

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC)

ORIGIN OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Congress Ideology at its Inception

At its inception, the Congress had no well-defined ideology and commanded few of the resources essential for a political organization. It functioned more as a debating society that met annually to express its loyalty to the Raj and passed numerous resolutions on less controversial issues such as civil rights or opportunities in the government, especially the civil services. These resolutions were submitted to the viceroy's government and, occasionally, to the British Parliament, but the Congress's early gains were meagre. Despite its claim to represent all of India, the Congress voiced the interests of the urban elite; the number of participants from other economic backgrounds remained negligible. According to A. O. Hume, the aims of the Congress were (i) to make British Rule long-lasting in India; (ii) to make Indians satisfied and proud citizens of the British Empire; and (iii) to function as the opposition party in the British Parliament by criticizing and suggesting proper remedies in the British Administration.

Historical proof of the Safety Valve Theory

The Safety Valve Theory was based on even volumes of the secret report which A.O. Hume read at Shimla in 1878. It was related to the seething discontent among the classes to over-throw the British rule. It was first mentioned in William Wedderburn's biography of Hume, published in 1913.

Political Associations Before the Indian National Congress

Before the inception of the Indian National Congress, there existed other small political platforms for the Indians. These organizations limited their focus to safeguard the interest of a particular class or group. **The Indian Association** set up by Surendranath Banerjee was probably the most active, among the earlier political associations. The focus of the Indian Association was to create mass awakening among the Indians and to create a strong public opinion in the country on the issues of national importance. Gradually, these organizations united the Indians on a common political platform and gradually, the masses became critical of the British policies. Some major political associations that existed before the emergence of the Indian National Congress were:

- ❖ **British Indian Association (1851)** operated in Chennai, Bengal and Mumbai. It looked after the interests of the landlords.
- ❖ **East India Association (1866)** was set up by Dadabhai Naroji in London. It aimed to mobilise public opinion about India in England.
- ❖ **Poona Sabha (1870)** was set up by M. G. Ranade in Poona.
- ❖ **Indian Association (1876)** was set up by S. M. Bannerjee in Kolkata.
- ❖ **Madras Mahajan Sabha (1881)** was set up by G. Subramania Iyer, R. Anandacharlu and others in Chennai.
- ❖ **Bombay Presidency (1885)** was set up in Mumbai against the rise of taxes in the region.

Theories behind the Birth of Congress

There are two theories by which historian try to explain the birth of a national level organization such as the Congress.

- 1. The need of a headquarter for the movement** A Nation and its people become capable of meaningful and effective political action only when they are organized. As a part of the growth of the national movement, it was necessary to create a common, all-India political leadership, that could be looked upon as the headquarter of the movement. On this common political platform, political workers from different parts of the country could gather and conduct their activities and mobilise people on an all-India basis. The founders of the Congress realized that the requirement of a national movement was a national leadership. The role of Allan Octavian Hume, the father of Congress, was pivotal as he was British and the government allowed the Congress to come into existence.
- 2. The Safety Valve Theory** The British foresaw the political situation in the country leading to another rebellion along the lines of the War of Independence of 1857. To avoid such a situation, the British decided to provide an outlet to the local people where they could discuss their political problems. To this end, Allan Octavian Hume, a retired British civil servant, had a series of meetings with Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy. He also visited England and met people such as John Bright, Sir James Caird, Lord Ripon and some members of the British Parliament. Hume also had the support of a large number of Englishmen in India, including Sir William Wedderburn, George Yule and Charles Bradlaugh. On his return from Britain, Hume consulted the local Indian leaders and started working towards the establishment of an Indian political organization. The convention of the Indian National Union, an organization he had

already formed in 1884, was held in Mumbai (now Mumbai), in December 1885, Seventy delegates, most of whom were lawyers, educators and journalists, attended the convention where the Indian National Congress was founded.

Objective of the First Session of the Congress

The objectives of the Congress as declared in the first session were:

- (a) Development and consolidation of national unity among the Indian masses irrespective of religion, region or caste divide.
- (b) Establishing friendly relations and synergizing the efforts of the nationalist workers operating in different regions of the country.
- (c) Form an agreement on popular demands and important issues and present it before the government.

A. O. Hume

The rise of the Indian nationalist movement started in the early 1880s. Allan Octavian Hume (1829 – 1912), an Englishman and retired civil servant who had studied medicine and surgery came to India as an Indian Civil Services officer in 1849. After retiring from the British Administrative service, he chose to stay behind in India for the purpose of inculcating the spirit of nationalism in the Indian youth. The racial discrimination and inequality of the Indians under the British rule propelled Hume to form the Indian National Union with the help of Wyomesh Chandra Banerjee, in 1884. He is also known as the father of the Indian National Congress. He served as the first general secretary of the Indian National Congress.

The Founding Members of the INC

Most of the early members of the Congress were upwardly mobile and successful Western educated provincial elites, engaged in professions such as law, teaching and journalism. They had acquired political experience from regional competition in their

professions and from their aspirations in securing nomination to various positions in the legislative councils, universities and special commissions. Among the founders were some of the leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Badruddin Tyabji, Anand Mohan Bose, R. C. Dutt, K. T. Telang, R. Anandachary, Behranji Malbari, Feroz shah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gohale, G. Subramaniam Iyer, Dinshaw Wacha, Bal Ganagadhar Tilak, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Madan Mohan Malviya. To begin with, the Congress acted as a 'Kings Party'. All the founding members backed the basic four objectives of the Congress initially. These were: (i) to seek cooperation of all the Indians in its efforts; (ii) to bring an end to the race, creed and provincial prejudices and try to form national unity; (iii) to discuss and solve the social problems of the country and (iv) to request the government to give more share to Indians in administrative affairs. As time went by, the Congress changed its stance and apparently became the biggest opposition to the British government.

The Poona Meeting

A. O. Hume, in association with various national leaders, called for its first meeting in Poona on 28 December 1885. The conference received the unanimous support of all Indian leaders, but the venue was shifted to Mumbai.

First Session

The leaders decided to rename the Indian National Union as the Indian National Congress during the first session. Lord Reay, Governor of Mumbai, was invited to convene the first session as the President of the session, but on his refusal, the session was held under the presidentship of W. C. Bannerjee. He was a veteran lawyer from Kolkata (now Kolkata). About 72 delegates from all over India attended the conference. This was a truly national gathering with leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Pheroze Shah Mehta, Dinshaw Wacha and K. T. Telang participating. The main demands put forward at the session included: (i) reforms of the Legislative Councils and acceptance of election in the place of nomination as a principle to constitute them; (ii) a

simultaneous examination for the ICS to be held in India and England; (iii) reduction in military expenditure and (iv) opposition to the annexation of Upper Burma.

Moderate Period (1885 – 1905)

At first, the Congress was a moderate, constitutional movement. In its early days, the party confined itself to an annual debate where political issues were discussed. It asked the government to remedy complaints, but had no constitutional role. However, some Congress members were also members of the Legislative Assembly, which advised the viceroy and the executive committee on the drafting of new laws. The cause of the Indian National Congress spread rapidly among the middle-class Indians. With the founding of the Indian National Congress, the struggle for India's independence was launched in a small, hesitant and mild but organized manner. The first two decades of the Indian National Congress are described in history as one with moderate demands and a sense of confidence in British justice and generosity. Its aim was not to be aggressive in attaining independence lest the British should suppress them. This resulted in the Indian Council Act in 1892, which allowed some members to be indirectly elected by the Indians but kept the official majority intact.

Indian Parliamentary Committee and Sir William Wedder Burn

Sir William Wedderburn was a politician from the liberal Party in the United Kingdom. He was born on 25 March 1838 in Edinburgh, Scotland in the United Kingdom. He tried to reform the banking system to solve the grievances of the peasants during his career. He, along with W.S. Caine set up the Indian Parliamentary Committee in 1893 to agitate for Indian political reforms in the House of Commons. When he felt that he did not get adequate support in the reforms, he started helping the Indian National Congress and support the local self-government.

INC before World War I

However, certain changes at the turn of the century resulted in changing the mood of the Congress. The most important among them was the change in the attitude of the British. Some of the repressive and oppressive measures of the British promoted the growth of extremism within the Congress. Extremist leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal, Bal Ganagadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai called on the people to show courage and self-reliance for the cause of India's nationalism. The partition of Bengal in 1905 raised the political temper of the country. The Congress started getting polarized into the moderates and the extremists. This era of militant nationalism prevailed within, and without the Congress during 1906 – 1919. The 1906 session of Congress, declared Dominion Status, to be the political goal of the Congress and the four resolutions on boycott, swadeshi, swaraj and national education were adopted.

INC during World War I

The Congress reunited in support of the British during World War I but was disappointed soon after the war when British restricted political activity in India. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Congress demanded Purna Swaraj (complete independence) and waged periodic campaigns of non-violent civil disobedience. Although leaders of the organization were imprisoned several times, British made some concessions in the 1930s.

INC during World War II

During World War II, the Congress was suppressed when it refused to support British. However, it had proved the strength of its popular support, and Britain granted independence to India following the war (1947). The predominantly Hindu Congress reluctantly accepted the creation of Pakistan as a separate Muslim nation.

Table 4.5 Important Sessions of INC

Session	Year	President	Venue	National Events that Took Place	
1st	1885	W.C.Banerjee	Mumbai		<p>Beginning years</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stressed upon the need for an unbiased Government through administrative alterations 2. Concern regarding poverty-elimination. 3. Motion against the increase in poverty and misery, poor financial condition of the country and steady deterioration in the condition of ryots since 1848 as nearly 40 million people had only one meal a day and some times not even that 4. Annual sessions of the Congress party held at different places every year. 5. Organization of provincial conferences to promote country-wide involvement. 6. Concrete efforts to amass public opinion in the favour of Indians in Great Britain. 7. Emphasis on the look out for representation in government as Madan Mohan Malviya upheld 'No taxation without representation'.
2nd	1886	Dadabhai Naroji	Kolkata		
3rd	1887	Badruddin Tyabji	Chennai		
4th	1888	George Yule	Allahabad		
5th	1889	Sir Willial Wedderburn	Mumbai	To pressurize the Parliament in Great Britain to accept their demands, British Committee of the Indian National Congress, established its offices in London.	
6th	1890	Sir Feroz Shah Mehta	Kolkata		
7th	1891	P. Anandacharlu	Nagpur		
8th	1892	W. C. Banerjee	Allahabad	Dadabhai Naoroji elected to the British Parliament in Great Britain.	

9th	1893	Dadabhai Naroji	Lahore	Indian Council Act 1882, despite being a big victory for the Congress, it did not conceive the idea of elected representation.	
10th	1894	Alfred Webb	Chennai		
11th	1895	Surendranath Banerjee	Poona		<p>Integration of Congress</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demand for economic responsibility. 2. Demand to Indianise the services. 3. Protection against being economically feeble and powerless. 4. Government's insensitivity towards natural calamities. 5. Famine-hit area of Pune witnessed Lokmanya Tilak's efforts in the form of social welfare. His writings in Kesari were perceived as the tools of inciting violence because of which he was put behind the bars. 6. Under the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, many oppressive measures were taken such as <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The sedition Act that snatched the elementary freedom of people. (b) Official Secrets Act that shifted the burden of proof of innocence onto the accused, and (c) Disapproval regarding the partition of Bengal on Communal basis.
12th	1896	Rahimtulla M. Sayani	Kolkata	Revolution holding the British responsible for creating the famine that took place.	
13th	1897	C. Sankaran Nair	Amravati		
14th	1898	Ananda Mohan Bose	Chennai		
15th	1899	Romesh Chanderdutta	Lucknow	Framing of the First Party Constitution.	
16th	1900	N. G. Chandvarkar	Lahore	As a result of the growing Congress movement, the British deprived the Indians from education through the	

				Universities Act, 1904 that limited the spread of the English education.	
17th	1901	Sir Dinshaw Eduljee Wacha	Kolkata	Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the Congress platform for the first time seeking support for the struggle in South Africa.	
18th	1902	Surendranath Bannerjee	Ahmedabad		
19th	1903	Lal Mohan Ghosh	Chennai		
20th	1904	Sir Henry Cotton	Mumbai		
21st	1905	G. K. Gokhale	Banaras		<p>Demand for Self Government</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Widespread protests against the Partition of Bengal – blatantly promoted by Lord Curzon as the creation of a Muslim Enclave. 2. The Congress witnessed arguments between the Moderates (who favoured peaceful agitation) and the Extremists (who favoured violent means, if needed).
22nd	1906	Dadabhai Naoroji	Kolkata	India demanded Swaraj; and boycotted British goods	
23rd	1907	Rash Behari Ghosh	Surat	First split in Congress between Moderates and Extremists took place whereby, the moderates retained the control of the Organization	
24th	1908 1909	Rash Behari Ghosh Pr. Madam Mohan Malviya	Chennai Lahore	Although the Minto-Morley Reforms created the Indian Councils and gave representation, they had sown the seed of communalism by providing separate electorates for the Hindus and the Muslims.	
25th	1910	Sir William Wedderburn	Allahabad	The first signs of strain in Hindu-Muslim relations	

				appeared.	
26th	1911	Pandit B. N. Dhar	Kolkata	The partition of Bengal was nullified	
27th	1912	R. N. Modholkar	Bankipore		
28th	1913	Nawab Syed Mohammad Bahadur	Karachi		
29th	1914	Bhupendranath Basu	Chennai		
30th	1915	Sir Satyendra Prasad Sinha	Mumbai		The Foundations of Independent India 1. The House Rule Movement. 2. The Advent of Gandhi. 3. The Khilafat Movement. 4. The Non-Cooperation Movement.
31st	1916	Ambica Charan Mazumdar	Lucknow	The Lucknow Pact was signed Muslim League in a joint session	
32nd	1917	Dr. Annie Besant	Kolkata	(a) A Congress Flag was proposed (b) The Principle of Linguistic Division was accepted which led to the foundation for the eventual creation of states by linguistic identity. (c) Satyagraha was introduced by Mahatma Gandhi in weagon of political protest	
33rd	1918 1918	Syed Hasan Imam Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya	Mumbai Delhi	Satyagraha became successful in Gujarat.	
34th	1919	Motilal Nehru	Amritsar	Throughout the country, Satyagraha was organized by Mahatma Gandhi against the Rowaltt Act; Jallian Wala Bagh massacre in Amritsar.	
35th	1920	Lala Lajpat Rai C.Vijayaaghavachariar (annual)	Kolkata Nagpur	(a) The Khilafat Movement took place (b) Mahatma Gandhi toured India to organize the Non-Cooperation Movement; The congress became a mass movement and	

				the whole country became one under Mahatma Gandhi.	
36th	1921	C. R. Das (in prison) Hakim Ajmal Khan (Acting)	Ahmedabad		
37th	1922	C. R. Das	Gaya	(a) Gandhiji was imprisoned (b) Formation of the Swaraj Party	
38th	1923	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Maulana Mahammad Ali (Annual)	Delhi Kakinada		
39th	1924	Mahatma Gandhi	Belgaum	Gandhiji fasted for 21 days to mark his protest against the communal disturbances.	
40th	1925	Mrs. Sarojini Naidu	Kanpur	Hindi was adopted as the official language for the Congress sessions.	The Demand for Complete Independence 1. Gandhi – Irwin Pact. 2. Definition of Fundamental Rights.
41st	1926	S. Srinivasa Iyengar	Guwahati	For proposing constitutional reforms in India, the Simon commission was proposed.	
42nd	1927	Dr. M. A. Ansari	Chennai	The resolution marked the boycott of the Simon Commission.	
43rd	1928	Pandit Motilal Nehru	Kolkata	(a) Hartals held successfully against the Simon Commission (b) Under Pt. Motilal Nehru, the All Party Committee was appointed to frame the Constitution for Independent India. (c) Under Sardar Vallabhai Patel, the Bardoli Satyagraha also became successful.	
44th	1929	Jawaharlal Nehru	Lahore	(a) Talks between Gandhi and Irwin. (b) Resolution marked for complete	

	1930	(No session) but Independence Day Pledge was adopted on 26 th Jan 1930.		<p>independence.</p> <p>(a) 26th January was adopted as the 'Purna Swaraj Day'.</p> <p>(b) There was a call for Civil Disobedience.</p> <p>(c) Salt Satyagraha – Dandi march took place.</p> <p>(d) All major Congress leaders were arrested; the AICC Working Committee was declared as an unlawful body.</p> <p>(e) Congress opposed the Round Table Conference.</p>	
45th	1931	Vallabhabhai Patel	Karachi	<p>(a) The Fundamental Rights were defined.</p> <p>(b) The AICC Working Committee Members were released.</p> <p>(c) The Viceroy invited the Congress to join discussions regarding the future of India.</p> <p>(d) Mahatma Gandhi got the authority to speak on behalf of the Congress.</p> <p>(e) Gandhi – Irwin Pact inked.</p>	
46th	1932	Delhi (session was banned) Ranchod Lal Amrit Lal		<p>(a) Despite the repression by the British, the struggle for freedom continued.</p> <p>(b) Gandhi was imprisoned.</p> <p>(c) The 1932 Poona Agreement passed guarantying reservation of seats for the SCs/STs.</p>	
47th	1933	Nellie Sengupta (session was banned)	Kolkata	Gandhi was on fast for 21 days for the cause of the Harijans.	

48th	1934 1935	Rajendra Prasad (continued again for 1935) Rajendra Prasad	Mumbai	(a) Gandhiji withdrew from the Congress. (b) Non-violence and Khadi became the fundamental belief of the Congress as a part of the amendment of its constitution. (a) The Government of India Act was passed. (b) Gandhiji's focus shifted to social reforms. (c) Congress decided to contest the election but disagreed with the new Constitution.	Struggle at the Final Stages of Gaining Independence 1. People demanded immediate freedom 2. Mass Satyagraha all over India.
49th	1936	Jawaharlal Nehru	Lucknow	Nehru condemned Fascism in his Presidential address.	
50th	1937	Jawaharlal Nehru	Faizpur	Elections won by the Congress in five out of the nine provinces	
51st	1938	Subhas Chandra Bose	Haripura		
52nd	1939 1939	Bose (Re-elected for 1939) Rajendra Prasad	Tripuri Tripuri	(a) The Congress ministers resigned and withdrew from the Legislative Process. (b) A constituent assembly elected by Universal Franchise was demanded.	
53rd	1940 1941 1942 1943 1944	Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (No sessions, caused by arrests and jailing) (No sessions, caused by arrests and jailing) (No sessions, caused by arrests and jailing) (No sessions, caused by arrests and jailing) (No sessions, caused	Ramgarh	(a) Non-cooperation in the war effort. (b) Demand for a national government. (c) Resolution of August 1942 Quit India Movement passed. (d) Public protests all over India because of the mass arrests. Victories of allies in the war leading to	

	1945	by arrests and jailing)		adamant stance of the Britishers. Jinnah steadfast on the partition of India. Failure of the Shimla Conference.	
54th	1946	Acharya J. B. Kripalani	Meerut	(a) INA trials. (b) Mutiny in the Navy at Mumbai and Karachi. (c) The Cabinet Mission was supposed to decide the fate of India. (d) Congress wins majority in the Constitutional Assembly.	
55th	1947			(a) India achieved Independence and was also partitioned.	
56th	1948	B.Pattabhi Sitaramayya	Jaipur		

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