

**VIVEKANANDA COLLEGE  
THAKURPUKUR  
KOLKATA-700063  
NAAC ACCREDITED 'A' GRADE**



**Topic:** Women's Representation in Karachi Congress

**Course Title:** GE2

**Paper:** Women's Movement in Colonial India

**Unit:** 3

**Semester:** ii

**Name of the Teacher:** Sonamoni Kunti

**Name of the Department:** Women's Studies

# WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN KARACHI

## CONGRESS

The tactics adopted by the Congress leaders at the Karachi Congress were to vote radical resolutions to satisfy the revolutionary youth and, obtain the ostentatious capitulation of the “left” “opposition” leaders to Gandhi in the name of “discipline.” There were 12 items on agenda of the Congress, the very first item—the one central item that was decisive—being the ratification or the rejection of the “Delhi Pact?” But, for tactical reasons, in order to obtain the support or at least break the resistance of the opposition, the first resolution discussed was the one relating to the execution of the three Lahore national revolutionary activists. Gandhi associated himself with the “tributes to the bravery and sacrifices of the young patriots” and denounced the executions as “first-class blunder” and an “act of wanton vengeance” but even the imperialist press says that these “wild statements of Mr. Gandhi’s should not be taken too seriously” because “Gandhi has got to watch the extremist elements” and makes these statements “with one eye on his young men.” It is openly admitted that this and other resolutions demanding the release of other Lahore prisoners, of the

Moplah prisoners, of the Frontier prisoners, were mainly intended as a “sop to the revolutionaries.”

Similar tactics were adopted in order to obtain the ratification of the Delhi Pact. The Pact clearly declares that “as regards constitutional, questions the scope of future discussion is stated with the assent of Majesty’s Government to be with the object of considering further the scheme for the constitutional Government of India discussed at the Round Table Conference.” That scheme laid down a number of “safeguards” for British imperialism. Gandhi himself is willing to accept those “safeguards” with a few modifications, but knows that the rank and file recognize their true character as a strengthening and widening of the basis of imperialist rule. The Congress resolution on the Pact, drawn up by Gandhi and accepted by the Subjects Committee by 298 votes against 2, was, therefore, careful to keep up the fiction of “independence” as the goal of the negotiations. “The Congress goal of ‘purna swaraj’ (complete independence) remains intact,” says the resolution, and declares further:

“In the event of the way being open to Congress to be represented at any Conference with representatives of the British Government, the Congress delegation will work for this goal, and in particular for national control over the army, external affairs, finance and fiscal and economic policy, the right of scrutiny through an impartial tribunal of the financial transactions of the British Government in India, the right to examine

and assess the obligations to be undertaken by India or Britain, and the right of either party to end the partnership at will.”

The sting of this deliberately bombastic resolution lies however in its tail which runs as follows:— “Provided, however, that the *Congress delegation will be free to accept such adjustments as may be shown to be necessary in the interests of India.*” And as Mahatma Gandhi, the infallible holy man, has been empowered to represent the Congress with 16 to 20 lieutenants, there is no doubt that such “adjustments in the interests of India” will be found at the second Round Table Conference. It is worth recording that Lord Irwin also in a speech made at about the same time said:— “Indian opinion is surely not less anxious than any opinion in Great Britain to see ample security provided where necessary, *for the good of India.*”

The Congress leaders are trying to make their followers believe that the “safeguards” already laid down at the Round Table Conference will be revised, and the fifth item of the Congress agenda dealt with the definition of ‘purna swaraj’ and the limitation of those safeguards.” As far as these safeguards are concerned, the I.L.P. Secretary of State of the Imperialist Government has just declared that “the statement that in any future Round Table Conference the constitutional safeguards will regarded as entirely open to discussion is a distortion of the position.” Nevertheless, the Congress leaders have created the impression that they will now dictate terms to British imperialism as

to the nature and extent of these safeguards. But Vallabhai Patel in his presidential speech was careful to create the necessary atmosphere of surrender by saying that when “power passed from one to another by agreement there were always safeguards” and that a country like India, emasculated by two centuries of imperialist exploitation, “must seek assistance in several respects from external sources.” For the hundredth time too the word “swaraj” was defined. Gandhi had already declared categorically, three weeks before the Congress, that in his opinion “purna swaraj is quite compatible with India remaining within the Empire!” And in anticipation of his visit to London, the saint of Sabarmati is fawning upon the British lion by saying: “I think the British are a practical people loving liberty for themselves. It is only a step further to give liberty to others!”

The most characteristic feature of the Karachi Congress, however, not its absolute domination by Gandhi on behalf of the landlords and millowners, whose interests alone he represents, but the miserable and disgraceful role played by the two “left” wing “oppositional” “youth” leaders, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, Bose presided at the meeting of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (Revolutionary Youth League) held at Karachi at the same time as the National Congress, and declare that India had been betrayed by the Delhi Pact and that the “real goal was a Socialist Republic in which government was shared by peasants and workers.” Jawaharlal Nehru had made similar statements during the Lahore Congress in December, 1929, but he is said to have “taken pains to dissociate himself” at Karachi from

the sentiments expressed by Bose. From this radical-sounding speech by Bose we should have expected him to lead the revolutionary youth against Gandhi and against the ratification. But nothing of the kind happened. Gandhi would not have half measures. The Pact, he said, must either be ratified or rejected. Placed before this terrible alternative, Bose, who had denounced the Pact several times as a betrayal, nevertheless thought it desirable to stand behind Gandhi "order to present a united front to the wicked bureaucracy."

As for Jawaharlal Nehru it is clear that the role assigned to him by Gandhi is to keep the youth inside the Congress camp by the frequent reiteration of anti-imperialist resolutions. The two leaders entered into an agreement by which Nehru would support the Delhi Pact, if Gandhi would move a resolution embodying a "declaration of rights" under the coming "Swaraj" constitution. Early in March, at a mass meeting convened in Lucknow to "explain the terms of the Pact" (to deceive the masses); Nehru said that "although all the terms were not to his liking, his business as a soldier was to obey and not to question the Congress decisions." His obedience to the "Generalissimo" (as Gandhi is called) was complete. At Karachi it was Nehru who moved the resolution on the ratification of the shameful Delhi Pact. And in order to carry their treachery to the youth still further, they succeeded in getting Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the leader of the "Red Shirts" of the N.W. Frontier, to second the resolution.

This manoeuvre to stifle the youth—who constituted more than 60 per cent. of the total number of delegates—was supplemented by a radical sounding resolution laying down “the fundamental rights of the people” under a “Swaraj” Constitution—this phrase being deliberately used throughout the resolutions instead of “independent India.” The object of the resolution was to make it appear to the masses that their interests were being protected, for it demanded, among other things, a living wage for industrial workers, suppression of slavery, protection of working women, prohibition of child labour, progressive income tax on agricultural incomes and legacies, reduction of land rent and taxes on the peasantry, adult suffrage, trade union rights, &c. Even though this was a mere trick to draw the workers and peasants into the Congress net, there was strong opposition to it from the landlords and the industrialists, but Gandhi forced the resolution through the Subjects Committee by 91 votes to so, and the open Congress naturally passed that deceptive resolution unanimously.

Gandhi has thus succeeded (1) in using a year of heroic sacrifices made by the masses for signing a pact with British imperialism in the interests of the landlords, industrial and commercial bourgeoisie and the moneylenders; (2) in getting the Congress to ratify the Pact and thus giving Gandhi and the other Congress delegates to the Round Table Conference the appearance of having the “nation” behind them; (3) in silencing the youth opposition temporarily; (4) in proclaiming a radical programme for the benefit of the masses, so as to enable the

national reformists to continue their pernicious work among the workers and peasants.

In order to carry on the negotiations with British imperialism, Gandhi has nominated the Working Committee, or "Cabinet" as he calls it, most of the members of which are likely to be delegates to the Second Round Table Conference. The names included are those of persons who are known to be absolutely subservient to Gandhi. The president is Vallabhai Patel of Gujerat, an uncompromising Gandhist; and other members are Jamnalal Bajaj a millionaire; four Muslims, Dr. Ansari, Dr. Alam, Dr. Mahmud and Abul Kalam Azad, all known for their "moderation." Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who even at Lahore was against the independence resolution, Sen-Gupta, the Mayor of Calcutta; K. F. Nariman, President of the Bombay Presidency Youth League, &c. Subhas Chandra Bose has been left out in spite of his capitulation to Gandhi, not only because his allegiance to the creed of non-violence is doubtful, but because, as President of the All-India Trade Union Congress and of a number of unions in Jamshedpur and Calcutta, he is needed in India by the bourgeoisie to gain control of the working class movement.

The Karachi Congress represents the final and definite transition of the Indian bourgeoisie and their agents and allies among the intelligentsia from the partial struggle against imperialism, which they had carried on for a short while, into open alliance with British imperialism against the Indian

Revolution. In order to free the masses finally from the national reformist leadership, it is necessary to carry on a wide campaign against the National Congress and in particular to expose the real role of Nehru, Bose and other leaders who still wield influence in working-class and peasant organisations.

Source:

[https://marxists.architecturez.net/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/periodicals/labour\\_monthly/1931/05/x01.htm](https://marxists.architecturez.net/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/periodicals/labour_monthly/1931/05/x01.htm)