

## Interview

**Date: 12 April 1985. Interview of Chaudhary Charan Singh by Vijay Rana (BBC Hindi) at 12 Tughlaq Road, New Delhi**

*Vijay Rana:* Chaudhary Saheb, for the first time in 1967, many other Congress leaders of your generation left the Congress Party under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi. What were the reasons that made you feel that the time had come to leave the Congress Party?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* (I) did not leave later. In 67, when Congress leaders rebelled in seven states, we all did it simultaneously. In Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and UP, rebellions took place in all these places and opposition governments were formed - headed by Congressmen. The main reasons were corruption and inefficiency everywhere.

*VR:* So what, according to you, was the main reason?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* Both, corruption and inefficiency

*VR:* You were among the pillars of the Congress of the Nehru period. Especially in the context of UP, in 1966, when Mrs. Gandhi took charge of the Congress Party, what was the difference in the functioning of the Congress from the Nehru period to that of Indira ji? Especially through the lens of policy.

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* There isn't much difference. The deterioration of the Congress had slowly begun during the British rule. There was no concern for the masses, first everyone came up with ideas and wanted to show strength. For example co-operative farming. Nehru Saheb wanted that every village should become a co-operative farm. A co-operative farm of each village, whether anyone owns land or not, one is a farmer or non-farmer, all the inhabitants of the village shall cultivate the entire land of the village jointly. Now nothing could be, to put it very mildly, more unimaginative given this proposal and action of his. Farmers and non-farmers, all residents of the village will jointly cultivate the entire land of the village. To put it very simply, there is nothing more unimaginable than his proposal. This proves that they know nothing about the village. The biggest bane of our public life is that the people who had political

power did not know anything about the village and as Gandhi had said, until his last breath that Hindustan lives in villages, not in Bombay, Calcutta or Delhi, but power generally came into the hands of those who lived in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi or Agra. Except at some places, except for some individuals, the ultimate power was in the hands of Nehru ji, in the hands of Indira, who had no sympathy or social relations with the villagers. These people were born in big houses in the city, and got their education in other countries, these people have no connection with the rural masses. Therefore [knowingly or unknowingly] these people could not serve the country and the country kept sinking. On the other hand, population was increasing. Then they started talking about co-operative farming. Calling oneself a socialist and believing in socialist theory has, in a way, become the hallmark of nationalism and patriotism, etc. etc. Now someone was telling me just yesterday that the Communist Party of our country has now turned against computers. Why? Because it will mean that unemployment will increase, and what about us, our philosophy has also been that agricultural population (agricultural population)... I will leave it now, I am not telling about it at this time... Well, I will leave it, will not tell. Firstly, the people here were becoming corrupt, now Nehru wanted his daughter to take his place. Why?

VR: Whatever happened?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* Yes, this is a weakness. (weakness)

VR: do you believe that Congress...?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* He could not rise above the caste. Our leader did not know the main cause of our undoing. He himself believed in and followed the caste system. We know thousands of their stories; corruption keeps on increasing. Used to contest elections by taking money from Seths (industrialists).

VR: Chaudhary Saheb there has been such a perception about you that in political matters you have been accused of supporting casteism or that you lead a particular caste. What would you say about this?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* those who accuse me are deliberately defaming me. They are all liars, they don't know what is what. One thing is that they don't know, they are doing something in ignorance. The ignorance of some may be true but most of them do it deliberately. The

principles of our party help the village rise and along with the village, the country also rises. The dreams they have are limited to the people of the city, their relatives, their community members, the people they know. The dream, my colleagues and my party is to lift the entire country, first of all we have to lift those who have fallen, they are the village people. Unemployment is increasing there. Do they have any treatment? They set up big factories and that too in the public sector, as much money has been invested, as many losses have been incurred. No political leadership in the world can tolerate this. When they see that financial losses are occurring, they immediately transfer them to private hands. As far as I know about Britain, 15 percent of the nation's capital is invested in industries. In our country, 50 percent of the public sector capital is invested in big industries and we tolerate loss after loss. They have no pain. They don't know their problem yet. I know. What can you say against me? But they have to say it. If my philosophy is successful then the poor will rise up, the villagers will rise up, those who are lying in slums, those who sleep on the pavements.

They took a loan of Rs 50 billion from IMF in 1980. Out of which 16 billion were lost in the Asian Games, in this farce. Could any government in the world have done this? This country is unfortunate. This could not have happened in any government. Therefore the debt in IMF is increasing. Now it has refused to give loan any further. Does anyone feel ashamed? If we tell, no one will listen to us. We said that use this money to rather install tube wells. For Rs 16 billion, 50 thousand tube wells would have been installed in Bihar. Bihar has the highest number of public sector industries and is the poorest state. Poorest state of the poorest country in the world. And the presence of public sector is very less in Punjab. There may be one or two factories in what is the richest state of your country. This country will never prosper until the boys born in poor families or in the homes of rural people do not get political power in their hands.

VR: do you believe that the Congress government and its leaders have been adopting the main policy only in cities?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* Yes, that's it.

Have been setting up big factories. no matter.....

VR: There has been another change in the leadership of Congress in 1984. What expectations do you have from Shri Rajiv Gandhi's party?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* I consider his succession as a misfortune for the country and the country will sink. Now, this is evident from the way it is handling the Punjab problem. Hey brother, the way the country has been run, for example, the way the elections have been conducted, all the votes have been cast fraudulently so that one can win. The ballot paper boxes were already filled with fake votes worth one lakh, two lakh each. Indira had committed every kind of dishonesty in the elections, but she could not get fake votes cast, it was he who got them cast. This is its contribution to the public life of this country.

VR: you think that the situation is getting worse.

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* it is getting worse, it is getting worse quickly. Today, pick up any newspaper, in any language, read it, from any state, on any page, know what is the news, the country is sick, going down day-by-day.

VR: Chaudhary saheb, opposition parties are being called a weak link of democracy. Many efforts for unity have also failed, why has no opposition party been able to become an alternative to Congress till now?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* It is very difficult to answer this, except to say that such leaders were not born in our country. What else to say? Now we do not want to say anything personal against anyone. The press is in his hands. The press spreads false propaganda day and night. For example, Janata Party was formed by JP and broken by Charan Singh. There cannot be a greater lie. I am going to write on this topic myself. He himself has admitted that as soon as the Emergency started, all the parties should have fought the elections together. This is what I was telling him, come to our party and become a leader. The man was not willing.

VR: Jaiprakash ji ?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* a weekly used to be published from London, on 12 February 1976, its correspondent came to Jaiprakash ji at Jaslok Hospital for an interview. He asked how is your movement going? What is your idea going forward? How and for how long will it be continue? In it he said that he had made a huge mistake. When Emergency was imposed, he should have fought the elections by combining all the parties, instead of starting direct action.

On December 23, 1974, I and my friends Biju Patnaik, Peelu Modi and Raj Narain were four groups who came together and BKD was formed, BLD was formed, BKD was ours alone. On 28th August 1974, we converted it into BLD (Bharatiya Lok Dal). So I said, what is the benefit of the movement that they are running? The majority is still against Indira. For your part, instead of 65, there will be 75 against and it will seem that we are divided into eight parties, so the relevance at this time is to bring all the opposition votes at one collective place.

We told them that we talked to Congress (O) thrice, but they did not agree. Jan Sangh did not agree, socialists did not agree. We want you to lead this movement. We have complete sympathy, we are also working with you. I am the leader of BLD, which was formed by all four of us. Now you take the leadership of BLD in my place and be the chairman. Whenever elections are held, you will win and become Prime Minister. But the man would not agree. Then the next day I gave a statement in the press that we went to them and they did not agree. I appealed to them, and said it publicly. Then Gujarat elections came in May-June, where everyone fought together with the United Front. His statement is there in it, I have a small file. Now see that there is great difficulty in choosing a candidate. A party will have to be formed to remove Indira. This is his statement, in May-June 75, we talked in 1974 and in May-June-75, the result of the election was declared on 12th June. She also lost from the High Court at the same time, so maybe there is a date in June, I have the cutting of it and in the interview in February 76, and said that it was my mistake, the press will go on propagating, it is J.P. who formed the party and I killed it (The press will go on propagating it that it is JP who formed the party and I killed it).

*VR:* what would you say especially about the disintegration of Janata Party?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* now this is a long story...

*VR:* in the elections, especially in the elections of state assemblies, your party has given a tough challenge to the Congress Party in North India but this could not happen in South India.

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* See, the reason for this is in South India, for example, DMK is in Tamil Nadu. They had no effect there. Well, Mr. Hegde was defeated because they did not have power there. The government in power was the opposition, in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

VR: Punjab problem is the biggest problem of the country today. What do you think is the reason for that?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* this is a long story, it cannot be told in one interview. Indira ji had called me on 27 October 1982 to talk about Punjab, so I told her that sister, this is your creation. Bhindrawala is your creation, he is Zail Singh's man. You, along with him, pushed forward Congress propaganda from the same platform in the last election. And Zail Singh did not have a good record as a Chief Minister. And I don't want to say much right now. So this is your man, you're making it happen. And I don't want to go into details. So I told her clearly. But forgive me, they have done this so that the votes of Hindus can be taken by scaring the Hindus and the votes of the Sikhs should ultimately be taken as per their demand. The whole aim of this was to gain votes. It may cost the country whatever it may.

VR: Mrs. Gandhi?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* Shrimati Gandhi has one single aim. Now that's a long story. I also gave an interview as soon as I arrived. 6-7 points were raised so that the country does not disintegrate. What is the difference between Hindu and Sikh? I told her that always when we were not of that age, our lectures used to be like this, we used to mention our leaders, Maharana Pratap, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh himself has composed songs in the glory of Ram and Krishna. There was and is no difference between Sikhs and Hindus. Marriages are happening till today. It has been happening till now. You have created all this, I had clearly her them.

VR: this problem can be solved by a big leader...

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* now that solution, you see brother, cannot be told in the interview. There is no problem in the world which cannot be solved. There is a solution to this but it cannot be told in the interview.

VR: Chaudhary Saheb, on one hand, our present Prime Minister talks about the computer revolution. My question is...

*Chaudhary Saheb:* this boy has never visited the village and seen poverty. What does he know? Talks about computers. Computer or machine is needed where man power is less and natural resources are more. Wants to copy America. Their population is 23 crores. They have three times more land than you do. You have 12 lakh murabba miles. They have 36 lakh square miles. Therefore, they have more oil, coal and iron. So natural resources are abundant there. If the resources are more than what is required, then the economy there may certainly be machine based, but here the natural resources comparative to population are very low, and are very small so here it will be mostly manual based. Yes it is an important thing, of course set up a big factory, we are not against big factories. But whatever can be made by hand, should be made by hand. Anything that can be made with a small machine.

That which can be made from small machinery should be made in small industries. And that which can be made only in big industries in the country's interest, make it from a big one, this is our stand. And then we want that agriculture should be given the priority.

Today you set up all the factories of America here in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, they will ground down to a halt in three months. They will run only when their production is purchased, and who will purchase – the masses. Where do they live: in the village, what do they do: farming? So unless they have purchasing power, there will be no demand for non-agricultural production and services. You can't send it out. How much is America exporting now? Hardly 10 percent of its production, 90 percent is consumed there. So big factories will run only when the masses have the purchasing power, they don't have all the factories in America. That is a matter of rudeness, your attention is not here. People are dying of hunger, lying on the streets, no one feels ashamed. In 1931, 33 percent population of Bombay was living in the slums. These are the figures of the government in 1983. Now more than 50% of the population of Bombay lives not only in the slums but on road pavements today. Can this Congress wallas or members and leaders of the Congress Party cite a single example in the world where one-third of the population of their big cities, more than one-third, lives on road pavements?

VR: What will be the future of Gandhian philosophy in India?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* the future of Gandhian philosophy is very bright. But it will come after great destruction. Now I have heard that the Communist Party has just passed a resolution against computers. Now I will introduce you to my colleague, he was giving me the reference

- Chaudhary Saheb, the communists have started agreeing with us. The Communists were our opponents in these matters. They all believed that we love the poor. We want to uplift the village but now gradually all the parties do not oppose anything of ours.

VR: So you explain that in future Gandhism... village upliftment?

*Chaudhary Charan Singh:* There is only one path, which is ours. Go and talk to all the leaders individually, they will agree. I feel a little shy in admitting it publicly. After a few days, they will also start accepting it publicly, as I learned from the Communist Party regarding computers.