

Rahul Gandhi Says Women Belong To Themselves, Rejects Manusmriti's Prescription About Their Identity

PUNE, AUG 22: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday said that women belong to themselves and not to their fathers, husbands or sons, and termed as shameful the Manusmriti's norm that a woman should remain under the authority of male relatives at every stage of her life.

India's biggest strength is the "70 crore unique journeys, unique imagination, unique dreams" of its women, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said, speaking at his party's youth outreach programme 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' here. History "I (would) like to quote here the Manusmriti, which says clearly that in childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth she belongs to her husband and, when her lord is dead, she belongs to her sons. A woman must never be independent. These words are a shame. These words should not have been spoken," Gandhi said.

Women are the country's biggest asset, he said, adding that they should stand for themselves and believe in themselves.



"You belong to nobody, except yourself. You have a relationship with your father, brother, husband, your son, but you do not belong to them, and you belong to yourself," Gandhi said.

He had come to the city not to lecture or discuss politics, but to allow young people to express what they felt and discuss their ideas, he said at the programme held on the ground of a local college where young women were present in large num-

bers. Calling on the audience to "break the cage", Gandhi told the youth that every individual is unique and has their own dreams and vision. "You are unique, you are special, you are individual, and you have your own dream and vision," he said.

Explaining why he considered women a greater asset of the country, Gandhi said, "My logic is that women are by nature more sensitive, more gentle, more compassionate and more forward-

looking than men."

Women were often confined to three identities, daughter, wife or mother, the Congress leader said, adding that while there was nothing wrong with these relationships, these could not be their only identity.

Women become professionals and sportspersons and are active in several fields, but their identities are often defined through their relationships with men, Gandhi pointed out.

'Paise Ki Goonj': BJP Claims Cong Paid Influencers To Draw Crowds For Rahul Gandhi's Event

MUMBAI, AUG 22: The BJP on Saturday dubbed Rahul Gandhi's student event in Pune as "Paise Ki Goonj", alleging that the Congress had paid social media influencers to mobilise crowds, triggering a fiery response from the Opposition, which claimed the saffron party feared the growing Gen Z support.

While BJP spokesperson Navnath Ban alleged that the Congress had spent nearly Rs 10 crore to buy attendance by paying up to Rs 35,000 per influencer for the "Chhatron Ki Goonj" programme, Opposition leader Sachin Sawant retorted that BJP leaders were terrified of Gandhi's growing influence among youngsters.

Gandhi is slated to hold a "Chhatron Ki Goonj" event specifically dedicated to female students in Pune on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP's Maharashtra headquarters here, Ban alleged that the Congress was trying to create an impression of a spontaneous public response to Gandhi's 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme by paying people to attend it and promote it on social media.

He claimed videos had surfaced showing offers of Rs 30,000 to Rs 35,000 to social media influencers to promote the Pune event, covering their travel expenses and promoting the programme

online.

"The programme is not 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' but 'Paise Ki Goonj'. The Congress is gathering crowds with money," Ban alleged.

He claimed that if around 3,000 people were paid Rs 30,000 to Rs 35,000 each, the total expenditure could work out to between Rs 9 crore and Rs 10 crore. Downloading Interactive Geographic Maps

"Where has this money come from? Who is providing it and through whom is it being distributed? What is the official account of this money?" he questioned.

The BJP spokesperson demanded a detailed investigation into the source of the funds and questioned whether they had any link to foreign funding or money allegedly diverted through contracts, commissions or other financial transactions in Congress-ruled states.

He also sought an inquiry into the organisations and individuals allegedly involved in distributing the money.

BJP Maharashtra vice-president Keshav Upadhyay alleged that Gandhi's Pune programme was an attempt to create a political platform by using students' issues.

"Though the programme is called 'Chhatron Ki Goonj', it is actually Rahul Gandhi's political battle," Upadhyay said, claiming that the Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition

had lost 100 elections, but had still failed to find a clear political direction.

"Rahul Gandhi has not been able to find a concrete issue against the Narendra Modi government at the Centre.

Despite making allegations and counter-allegations about fake narratives and trying various political experiments, people are not ready to trust him," he said.

Hitting back at the BJP, State Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant claimed that the ruling party was "rattled" by the growing response Gandhi was receiving from the youth, particularly Gen Z. He accused the saffron party of trying to create obstacles for the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme in Pune.

Sawant said BJP leaders appeared to be as apprehensive of Gandhi as Mughal forces were of Maratha warriors Santaji Ghorpade and Dhanaji Jadhav.

"The BJP has become so rattled by Rahul Gandhi that its leaders perhaps see him in their dreams, just as Santaji and Dhanaji appeared in the dreams of Mughal forces," Sawant said in a statement.

He also alleged that authorities in Uttar Pradesh had released sewage water near the venue of Gandhi's programme in Prayagraj to discourage youngsters from attending.

The Maharashtra govern-

ment had imposed several restrictions on the Pune event, he claimed, alleging that members of the ABVP had indulged in "high-handedness" on Friday.

"No matter how much they protest or try to create obstacles, Gen Z will tell the country that the BJP has been rejected," Sawant said, adding that Gandhi would continue on his political course.

Meanwhile, NCP (SP) leader Mahesh Tapase accused the ABVP of creating hurdles for students participating in the Pune event, and accused the BJP of displaying "intellectual bankruptcy" by questioning the programme.

Tapase said the country functions through dialogue and there was no reason for the BJP to be apprehensive about a programme aimed at raising issues concerning students and youth.

"If Rahul Gandhi is holding the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme to raise his voice against injustice being done to youth and students, why is the BJP afraid of it?" he remarked.

"Under the Constitution, citizens have the right to decide which views they want to hear, accept or reject. The youth of the country have now decided to reject the BJP's ideology, and that is why the BJP is rattled," Tapase said. (Agencies)

Yamanashi announces Rs600-Cr fund to support MSMEs in UP; Yogi unveils dedicated Japan Investment Desk

LUCKNOW, AUG 22 : Uttar Pradesh and Japan advanced their partnership on Friday with four MoUs on skills, technical training, tourism and Japanese Global Capability Centres (GCCs), along with a Rs600-crore fund announced by Yamanashi to support UP's MSME sector.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also announced a dedicated Yamanashi Desk at Invest UP and regular coordination with JETRO and JICA to facilitate Japanese investment.

The announcements were made at the Japan-India Business Networking Event at Indira Gandhi

Pratishthan, Lucknow, attended by Yamanashi Governor Kotaro Nagasaki, Japanese business leaders and senior Uttar Pradesh ministers and officials.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the partnership with Japan must move beyond investment discussions towards structured, long-term cooperation.

He said the Rs600-crore Yamanashi fund would support Uttar Pradesh's MSMEs, while the dedicated Yamanashi Desk at Invest UP would provide a focused channel for investors and businesses from the prefecture.

Regular coordination with

JETRO and JICA, he said, would help identify opportunities, address investor concerns and accelerate project implementation.

The first was exchanged between 'Invest UP and the Technical Training & Research Centre, Kanpur,' focusing on technical training and workforce development. Shuichi Kamada, Director, Japan Technical Training Centre, was felicitated along with three Uttar Pradesh-domiciled trainees placed in Japan, highlighting the growing skills and employment linkage between the two sides.

The second MoU was between Tourism Department

and Japan to promote Buddhist-based investments.

The third MoU, between Invest UP and representatives of Yamanashi Prefecture, aims to strengthen collaboration and promote the establishment of Japanese GCCs in Uttar Pradesh.

The partnership is expected to create opportunities in technology, business services, digital operations and high-value employment.

The fourth agreement, between the Labour Department, and representatives of Yamanashi Prefecture, focuses on ensuring a consistent supply of Japanese-language-proficient workforce.

Nitin Nabin Holds First Meeting With BJP's New National Team

NEW DELHI, AUG 22: BJP national president Nitin Nabin on Saturday held the first meeting with the party's newly appointed national office-bearers to discuss poll strategy and grassroots outreach, party sources said.

The meeting focused on preparations for upcoming state assembly elections, grassroots mobilisation and communicating government initiatives to the public, the sources said.

More meetings are scheduled later in the day, with state presidents, state in-charges and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states expected to attend, they said.

The BJP announced a new national team under Nabin



earlier this week. It comprises 65 office-bearers, with 51 new faces.

The new team includes 13 national vice presidents, including former Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara

Raje Scindia and former RSS functionary Ram Madhav, while former Union minister Smriti Irani has been appointed as one of the eight national general secretaries. B.L. Santhosh has been re-

tained as national general secretary (organisation) and Vinod Tawde and Sunil Bansal as general secretaries.

The new team includes 12 women and six leaders from minority communities.

Union minister Piyush Goyal has been named national treasurer, a post he held before becoming a minister in the first Narendra Modi government in May 2014.

The BJP removed Amit Malviya as the head of its IT department and appointed Deepak Mhaskey of Chhattisgarh in his place. Hemang Joshi of Gujarat has been named the party's Yuva Morcha president, replacing Lok Sabha MP Tejasvi Surya.

'Risks Weakening Worker Safeguards': Cong On SC's Recent Industry Definition Judgement

NEW DELHI, Aug 22: The Congress on Saturday expressed concern over a Supreme Court ruling that stated that its 1978 worker-friendly interpretation of the term "industry" will not apply to fresh cases under the Industrial Relations Code of 2020, and said any move to narrow or distance the law from the broad definition of "industry" risks weakening worker safeguards.

Congress general secretary in charge of communications, Jairam Ramesh, claimed that the Modi government's Industrial Relations Code, 2020, "significantly weakens essential safeguards for our workers".

Against this backdrop, a narrow majority of the Supreme Court, in State of Uttar Pradesh versus Jai Bir Singh delivered on August 20, 2026, has "hypothesised" a reformulation of the Triple Test laid down in its earlier landmark February 1978 verdict in the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board versus A Rajappa case, Ramesh said on X.

The importance of how "industry" is interpreted lies in the legal reality of who qualifies as a workman and, consequently, who receives the protections of labour law, he said.

"In the 1978 Bangalore Water Supply case, the Supreme Court identified three elements that ordinarily characterise an industry: a systematic activity; cooperation between employer and employee; and production or distribution of goods or services calculated to satisfy human wants and wishes, excluding purely spiritual or religious services," he said.

It also held that the absence of profit motive is irrelevant, and activities carried out by charitable institutions or public bodies may still fall within the definition, Mr. Ramesh pointed out.

"For nearly five decades, this Triple Test provided a broad and settled framework for determining what constitutes an 'industry' under the erstwhile Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, as amended from time to time, bringing a wide range of workers within the protection of labour law," he said.

The 2026 majority judgment narrows this approach in two important ways by requiring an activity to have a "discernible commercial character" resembling trade or business – an additional requirement not found in the earlier test; and by broadening the scope of the sovereign-function exemption,

potentially placing a wider range of government activities outside the definition of "industry", Mr. Ramesh said.

The Supreme Court has clarified that this reformulation will not disturb concluded or pending proceedings under the erstwhile Industrial Disputes Act, as amended from time to time, and will not govern interpretation of the new Industrial Relations Code, he said.

But leaving this "hypothesis" on the record creates an interpretive vacuum that could open a Pandora's Box of litigation and uncertainty, particularly before labour courts and industrial tribunals, Mr. Ramesh said.

This leaves space for a narrower definition to take hold in practice, especially when the Industrial Relations Code already empowers the Central government to exclude further categories of establishments from its ambit, he argued.

"Justice B.V. Nagarathna's dissent is, as always, courageous, clear and compelling. She has held that the Triple Test in the Bangalore Water Supply case required no reconsideration and, in the interest of judicial certainty, cautioned against unsettling settled law," the Congress leader said.

Akhilesh must apologise to Jats for insulting family of Charan Singh: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, AUG 22: BSP supremo Mayawati on Saturday said that Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav must apologise to the entire Jat community for his "derogatory" remarks against the RLD and its president Jayant Chaudhary, grandson of former prime minister late Charan Singh.

In a post on X, Mayawati said Yadav's public remark about his former ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) and its leader and Union minister Jayant Chaudhary that "we turned them from 'chavanni' (quarter) into a rupee" was "completely improper, indecent and highly shameful". Downloading Interactive Geographic Maps

She said Yadav should apologise not only to the RLD and its leader but also to the entire Jat community for insulting the family of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh.

Prominent peasant leader Charan Singh served as the prime minister from July 1979 to January 1980. His son and Jayant's father, late Ajit Singh, was a former Union minister.

Mayawati also alleged that the SP has remained narrow-minded, marked by caste-based animosity, not only towards rival parties but also towards its allies.

She claimed its politics often benefited the BJP elec-



torally and weakened the secular forces.

to the 1993 SP-BSP alliance, Mayawati claimed it broke down because of the arrogant attitude of the SP, resulting in the 1995 Lucknow state guest house incident.

In June 1995, BSP leaders and workers were allegedly attacked by SP supporters at the state guest house here amid tensions following the collapse of the SP-BSP alliance, with Mayawati alleging that there was a conspiracy to kill her.

She also recalled the 2019 alliance for the Lok Sabha elections between the SP and the BSP, claiming that that too ended because of Akhilesh Yadav's arrogant and self-serving attitude after the union failed to achieve expected electoral results.

Mayawati also accused the SP of using alliances only for its own political interests and changing its stance once its

purpose was served.

Targeting the SP's PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alp-sankhyak) formula, she alleged that Yadav changed the meaning of 'P' according to his political interests, sometimes projecting it as the voice of the backward classes and at times as representing the interests of Brahmins.

She alleged that the previous SP governments failed to take positive steps for Dalits, backward classes, minorities and upper-caste communities, particularly Brahmins, and instead benefited "goons, criminals, mafias and other anarchic elements".

Mayawati also urged people across communities to remain cautious of what she described as the SP's "narrow and casteist politics" and appealed to voters to ensure that the party does not return to power after next year's Assembly elections.

Late on Friday night,

She also rightly observed that established jurisprudence under the old law may inform interpretation of the new Code, rather than the new Code being used to reopen settled law under the old Act, Mr. Ramesh said.

The August 2026 majority judgment is concerning because it injects uncertainty into labour relations at a time when clarity is essential for industrial peace, he said "In an open economy with increasing private delivery of services, any move to narrow or distance the law from the broad definition of 'industry' risks weakening worker safeguards precisely when they are needed most," Mr. Ramesh said.

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Thursday (August 20, 2026) held that its 48-year-old expansive worker-friendly interpretation of the term "industry" will not apply to fresh cases under the Industrial Relations Code of 2020.

Pronouncing the verdict, CJI Surya Kant made clear that the "triple test", evolved in the 1978 judgement by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, to ascertain what constitutes an "industry" will remain valid. He also said the "triple test" has been refined in the instant judgement.

Jayant Chaudhary, without naming Akhilesh Yadav, hit back at the SP chief's remarks.

"In the battle of politics, if you had to use some cheap words, you could have taken my name," Chaudhary said in a post on X.

Chaudhary also said he had seen such "arrogance" from close quarters and believed that such conduct only led to a person's downfall.

The exchange has revived the political significance of the "chavanni" remark ahead of the 2027 Uttar Pradesh elections.

Yadav recently said that the SP had turned "chavanni" into a rupee, referring to the political value he claimed his party gave to its former allies.

The remark was a reference to a comment Chaudhary made during campaigning for the 2022 Uttar Pradesh elections, when he rejected BJP's overtures for being an SP ally, saying he was not a "chavanni" who could be easily flipped.

Chaudhary later joined the BJP-led NDA and is currently a Union minister.

The latest exchange marks a sharp reversal from the public bonhomie between Yadav and Chaudhary during the run-up to the 2022 polls, when the two parties campaigned together in western Uttar Pradesh. (PTI)