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Q11

To what extent did the role of the moderates prepare a base for the wider freedom movement? Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · GS I · 15 marks · The Freedom Struggle

The Freedom Struggle - its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country.

Core demand of the question

- To what extent did the role of the moderates prepare a base for the wider freedom movement? Comment
- Keep a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Moderates created Congress, drain theory, and an all-India political public.

Gokhale and Naoroji linked reform, famine, and economic critique.

Their base was urban and petition-minded, so 1905-20 had to add boycott and satyagraha.

The later movement still used their letterhead and economic grammar.

They are the foundation, not the completed freedom struggle.

Introduction

The Early Nationalists, called Moderates, did not win swaraj by petition. They did build a public, a method, and an all-India claim that later Extremists, **Gandhi**, and the masses could widen. The base is real. It is not the whole house.

Body**What they built**

- The **Indian National Congress** (1885) created a yearly all-India stage. **Dadabhai Naoroji**, **Pherozeshah Mehta**, **Gokhale**, and **Surendranath Banerjea** taught the country to speak as one political public.
- Drain theory, in Naoroji's Poverty and Un-British Rule, gave a shared economic grammar that **Gandhi** and **Nehru** still used.
- Constitutional method - councils, charters, the press, and the bar - trained a professional leadership that could later run ministries and a Constituent Assembly.
- **Gokhale's** Servants of India Society and **Ranade's** social reform linked politics to famine, education, and widowhood, so nationalism was not only a street cry.

Limits of the moderate phase

- The social base was English-educated and urban. Peasants, workers, and most Muslims and non-Brahmin publics were thin in the hall.

- Faith in British justice delayed a theory of power. The **1909** Morley-Minto outcome showed how far petition could be turned into communal electorates.
- **Tilak, Aurobindo**, and the Swadeshi years after 1905 had to add boycott, festival, and jail because the moderate toolkit could not punish the Raj.

Base for the wider movement

- Without Congress, drain theory, and the idea of Indian nationhood in English and the vernacular press, **Gandhi's** 1920 mass turn would have had no national letterhead.
- Moderates also left a liberal minority tradition that later opposed both Empire and majoritarian shortcuts.
- **Extent:** they prepared the political roof and the economic argument. The floor of mass satyagraha, Khilafat, and peasant leagues was laid by others.

Flow diagram

Moderates -> Congress public
Moderates -> Drain theory
Moderates -> Liberal method
Congress public -> Wider movement
Swadeshi Gandhi masses -> Wider movement

Conclusion

- **Moderates prepared a substantial base:** Congress, drain, and a constitutional nation. They did not prepare the peasant army. Comment fairly: necessary foundation, insufficient revolution.

Facts & figures

INC 1885

First standing all-India nationalist association, moderate in method.

Dadabhai Naoroji

Drain theory and a seat in the British Parliament as an Indian voice.

Gokhale

Moderate leader, mentor to **Gandhi**, founder of the Servants of India Society.

Morley-Minto 1909

Council reform that also entrenched separate electorates, exposing petition's ceiling.

Swadeshi 1905

The turn that showed moderate methods needed a more militant supplement.