




## Be Mains Ready

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**Q.** While discussing the methods of political work of the moderate leaders, also highlight their contributions in the National Movement.

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### Approach

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- Provide a brief introduction of the moderates
- Explain their methods of political work
- Talk about their contributions in the National Movement
- Conclude suitably

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

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- 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.

- In order to create public opinion in England, the Moderates arranged lectures in different parts of England. A weekly journal called India was published in England for circulation among the British population.
- Moderates used different types of newspapers and chronicles to criticize the government policies such as The Bengalee, Bombay Chronicle, Hindustan Times, Nationalist weekly, Induprakash, Bombay Anglo Marathi daily paper, Rast Goftar and a weekly journal India.
- They criticised the British rule in their speeches and sent representatives to different parts of the country to mobilise public opinion.

### **Major contributions of moderate leaders include**

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- **Economic Critique of British Imperialism:** The early nationalists came forward with the drain of wealth theory explaining British exploitation of India, thus creating a Pan-Indian opinion of British rule being the major cause of India's poverty and economic backwardness.
- **Constitutional Reforms and Propaganda in Legislature:** Legislative councils in India had no real official power till 1920. But the nationalists were able to transform these councils into forums, for ventilating popular grievances, for exposing the defects of an indifferent bureaucracy, for criticising government policies/proposals, raising basic economic issues especially regarding public finance.
- **Campaign for General Administrative Reforms:** They campaigned for demands such as representative legislatures, Indianization of services, reduction of military expenditure, education, employment and holding of the ICS (Indian Civil Services) examination in India, decrease in the burden of the cultivators etc.
- **Defence of Civil Rights:** Through an incessant campaign, the nationalists were able to spread modern democratic ideas such as right to speech, thought, association and a free press. Soon, the defence of civil rights became an integral part of the freedom struggle.

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.