

## **RESOLUTION FOR 125 YEARS OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS**

On 28<sup>th</sup> December, Indian National Congress will complete 125 years of its foundation. This Plenary Session is a historic landmark in our journey as one of the oldest democratic movements of the world. It is an inspirational moment not only for millions of Congress men and women, but for all those across the world who believe in human dignity and freedom and for those who subscribe to the right of free expression and in the power of free choice. 125th Anniversary is an occasion to reflect on our glorious past, to rejoice in our achievements and to ponder and introspect on the challenges which remain.

The Indian National Congress had a humble beginning when 72 eminent persons gathered at Gowalia Tank in Mumbai, fired by a common ambition of liberating India from the shackles of colonial bondage. This Plenary Session is an occasion to salute all the stalwarts who laid the foundations of the Indian National Congress.

The Congress has always represented the spirit of India and its unique moral universe which has provided sustenance to our people in times of prosperity and courage and strength in times of adversity.

The arrival of Gandhi from South Africa and his courageous struggle against apartheid galvanized the people of India. His philosophy of Satyagraha became the mantra of India's freedom struggle. The Congress Party feels truly privileged that our guiding principles and ideology are founded on the values espoused by him, which have an enduring relevance not just for the people of India but for the entire world. Mahatma Gandhi swayed millions with the simplicity of his message demonstrating through example, his courage, compassion and humanism. Inspired by his values and philosophy, Congress spread to distant corners of the country, embracing all people, cutting across the divide of caste, class, creed or language, by converting it into the biggest mass movement in the democratic world.

The dawn of independence brought several painful challenges in its wake. The unity of our nation, torn by partition, conflagrated by strife and violence, was severely tested. The historic embrace of democracy at a time when a vast majority of our people were steeped in ignorance, hunger and poverty, personified the conviction of our leaders. It is our shared legacy and an enduring strength of our nation and it is our collective duty to nurture it and strengthen our secular democracy. This Plenary Session reaffirms its commitment to nurture and strengthen the traditions of secular democracy.

In India's early days of freedom, Bapu was snatched away by forces of violence and communalism – ironically the very forces which he stood up against. India was fortunate to have veterans of national movement in Pandit Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Govind Ballabh Pant, Babu Jagjiwan Ram who gave us strength in moments of shock and grief.

We recall with gratitude the remarkable contribution of Pandit Nehru who is remembered as a visionary builder of institutions. He was the architect of our planned economy and laid the foundations of India's industrialization, led by the public sector and the commanding heights of our economy. He engendered in us a scientific temper and built institutions of excellence which have stood us in good stead. He was a global statesman and his world view commanded respect amongst the leaders of his times. He was a principal architect of the Non Aligned Movement which played a significant role in shaping the global political and economic discourse.

Indira Gandhi continued the legacy of Pandit Nehru combining his idealism with a firm pragmatism which enabled her to take tough decisions in the interest of the nation. A socialist at heart, she had the courage to take bold decisions in abolition of privy purses and bank nationalization. She stood for the cause of the weak, down-trodden, dalits, tribals and women. Her concern for the poor was manifested in her call for poverty eradication – *Garibi Hatao*. She ensured India's self-reliance by ushering in the Green revolution and gave a strong thrust to the development of high technology. Rajiv Gandhi assumed office as Prime Minister in a tragic backdrop and gave a vision in preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the same time, he was a firm believer in devolution of power and strengthening village institutions and introduced historic legislation for local self-governance and empowerment of women. His vision was reflected in his legislative agenda which saw the reservation of one-third seats for women in *Panchayats* and Nagar Palikas. He was a firm believer in the power of youth to act as an agent of change and gave them the right to vote at the age of 18.

India thereafter also saw a period where peripheral forces and political parties with a divisive agenda combined to influence the national political discourse. Congress lost substantial support base in its traditional bastions and workers were demoralized, looking for direction. Our detractors predicted the demise of Congress when India needed it the most.

It was during this difficult period that Smt. Sonia Gandhi was elected President of the Party. She accepted the challenge of rebuilding and reinvigorating the Congress, preparing it to counter the rise of communal forces. Her leadership enthused the rank and file of the Party and galvanized it to regain the confidence of the people.

The people of India sagaciously reposed their faith in the ideology of Congress and mandate was given in two successive elections to Congress led coalition of progressive secular parties to keep communal forces in check. In 2004, we had made a commitment to our people to be the custodians of trust of the *aam admi* and which has been mirrored in the policies and legislations of this period. An inclusive social agenda has been at the core of our growth paradigm which has ensured a silent transformation in the rural hinterland.

The youth of India mirror our hopes and aspirations for the future and it is important to enthuse the young men and women to embrace the ideology of Congress which has become synonymous with the idea of India. This will rejuvenate and reinvigorate our great old party and enable it to retain its pristine character forever.

AICC recalls the message of Shri Rajiv Gandhi on the occasion of the Congress Centenary in Mumbai when he exhorted us to revitalize the organization as no other party has the capacity of defending the unity and integrity of the country. He, however, cautioned against power broker and vested interest which seek to destabilize the Party. His wise counsel urged us to create a mass movement which will reconnect the Party with the people of India and truly empowering them.

We believe that the task of building India remains an unfulfilled mission. The dreams of our founding fathers will only be fulfilled when the fruits of development reach the poorest of the poor, when the darkness of ignorance is dispelled from the country, when harmonious co-existence becomes a way of life, when all citizens are equal partners in progress.

As we conclude our year-long commemoration, we are reminded of the powerful words of the Father of Nation.

*"I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class or low class of people; an India in which all communities live in perfect harmony... Women will enjoy the same rights as men. We shall be at peace with all the rest of the world. This is the India of my dreams".*

This Plenary Session rededicates itself to building India of Mahatma Gandhi's dreams.

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