**From secularism to fascism**

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India, the world’s largest democracy, embraced secularism in 1976 through the enactment of the 42nd amendment to the constitution. Perceptively, it neither had the will nor the urge for secularism and seemed more of an attempt to portray a brighter picture of India to the world. The constitutional amendment itself was quite ironic since an emergency was already imposed throughout the country in 1975; the constitution was suspended and fundamental rights of the citizens were held in abeyance (although they were restored much later through the 44th amendment).

The circumstances for imposing the emergency were also quite sceptical for an avowed democratic country—student agitation against canteen shortages in Gujrat in 1973, backed by Morarji Desai, leading to the dissolution of provincial assembly and imposition of President’s rule; agitation by students of Patna University in Bihar in 1974, backed by JP Narayan; the railway strike in 1974 followed by the nationwide strike of transport workers, backed by George Fernandes; a decree by Judge Jagmohan Lal Sinha of Allahabad High Court declaring Indira Gandhi’s election invalid for electoral malpractices in 1975, on a petition filed by socialist leader Raj Narayan, which was challenged and the Supreme Court of India gave a stay order; and a massive rally held by Morarji Desai and JP Narayan asking the police and army not to follow the orders of the Congress government. India was ruled by the ‘Indian Iron Lady’ practically through a ‘civil martial law’ from 1975 to 1977 and yet it remained ‘democratic’ and ‘secular’.

[PM Shehbaz reaches New York to attend UNGA session](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Sep-2022/pm-shehbaz-reaches-new-york-to-attend-unga-session)

India never recovered from the toxic spilt by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar’s vision of Hindutva, which is staunchly idealised and pursued by the ultra-right nationalist organisation, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and other subsidiary organisations of the Sangh Parivar. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), founded in 1980, is the political appendage of RSS and aggressively pursues the policies laid down by RSS. Savarkar, popularly eulogised as Veer Savarkar, was inspired by Nazism and praised Hitler’s persecution of Jews and ardently equated the Muslims of India with the Jewish community in Germany. His speeches and articles made headway in the German press and he was purportedly gifted a copy of Mein Kampf.

India remained ambivalent about the serpent it has created and harvested, even though its father of the nation, Mohanlal Karamchand Gandhi, was assassinated by an RSS protégé, Nathuram Vinayak Godse, on 30 January 1948. Although RSS leader Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar aka Guruji, was allegedly involved in the conspiracy to murder the revered Gandhi, but he got a clean chit for the lack of evidence and was later released. RSS has always denied any involvement in the heinous act, though the affiliation of Godse and Golwalker is an open secret, which is evident from their joint efforts to translate the book “Rashtra Mimansa” into English, authored by Ganesh Damodar Savarkar aka Babarao Savarkar (the elder brother of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar), though Godse was given no recognition and Golwalker claimed the work as his sole effort.

[Magnitude 7.7 earthquake strikes Mexico's west coast](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Sep-2022/magnitude-7-7-earthquake-strikes-mexico-s-west-coast)

Moreover, Golwalker allegedly gave his blessings to Godse and other conspirators in his last meeting with them at his residence in Bombay, yet the testimony was declared doubtful and invalid. The ruthless assassination of Gandhi was a warning for the times to come and the beginning of the long journey towards fascism and the creation of the Hindu Rashtra. It was acknowledgeable when the RSS was banned on 4 February 1948 after Gandhi’s assassination but laughable when the ban was removed, only after 16 months in July 1949, when the RSS ‘promised to be non-political but reneged in 2013’, as reported by journalist Vidya Subrahmanium.

The RSS was banned again from 1975 to 1977 and then again for six months in December 1992, after the demolition of the Babri Mosque. Characteristically, the RSS has not budged from its ideology and since 2014 has become more aggressive when the BJP came into power. And disparagingly, history is being rewritten and books are being altered through RSS-sponsored ‘brains’ to prove that the RSS was always on the right path; secularism and a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society are anathema to ‘Hindustan’ and Indian glorification is only possible through the establishment of a ‘Hindu Rashtra’.

[Japan evacuates millions as typhoon batters southern regions](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Sep-2022/japan-evacuates-millions-as-typhoon-batters-southern-regions)

With Modi at the helm, BJP has accrued praise from RSS, for its Hindu nationalist policies which are based on RSS ideology. No doubt, the journey was long but Modi is a popular choice and the face of the BJP and RSS—and the RSS does not want to lose the position it has attained by gaining popularity, may it be through subversion, propaganda or media management through its prudent antics.

The dream to achieve unbridled political power has been realised where opponents and minorities alike, are squabbled, vilified, hounded and repressed to subdue any dissenting voice. Only last month, on 5 August, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi were detained by the police for leading peaceful protests against price hikes and unemployment, and Rahul Gandhi tweeted, “Democracy is a memory”. The BJP is making all-out efforts to extend its rule. Synchronously, Hindu sentiments have been ignited—through propaganda vis-à-vis media management, priests and politicians alike—and conditions have been made conducive through political management to such an extent that it seems evident that BJP would rule India for a considerable time to come. Considering the current policies of the BJP government, it would not be surprising if a constitutional amendment is enacted to declare India a Hindu state and Saffron replaces the Tiranga—an ultimate eulogy to the RSS founders.

[Senate committee discusses Afghan refugees' issues](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Sep-2022/senate-committee-discusses-afghan-refugees-issues)

With a rising religious temperature in the country, the BJP and RSS rant for the establishment of a ‘Hindu Rashtra’, and slogans like ‘India for Hindus’, accompanied by passing certain laws and some pronouncements, have invoked a constant fear amongst minorities for state persecution. And actions do speak louder than words—the abolition of the special status of Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill, laws against cow slaughter, threatening to deport Rohingya Muslim refugees, the passage of an anti-conversion law by three BJP-ruled states which target Muslims, Christians, Dalits and Adivasi communities who marry Hindu girls.

Muslims, as the largest and most affected minority group, have a genuine fear amongst them not only for their basic survival but also regarding their livelihoods. The hatred imbued against Muslims by the RSS progenitors has reached alarming levels, where crimes against Muslims go unpunished and the law in India does not take its course and remains biased. A recent instance from August 2022 is the release of 11 rioters who gang raped Bilkis Bano and murdered 7 of her family members in the Gujrat massacre of Muslims in 2002. As a rude awakening, the Chief Minister of Gujrat in 2002 was none other than Modi, popularly dubbed the ‘butcher of Gujrat’.

[Interior Minister terms Pak-Saudi ties as trust-based, long-standing](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Sep-2022/interior-minister-terms-pak-saudi-ties-as-trust-based-long-standing)

Can India today be justified as a secular country? No. The policies and actions of the government are a violation of basic human rights where minorities are being isolated, vilified, suppressed and pushed into the corner. Ironically the policies being enacted by BJP, seem right out of Hitler’s Nazi manifesto—the road to fascism. Human rights organisations have fumed against Modi’s discriminatory and fascist policies but the euphoria for Hindu Rashtra has deafened all sane voices.

India today is not as per the ideals of its forefathers; Gandhi’s message of “equality of status” regardless of religion, seems to be lost in the rant by Hindutva devotees.

On the eve of India’s 75th Independence Day, the divisiveness of India was quite visible. When Modi was addressing his compatriots from Red Fort, the eastern states of Manipur and Nagaland were undergoing a shutter-down strike, some districts of Assam observed a general strike where Maoist flags were also visible and IIOJK observed it as a Black Day. The India of today has yet to realise that RSS ideology, actively pursued by the BJP government, has been more divisive for India than creating unity and cohesion amongst its multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-cultural and multi-religious society. The question asked by Arundhati Roy requires an answer from the Indians; “Does a country fall into fascism the way a person falls in love? Or, more accurately, in hate?”