



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** What were the aims and objectives of the Indian National Congress at the time of its inception? Discuss how far was it successful to achieve the targets. (250 words)

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### Approach

- Start with the situation prevalent at the time of formation of Indian National Congress (INC).
- Explain the aims and objectives of the INC at the time of its inception.
- Evaluate the success of INC to achieve the targets in its early phase.
- Conclude by emphasizing the significance of INC in the Indian freedom struggle.

### Introduction

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

### Body

#### The main aims of the Indian National Congress in the initial stage-

- Found a democratic, nationalist movement;
- Politicise and politically educate people;
- Establish the headquarters for a movement;
- Promote friendly relations among nationalist political workers from different parts of the country;
- Develop and propagate an anti-colonial nationalist ideology;
- Formulate and present popular demands before the government with a view to unifying the people over a common economic and political programme;
- Develop and consolidate a feeling of national unity among people irrespective of religion, caste or province;
- Carefully promote and nurture Indian nationhood.

#### Evaluation of the success of INC in the early phase

##### Successes

- They represented the most progressive forces of the time.
- They were able to create a wide national awakening of all Indians having common interests and the need to rally around a common programme against a common enemy, and above all, the feeling of belonging to one nation.
- They trained people in political work and popularised modern ideas.
- They exposed the basically exploitative character of colonial rule, thus undermining its moral foundations.
- Their political work was based on hard realities, and not on shallow sentiments, religion, etc.

- They were able to establish the basic political truth that India should be ruled in the interest of Indians.
- They created a solid base for a more vigorous, militant, mass-based national movement in the years that followed.

### Issues with functioning in its early phase

- The early nationalists did a great deal to awaken the national sentiment, even though they could not draw the masses to them.
  - The moderate phase of the national movement had a narrow social base and the masses played a passive role. This was because the early nationalists lacked political faith in the masses; they felt that there were numerous divisions and subdivisions in the Indian society, and the masses were generally ignorant and had conservative ideas and thoughts.
- INC in the early phase failed to widen their democratic base and the scope of their demands.

### Conclusion

- Earlier, there was 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. However, INC represented the urge of the politically conscious Indians to set up a national body to express the political and economic demands of the Indians.
- In the circumstances, Historians observe, the early Congress leaders used Hume as a 'lightning conductor' i.e., as a catalyst to bring together the nationalistic forces even if under the guise of a 'safety valve'.

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