

## [ The Contribution of Moderates in Indian National Movement ]

The foundation of the Indian National Congress (INC) on December 28, 1885 at Sir Tej Pal Sanskrit Vidyalaya, Bombay was not a sudden event. In fact, the idea of a national organisation had been in air for quite some time. The Indian Nationalist attempted many times to form a group of on-all India scale. Finally with the attempt of Allan Octavian Hume (A.O.Hume) Indian National Congress was founded in 1885.

The Early Nationalist, also known as the Moderates, were a group of political leaders in India active between 1885 to 1907 A.D. Their emergence marked the beginning of the organised National movement in India. Some of the important Moderate leaders were Dada Bhai Naoroji, Badraddin Tayyabji, Pheroz Shah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhle, Balwant Panade etc.

### Approach of Moderate Leaders towards British Government

The approach of Moderate leaders towards British Government involved constitutional agitation within the framework of law and showed a slow but orderly political progress. They worked on a two pronged methodologies. One, Create a strong public opinion to arouse consciousness and national spirit and then educate and unite people on common political question and two- persuade the British government and British public opinion to introduce reforms in India on the lines laid out by the Nationalists.

They used method of 'prayer and petition' and if that failed, they resorted to constitutional agitation.

Contribution of Moderate Leaders — The Early Nationalist popularly known as Moderates helped tremendously the National Movement of India. Their contribution can be summarised in following points —

- 1- Economic Critique of British Imperialism — The early nationalists, led by Dada Bhai Naoroji, R.C. Dutt, Dinshah Wacha and others, carefully analysed the political economy of British rule in India, and put forward the 'drain theory' to explain the British exploitation of India.
2. Constitutional reforms — From 1885 to 1892, the nationalist demanded for Constitutional reforms. These were centred around —
  - 1- Expansion of Councils — i.e., greater participation of Indians in councils.
  - 2- Reforms of Council — More powers to councils. With the passage of time, the moderates demand increasingly focused on — a majority of elected Indian in council and control over budget. They gave the slogan — No taxation without representation.
- 3- Protection of Civil Rights — Civil rights include the right to speech, thought, association and free press. Through an incessant campaign, the moderates were able to spread modern democratic ideas, and defence of civil rights.

An evaluation of the Moderates — The Moderates did a great deal to awaken the nationalist sentiment of masses. They exposed the exploitative character of colonial rule and established the basic political truth that India should be ruled in the interests of Indians.