



# Secular democracy in peril

Posted at: 04/12/2018

## **Secular democracy in peril -Indian politics today reminds one of the first decade of the existence of Pakistan**

- India is literally at the crossroads with the very future of its secular democracy at stake.
- Competitive Hindutva has become the name of the game, with the ostensibly secular Congress party trying desperately to demonstrate its Hindu credentials to cut into the base of the Hindu-nationalist BJP.
- Congress president Rahul Gandhi is busy visiting Hindu temples and publicising his caste genealogy for electoral gains.
- This is the first time since Independence that the religion and caste of a candidate for the job of Prime Minister is overtly portrayed as the defining basis for his/her claim to lead the country.

### **Rising intimidation**

- The Congress's passive Hindutva is ceding the ideological ground to the BJP by heavily diluting the tenets of secularism enshrined in the Constitution.
- A very dangerous aspect of this unfolding drama is the escalation in the politics of intimidation, which is undermining the rule of law and threatening the democratic fabric of India.
- Simultaneously, there is an anti-democratic wave sweeping through the country.
- Populism rather than liberal democracy is increasingly coming to define the nature of the Indian polity.

### **The opposite of patriotism**

- A jingoistic form of ultra-nationalism has become very popular.
- This is the polar opposite of patriotism combined with liberal values that was enshrined in the Constitution and was held dear by the first generation of independent India's leadership.
- A further indication of the erosion of democratic values is the tendency

of highly placed serving military officers to comment publicly on sensitive issues of domestic and foreign policy.

- Mounting majoritarianism fuelled by religious intolerance, hyper-nationalism born out of insecurity, deliberate erosion of political and judicial institutions, and creeping military intervention in the political arena finally led to the first military coup in Pakistan in 1958.
- Pakistan has never recovered from the tragic errors committed in its early years and is paying a very high price for it today.
- One hopes that India will not go down the same path because otherwise, the largest democracy in the world could face an equally bleak future.

The Hindu

