



100 years of the Belgaum Congress Session

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Why in News?

The centenary of the **1924 Belgaum Congress session** is being celebrated in **Belagavi, Karnataka**, on 26-27th December 2024.

- This event commemorates **Mahatma Gandhi's chairmanship** of the historic **39th All-India Congress** session in Belgaum, where he made significant contributions to the Congress Party's ideology and organizational structure.

What is Significance of the 1924 Belgaum Session of Congress?

- **Gandhi's Leadership:** It was the **only Congress session** which was **presided over by Gandhiji** as the party chief. Gandhi had held the post of the **Congress president** between **December 1924 and April 1925**.
 - Gandhi's first visit to Belgaum in 1916 was at the invitation of local leader Deshpande.
- **Focus on Social Change:** Gandhi emphasized **combating untouchability, promoting khadi**, and supporting **village industries**, transforming Congress into a movement for both political independence and social reform.
 - **Khadi spinning was mandatory for Congress** members and mandated the submission of 2,000 yards of khadi cloth monthly.
 - Gandhi **reduced Congress membership fees by 90%**.
- **Hindu-Muslim Unity:** Gandhi used the platform to advocate for Hindu-Muslim unity, which was essential to the broader freedom movement.
- **Social and Economic Upliftment:** Gandhi also focused on issues like **sanitation, town planning**, and the **use of cows for economic upliftment of farmers**, with a specific stance on **cow protection**.
 - He stressed that his **advocacy for cow protection** was not linked to religious conversion or violence against Muslims.
 - He **praised the sanitation volunteers**, noting that 40 out of 70 were Brahmins, emphasising **social service across castes**.
 - He criticized the **session's excessive expenditure on VIPs** and called for **equal treatment of all members** in future sessions.
- **Cultural Significance:** The session was marked by notable musical performances, including by Hindustani maestro **Vishnu Digambar Paluskar** and young **Gangubai Hangal**, along with the Kannada song "**Udayavagali Namma Chaluva Kannada Nadu.**"
- **Legacy of the Session:** The **Pampa Sarovara well**, dug for the session, continues to **supply water** to parts of south Belagavi.

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Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

Brief Description

Birth: 2nd October 1869, Porbandar (Gujarat).

2nd October is observed as **International Day of Non-Violence**.

Profile: Lawyer, Politician, Social activist, Writer and led Nationalist Movement.

Father of the Nation (first called by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose).

Ideology: Believed in the ideas of non-violence, Truth, Honesty, Care for Mother Nature, Compassion, Welfare of Downtrodden etc.

Political Mentor: Gopal Krishna Gokhale

Death: Shot dead by Nathuram Godse (30th January, 1948).

30th January is observed as **Martyrs' Day**

Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times.



Gandhi in South Africa (1893-1915)

Used satyagraha against racist regime (Native Africans and Indians were discriminated).

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated every year on 9th January, to commemorate his return from South Africa.

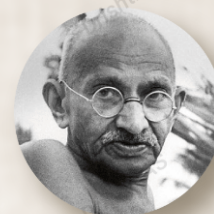
Contribution in India's Freedom Struggle

Small-scale movements like Champaran Satyagraha (1917)—First Civil Disobedience, Ahmedabad Mill Strike (1918)—First Hunger Strike, and Kheda Satyagraha (1918)—First Non-Cooperation.

Nationwide Mass Movements: Against Rowlatt Act (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement (1942).

Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931): Between Gandhi and Lord Irwin that marked the end of a period of civil disobedience.

Poona Pact (1932): Between Gandhi and **B.R. Ambedkar**; this abandoned the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes (Communal Award).



Books Written

Hind Swaraj, My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)

Weeklies

Harijan, Navjivan, Young India, Indian Opinion.

Gandhi Peace Prize

is given by India for social, economic, and political transformation through Gandhian methods.

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”

“You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty”

Key Sessions of the Indian National Congress

- **1885:** *First Session* in Bombay, presided by W.C. Banerjee – Formation of the Indian National Congress.
- **1886:** *Second Session* in Calcutta, presided by Dadabhai Naoroji.
- **1887:** *Third Session* in Madras, presided by Syed Badruddin Tyabji – First Muslim President.
- **1888:** *Fourth Session* in Allahabad, presided by George Yule – First English President.
- **1896:** *Calcutta* – National Song ‘Vande Mataram’ sung by Rabindranath Tagore.
- **1901:** *Calcutta* – First appearance of Gandhiji on the Congress platform.
- **1905:** *Benaras* – Formal proclamation of the **Swadeshi Movement**. Held under the presidency of **Gopal Krishna Gokhale**.
- **1906:** *Calcutta* – President Dadabhai Naoroji – Resolutions on **Swaraj, Boycott, Swadeshi** & National Education.
- **1907:** *Surat* – President Rash Bihari Ghosh – Split between **Moderates and Extremists**.
- **1916:** *Lucknow* – President A.C. Majumdar – Unity between Moderates and Extremists; **Lucknow Pact** with Muslim League.
- **1917:** *Calcutta* – President Annie Besant – First Woman President of Congress.
- **1919:** *Amritsar* – President Motilal Nehru – Support for **Khilafat Movement**.
- **1920:** *Calcutta* – President Lala Lajpat Rai – Gandhi moves **Non-cooperation resolution**.
- **1924:** *Belgaum* – President Mahatma Gandhi – **Only session presided over by Gandhi**.
- **1927:** *Madras* – President Dr. M.A. Ansari – Resolutions against **Simon Commission** and for Purna Swaraj.
- **1929:** *Lahore* – President Jawaharlal Nehru – Resolution on Purna Swaraj; Civil Disobedience movement launched.
- **1931:** *Karachi* – President Vallabhbhai Patel – Resolutions on **Fundamental Rights** and **National Economic Programme**.
- **1936:** *Lucknow* – President Jawaharlal Nehru – Shift towards socialist ideas.
- **1938:** *Haripura* – President Subhas Chandra Bose – National Planning Committee formed.
- **1939:** *Tripuri* – President Rajendra Prasad – Bose re-elected but resigns; Forward Bloc formed.
- **1940:** *Ramgarh* – President Abul Kalam Azad – Civil Disobedience movement postponed.
- **1946:** *Meerut* – President J.B. Kripalani – Last session before Independence.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q1. Who among the following is associated with ‘Songs from Prison’, a translation of ancient Indian religious lyrics in English? (2021)

- (a) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- (b) Jawaharlal Nehru
- (c) Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
- (d) Sarojini Naidu

Ans: (c)

Q2. With reference to the British colonial rule in India, consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in the abolition of the system of ‘indentured labour’.
2. In Lord Chelmsford’s ‘War Conference’, Mahatma Gandhi did not support the resolution on recruiting Indians for World War.

3. Consequent upon the breaking of Salt Law by Indian people, the Indian National Congress was declared illegal by the colonial rulers.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/100-years-of-the-belgaum-congress-session>

