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He got in touch with important Indian leaders and organised with their cooperation the first session of the Indian National Congress at Bombay in December, 1885. It was presided over by W. C. Banerjee and was attended by 72 delegates. The main of the Congress were:- 1. Promotion of friendly relation among the Nationalist Political Workers. 2. Development of national unity irrespective of caste, religion and province.

3. Preparation and presentation of popular demands before the Government.
4. Organisation of public opinion in the country.

So, A. O. Hume is called the Father of the Indian National Congress. One of the main of Hume in helping to found National Congress was to provide a safety valve, to the increasing popular discontent against British rule. Hume felt that the chief cause for the growing tension between the British Government and the Indian people was lack of proper machinery to throw the view of the people. He was convinced that, this tension could be greatly reduced and the cordial relations be established between the two if proper channels of communication between Government and the people could be provided. To quote Hume, " A safety valve for the escape of great and growing forces generated by our own action, was urgently needed, and no more efficacious safety valve then our Congress movement could possibly be devised.

" So the idea was not only to save the British rule from any danger that threatened, but even to strengthen it. So, Hume's view of Safety Valve Theory is not correct. In 1885 Indian National Congress shared the aspirations of politically conscious Indians to set up a National Platform for

political and economic development. So, no one man or group of men can be given credit for creating this movement. The Indian leaders who helped with Hume in starting this National Congress were patriotic men of high character, who willingly accepted Hume's help as they did not want to arise official hostility towards their effort at so early a stage of political activity. In the first session of Indian National Congress Surendranath Banerjee had not participated because he was busy with the Second National Conference at Calcutta. The Second session of Indian National Congress was held at Calcutta in 1886 under the president ship of Dadabhai Naoroji.

In the Second session they merged their movement with Indian National Congress. From the Second session it became whole country's Congress. Its delegates were elected by different Organisations and Groups. And its delegates now consisted of Lawyers, Journalists, traders, industrialist, teachers and landlords.

Gradually Indian women participated in the session and in 1890 Kadambini Ganguli addressed the Congress Session. The Indian National Movement upto 1905 was dominated by leaders who often been described as moderates. Some of the prominent leader's of the moderates are Dadabhai Naoroji, Badruddhin Tyabji, Pherozshah Mehta, S. N. Banerjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Romesh Chandra Dutta. The programme of the moderates during the early phase (1885-1905) can be divided under various heads.

(1) Economic Reforms: The moderate leaders highlighted the prevailing poverty and economic backwardness of India. So Dadabhai Naororji declared in 1881 that British rule was " an everlasting, increasing, and everyday

increasing foreign invasion”, that was utterly, though gradually, destroying the country. The moderates blamed the British for destruction of India’s cottage and handicraft industries.

The chief remedies suggested for eradication of India’s poverty was popularization of idea of Swadeshi means use of Indian goods and boycott of British goods as a means to protect Indian Industries. They also advocated for reduction of military expenditure. The Moderates also popularised the drain of wealth of India to England and demanded for its remedies. They also carried on persistent demand for reduction of land revenue demand in order to lighten the burden of taxation on the peasant. They also agitated for the improvement in the condition of different plant labourers. With the passing of time the Moderates woke up that Economic exploitation and impoverishment of the country and perpetuation of the poverty became perpetual part of Colonial rule (2) Constitutional Reforms: The period from 1885 to 1905 was dominated by moderates and during this period they demanded larger share in the Government of their country. Their demand was extremely moderate.

They hoped to achieve the goal through gradual steps. From 1885-1892, they demanded greater representation and reform of the Legislative Councils. They demanded membership of the Councils from elected representatives of the people. In 1892 the British Government passed the Indian Council Act of 1892. This acts increased the number of members in the Imperial Legislative Councils as well as Provincial Councils. The members could be elected indirectly by the Indians but official majority remained.

By this acts the annual budget was discussed in the Council but members could not vote on them. But the moderates were not satisfied by this Act. They demanded larger representation for Indians in the Councils.

Moreover, they demanded Indian control over the Public Finance and raised the slogan " No taxation without representation". But by the beginning of the 20th century, the moderates advanced the demand for Swrajya, or Self Governing Colonies like Australia and Canada. (3) Administrative Reforms: The Congress under the leadership of the Indian Liberals from 1885 to 1905 fought for administrative reforms such as separation of Judicial and Executive functions, the right of the Indians to be admitted to Public Services on equal terms and subsequently for the Indianisation of services, for the rescinding of the Arms Acts etc. were highlighted by the Moderates. In 1892, the Congress passed the Resolution of Pandit Malaviya asking the Government to help the resuscitation of declining handicraft industries. The nationalist leaders also spoke up in defence of Labourers migrated to foreign countries such as South Africa, Malaya, Mauritius where subjected to racial discrimination. They also demanded to save the peasant from the clutches of the money-lender and development of agricultural banks. (4) Civil Rights: The Moderates gave high priority to freedom of speech and press during their struggle for Freedom.

In 1897 B. G. Tilak were arrested and tried for spreading disaffection against the British Government by their speech and writings. They were sentenced long-term imprisonment. In Poona Natu brothers were deported without trial.

All over the country people protested against the act of this Government. Tilak, hitherto known largely in Maharashtra, became overnight All-India leader. In fact, Tilak arrest and consequent mass movement in India was an important milestone in the Press freedom. (5) Method of Work: The political method of moderates was Constitutional agitation without four walls of law, and slow, orderly political progress. They wanted to develop strong public opinion in India to raise political consciousness and national spirit of the country. The Moderates also tried to persuade the British Government to introduce reform for the benefit of the people. Similarly, apart from educating the public opinion in India, the moderates desired to educate the public opinion in England.

For this purpose a British Committee of the Indian National Congress was founded. Its main purpose was to carry active propaganda in Britain. (6) Attitude of Government: The British authority was very skeptical towards the activities of the National Congress. So they developed hostile attitude towards the Congress. So the British officials branded the nationalist leaders as ' disloyal babus', ' Seditious Brahmins', and ' Violent Villians'. In 1887, Duffrin attacked the National Congress as it representing only a ' microscoping minority of the people'. In 1900, Lord Curzon announced to the Secretary of State that, the " Congress is tottering for its fall, and one of my greatest ambitions, while in India is assist for its peaceful demise." The British authorities also followed the Policy of divide and rule and tried to divide and weaken the Congress.

They encouraged Sayyed Ahmed Khan, Raja Shiva Prasad of Benaras and other Pro-British individuals to start an anti- Congress movement. However <https://assignbuster.com/he-indian-national-congress-shared-the-aspirations-of/>

the British authority failed to check the popularity of the Congress. (7)

Evaluation of the Moderates: The Moderates were the architect of the first All India Political Organisation. They infused national consciousness among sections of the Indian people, disseminated among them Democratic conceptions and popularised the idea of representative institutions. They exhorted them to feel as Indians, irrespective of all Provincial and communal distinctions.

Most of all the Moderates helped the people to realise the economic character and content of British imperialism. So the moderates made a humble but correct beginning. They planted the sapling of freedom, watered it meticulously, but constantly and steady, which in the fullness of time was bound to grow, as it has actually grown.