



# Indian Youth Congress & National Students Union of India **Addressing the Accountability Gaps**

**Shaffi Mather**  
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**Mason Fellow in Public Policy, 07-08**  
**Harvard Kennedy School**  
**Harvard University**



## **IMPORTANT NOTICE**

This study, report, its contents and recommendations are purely academic and part of the author's course requirements as a Mason Fellow in Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University during the academic year 2007-08. This paper has not been authorized, endorsed or approved by Indian National Congress, Indian Youth Congress, National Students Union or any of its office bearers / functionaries.

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This paper and the enclosed presentations have been prepared on the basis of the author's detailed study of the existing organizational framework, reward system, incentives, penalties, culture and working mechanism of Indian National Congress, IYC and NSUI backed by limited academic literature on the working environment in Indian National Congress party. High levels of reliance has been given to opinions, observations and analysis of several leaders of the Congress party, leading journalists and political / social analysts in the absence of academic literature covering the fields of study of this paper and proposed recommendations. Material from Academic Literature or from any other source, wherever used, and opinions when allowed to be cited have been cited as per conventions. Substantial material from the author's previous papers on "Political Party Leadership – Inner Party Democracy & Accountability in India" and "Study of the Accountability Gaps in Indian National Congress" in the course NPS202 "Accountability and Policy: Challenges in the Public, Nonprofit and Private Sectors" by Prof. Alnoor Ebrahim at Harvard Kennedy School have been relied upon in writing this paper and used as preface to recommendations to address these gaps. Concepts, frameworks, strategies discussed and lectured on by Prof. Alnoor Ebrahim in the course as also other students in the course also have been used in writing this paper without specific citation at every instance.

The author would like to thank all the leaders in Congress Party and other Indian Political Parties, journalists, academicians and public spirited individuals for their support in writing this paper. The author would like to thank everyone at RGCT (where the author volunteered for about 15 months) for their support though this study has been done outside of the author's experience at the RGCT where the author has not had any interaction whatsoever with either IYC or NSUI functionaries or on the working of either organization. This report is thus based primarily on the author's experiences of having been a proactive member of both NSUI and IYC since 1984 when the author has had close opportunities to understand the dynamics and workings of both these organizations from the grassroots level to the apex level in spite of never having held any office in either organization.

All analysis, opinions, projections, recommendations and forecasts in this paper are based on assumptions considered to be reasonable but the actual outcome may be materially affected by changes in economic, social, political and other circumstances, which cannot be reasonably foreseen.

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AICC Session, Hyderabad, January, 2006

“With due respect, I would like to make two appeals. The first is to our grassroots worker and to the youth of our party and second appeal is to our leaders. To our grass root workers and young I would like to humbly say let us move into a battlefield, the heart of India. Let us go to the villages, and the towns and the cities. Let us go to universities and schools. Let us move away from the corridors of power. Let us cement the links with our people. Let us listen to wisdom of our great people. Let us understand their concerns and their aspirations. **Let us become leaders by listening and by learning and by working rather than through post and positions.**”

AICC Session, New Delhi, November 2007

“It is we the youth who have the greatest stake in our future. It is from among the youth that tomorrow's leaders will rise. I firmly believe that **the youth Congress and the NSUI can and should become the vehicles for young Indians who want to serve our nation.**”

Over the last few weeks, I have spent many hours with our workers and office bearers. I am proud to say that there are many among them with talent, character and a will to serve. But there is work to be done. In my travels, I am often asked two questions: the first is from young people who ask how can we join politics and help India? The second question which comes from within the Youth Congress and NSUI is how do we progress in the organization? These two questions touch at the heart of what needs to be changed.

If we are to truly become an organization that represents the youth of our country; if we are to truly develop leaders of whom the nation can be proud, we need to do two things. The first is to **build an organization that is open and relevant to the broad range of young Indians** who believe in our values and seek to serve the nation. The second is to **build a meritocratic organization.** Young people bring tremendous passion and energy into our organization. We must see to it that **they are accountable.** It is our duty to **ensure that their progress is linked to their performance.**

I stand here today to **urge every young Indian to join us and help us build institutions worthy of your dreams, your values and your capabilities.** Jai Hind.”

UPCC Meeting, Lucknow, November, 2007

“There should be **accountability in politics.** The UPCC had no records to speak of and there were no entry forms to check the memberships. In fact, we want to make the youth Congress a vehicle of accountability in UP. **I strongly believe in democracy and accountability** and will now make an effort to bring the youth into the party.

**Rahul Gandhi, General Secretary, All India Congress Committee**

## Background

History clearly points to established and well functioning democracy in India at the federal, state and local level. Constitutionally mandated free and fair elections are held periodically in India under the supervision of the independent body, the Election Commission of India. Yet, when it comes to inner-party democracy, the picture is completely different.

The author has been an active member of the Indian National Congress Party (starting with NSUI – National Students Union of India, student wing and IYC – Indian Youth Congress, youth wing) since 1984 firmly believing in its leadership’s capability to lead India to leadership position in the world and achieve all round development for her citizenry. But even the party that the author work for proactively and am proud to be a member of for 24 years shuns practice of true inner party democracy in spite of commitment to it even from its current supreme leader.

## *Democracy*

The following are key characteristics in a democracy: 1. Supreme Power vested in people. 2. Exercised by them directly or indirectly. 3. When indirect, it is through a system of representation and 4. Free Elections held periodically to select the representatives. Thus, in a democratic system, individual citizens select their representatives in a free and fair election. The elected representatives in turn make decisions for and on behalf of the collective group of citizens. In a true democratically functioning party, the members elect the leaders. The elected leaders in turn make policy decisions and lead the party.

And the members have the opportunity to reelect or replace the party leadership in the next election based on their free choice.

It is very interesting to note that, often, the political champions of democracy in India push democratic rights within their own political party setup to the rear of their respective agendas. The more there is talk of the importance of democracy among and within political parties in India, the less importance inner party democracy seems to have within the respective political parties. The obvious consequence of such lessening degree of inner party democracy is the declining accountability levels within the political parties. This is all the more relevant in the frontal organizations of the political parties which includes the Youth Wing, Students Wing etc. Indian National Congress is no different with inner party democracy being non-existent in any of its frontal organizations, especially the Youth Congress or National Students Union of India. And for much of the party's history, 'Congress tradition' meant something else altogether. This was a party built upwards from the grassroots, taluk and district committees feeding into provincial committees, which in turn fed into the All India Congress Committee. The leaders at the Centre could not impose their will (and whim) on those lower down. As Bengalis so well know, Mahatma Gandhi could not always get his man elected as Congress president. After Independence, Jawaharlal Nehru could not nominate Congress chief ministers of his preference; these were chosen by the state units and their elected legislators." (Guha, Ramachandra. 2008)

### ***Declining Accountability***

The declining accountability in a political organization stems directly from the inability of a party member or a group of members to throw out or replace the incumbent party leadership in the absence

of free and fair inner party election. Since independence, this problem of declining inner party democracy has only accentuated in India as incumbent leaderships stifle inner party democracy leading to a direct decline of accountability among the respective political party leadership. Over the years, the inner party system in India has been conveniently made subservient to the incumbent leaderships in place from the top to the bottom in all political parties with very few exceptions.

The traditional forms of answerability are defined by hierarchical organizational structure that is anathema to democracy where the structure ought to work in the inverted manner reporting to the masses or the grassroots who elects the representative. The answerability in a democracy should be to the electorate and in a political party to the members of the party who the elected legislator or office bearer is supposed to represent. Yet, in practice, political parties in India tend to follow the hierarchical structure where positions lower in the hierarchy are filled through top down appointments which furthers deference to one's superiors in the form of obedience. This in turn starts to become a form of sycophancy in the aspiring politician to grow within the political party and beyond in the absence of growth opportunities through true inner party democracy. (See System Diagram on Appendix I)

“Positive loops tend to reinforce or amplify whatever is happening in the system.” (Strategic Operations Management Course STM 301, HKS, Prof. Guy Stuart) “We also build mental models to adapt to the prevailing mental models which includes our beliefs about the networks of causes and effects that describe how a system operates, along with the boundary of the model and the time horizon we consider relevant – our framing or articulation of a problem.” (Strategic Operations Management Course STM 301, HKS, Prof. Guy Stuart)

## *Sycophancy*

The dictionary meaning of *sycophancy* is 'self-seeking or servile flattery', 'obsequious flattery' and a *sycophant* 'a servile, self-serving flatterer'. Interestingly, 'parasite' is one of the synonyms of sycophant. 'Fawning', 'buttering' and 'sucking up' are the other words descriptive of the process. (Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1) Retrieved December 05, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/sycophancy>; Roget's New Millennium™ Thesaurus, First Edition (v 1.3.1). Retrieved December 05, 2008, from Thesaurus.com website: <http://thesaurus.reference.com/browse/sycophancy>).

The vice which fires the most creative instincts of political party members in contemporary Indian politics is sycophancy instead of actual on the ground work at the grass roots level. This is often their (party members') best device to make themselves seen and heard in a political milieu / party that gives more merit to loyalty to a person than that to the party, principles, work record and abilities. Whatever way sycophancy works, it has a demoralizing effect on those outside the charmed circle, especially the ones adhering to principles and values and minding their business as best as they might. Encouragement to sycophancy is invitation to disaster as history has shown time and again. Yet, most leaders in Indian politics succumb to its charms.

The leader who actually hates or pretends to hate sycophancy and sycophants, sooner or later, falls for their wiles. Sucking up is one of the toughest acts for any person to resist succumbing to. A dog and its master is a great example. An owner of a Dog ends up loving and caring for his / her Dog more than they love and care for their own spouse, parents, children or friends simply because the Dog knows all the tricks of sucking up to the Master and uses it without any self restraint.

Contrary to practice and tradition among individuals in leadership positions in Indian politics, the current Gandhi Family members in leadership positions have time and again tried to resist the culture of sycophancy within the Indian National Congress Party. Sonia Gandhi set the tone in her maiden speech in 1998 to the All India Congress Committee after taking over as the President of Indian National Congress, "I appeal to all Congress workers to come together with unity and determination to once again forge the Congress party organization into a powerful tool in the service of the country. I cannot agree more -- that sycophancy has to come to an end. It should have no place in the party. We should mean what we say, and say what we mean," (Sonia Gandhi at AICC Meeting, Indian Express, April 7, 1998) Her Son and General Secretary of the Indian National Congress stated "I do not believe in sycophancy and show-off and those who believe in this can stay away from the party. I am not impressed by sycophancy and my emphasis will be on accountability" (Rahul Gandhi at UPCC Meeting, the Asian Age, November 13, 2007). **Yet, sycophancy reigns supreme at all levels in Indian National Congress, Indian Youth Congress and National Students Union of India.**

"Parties that stem out of movements or were found with idealism in the formative years soon turn into 'normal' parties. Over time, fierce intra-party competition for patronage and benefits becomes a normal or routine feature in such parties. The intensity increases if it is a ruling party. Those who join parties with some amount of idealism gradually fall in line and become "realistic". Pragmatic leaders, who have the capacity to manipulate things in their favor and bestow benefits on followers / supporters, come to the forefront." (Suri, K C. 2005)

"The destruction of inner-party democracy initiated by Indira Gandhi (in Congress party) has meant a radical reorientation in the mindset of the ambitious young Congressman. Once, he sought to

nurture his party and thus also to build a solid base for himself. Now, he seeks rather to flatter and please the First Family. In other political parties, one can make a name by dealing directly with voters and impressing them, or by efficiently running party units. On the other hand, in the Congress what matters is your closeness to the party president. Obviously, Sonia Gandhi does not know all party workers or even legislators. Thus, if you are a Congressman, you seek to minimize the number of handshakes that separate you from her. If you are a *chamcha* (sycophant) of someone who is a *chamcha* (sycophant) of someone in the inner circle, then you might get a ticket to fight the next assembly election. If you can leapfrog one link in this chain you might have a shot at becoming a member of parliament. If you can leapfrog two you might even end up as a Union minister.” (Guha, Ramachandra. 2008)

### ***Importance of New Voters***

Traditionally, the party leaderships look at youth and students as peripheral groups which do not make huge differences in the current elections. It is established beyond doubt that the contrary is the fact on the ground. The voters can be broadly classified into three groups:

1. Loyalists – those who stay with their party of choice no matter what
2. Switchers – those who drift from one party to another depending on issues and personalities of the moment and
3. New Voters – those entering the electorate for the first time

Young Voters are most likely to be the new voters. Thus, the perpetual challenge that political parties face is which party will recruit the new voters into its ranks, especially among the youth. Indian

National Congress (including IYC and NSUI) can only ignore this reality at their own peril especially considering that India is getting younger and the youth vote is going to make the difference in every election in the coming several decades.

## Indian Youth Congress - IYC

“Indian Youth Congress took concrete shape into an organization in the late 60’s and early 70’s. Two major conferences of post-Independent India played a major part in shaping the Youth Congress structure. The first was the Tirupati AICC (All India Congress Committee) session of the mid 1950’s and the second was the Panchmarhi AICC session of the 1960’s. It was at Panchmarhi that the National Council and the National Advisory Committee came into being. The IYC Constitution was also drafted and adopted in this session. Prior to this, the Youth congress used to function through the AICC, as one of its constituent departments /cells. The Youth Cell used to coordinate Youth Congress and students activities throughout the country during this period.” (Priyo Ranjan Das Munshi, Former President, Indian Youth Congress, Retrieved December 04, 2008, from website: [www.indianyouthcongress.in](http://www.indianyouthcongress.in))

“During the Indore session of the Congress in 1971, the National Council went into election on the direction of the then Prime Minister, Late Smt. Indira Gandhi. Priyo Ranjan Das Munshi was elected as Youth Congress President in the organizational election held at 5, Rajendra Prasad Road, in which Vayalar Ravi and Nandini Satpathy acted as observers. There have been 13 Presidents of the Indian Youth Congress since then, namely

1. Smt. Ambika Soni
2. Shri. Ramchandra Rath
3. Shri. Ghulam Nabi Azad
4. Shri. Tariq Anwar
5. Shri. Anand Sharma
6. Shri. Gurudas Kamat

7. Shri. Mukul Wasnik
8. Shri. Ramesh Chennitala
9. Shri. M.S. Bitta
10. Shri. Satyajeet Singh Gaekwad
11. Shri. Manish Tewari
12. Shri. Randeep Surjewala and
13. Shri. Ashok Tanwar (present)

**However, none of the above occupied the post through the process of an organizational election.”**

(Priyo Ranjan Das Munshi, Former President, Indian Youth Congress, Retrieved December 04, 2008, from website: [www.indianyouthcongress.in](http://www.indianyouthcongress.in))

The Organizational Structure Diagram of Indian Youth Congress on the official website of Indian Youth Congress (Appendix II) is proof of the complete and total breakdown of the democratic structure and functioning of Indian Youth Congress due to the use of appointments to offices rather than election. It is indeed ironical that the same website home page proudly claims Indian Youth Congress as the “Largest Democratic Youth Organization in the World”. (Retrieved December 04, 2008, from website: [www.indianyouthcongress.in](http://www.indianyouthcongress.in))

## National Students Union of India - NSUI

“The origins of students’ movement in this country dates back to the origin of the whole concept of organized movement. Several thousands of well-read, intelligent and capable students, who could have comfortably continued their education stopped mid-way and jumped into the bandwagon of Mahatma Gandhi’s call to participate in the freedom movement in pursuit of something much more significant to the then society than their individual education. Though students’ had been one of the most vocal and active groups and had organized aggressively under the larger umbrella of Indian National Congress, right since early 1900’s, the first students’ organization, All India Students’ Federation (AISF) was formed in 1940.

After independence, the Congress leadership initially felt that students’ activism should not be linked with party-based politics. However, the left parties started using this to satiate their nihilist vested interests, particularly in the states of Kerala and West Bengal, where they were relatively strong. For AISF, the primary objective was to patronize students’ discontent and give it form of an organized unrest. By early 1950’s, students’ unrest had virtually peaked in these states and somehow AISF was trying to position itself as the single champion of students’ causes. Realizing the gravity that the situation was reaching, the Congress Party gave a rethought to its approach towards students’ politics in these states. Subsequently, in 1953 and 1955, Chaatra Parishad (CP) and Kerala Students’ Union (KSU) were formed in West Bengal and Kerala respectively under the umbrella of Congress party.

In the 1960’s, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) tried to replicate the left’s idea of playing politics over students’ unrest in other parts of the country. Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)

came into being, and started spreading the communal and divisive venom among students. Students' politics also got majorly polarized during this period. On the one side was the extremist right block represented by ABVP and on the other the myopic left. With the existing equations, the larger section of Indian students, the genuinely secular, peace-loving, nationalist and democratic minded students felt alienated and unrepresented. The idea of Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the Congress President, then was to seek a credible mass-based representation for these students and thus was born NSUI. Though the idea was conceived in 1969 itself, NSUI was formally constituted on 8 April 1971. KSU and CP, however retained their original identity but joined the larger NSUI fold. There have been 13 Presidents of NSUI since inception namely,

- 1) Late Shri. P. R. Kumaramangalam (1971-74)
- 2) Shri. Mohan Gopal (1974-76)
- 3) Late Smt. Geetanjali Maken (1976-77)
- 4) Shri. K. K. Sharma (1977-81)
- 5) Shri. Sub hash Choudhary (1981-82)
- 6) Shri. Ramesh Chennithala (1982-84)
- 7) Shri. Mukul Wasnik (1984-86)
- 8) Shri. Manish Tewari (1986-93)
- 9) Shri. Saleem Ahmad (1993-97)
- 10) Smt. Alka Lamba (1997-99)
- 11) Smt. Meenakshi Natarajan (1999-2003)
- 12) Shri. Ashok Tanwar (2003-05)
- 13) Shri. Nadeem Javed (From 2005 - Present)

**However, none of the above was elected through a democratic election.**

(History of NSUI and list of past Presidents have been taken almost entirely from the NSUI Website;  
Retrieved December 04, 2008, from website: [www.nsui.in](http://www.nsui.in))

## Path Forward to address the Accountability Gaps

The Gandhi family has tried to inculcate inner party democracy in Indian Youth Congress and NSUI in several initiatives since 1984 but this has been thwarted at different levels at implementation stage. “Even if a team agreed on the proper course of action, the implementation of these decisions can be delayed and distorted as the actual organization responds. Local incentives, asymmetric information and private agendas can lead to game playing by agents throughout a system” (Strategic Operations Management Course STM 301, HKS, Prof. Guy Stuart)

“New relationships between citizens and institutions of government must emerge if a crisis of democratic legitimacy is to be averted... old styles of representation have come under pressure to change. There is a pervasive contemporary estrangement between representatives and those they represent, manifested in almost every country by falling voter turnout; lower levels of public participation in public life; public cynicism towards political institutions and parties.” (Coleman, S and Goetze, J, Bowling Together: Online Public Engagement in Policy Deliberation, 2001, Hansard Society)

Also, it is important to understand that the best intentioned and expert leadership group also will not meet the democratic aspirations of the people if room is not given to express their needs, opinions and decisions in a democratic manner. “No government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interest of the few.... The essential need... is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion. (Dewey, J, 1927, The Public and its Problems.) Similarly, the same is

applicable to political organizations also where leadership even by the best experts results in an oligarchic management in the interest of the few.

The author studied the Accountability gaps that exist in Indian National Congress (and Indian Youth Congress and National Students Union of India) as part of the Accountability Course at Harvard Kennedy School under Prof. Alnoor Ebrahim. The key accountability gaps identified in the earlier study included:

Non Existence of a Basic Membership Register

Lack of Intra Organization Democracy at all Levels

Lack of Performance based Reward System and Career Progression

Lack of Vision, Mission and Goals

Nonexistent Information Technology Backbone and Communication Infrastructure

No existent Administration Infrastructure

Non Transparent Funding, Accounting and Accounts

Lack of projects to keep the Members engaged

**The following road map is a strategic plan developed by the author post the study to address the major Accountability Gaps in IYC and NSUI identified in the earlier study in the most effective, least disruptive and on affordable cost basis.**

## Overcoming Non Existence of a Basic Membership Register

The basic of any membership based organization is a membership database or a membership register. It is non-existent in Indian Youth Congress and National Students Union for all practical purposes. Youth Congress or NSUI does not know who its members are beyond a certain level. The organization itself is structured as a mass based organization and the membership becomes a conjecture for the leaders at different levels which translates into a faceless crowd at the lowest hierarchical / grass root levels. (Mather, Shaffi. 2007)

This can be addressed by establishing a virgin Membership Register using IT Backend with Election Commission Identity Card as primary Identity Verification and validation tool of all members at every level of Indian Youth Congress. The fields to be included in the membership database are listed in Appendix III. It is important to give a reasonable time period for enrollment of members when the membership campaign is launched with a clear message that the deadline announced shall be adhered to under all circumstances for the year (or two / three years which is to be decided as the term of the membership).

It is important that the Election Commission Identity Card is used as the primary Accountability Enhancement Tool (Tracking Mechanism) within IYC / NSUI for membership verification and validation for the following reasons:

- Zero Cost to IYC / NSUI in issuing, tracking and maintaining the Election Commission Identity Card

- Election Commission Identity Card is changed whenever people move residence but the Identity Card Number stays the same for every individual throughout life enabling tracking for life
- Every Youth Congress Member should have the EC identity Card as a matter of basic requirements of membership considering that Youth Congress is a political organization; if not, they should get one within 30 days of the membership to have the IYC / NSUI membership validated
- It is a criminal offence to have more than one EC Identity Card which will effectively prevent bogus / fraud in membership with an in-built penalty / enforcement mechanism within and outside the organization for violation.
- Allowing use of multiple forms of identification (Passport, Drivers License, Ration Card, Employer ID etc.) can potentially undermine the sanctity of the proposed IYC / NSUI membership register as it will not only make the verification process cumbersome but also open to being compromised.

## Instituting Intra Organization Democracy at all Levels

“Democracy is the Government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Lincoln, Abraham. 1863). This definition of democracy translated to political parties would be ‘Inner Party Democracy’ is the party leadership of the members, by the members and for the members. (Mather, Shaffi. 2007)

In a true democratically functioning organization, the members elect the leaders. The elected leaders in turn make policy decisions and lead the party. And the members have the opportunity to reelect or replace the party leadership in the next election based on their free choice. “The lack of effective intra party democracy in most Indian political parties has impeded accountability considerably. In most Indian political parties the selection of candidates has been extremely centralized and there is little intra party democracy.” (Mehta, Bhanu Pratap, 2005)

“The great disjuncture in Indian democracy is that the rules of political advancement within political parties are arbitrary and can circumvent accountability. Genuine intra party democracy is an essential component of restoring accountability to this process.” (Mehta, Bhanu Pratap. 2005)

The organizational structure of Indian Youth Congress on the official website of Indian Youth Congress (Appendix II) clearly points to the breakdown of the democratic structure and functioning of Indian Youth Congress. Furthermore, the same circular on the website ends with a warning that “you are herewith directed to follow the given instructions in toto, any failure to do so will be treated as an act of indiscipline”. Through this circular on the website, the current IYC leadership is reinforcing the already

prevailing norm among the members and office bearers that any effort at democratic functioning at any level within IYC will not be tolerated.

This issue has to be addressed to bring in talented non-sycophantic leadership into both IYC and NSUI:

- Once the validated membership register is in place in both Youth Congress and NSUI, the party leadership shall conduct free and fair elections at all levels from the lowest hierarchical level to the office of President at the National level.
- The elections may be held physically in the case of Youth Congress and virtually in NSUI considering the potential difference in the depth of internet penetration in these two organizations (Lower in IYC and higher in NSUI)
- It will also be helpful if the election process in both these organizations can be managed by credible authorities who have a distinguished track record of conducting free and fair election as some of the eminent past Election Commissioners of India. This will enhance the credibility of the entire organizational election process and lend seriousness to it which has been hitherto lacking every time announcements have been made of elections either in Youth Congress or NSUI.

## Performance based Reward System and Career Progression

“The greatest problem of India is that its finest men — men of caliber and vision, knowledge and character — are not in politics and stand little chance of getting elected, having regard to the murky atmosphere of our political life.” (Palkhivala, Nani. 2001)

Human Beings are born with aspiration. Aspirations can be channeled positively or negatively. A performance based reward system with a clear cut career progression track that is reasonably objective and acceptable to the party membership will channel aspirations positively. Such a system which works drastically enhances talent retention in the party and helps manage expectations of both old and new members. It makes comparison between two good performing individuals in the party easy for both the leadership and the grass root workers avoiding potential for conflicts.

Politicians, like every Human Being, respond to incentives. The biggest constraint any member of any political party faces in India is how to prove himself worthy within the organization and manage the existing incentive structure in the party. Thousands of party members, dedicated, honest, sincere and committed to the party they are in, very often languishes in anonymity for years even as their lesser co-workers prosper through sycophancy, caste identity or money power or a combination of all three factors. The dedicated, honest, sincere and committed party worker soon realizes that it is not real work but proximity to powerful leaders which will take them up the power ladder and fast track their career progression within the party. Naturally, they adopt sycophancy as their main tool for advancement within the party. Caste Identity is openly flaunted as an additional chip to speed up the progression.

Consequently, vested interests take control and make every effort to deny the really talented and sincere from posing a threat. In the bargain, performance ceases to be a parameter for career progression. Consequently, internal elections are resisted and "consensus" becomes the tool to perpetuate the interests of a few. (based on Nikam, Girish and his Essay - Will Rahul Gandhi be able to walk the talk?)

Further to the intra organizational elections, it is important that a message goes across in these two organizations that performance will be rewarded in the constitution of the Office Bearer teams at every level by the elected Presidents.

- Broad guidelines of benchmarks for the nomination of office bearers to every committee at every level has to be announced clearly and publicly before the election process so that the best and the brightest get to know that they do stand a chance in the reformed Youth Congress and NSUI without being masters of the art of sycophancy.
- Performance Review system has to be put in place again with a non-partisan independent body created like the election authority to lend credibility and impartiality to the process. It may be noted here that even the most professional businesses often use third party agencies to coordinate and conduct performance review to ensure unbiased and credible reviews.
- Career paths have to be clearly drawn up and measurable benchmarks set against the performance review system for the aspirants to understand the system and work within the system than outside the system subverting it.
- It has to be asserted here that while all these initiatives are required to institutionalize good performance in both IYC and NSUI, this shall not be used or allowed to be used to by-pass or subvert the true practice of inner party democracy at any level of the organization though clear

but fair qualification norms could be spelled out for aspiring candidates to different levels in the organization.

- An independent committee consisting of grass root party leaders and human resource management experts may be constituted to draft and develop the guidelines for performance review and career progression in IYC and NSUI. The report shall be debated, adopted and published before the intra organizational election process is put in place.

## Vision, Mission and Goals

Masses get mobilized by leaders when they share a dream, a vision and a mission. The 'Connect' of the anonymous individual in the mass to the dream, the vision and the mission is what motivates him / her to step beyond his individual self and work for a larger goal.

Jawaharlal Nehru had the vision of building a free united India post independence, Lal Bahadur Shastri had the theme "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan" (Victory to the Soldier, Victory to the Farmer), Indira Gandhi pulled the nation alongside her with the slogan 'Garibi Hatao' (Remove Poverty), Rajiv Gandhi rallied the youth of India with the promise of taking the nation to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Sonia Gandhi brought the common man in India to support her with her slogan of Congress ka haath, Aam Aadmi ke saath (The hand of Congress is with the common man) . Each of these leaders rallied the nation around the dream, the vision and the mission they laid before the people. Each of them communicated their vision clearly and directly to the people and people believed in each one of them and in their dream, vision and mission. They connected with the masses by tapping into the social and psychological needs of fulfillment.

Each individual has intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations are imposed on individuals from the outside and take the form of either offers of money for, prices imposed on behavior, or threats of punishment or reward from a superior for complying with or failing to comply with specifically prescribed behavior. Intrinsic motivations are reasons for action that come from within the person, such as pleasure or personal satisfaction. (based on work by Edward Deci, Psychologist and Economist Bruno Frey) For each individual, there comes a time on any given day, week, month and year

and in different degrees over his / her lifetime when one chooses to act in some way that is oriented toward fulfilling one's social and psychological needs beyond the normal market-exchangeable needs... meaning a time when intrinsic motivation takes precedence over extrinsic motivation. It is this part of one's life and motivational structure that IYC and NSUI should tap and on which connect between the vision, mission and goals of IYC and NSUI and the individual in the mass be built upon.

- Youth Congress and NSUI has to layout a dream, a vision, clear mission and benchmarked goals to mobilize the masses connecting with their intrinsic motivations.
- Considering the charismatic appeal of Rahul Gandhi across India and the lesser appeal of the current leadership in both Youth Congress and NSUI to the target communities at large, Rahul Gandhi will have to take personal leadership in articulating, communicating and connecting this goal with the youth and students of India at this point in time.
- At the same time institutionalizing the process to ensure it being taken forward by succeeding Youth Congress and NSUI leaderships.

## **Information Technology Backbone and Communication Infrastructure**

Though the Indian National Congress has a website at present and a Computer Department since the days of Rajiv Gandhi, there exists no IT Backbone / Infrastructure in spite of the fact that the party itself and former President Rajiv Gandhi having been a champion of IT in the overall development strategy shaped by the party for the nation. The Computer Department at AICC is still a collection of four computers with a small group of staff basically inputting election commission and census data in the most simple and basic levels of analysis which would even put amateurs to shame. The AICC office computers, other than those in the computer department, are not networked and mostly function as the replacements for typewriters for the respective office bearer. Many state units and 510 of the 600 odd District level offices do not even have a computer (sample survey by author). These offices still work in the 60s and 70s mode with rickety typewriters exemplifying everything that is wrong with the Congress party in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The situation is even worse in the case of Youth Congress and NSUI though it has to be noted with appreciation that both Youth Congress and NSUI now has decent websites which ONLY came up post Rahul Gandhi taking over charge of both these organizations.

The author had personal experience of the workings of the communication infrastructure within the Indian National Congress party when the author was involved with the campaign management team of the party as part of the party Election War Room in the General Elections 2004. The party primarily relied on the mass media to even communicate with its office bearers below the district level and the cadre who were managing the campaign at the grass root level.

The communication infrastructure relied on were:

- Telephone
- Fax
- Courier Service

The central office of the party did not even have contact details (Telephone / Fax / Address) beyond the State office bearers. Very often, the details of even the state office bearers available were sketchy and incomplete. Most contacts were established using chain of networking which was highly inefficient, time consuming and expensive. When contact was established and communication enabled, it remained a one way communication without any reverse communication flow for there was no system in place to receive any reverse flow of information. The central office effectively could only courier a circular to the state offices and to the district offices which would in effect mean a time delay of 3 to 5 days for any formal communication to reach the intended recipient. It took longer for the communication to go lower in the hierarchical party network. The situation remains so to this day without any change from 2004 when the author personally experienced the above situation. The situation in both Youth Congress and NSUI is even worse inspite of the presence of younger and more educated office bearers.

The party does not have a basic email network nor does it use free email ids' available on the internet for intraparty communication. The non use of emails for even interpersonal communication within the party also stems from the fear of the unknown and in being held accountable to one's position, thoughts and convictions as communicated in writing in an email. This also gives raise to use and dependence on anonymous letters and faxes to support and / or destroy potential aspirants and

competitors with impunity as not much emphasis is placed on ownership of communication within the party.

Any competitive organization in business would be run to the ground if operating in a similar situation. The party was saved from decimation only because other competing parties also were facing similar situations though the communications machinery of some of the competing parties seemed on the surface to have worked better and more effectively. This is a serious cause for concern at present with the leading opposition party (BJP – Bharatiya Janata Party) embarking on putting in place advanced communication infrastructure within their party network. It may be of interest to note here that US President George Bush's first campaign for 2000 election and primaries before it was made much more effective and efficient by the use of a free email network created on yahoo.com setup by an intern who created yahoo email ids for the campaign team in every county in the United States. (Click on Democracy, Steve Davis, Larry Elin and Grant Reeher, p90)

This issue has to be addressed urgently by putting in place a dedicated IT backend which encompasses the membership database with provisions for detailed analysis of different parameters, performance review and track record of members (more importantly office bearers) and a communication infrastructure with individual email id's for the office bearers and members. The email based communication infrastructure should become the primary communication artery within the party bringing within accountability and ownership for the communication among members and across the organizational hierarchy. As explained separately in the funding and accounts section, the email network can become a source of continuing revenue for both Youth Congress and NSUI (and the party at a later date).

The IT backend should provide for five primary needs of the organization:

- Membership Database
  - Robust, validated and current membership register
- Intra Organization Democracy
  - Enabling free, fair and transparent intra organization elections
- Information
  - Providing maximum access to Information of party initiatives
  - Easy to use and access
  - Multi-lingual
- Consultation
  - Online Consultation Fora – Issue based / Policy based
  - Consultation Tools like Online Surveys, Opinion Polls, Discussion Forums
  - Online Moderation Systems
- Active Participation
  - E-petitioning
  - Online Referenda

Email combined with follow up telephone calls can be potent tools to win over volunteers which can be developed to become communities of support. Interest groups and sub-groups within the larger umbrella can be created online and connectivity maintained. Email, instant messaging, viral marketing and personalized group and sub-group webpages empower users giving them a sense of belonging.

Using the power of internet, IYC and NSUI can and should create the following communities across India under the umbrella of Indian National Congress:

- Communities of Belief
  - Marked primarily by points of view or political ideologies or organized sets of beliefs. Communities of belief lead to and encourage political action on the part of their members while remaining anchored in particular ideologies
- Communities of Action
  - Marked primarily by actions their members undertake. Communities of action are anchored in the doing and in making. These are the groups who get their feet wet on the ground making things work for the party.
- Communities of Identity
  - Marked primarily by shared senses of identity based usually on ascriptive traits be it religion, nativity, sex, language, race etc.
- Communities of Discourse
  - The primary focus in this community is communication itself. The group remains anchored as a community on sharing their thoughts with each other.

The leadership has to be careful in that broadening communities too far, however, can dilute them to the point where real bonding becomes difficult if not impossible defeating the purpose of community itself.

## Administration Infrastructure

Every organization needs an administration apparatus to keep it running inspite of all the negatives and issues associated with bureaucracy. Governments have it. The Government of India runs on the bureaucracy led by the IAS (Indian Administrative Service.) Every large NGO has it. Major Civil Society organizations have it. Intergovernmental organizations have it. The administration apparatus brings stability to the organization especially for the ones which have frequently transitioning leaderships.

While this is so, the Indian National Congress does not have an Administration backbone or apparatus across the nation. There is a very weak and tame bureaucracy in Delhi which is even worse in sycophancy (and often corrupt) than emerging leaders at any level. There is hardly any administrative setup at the state levels and nil setup at the district levels. The lack of a permanent administrative apparatus leads to non continuity in transitions and failure in pinning responsibility down in a fluid mass based voluntary political organization which is what the Congress party is. As in other factors mentioned above, the administration infrastructure is simply non-existent in both Youth Congress and NSUI which relies completely on the voluntary office bearers to make the organization function and co-ordinate all its activities.

Both Youth Congress and NSUI needs basic administrative infrastructure without overburdening either organization or the parent party with the costs of putting in place a working administration apparatus or creating an unwieldy bureaucratic setup which becomes a burden in the future. Most large institutional NGOs use services of fellows and interns to get highly qualified performers at low cost to the organization by tapping into the sense of social service of the interested individual.

- Youth Congress and NSUI can institutionalize National and State Fellowships for periods of 1, 2 and 3 years during which the selected fellow can be paid a reasonable honorarium and accommodation.
- The fellowship shall be structured as competitive and prestigious attracting the best and the brightest to serve the term.
- It shall be made clear in the announcement of the fellowships that this is not a fast track to electoral politics and will be an exposure to public life and its complexities.
- The fellowship can be modeled on Acumen Fund Fellowships or the Congressional Fellowships in USA.
- A draft press release for the Congress Fellowships is enclosed in Annexure IV.

## Funding, Accounting and Accounts

Current political system in India works on un-identified, un-documented and mostly un-traceable sources of funds. All political parties are caught in a catch 22 situation of un-accounted funds giving way to unaccountable obligations. Any new member in a party, however idealistic he or she may be, gets to realize the 'System and how it works' soon enough that he / she is compelled to fall in line or face peer pressure to step aside and / or make way for more enterprising members who share this working system and the booty (funds collected) with other members. This is the prevailing situation in the parent party as well as in Youth Congress and NSUI.

“The reform and regulation of the ways in which elections are financed remains the single most difficult challenge for Indian democracy. Arguably, all attempts at reform will come to naught unless the question of political finance is tackled head on. The imperative to raise money for elections combined with unrealistic, unworkable and unenforceable existing laws on campaign finance produce profound distortions in the working of Indian democracy.” (Mehta, Bhanu Pratap. 2005) “There should be a complete disclosure of contributions received and expenditures incurred by political parties in the form of audited accounts available for public scrutiny.” (Nayyar, Deepak. 2006)

It may be difficult to bring about radical changes in the funding / fund raising pattern at one go in Youth Congress and NSUI but change can be initiated by bringing all expenses incurred by Youth Congress and NSUI on each and every activity to be accounted for in the books using prudent accounting norms. There is going to be high resistance to this transition as current environment puts high peer pressure to fall in line to avoid accounts and accounting to share the booty (funds raised).

- In spite of potentially high pressure against such a transition to hundred percent accounting of expenses, it is imperative to transition to a system where 100% of expenses are accounted for as it is to build the basic foundation to building accountability within the organization.
- This can be achieved first at the State level by using the Tally Accounting Software networking the accounting and accounts of all state committees of IYC and NSUI which can be later extended to District Committees and to the Block Committees.
- The accounting entries should be done locally and the Tally Accounting Software will enable the automated consolidation of the accounts at the District, State and National levels.
- Appropriate auditing measures should be put in place using the services of Congress aligned audit firms who may be reimbursed the expenses to do the audit.

Further to this, clean, transparent and sustainable (where possible) sources of funding has to be identified, tapped and maintained so that the income side is built into the accountability systems within and outside the IYC and NSUI organizations at the earliest. Some of the options that may be considered for sustainable funding could be:

- Paid official individual email id's for IYC / NSUI
  - Even a Rs. 100 fee for assigning official IYC / NSUI email ids for a small base of 100,000 individual members across the country will fetch Rs. 10.00 Million (Rs. 1.00 Crore Annually).

- Paid web pages for every office bearer of IYC / NSUI
  - Even a Rs. 1000 fee for a web page per year charged to an office bearer for a small base of 10,000 office bearers across the country will fetch Rs. 10 Million (Rs. 1.00 Crore Annually)
  
- Centralized sales of all branded materials of IYC / NSUI including Flags, Banners, Business Cards, Letter Heads etc. This will also help in maintaining Branding effort throughout the country.
  - Estimating IYC / NSUI expenditure on flags, banners, promotional materials etc. @ Rs. 100,000.00 (1 Lac) per block for 6000 Blocks will mean an annual expense of Rs. 600.00 Million (Rs. 60.00 Crores). 10% Commission on this realized through a internet based order mechanism and an outsourced official supply chain will fetch Rs. 60.00 Million (Rs. 6.00 Crores)
  
- Internet based Online Fund Raising
  - Cause based fund raising efforts can be done through internet. Though the initial realization could be small due to low internet penetration in India at present, this is a future based initiative as can be seen from the exponential growth in internet based online fund raising efforts in the developed societies. Also, this could attract those segments of professionals who are removed from the party, IYC and NSUI to come closer.

- Branded Conferences, Seminars, Expos etc. (similar to ones organized by industry associations and media companies)

- Conferences, Seminars, Expos are a major source of revenue for the industry associations and media companies, for eg. Events, Conferences and Seminars by CII, Assocham, FICCI, India Today Conclave, HT Summit etc. IYC / NSUI can organize quality conferences, seminars, expos etc. through a special purpose vehicle (SPV) sister foundation formed for this purpose. This should be managed and run professionally with set topline and bottomline targets. Success of many of the conferences organized by the above referred organizations currently depend on participation from Congress leaders (Ministers etc.) which can be appropriately leveraged by ensuring that Congress leaders (Ministers etc.) give preference to conferences organized by the IYC / NSUI SPV. Estimates show that net surplus of Rs. 120.00 Million (Rs. 12.00 Crores) can be achieved in three years from start of this initiative if supported appropriately by the Congress leadership. In the initial days, such events can be organized even on a joint venture basis with the organizers sharing the surplus while building capacity within the SPV to organize and manage these events professionally and independently. This will also be a training ground for the IYC / NSUI leadership to professionally manage such events. The author's personal experience of organizing three conferences in the nascent field of Emergency Medical Service and Disaster Management clearly brings out the potential. The three events organized had topline over Rs. 5.00 Million (Rs. 50.00 Lacs) and bottomlines close to Rs. 1.00 Million (Rs. 10.00 Lacs).

- Training Programs

- There are several training programs conducted across the country on fee basis. IYC / NSUI can organize quality training programs in multiple fields through a special purpose vehicle (SPV) sister foundation formed for this purpose. This should be managed and run professionally with set topline and bottomline targets. Again, the experience from the training institution (virtual – with no physical infrastructure) in the field of EMS (Emergency Medical Service) and Life Support co-founded by the author in 2005 which had a revenue of Rs. 10.00 Million plus (Rs. 1.00 Crore plus) and a net surplus of Rs. 1.6 Million (Rs. 16.00 Lacs) last financial year is an example which can be replicated and scaled by IYC and NSUI in multiple fields across India.
  
- Sustainable Social Enterprises
  - Several Congress leaders have over the decades launched successful social enterprises in the fields of health, education, dairy etc with policy support from Congress Governments. Structured Financial Support from these organizations can grow on to become a vehicle of substantial funding for INC, IYC and NSUI over the next two decades or so separate from the financial support these organizations have become for individual leaders within and outside Congress Party.
  
- Co-branded Credit / Debit Cards
  - Several NGO's / Corporates use co-branded credit / debit cards relying on the loyalty of its members / customers to provide them with incentives while at the same time taking a share of the membership fees / revenues out of the card spend to bolster their fund raising efforts. This mode of funding brings in a painless contribution to the spender to support a cause of his / her liking. IYC / NSUI can launch co-branded credit / debit cards

for its members on negotiated terms with a credit / debit card issuing bank and collect a share of the revenues from the card spend.

## **Projects to keep the Members engaged – Modular, Granular and fulfilling the intrinsic motivation of the Member**

The disengagement of Indian youth from politics and civic matters is a serious discussion point however one evaluates it irrespective of the socio-economic strata they are from. It stems from the pervasive feeling that youngsters who have the means are only interested in having a good time and who does not have the means are stuck struggling to make their ends meet leading to young Indians' indifference to public affairs at large.

Though these perceptions persist, these could be wrong also. One explanation for this perception might simply be that this is the age-old generational griping where older generations think poorly of younger ones. Another explanation might be that there is an overall decline in civic life post the liberalization regime which is not just restricted to the youth. Possibly, a stronger reason for this perception of an apathetic generation has been the emerging cultural shift in the cable TV generation which is often blamed for leading the Indian youth down a path of hedonism, violence, vulgarity and most importantly to an indifference to the greater public good.

While perceptions remain so fairly strongly, today's Indian youth seem more than willing to lend a hand in volunteering at health camps, help others learn to read, clean up localities, plant trees etc. Yet, they shun politics – the very process that could produce solutions to each of these issues they are willing to lend a helping hand for. This effect of volunteering increasing rapidly among young people while political participation decreasing drastically points to a very important vacuum in Indian politics - the rapid, deep and broad withdrawal from politics of the youth generally and the talented one specifically.

Why would a generation so eager to be involved in volunteering refrain from political involvement? Most young people characterize their volunteering as an alternative to official politics which they see as corrupt, ineffective and unrelated to their deeper ideals. The youngsters have confidence in personalized acts with consequences they can see for themselves; they seem to have no confidence in collective acts, especially those undertaken through political parties whose operations they regard as remote, opaque and virtually impossible to contribute meaningfully. In other words, Indian youth is disengaged from the political parties because they feel marginalized within the political parties. In this situation, it is only natural that the younger generation has become cynical about the political party (whichever one) which value unbridled sycophancy than merit, hard work and democratic processes leading to further reaffirmation of their belief that the best way to make a true difference is to volunteer with a specific project rather than join the political fray.

One of the most important factors which turn off the present day generation is not being engaged. The new generation irrespective of the socio-economic strata is not interested in floating around... except for the few who do it for crumbs of power, money and other incentives within the present day Indian politics. To ensure plugging this gap, it is important for IYC and NSUI to provide structured result oriented causes to work for than provide a platform for the members to float around.

Natural or contingent, it is nevertheless a fact of the modern day networked society that individuals – susceptible as they are to acting on diverse motivations, in diverse relationships, some market based, some social – possess and control the physical capacity necessary to make effective the human capacities they uniquely and individually possess to connect with a common cause. (Wealth of Networks, Yochai Benkler) Individuals are not monolithic agents. While society may like to categorize

individuals as avaricious money grubbers, power mongers, altruistic saints or social climbers, the reality of the vast majority is that most individuals are a composite of each of the above categorizations. Irrespective of the degree of the combination within each individual, every individual do choose to act in some way at some point in their life that is oriented towards satisfying his / her social and psychological needs of self fulfillment.

Children, teenagers, retirees and very rich individuals can spend most of their time volunteering or in social / political activities if they choose to; but most people cannot be tied down in volunteering even if they want to because they are trying to make their ends meet. While creative capacity and talent are universally distributed in a population, available time and attention are not and individual human capacity to contribute cannot be fully dedicated to non market, non-proprietary activities all the time. Most people need to work for money most of his / her time. Yet, there remain large quantity of time, capacity and interest in individuals available to be used for activities whose rewards are not monetary or monetizable, directly or indirectly but meeting their needs of self fulfillment.

- For this excess capacity to be harnessed and made effective on a large scale, the project or initiative must effectively integrate widely dispersed contributions from millions of individuals with relatively varying available time, capacity and interest in each one of them. These contributions, for obvious reasons, will be diverse in their quality, quantity, focus, timing and geographic location.
- The success of nationwide initiatives by IYC and NSUI will depend on the adoption of structural and organizational architectures that allows pooling of such diverse and dispersed efforts to create a pan Indian national movement. IYC and NSUI need to launch activities which the youth

of today can connect to, stay engaged, feel valued and satisfied from their contribution while at the same time structuring and organizing these initiatives to be both modular and granular to ensure implementation across the nation right from the grass root level to the national level.

- 'Modularity' in an initiative is a property of a project or initiative that describes the extent to which it can be broken down into smaller components, or modules, that can be independently pursued or implemented before they are assembled or aggregated into a whole. If modules are independent, individual contributors can choose what, when and how to contribute to the project / initiative independently of each other. This maximizes their autonomy and flexibility to define the nature, extent and timing of their participation in the project / initiative. For example, comprehensive development of a poor slum area can be planned but its implementation can be in modules to enable volunteers to take it up at scales at which they can contribute within their constraints.
- 'Granularity' refers to the size of the modules, in terms of the time and effort an individual must invest in pursuing or implementing them. More people can participate in say, for example, in writing a protest letter to the Chief Minister of a State opposing a policy than participate in a rally organized in the State Capital (which requires organizational effort and travel) against the same policy. The number of people who can, in principle, participate in a project is therefore inversely related to the size of the smallest scale contribution necessary to pursue / implement a usable module of the project / initiative. The granularity of the modules therefore sets the smallest possible investment necessary to participate in a project / initiative. If this investment required is sufficiently low, then the 'incentives' required for ensuring participation in pursuing / implementing that component of a modular project can be also of trivially low magnitude.

- As stated earlier, it is important that IYC and NSUI launch nationwide projects / initiatives / plans which are modular and granular making it easy for the youngsters to involve in it at their own terms and time constraints while at the same time connecting with the youth, keeping them engaged, making them feel valued and giving them a sense of contribution to the project / initiative / cause.
- The author has put forth a project report for a Nationwide Blood Donor program which fits these requirements as one example of a social focus initiative which can be taken up by both IYC and NSUI to engage with the Indian youth. A draft initial presentation on the Blood Donor project is enclosed in Annexure V.

## Key Success Factors required in implementation of this

### Roadmap for IYC and NSUI

Success of this plan is dependent on a number of factors which among many others includes commitment of the current leadership, sufficient funding to implement the plan in its entirety and widespread adoption of internet / mobile telephony.

When such leadership initiatives which span both adaptive and technical challenges to effect fundamental and structural change in an organization is undertaken, it will undoubtedly generate considerable amount of heat internally and among the entrenched interests. It is important to have a holding environment within the organization to contain and adjust the heat that gets generated in this change process. A holding environment is a space formed by a network of relationships within which people can tackle tough, sometimes divisive questions without flying apart. In the INC, IYC and NSUI context, Rahul Gandhi himself will have to back this change initiative and provide backing to the network of relationships developed to effect this change process. **The commitment from the top leadership has to be unflinching and complete.** An example of the holding environment may be characterized by a clear set of rules and processes that give minority voices enough confidence that they will be heard without having to disrupt the proceedings to gain attention and traction.

Another important success factor of this plan is access and availability of internet to the members of the organization irrespective of their socio, economic and political backgrounds and standings. While it is clear that there is tremendous growth in mobile telephony, the spread and depth of internet is still slow and it will quite possibly take another generation before it becomes deeply and

widely available to the masses in India. **The lack of depth of internet is indeed a serious constraint in taking this plan to fruition in the parent party and even in Youth Congress but this is not a constraint whatsoever in successfully implementing this plan in NSUI as every member of NSUI is expected to be a student who even if does not have access to internet at present can be motivated to get access in the course of his academic pursuits wherever located in India.**

Another important factor which will determine the success of this plan is **the notion of 'proactive membership'**. Proactive membership requires individual members of the organization to play an active role in the democratic process within the organization by engaging in online discussion forums, participating in debates and offering their expertise so that issues may be explored and addressed in a consensual manner to the extent possible. The loss of space by both IYC and NSUI among the Indian Youth and students suggest serious apathy and disengagement of the youth and students from Youth Congress and NSUI respectively. In order to re-invigorate these two organizations, it will be necessary for the youth and students to re-engage with Youth Congress and NSUI led by the fresh and committed efforts towards true inner organization democratic practices. Some of the best practices of successful engagement of youth and students to political parties around the world based on multiple studies which can be replicated in IYC and NSUI are enlisted below:

1. Importance of Leadership at the lowest level
2. Target Youth and Students at their Turf – where they are already involved
3. Get Youth and Students involved in the party meetings also. Don't restrict them to just youth and student events
4. Give youngsters meaningful volunteer work – Young people are restless. If they feel they are wasting time 'just floating around', they will disengage or not participate at all.

5. Make it Fun wherever possible – Even if the work is hard work, find ways to make it fun – a party after the work or an informal get-together etc.
6. Make use of different outreach technologies – Youngsters are at the forefront of adapting to technology. Use modern and innovative technologies to reach out to youngsters especially mobile telephony and internet
7. Peer to Peer Programs are effective – Youngsters connect more with other young people. Simply put, youngsters listen to each other. Use youngsters to connect with more youngsters
8. Reward Achievement – When their efforts are recognized, the youngsters feel better about their efforts and are even more eager to make a difference.
9. Link up with like-minded non-political youth groups – There are a number of organizations out there doing good work with great work in the field. IYC and NSUI should connect with them and build activities together.
10. Combine Service with Political Activity – Youngsters like to give to the community if they find avenues for it. Instead of competing with this natural desire among the youngsters to make a difference, IYC and NSUI should combine service activities with their work to attract the youngsters who are looking for avenues to contribute by serving the community.

## **IMPERATIVE TO REFORM IYC & NSUI – TIME TO ACT IS NOW**

Indian National Congress, IYC and NSUI face several serious and grave challenges at this juncture. Sonia Gandhi, President of Indian National Congress and Rahul Gandhi, General Secretary, Indian National Congress (in charge of IYC and NSUI) have understood and appreciated the stark realities facing Indian National Congress in contemporary Indian politics. "Neither Rahul nor I have a magic wand. What has to happen is with the cooperation of all and each one of you. We have to take every step after giving due thought and then I am sure we will achieve our destination." (Sonia Gandhi, Speech at AICC Session, November 2007)

The first and foremost challenge facing Indian National Congress is the current political scenario. When Rajiv Gandhi was inducted in politics in the early 80s, Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. The Congress party was in power at the Centre as well as in several states. Today, the Congress party is leading a coalition government at the federal level for the first time. Coalition politics demands different dynamics linking up with regional and caste based parties and leaders. It also means the challenge of rebuilding the party organization has to be taken up at the regional / local level without stepping on the shoes of the regional and caste based parties and leaders with whom the Congress party has to work proactively to make the coalition government work in New Delhi in a functional manner.

The second challenge facing Indian National Congress is that while the party is universally positioned to be inclusive of all sections of the society and Rahul Gandhi considers himself above caste, the ground reality is different. The party has to work in a caste ridden and regional sentiment based society where votes are cast on caste / regional lines. For this, the party needs to identify, groom and

promote leaders representing various sections of the society who are firmly rooted at the grass root levels in the caste / regional groupings.

The third challenge faced by the party is to convert the goodwill enjoyed by Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi across India into votes for the Congress party candidates on Election Day at polling booths across the country. While the road shows of both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in UP, Gujarat and other states in India have been an unqualified success, this has not translated into votes for the Congress party candidates primarily due to the organizational weakness of the party organization at the grass root levels.

The fourth challenge faced by the Congress party is how to attract the youth to the Congress. The youth population in India is about 65 per cent at present. ([www.censusindia.gov.in](http://www.censusindia.gov.in)) The youth of today want imagination, performance and coolness. While the Gandhi name and his age gives an initial advantage to Rahul Gandhi, this alone will not be enough. The party requires a dream, a vision, mission on the ground, imaginative and inclusive programs, attractive membership campaign, transparent career progression path, accountability and performance based rewards to attract the youth of the nation to its fold.

The fifth challenge faced by the Congress party is the extra cautious approach of both Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in putting initiatives, projects and ideas to work at the ground level. This may be a reflection of the learnings from the high speed action oriented agenda followed by Rajiv Gandhi during his days in the Congress leadership which resulted in several hits (successes) but also several misses (failures). It may also be the fear stemming from violation of trust and confidence placed in key confidantes by Rajiv Gandhi while delegating serious work and major initiatives. In this context, it is to

be remembered here that no leader be it from the field of politics, business, science or any other field has had 100% success in their lives. It is better to correct as one act than not act at all for fear of not getting it right the first time. Further, no work of the kind that has to be done in India if India is to be taken to leadership position can be got done without adequate delegation of power and responsibility to get things done.

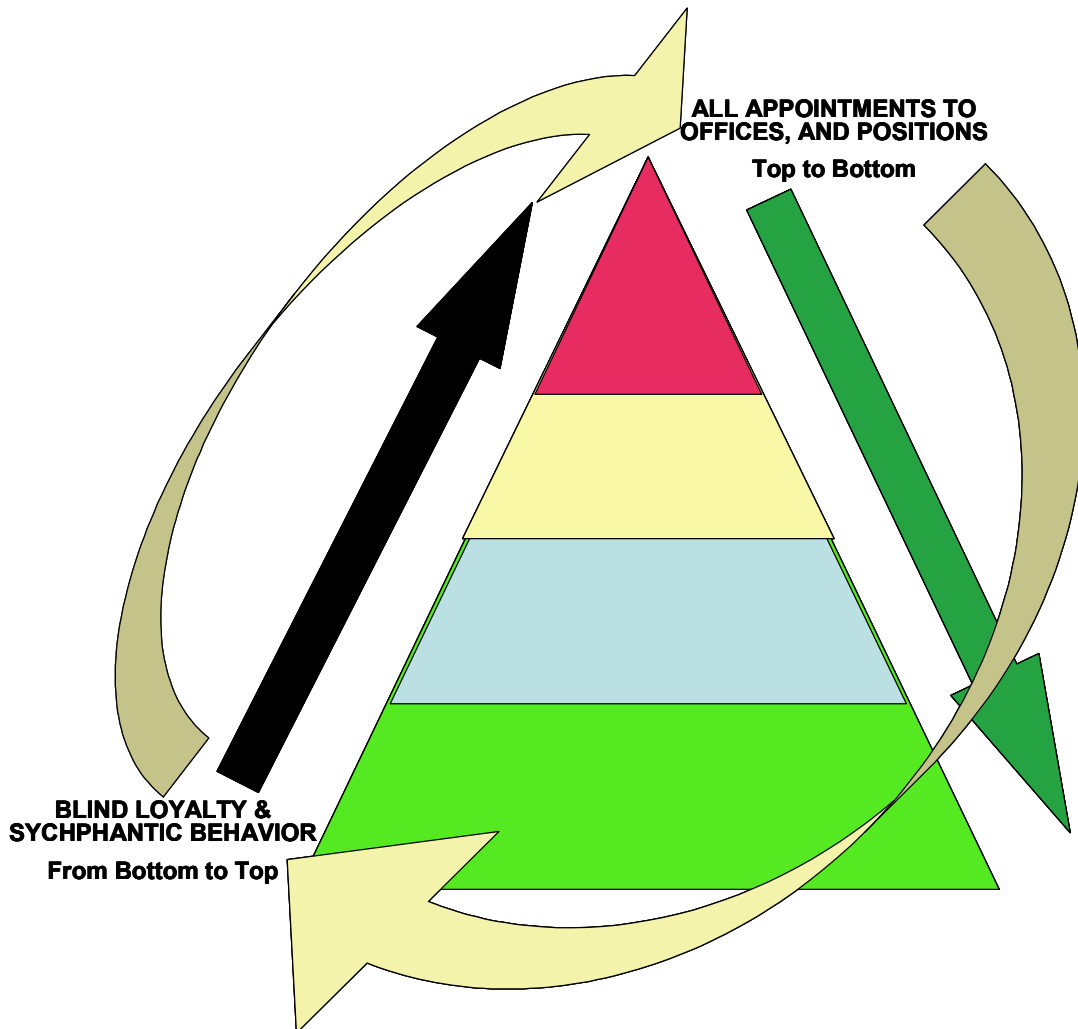
It is widely recognized in Indian intellectual and media circles that the Gandhi Family members in leadership positions in Indian National Congress are best placed to provide a combination of moral pulls and pushes to re-institutionalize inner party democracy, accountability and merit / performance based reward system into the Indian Political party setup due to their sheer nationwide following and unchallenged leadership position within Indian National Congress party. Incumbent leaderships in other parties may be averse to it fearing being overthrown by potential challengers from within the party itself if they institutionalized free, fair and transparent inner party democracy. (Opinion formed by the author based on specific discussions with leading political analysts and media personnel on the issue.) Thus, the historical responsibility on the shoulders of the current members of the Gandhi family in leadership positions in Indian National Congress is unparalleled at this point in India's history.

**To meet these challenges, it is imperative that IYC and NSUI reform its structure, working, culture, processes and transparency levels immediately and Rahul Gandhi takes leadership for this transformation NOW.**

**To conclude, 'IT IS TIME FOR ACTION NOW IN IYC and NSUI. No more Analysis. No more Paralysis. ACT NOW.**

## Appendix I

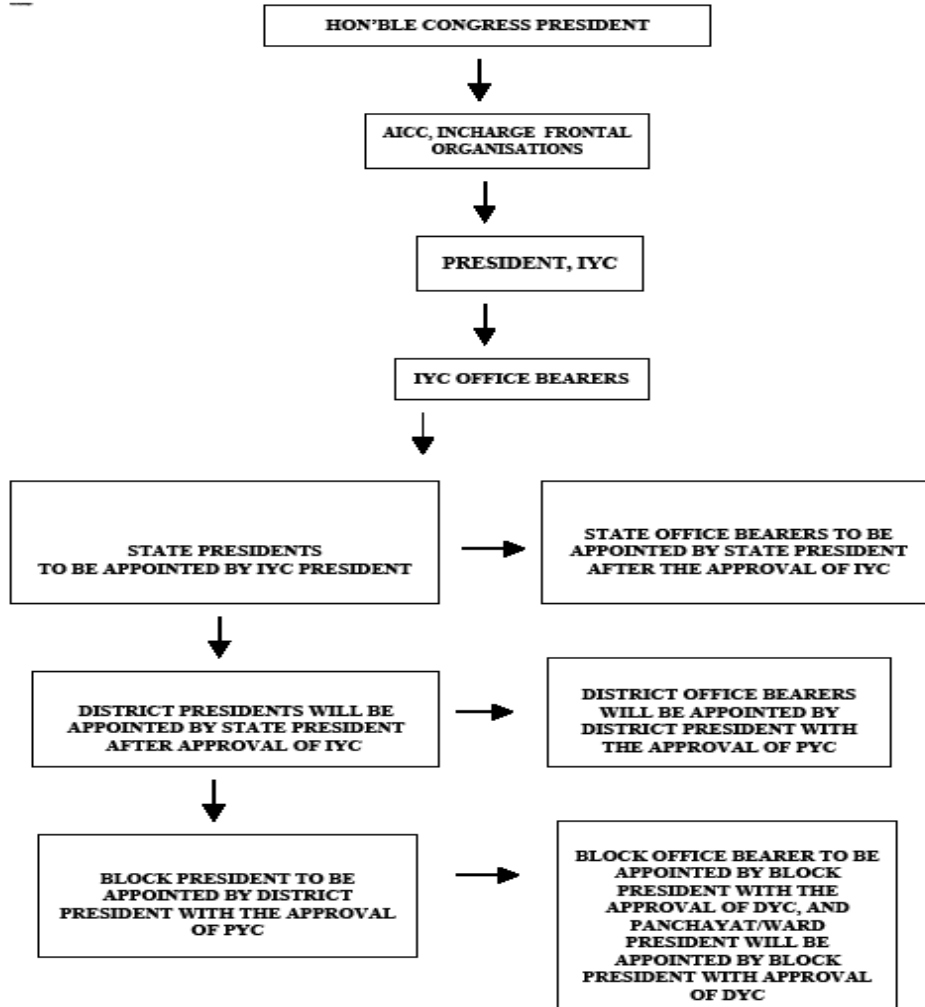
### SYSTEMS DIAGRAM OF THE REWARD SYSTEM WITHIN INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES GENERATING BLIND LOYALTY & SYCHOPHANTIC BEHAVIOR



**CATCH 22 Situation in Indian Political Parties / Indian National Congress where blind loyalty and sycophantic behavior gets the party member rewards from Higher Officials in a Top-Down Appointment to Office system in the party further demanding blind loyalty and sycophantic behavior to get further rewards in terms of Office, Position and Power (based on work done by Mather, Shaffi, 2007 on sycophantic behavior in Indian Political Parties)**

## Appendix II

### STRUCTURE OF INDIAN YOUTH CONGRESS



**NOTE:-** YOU ARE HEREWITH DIRECTED TO FOLLOW THE GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS IN TOTO, ANY FAILURE WILL BE TREATED AS AN ACT OF INDICIPLINE

Source: Retrieved December 04, 2008, from website: [www.indianyouthcongress.in](http://www.indianyouthcongress.in)

## **Appendix III**

### **Membership Database Structure - Fields**

The Membership Database shall consist of the following fields:

First Name

Middle Name

Last Name

Initials (if any)

Date of Birth

Residential Address:

Street and House No.

Village / Town / City

District

State

Pin Code

Gram Panchayat (if applicable)

Block Panchayat (if applicable)

District Panchayat (if applicable)

Municipality / Corporation / Mahanagarpalika (if applicable)

Legislative Assembly Constituency

Parliament Constituency

Election Commission ID No.

Election Commission ID (Scanned)

Blood Group

Office Held in the Party

Ward

Mandal

Block

District

State

National

Year of joining Party

Has the member left the party at anytime

If yes, From Year – To Year

Membership Verified by:

Name (of the person verifying the Membership):

EC ID No. (of the person verifying Membership)

## Appendix IV

### **ANNOUNCING CONGRESS NATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS**

**Duration: 1, 2 & 3 Years**

**Qualification: Outstanding performer in any field under the age of 40**

The Indian National Congress Party is seeking talented individuals with deep commitment, high integrity and dedication to serve India by assisting and supporting Congress Leadership in creating innovative solutions to address the pressing challenges faced by different sections of society with a particular focus on the underprivileged. An important qualification is knowledge of and experience in systems and processes to hold together at the backend each endeavor initiated by the Congress Party and its leaders leveraging the creativity, energy and passion of millions of our committed fellow country men and women.

#### **Why the Congress National Fellowship?**

In order to build a new India of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – one that holds leadership positions in the world across sectors, India must unleash unparalleled growth across all sectors of its economy and society while taking care of the economically underprivileged and socially disadvantaged which requires new creative ways to channel her youthful and talented energy. Indian National Congress has taken leadership role to accomplish the goal of building a modern India since the freedom struggle and is instituting a fresh set of organizational processes to align itself with the demands of a youthful India seeking her rightful place in the comity of nations. To support its current and new initiatives, at the National, State and District levels, Indian National Congress requires individuals with strong administrative and operational skills as well as experience in bottom of the pyramid services and a personal desire to see new social, political and economic systems to meet the growing needs of all Indian citizens with a particular focus on those that are underprivileged.

#### **What Being a Congress Fellow Means?**

Starting in August 2008, Indian National Congress is launching Congress Fellowships at the National, State and District levels to provide extraordinary young individuals with an opportunity to use their skills to effect real social, political and economic change by working closely with Congress Party Leadership at the National, State and District Levels across India and to build lasting relationships with other like-minded individuals to support the nation's growth and progress in the coming years.

The Congress Fellowship begins with two weeks of intensive leadership training in Delhi and State Capitals. Training topics include Indian political scenarios; operational challenges in the short, medium and long term hindering India's growth; high impact service models for poor and rural populations; and data capture and analysis. The Fellows also meet with leaders from diverse fields (political, social,

business, civil society, media, academics as well as leading writers and thinkers) and explore issues related to effecting positive high impact change across India.

Over the course of the fellowship, each Fellow will apply their skills while enjoying an unusual level of responsibility both at the Indian National Congress and our Partner Organizations. Each Fellow will be assigned to a specific project to support the Congress, Youth Congress organizations and senior Congress leaders to solve critical socio-political and economic issues, including poverty alleviation, education and health initiatives, social integration, capacity building, party building, reinforcement of processes and systems, etc.

Over the course of the fellowship, Fellows will be expected to stay in touch formally during quarterly meetings in Delhi or the State Capital and informally to share lessons learned and insights about how best to create change for India. Additionally, there will be significant discussion and networking for full time job opportunities in business, civil society and social entrepreneurship. Finally, at the end of the fellowship, the Fellows return to New Delhi or the State Capital for two weeks to share experiences with each other as well as the leadership of the Indian National Congress Party.

The fellowships will provide an unparalleled opportunity to develop and implement on the ground solutions to address problems of poverty, creative rural initiatives, education and health challenges across India by managing organizational settings in the most demanding and severely constrained environments.

### **What is life post the Fellowship?**

Ideal Congress Fellows include those who are committed to a stint in the socio-political sector for short or medium term and are firmly rooted in Congress ideals and policies. After the fellowship, fellows will be expected to seek a career at the highest levels in the corporate and social sectors. **It may be noted that Congress National Fellowships are not fast track entry programs either into organizational officebearership or electoral opportunities.**

### **How to Become a Fellow?**

The application process details and deadlines are available at [www.congressfellowships.org](http://www.congressfellowships.org) (mock website address)