

Regional Organisation before INC

Introduction:

The Indian National Congress (INC) was formed in Dec 1885. However, there were many political organizations which were a pre-cursor to INC. The political organisations in the early half of the nineteenth century were dominated by wealthy and aristocratic elements, local or regional in character, and through long petitions to the British Parliament demanded Administrative reforms, Association of Indians with the administration, and Spread of education.

Some of the prominent Political Associations which played very important role in arousing general will and laying down a path towards modern Nationalism. Most of them had the common objectives of their own wellbeing and were mostly localised in nature. The evolution of the same are as follows:

Landholders Society:

- In July 1838, the “Zamindari Association”, also known as the “Landholders Society”, was established to safeguard the interests of the landlords.
- Landholders’ Society was limited in its objectives i.e. covered demand of Landlords only.
- The landholders Society used the methods of constitutional agitation for the redressal of grievances and marked the beginning of organised political activities.

Bengal British India Society:

- In April 1843, another political association under the name of the Bengal British India Society was founded.
- Its objective was “the collection and dissemination of information relating to the actual condition of the people of British India”

The British Indian Association of Calcutta (1851):

- It was formed in 1851 by the merger of Bengal British India Society and the Landholders’ Society.
- It was established to convey Indian grievances to the British Govt.
- It suggested various reform in Company’s upcoming charter like Need for the establishment of a separate legislature, separation of judicial functions

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from executive functions, salaries of higher officers to be reduced, abolition of abkari, salt duty and stamp duties.

- Some of the recommendations of the association were accepted when the Charter Act of 1853 provided addition of six members to the governor general's council for legislative purposes.

The Deccan Association (1852):

- British India Association of Calcutta was confined only to Bengal but British India Association's Secretary, Debendranath Thakur wanted to expand the association, as the aim of the British India Association was to make representations from every part of British India to the British Parliament.
- In February 1852 as a further expansion of British India Association, the Deccan Association was established at Poona.
- Deccan Association did not last long and could not fulfil its objective of sending any mission or petition for suggesting reforms to the upcoming Charter Act I.e. Charter Act of 1853.

The Madras Native Association (1852):

- After the establishment of Deccan Association, Madras acted next by establishing, the Madras branch of the British Indian Association in February 1852.
- Within a few months, its name was changed to the Madras Native Association as it decided to act independently of the parent body.
- The possibility of joint Indian petition to Parliament was wrecked by the split between Calcutta and Madras associations.
- However, the Madras Native Association right from its inception possessed very little vitality, had hardly any hold upon the public mind and languished into obscurity after 1857.

The Bombay Association (1852):

- On the lines of British India Association of Calcutta, on 26 August 1852, Bombay Association was founded with the object of 'reminding from time to time the government authorities in India or in England for the removal of existing evils, and for the prevention of proposed measures which may be deemed injurious or for the introduction of enactment

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which may tend to promote the general interest of all connected with this country’.

- The Bombay Association sent a petition to the British Parliament urging the formation of new legislative council to which Indians should also be represented.
- It also condemned the policy of exclusion of Indians from all higher services, lavish expenditure on posts given to the Europeans. However, this Association didn’t survive for long.

East India Association:

- In the year 1866, East India Association was founded by **Dadabhai Naoroji in London**.
- East India association started its branches in Bombay, Kolkata and Madras in 1869.
- The objective of East India Association was to discuss the problem and questions related to India and to influence the British leaders towards the development of India.
- Later, Dadabhai Naoroji also opened its branch in various important Indian cities.

Poona Sarvajanik Sabha:

- The Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was established in 1867 at Poona.
- It has the objective of serving as a bridge between the Government and the people.

India League

- It was established by Sisir Kumar Ghose in 1875.
- The aim of India league was to instill the feeling of Nationalism amongst the people.

The Indian Association of Calcutta

- Surendranath Banerjee and Anand Mohan Bose founded the Indian Association of Calcutta in 1876.
- Founders of Indian Association of Calcutta were discontented with the pro-landlord and conservative policies of the British India Association that’s why they established this new Association.

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- This association was aimed to unify Indian people on a common political programme and create a strong public opinion on political questions.
- East India association also organized an all India agitation known as the Civil Service Agitation after its formation.

The Bombay Presidency Association

- Pherozeshah Mehta, K.T. Telang, Badruddin Tyabji and others formed the Bombay Presidency Association in 1885.
- The reactionary policies of Lytton and the Ilbert Bill controversy caused political commotion in Bombay and led to the formation of Bombay Presidency Association.

Madras Mahajan Sabha

- In 1884 Madras Mahajan Sabha was established by Viraraghavachari, P. Ananda-charlu and B. Subramaniya Aiyer.
- The Madras Mahajan Sabha was formed in May, 1884 to co-ordinate the activities of local association and to 'provide a focus for the non-official intelligence spread up through the Presidency'. It was founded by M. V. Raghavachari, G. Subrahmanyam Aiyar, Anand Charlu and others.

Shortcomings:

- These early Associations had, though, important contribution in terms of arousing the political will and demands of the Indian public, but their area and activities, were limited.
- They mainly questioned local issues and their members and leaders were also limited to one or adjoining provinces.
- Despite good leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjee, Ananda Charlu and others there was a lack of national unity in case of political association later it was gained by the formation of Indian National Congress.

Conclusion:

Most of these political organizations finally merged and culminated into a pan India organization called the Indian National Congress. It was a result of many a regional consciousness uniting together under the context of commonality of interests.