

Political Resolution

Political Evolution

The Indian National Congress has been the platform for the national freedom struggle, a torch-bearer for secular politics and an instrument for unifying the divergent forces in the country. It has also been the institution which laid the strong foundations for parliamentary democracy.

Mahatma Gandhi in his speech to a meeting of the All India Congress Committee in November 1947 described the Indian National Congress saying

“Congress is of Indians, of all those who inhabit this land, whether they are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs or Parsis.”

His words still ring true almost sixty five years later at the plenary session celebrating 125 years of the founding of our Party.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru translated Independence for the country into freedom for her people. He built the modern nationhood of India on the four pillars of Democracy, Secularism, Socialism and Nonalignment. India under his leadership emerged as the exemplar for all humanity of unity based on the celebration of diversity.

Indira Gandhi galvanized the Party, with a slogan ‘Garibi Hatao’ establishing an integral and dynamic link with the downtrodden, the under-privileged and the poorest of the poor, giving fresh impetus to growth with social justice, combining industrialization, technological development, agriculture and self-reliance with innovative programmes of poverty alleviation and prioritization of the poor in planning.

Rajiv Gandhi, with his rousing call of “Power to the People” and “Maximum Democracy, Maximum Devolution”, ushered in a constitutional revolution to empower grassroots institutions of local self-government in both rural and urban India, imparting a new vision for 21st century India in which technology of the highest order would be harnessed to meeting the needs of the most needy.

Smt. Sonia Gandhi in her address at the 10th Indira Gandhi Conference 2010, stated:

“The issue of fairness is important in any democratic society. The broad mass of people must believe in the fairness of the system, if it is to survive.”

As the Indian National Congress, we rededicate ourselves to this great cause. The Congress led the Freedom Movement; for the better part of half a century, it was the natural party of governance. Subsequently, the Congress has shown itself adept at adjusting to the ground realities of coalition politics. The Congress remains dedicated to restoring the primacy of the Party at the Centre and in all States so that without let or hindrance it can carry the nation forward to the noble goals espoused by those who sacrificed their all for the liberation of the nation and then laid the foundations of the restoration of India to its historical place in the vanguard of the advancement of human civilization.

Political Mandate

When the people of India voted in 2004 and 2009, it was clear that they had voted for a government led by the Indian National Congress, for its policies of development, inclusion and social justice. It was very simply a mandate to work selflessly for our people – for the disadvantaged and the discriminated and above all for the “aam aadmi”.

Desperate attempts are being made by forces inimical to the fundamental tenets of our nationhood to undermine parliamentary institutions and substitute democratic debate by the politics of insinuation and scandal-mongering, all with the aim of subverting our essential secularism and diverting the minds of the people from the key tasks of nation-building. The Indian National Congress will stand firm against these nefarious attempts to erode the institutions of our democracy, bring down the pillars of our nationhood and foster the disintegration of our country. The need of the hour is to restore trust and the highest of values in politics in this country – to give people hope once again that politics is and always should be about serving

the public. We commit ourselves to resurrecting such public faith. The Indian National Congress is proud and honoured to lead a government that gives India the strength and confidence to lead both at home and abroad.

UPA I was supported amongst others by the parties of the Left Front. They subsequently withdrew support and thereafter have been working in tandem with the BJP in opposing the Congress and the UPA. A number of regional parties as well, the TDP, JD (U) and the BJD continue to work in collaboration with the BJP in opposing the Congress and its allies in the UPA.

In fact, the BJP has led the disruption of the Sixth Session of the 15th Lok Sabha in complete disregard of their duty under the Constitution and their obligations to the public and the nation. Parliamentary propriety has been usurped. This does not speak well of our mature democracy. As a country we cannot be led to self-destruction, where political parties seek to undermine the institutions of our democracy built over decades. The Congress Party urges the people of the country to understand the malicious designs of the opposition parties.

The commitment of the Indian National Congress is first and foremost be to our nation and its people. It is the solemn duty of every Congressman to raise their voice on behalf of the people by empathising proactively with their concerns to ensure that their faith in democracy and the party is sustained and strengthened. As vested political interests seek to malign our institutions the Congress Party affirms that it shall protect the institutions of democracy, including the office of the Prime Minister, and will not allow them to be denigrated by anyone. We must ensure that we strengthen the party organisation to continue to reflect a political will to craft both its own future and that of the country, much like it did during the freedom struggle and the decades that followed. In states like West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura the Indian National Congress emphatically rejects all attempts to perpetrate a cycle of violence for political and /or electoral advantages by political parties.

Indian National Congress is alarmed about the increased instances of attempts to control and capture areas and zones by violent means and intimidation. Politics based on 'capture' and 'recapture' of areas and attempts to create 'safe zones' by violence and physical intimidation against political opponents and general masses of population must be defeated. The primacy of Rule of Law and the Fundamental Right of Equality must be upheld under all circumstance. Moreover, coerced displacement of people from their political persuasion and belief cannot be allowed. Indian National Congress condemns this politics of violence.

Congress Resurgence

The Indian National Congress is the only party in India that has a history inextricably linked with the birth of our nation. It was founded on the very same principles of inclusiveness and diversity on which India itself was created – ours is a history that is unique and today our appeal to every Indian continues to be unique.

The freedom movement of impoverished farmers, artisans, students and others was led by dedicated leaders such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gandhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Sarojini Naidu, Dr. B.R Ambedkar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachary, Kamrajar and many other eminent individuals. Our freedom fighters worked hard to give India not only political freedom, but also freedom from hunger, destitution and poverty. They created genuine democracy, based on free and equal citizenship, with a uniquely Indian character. Self-sacrifice and renunciation have always been, and will continue to be, for our leaders and our workers, the national ethos that we shall strive to preserve.

Jawaharlal Nehru implemented the true spirit of the Indian Constitution and laid the foundation of our democracy by ensuring universal adult franchise, equal fundamental rights for all citizens irrespective of caste, gender or economic status. He also encouraged a free press, an independent judiciary and created high quality educational institutions that have over the years come to be respected the world over.

Following on the work of Jawaharlal Nehru, we had eminent people such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi who have built on the strong foundation to ensure that India makes social and economic progress. With such an extraordinary history, we are now fortunate that we have Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to lead the government, with the full support and guidance of the Congress President Sonia Gandhi. Under their guidance and leadership, it is a collective responsibility on all of us to strive to

ensure that the ‘aam aadmi’ is able to reap the benefits of social and economic progress of India in the years to come.

At the centenary celebrations of the Congress Party in 1985, Rajiv Gandhi said:

“As the Congress celebrates its centenary, we should remember that for nearly two-thirds of the period it was a party of struggle. Its toil and sacrifices in the years of struggle earned for the Congress the trust of the people of India”.

Echoing his sentiments a quarter century later, Congress President Sonia Gandhi in her address to the Congress Parliamentary Party on the 13th of December, 2010, stated:

“Our party has faced tremendous challenges in its long history of 125 years and yet it has never lacked in courage and determination to rebuild itself. We will most certainly do that wherever is necessary.”

The effective leadership of the nation has meant that our Party has a broader vision that is pan-national – Congress cannot join the politics of regionalism. However, we should identify, address regional issues to ensure that the sense of alienation is not felt by the people of the region.

We have been in opposition in certain States for a very long period and this has meant a shift in the power dynamics on the ground where our party workers are demoralized. It is imperative for us to emphasize in no uncertain terms that ours is a national vision that can and must be realized through concrete local action by party workers in every region of India. The necessity of coalition politics at the central level does not prevent our state-level workers from hoping and dreaming of a larger political space wherever they may be and we as a party must be cognisant and supportive of their aspirations. Every Congress worker and state party unit has a responsibility to strengthen the organizational base of the party.

While acknowledging that the horizon of expectation is gradually changing our Party will set the organization to match aspirations with reality. Wherever the Congress Party has a deficit of goodwill, it will identify challenges and take corrective action to build leadership at all levels to stand up to challenges that are facing the country, with renewed energy and vigour.

Probity in Public Life

The Indian National Congress has always stood for probity and transparency in public life. In order to realise the dream of a transparent and clean government for every citizen, the UPA government passed the historic Right to Information Act. This is one of the major instrumentalities to make the Government transparent, free from corruption, and to empower the citizens.

The Congress has never hesitated in taking firm and prompt action even on the shadow of doubt, securing resignations of chief ministers and senior ministers without waiting for findings of inquiries and investigations. Maintaining credibility with the people has remained an article of faith for the Congress. The government has always been prepared for a reasoned debate in the parliament.

By contrast, BJP and its new found allies have done exactly the opposite. It may be recalled that while being in government whether at the centre or in the states, after the shameful findings of the Kargil scam and taped revelations of murky defence purchases, putting national security at risk and bringing the country to shame, the BJP refused to act and in fact rehabilitated the then defence minister before even the completion of inquiry.

The BJP has a history of double standards and double speak on issues of serious corruption involving senior most leadership and occupants of highest offices including those of chief ministers and ministers. It has remained in a state of denial or stubbornly sought to divert attention by raising bogeys and indulging in political theatrics. In shamelessly putting up a defence of corruption in BJP governed states and stubbornly protecting the Chief Minister of Karnataka and others accused of plundering national resources, BJP has demonstrated its moral bankruptcy and political hypocrisy; so too parties like the CPI(M) and others who have actively indulged in corruption in the states under their rule. Shrill messaging cannot overtake the place of concrete action and Congress units across the country should take up cudgels against corruption.

The Indian National Congress reaffirms the trust reposed in it by the people of the country.

Administrative and Political Reforms

The Indian National Congress is a party that belongs to the “aam aadmi” and believes that strengthening governance is an essential precondition to improving the lives of the poor. Whenever the power of the state is abused, or exercised in weak or improper ways, those with the least power in the society – the poor- are most likely to suffer. Poor governance generates and reinforces poverty and subverts efforts to reduce it. Governance today requires a new vehicle - our archaic system of administration needs to be replaced in order that the political mandate of the people is effectively implemented by us without any hindrance. The Administrative Reforms Commission was established under the auspices of the UPA I government and the relevance of its reports has only increased under the UPA II regime.

Accountability and transparency has been ushered in by the path-breaking Right to Information Act by empowering citizens in far-flung corners of the land to enquire into the functioning of union and state agencies, local governments and even societies and trusts which receive public funds.

The political system must continuously respond to the challenges of governance and the UPA I Government had launched several significant initiatives with this objective in mind. Political reforms such as electoral funding, reforms promoting transparency and fairness and creating tax incentives to donors, disclosure of antecedents of candidates contesting for public office are some of the measures that have resulted in cleaning up the system. Rajiv Gandhi ushered in an era of radical measure like the Anti Defection Act which sought to halt illegal activities of the elected representatives from crossing the floor. It is unfortunate that the main Opposition Party in our country today has given an open call to MLAs belonging to other parties to cross the floor and various methods have been adopted to defeat the very purpose of the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution on anti defection. The BJP has unleashed a flood of corruption in the political arena just to grab power. This needs to be halted with a firm hand, with political parties introspecting and engaging in comprehensive electoral reform

An efficient legal and judicial system which delivers quick and quality justice reinforces the confidence of people in the rule of law, facilitates investment and production of wealth, enables better distributive justice, promotes basic human rights and enhances accountability and democratic governance. The right to Justice as enshrined in Article 39A must be acted upon. The Judicial reform process instituted by UPA II is well under way; this will ensure not only the speedy disposal of cases in the courts but a robust infrastructure at the level of subordinate courts to meet future demand in a time-bound manner.

Internal Security

The nation today faces serious challenges to its internal security – the safety and security of its citizens in every part of India remains the first priority of the Indian National Congress and of the governments it leads.

Terrorism, insurgency and Left-wing extremism are grave threats. The Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, has spelt out the Government’s policy: though law and order is primarily a State subject, it is necessary to ensure sustained coordination between the Centre and States both in matters of overall strategy as well as regular operational issues. The Indian National Congress compliments the Government for its vigilant and effective action that has prevented major terrorist attacks on Indian soil, save one incident each in Pune and Varanasi, in the two year period after the dastardly attack of 26/11. Government has also tackled cross-border terrorism in an effective manner.

In dealing with Left-wing extremism we must combine firm action to restore civilian administration with a surge in people-oriented and environment-friendly developmental activity, founded on inclusive governance in the affected areas. The Constitution of India casts on the Union Government special responsibilities for the administration and development of the Fifth Schedule tribal areas. A whole raft of legislation, including in particular the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, [PESA], have charted the route to inclusive development through inclusive governance in tribal areas. Yet, these areas have lagged far behind the rest of the country, principally because in practice they have been denied their rights and entitlements. The status quo needs to be changed immediately. Traditional livelihoods of tribal populations must not be disrupted without making available alternative means of livelihood. Development work at the grassroots should fall within the domain of the tribal communities themselves, in conformity with the Constitution and special legislation enacted in this behalf, and other development work should take place only in consultation with tribal gram sabhas and after ensuring that tribal populations receive adequate compensation for any displacement or environmental loss, as well as ensuring for displaced persons and

communities a continuing stake in the benefits flowing from such developmental activity. Legal awareness must be increased; access to welfare programmes must be guaranteed; and the tribal people must be empowered through their own institutions of governance and capacity building to enhance their effectiveness in running them.

The role of religious fundamentalist organizations in challenging the security of the nation can no longer be ignored. The Indian National Congress calls upon the government to tackle this menace in the strongest possible manner and investigate links between terrorists and the RSS and its sister organizations that have been uncovered in some recent cases. Terrorism from wherever it comes and whatever form it takes must be dealt with firmly and effectively.

Since 'police' and 'law and order' are State subjects, State police forces need to be strengthened. Police reforms are an imperative and there is already a blue print for such reforms. States should take immediate measures to fill vacancies in the police force, develop adequate incentive packages for difficult postings, and ensure that the police force is well-paid, well-clothed, well-housed, well-trained and well-equipped to discharge its onerous responsibilities.

Jammu and Kashmir

The Indian National Congress thanks the people of Jammu and Kashmir for displaying exemplary courage and commitment to the principles of democracy and choosing their government in the Assembly elections of 2008 with a record voter turnout of 57%.

After a period of relative peace, there was an unfortunate phase of street protests and stone throwing between June and September 2010. We grieve the loss of innocent young lives and pledge ourselves to fostering peaceful democratic dissent, limiting lethal security action to only those who challenge the State with violence. We urge the State government to make up for years of lost development in Jammu and Kashmir and bring back its people, especially the youth, into the fold of progress, prosperity and self-governance. The Indian National Congress endorses the Government's policy to search for a political solution and a permanent and just settlement of all outstanding issues that protects the honour, dignity and participation of all sections of society and all regions within that State. It is of key importance that the search for such solutions embraces also the need to empower the people through their own institutions of local self-government so that it is not only the State government but also the people of the State who will enjoy the maximum degree of autonomy that might be devolved upon them.

A new generation is asserting itself in Jammu and Kashmir. This generation has lofty aspirations and high expectations. Besides an assertion of identity, this generation also wants education, jobs, economic development and, above all, participation in the processes of governance. It seeks, like youth everywhere in the country, a decisive voice in determining its own destiny and that of the nation. Hence, the search for a political solution must go hand in hand with economic development and inclusive growth through inclusive governance.

Jammu and Kashmir being an integral part of India, the Indian National Congress urges the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir to give peace a chance. It is our hope that the sustained and uninterrupted dialogue that has been started will find a solution within the framework of India's democratic and federal political system.

The North East

The North Eastern States are an integral part of the rich social and cultural heritage of India. For many years, the lives of the people in the North Eastern States were engulfed in a cycle of violence and uncertainty. In the last two years, peace has returned to these States in substantial measure. Congress party reiterates the protection of the territorial integrity enshrined in the Constitution of India including Arunachal Pradesh. The development will be taken forward in these regions with greater vigour.

The Indian National Congress is happy to note that almost all insurgent groups are now in talks with Government-appointed interlocutors. Settlements and peace are within our reach. The Congress Party assures the citizens of the North East that it shall continue strive to expeditiously resolve all outstanding issues that concern their welfare. Meanwhile, the State governments must focus on good governance and development. The Indian National Congress which is in power in most of the North Eastern States pledges

to continue its work to bring peace and development to the people of these States in accordance with the ambitious goals of “North-Eastern Region Vision – 2020” released by the Prime Minister in July 2007.

Combating Communal Forces

The life line of Indian democracy is secularism. Our freedom struggle was truly secular. It is this very basis of our polity that is threatened by the ideology of the BJP, and its affiliate organizations like the RSS, which spreads hatred and violence. The RSS and the VHP are insidious in their effort to break India.

Governments may come and go – what survive are their legacies. The failure to protect all citizens will cast a dark shadow over our future. The BJP and its affiliated organizations like the RSS and VHP continue to hide their prejudice and the atrocities committed by them behind the rhetoric of economic progress and pseudo-nationalism. It is imperative that the Indian National Congress and the collective conscience of the people call their bluff. We cannot be indifferent to the plight of our fellow citizens in Gujarat who have suffered untold misery – by denying their humanity we will only betray our own. The Indian National Congress urges the government to protect all its citizens, regardless of their religion, race, language or region and relentlessly prosecute all those responsible for the unforgivable genocide that occurred in large parts of Gujarat in 2002.

The Party congratulates the Government that consequent to a series of atrocities and assault on the minorities it is coming out with a comprehensive Prevention of Communal Violence Bill. While it is necessary to deal with the culprits who take the law in their own hands, there is a need to put in a system to prevent communal violence and also provide for punishment to the perpetrators of communal violence.

Ayodhya

The Indian National Congress applauds the citizens of the country belonging to all communities for their abiding faith in the Constitution of India and the rule of law. All of us must respect the judicial process with regard to the Ram Janmabhoomi – Babri Masjid title suit. It is important to underline that the High Court verdict in no ways condones the demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6th December, 1992, which was shameful and a crime for which the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

We must now await the final decision of the Supreme Court. The Indian National Congress welcomes efforts by the parties concerned with the litigation to find an amicable and peaceful settlement among themselves to extinguish the sense of anguish that has prevailed ever since the mindless destruction of a place of worship in December 1992 and the assiduous fanning of the flames of communalism which preceded and led to the that act of shameful vandalism which struck at the soul of our secularism. The Liberhan Commission’s report is at last in the hands of the people. The party urges Government to act expeditiously and conscientiously on the findings of the Commission.

The Indian National Congress appeals to its members to continue to strain every nerve to heal the wounds caused by communal disturbances and promote the values of secularism, brotherhood and social harmony.

Social Justice

The UPA Government has already ushered in the rights revolution in the country. It has given the country and its poor: the Constitutional right to local self-government across the range of subjects listed in the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedules; the right to information; the right to work; the forest dwellers’ rights; the right to education; and now, the right to food security. But the good work should go on. The Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and the Indian Forests Act of 1927 and the right to resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced populations need a fresh and urgent look. Article 39A of the Constitution of India, as part of the Directive Principles of State Policy, enunciates the principle of equal justice. The Indian National Congress applauds the farsighted approach of successive UPA Governments to translate principles of social justice into justiciable rights.

The empowerment of disadvantaged groups, particularly scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities, OBCs and economically weaker sections of the society is a responsibility that needs to be shared by both government as well as the private sector. It is the Congress party which in the 90’s had implemented the policy of 27% reservation in employment and again it is the Congress party which gave 27% reservation to OBCs in education vide the 93rd amendment to the Constitution. We must realize that social equity and

equality of opportunity cannot be achieved only by the bare minimum required under a compulsory reservation or a quota but rather by a radical shift in the mindset of our institutions in the public and corporate sectors.

The Indian National Congress urges the Government to continue with its efforts, both legislative and administrative, to ensure that all reservation quotas are filled in a strict and timely manner.

The Constitution has laid down the standard of living of its citizens and the Indian National Congress has adhered to it over the years. Despite governments enacting laws to lift millions of poor out of poverty providing adequate funds to the States, the implementation of pro-poor laws and delivery of pro-poor programmes have remained tardy, especially in some of the non- Congress ruled states. The party asserts that it cannot remain silent spectator to this. It urges the government to ensure that outcomes of such programmes have the desired social and economic impact.

Women's Empowerment

Gender justice and empowerment of women are enshrined in the ethos and history of the Indian National Congress. Rajiv Gandhi was instrumental in bringing about 33% reservation for women in the Panchayat Raj system with the hope that it would radically transform the socio-economic landscape of our villages and the political fabric of India. Today the effects of this path-breaking decision are clear for all to see – women across the country participate in shaping the progress of their communities and are at the very foundation of our democracy. There are more elected women representatives alone than in the rest of the world put together. We laud our government under UPA II which has prepared legislation to enhance reservation for women in the institutions of local self-government to 50%.

The UPA II government has stayed true to its commitment to empowering the women of India and has led the passing of the Women's Reservation Bill in the Rajya Sabha earlier this year. The Indian National Congress urges the government and its allies to ensure the speedy passage of the bill in the Lok Sabha so that women may take their rightful place in the democratic fabric of India. The party is proud to lead a government that has seen the first woman President of India and the first woman speaker of the Lok Sabha assume office.

Continuous legislative reform including amendments to the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act bring larger groups of women under the protection of the law and ensure their safety within the home. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women is an initiative of UPA II to ensure that all schemes focused on women function in a coordinated manner. Economic equality plays a very large part in ensuring that women are not abused and it is the solemn duty of every state government and the central government to take concrete steps to provide opportunities for women and protect their property and person.

Securing Rights of Minorities

The Indian National Congress was founded on the tenets of secularism and the plurality of India and it continues to discharge its responsibility towards the welfare and concerns of the minorities. The UPA government has fulfilled its promises to improve access to education for minorities as well as ensuring communal harmony in India. Since independence successive Congress governments have initiated successful programs for minorities and the Prime Minister's 15 Point Program for the Welfare of Minorities continues to address the needs of the minority population and provide the necessary resources required to make minority communities equal participants in the economic social and political development of our nation. We are happy that the recommendations of the Justice Sachar Committee are under implementation.

The Congress Party lauds the government for initiating the steps for establishing an Equal Opportunities Commission to address the grievances of deprived groups.

Panchayat Raj

Parts IX ('The Panchayats') and IXA ('The Municipalities') of the Constitution have wrought a major social revolution at the grassroots bringing into existence close on 3,00,000 institutions of local self-government, to which we have elected some 32 lakh people's representatives, 12 lakh of whom are women and nearly 86,00 of whom hold office, with assured representation and office for the historically disadvantaged sections of our society in proportion to their population at every level of local governance. This is political and social

empowerment on a scale without precedent in history or parallel in the world. However, it is still to be matched by administrative and economic empowerment commensurate with the immense tasks they are required to perform.

Empowerment of the people to deal as far as possible with their own affairs instead of remaining dependent on the bureaucracy to meet their basic minimum needs lies at the heart of effective Panchayat Raj, which, if properly implemented, could prove the single most important measure to bring development to the doorstep of the people and enable them to ensure accountability and transparency in governance through their respective gram sabhas. At the same time, partial or perverted Panchayat Raj, as we have seen in several States run by narrow-minded parties that have little interest in probity in public life, could well turn these institutions into instruments of oppression and exploitation.

Therefore, the party calls upon the Government to ensure that people-oriented Centrally Sponsored Schemes are so designed as to ensure the administrative and economic empowerment of the institutions of local self-government in accordance with the aims and objectives of the legislation that brought about this constitutional revolution. Equally, the Union Government may engage with state governments to ensure transparency and accountability in the functioning of these institutions, especially by statutorily mandating gram sabhas and ward sabhas to effectively perform their supervisory tasks. Both efficiency of expenditure and probity in public life would be greatly enhanced by such social audit and the constructive use of RTI.

Panchayat Raj has a special political and emotional significance for the Congress party. Rajiv Gandhi's vision helped to change the lives of millions of people, particularly in rural India. 'Power to the People' was his talisman; 'Voice to the Voiceless and Decentralized decision-making' was his objective; and 'Inclusive Democracy' was his mission. We as a Party reaffirm our dedication to seeing that Panchayat Raj continues to flourish and urge all state governments to guarantee the rights and entitlements of Panchayat Raj Institutions as envisaged in the Constitution.

Youth

Rajiv Gandhi gave the Right to Vote to the youth of the nation following on the same tradition Rahul Gandhi has given a clarion call to the youth to step forward and actively participate in nation building. India today is the youngest nation in the world with more than half of its population below the age of 35. It is vital that our political system is representative of the demographic profile of our nation and of the dreams and hopes of millions of young Indians. The Indian National Congress believes that it is only by including the youth in our electoral politics that we can provide India with the necessary leadership in the future. The Indian Youth Congress and the NSUI have undertaken very successful membership drives under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi and the participation of youth and their contribution to decision making in the party cannot be over-emphasized. As we become a global power, our party will ensure that the youth including those from the poorest and weaker segments of society will be able to fully participate in shaping their collective future. To this end innovative measures are required to create world class infrastructure and skilled manpower to enable the youth to derive the full benefits of the opportunity of our demographic dividend over the next 25 years and truly participate in nation building.

Education

April 1, 2010 was a historic day in the history of India- this day saw the right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act come into force. The right to education is accorded the same legal status as the right to life as provided by Article 21A of the Indian Constitution. Every child in the age group of 6-14 years will be provided 8 years of elementary education in an age appropriate classroom in the vicinity of his/her neighborhood. The Indian National Congress applauds the UPA government in enacting this legislation and believes it provides the fundamental stepping stones towards an India where every child, rich or poor, will be able to share the same dreams and aspirations that a basic education provide.

The Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh declared 2010 – 2020 as the decade of innovation. In this spirit the UPA-II Government has announced far-reaching reforms in the field of education in the first eighteen months of returning to power and established institutions of higher education on a principle of expansion, inclusion and excellence.

Way Forward

The Indian National Congress is proud to be the only party that truly represents India – an India that is at peace with herself, proud of her multiple identities and celebrating her inherent diversities. More than a billion Indians today view the world with a renewed confidence – they believe this is their century and they can achieve anything they set out to do. India, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was created in 1947 as the largest democracy in the world. Our civilization, our history, our philosophies, our plurality and our advancement in different fields continue to inspire people everywhere. Our commitment to the principles of non-violence heralded a revolution in the history of the world.

The Congress Party envisions an India where every child is in school and every adult gainfully employed, chronic poverty and the ills associated with it are a thing of the past and society is free from communal and social prejudices, a casteless and a non discriminatory society with equal opportunity for all; Building such an India is our solemn duty and we as a Party are committed to do just this.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi on the Congress Foundation Day celebrating the commencement of the 125th Anniversary of the Congress Party stated:

“The Indian National Congress has always represented a secular, democratic, just and inclusive India, an India that is empowering the disadvantaged and the discriminated, an India that is blending tradition with modernity is anchored in unity amidst its many diversities.”

That remains the clarion call of the Congress, the core of our philosophy as the Indian National Congress continues to lead India with social, economic and political stability.