

**Ques -The Safety Valve Theory does not explain the birth of the Indian National Congress. Do you agree with the statement?**

**Answer:** A number of arguments have been made in the favour of the Safety Valve Theory. None of them hold water. In fact, the logical explanation lies in the gradual evolution of national politics in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The safety valve theory was first proposed by R. Palme Dutt. Since then, this theory has become a handy tool for anyone of any political persuasion to discredit Congress. Dutt had cited the biography of Hume written by his friend Wedderburn to substantiate his argument.

Dutt's proposition that Congress was a collaborator of the Raj in preventing the radicalization of national movement while it was simultaneously claiming the leadership of national movement is a profound misinterpretation of the politics of Congress.

The facts cited from the book of Wedderburn to substantiate this proposition do not add up. The so called voluminous correspondences between the mystics and Hume are nowhere to be found. Moreover, the now public official correspondences of Viceroy Dufferin also indicate that he was unhappy with the establishment of Congress.

**Thus, the Congress wasn't a safety valve but Hume was more likely to be a lightning conductor.** In fact, a much more sensible answer lies in the gradual evolution of modern political consciousness in India during the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The foundation of Congress was the final stage in the gradual development of politically oriented regional organizations.

In conclusion, the Safety Valve Theory is more of a myth than a theory and the real answer lies in the gradual modern politics and national movement of India.