



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** To what extent did the role of the moderates prepare a base for the wider freedom movement?  
Comment. (250 words)

17 Jan, 2022 GS Paper 1 History

### Approach

- Give a brief introduction about the moderates in Indian National congress.
- Discuss the success of the Moderates in achieving their objectives.
- Comment upon the issues/challenges in moderates' ways of action and how they largely failed to achieve the larger goal.
- Conclude on a positive note.

### Answer

The first phase of the existence of the Congress is known as the moderate phase (1885-1905). During this the Congress worked for limited objectives and concentrated more upon building up its organization. The national leaders like Dadabhai Nauroji, P.N. Mehta, D.E. Wacha, W.C. Banerji, S.N. Banerji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale who dominated Congress policies during this time were staunch believers in liberalism and moderate politics and came to be labelled as moderates.

The main **objective of the Moderates was to achieve self-government within the British Empire.** They believed in patience and reconciliation rather than in violence and confrontation, thus relying on constitutional and peaceful methods in order to achieve their aims.

### Methods of political work of the moderate leaders

- They held meetings and discussions concerning social, economic and cultural matters to educate people, arouse their political consciousness and create public opinion.
- They organized annual sessions with delegates participating from all parts of the country. After the discussions, resolutions were adopted which were forwarded to the Government for its information and appropriate action.

### Success/contributions of moderates

- 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.

The early nationalists did a great deal to awaken the national sentiment, even though they could not draw the masses to them and failed to widen their democratic base and the scope of their demands.

- They did not understand the true nature of British rule.
- 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 Indian society, and the masses were generally ignorant and had conservative ideas and thoughts.
- The Moderates felt that these heterogeneous elements had first to be welded into a nation before they entered the political sphere.
  - But they failed to realise that it was only during a freedom struggle and with political participation that these diverse elements could come together.
- Because of the lack of mass participation, the Moderates could not take militant political positions against the authorities. The later nationalists differed from the Moderates precisely on this point. Still, the early nationalists represented the emerging Indian nation against colonial interests.
- Pray, petition and protest type of politics could not turn to be effective
- Bengal was divided against the will and wish of people.

Moderates wanted to educate people in modern politics, to arouse national and political consciousness and to create a united public opinion on political questions. Their critics often accuse them for using methods of beggary through prayers and petitions.

However, had they adopted revolutionary or violent methods, they would have been crushed right in the infancy of the Congress. They created a solid base for a more vigorous, militant, mass-based national movement in the following years. The Moderates thus were prudent in using the constitutional and peaceful methods to handle British rule.

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