



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the reasons that led to the foundation of Indian National Congress and its major objectives. (150 words)

25 Mar, 2019 GS Paper 1 History

Approach

- Introduce briefly by stating facts w.r.t. formation of INC.
- Give different views regarding the formation of INC.
- Describe the major objectives of INC.
- Give conclusion.

Introduction

- In the later 1870s and early 1880s, a solid ground had been prepared for the establishment of an all-India organization.
- The final shape to this idea was given by a retired English civil servant, A.O. Hume, who mobilized leading intellectuals of the time and, with their cooperation, organized the first session of the Indian National Congress in Bombay in December 1885.

Body

Views on reasons regarding the formation of Indian National Congress (INC)

- **Safety Valve Theory:** There is a theory that Hume formed the Congress with the idea that it would prove to be a 'safety valve' for releasing the growing discontent of the Indians. To this end, he convinced Lord Dufferin not to obstruct the formation of the Congress.
- The extremist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai believed in the 'safety valve' theory. Even the Marxist historian's 'conspiracy theory' was an offspring of the 'safety valve' notion.
- **Organization for expression of Indian Demands:** Modern Indian historians dispute the idea of 'safety valve'. In their opinion the Indian National Congress represented the urge of the politically conscious Indians to set up a national body to express the political and economic demands of the Indians. Historian Bipan Chandra observes early Congress leaders used Hume as a catalyst to bring together.

Major objectives of INC

- **A Pan India Organization:** To found a democratic, nationalist movement through a pan India organization.
- **Politicize and politically educate people:** Congress aimed to increase awareness about the colonial exploitative policies the political rights of Indians. To this end congress focused on demanding increasing representation in councils, Indianization of civil services etc.
- **Anti-colonialism:** Develop and propagate an anti-colonial nationalist ideology; Promote friendly relations among nationalist political workers from different parts of the country.
- **Forward looking political and economic programme:** Formulate and present popular demands before the government with a view to unifying the people over a common economic and

political programme.

- **Promote Nationalism:** Develop and consolidate a feeling of national unity among people irrespective of religion, caste or province.

Conclusion

Thus the objectives of INC were not mere critique of British policies but forward looking programme for improving conditions of Indians. Even though Moderates were not successful in their endeavor they laid the foundation of mass based independence struggle with INC formation.

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