Narain, the lost opponent of Mrs. Gandhi filed a case in Allahabad court regarding corrupt practices adopted by her during the elections. The charges were that she used government servants help to build rostrums and the other was that she had used an officer to further her election prospects. The court held her guilty. Because of internal resistance in the Congress party and protests from opposition parties, She asked Fakhruddin Ali-then President of India to impose an internal emergency to consolidate her power.

This book consists of four chapters: Towards dictatorship- It narrates circumstances which led to the imposition of emergency, Murk Thickens- This contains how Sanjay and his friends, people close to Mrs. Gandhi used emergency to gain personal favors, atrocities committed on opposition, normal people, End of the tunnel- This contains information on what led to Mrs. Gandhi calling off emergency despite Sanjay Gandhi and Bansi Lal against it, The Judgement- It contains how people defeated Congress by voting for

Janata Party.

This book contains a clear account of atrocities committed during the emergency, Curbing of freedom of Speech of press, how Congress amended the law to suit its needs and many other unknown things that happened during the emergency.

Before reading this book I have heard arguments supporting emergency like family planning, low inflation rate etc. But in a democracy not only ends but means matter as well. Yes, there may be a low inflation rate during the emergency but I think such measures were not necessary for achieving that. This holds true for other so-called achievements as well.

The blurb of the book doesn't match the content. But on the whole, it is one book every Indian must read.

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### **Ashok Sridharan says**

Kuldeep Nayar brilliantly narrates the sequence of major events during the Emergency. For the uninitiated: it was a traumatic 21 month period (1975-77) when civil rights were suspended and India temporarily became a police state. This book is disturbing in places, but its an excellent chronicle of a nightmarish period that should never be forgotten. The writer brings in a first hand perspective, having himself been one of the victims of the political machinations of that period.

My only grouse with the book is that the ending is just a touch abrupt. Nonetheless, this book ought to be made a compulsory read, so that today's generation gets to know how close India came to losing the freedom for which countless people laid down their lives.

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### **Hajarath Prasad Abburu says**

A Prime Minister of India (Mrs. Indira Gandhi) used the services of an IAS for 18 days before his resignation was accepted and also was helped by a State Government's officials who arranged rostrums, electricity and PA systems for her election campaign in her constituency. And she won by more than one hundred thousand majority than her nearest rival, Raj Narain. The court found fault with her 4 years later and declared her victory illegal and barred her from Indian Politics for 6 years.

Such was the integrity of Judiciary.

And then Mrs. Indira Gandhi appealed in Supreme Court, made constitutional amendments,

1. to recognize the resignation date as the date on which it was printed in gazette and
2. To allow Prime Minister to use government machinery and employees for election practices, obtained the assent from the State Assemblies, Upper and Lower Houses, and The President in just over 5 days and made the Supreme Court declare the High Court ruling null and void.

Such was the audacity of Legislative.

The Opposition party leaders and political activists who were detained for 19 months were released barely 2 months before the elections which were announced by an overconfident Indira Gandhi. The fundamental rights weren't even restored to the citizens. The press censorship hadn't been lifted yet. Despite all this, the

people ousted Indira Gandhi out of power ruthlessly. The Congress couldn't even open their tally in 4 states and 1 Union Territory. They threw Congress, flag bearer of Indian Independence Struggle out of the office and with them the Gandhi-Nehru dynasty too, for the first time in the history of Independent India.

Such was, is, and will always be the power of freedom loving common man :)

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### **Sumit Mohanty says**

A jarring account of our country that lingered under a labyrinthine neural network of autocracy, corruption and press censorship.

Given the abundance of Hitler/Mussolini references in our history, wonder what stops us from going indigenous over there?

Heartfelt thanks to Aniruddha Palriwala for this beautiful recommendation.

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### **Vaibhav Anand says**

I remember asking my mother if she remembered the Emergency in the 70's and she told me, "Yes, a lot of people went to jail; but corruption went away. Trains, buses used to be on time." That and the undeniable fact that Indira Gandhi had induced the Emergency to satiate her hunger for power, had been my narrow viewpoint on the Emergency. I came across Nayar's book and picked it up, wanting to know what had really happened.

I loved Nayar's 'Emergency Retold'. Except for certain parts where Nayar lends voice to lengthy diatribes by leaders against the Emergency, the narrative is taut and thriller-like. If you think the Congress leaders of today are sycophantic (towards that magnificent buffoon Rahul Gandhi), you must read 'Emergency Retold' to understand where the seeds of this sycophancy were sown. The Indira/ Sanjay combine killed the spirit of the Congress to such an extent that sycophancy became the norm as opposed to the exception.

A fantastic record of Indira's India in the 70's.

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### **Rajesh Bhandari says**

I am not sure why nothing from this book has been added into India's formal history texts in schools .

Irrespective of what your political affiliations are, this is a book that every Indian should read.

More than an account of the horrific history, this book shows that there is a very thin line between a 'strong centralised democratic' system and fascism .

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### **Arun says**

The book goes through the events that lead to 'The Emergency' in India, what happened during the period and how it ended. I found it to be an unbiased account of what happened. The author has tried to interview all the parties involved. Recommended for anyone who hopes to know about arguably the most important



event of post-independent India.

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### **Indrani Talukdar says**

A no-holds-barred book on the emergency with complete factual details, Kuldip Nayyar's book "Emergency Retold" serves as a chilling reminder of those 18 months of sheer mockery of democracy. Sans embellishments and emotional trappings, it gives a very insightful picture of the time. Definitely worth a read. I only wish the editors had been more meticulous in their editing, though.

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### **Navdeep Pundhir says**

I have had deep regard for the author, a veteran journalist that he was. Having picked up the book with great excitement, I was pretty disappointed with the tone and tenor of the text. This book was originally published in 1978, with the hangover of emergency still prevalent.

The book fails to generate the passions and you are bound to dislike the very idea of going through a newspaperish prose in the very beginning. There is no analysis, nothing on the other side of the story. The negativity of the book is the hallmark of my experience. Two star, hence!

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