He was a popular leader in the Congress Party. He did not attend the first session in the Congress Party. Gokhale did not attend the first session of the Congress, the organisation, in which he later played a prominent part. In 1885, the year when the first session of the Congress was held, Gokhale had started his career as a teacher in the New English School of the Deccan Education Society. He could not attend even the next three Congress sessions. In the initial period the organisational details of the Congress were not decided and the nature and the scope of various committees took some time to be finalised. It could only be done by 1888 when it was decided that the provincial conferences should be held regularly. Accordingly, the Bombay Provincial Conference was held in Pune in 1888. Though it was a Bombay Provincial Conference in name, the initiative was taken by the leaders of Pune. Dinshaw Wacha wrote to Dadabhai to complain against the Pune leaders for their defiance.

Gokhale was the secretary of the Provincial Conference for the first four years. In the second session of the conference he made a speech decrying the reduction of expenditure on higher education by the government. He emphasised the importance and usefulness of the English education, which he said would usher in an era of progress in India. He firmly believed that if India’s case was properly explained to the English people, they would get justice. This, of course, was also the position of
Ranade, Dadabhai and Pherozeshah Mehta. The fifth Provincial Conference was presided over by Pherozeshah Mehta, and then onwards the leaders from Bombay and Pune started to hold such sessions jointly.

The first session of the Congress evoked opposite reactions from different newspapers and quarters. ‘The Hindu’ of Madras commended the restrain shown by the political leaders and also in the deliberations. Even if there had been any festivity, it would have been justified, but the leaders convened the Congress session as any other public function. ‘The Hindu’ was confident that this would give prestige to the Congress, and gradually the public opinion in India would also be influenced by the new organisation. ‘Hindusthan’ of Lucknow remarked that the Anglo-Indians did not consider India as one nation, but the Congress session in Bombay had given a fitting reply to them. ‘Hindu Patriot’ declared that the session had clearly shown that the Indians could act collectively. It was confident that eventually those castes and races, which were distant from the Congress would come round in spite of whatever the Anglo-Indians do. ‘The Times of India’ advised the government that the demand for more seats for Indians in the Viceroy’s Council should be rejected in the interests of Indian people. It feared that elected representation in the Provincial and Viceroy’s Councils would be the next most important demand which should firmly be denied.
Based on the newsletter of its Bombay correspondent, the ‘Times’, London, wrote an editorial on December 31, 1885. It said that the ‘lawyers, teachers, journalists dominated the Congress which did not represent the Indian masses’. Kashinath Trimbak Telang, a prominent lawyer and afterwards a judge, replied to ‘The Times’ in its issue of March 9, 1886. He wrote, “Although it must be admitted that the Mahomedan community was not adequately represented at our meeting, your remark is not altogether an accurate one. Two leading Mahomedan gentlemen did attend the Congress, viz., Mr. R.M. Sayani and Mr. A.M. Dharmsi. Both of these gentlemen are graduates of the University and attorneys of standing at the High Court of Bombay. Mr. Sayani held the office of the Sheriff of Bombay. Further, the Hon. Badroodin Tyabji, a member of the Legislative Council of Bombay, and Mr. Cumroodin Tyabji would have attended the Congress, had they not been absent from Bombay at the time the Congress was seating. And it must be remembered that this Congress was the first of its kind, and naturally, therefore, there were some shortcomings. But we feel confident that next year, when assemblage would be at Calcutta, Mahomedan community will be represented as it befits its numbers and importance. The second point relates to the omission of social reform from the proceedings of the Congress. As regards this, it is to be observed that the main object of the Congress was a political one. But when the programme for business was informally discussed by the members, they decided that after the subjects for which they had
specially assembled were disposed of, the questions of social reform should be considered if there was time. But on that (last day) earnest social reformer, Diwan Bahadur Raghunath Rao of Madras, gave an eloquent address on social questions, and he was followed by another eminent reformer, the Hon. M.G. Ranade, of this Presidency”. ‘The Times’, in the years to come, made it a point to emphasize that the Congress had no support of the Muslims. It was also the constant refrain of many of the British officials and opinion-makers. In the December 1886 issue of the ‘Nineteenth Century’, one W.H. Jeffrey wrote to advise the government to grant more facilities to Muslims and keep them on our’ side. He reminded that Lords Mayo and Duffer in did something to cultivate the Muslims, but under Lord Ripon’s regime Brahmins and Bengalees were given more importance.

After the first session of the Congress, Dadabhai went to England. Some in the Congress, and especially Dadabhai, were demanding that the Indians should have some reserved seats in the Parliament. This, of course, was not accepted by the British government or political leaders. Nevertheless, Dadabhai thought it worthwhile to contest an election to the Parliament. So he and Lal Mohan Ghose entered the fray in 1886, but were defeated. ‘The Statesman was of the opinion that the Liberal Party did not support both Dadabhai and Ghose as it should have. Dadabhai then came back to India to preside over the second session of the Congress in Calcutta.
This session of the Congress differed from that of the first in many respects. The exuberant report of the secretary says, “In regard to the second congress, the greatest enthusiasm prevailed, especially throughout Bengal. At many places, large crowds accompanied delegates to the ships or railway stations on their departure for the Congress, giving them ovation”. Preparation for the Session began in the rainy season. In many cities some institutions organized meetings and discussed the subjects, which they thought ought to come up in the Congress session. The report of the secretary, giving the classification of the delegates, asserted that every two delegates represented one million people. One of the striking things was a total absence of the landed aristocracy and also of the shop-keeping class. But higher landed interests as Talukdars and zamindars were represented. Bankers and merchants were fairly represented, but petty moneylenders and shopkeepers were absent. He also says that there were very negligible representatives of peasants and agricultural classes. But to him it was no surprise, as they had very imperfect knowledge of political problems, and they were poor. Legal profession mustered strong. Referring to the poor representation of the Muslims, the secretary argues, “The Mohammedans were inadequately represented; which is just as if the nationality of the House of Commons in England were denied, because it contained the smaller proportion than the population of Great Britain as a whole, of Methodists or Roman Catholics”. This inadequate representation of the Muslims was the subject of comments by
many newspapers. ‘The Hindu’ attributed this to “an insidious attempt...made to discord and foment sectional jealousies among the Mohamedan community”.

In his presidential address Dadabhai laid all the emphasis on eradication of poverty. He also repeated the Congress demands for more representation for Indians in the Provincial and Viceroy’s Councils and in the government. The session passed a resolution on the subject when Surendranath Banerjea and Ambika Charan Muzumdar pointed out that poverty was due to absence of industries and also due to the large population. Bipin Krishna Bose, who was a judge in Nagpur, in his reminiscences narrates an incident at Calcutta. He writes: “I had a talk with Mr. Bapu Rao after his return from Calcutta. He said that Mr. Chitnavis and he were among those whom the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, had graciously received, not as delegates of the Congress, but as distinguished visitors to the Capital. In the talks which His Excellency had with the president, Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, the matters soon came to a crisis, and when Mr. Naoroji said that he and his friends were determined to carry on the propaganda vigorously until success was attained, His Excellency said, what if in the public interests he were to stop their dangerous activities by putting into operation both his ordinary and extraordinary powers in that behalf, Mr. Naoroji promptly replied that His Excellency might please himself and he and his friends never expected to
reach their goal except through many troubles and tribulations. No publicity was given to the incident by any of the delegates present”.¹

‘The Times’, as expected, severely criticised the Calcutta session of the Congress. A “National Indian Congress, composed of three hundred delegates from all parts of the country, holds its first meeting in Calcutta today. It is organised, of course, upon the model of the societies, which discuss political and social affairs in this country. The subjects discussed are the representation of the Natives in the Legislative Councils, the admission of Natives to more numerous and responsible posts in the civil service, and generally, the objections to British administration which naturally occur to persons of considerable imitative powers, of great fluency of speech, and of total ignorance of the real problems of the Government and the means by which they have to be overcome by practice. The Mahomedan community appears to be aloof from this kind of thing, on the ground that they prefer not to hamper the Government at a time when it is doing its best for the natives of India. We have produced an extensive class of talkers and equipped them with a second-hand knowledge of English history and literature. Thus, we have to deal with the public opinion of a kind, but it is important to remember that it is the public opinion of a class whose aims and interests are not by any means identical with those of the great masses of Indian populations for whom we have to care. These societies and the newspapers
they control represent a very trifling percentage of the people of India”. The demand for more representation in the Councils and administration by the Congress was not favoured by many Muslim leaders. But even the Kayasthas in the north India were also wary of this demand, as they feared that it would lead to the dominance of the Bengalis. Nevertheless, unlike Muslim leaders, the Kayasthas in the north, without much loss of time, joined the Congress.

Both Tilak and Gokhale shared the platform in the first session of the Provincial Conference. Gokhale’s first public speech was on the scandalous behaviour of Crawford, who became notorious in his capacity as a collector and commissioner. He was efficient but unscrupulous; a great spendthrift, he was careless about other peoples’ money. Crawford spoke Marathi very well; and N.C. Kelkar said that with a dhoti on he could have passed as a Chitpawan Brahmin.

As a commissioner of the Bombay Municipality, he executed some useful schemes, but spent lavishly on them. There was, therefore, a public outcry and the government had to appoint an inquiry committee. But Crawford’s most reprehensible behaviour was with some Mamlatdars under his jurisdiction when he was the commissioner of the Central Division of the Bombay Presidency. It was freely said that Crawford had taken bribes from Mamlatdars. When the government decided to inquire into this scandal, it assured the Mamlatdars that they would not be charged for the bribery, if they
produced concrete evidence against Crawford. Mamlatdars took the bait and after the inquiry Crawford had to leave, as he was found guilty. Crawford then left for England, where he wrote a book viciously criticising the Indians in general and Pune Brahmins in particular. However, the Mamlatdars found themselves in soup, as the government went back on its promise and sent notices asking for the explanation of their behaviour.

When the government proceeded against the Mamlatdars, it was Tilak who raised a hue and cry. He wrote several articles and addressed meetings. Gokhale joined in protesting against the government’s action in a public meeting in Pune on September 1, 1889. The government had no doubt about the culpability of Crawford. Viceroy Lord Dufferin wrote to the secretary of state that the behaviour of Crawford had brought shame to the English regime. But many of the Englishmen were angry with the government, as they believed that the governor, Lord Ray, blundered in instituting an inquiry against Crawford.

‘The Times’, London, avoided any criticism of Crawford but came down heavily on the Mamlatdars; while ‘The Times of India said that the whole affair had proved that the Indians were incapable of holding responsible positions. In his public speech Gokhale took both these newspapers to task and said that ‘The Times’ could be depended upon to justify any untruth. The government then decided that the Mamlatdars
should be compensated; but did not bother to pay a farthing for two months.

In criticising the government’s action or inaction, Gokhale wrote in the January 29, 1890 issue of ‘Sudharak’: “When there was some slight unavoidable delay in communicating to Mr. Crawford the conclusions at which those three worthy gentlemen the Commissioners had arrived with regard to his guilt, a terrible hubbub was made in about every quarter and great sympathy was expressed for his being liable to be done to death by that delay. While here are about fifteen to sixteen persons who have, in the first place, been most unjustly dismissed, and who are not again as yet even informed of the decision of the Government, arrived at about two months ago, to compensate them in some measure, for the pecuniary loss they have sustained. But these persons are only Natives and that makes all the difference in the world”.

Ronald Smith, in an article in the ‘Westminster Review’ of June 1890, criticised the bias of the government with regard to Crawford. He also provided some interesting details of Crawford’s methods of raising loans recklessly. Smith said: “One of his agents, a Native, called Hanumantrao turned the loan-raising into blackmailing. The Indian magistrates having savings or friends with means were subjected to pressure by Hanumantrao. And by suspending some on trifling pretext and transferring others to districts far away from their own people, scruples were removed and money
was found... Inquiry was held and Mr. Crawford was suspended from duty. Having remitted large sums through the French bank to Europe, he made preparations for flight. He wrote two letters addressed to his brother, who was expected to arrive at his bungalow the same night; then, disguising himself he disappeared”. One of the letters disclosed that he was to commit suicide at Holkar Bridge in Pune. Crawford then disguised as a tramp, boarded the third class compartment of a train and travelled to Bombay without knowing that he was followed by police. In Bombay he stayed in a hotel near the dock and requested the purser for some information. But he was then apprehended by the police.

In his capacity as the editor of the English section of ‘Sudharak’, Gokhale had decided to follow the policy laid down in the first sessions of the Indian National Congress. The national organisation had expressed its faith in and loyalty to the British rule. It believed that the English rule was in the interests of the Indian people. At the same time the Congress made some demands. It felt the need for some control on the powers of the British Parliament. To this end it suggested forming a standing committee of the Parliament. The Congress also demanded an increase in the number as well as the powers of the Indian representatives in the councils of the governors and the Governor-General; reduction on salt duty and acceptance of the elective principle to be adopted for the councils of the governors and that of
the Governor-General. The secretary of state for India, Lord Cross, was opposed to accepting the principle of election for the membership of the councils, even in a limited form. Gokhale in his article in ‘Sudharak’ of March 10, 1890, took exception to this attitude. He referred to the fact that all the governors and the Governor-General, Lord Lansdowne himself had concurred with the secretary of state. The governor of Bengal wanted additional thirty members on his Council, but the governor of Bombay would like to have less than eight members. The Viceroy’s Council was opposed to any increase. Gokhale reminded the government that the former Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, had conveyed to the secretary of state that an increase in the number of members was overdue and quite in order. He also suggested that without disturbing the majority of the official members, non-official members should be elected from the electoral college of the municipalities, district boards etc. In the Lords, Ripon, Northbrook, Kimberley generally supported this suggestion. But Prime Minister Lord Salisbury, opposing the introduction of elective principle, said that adoption of such principle in an oriental country was a mistake. He reminded the House that this experiment failed in Turkey and Egypt before. Besides, Indian people were divided by castes, race and religion. Gokhale alluded to the opposition by some members of the House of Commons, who were known as promoters of Congress and advised them not to throw the bill lock stock and barrel. He thought it would be madness to reject the bill altogether because it did not
incorporate an elective principle. Gokhale would have been happy to have the reforms with elective principle, but was ready to accept the limited reforms, which Lord Cross offered as a compromise.

But it was not only the high government dignitaries who were opposed to elective element; William Hunter, Principal Selby, Sir Richard Garth etc, though sympathetic to India, also had reservations. Hunter had a compromise solution. He suggested that the number of members of the governor’s Council should be increased to eighty, fifty per cent of which should be elected by the municipalities and district boards. He was afraid that some areas, which were also thickly populated, were backward than others, and they would send more members. To Hunter, second chamber would act as a check on the lower one and that would be more effective than a veto power of the viceroy. Gokhale did not agree with Hunter’s misgivings that members from Bengal and the north would outnumber and dominate the Governor General’s Council. He felt that the veto power of the viceroy was quite comprehensive and there would be few occasions to use it. Gokhale thought that it would be difficult to elect only fifty per cent of the members from the municipalities and district boards. Hunter scheme did not require the Governor’s prior consent for the admission of any member on Governors Council; but it had to be obtained for those who would sit on Viceroy’s Council. Gokhale pointed out that it was exactly what the Congress members of Maharashtra had suggested.
Professor Selby of Deccan College was an Irishman and was generally in sympathy with aspirations of the Indians. Ranade invited Prof. Selby to express his opinion about a scheme, which he called ‘graduated election’, which Selby disapproved. He thought that each part of Ranade’s scheme would increase the distance between the representatives and the constituents. Selby concluded his letter to Ranade by declaring, “I am by no means prepared to admit that the remedy for India’s ills, whatever they may be, is the importation of English institutions. It seems to be too often assumed that liberalism in politics means the anglicizing of India. English institutions are good in England. But with regard to India the question is, as it must be with regard to all other countries; what do the present times and circumstances require?”

Gokhale, criticising the stand taken by Selby (June 30, 1890), thought that the present requirements were met by the freedom to express the views of the people through different institutions like Sarvajanik Sabha. Gokhale argued that Selby was raising questions, but not offering remedy. Selby feared that by conferring the voting right, people of the calibre of Ranade and Telang would be left out and non-entities would come to the forefront. Gokhale was reminded of the clamouring against the lowering of the franchise by the Tories, but Gladstone had shown that political reforms had in no way brought about the deterioration of the quality of the House of Commons. Gokhale then asked whether Ranade and Telang would always be nominated. He also asked, if Selby held members of the Sarvajanik Sabha in
such a high esteem, then what prevented him in allowing them to elect members to the Council? Sir Richard Garth was the retired chief justice of the Calcutta High Court. He agreed with Hunter that elections would give too much representation to people from the backward regions of India. Sir Richard also feared that the elective element would give overwhelming majority to Hindus. Gokhale did not subscribe to these fears. He was emphatic in saying (July 14, 1890) that people like Dadabhai or Tyabji would not be discarded by Hindu voters simply because they were Parsi or Muslim. At the same time persons of the calibre of Ranade or Telang should not be debarred to give place to some inferior persons simply on the basis of religion.

Gokhale wrote three articles in support of the Congress demand for holding ICS examinations simultaneously in England and India. The opposition to this demand was voiced mainly by the British ministers and high civil servants. They objected on the grounds that the level of education in India was not suitable to prepare the candidates for such examination. Besides, the viva voce was equally important and Indian students would not be able to match the British candidates. Gokhale refuted all these arguments. He said that if there was any deficiency in the educational system in India, it was the responsibility of the government to take appropriate steps. Gokhale also said that in Macaulay’s time it might have been all right for the civil
servant not to have knowledge of the vernacular languages, but with the
passage of time, this knowledge had become necessary. He even suggested
bringing some examiners from England.

The year 1889 proved to be a turning point in the life of Gokhale. He
became the life-member of the Deccan Education Society and attended the
session of the Indian National Congress for the first time as a delegate from
Pune along with Tilak. Gokhale was also nominated as the secretary of the
Sarvajanik Sabha and the editor of its prestigious journal. The Congress
session in 1889 in Bombay was known as the ‘Bradlaugh session’. Brad
laugh, the British MP, was held in high esteem in India. His sympathies for
India were well known, for which he was nicknamed as a ‘Member for
India’. In the session Gokhale supported an amendment moved by Tilak, and
then was asked to make a speech on a resolution about the simultaneous
examinations of the ICS in England and India. His brief speech was much
appreciated, and then onwards Gokhale became one of the permanent
speakers in the Congress sessions. Gokhale in his first appearance on the
Congress platform reminded the British of the Queen’s Declaration of 1858
assuring the Indians that they would be treated on equal footing of race and
religion. He hoped that the majority of Englishmen would not support the
views of “a famous or infamous judge (James Stephen)” who advised the
British to ignore that declaration. Gokhale asked, what was wrong in
demanding the implementation of the assurances, which were given to Indians?

‘The Times’ correspondent on January 22, 1890 derisively said, “The term India is not to lead us astray. It is nothing more than a geographical expression. Not a single test of the nationality is fulfilled. Congress delegates who numbered two thousand came from all parts of the country, but they have nothing in common. What then brought these divergent elements together? Two hundred millions under the British rule had not sent them. The Indian ryot has no political aspirations, nor has the workman in the town. Nor has the Native aristocracy cared to agitate; nor do the 40 million Mohammedans. Few Mohammedans appear at the Congress but they were handful with no representative character. The real leaders of Islam not only hold aloof, but they have organised a Patriotic Anti-Congress League. The Parsis hold a similar attitude. Few have joined but the main body has followed the two leaders of the Parsi community—Sir Jameshetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sir Dinshaw Petit. The movement is a Hindu movement carried by the advance section of the Hindus”. ‘The Times’ concluded by saying that Hume was the main inspirer without whom the Congress could not have come into being. Writing to Queen Victoria, Viceroy Lord Lansdowne, informed: “He (Lansdowne) believes your Majesty is quite right in thinking that Mr. Brad laugh’s visit has to some extent disappointed the
advance party, which expected him to take a much more pronounced and aggressive line. Mr. Brad laugh’s public utterances were on the whole cautious and more moderate than was anticipated. Lord Lansdowne believes that his attitude has to some extent had a salutary effect in undeceiving those who believed that the Radical Party in Parliament was ready to take up anything and everything, which the agitators in this country might suggest. On the whole, the general impression of the last meeting of the Congress fell flatter than those held in previous years”.  

The Viceroy, however, betrayed his bias by not dealing with the reality.

‘The Times’ Calcutta correspondent had sent a malicious newsletter to his paper. He said: “The Hindu Congress, that cave of Aladdin for government pensioners, unsuccessful pleaders and impecunious graduates, opened its session in Bombay, Thursday. The whole proceedings in spite of Mr. Brad laugh’s presence have fallen flat and save locally, have attracted little or no public interest. Though a few individual Parsis and Mohammedans attended, both these influential communities have declared against the Congress. Both the general secretary and the president are ex-government officials, drawing from the Indian government yearly pensions of one thousand Pounds. They are faddists of a very pronounced type. The president is essentially a man of half knowledge. He is possessed of a very ordinary range of intellect”. This criticism of the correspondent was directed against Hume and Wedderburn.
In the Bombay session, Brad laugh was given a draft of a bill outlining the political reforms for India. Brad laugh assured that though he was derisively described as a member for India, he was proud of this title. Though the Congress constitution could not be passed in this session, some rules for selecting the delegates were approved. The Sabha Journal, writing about the session, asserted that it was the proof that the Congress has struck its roots firmly in the soil of this country. The article said that: “many of the critics had by then realised that their opposition to the Congress would be futile. But the Indians should take note of what critics had to say. The greatest opponents were the Anglo-Indians, who were narrow minded, and their selfishness was enormous unlike their conscience. They did not want Indians to make progress in education and politics. They would even go to the length of hitting us under the belt to achieve their objectives. It was better not to pay attention to those people. There were some others who were timid and afraid of change, who should be persuaded and cultivated”. ‘The Statesman’ of Calcutta took ‘The Times’ to task for its virulent criticism of the Congress and the educated Indians. The paper wrote on February 5, 1890: “That the Indian National Congress has fastened itself on the attention of the English public is shown by the criticism showered on it by the leading London journals, who whether speaking for or against the movement treat it as an imperial theme. Of course, the idea has been ridiculed; but ridicule does not in every case kill. Those who have ridiculed the Congress and the aspirations
of the educated portion of the people of India belong to the least intelligent section of the English public—flippant, flashy, supercilious, and astonishingly ignorant and stupid. ‘The Times’ is contemptible for its lack of all principle, the St. James Gazette is a jingo monomaniac. Yet these are the journals that attempt to cast ridicule on the Congress movement. The flippancy and coarseness displayed by some of these so-called Conservative journals in their comments on the Congress are beneath notice”.

One of the demands of the Congress was to scale down the tax on salt. The economist, G.V Joshi, in an article in the ‘Bombay Gazette’ pointed out that there was a surplus of rupees two crores in the Indian budget. Gokhale, alluding to this in ‘Sudharak’ of February 10, asked the government to use that surplus to relieve the hardship of the poor people and reduce the tax on salt. He reproduced a dispatch by Lord Cross, the Secretary of State, to the government of India that the increase in tax on salt proposed that time was temporary and should be scaled down as soon as possible for the benefit of the common people. Gokhale asked the government to follow that advice. Gokhale dwelt on this subject several times later. In the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1890, one of the resolutions was about the salt tax, and Gokhale’s speech was effective and well appreciated.

R.D. Rusden, an Englishman, was moved by the hardships suffered by poor Indians due to the tax on salt. He wrote a letter to the editor of the
‘Maratha’, which was published on July 21, 1889. Rusden said: “I should think your ‘policy’ as regards the salt tax should be to agitate for its total extinction as opposed to mere ‘reduction’, that is what our anti-corn law men did and you know that they won in the end. I think the time has come to say to the Government: The whole thing is hateful and shameful and scandalous, and we insist upon the sweeping away of the tax; and if you do not repeal it, we will try and make it so hot and disagreeable to you that before long you will have to drop it whether you like it or not. As I have often written, it’s no use going to a Government with a plea of justice. They know all about that—the principles of justice are like the principles of Christianity, very well-known, but never acted on, certainly not by Government, but go to them and show by good evidence that unless a certain course is taken, there will be a danger to the ‘Rulers’ and see how quickly they change”.4

In 1890 the Industrial Conference was established and its first session was held in Pune in May of the same year. It was Ranade and G.V. Joshi, who took the initiative to establish the conference and hold the session. Addressing the session Ranade said that as there would not be any difference of opinion about the need to industrialise, everybody could cooperate. Gokhale supported this plea in his editorial in ‘Sudharak’. Sarvajanik Sabha, in a statement issued about the session of the Industrial Conference, said that with the import of mill cloth, the indigenous handloom industry had suffered.
Bombay and Calcutta have seen the growth of new mills. But the Government of India’s inquiry about the industrial progress of the country has revealed that it was unsatisfactory. India is very backward in technical education. The Industrial Conference did not hold the view that there was only one way to industrialisation. It would encourage small and big industries. It appealed to the industrialists, traders and the government that they should all cooperate to foster industries.

Congress, by now, was facing increasing opposition from Syed Ahmed. When the third session of the Congress was convened at Madras and Badruddin Tyabji was selected as president, Syed Ahmed mounted an attack on the Congress and did his best to persuade Tyabji to disassociate with the Congress. It was Lala Lajpat Rai who crossed swords with Syed Ahmed Khan on this issue. He wrote two articles citing Syed Ahmed Khan’s previous writings showing how he became a turncoat. Syed Ahmed had written a book in Urdu about 1857 revolt. This was translated by Sir Auckland Colvin in English, which was published in 1873. Syed Ahmed’s thesis was that the revolt was not religious and was not a planned affair. He maintained that stability and prosperity of any nation were dependent on the scope which was given to the people to advise and participate in the administration. Syed Ahmed pointed out that as the rulers did not know the language of the people and the people did not have the right to send their
representatives to the Councils, it had created misunderstanding about the government’s laws and intentions. Lala Lajpat Rai also cited the views expressed by Syed Ahmed in his speeches at Muradabad and Lahore in 1884. In both these speeches Syed Ahmed appealed to Hindus, Muslims and Christians to join hands and cooperate. He complimented the Bengalis for bringing in the light of western knowledge. He declared that by nation he meant the one that consists of Hindus and Muslims. Lala Lajpat Rai expressed his surprise at the volte face by Syed Ahmed in the following four years when Syed Ahmad published a book—The Present Discontent In Indian Politics, to which Mr. Bake, the Principal of the Alighar College started by Syed Ahmed Khan, wrote an introduction. Bake had contempt for the Congress and Hindus. In the introduction, Bake described the Congress as a debating society and not a political organisation representing the whole of the country. He asserted that the Congress represented a section of the people of some castes in India. Bake appealed to the people of England not to be carried away by the Congress propaganda. Syed Ahmed’s book carried some of his speeches. In one such speech he asserted that Hindus and Muslims not only belonged to two religions but they were two nations. Muslims had ruled India for some centuries and the Bengalis who were afraid of a table knife should not be allowed to rule over the Muslims. Syed Ahmed opposed the representative local self-organisations and more representation in the higher echelons of the administration. His fear was that,
it would lead to the Hindu domination. To Syed Ahmed, it was the right of the government to decide the size of the army it needed for national security and it was totally unnecessary to discuss this with the people; the Bengalis who had never ruled were incapable of understanding this. Syed Ahmed’s original speech in Urdu was much more vituperative.

The English officials were pleased with Syed Ahmed Khan’s speeches. The secretary of state had conveyed to Lord Dufferin that some fetters must be created in the way of the Congress to which the viceroy was not averse. Syed Ahmed even opposed the reduction of salt tax. He said that the government needed to maintain an army and hence it had to levy taxes. It was, therefore, natural that Syed Ahmed was peeved by the selection of Badruddin Tyabji as the president of the Madras session of the Congress. Tyabji was of mild disposition. He impressed upon the Congress leaders that any decisions regarding the Muslims should be taken with the consent of the Muslims, to which the Congress leaders agreed. Madras session of the Congress was much more disciplined than the previous two. The preparations started quite in advance, and Congress workers spread themselves in small towns and collected whatever money they could. There was tremendous enthusiasm for the session and everything was orderly. The local leaders made special efforts to muster Muslim support, which resulted in an
impressive attendance of eighty Muslim delegates at the session. ‘The Times’, reviewing the Madras session, referred to the speeches of Syed Ahmed Chan, and stressed again the unrepresentative character of the Congress. According to ‘The Times’ it was an organisation of the Parsis and Bengalis. In fact, delegates to Madras session had come from different parts of India. ‘The Times’ on December 22, 1887 published a letter by ‘An Indian Mohammedan’, which declared: “that the Indian National Congress was got up by a handful of Bengali and Parsi gentlemen”; the Calcutta Mahomedans had refused to send delegates because, “they had perfect confidence of the government of India”. This anonymous letter referred to the Anglo-Indian papers who were discussing whether in view of the absence of the Mahommedans, the Indian National Congress should be called National or not. Ten days later, Syed Ahmed Khan made a speech at Lucknow, which was reported by ‘The Times of India’ on January 18, 1888. The similarity of views between the anonymous letter and the speech by Syed Ahmed Khan was striking. Three days after the speech Syed Ahmed Khan was made a Knight Commander of the most exalted order of the ‘Star of India.’

In his speech to the Mohammedan Educational Congress, Syed Ahmed claimed that the people had a due share in the making of the laws and the government did not act without regard to the opinion of the people. He did not think that competitive examinations were suitable for India, as there was
no one nation. He referred to the Congress as a ‘stupid agitation’, and the Congress session as mere scribbling of the pen, “Zig, Zig, Zig, Zig, Zig” and more talk—“Buk Buk Buk Buk”. The ‘Times of India’ editorial praised the speech as ‘slashing address’ and characterised the Lucknow meeting as “a great meeting of the intellect and aristocracy, the brain and muscle of Mohamedan community.” Hume was furious with the speech by Syed Ahmed and asked Tyabji to issue a rejoinder and also sent a draft. Tyabji advised patience. Hume then wrote a long letter to Tyabji on January 22. He said, “Having been patted out on the back for it, he (Syed) would go further and make it impossible to hold the next Congress at Allahabad.” Hume was convinced that Syed Ahmed’s speech had been put up to throw out the suggestion of suppression of the Congress. He then added, “Doubtless, though it may be hard to realise—just as mosquitoes and cockroaches perform a useful part in the universal workshop, so men like Syed Ahmed and creatures like ‘Muslim Herald’, perform useful parts in the evolution of the nation, so, I never for two minutes bear any of these people any personal ill will”.

Tyabji had written to Sir Syed before the latter made his vituperative speech. He expressed his regret that on matters affecting all of India, a section of the Mussalman community should keep aloof from the Hindus and thus retard the national progress of India as a whole. Tyabji assured Sir Syed
that the intention of the Congress was not to subject Muslims to Hindus. Sir
Syed in reply to Tyabji reiterated his views about the Congress, which he
thought was not only harmful to the Muslims but to the whole of India,
because it was based on the wrong assumption that India was a one nation.
Tyabji again wrote to Sir Syed stating that the Congress could not be
stopped, and by resolute action Muslims could direct the course that the
Congress should take. Sir Syed did not reply to Tyabji but in a speech at
Meerat on March 16, 1888 he made a reference to the letter by Tyabji and
repeated his arguments. In the end Sir Syed cited Koran and said that the
God had commanded that the Muslims could not be friends with non-
Muslims. If they could be friends, it could be only with Christians as they
were men with a book like Muslims. Sir Syed’s tirade against Congress
evoked sharp reaction from some quarters, while some others expressed their
sorrow and dismay. Pherozeshah declared that Sir Syed was not on the right
path. However, all Muslim leaders were not following the lead given by Sir
Syed. Sheikh Raza Hussain, president of the Anjuman-i-Rifa-i-Am, one of
the most prestigious associations in the North, declared that he had full
sympathy for the Congress and was ready to furnish fifty thousand
signatures of the Muslims in support. He also said that India was one nation.
The Sheikh wrote to Tyabji saying that Muslims should come out openly to
support the Congress. It was then decided that the Congress should invite the
Anjuman to send delegates to the next session to be held in Allahabad.\textsuperscript{5}
Wacha, Dadabhai and Malbari had reacted to the criticism by Sir Syed against the Congress. Wacha in a letter asked Dadabhai whether he had read a newspaper report in which Sir Syed was supposed to have said in one of his speeches in England that he was ashamed to be an Indian. On January 20, 1888 Wacha sent Dadabhai a clipping from ‘The Statesman carrying Sir Syed’s speech, and remarked, “The old man is a fool and pretends to lead. But it is blind leading the blind. Badrooddin’s presidency has been the most fortunate thing at the juncture”. Wacha in another letter (May 29, 1888) told Dadabhai that, “No doubt the Allahabad Congress must be viewed with grave apprehension. Theodore Beck is braying in the columns of ‘The Pioneer’. He is being answered valiantly by almost all the vernacular papers. In one respect Sir Syed Ahmed’s tirades have done good. The Congress is so much talked about that even our arch enemy, ‘The Times of India’ suggests to Syed to allay the fury, and suspend his activity for a time.” Dadabhai thought that Sir Syed had the backing of only the Muslim zamindars and would not be able to influence the ordinary Muslims. Future events have proved that Hume, Dadabhai, Wacha were all wrong in their estimation of Sir Syed and the forces he unleashed. Sir Syed had appealed to the religious feelings and invoked the past glory of the Muslim rule, and frightened them about their present and also future.
Before the Allahabad Congress a great deal of controversy raged at different levels. Muslim organisations were divided, especially those in the North. Sir Auckland Colvin, the lieutenant governor, by his expression of displeasure, was frightening the Muslims. Tyabji took stock of the situation and held talks with many Muslim leaders as well as with Pherozeshah, Telang and some others, and wrote to Hume: “As an ardent friend of the Congress desiring nothing but its success”. He said that whatever he was suggesting had the approval of Pherozeshah, Telang etc. Tyabji then suggested that in view of so much controversy, it was better to postpone the Congress session for five years and then review the situation. He said, “Friction and bitterness which are caused by the agitation every year outweigh the advantages gained. If after the end of five years, our prospects improve, we renew the Congress, if not, we can drop with dignity, conscious of having done our utmost for the advance of India and for the fusion of different races into one”. But Hume disagreed. In a lengthy reply he wrote, “Out of eight millions (Muslims) we have one million distinctly with us, and there are not one hundred thousand really opposed to us. In the Punjab we are sweeping Syed Ahmed away. In Bihar and Eastern Bengal we have an overwhelming majority. In Madras it is the same. The upshot is that they (the Moulavies) consider that in all probability, within the next two or three years we shall have every single Moulavie of any real influence in India...and with them the great bulk of intelligent adults, and we shall within this period win
at least half of the intelligent of the eight millions”. It was to be a daydream. For the moment Hume carried the day; and the idea of postponing the session of the Congress was given up.7

The Allahabad Congress session had to encounter difficulties created by Sir Syed Ahmed who considered the United Provinces to be his area of influence. Lt. Governor Sir Auckland Colvin, in order to harass the Congress leaders and workers, made them change the venue several times, and the provincial governments asked for bail from those attending the session. In spite of all these difficulties, Congress session attracted a large number of people; and 221 Muslim delegates participated. This was more than those present at Madras. Hume in his letter had written that Sir Syed Ahmed and Deoband Muslim leaders were jointly conspiring against the government. This was nothing but his wild imagination, as Deoband leaders were angry with Sir Syed because of his insistence on English education for the Muslims. Moulana Rashid Mahmod Gangohi, the chief of the Deoband, had issued an edict that Muslims should cooperate with the Congress purely for secular purpose. But some other sections were withdrawing their support to the Congress even before the Allahabad Congress. They were the zamindars from Bengal and several Parsis from Bombay. Letters by Wacha and Malabari to Dadabhai made clear that Parsis were deserting the Congress. Wacha wrote to Dadabhai on Oct. 5, 1888, “Bombay is no doubt cutting a
sorry figure in every way. The spirit of political activity which was so visible and strong three years ago is nowhere. A sort of languor is supervened. Our leaders are taking it coolly with but little forethought or even counting the present odds at stake”. Wacha wrote on November 23, “‘Rast Goftar’ is worse. In last Sunday’s article (November 18) it openly incites the Parsis to refrain from joining the Congress, if the Congressmen become revolutionists and irreconcilable. Pherozeshah told me that he had to remonstrate to Kabraji against such a mischievous article said to emanate from the pen of Bhownaggaree”. Wacha wrote on June 18, 1889, “There is this disturbing element of the Mahomedans and the Parsis. The rabid writings of the ‘Rast’ are a disgrace to that paper. The attitude of Mahommedans is as you know, hostile. For these considerations we thought that Poona might be pitched upon. In Bombay absence of Parsis and Mahomedans, if bent upon holding aloof, may be most marked and will certainly commented upon adversely”.

At the Allahabad session of the Congress, George Yule, an industrialist from Calcutta, presided. In his address he regretted that there was no control over the Indian administration, especially, the Finance Department; and not only Indians could not participate in the administration, but even the Englishmen who were outside the official circles, like industrialists, traders etc., were kept out. Mr. Yule then gave some interesting statistics. He said, India’s export trade was about rupees fifteen crores. England’s foreign trade
in 1837 was of the same order. But the British government had no authority to spend a farthing without the consent of the Parliament. The school-going population in India was 3.3 million, same as it was in England in 1821. But even with the spread of education, the government could not find Indians to participate in the administration. Anybody from India staying in England and paying taxes could get the voting right, but such a person, on returning to India was disfranchised. In the session, Gokhale was asked to move a resolution on the question of Public Service Commission. This was in a way promotion for him and with that he moved into the higher echelon of the Congress. Gokhale pointed out that the number of seats for Indians in the government service had gone down as per the report of the Public Service Commission. The Indians should have 125 seats, but the Commission had given 108 seats, which belonged to the provincial cadre. Even then the right to fulfill these seats rested with the secretary of state who had not given any promise. Gokhale sarcastically said that no doubt the change was taking place, but progress was in a reverse direction. In this session many complaints were made against the treatment given to the delegates from Punjab, Madras etc. by the officials. The secretary’s report denounced such intimidation and reminded the government that repression gives rise to the secret work and secret societies. The report declared that the idea of the Congress had taken deep roots in India and even if ten thousand congressmen were deported, the organisation would continue to grow. Because of the
repressive measures under Lord Lytton, some secret societies came into being. Those who had studied history would know where these societies would lead. The report in conclusion said that if the Viceroy and the government would look to the Congress and people with contempt and resort to repression, then that would spell danger to both India and England.

There was a discrepancy between the public utterances of Dufferin and the official correspondence with the secretary of state. Dufferin had great expectations about the state chiefs, zamindars and the landed gentry. He bestowed titles and honours on them lavishly. He was also thinking of having a Council of these chiefs. He had realised that political reforms were unavoidable in India. In 1886 he wrote to the secretary of state that there were several movements going on and the demands emanated from them would have to be considered in seriousness. Whatever was to be given should be given without loss of time and with grace. He advised that it should also be made clear that within the next fifteen years there would be no changes. Dufferin was confident that if the energies of some of the efficient people were harnessed, then many good schemes could be implemented. Dufferin had some discussions with Surendranath Banerjea. Moreover, he had asked his officials to prepare a scheme for social reform. The committee of the officials had suggested that all castes and religions should be represented. Property was to be the criteria for the selection of a member. The Committee
suggested that the members of the Councils should have the right to see the
government documents and to ask questions. The right for discussion should
be accepted. Two fifths of the members should be elected and government
would have overriding powers to go against the majority opinion. Dufferin
was aware that his scheme would not be accepted by the British government
as it was. Therefore, he wrote to the secretary of state an explanatory letter.
He said that his scheme aimed at enlarging the provincial legislatures and
giving them some additional powers. Some elective element could be
introduced. At the same time it should be made clear that it would not be on
the model of the British Parliament. Dufferin wrote that the British had the
responsibility to protect the interests of various castes and religions and of the
administration of the Empire in India; and as the government in India was
responsible to the Queen and the Parliament, the newly created legislative
councils could not follow the Parliamentary model. If that model had to be
followed, then in the event of loss of majority, the opposition would have to
be invited to form the government. As that was not possible in India, there
could not be legislatures on the model of the Parliament and that was why the
government majority was assured in the scheme. India might be a backward
country in many respects, but it had also a large educated population. Some
of these should be associated with the government, Dufferin concluded.
Though Dufferin initiated this move on official level, he was very critical of the Congress politics while speaking at the farewell dinner in Calcutta. He asked the Congress to concentrate on social work, as government was doing its best to safeguard the interests of the people. Dufferin was convinced that it would take hundreds of years before India would have parliamentary democracy. His speech provoked a controversy. Umashankar Misra wrote a piece in the July 1889 issue of the ‘Westminster Review’ and supported Dufferin. He wrote: “When we reflect calmly over the arguments adduced by the late Viceroy in support of his proposition on this subject, we are forced to admit the truth of his assertions. We admit that India has made great progress in education, and the growth of an intelligent public opinion, and the number of men of Western culture and Western thought is increasing rapidly. But we do not think that they have as yet a representative character. The Mohammedan community, with its distinctive characteristics, whether religious, social or ethnological, which has shown no sympathy for the movement, is a great drawback to political unity. One of the methods lately employed by the Congressionists has been to issue two pamphlets in the form of catechisms, with third report of the Congress meeting held at Madras. The object of these indiscreet publications-not to use a stronger term- is to hold the Government of India to the contempt and indignation as “unjust, inconsiderate, ill-informed, and reckless of the consequences of their actions. We all know how much inflammable material
there is in India, and we can easily conceive what evils will ensue if such pamphlets are circulated amongst the credulous and ignorant masses”.

Pandit Bishan Narayan Dar, one of the eminent leaders of the Congress from the United Provinces, countered every argument of Misra in the June 1890 issue of the ‘Westminster Review’. He referred to Dufferin’s statement that English brought the legal codes, which secured to Her Majesty’s every subject equality before the law. Refuting this argument, Dar said that this was all very well on the paper. “There is a sharp line of demarcation drawn between the rulers and the ruled; the trial by jury is conceded to the one but refused to the other; Indian magistrates, whatever their experience and ability, are not allowed to try European offenders; but a young English civilian, who probably knows as little about India as he does about the other side of the moon can try Indians for the most serious offences. This is not our idea of equality before the law”. Dar castigated the Indian legislatures as sham. Citing statistics, Dar showed how Indians had very little scope in the government service. “Nobody will deny that Russia is despotic, but one of the chief secrets of her remarkable expansion is, as soon as she annexes a territory by force of arms she removes the bitterness of conquest from the minds of the conquered people, by, at once, extending to them the laws and principles which govern the people of St. Petersburg. On the contrary inequality is the keynote of the English constitution”. Dar reminded the English readers that this trait had alienated the colonists in America as well as
in Canada. Proceeding further, Dar said, “It is human nature to love liberty and equality. It is certainly untrue to say, as is always implied by those who say that the demands of the Congress proceed from a discontented educated class, and not from the masses. Britain is civilized, is just, is humane, but it is not sympathetic. I think that it is creditable rather than otherwise to the Congress that it is under the guidance and control of the educated classes”.

When Misra mentioned in his article, that inflammable material was circulated in India, he was echoing what Sir Auckland Colvin had said in his correspondence with Hume. This was the new line, which was then adopted by the British officials. Colvin had objected to the language used in the Congress pamphlets, which according him would spread disaffection about the British rule among the people. Colvin advised Hume to ask the Congress to take up social problems. Objecting to the demand for a representative government, Colvin said that that demand was confined to the educated class, as the masses were not aware of such representative government and the conditions were not ripe for it. Hume, in a lengthy reply, refuted Colvin’s arguments. He said that the Congress had as many true representatives of the people as there were representatives in the British Parliament. Hume asserted that the Congress was a growing organisation and spoke the minds of the people. He also told Colvin that many Congressmen were involved in many other fields to further the cause of their country.
Nobody was aware of the shape of the impending political reforms, though everybody was expecting some. Dufferin had asked for very limited reforms, but the secretary of state, Lord Cross, was a diehard Tory and did not approve of the scheme proposed by Dufferin. He and his Advisory Council raised many questions and objections. Aware of this, the Congress leaders felt an urgent need to do everything in their power to assert and propagate their demands. Dadabhai and other Congress leaders had already agreed that the propaganda campaign had to be undertaken in India as well as in England. They were convinced that as the government of India was under the control of the bureaucracy, it was necessary to convince the Parliamentarians and the British public of the justness of the Congress demands. Congress had earlier decided to start an agency and a magazine or a weekly to undertake this job in England. In 1888, Dadabhai had started an agency named Indian Political Agency, which was renamed as British Committee of the Indian National Congress. Sir William Wedderburn was appointed president, and Dadabhai, MacNeill etc. were the members. William Digby, a journalist and a writer, was the secretary.

It was recognised by the Indian National Congress in 1889. Forty-five thousand rupees were sanctioned for the expenses. The British Committee started a periodical, ‘India’, in 1890 under the editorship of Digby. From 1892 it was converted to a monthly magazine and after six years it became a
weekly. Dadabhai’s correspondence reveals that this venture was facing financial difficulties for a long time. Dadabhai, Hume and Wedderburn were raising funds and spending their own money. Malabari also lent a helping hand. It was decided that every Congress Committee should collect a certain amount of money and enrol subscribers. But this was seldom done. Most of the provincial Congress committees found it difficult to enrol subscribers or raise the amount, which was expected of them. They found that it was beyond their capacity to sell definite number of copies of ‘India’, which were allotted to them. The Madras Committee had informed Dadabhai that fifty per cent of the copies allotted to them should be kept in the London office, and the Committee would pay for them so that they would save on postage. At one time, the British Committee came to the conclusion that it was better to close down ‘India’. When Gokhale agreed to raise money for ‘India’, Wedderburn was happy and wrote to Dadabhai, “The news that Mr. Gokhale will undertake this work is indeed cheering. As the favourite disciple of the great and good Mr. Ranade, he is thoroughly ‘sound’ and has also the energy and ability necessary to make his work fruitful. Mr. Hume will be very glad to hear the news”. 9 As was his wont, Gokhale undertook this job seriously and made it a point to collect money and enroll subscribers for ‘India’ wherever he went. In the Gokhale papers there are several letters in which Gokhale could be seen giving the details of his collection to Dadabhai. On the other hand, Wacha informed Dadabhai that both
Pherozeshah and Telang were not enthusiastic about his work in England and thought that Dadabhai should return to India.

Dadabhai did not listen to Pherozeshah and Telang and continued his work in England. He also decided to contest election to the Parliament from Finsbury, in 1892. British Liberal Party accepted his nomination after great deal of efforts by Dadabhai and his friends. Malabari seemed to be serious about sending money to Dadabhai for the election. Dadabhai’s task was not easy, as he was facing a stiff opposition in England. Prime Minister Lord Salisbury called Dadabhai a ‘black man’. But it was Gladstone and newspapers like ‘The Guardian’, which took strong exception to such a racist expression. Ultimately, Dadabhai won the election by razor thin majority. Whole of India celebrated this victory with, great enthusiasm and joy. Lokmanya Tilak, congratulating him in an editorial said that: “when Dadabhai was castigated as a ‘black man’, everybody in India was amazed and saddened by the thought that a prime minister of a progressive country in the nineteenth century should think in such racial terms. It was also feared that the assurances by the Queen, of equal treatment, would be of no avail. But the voters in the Central Finsbury had demonstrated to the -whole world that their hearts were not ‘black’ and they would be remembered for a long time, both in India and England. If out of the twenty crore people of India only one was to be selected to contest the election in England, on the basis of
intelligence, character and high moral qualities, then all India would have unanimously selected Dadabhai as their representative. Dadabhai’s election had also shown that the English people were not adamant, rigid and narrow minded like English bureaucrats in India”. Writing in the Sabha’s Journal in the January, 1894 issue Gokhale said, “We all remember how for six long years a whole nation’s eyes were watching with anxious suspense the unequal and unprecedented struggle which Dadabhai was carrying on in England on India’s behalf, and how our hearts constantly rose and sank accordingly as we heard that his prospects were getting brighter or darker. And gentlemen, to my mind, it has always appeared that the one secret of the unique, unparalleled success which he has achieved has been the great faith that if only he did his duty honestly and manfully, success must follow no matter when it came”.

Before the Indian people celebrated Dadabhai’s victory, Hume threw a bombshell by a circular addressed to the Congressmen on February 16, 1892. Hume reminded them that they should take a serious note of the poverty, which was on the rise. He said that the poverty was the mother of anarchy and the government was unable to protect the people. Hume told them that they and especially the rich were oblivious of the conditions in India, while the government of India was pauperizing the country and inevitably paving the way for a terrible cataclysm in the history. The Indian people were mild
and humble but so were the people of France; but they rose in revolt and executed their Sovereign and practically the bulk of the better classes. History shows that hunger and poverty drive even peaceful people to violence and revolt. This violence might be met with by force; and thousands will die; “but when there were millions and millions who had nothing to look forward to but death...nothing to hope for but vengeance, there would be no lack of leaders”. Hume expressed his frustration about the smugness of the government, which did not want to implement any essential reform measures. He, however, thought that the only ray of hope was the conscience of the British people, which had to be appealed to and roused. He suggested that Britain must be flooded with articles, pamphlets and other propaganda material... the way followed by the Anti-Corn Law League, which triumphed. This would require money; but though the common people were generous in contributing to the Congress fund, the rich were blind and miserly.

Hume’s circular was denounced by several members of the House of Commons. Mr. Maclean said that under the less mild rule than that of the British, Hume would have been shot or hanged as a traitor. The officials in India were furious and there was panic in the Congress circles. Anglo-Indian press savagely attacked Hume. The Allahabad, Madras and Bombay Congress Committees refused to circulate the letter by Hume on the ground
that it would be seditious. Even the British Committee disowned the circular by issuing a statement signed by Caine, Dadabhai and others. On April 1, a letter by Dinshaw Wacha was published in the ‘Bombay Gazette’, which said that immediately after the receipt of the circular, Pherozeshah Mehta sent a telegram begging Hume to withdraw the circular. As Hume did not do so, the standing committee of Bombay Congress met and passed the resolution deciding not to circulate Hume’s two letters; the second being declination to withdraw the first.

But Wacha was in two minds. This is clear from his two letters to Dadabhai and his articles, which were collected in a book eight months later. In a letter to Dadabhai on March 19, 1892, Wacha wrote: “It (Hume’s circular) somewhat borders on seditious, though the facts cannot be gainsaid. Hume embodied these sentiments of the circulars in a more amplified form in the concluding portion of his usual introduction to the Congress Report. Now this Report is an authentic document. It has the imprimatur of all Congress delegates who therefore become responsible for its contents. Imagine the disaster, which might befall the Congress, if government took into its head to discredit it. They could easily do so, and suppress the Congress as a body, which under the guide of loyalty was endeavouring to sow the seeds of sedition and inflame the popular mind. Owing to the remonstrance from more than one quarter, Hume informs all Congress
Committees in a letter... that he has entirely omitted from the Report the whole of the introduction. This he carries to England where he means to publish it. I am entirely in one with Hume’s facts which none can gainsay. They are notorious, but there are ways of expressing them. Between ourselves we must say that Hume is sometimes too impulsive”. On April 2, Wacha again referred to Hume’s letter informing Dadabhai that all friends of the Congress were apprehensive that Hume’s most “ill advised action” had harmed the cause. Wacha also feared that it might affect adversely the India Council Bill then before the Commons. It was only Lokmanya Tilak, who through ‘Kesari’ and ‘Maratha’ openly supported Hume. He said that it would have done no harm if those Congressmen who issued statements criticising Hume’s circular, had kept quiet. Hume had correctly described the situation in the country. ‘Maratha’ recalled that some years ago there were peasants’ riots in Maharashtra, and asserted that the failure to improve the situation would create such a situation, which Hume had envisaged. Tilak followed his articles endorsing the views of Hume by two more editorials under the title, ‘Would the Indian peasants have to revolt?’ Afterwards when Wacha published his articles giving great deal of statistics about the impoverishment of the people and specially the peasants, Tilak congratulated him in the editorial columns of ‘Kesari’. Agarkar, editor of the ‘Sudharak’, in his characteristic impassioned style denounced those Congressmen who criticised Hume’s circular and called them cowards.
Though the Congressmen betrayed their cowardice by distancing themselves from Hume, it is equally true that Hume was impulsive and given to imagine things. Nobody doubted his contention that there was abject poverty in India; but the situation was not inflammatory and there was no immediate danger of any large-scale revolt. About his suggestion to wind up the Congress, it must be recalled that it was Hume who strongly opposed Tyabji who had suggested two years earlier that in view of the controversy raised by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the annual session of the Congress should be postponed for five years. But in 1891 Hume himself suggested the disbanding of the Congress altogether. In a circular letter to all Congress Committees, he said that the objective of the Congress was to create awakening in the people. The government had been approached and demands were placed before it. As nobody knew when the Liberals would come to power, it was uncertain when the session of the Congress could be held in England. Under the circumstances, it was futile to spend hundred or hundred and fifty thousand rupees every year on a Congress session. It was a sheer waste of money. Agarkar wrote two editorials in July 1891 opposing Hume's suggestion. He thought that the suggestion might have come from Hume, who might be disgusted with the behaviour of the Indian elite. They were selfish, cowardly, and not prepared to sacrifice for the good of the country. In the second editorial, Agarkar disagreeing with Hume suggested that the people of India should raise a memorial for Hume in the form of a hall to be
named after him. At the same time all was not well with the political agency established in England, which was looked after by William Digby, as a secretary. He was paid for this work. Digby also looked after the interests of some Indian princes. Moreover, the information that Digby provided about the probable government policy towards the states like Kashmir had eventually proved to be incorrect, which created bitter feelings among the members of the British Committee. The Amrita Bazar Patrika’ was also angry with Digby. He, therefore, was relieved from the responsibilities of the secretary and as the editor of the ‘India. J.R. McLane, a British Member of Parliament in his book, Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress has discussed in detail disagreements and the differences in the Congress.
References


9. *Dadabhai Papers*, (these are unpublished papers from Dadabhai Naoroji Trust).