

Speech by Rahul Gandhi

ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE SESSION, JAIPUR

Congress President Sonia Gandhiji, Pradhan Mantri Dr. Manmohan Singhji, Members of the Congress Working Committee, PCC President and Chief Minister of Rajasthan, AICC Members, Delegates of the Chintan Shivir, Friends:

I would like to welcome all of you here and to thank you very much for all the support you have shown to me.

There are a lot of our workers who are not here today. I would also like to thank them for the work they do and for the blood and sweat they give to this Party.

Before I begin, I would like to state that this is a huge honour for me. Over the last 8 years this Party has taught me a tremendous amount. I have learnt from the senior leaders and the youngsters of this party and I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for all the help and direction you have given me.

There are people in South India who would like me to speak in English and there are people in North India and as is the tradition, I will speak in English and then I will speak in Hindi.

In 1947 India was liberated not by arms, but by unleashing the voice of our people. Other countries fought violently. Other countries fought with weapons. Other countries fought with death. India fought with non-violence and with voice.

Everybody told us that it cannot be done. Everybody told us that if you want to get rid of the British you have to use violence. And the Congress Party said no, we are not going to use violence. We are going to use non-violence. And we defeated the

biggest empire of its time and we sent them home. This was energy behind of Freedom Movement. Voices. Millions and millions of our voices.

Gandhiji's successors led by Jawahar Lal Nehru freed the voice of every Indian by ensuring the democracy became the bedrock of our Constitution. Relentlessly championing the voice of every Indian will always be the essence of the Congress Party. And not an Indian of one caste or one religion. I would like to repeat it: every single Indian is going to be supported by the Congress Party. No matter where he is; no matter who he is. If he is Indian, we work for him.

Let's look at the last sixty years of India's successes. They have all come when we gave our people voice. The Green Revolution restored the voice of the farmer. Bank nationalisation restored the voice of the poor in the market for credit. The IT and telecom revolutions literally gave the people voice, millions of people's voice. And if you have a cell phone in your pocket today, it is result of that revolution. And it's an honour that Manmohan Singhji is sitting here because he spearheaded another revolution. In 1991, he unleashed the voice of thousands in the field of entrepreneurship and changed this country forever.

The UPA Government has followed Gandhiji's model. It has created platforms for those denied their voice in the political system. For the first time in our history our people have been guaranteed their basic rights – social and economic rights. The Food Bill will ensure that no mother sees her child go hungry at night; the RTI allows every single Indian to personally take on the battle against corruption; MNREGA has given millions of Indians pride in their work; Right to Education enables every child to aspire to greatness. All of these radical innovations were possible only because of the growth provided by the Congress Party and the UPA.

But there are many challenges ahead. The voices of a billion Indians are today telling us that they want a greater say in government, in politics and in administration. They are telling us that the course of their lives cannot be decided by a handful of people behind closed doors who are not fully accountable to them. They are telling us that India's governmental system is stuck in the past. It has become a system that robs people of their voice, a system that disempowers instead of empowering.

But why are we in this situation? Why is it, I ask you, that our ministries do the work of Panchayats? Why does the Supreme Court handle the load of the lower houses of justice? Why does the Chief Minister need to appoint a teacher? Why are Vice Chancellors chosen by people who are far removed from the education system? No matter what state you look at, no matter which political party you look at why do a handful of people control the entire political space? Power is grossly centralized in our country. We only empower people at the top of a system. We don't believe in empowering people all the way to bottom.

Every single day, I meet people who have tremendous understanding, deep insight and no voice. And all of us meet them. They are everywhere. But almost always they are kept outside our systems. No one can hear their voice. No matter how much they try to speak no one listens. And then I meet people holding high positions with tremendous voice but with no understanding for the issues at hand.

Why does this happen? It happens because we don't respect knowledge. We respect position. And it does not matter how much wisdom you have, if you do not have a position, you mean nothing.

This is the tragedy of India.

Why is our youth angry? Why are they out on the street? They are angry because they are alienated and excluded from the political class. They watch from the sidelines as the powerful drive around in their *lal battis*. Why are the women suffering? Because their voice is being trampled upon by people with arbitrary power over their lives. Why are the poor confined to powerlessness and poverty? Because decisions regarding their lives and the services they need are decided by people far away answerable to them only in theory.

Until we start to respect and empower people for their knowledge and understanding, we can't change anything in this country. All our public systems – administration, justice, education, political systems – all of them are designed to keep people with knowledge out. They are all closed systems. Their design promotes mediocrity and mediocrity dominates discussion while the voices of insight and thought are crushed by the loudness of those who possess neither understanding nor compassion.

Success in these systems does not come through building, it comes by excluding. It comes not by pushing people forward, but by holding people back. Everyday initiative is killed to maintain the status quo. We do not praise our colleagues or look at their strengths. And all of us, every single one of us does it. We won't praise other people. We will ask them "bhaiya, what is your weakness?" We only look at ways to neutralize them. And every single day all of us are faced with the hypocrisy of this system. We all see it. And then we pretend that it is not there. People who are corrupt stand up and talk about eradicating corruption; and then people who disrespect women everyday of their lives talk about women rights.

Until we start to respect and empower people for their knowledge, for their understanding, we are never going to change this country.

We need the *aam aadmi* to participate in our politics. Because even as I speak their future is being decided in closed rooms. There is a young and impatient India and it is demanding a greater voice in the nation's future. Let me tell you that they are not going to watch silently.

Our priorities are clear.

The time has come to question the centralized, unresponsive and unaccountable systems of decision-making in governance, administration and politics. The answer is not that people say we need to run the system better. The answer is not in running these systems better. The answer is to completely transforming these systems.

Yet, I am optimistic.

I am optimistic because we have already put the building blocks of this revolution in place. And to a big degree I would like to thank the Congress President, the Prime Minister and the Congress Party for putting these building blocks in place. Let me tell you what these building blocks are. First of all, India is more connected today than it has ever been. We have the networks of roads, information, communication, people and media for new ideas to emerge, develop and take flight. It is no longer possible to limit an idea whose time has come. *Aadhar* gives us an unprecedented mechanism to recognize the unique journey of aspiration of every single Indian no matter where he is. Direct cash transfer is going to allow us to respond to these dreams with an empowering delivering system. My father used to speak about 15 paise to the rupee reaching the people and we today are preparing the system that is going to answer that question. We are going to answer that question. And 99% of our people's money can go to them. It is a revolution that no other country has done. And we are preparing that revolution. We prepare the revolution and our opponents say that we

are bribing the country. Giving the people their due is now called bribing the country. They say it because they are scared. They understand what Aadhar can do. They understand what cash transfers can do. And most important, they understand what people in the Congress Party, what the thinking in the Congress Party can do. Panchayati Raj and the women's self-help movement have given us the platform to transform our democracy. The balance of power in national decision-making must shift away from Delhi and the state capitals to the last Panchayat and Municipal Ward. The Congress Party must continue to wage a relentless battle to overcome social prejudice and discrimination against women, dalits, minorities and tribals.

I am optimistic because of the buildings blocks. But I am most optimistic and excited because I see the energy, the passion and capability of our youth. We need to respond to their urgent demand for jobs, now. Our institutions of learning and training must respond, first and foremost, to preparing youth at scale for the best jobs in the world. Equally, decisions that matter to creating jobs need to be further liberated from irrational red-tape and outdated laws so that the tremendous energy of India's youth will be fully unleashed.

अब मैं थोड़ा हिन्दी में, संगठन के बारे में बोलना चाहता हूँ। आपने मुझे बहुत बड़ी जिम्मेदारी दी है, और ये एक पार्टी कहलाती है मगर सचमुच में ये एक परिवार है। इस बात को आप मानते हैं की ये हिन्दुस्तान का, शायद दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा परिवार है। और इसमें हिन्दुस्तान के सब लोग अन्दर आ सकते हैं। आपको क्या लगता है? बदलाव की जरूरत है या नहीं? है, तेजी से बदलाव की जरूरत है, मगर सोच समझ कर बदलाव की जरूरत है। और सब को एक साथ लेकर बदलाव की बात करनी है,

और बदलाव लाना है। सोच समझ के करना है, और आप सबकी आवाज़ को सुनकर करना है। मैं पहले Youth Congress का General Secretary हुआ करता था, NSUI का General Secretary हुआ करता था, अब मैं कांग्रेस पार्टी में Vice President हूँ। आपको ये नहीं लगना चाहिये कि राहुल गांधी सिर्फ युवाओं की बात करता है। राहुल गांधी का परिवार Youth Congress, NSUI, Congress Party, Mahila Congress सब हैं और आज से राहुल गांधी सबके लिये काम करेगा। और सबको, मैं एक वायदा करता हूँ की सबको मैं एक ही आँख से देखूंगा। चाहे वो Youth Congress से हो, चाहे वो बुर्जुर्ग हो, चाहे Inexperienced हो, Experienced हो, चाहे वो महिला हो, जो भी हो, जो आप कहेंगे मैं उसे सुनुँगा और समझने की कोशिश करूँगा। राजनीति में, मैं अब 8-9 साल से हूँ और मैं एक बात समझा हूँ, काम करना है, सोच समझ के करना है, गहराई से करना है, और जल्दी से नहीं करना है। बदलाव हो तो लम्बे तौर पर हो और गहराई से हो।

एक दो चीजें मैं आप से कहना चाहता हूँ, बदलाव की बात आपने कही, नियम और कानून की बात मैं कहना चाहता हूँ। कांग्रेस पार्टी एक ऐसा संगठन है, दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा राजनीतिक संगठन है, मगर इसमें नियम और कानून नहीं चलते। शायद एक भी नियम और कानून इस पार्टी में नहीं है। हम हर दो मिनट में नये नियम बनाते हैं और पुराने नियम को दबा देते हैं, और यहां शायद किसी को भी नहीं मालूम कि कांग्रेस पार्टी के

नियम क्या है? मज़ेदार संगठन है। कभी कभी मैं पूछता हूँ अपने आप से, कि भैया ये चलता कैसे है, ये इलेक्शन कैसे जीतता है? ये बाकी पार्टियों को खत्म कैसे कर देता है? समझ नहीं आती है बात। मगर इलेक्शन के बाद, धड़ाक से कांग्रेस पार्टी जीत जाती हैं। वर्कर खड़ा हो गया, नेता खड़े हो गये। शीला जी मुझसे कह रही थी कि भैया पता नहीं क्या होता है, इलेक्शन के पहले सब खड़े हो जाते हैं और धड़ाके से लग जाते हैं। ये गांधी जी का संगठन हैं, इसमें हिन्दुस्तान का DNA भरा हुआ है। बाकी संगठन और जो हमारे विपक्ष के हैं वो समझते नहीं हैं इस बात को, वो देखते हैं और कहते हैं भैया ये हो क्या रहा है? ये क्या कह रहे हैं लोग? कोई कहता है, भैया मैं किसी एक जात की पार्टी हूँ, कोई कहता मैं किसी एक धर्म की पार्टी हूँ और कांग्रेस पार्टी कहती है, भैया हमारा तो DNA हिन्दुस्तान का है। हम ना तो जात पहचानते हैं ना धर्म पहचानते हैं, सिर्फ हिन्दुस्तान का DNA पहचानते हैं। सब के सब है इसमें। तो नियम और कानून की जरूरत है, पहली बात।

दूसरी बात, हम Leadership Development पर फ़ोकस नहीं करते। आज से पाँच-छः साल बाद ऐसी बात होनी चाहिये। अगर किसी स्टेट में हमें Chief Minister की जरूरत हो, तो जैसे पहले फोटो हुआ करती थी कांग्रेस पार्टी की, चालीस फोटो हुआ करती थी। नेहरू, पटेल, आज़ाद जैसे हुआ करते थे, Giants होते थे, उनमें से कोई भी देश का PM बन सकता था। उनमें से कोई भी देश को चला सकता था। सिर्फ प्रदेश को नहीं, देश को चला

सकें, ऐसे 40—50 नेता तैयार करने हैं। हर प्रदेश में हमारे पाँच, छः, सात, दस ऐसे नेता हो जो Chief Minister बन सकें। और हर District में, हर District में ये बात हो, Block में ये बात हो। और अगर कोई हमसे पूछे, भैया कांग्रेस पार्टी क्या करती है, कांग्रेस पार्टी हिन्दुस्तान के भविष्य के लिये नेता तैयार करती है। कांग्रेस पार्टी सेक्यूलर नेता, ऐसे नेता जो गहराई से हिन्दुस्तान को समझते हैं। जो जनता से जुड़े हुये, वैसे नेता तैयार करती है। ऐसे नेता तैयार करती है, जिनको हिन्दुस्तान के सब लोग देखकर कहते हैं भैया हम इनके पीछे खड़े होना चाहते हैं। तो Leadership Development की जरूरत है और इसके लिये ढाँचे की जरूरत है, System की जरूरत है, Information की जरूरत है। क्योंकि यहां पर, जो नहीं होता है, इसलिये नहीं होता है कि कोई चाहता नहीं। इसलिये नहीं होता है क्योंकि सिस्टम नहीं है, और सिस्टम बनाया जा सकता है और इस सिस्टम को आप लोग बनाओगे और आप लोग चलाओगे।

हम टिकट की बात करते हैं। ज़मीन पर हमारा कार्यकर्ता काम करता है, यहाँ हमारे District President बैठे हैं, Block President हैं, Block Committee हैं, District Committee हैं, उनसे पूछा नहीं जाता है। यहां District President हैं? हैं। टिकट के समय उनसे नहीं पूछा जाता, संगठन से नहीं पूछा जाता, ऊपर से Decision लिया जाता है भैया, इसको टिकट मिलना चाहिये। होता क्या है? दूसरे दल के लोग आ जाते हैं, चुनाव के पहले आ जाते हैं, आ जाते हैं, चुनाव हार जाते हैं और फिर चले जाते हैं, और हमारा कार्यकर्ता

कहता है भैया, वो ऊपर देखता है, चुनाव से पहले पैराशूट गिरता है, धडाक, नेता आता हैं, दूसरी पार्टी से आता हैं, चुनाव लड़ता हैं फिर हवाईजहाज में उड़कर चला जाता है, ये बदलना है। सबसे पहले कांग्रेस पार्टी के कार्यकर्ता की इज्जत होनी चाहिये। और सिर्फ और सिर्फ कार्यकर्ता की इज्जत नहीं और सिर्फ कार्यकर्ता की इज्जत नहीं, नेताओं की इज्जत। नेताओं की इज्जत का मतलब क्या है कि अगर नेताओं ने अच्छा काम किया है, अगर नेता जनता के लिये काम कर रहा है, चाहे वो जूनियर हो या सीनियर नेता हो, जितना भी छोटा हो, जितना भी बड़ा हो अगर वो काम कर रहा है तो उसे आगे बढ़ाना चाहिये। अगर वो काम नहीं कर रहा है, अगर वो काम नहीं कर रहा है, तो उसको कहना चाहिये भैया आप काम नहीं कर रहे हो, और दो-तीन बार कहने के बाद काम नहीं करें तो दूसरे को Chance देना चाहिये।

और अंत में, जो हमारे ही लोग हमारे खिलाफ खड़े हो जाते हैं। चुनाव के समय Independent खड़े हो जाते हैं, जो Independents को खड़ा कर देते हैं, उनके खिलाफ Action लेने की जरूरत है। आप सभी ये चीजें जानते हैं। मैं भी जानता हूँ। सब लोग जानते हैं। कमी Implementation में है, और हम Implementation अगर मिलके करेंगे। यहां पर, ज्ञान है, जानकारी है, हम ये काम कर सकते हैं। और जिस दिन हमने ये काम कर दिया, हमारे सामने कोई नहीं खड़ा रह पायेगा। जिस दिन जनता की आवाज़ कांग्रेस पार्टी के अन्दर गुंजने लगी, आज गुंजती है, गुंजती है, बाकियों से ज्यादा

गुंजती है। मगर जिस दिन गहराई गुंजे लेंगे, जिस दिन पंचायत, वार्ड के लोग यहां आ कर बैठ जायेंगे उस दिन हमें कोई नही हरा पायेगा। और होगा क्या? कि जो आज, हमारे अन्दर कभी-कभी गुस्सा आता है, दुख होता है, Frustration आती है, वो भी कम हो जायेगी। मुस्कराहट आ जायेगी, लोग कहेंगे भैया मज़ा आ रहा है, अब जाते हैं विपक्षी पार्टियों को हराते हैं। मजे से लड़ेंगे, मजे से जीतेंगे।

मैं पिछले आठ साल से यहाँ काम कर रहा हूँ। और मैंने आपसे कहा कि आपने मुझे सिखाया। सीनियर नेता बैठे हैं। कल मैंने, ओला जी का भाषण सुना, कितनी गहरी बात बोली उन्होंने और युवा भी बैठे थे, उन्होंने भी गहरी बात बोली। चिदम्बरम जी थे, एन्टनी जी थे, उन्होंने गहरी बात बोली, यहाँ पर Capability की कोई कमी नहीं है। गहराई की कोई कमी नहीं है। जिस प्रकार ये पार्टी सोचती है, जितनी Depth इस पार्टी में है, कहीं और नहीं है, पार्लियामेन्ट में दिखता है, सब जगह दिखता है। और मैं आपको ये बताना चाहता हूँ कि मैं सब कुछ नहीं जानता हूँ। दुनिया में ऐसा कोई व्यक्ति नहीं है जो सब कुछ जानता है। मगर अगर आपसे पूछा, कांग्रेस पार्टी में करोड़ों लोग हैं, कहीं न कहीं जानकारी जरूर है, मैं आपसे ये कहना चाहता हूँ कि मैं उस जानकारी को ढूँँगा। सीनियर नेताओं से पूछूँगा, भीला जी बैठे हैं, गहलोत जी बैठे हैं, अल्वी जी बैठे हैं बहुत सारे लोग हैं सबके नाम नहीं ले सकता हूँ, मगर मैं आपसे पूछूँगा, आपसे सीखूँगा। क्योंकि इस पार्टी का इतिहास, आपके अंदर है। इस पार्टी की

सोच, आपके अंदर हैं। और मैं सिर्फ आपकी आवाज को आगे बढ़ाऊँगा। जो सुनाई देगा वो मैं आगे बढ़ाऊँगा, और Fairness की बात होती है, कल मैंने Meeting में कहा, हर कचहरी में दो लोग होते हैं, Lawyer होता है, Judge होता है, मैं Judge का काम करूँगा Lawyer का काम नहीं करूँगा।

अब मैं वापस अंग्रेजी में बोलना चाहता हूँ तो थोड़ा मैं आपको, अब Emotional बात कहना चाहता हूँ, दिल की बात कहना चाहता हूँ।

This morning I got up at 4 a.m. and went to the balcony. I thought now you have a big responsibility in front of you and people are standing behind you, people are standing on your side. It was dark and it was cold. I decided I was not going to tell you only what you wanted to hear. I decided I was going to tell you a little bit about what I feel. I want to tell you about Hope and I want to tell you about Power.

When I was a little boy I loved to play badminton. I loved it because it gave me balance in a complicated world. I was taught how to play, in my grandmother's house, by two of the policemen who protected my grandmother. They were my friends. Then one day they killed my grandmother and took away the balance in my life.

I felt pain like I had never felt before. My father was in Bengal and he came back. The hospital was dark, green and dirty. There was a huge screaming crowd outside as I entered. It was the first time in my life that I saw my father crying. He was the bravest person I knew and yet I saw him cry. I could see that he too was broken.

In those days our country was not what it is today. In the eyes of the world we had nothing. We were seen as worthless. We didn't have money; we didn't have cars. Everybody said that we were a poor country. Nobody thought about us.

That same evening I saw my father address the nation on television. I knew, like me, he was broken inside. I knew, like me, he was terrified of what lay in front of him. Then as he spoke on that dark night I felt a small glimmer of hope. It was like a small ray of light in a dark sky. I can still remember what it felt like. The next day I realized that many people had seen it too.

Today as I look back – I have a political career of 8 years and I am 42 years old – I can see that it was that small ray of hope in the darkness that helped change India into what it is today. Without hope you cannot achieve anything. You can have plans, you can have ideas, but unless you have hope, you cannot change things; you cannot move things the size of India.

Now I want to talk to you about Power.

Last night everyone congratulated me. Many of you came and hugged me and congratulated me. Everybody congratulated me. But last night my mother came to my room and she sat with me and she cried. Why did she cry? She cried because she understands that the power so many seek is actually a poison. She can see it because of what it does to the people around her and the people they love. But most importantly she can see it because she is not attached to it. The only antidote to this poison is for all of us to see it for what it really is and not become attached to it. We should not chase power for the attributes of power. We should only use it to empower the voiceless. In our work – it is my mother's experience of a lifetime, it is my experience of 8 years and I am sure many of you here who deal with power

everyday and understand what I am saying and realize the positive and the negative. We mustn't forget that there is negative and that you have to be very careful when you are going to administer power and when you use power.

Today India is not like it was in 1984. We are no longer seen as worthless. Today the entire world is courting us. Today we are the future. And as I said before, nations are not built on schemes and plans. They are raised on a foundation of hope. I am standing here because I believe that the Congress Party is a symbol of this hope and has the potential to embody it. I'd like to end again by saying that for me the Congress Party is now my life. The people of India are my life. And I will fight for the people of India and for this Party. I will fight with everything I have. And I invite all of you to stand up and take on this fight.

Thank you.