

Glimpses Of 1924 Belgaum Congress Session and its Impact on Karnataka National Movement.

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Abstract

The Belgaum congress session was a milestone event in the history of Karnataka, which opened the new chapter of freedom movement for the people of Karnataka with the Mahatma Gandhiji's presidency. The people of Karnataka confidently and enthusiastically responded to the call given by Gandhiji mainly the unification of lower class and upper class of the society towards freedom struggle, Khadi movement and swadeshi entrepreneurship by launching several establishments. The impact of the session was clearly seen during salt satyagraha kadhi movement and non-cooperation movement in Karnataka. The paper enhances the importance of Gandhian participation and spotlights impact on social Reconstruction and swadeshi ideals.

Keywords: Belgaum Session, Khadi movement, Swadeshi Entrepreneurship, Social Reconstruction, Salt satyagraha, Kadhi movement.

INTRODUCTION

The 39th Indian National Congress Session was held in Belgaum. It was a historic place since the dawn of history. The Core values of congress were propagated by A. O Hume here. Hume visited Belgaum to popularize Congress ideas in 1893. It was a home for both the factions of the Congress Bal gangadhara Tilak visited it in 1906. This place was a witness of Mahatma Gandhi's historic visit in 1924. On February 5th 1924, Gandhiji was released from prison after the appendicitis surgery. The Hindu-Muslim cooperation for which he had striven so zealously had nearly phased out. With the abolition of Khilafat in Turkey, no encouragement was left for preponderance of Muslims to collaborate & work together with the Hindus. The Muslim league failed the purpose of communal unity. Thus with the passage of time the incongruity between the Hindus and the Muslims began to appear and communal riots occurred at regular intervals. Gandhiji held on to fast for 21 days from September 18 to October 8, this fast was towards ending communal tensions. The decision of Swarajists for council entry was not encouraged by Gandhiji. Considering the gravity of situation a compromise was achieved to get the masses for active non-cooperation movement. The Congressmen were given option to whether to work for the Council entry or to carry on the resistance against the Britishers outside the Council. It was in this background that Gandhiji presided over the Belgaum session in December 1924 with the objective of restoring unity between Congressmen who were for Council entry and those against it and between Hindus and Muslims. The major objectives of the session were eradication of untouchability and promotion of charaka. (Mahatma Gandhi emphasized Khadi as "The livery of freedom"). The Belgaum Congress session was a special event and the enthusiasm of the people of, as it was the only Congress session presided by Gandhiji

1. The place was named as “Vijayanagar” where the session was held and entrance was designed like gopura of hampi.
2. A new railway station was constructed near the site of congress session named “vijayanagar” after the glorious empire of vijayanagara, and a “gopura” was constructed for the entrance at humongus 70 feet.
3. Khadi and Bamboo roofs were used for huts which accommodated visitors and delegates.
4. Gandhiji reitreated khadi as “livery of freedom”
5. Gandhiji reached the venue of congress session by huge procession.
6. Pampa sarovara was constructed for use of water
7. To feed the participants, a huge kitchen was set up and thousands of lanterns and petromax light were brought from Bombay for lighting purpose.
8. Hindustan seva dal headed by N S Hardikar were looking after the arrangements and attending the comforts of visitors.
9. Gangadhar rao Deshpande was the chairman of reception committee with the presence of huge crowd they welcomed Gandhiji, Ali brothers, Sarojini naidu, Jawharlal Nehru, Sardar vallabhai patel and several others were witness to the congress session.
10. Vande mataram’ was sung by paluskar with which the session started followed by kannada choir.
11. Huliya gl narayanrao sung the famous kannada song ‘Udayavagali cheluva kannada nadu’ which was recited by venne seshanna. In his presidential address Gandhiji emphasized khadi weaving and spinning, also discouraged untouchability. Gandhiji said "I am convinced that swaraj cannot come so long as the tens of millions of our brothers and sisters do not take to the charkha, do not spin, do not make khadi and wear it”.

Several number of sessions were also held on the occasion like the

1. All-India Khilafat Conference,
2. All-India Hindu Mahasabha Conference,
3. All-India Non-Brahmin Conference,
4. All-India Social Conference
5. The first Karnataka Unification Conference

The people of Karnataka region including old Mysore region reacted positively & confidently to the call given by Gandhiji for constructive programmes. The spread of Khadi and village industries was taken up all over Karnataka was a sporadic khadi movement in Princely Mysore as well. The enthusiastic people undertook setting up of khadi.

1. The organizations for Harijan welfare were set up in many places of the state.
2. The majority participation was by lower rungs of society and peasants.
3. national leaders like C R Das, C. Rajagopalchari, Lala Lajpat rai, Pattabhi Seetharamiah, Jamnadas Mehta, Konda Venkatappiah and others toured all over Karnataka between 1922 and 1925 to encourage the national spirit.
4. The enthusiasam of freedom struggle was also kept alive by a host of Congressmen of Karnataka like Gangadhar rao Deshpande, Srinivas rao koujalgi, N.S. Hardikar, R.R. Diwakar, Krishna Rao mudvedkar and others.
5. The authorities in Princely state of Mysore also encouraged the value of spinning and weaving Khadi in the pretext of rural development and cooperated with the Congress workers in the encouragement of Khadi industries and other village industries.

6. Albion Banerjee, the dewan of Mysore state permitted the department of Industries which greatly helped the spread the production of khadi

The participation of peasantry was a indication of national awareness among them especially the salt satyagraha of Ankola, Sirsi, Siddapura and Mangalore were supported by the Congress leaders.

Industries began with the influence of Swadeshi Movement

Name of the industry	Place
Paper processing	Bengaluru
Tanning	Belgaum
Waxing	Bengaluru
Match box industry	Bengaluru
Agarbhati	Mysore
Brickmaking	Bellary
Food processing	Hubli
Oil tanneries	Mangalore
Cloth manufacturing	Dharwad

Gandhi’s leadership transformed the Congress into a mass movement, shifting its focus from elite politics to commoners mobilization. His presidency provided a great boost to the Congress, bridging the divide between two factions and bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and faiths to work towards a common goal of Indian independence. As we reminisce the centenary of presidency of Gandhiji, we are reminded of his commitment to communal harmony.

Other Key Aspects of the 1924 Belgaum Congress Session:

Presidency of Mahatma Gandhi;

- Gandhi was elected as the president of the session, marking a rare occasion when he formally assumed the role of Congress president.
- Focus on Swaraj and Constructive Work
- Gandhi emphasized the importance of achieving Swaraj (self-rule) through non-violent means and constructive programs.
- He urged Indians to focus on self-reliance, khadi (homespun cloth) and the eradication of social evils like untouchability.

Promotion of Khadi and Charkha

- The session highlighted the importance of khadi and the charkha (spinning wheel) as symbols of economic independence and resistance to British colonial rule.
- Gandhi encouraged every Indian to spin khadi as a way to boycott British goods and promote self-sufficiency.
- Inclusion of Women and Marginalized Groups
- The session saw active participation from women and marginalized communities, reflecting Gandhi's commitment to social equality and inclusivity.
- Gandhi's emphasis on eradicating untouchability and promoting social reform was a key theme.

Criticism of Violent Methods

- Gandhi reiterated his opposition to violent methods of resistance, which were being advocated by some factions within the independence movement.
- He stressed the importance of maintaining discipline and unity within the Congress.

Preparation for Future Struggles

- The Belgaum session laid the groundwork for future mass movements, including the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930) and the Salt Satyagraha
- It reinforced the Congress's commitment to non-violent resistance and grassroots mobilization.

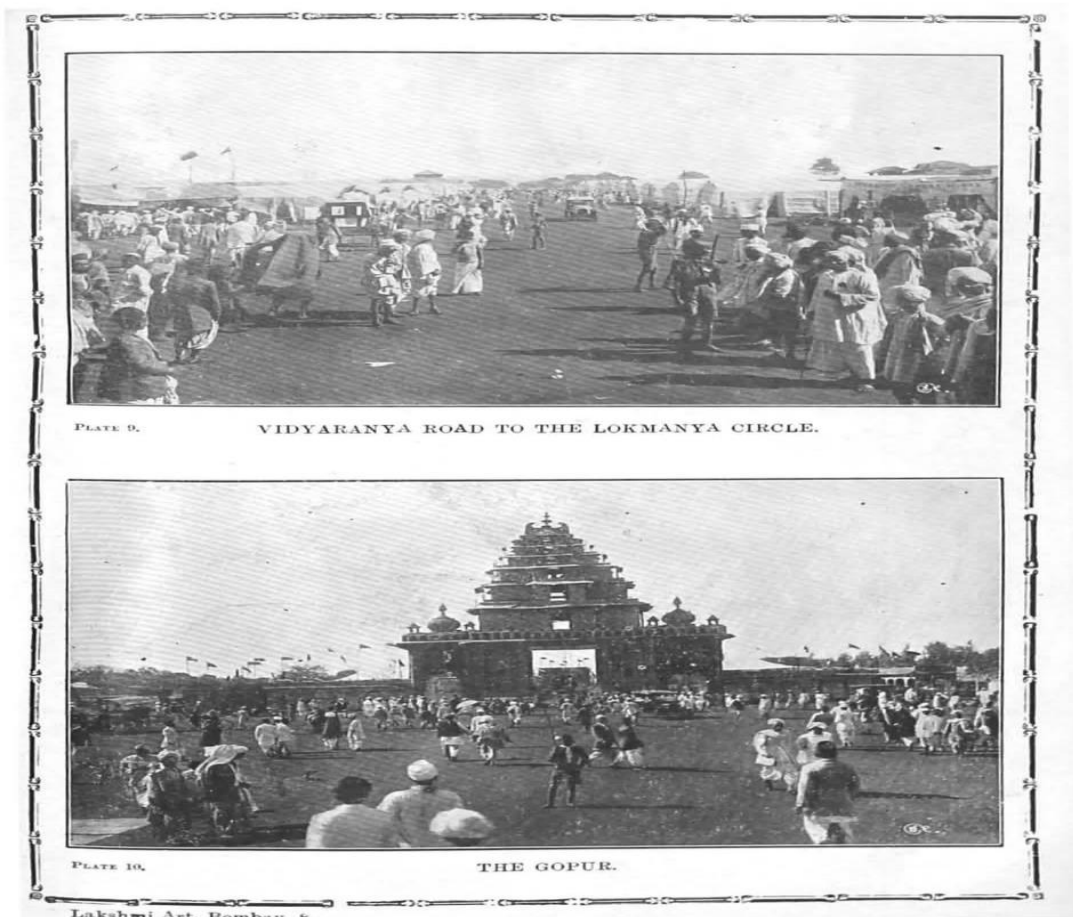
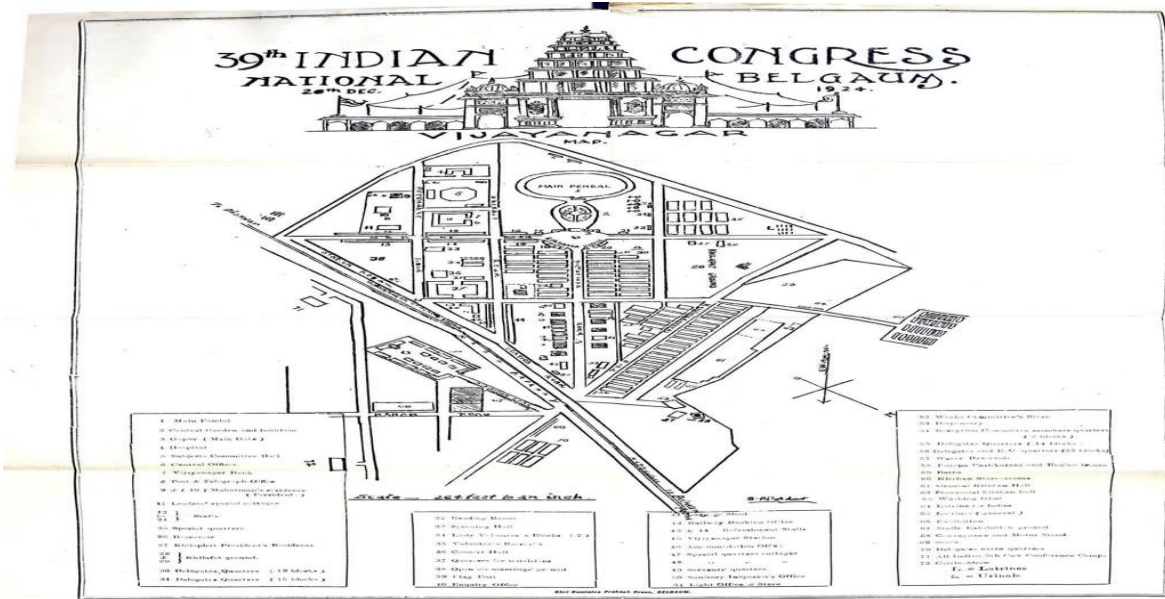
Significance:

- The 1924 Belgaum Congress Session marked a turning point in the Indian independence movement, as it solidified Gandhi's leadership and his vision of non-violent struggle.
- It also highlighted the importance of social and economic reforms alongside political independence.

The session is remembered as a milestone in India's journey toward freedom, showcasing Gandhi's unique approach to combining political activism with social and economic transformation.

Photographic Glimpses of the Session





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