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## Save the Constitution: From whom?

In a vast and diverse country as India, there is bound to be a multiplicity of values, interests and beliefs with different parties representing them. But parties that undermine the building blocks of the country will not be accepted by the citizens

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The Congress' attempt to pass an impeachment motion against the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on the basis of baseless allegations has set a very dangerous precedent for our polity. Democratic values require that political parties must have patience when in Opposition. Democratic constitutions have carved out a special place for the Opposition. They are expected to play that role with responsibility.

The problem with the Congress is that the party believes that it has the birthright to rule over India and that its commitment to democratic ethos holds good only till it retains power. Once out of power, it works to undermine the very

structure that keeps the country together.

The Congress' disdain for democratic values is also clear from its complete absence from inner party structure and workings. The grand old party is not an ideologically coherent party and power is the glue that keeps it together. There is no 'lakshmanrekha' for it. This has been the history of the Congress and its first family.

First, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made concerted attempts to ensure that no challenge to his Government or leadership emerges from any corner.

As a political leader, he undermined the contributions of his contemporaries in the party, like Sardar Patel, Bhimrao Ambedkar, Shyama Prasad Mookerjee, among others and sought to discredit rival ideologies. For example, he tried to link the murder of Mahatma Gandhi to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Emergency, the only blot on our vibrant democracy, was imposed by

the Congress Government under the then prime ministership of Indira Gandhi, when she saw power slipping out of her hands.

Similarly, her son, Rajiv Gandhi, in a desperate attempt to woo the Muslim electorate, reversed the Supreme Court's verdict in the Shah Bano case and when faced by political backlash, allowed the *shilanyas* at Ram Janmabhoomi at Ayodhya. It is in this context that Senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid, a few days ago, had to accept that the Congress has the blood of Muslims on its hands.

It must also be accepted that our Government, in spite of the many initiatives that are still under progress, has done a remarkable job in a short span of four years and is comfortably placed to fight the 2019 general election. Hence, the Congress, faced with an existential dilemma, has resorted to mindless and vicious attacks on the Constitution and other institutions.

It has done greatest disservice

to the nation by attacking the Supreme Court, the Election Commission and the defence forces.

When the Congress performed abysmally in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Election in 2017, it put the blame on the venerable Election Commission of India and said that the EVMs were tampered. Democracy has taken deep roots in this country because the people have faith in its electoral process.

A country deemed to be unfit for democracy has seen peaceful transfers of power. By questioning the credibility and impartiality of the Election Commission, the Congress is sowing seeds of a tree that will bear no fruits in the future.

Similar has been the attitude of the Congress towards the top court. So long as the Congress did not have problems with the decisions of the apex court, it chose to keep quiet, but raised grave doubts on the impartiality of this institution when, in certain matters, the decisions did not meet the wishes of the

party. The most reprehensible attempt to bully the higher judiciary of the country was its decision to pass an impeachment motion against CJI Dipak Misra. The impeachment notice was rejected by Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice President Venkaiah Naidu, who said that the move "lacked evidence".

It must be said that the manner in which the impeachment drama unfolded, it lent credence to the theory that the initial threat of impeachment was a hint to the CJI of the consequence that was likely to follow if he did not deliver the order which the Congress wanted in the PIL seeking investigation in Judge Loya's death. The initiation of impeachment was also to compel the CJI to not take up the Ayodhya dispute matter.

In September 2016, the Government announced that the Indian armed forces had carried out surgical strikes across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir in response to Pakistan sponsored terrorism. The Congress demand-

ed proof from the Government about the surgical strikes. Dragging an apolitical defence force in the political slugfest was a new low in Indian politics.

Compare all these with the behaviour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its predecessor, the Jan Sangh. The BJP had ideological differences with the Congress Government but it showed full faith in democracy. It never attacked the democratic institutions and kept patience for 60 years, expressing dissent but never disrupted governance.

In a vast country like India with diversity and long historical background, there is bound to be multiplicity of values, interests and beliefs and multiple parties representing them, but parties that undermine the building blocks of this country and its society will not be accepted by the voters. The same fate awaits the Congress, which is now under Rahul Gandhi.

(The writer is National Spokesperson, BJP)