ALL INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE
24, AKBAR ROAD, NEW DELHI
COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Highlights of Speech **16 Nov, 2026**

Shri Rahul Gandhi, Leader of Opposition (Lok Sabha), spoke during official launch of Smt. Sonia Gandhi's memoir, 'Belonging: A Journey of Love', in New Delhi today.

Shri Rahul Gandhi said- I have got very strict orders, which I am going to follow. No politics, but as a son, I thought… or as children, I thought one of us should give a little flavour of my mother as well.

I was looking at that picture (pointing towards a picture) and there is another picture of Mum upside down…hanging upside down from a swing, and that was in Cambridge. And that's our mother when we were small. There was quite a lot of mythology about my parents. One of the big stories was their meeting in Varsity Restaurant and how they met in this restaurant.

Many years later, I happened to be in Cambridge and I told my girlfriend- let's go to Varsity Restaurant. She had no idea about what this was and I said- let's go to Varsity Restaurant. So, we went there. I wanted to see where my parents had met. We walk in there. I still remember yellow coloured door. There was a gentleman standing there, he says- how many people? I said- two. And he said- go and sit down. I sat down. They got the menu and I said- you know, my parents met at this restaurant, and he just looked at me and he said- oh, them… I know them.

And I was like- what do you know about them? He says- oh those two, I know exactly who you are talking about. Then I asked him- listen, what is good on the menu? And he said- Chicken Chasseur is good in the menu. So, I said - well, you know what we will do? We will have two of those. And we had the chicken. And listen, if you want to fall in love, go to Varsity Restaurant… never eat the Chicken Chasseur in Varsity Restaurant. Because they seem to remember that

the food was fantastic, they seem to remember it was brilliant… the food is horrible. So, that was one flavour.

The second flavour- I see Amarinder Singh Ji here. Look, you will not believe me, when I say this and you can ask my sister. We saw them argue, but we only saw them fight once. Correct? And coincidence of coincidences… my father was speaking to Amrinder Singh Ji on the phone when it happened. You remember that? That was the only time we ever saw them fight. Papa was speaking to Amarinder Singh, Mama was trying to say something. She repeated herself 3 or 4 times and Papa was obviously stressed, so he got angry… so that was the fight.

And I have never seen this in another house. Every meal, there would be Papa and on Papa's lap, there would be Mama. Now, I thought this was normal thing. So, I would go to my friend's house and they wouldn't be sitting in each other's lap and I asked my friends, "Guys, like what is going on? Why is your mother not sitting in your father's lap?" And the staff was there, they were oblivious… at lunch time, dinner time, Mama was sitting on Papa's lap. So, this is what we grew up with.

And then we saw it get smashed… not just over time, suddenly. We saw one of our anchors, who was our anchor, get shot and then we saw our biggest anchor get blown to pieces. She is…. I have heard a lot about memory here; I constantly have this argument with mother- you have a perfect memory. My mother says- no, I don't have a good memory. She never-never-never forgets anything, except one thing… if you ask her what happened when Papa died, she has no memory of it. What you read in the book has been pieced together by my sister and her.

And so, this wonderful life, this wonderful love that they had… in one day, it disappeared and it was a terrifying period for her. Because she knew it what is going to happen. So, the book 'Belonging'… she belonged to my father and my father belonged to her, and then my father disappeared. And then she began another journey... different mother. The fun-loving mother, the smiling mother disappeared… new mother came. Why- because literally the flame of her life had gone out. I cannot put it in any other way.

So, she went from… everybody thinks my mother is an introvert… she is not an introvert at all, she is complete extrovert. She was an extrovert. She will talk to anybody, she will speak about anything to anybody until the day my

grandmother died and then even more so, when my father died… then she becomes… she goes into herself. And then I have seen it.

Then suddenly a new door opens. Which door opens- the door of people of India and they turn around… and I am not talking about 50-70 haters. I am talking about the millions of people that my mom mentioned about… in the villages, they suddenly turn around and tell her that you belong to us. And so, for me, what I like about this book is the thing has come full circle. That what you are reading in this book is my mom before Papa died. The expression is that type of expression, so for me… it's a very powerful thing. Not once, I will tell you, she has written twice cancer survivor, three times cancer- right! She is 4 times cancer survivor. So, she plays it all down. Not once… not once in my life have I seen her scared, not once have I seen her back down and so I wanted to… she told me- no, you are going to say something political; I said- no, I am not going to say something political, but the reason I wanted to give this 3 minute-5 minute speech is because Mummy, Papa loved you, but I cannot even tell you how proud he would be of you.

Thank you!

Sd/-
Secretary
Communication Deptt.
AICC