

could be made in the administration. He also organized the Indian Parliamentary Committee there which aimed at developing interest of the members of the British Parliament in Indian affairs. Mr. Hume made efforts to establish an all India organization and eminent Indians from different places were invited to meet in Bombay where the first session of the All-India Congress began on 28th December 1885 at Chakul Das Tejpal Sanskrit College. It was presided over by an eminent barrister of Calcutta, Mr. Womesh Chandra Banerjee.

Some controversy prevails about the object which prompted Mr. Hume to take this step. The one view is that the Congress was to provide an outlet - "a safety valve" for the British rule in India. However, the first President of the Congress, Mr. W.C. Banerjee and the biographer of Mr. Hume, Mr. W. Wedderburn claimed that the final form of the Congress had resulted from discussion between Mr. Hume and the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin. They expressed the view that Lord Dufferin advised Mr. Hume to organise a political body which would act in the same way as the opposition party

did in Britain, otherwise Mr. Hume simply desired to establish an all-India body to discuss matters of social reform. It has also been suggested by certain scholars that Mr. Hume wanted to take 'the steam out of Surendra Nath Banerjee's ship by starting a parallel organization and took care to associate with it only moderate and loyal elements.

The Congress initiated its function most moderately. It formulated the following objects in its first session:

- (a) To bring closer all those people from every part of India who were sincerely devoted to the welfare of India.
- (b) To protect and enhance the feeling of unity among all Indians without distinction of caste, religion, province etc.
- (c) To collect all those opinions concerning society which were properly deliberated on by the educated Indians, and
- (d) To fix up those aims and means which were to be adopted by Indian politicians for the welfare of India.

## The causes which led to the establishment of All-India Congress in 1885: Its early aims

It is difficult to say as to how the idea of establishing the Congress originated. According to some people, the Delhi Durbar held in 1877, gave birth to this idea. But, most probably, the Delhi Durbar suggested the idea of National Conference and not that of the Congress to Surendra Nath Banerjee. Another view that seventeen Indians who attended the Theosophical Convention at Madras explored the idea of the Congress has been discussed in Mrs. Annie Besant's book, 'How India Wrought for freedom'. But, the generally accepted view is that the Indian National Association formed by Allan Octavian Hume (A.O. Hume) was instrumental in convening the Congress. The fact is that the idea of having an all-India organization had struck the minds of several Indians but it was given a concrete shape by A.O. Hume. Lord Dufferin advised Hume to form an association which might function on the model of opposition party in Britain so that improvement