

## Foundation of the Indian National Congress (INC)

### Overview

- The **Indian National Congress (INC)** was founded in **1885**.
- It became the **principal organisation leading India's national movement**.
- Played a crucial role in **mobilising political awareness and nationalism**.

**Founder:** A.O. Hume (retired British civil servant)

**First Session:** 28 December 1885

**Place:** Bombay (now Mumbai)

**Venue:** Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College

**First President:** Womesh Chandra Bonnerjee

**Delegates:** 72 representatives from different parts of India.

### Background of INC Formation

Before the INC, several regional political organisations emerged:

Important early political associations:

- **Indian Association (1876)** – Surendranath Banerjee
- **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870)** – M.G. Ranade
- **Madras Mahajan Sabha (1884)**
- **Bombay Presidency Association (1885)**

These organisations created **political awareness and nationalist sentiment**.

### Objectives of INC

1. Promote **personal friendship and unity among Indians**.
2. Remove **prejudices based on caste, religion, and region**.
3. Develop **national unity**.
4. Present **opinions of educated Indians on public issues**.
5. Formulate **political programs for public welfare**.

### Participation in the Early Congress

Dominant groups:

- Educated middle class
- Lawyers
- Professionals

Groups largely absent:

- Princes and zamindars
- Peasants
- Artisans

Thus, the early Congress was often called a **middle-class organisation**.

### *Theories on the Foundation of INC*

#### *1. Safety Valve Theory*

Proposed that the British allowed INC to act as a “**safety valve**” for **Indian discontent**.

Proponents:

- **Lala Lajpat Rai**
- Some British officials

Idea:

- Congress would **release growing political frustration peacefully**.

#### *2. Conspiracy Theory*

Proposed by **Rajani Palme Dutt**.

According to this theory:

- Congress was created to **prevent a mass uprising against British rule**.
- The British and Indian elite collaborated.

#### *3. Lightning Conductor Theory*

Proposed by **Gopal Krishna Gokhale**.

Idea:

- INC acted as a “**lightning conductor**” channelling nationalist energy.
- It helped **organize political demands of Indians**.

Modern historians believe this theory is **more realistic**.

### *Important INC Sessions*

| Year | Place              | President               | Outcome  |
|------|--------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 1885 | Bombay             | W.C. Bonnerjee          | First session of INC                           |
| 1886 | Calcutta           | Dadabhai Naoroji        | Formation of Provincial Congress Committees    |
| 1887 | Madras             | Badruddin Tyabji        | First Muslim President                         |
| 1888 | Allahabad          | George Yule             | First English President                        |
| 1905 | Banaras            | Gopal Krishna Gokhale   | Opposition to Bengal Partition                 |
| 1906 | Calcutta           | Dadabhai Naoroji        | Goal of <b>Swaraj</b> declared                 |
| 1907 | Surat              | Rash Behari Ghosh       | <b>Moderate–Extremist split</b>                |
| 1916 | Lucknow            | A.C. Mazumdar           | <b>Lucknow Pact (Congress + Muslim League)</b> |
| 1917 | Calcutta           | Annie Besant            | First woman president                          |
| 1920 | Calcutta (Special) | Lala Lajpat Rai         | Non-Cooperation resolution                     |
| 1920 | Nagpur             | C. Vijayaraghavachariar | Reorganization of Congress                     |
| 1924 | Belgaum            | M.K. Gandhi             | Only session chaired by Gandhi                 |
| 1925 | Kanpur             | Sarojini Naidu          | First Indian woman president                   |
| 1929 | Lahore             | Jawaharlal Nehru        | <b>Purna Swaraj resolution</b>                 |
| 1931 | Karachi            | Vallabhbhai Patel       | Fundamental Rights resolution                  |
| 1937 | Faizpur            | Jawaharlal Nehru        | First rural session                            |
| 1938 | Haripura           | Subhas Chandra Bose     | National Planning Committee                    |
| 1939 | Tripuri            | Subhas Chandra Bose     | Bose resigned after conflict                   |
| 1946 | Meerut             | J.B. Kripalani          | Accepted Cabinet Mission Plan                  |

### Significance of INC

#### 1. Political Awakening

Created **national political consciousness** among Indians.

#### 2. Platform for National Leaders

Leaders like:

- Dadabhai Naoroji
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- Gandhi
- Nehru

- Patel

emerged through Congress.

### 3. Organised Freedom Movement

INC coordinated major movements:

- Swadeshi Movement
- Non-Cooperation Movement
- Civil Disobedience Movement
- Quit India Movement

### 4. Development of Democratic Culture

Promoted:

- Debate
- Elections
- Constitutional politics

### Key Facts

| <i>Feature</i>                      | <i>Details</i>          |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Founded</i>                      | <i>1885</i>             |
| <i>Founder</i>                      | <i>A.O. Hume</i>        |
| <i>First Session</i>                | <i>Bombay</i>           |
| <i>First President</i>              | <i>W.C. Bonnerjee</i>   |
| <i>Delegates</i>                    | <i>72</i>               |
| <i>First Muslim President</i>       | <i>Badruddin Tyabji</i> |
| <i>First English President</i>      | <i>George Yule</i>      |
| <i>First Woman President</i>        | <i>Annie Besant</i>     |
| <i>First Indian Woman President</i> | <i>Sarojini Naidu</i>   |