

**Emergence of modern political consciousness**

An ideology known as nationalism holds that all people have a shared cultural consciousness. It is when people in a country begin to think of themselves as being a part of a single family. The state becomes a nation when its citizens have a shared past heritage and when they believe that their future is also intertwined.

The spirit of modern Indian Nationalism emerged around the middle of 19th century due to a variety of factors. British rule with its direct and indirect consequences provided the material, moral, and intellectual conditions for the development of a national movement.

**Unintended role of British colonial rule in creating modern Indian nationalism:**

- **Politico integration** was carried to create an extensive British Indian empire.
- **Uniform laws, judicial system and administrative structure**
- **English education**
  - Western education was designed to colonize Indian mind and breed sense of loyalty. Initially Indians were impressed, moved, and spellbound due British material progress.
  - In reality, Indians selectively appropriated English education and learnt political rights and Enlightenment philosophy they acquired the ability to study the foreign evil and soon started crafting criticism of colonialism.
    - a. They started using the language of politics that they had imbibed through their exposure to Western political ideals.
    - b. It was through their engagement with Western political thought that they espoused nationalism as a legitimate political ideal for the Indians to achieve a status of equality with the West.
  - English language emerged as lingua-franca of the rising intelligentsia.
- **Rail, telegraph and unified postal networks** were created for tighter control over India and to facilitate more efficient exploitation. However, it also gave rise to pan-Indian contacts and strengthened Indian unity. It made possible new associations, bonds, idea of unified India.
- **Modern Press** was originally started by some disgruntled British India officers to fulfil their own interest.

These initiatives were undertaken to fulfilling the British colonial interest and not for the benefit of India. The positive impact of these changes was unintended, indirect and accidental by-product.

### **Negative Role:**

- **The British rule in India was colonial in character.** It was despotic, anti-people, unethical, immoral, unfeeling, insensitive and alien.
- **Economic integration**
  - Creation of **all-India poverty**:
  - Indian interests were subordinated to the British interests and Indian resources were exploited by every possible means.
    - a. It became the major cause of economic backwardness and halted India's economic, socio-cultural, political, and intellectual growth.
    - b. Every class and section of Indian society (peasants, artisans, workers, capitalists, and rising class of intellectuals) suffered due to it.
    - c. This suffering triggered a strong sense of anti-British discontent among the masses.
- **Cultural/ideological Imperialism: British propaganda**
  - Indians were never able rule themselves in the past, and they are destined to be ruled by the foreigner.
  - Uncivilized and degraded culture and thus Indians unfit for democracy.
  - Reform agenda, Humiliation, Missionary criticism and Conversion
- **Racism**
  - Europeans developed social code of ethics. They believed in the theory of superior race and considered Indians as inferior race. They portrayed Indians as uncivilized and untrustworthy.

Thus, the British rule created circumstances for the birth of Indian nationalism but at same time it should be understood that it was essentially colonial. Both are antithetical to each other. British tried to suppress Indian nationalism from the very beginning rather than being facilitator of it.

### **There were many peasant/tribal rebellions against the British in the post 1858 decades.**

- Wahabi movement of Muslims under Barelvi – finally suppressed in 1870s
- Kuka movement of Sikhs under Ram Singh – brutally suppressed in 1872
- Peasant uprisings – Indigo (Bengal), Pabna (Bengal), Deccan Riots (Maharashtra)
- Tribal uprisings – Rampa (AP), Mundas (Chota Nagpur), Tikendrajit (Manipur) and Vasudeo Balwant Phadke (MH)

Numerous such rebellions indicate the widespread discontent prevailing against the British rule in the country. However, most of them were localized, didn't post any serious threat to the British rule, and thus easily crushed.

### Emerging tiny middle-class intelligentsia created an ideological background.

Besides such uprisings, by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was also a gradual emergence of the middle class. It happened due to the circumstances created by colonization of India by the British.

The middle class hopes that British rules would modernize India soon evaporated. It started to recognize that British rule was hindering their progress.

- Economically, India remained backward, politically there was no growth of self-government despite the pretensions, and culturally there was increasing lack of confidence as well as hostile British attitude towards educated Indians.
- Moreover, there was racial arrogance of the British
  - Europeans held all the high-ranking positions while Indians faced discrimination in every sphere of life (judiciary, train compartments, hospitals, parks etc.)
  - Educated Indians were first to feel the humiliation, yet such racial dominance appalled every self-respecting Indian.
- Most importantly, the foreign/alien character of British produced a counter feeling of patriotism.

Thus, the conflict between British interest and Indian interests → rise of anti-colonial consciousness. This realization motivated Indians to protest against colonial rule, with the expanding middle class leading the way in the national struggle for independence. That led to the beginning of the modern national movement which represented all sections of the population.

Rapidly spreading **Print Culture** led to the emergence of **modern public sphere**.

- Emergence of **modern Press** (intellectual unification)
  - There emerged several journals with nationalist content and vision in both English and vernacular. By 1870s, vernacular print media proliferated and became more effective and played major role.
  - Press was the chief instrument to spread message of patriotism and spread all-India consciousness.
    - a. Role:

- i. Political education/awareness, politicization and propaganda:  
Newspapers tried to educate people by raising important issues and to spread ideas about political rights among the common people.
  - ii. It was through the print media that people living in disparate regions were able to establish a certain kind of communication with one another.
  - iii. They actually carried news information with which the local context always was not associated. For example, a newspaper published in a small district in Bengal carried information about how the textile mills were actually trying to establish their strongholds in western India against many obstacles created by Imperial rule and therefore imperial rule deserve to be condemned.
  - iv. Role of opposition to scrutinize government actions/policies: Issues like racial discrimination, injustice to Indians, economic exploitation were highlighted to argue that British rule resulted in economic and intellectual subordination of Indians to Britain.
- It played imp role in the rise of Indian nationalism. By 1875, 400+ Indian owned newspapers, mostly in vernaculars and readership of around 1.5 lakh.
    - a. Bengalee and Amrita Bazar Patrika in Bengal
    - b. Kesari, Mahratta, Indu Prakash and Voice of India in Bombay
    - c. The Hindu in Madras
    - d. Tribune in Punjab

- **Drain Theory and Economic Nationalism**

- The Drain theory put forward by leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji exposed the true face of the British rule in India. It explained how India was being systematically impoverished by the British and connected Indian poverty hunger and reoccurring famine to it.
- This realization of the impact of British rule opened the eyes of Indian intelligentsia and they started demanding politico-administrative reforms.

- **New History Writing**

- During British rule, India's rich cultural heritage and past was rediscovered. It inculcated dignity, identity and patriotic instincts.
- The nationalist school of Indian history started to emerge in the late 19th century. These nationalist historians highlighted the glorious achievements of India in the past to instill a sense of pride in the heart and mind of Indians and this gradually got transformed into national pride.

- a. Ashoka, Chandragupta: The decipherment of Ashokan's Edicts in 1837 revealed the existence of subcontinental political unity during the Mauryan era.
- b. Art, heritage, spirituality
- c. Regional patriotic literature
- d. The nationalist historians portrayed Gupta period as the Golden Age of Indian history. The politico-admin, socio cultural achievements of Gupta's were highlighted.
- e. Existence of Indo-Aryans as the same ethnic group as British boosted the confidence of educated Indians.
- These interpretations shattered the myth of white man's burden.
- **Awareness of International events**
  - American Revolution of 1776 was the first expression of nationalism in modern sense. The success of American revolutionaries inspired the educated class all over the world.
  - The developments associated with French Revolution resulted in the spread of national awakening not only in France but also in many other countries.
  - When Germans and Italians were successful in uniting and creating powerful nations, Indians also started-thinking along the same line and a powerful spirit of Indian nationalism emerged.
- **Patriotic literature:**

Subramaniam Bharathi	Tamil
Bharatendu Harishchandra	Hindi
Altaf Hussain Hali	Urdu
Vishnushastri Chiplunkar	Marathi
Bankimchandra Chatterjee and Tagore	Bengali
Lakshminath Bezbarua	Assamese

#### **First Indian reaction came in the cultural sphere. Socio-religious Reform:**

- To modernize Indian society in light of western rationalism. The reformers examined the existing ideas, beliefs and practice in the light of new knowledge. They promoted rational and scientific outlook among the people. They were greatly in favour of logic and reason. Such awakening among the people gradually transformed into nationalist thinking.
- The reformers of 19<sup>th</sup> century condemned divisive social evils such as casteism and untouchability. The attitude of purity and pollution prevailing among upper sections of population were strongly condemned. These efforts weakened the internal social divisions

and strengthened socio-cultural unity. Thus, it paved the way for common national identity among Indians.

- As it spread all over the country and communities, it also spread the message of political content – which was nationalist. However, its speed was slow and halting.
- The reformers highlighted common cultural elements, because of this, a collective cultural consciousness was created among the educated Indians. It gradually percolated downwards and infected every Indian with the spirit of nationalism. This paved the way for the rise of Indian nationalism.

With this started the emergence of **modern political association**. This confrontation of middle class with the British rulers during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century may be considered in two phases.

- Before 1885: Unorganized, spasmodic, lacking initiative, only temporary responses to provocations and lacking plan.
- After 1885: Grew in strength and self-confidence, INC became the rallying centre of the political movement, agitation acquired momentum of its own. Attainment of responsible self-government became the principal objective.

#### Predecessor political organizations: First Generation

Modern political consciousness had made itself manifest as early as the times of RRM Roy. He was the first Indian leader to start an agitation for political reforms in India. His work was continued by liberals, conservatives and radicals in some way or the other in 1830s and 1840s.

Year	Organisation	Founders	Aims and Objectives
1836	Bangabhasha Prakasika Sabha	Associates of Raja Ram Mohan Roy	Discussing government policy and seeking redressal through petitions and memorandums. ( <i>first modern political organization in India</i> )
1838	Landholders Society/ Zamindari Association	Dwarkanath Tagore, Radhakant Deb	To safeguard the interests of the landlords of Bengal. It is credited with launching organised political activity in India using constitutional methods.  Controlled and dominated by the absentee landowners, the high browed elites of northern part of Calcutta

1839	British India Society	William Adam	To improve the situation of Indians by letting the people of Britain know about their suffering.
1843	Bengal British India Society	George Thompson	Established in opposition to the zamindari Association. To protect and promote general public interest. Young Bengal people.

### Predecessor political organizations: Second Generation

However, it was finally in 1850s that the first major voluntary organizations with exclusively Indian membership came into being. The occasion was the discussion about the renewal of the Company Charter in 1853. On the eve of the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company, there are three important associations in the three presidency towns.

British India Association	Calcutta	1851	First president Radhakant Deb, first secretary Dwarakanath Tagore.  British Indian Association also tried to setup branches elsewhere in the country.
Bombay Association	Bombay	1852	Jagannath Shankar Sheth, Dadabhai Naoroji, Naoroji Ferdunjee, Bhau Daji Lad etc.  In the early stage Bombay's politics was dominated by the sethiyas, the very powerful Parsi merchants.
Madras Native Association	Madras	1852	Gazulu Lakshminarasu Chetty  (He was the owner of the first Indian-owned newspaper in Madras named The Crescent. He was the first Indian member of Madras Chamber of Commerce)

#### **Features:**

- **Membership:** These earliest associations were in the cities of Calcutta/Madras/Bombay. They were dominated by notables, 'prominent Indians' and thus represented interest of landed aristocratic class.
- **Demands:** These people desired improvement in administration and system of government
  1. Greater part in administration
  2. Complaint against dual system

3. Complaint against expensive administration and high taxation
4. Neglect of public work and education and suggest measures etc.

- **Methods**

1. Sending petitions and proposals to British parliament to express demands, esp on the eve of the renewal of the Charter in 1853

No demand incorporated in the Charter Act, 1853. Yet, such politics indicates the evolution of modern sector of Indian politics.

### **Post 1857: Inauguration of Victorian Era**

The period after 1858 witnessed a gradual widening of the gulf between the educated Indians and British Indian administration.

As Indians studied the character of British rule and became aware of the consequences, they became more critical of the British policies and gradually became politically active. Now, these initial political associations no longer satisfy them. They became increasingly discontented with the conservative and pro-landlord policies of these initial political associations.

<b>Lord Canning</b>	1858-62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victoria's Proclamation</li> <li>• The Government of India Act, 1858</li> <li>• Indian Council's Act, 1861</li> <li>• Introduction of the system of Budget</li> <li>• Introduction of Portfolio system</li> <li>• Indian Civil Service Act, 1861</li> <li>• Indian Penal Code, 1860</li> <li>• Police Act, 1861</li> <li>• Indian High Courts Act, 1861</li> <li>• Archaeological Survey of India, 1861</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigo Revolt in Bengal</li> </ul>
<b>Earl of Elgin</b>	1862-63	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calcutta, Bombay and Madras High Courts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suppressed Wahabi Movement</li> </ul>
<b>Sir John Lawrence</b>	1864-69	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bhutan War, 1864 (annexation of Assam and Bengal Duars)</li> <li>• Est of Shimla as summer capital of India, 1864</li> <li>• Est of Allahabad High Court, 1866</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keshub Chandra Sen established Nava Vidhan (New Dispensation)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Famine Commission of Henry Campbell (Odisha famine 1866)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of Prarthana Samaj, 1867</li> </ul>
<b>Earl of Mayo</b>	1869-72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Started Census operation, 1872</li> <li>• Mayo college at Ajmer, Rajmukar college at Rajkot</li> <li>• Financial Decentralization, 1870</li> <li>• Statistical Survey of India, 1872</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keshub Chandra Sen established Indian Reform Association (1870)</li> <li>• Formation of Pune Sarvajanik Sabha</li> <li>• Assassinated by a Pathan Sher Ali Afridi</li> </ul>
<b>Lord Northbrook</b>	1872-76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramatic Performances Act, 1876</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suppressed Kuka Revolt</li> <li>• Formation of Satyashodhak Samaj, 1873</li> <li>• Formation of Arya Samaj, 1875</li> <li>• Formation of Muhammad Anglo-Oriental College by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, 1875</li> </ul>
<b>Lord Lytton</b>	1876-80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal Titles Act, 1876 (Empress of India – Kaisar-e-Hind)</li> <li>• First Delhi Durbar, 1877</li> <li>• Great Famine, 1876-78 and Strachey Commission</li> <li>• Vernacular Press Act, 1878</li> <li>• Arms Act, 1878</li> <li>• Civil Service Age: 21 to 18</li> <li>• Second Anglo-Afghan War, 1878-80</li> </ul>	
<b>Lord Ripon</b>	1880-84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Factory Act, 1881</li> <li>• First Complete Census of India, 1881</li> </ul>	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repealed Vernacular Press Act, 1882</li> <li>• Resolution on local self-government, 1882</li> <li>• Hunter Commission on Education, 1882</li> <li>• Famine Codes, 1883</li> <li>• Civil Service Age: 19 to 21</li> <li>• Ilbert Bill, 1883</li> </ul>	
<b>Lord Dufferin</b>	1884-88	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bengal Tenancy Act, 1885</li> <li>• Third Anglo-Burmese War, 1885</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formation of INC, 1885</li> </ul>
<b>Lord Lansdowne</b>	1888-94	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of Consent Act, 1891</li> <li>• Second Factory Act, 1891</li> <li>• Indian Councils Act, 1892</li> <li>• Durand Line, 1893</li> </ul>	
<b>Earl of Elgin</b>	1894-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Famine and Bubonic Plague, 1896</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ramkrishna Mission, 1897</li> <li>• Assassination of Rand by Chapekar Brothers, 1897</li> </ul>
<b>Lord Curzon</b>	1899-05	<i>To be discussed later</i>	

#### (A) Lord Canning (1856-62):

##### 1. Queen's Proclamation 1858: Direct takeover of Indian colony

- Loyalty of princes in 1857 rewarded. No further annexations. Princes were cultivated as bulwark against future upsurge.
- Social policy became conservative, reactionary.
  - There was no interference in society.
  - There was theoretical equality but increased racism in reality.
  - Divide and Rule

##### 2. Middle class estrangement

- Indigo disturbances (1859): A peasant revolt against oppressive planters in Bengal also became the first peasant revolt with middle-class participation.
- Income Tax imposition (1860): without any control over expenditure led to some protests.

### 3. Indian Councils Act (1861):

#### a. Transformed Viceroy's Executive Council

- i. Miniature cabinet (portfolio system)
- ii. Expansion: EC + 12 members
  1. 50% members non-officials (either Indian or British).
  2. No statutory requirement of Indian appointments. Yet, beginning to associate Indians.

#### b. Formed a central though rudimentary legislative body. It was called as **Imperial Legislative Council**

- i. No elections but nominations.
- ii. No real powers: (Chiefly advisory in nature, a consultative body without any active role)
  1. Can't discuss budget or move financial proposal without prior approval.
  2. Cannot discuss the actions of the bureaucracy at all.
- iii. The Indian Penal Code of 1860, which defines crime and punishment in the country, was discussed and passed in this Council Chamber.

### (B) Lord Lytton (1876-80):

The late 1870s was a period of conservative dominance in British policy in England. In the same series, Lord Lytton enacted a series of repressive laws. He is known as the most repressive and inglorious Viceroy. His tenure was the most controversial tenure due to a series of obnoxious Acts.

#### 1. Extravagant **Delhi Durbar 1877** on Jubilee of Queen Victoria's rule amidst ravaging famine

Three Delhi Durbars			
1877	Lord Lytton	Queen Victoria (r. 1837-1901)	Did not attend in person
1903	Lord Curzon	King Edward VII (r. 1900-1910)	Did not attend in person
1911	Lord Hardinge	King George V (r. 1910-1936)	Most spectacular of all as Attended the event in person.

2. The expensive **cost of the Second Anglo-Afghan War** burdened the Indian finances.

**3. Racist Arms Act, 1878**

- a. It took away the right of India to bear arms without licence unlike Europeans.

**4. Problem of Civil Services**

- a. System of appointment through competitive examination was started in 1854. Still, Indians remained procedurally excluded due to –
  - i. London as the centre of examination
  - ii. Syllabus favouring Englishmen
  - iii. Progressive reduction in the age limit (1853 – 23 to 1876 – 19 by Lytton)  
The effect of lowering the age was to exclude Indians.

- b. In 1879, Lytton also closed Covenanted service to Indians altogether and instituted **Statutory Civil Service** where certain number of Indians every year were to be appointed (max 1/6<sup>th</sup>)
- c. It was keenly opposed by Indians.

**5. Vernacular Press Act, 1878**

- a. It was gagging device to muzzle native press through enforcing censorship, deposit and confiscation.

**6. In 1879, Import duty** was reduced on British cotton goods to facilitate the entry of British products in India at the cost of Indian manufacturers.

These anti-India measures initiated by the Lord Lytton intensified the anti-British discontent among the people and the level of nationalist awakening reached new heights.

**Predecessor political organizations: Third Generation**

This framework of the provincial politics began to undergo changes in the 1870s. The public sphere of the print media was expanding rapidly. In many of the towns and cities associations began to be formed by a group who broke away from these parent bodies in order to establish the independence and autonomy of the middle classes.

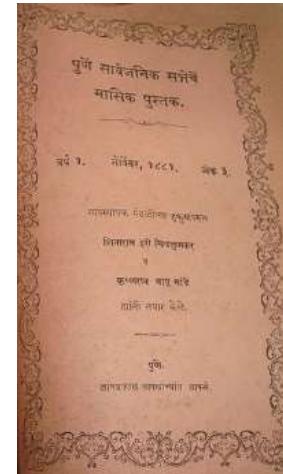
- These middle-class educated elites, the professional people who had been able to consolidate their power or their influence in social life through the educational, legal institutions or judicial institutions.



- They provided the main leadership partly because of their ability to lead the public, partly because of their ability to speak the language that the British rulers would be able to understand and also because of their exposure to liberal education from which they had imbibed the liberal political ideas which they wish to use against the despotic character of British rule.
- They were more forthright in the criticism of the government policies and didn't hesitate even to hold protest meetings.

### **Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (1870)**

- It was established by GV Joshi, Bhagwanrao Pant Pratinidhi etc but major role performed by Mahadev Govind Ranade
- It worked for social reform as well as political reform.
- Activities
  - Devoted much attention to study of economic problems and drew govt attention.
  - Mukhtayarnama (letters of attorney) from 17,000 people
  - Sent petition to House of Commons demanding direct representation.
  - Started a journal in 1878 to advocate land reforms, formation of agricultural banks, spread of education, improvement of judicial administration.



### **India League (Calcutta, 1875) by Motilal Ghosh, Shishir Kumar Ghosh**

### **Indian National Association (Calcutta, 1876) by SN Banerjee and Anandmohan Bose**

- It was established the same year when Lord Lytton came to India and duly opposed his regressive policies.
- Its objective was to create strong body of public opinion in country and create a unity of Indian people on the basis of common aspirations and political interests.
- To attract wider public, it kept its membership fee low for poorer classes.
- It soon established many branches in Bengal and a few outside Bengal too.

### **Madras Mahajan Sabha (1884)**

- The middle-class intelligentsia, primarily lawyers belonging to a Tamil Brahmin community, who clustered around the famous newspaper called The Hindu.
- Main activity in south India was The Hindu in 1870s – great organ of public awakening.
- Founded by M Viraraghavachari, G Subramaniam Iyer and P Ananda Charlu

## Bombay Presidency Association (1885)

- The graduates, no longer the Parsees alone, but the graduates who are Marathas, Brahmins province, who had migrated from interior Maharashtra and gone to Bombay to take up English education to be able to acquire the ability to join modern professions and services, they formed their own organization.
- By the new generation of MG Ranade, KT Telang, Pherozeshah Mehta etc.
  - These are the graduates of Elphinstone college.
- It helped in the hosting of INC in 1885 in Bombay.

**These organizations came with new demands:** Fighting for limited reforms.

- Increasing representation in **civil service** and **legislative councils**
- Reducing military expenditure and home charges
- Imposing import duty on cotton goods etc.

These were not overtly anti-British demands, are still conservative but national in character. There was a new awareness of equality and wanting share in the administration of their own country.

However, their activities remained confined largely to their own regions. It was the defeat of some of the liberal measures of the government under Ripon's Viceroyalty, particularly the Ilbert bill reform, that impressed upon the Indian leadership the need for creating a powerful organization at the national level in order to be able to influence government policy.

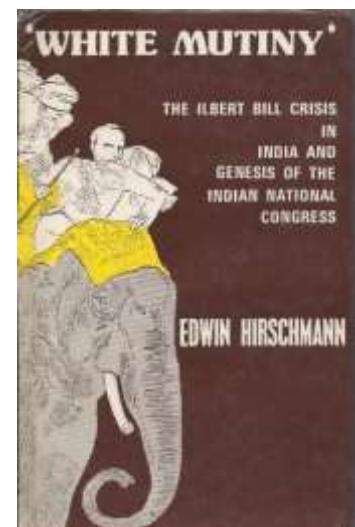
### (C) Lord Ripon (1880-84)

In 1880, a new liberal government of Gladstone was set up in England. Thus, Lord Ripon was sent to India to repair the damage done by his dictatorial predecessor. He meant well and tried to conciliate public opinion. However, the reality is complex and never favourable to Indians under colonial structure.

1. Repeal of Vernacular Press Act, 1882
2. Amending Arms Act
3. Afghan war was brought to end.
4. Civil Service Age: 19 to 21
5. Hunter Commission on Education, 1882
6. Famine Codes, 1883
7. The first Factory Act, 1881
8. First Complete Census of India, 1881
9. Resolution on Local self-government (LSG), 1882
  - a. Self-governing institutes were extended to rural areas (District boards)
  - b. Strength of official element was reduced to 1/3<sup>rd</sup>
  - c. Elective principle was adopted for non-official posts.

**Ilbert Bill Controversy in 1883**, a major eye-opener for provincial leaders.

- CP Ilbert (Law Member), at the behest of Lord Ripon, proposed to give Indian judges power to try European offenders in the mofussils. It was a proposal for judicial equality.
- Yet, it aroused bitter fury among Europeans.
  - Against this measure an organized agitation was conducted by the chambers of commerce, particularly the planters' interest who had this habit of killing plantation labourers and arguing that a minor injury had caused death.
  - Thus, Europeans launched organized protest to ensure the continuation of their Racial privileges. The ugly face of racism came out: How can native judges try us?
  - They mobilized the Anglo-Indians, Eurasian communities and organized a massive agitation in Calcutta. Public meetings in the largest square in which they actually fulminated against this measure.
- The British government comes under immense pressure. Ripon finally succumbed to pressure and found compromise. This modification defeated the very purpose of Ilbert bill



because the modified bill allowed European to demand a trial by a jury in which not less than half of judges were to be European.

### **Importance:**

- It proved that the British criminals tend to have impunity despite rule of law (racism).
- It was the last straw of humiliation.
- Ilbert bill controversy denied justice. It was an attack on human dignity. It was a clear indication of the subordinate position of even English educated intelligentsia.
- This controversy convinced Indians that the British rule was essentially racist and the British would never accept Indians as equal. This realization intensified the anti-British discontent and greatly strengthened the spirit of nationalism.
- It demonstrated the value of organized agitation community.
  - White demonstration/propaganda/organization – now Indians tried to imitate it for more effective modern politics.
- Necessity of an all India organization to be able to mobilize public opinion in such cases.

### **Need of all India organization:**

- Many political activities by several political organizations since 1850s had prepared the ground for creation of all India political organisation.
- This organization was expected to bring together the politically conscious individuals who were scattered across the country.
- Many issues of all India character had remained unfulfilled so far, for example:
  - Creation of National Fund to appeal to British voters
  - Volunteer Corps: allowing Indians to be part of it.

Already some steps were taken in this direction. **SN Banerjee** had started All India National Conference in 1883 in Calcutta and its second session was to take place in 1885.

- However, Indians still needed to overcome regional jealousies.
- Moreover, if such an all-India party was started by an Indian, then British would have definitely opposed.

It is at this juncture, enters **AO Hume**, a retired ICS officer and there was a parallel effort to form Indian National Congress.

## Formation of the Indian National Congress

Indian National Congress was established in Dec 1885 at Bombay by group of Indian nationalists under the leadership of AO Hume, who is popularly known as founder of the Congress. Congress was the first pan-India nationalist platform. Its foundation marked the beginning of the politics of national unity. It carried anti-British struggle into a movement which culminated in independence of India in 1947.

Its foundation is interpreted differently by different scholars and has been at centre of historical controversy for long time.



### **Safety Valve Theory: (myth)**

Safety valve theory was put forward by Lala Lajpat Rai in his paper Young India. According to this theory, Congress was established by A.O. Hume to act as a safety valve for British Indian empire.

**Theory:** Hume wanted Congress to work as a platform from which Indians leaders could raise issues concerning the masses. Senior British officials were expected to initiate necessary means were to remove grievances among people so that level of discontent among masses could come down, there would not be a mass revolt and British Indian empire could remain safe.

Following developments led to the emergence Conspiracy theory much after Hume was long dead.

- After 1905, Congress started becoming hostile, extremist and radical, and started going beyond the path of constitutionalism. So, some Englishmen started blaming Hume for the troubles posed to British rule by Congress. To answer this charge, his colleague and biographer **William Wedderburn** tried to whitewash his image in his biography (1913). He claimed:
  - a. Hume had seen **seven secret reports** which had data regarding seething discontent among Indians → He thus thought there was a need for an organization of Indians to voice their opinion to take the steam off. A representative organization in India could be used as a safety valve.
  - b. This initiative of Hume was taken in association with and **approval of Lord Dufferin**.

That is the basis of a safety valve theory which sees the congress as a kind of a command performance performed by a man like Hume, in consonance with the bureaucracy. This argument given by Wedderburn was later subscribed by some Indian political leaders to support their own political views.

- **Extremists** wanted to blame moderate Congress for being loyalists.
- **Leftist** thought it was a proof of the anti-revolution tendency of the moderate leadership.

#### **However, later research disproved any such claims:**

These theories which actually try to link the congress with a certain kind of command performance have reduced the story to the level of detective fiction. These are not actually valid arguments are valid explanations.

- Those 7 secret volumes were never found.
- In 1950s, Dufferin private papers declassified. He was also not appreciative of Hume, he rather suspected that Hume is teaching Indians the Irish techniques which were troublesome to Britain.

Thus, now this conspiracy theory is totally rejected. The reality is that the foundation of Congress in 1885 was not the result of any sudden development. It was culmination of long process of nationalist political activities going on in India since 1850s.

#### **Critical Analysis of the Role of AO Hume:**

We should acknowledge the very important contribution that Allan Octavian Hume made to the emergence of the Congress. But the larger circumstances necessary for a pan-Indian political platform were already there when Hume emerged on the scene. While Indian leaders in the different parts of India were already moving towards the formation of a political body of a countrywide scale, Hume's enthusiastic support hastened its birth.

His **intent** was clear: He was enlightened liberal imperialist. He was concerned about the wide gap and distress prevailing between the government and the people. He genuinely believed in the desirability of self-government for the people of India.

His **role** was very crucial in formation of Congress.

- He toured the entire subcontinent.
- He persuaded prominent Indian leaders to come together in a national body to secure alleviation of grievances and to obtain representation in provinces and centre.

It seems rather that it was the Early Nationalists (and not British government) who benefitted by association with Hume. Hume's role was very instrumental for the Early Congress in the two respects:

- To overcome regional jealousies
- To shelter potential British onslaught

Thus, one can say that it was Moderates who used Hume as lightening conductor (phrase used by Bipin Chandra)



### The Story of First Five Congress Sessions

Year	President	Delegates	Significance
Bombay, 1885 (Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit School)	WC Banerjee	72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First time, political unity by educated class, determined to shape new India as per their vision.</li> <li>Attempts to eliminate regional differences, inculcate democratic habits.</li> <li>Delegates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>38 Bombay, 21 Madras, 4 Bengal</li> <li>Only 2 Muslims (eg Rahimatulla Sayani)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Demands: civil rights, administrative, financial and military reforms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Appointment of a commission to enquire into the working of the Indian Administration</li> <li>India Council in London should be abolished.</li> <li>Creation of legislative councils for the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Sindh and Awadh – more responsive</li> <li>Reduction of Military Expenditure</li> <li>Civil Services Reforms for Indianization</li> <li>Opposed increasing military expenditure</li> <li>Criticized Upper Burma annexation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed separation of executive and judiciary</li> <li>• Proposed re-imposition of import duty on finer classes of cotton goods</li> <li>• Urged encouragement of indigenous manufactures</li> <li>• Demanded promotion of general and technical education</li> <li>• Reduction of government control over education</li> </ul>
Calcutta 1886	Dadabhai Naoroji	343	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almost five times of the first session.</li> <li>• SN Banerjee's Indian National Association merged with INC. It create the basis of what is known as the politics of national unity.</li> </ul>
Madras 1887	Badruddin Tyabji	702	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prospects of attracting more Muslims.</li> <li>• The government became alert and uneasy.</li> </ul>

### **British reaction:**

Initially, the government was only curious and not apprehensive.

However, from 1887-88, the stance of the government started to harden.

- British officers started arguing that there is no Indian nation, its merely a geographic expression. There is no organic whole or social unity. So, for peace and order, British are required.
- They also relied on statistics to prove how little important and unrepresentative was the new English educated middle class.
- Zamindars and Princes were also used to mobilize the support against the INC.
- Realizing that the growing unity of Indian people poses threat to the British empire, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was encouraged to raise the voice in opposition to INC (divide-and-rule policy).
  - He did so in 1887 Lucknow speech. He was awarded Knighthood within a week of the speech.
  - He also started United Patriotic Association, but it didn't last.

To counter this, AO Hume withstood the pressure and tried to create popular base for the INC.

- Propaganda campaign – large number of public meetings
- 2 pamphlets in 12 languages – almost 5 lakh copies were printed

- Muslims were assured – no new decision if any one community unitedly opposes (later it was passed as a resolution in the 4<sup>th</sup> congress)

The huge success of the fourth Congress session vindicated the Congress stance.

Allahabad 1888	George Yule	1248	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huge attendance despite open government hostility</li> <li>• Almost 1/6<sup>th</sup> were Muslims. (2à33à81à221)</li> <li>• The Congress resolved not to debate social or religious matters for ensuring the support of religious minorities.</li> </ul>
Bombay 1889	Sir William Wedderburn		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 registered lady delegates, including social reformer Pandita Ramabai, Rabindranath Tagore's sister Swarnakumari Devi and Calcutta University's first lady graduate Kadambini Ganguly. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kadambini Ganguly became first female to address the Congress.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 254 Muslim delegates</li> <li>• Significantly, it was attended by 41 'simple' cultivators and two working artisans.</li> </ul>

Thus, Congress established its position as a major political organization. Now, British could not neglect its demands for progress.

Moreover, the need for propaganda outside India and esp. in England was recognized and in 1889, the **British Committee of Indian National Congress** was setup with William Wedderburn as Chairman, William Digby as Secretary and Dadabhai Naoroji and many other Englishmen as members. The journal India was founded to propagate Congress views in England.

Despite scant respect shown to the Congress by Viceroy Dufferin and his immediate successors, its pressure for constitutional reforms yielded the first fruit with the 1892 Council Act.

#### Indian Councils Act 1892 (Lord Cross Act)

Enlargement of Imperial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Marginal expansion</b> of Imperial and Provincial legislative councils (12à16)</li> <li>• As earlier, no less than half were to be non-official.</li> </ul>
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<b>Legislative Council</b>	
<b>Powers of the <i>impotent</i> Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can discuss Budget but no voting.</li> <li>Can ask questions but no supplementary</li> <li>Cannot pass resolutions.</li> <li>Cannot move amendments.</li> <li>Viceroy: overriding and veto powers</li> </ul>
<b>Elections</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Electoral principle</b> kept outside the text of the Law but conceded in the speech while presenting the Bill.</li> <li>While nominating members, consideration to be given to representatives of provincial councils, zamindars, chambers of commerce, major municipalities, Universities, district boards etc.</li> </ul>

Thus, it offered enlargement of the council, extension of its functions and partial introduction of the electoral principle.

These steps were not intended as steps towards granting responsible or representative government, but as a means of providing the Government as source of information regarding Indian opinion.

Yet, it was enacted due to INC demands, which is the recognition of the Congress.

In 1894, at this point, Hume finally left India. With his departure, the unifying figure was gone, so the internal differences within moderates and extremists started to become intense.

### **British response to Congress after 1892**

- Hostility didn't abate when moderate Congress distanced itself from militant nationalism.
  - Verbal attacks continued (Seditious Brahmins, Factory of sedition etc)
  - Regressive policy: attack on Press freedom in late 1890s
  - British soon became eager to finish off the Congress. Thus, Curzon policy of assisting its demise.
- However, with the beginning of the Swadeshi, the stance changed. Now, the new policy was to rally the moderates, isolate the extremists, suppress them, and then ignore the moderates. Moreover, divide and Rule became even more extensive.