

## Speech by Shri Rahul Gandhi

**Programme on the occasion of Presentation of Certificate to the Newly Elected Congress President at All India Congress Committee, 24 Akbar Road, New Delhi 110011**

Smt. Sonia Gandhi Ji,  
Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji,  
Motilal Vora Ji,  
Janardan Dwivedi Ji,  
Mullapally Ramachandran Ji,  
Madhusudan Mistry Ji,  
Bhubneshwar Kalita Ji,

कांग्रेस पार्टी के हमारे सब नेता और करोड़ों कार्यकर्ता – आप सबका मैं दिल से बहुत बहुत स्वागत करता हूँ।

Like many Indians across the country, I am an idealist. I joined politics thirteen years ago because of my profound belief in this country, its people and its path ahead. I travelled constantly over the past years and have had the fortune to speak to many of you and like me you are also idealists.

However, many of us are disillusioned today by the politics of our times. Because what we see before us is a politics devoid of kindness and truth. Politics belongs to the people, it is their greatest weapon in dismantling the structures that oppress, silence and disempower them.

But today, politics is not being used in the service of the people, it is being used to crush them, not to lift them up.

When I joined politics as a 34 year old, I came into this world having watched the generation before me fight the structures of oppression, the structures whose very fuel is lies and silence.

When I entered politics 13 years ago I wished to be a part of the awakening that would transform India at home, by ensuring dignity for all its people, and in the world, where we would step into a role that resonated globally.

Early on, I learned that the moment you challenge the structures of power to stand with the weak, the moment you announce that you stand for the poor, you are attacked and in order to defeat you,

they hit you on all fronts. They lie and they distort. Those in power in India today are shaped by the very structures that keep India poor.

The Congress took India into the 21st century while the Prime Minister today is taking us backwards, to a medieval past where people are butchered because of who they are, beaten for what they believe and killed for what they eat.

This ugly violence shames us in the world. Our country, whose philosophy and history is born out of love and compassion, is tarnished by such horror and no amount of hugs can repair the damage done to this great country of ours.

This vision belongs to a time where people did not have the rights and freedoms that have made our country the profound entity it is – a time when people did not have voice, did not have the right to dissent, to disagree, to differ, to be.

We are now being compelled to imagine that businesses can be built without harmony, that only one man, one man himself – is the voice of reason, that expertise, experience and knowledge can be cast aside for personal glory, that it is acceptable for our foreign policy to lie in tatters so that one man can feel strong, and that everything in fact is subservient to the leader's personal image.

These regressive forces don't win because they are right, they do not win because they stand on the side of what is correct, they win because they are powerful.

Their power is manipulative and distortive and it stains everything it touches.

But I have realised over the last few years is that they attack the Congress and try to weaken us but they can only defeat us if we back down. Stand up to them - and their anger and hatred makes all of you and us stronger.

We, in the Congress, will never back down and away from our promise to our country and our beloved people: our commitment to India's past, its present and its future will stand today and evermore.

And our commitment is this: we will defend the voice of every single Indian. We will never allow the democratic dreams and longings of our people, not one of them, to ever be silenced.

In this, I and all Congressmen and women, those who stand before us today and those who will rise in the times to come, will always stand strong.

I want the Congress Party to become an instrument for dialogue between Indian people – all of us, from all corners of our great country, all religions, all ethnicities, all ages, genders and people – and for our dialogue to always be lead by love and affection.

थोड़ा सा अब मैं हिन्दी में बोलना चाहता हूँ। देखिए आपके सामने उदाहरण है, एक बार आग लग जाती है तो उसे बुझाना बहुत मुश्किल होता है। यही हम बीजेपी के लोगों को समझाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं। एक बार आपने देश में आग लगा दी, उसको बुझाना बहुत मुश्किल होता है।

आज बीजेपी के लोग पूरे देश में आग और हिंसा को फैलाने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं और इसको रोकने के लिए हम लोग देश में सिर्फ एक शक्ति है – वो है कांग्रेस पार्टी का प्यारा कार्यकर्ता और नेता। वो तोड़ते है, हम जोड़ते है। वो आग लगाते हैं, हम बुझाते हैं। वो गुस्सा करते हैं, हम प्यार करते हैं। ये फर्क है – उनमें और हममें। और, मैं कांग्रेस कार्यकर्ताओं को और नेताओं को आज आश्वासन देना चाहता हूँ, आप सब मेरा परिवार हो और आप सब, चाहे आप युवा हो, या बुजुर्ग हो, कहीं से भी हो, आप सब मेरे हो, और मैं आप सबको अपना पूरा प्यार, दिल से पूरा प्यार दूंगा।

देश के युवाओं से मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि ये हिंदुस्तान की, जैसे द्विवेदी जी ने कहा Grand Old Party हैं, मगर आने वाले समय में हम इसे हिंदुस्तान की Grand Old and Young Party बनाने जा रहे हैं और मैं आपको, सब युवाओं को, चाहे आप कोई भी हो, मैं आपको एक invitation देता हूँ – आप आइए, एक प्यार का, भाईचारे का हिंदुस्तान एक साथ बनाएंगे। क्रोध की, गुस्से की राजनीति से हम लड़ेंगे और उनको हराएंगे।

मगर मेरे लिए कांग्रेस पार्टी का जो कार्यकर्ता हैं, जो पार्टी की विचारधाराओं को अपने खून पसीने से देश के हर गांव, हर शहर तक पहुंचाता हैं, संगठन में उसकी रक्षा करना मेरी जिम्मेदारी है। और, मैं आपको आश्वासन देना चाहता हूँ कि आने वाली कांग्रेस पार्टी में आपकी आवाज पूरे हिंदुस्तान में सुनाई देगी और उसको हम सुनेंगे।

The Congress is an ancient idea.

The BJP would have you believe that they are the oldest idea in the universe. As usual, that is not the truth. In India there are two ideas that have historically clashed: the idea of the self versus the idea of the other. The BJP are soldiers fighting for the self: How much can they have? How can they protect their power? And how can they stop others from taking what they think is theirs?

We, the Congress, have always been guided in service of our community of brothers and sisters. We fight for everyone, for all those in the periphery, all those relegated to the fringes.

We fight for those who cannot fight alone and our struggle has always been one of brotherhood and of love. This defence of our fellow man was the spirit of the freedom movement and it remains the lifeblood of our party today.

We consider the BJP our brothers and sisters, even though we do not agree with them. They want an India free of Congress, they want to erase us but the Congress's inclusion and respect for all Indians extends even to the BJP. We do not fight hate with hate.

The Congress has met and will always meet our challenges and struggles with love and affection. They crush voice, we allow the most vulnerable to sing. They defame, we respect and defend. They might control the structures of power, the machinery of silence and fear but, we in the Congress, we are the bastion of the people. It is in this service that my idealism, your idealism and our hope for politics always rests.

In the 13 years that I have served in politics, I have had the honour of listening and learning from my elders, Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji, Congress President Sonia Gandhi Ji and others on the stage and my friends who have shown India democracy with dignity. Thank you for your lessons and your guidance.

I am humbled by all the people who have stood here before me, not only those in the position of Congress President, but all Congress workers and leaders who have fought and died for our beautiful country. It is with the utmost humility, the deepest humility that I accept this position, knowing that I will always be walking in the shadow of giants.

**Thank you**