

The 1924 Belgaum Session

Posted at: 26/12/2024

A Turning Point in India's Freedom Struggle: The 1924 Belgaum Session

Introduction

The Congress is hosting a **two-day event in Belagavi (formerly Belgaum), Karnataka, on December 26-27**, to commemorate the **centenary of Mahatma Gandhi presiding over its historic 1924 Belgaum session**.

- The event will feature an **extended session of the Congress Working Committee (CWC)** and a **rally** to honor Gandhi's leadership and contributions during this pivotal session.

Backdrop of the 1924 Belgaum Session

1. Gandhi's Release from Prison

- Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned in 1922 for writing critical articles about British policies in *Young India*.
- Sentenced to six years, he served about two years before being released in February 1924 due to health issues.

2. Challenges Post-Release

- Gandhi was deeply concerned about:
 - **Lack of Hindu-Muslim unity** in the freedom struggle.
 - **Factionalism within the Congress**.
- To address these concerns, he undertook a **21-day fast** from September 18 to October 8, 1924.

Participants in the 1924 Congress Session

- Senior Congress leaders like **Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Sarojini Naidu**.
 - Leaders from the Khilafat movement, including **Muhammad Ali Jauhar and Shaukat Ali**.
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Significance of the 1924 Belgaum Session

1. Gandhi's Unique Role

- This was the **only Congress session presided over by Mahatma Gandhi**.
- He served as Congress president from **December 1924 to April 1925**.

2. Key Themes Presented by Gandhi

- Philosophy of **non-violence** and its role in the independence movement.
 - Importance of **communal harmony** and **social reform** for achieving self-rule (*swaraj*).
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Highlights of Gandhi's Address

1. Non-Violence and Non-Cooperation

- Gandhi emphasized the power of **non-violence** as a moral and effective force for change.
- He acknowledged the shortcomings of the **boycotts** (e.g., of government institutions and foreign goods) but highlighted their impact in reducing British prestige.

2. Hindu-Muslim Unity and Untouchability

- Stressed that **swaraj** was unattainable without:
 - **Hindu-Muslim unity**.
 - The removal of **untouchability** and the upliftment of oppressed classes.

3. Self-Rule and Reforms

- Proposed reforms like:
 - Shifting the **final court of appeals** from London to Delhi.
 - Adopting **Hindustani** as the official language in provincial governments and courts.
- Urged people to embrace **satyagraha** (non-violent resistance) as a path to truth and justice.

4. Khadi and Self-Reliance

- Encouraged spinning and weaving of **khadi** to symbolize self-reliance.
 - Asserted that true **swaraj** could only be achieved through economic independence and community participation.
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Impact of the 1924 Session

- The session sparked a rise in **peasant participation** in the freedom movement.
- It promoted the spread of **khadi** and strengthened **village industries** in Karnataka and

other regions.

- It marked a renewed emphasis on grassroots efforts and social reform as central to the independence struggle.

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