

# UPSC Preparation

## Establishment of Indian National Congress

The need for an all-India organisation of educated Indians had been felt since 1880, but the Ilbert Bill controversy deepened this desire. The establishment of Indian National Congress (INC) is one of the most prominent political associations of the 20th century.

### First Phase of Indian Nationalism (1885- 1915)

This phase was dominated by moderates. This phase was initially called as the 'Early Nationalist' phase, however, with the rise of extremism in the closing stages of the 19th Century, this phase was described as the 'age of moderates'.

#### Establishment of Indian National Congress (INC):

- The INC was established in 1885, by A.O. Hume, a retired civil servant who was staying in Shimla post-retirement.
- He invited many Indian leaders regarding the Indian cause, and he laid the foundation of the 'Indian National Union'.
- But, after the suggestion of Dadabhai Naoroji, its name was changed to 'Indian National Congress'. The word 'Congress' was taken from the American Constitution.

### What was the real reason for the establishment of the Indian National Congress?

There are two broad theories behind this:

#### Mythical Theory:

This suggested that it was the humanistic approach of A.O. Hume that was cited as one of the factors that led to the establishment of the INC. In fact, it was said that Hume was deeply moved by the political plight of the Indians, and he wanted to establish a political platform for Indians that could serve as the 'voice for Indians' so that the grievances could reach the British and the discontentment which was gradually growing between the British ruling system and the Indians could be minimized.

The biographer of A.O. Hume, **William Wedderburn**, who later on also became the President of the INC as well, deeply believed in the humanistic approach of A.O. Hume.

### Realistic Theory:

1. The extremist elements in India like Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, etc. laid down the theory known as 'Safety- valve' theory.
2. Lala Lajpat Rai wrote two books, 'Unhappy India', and 'Punjabi'. In these two books, he explained and criticized the policy of the British regarding the establishment of the INC.
3. According to him, it was a conspiracy of **Lord Dufferin**, and **A.O. Hume**, that lead to the establishment of the INC. In the second half of the 19th Century with the growing tide of nationalism, the aggression of Indians kept on increasing against the British policies, thus the British think-tanks derived a concept by which it was said that in between the British Government in India and the Indian public, there would be a buffer organization known as the Indian National Congress (INC).

Thus, the INC would work as a buffer organization, or in other words, it would work as a safety-valve.

The safety-valve theory got a strong momentum in the political circles of India.

But, on the basis of modern analysis, the INC was a result of many a regional consciousness uniting together under the context of commonality of interests. In fact, with the beginning of the 19th Century itself, there were many cultural organizations which were established by social reformers. And cultural organizations always lead to political and social awareness.

Thus, in this regard, we find that immediately after the socio-cultural movement in India (i.e. 19th-century renaissance), we find various political organizations being established like:

- **The Landholders Society**, which was established by Dwarkanath Tagore. This was also known as Zamindar Sabha.
- There were many other organizations like, **East India Association**, **Bengal British East India Association**, **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha**, and the **Indian League**, established by **Sisir Kumar Ghosh**.