Modern History · GS - I

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

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - I	Modern History

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~250 words

Answer Hint

Early Indian nationalism, Indian National Congress, Dadabhai Naoroji, Drain Theory, constitutional methods, political consciousness, economic critique of colonialism, organisational foundations, limited mass mobilisation, legacy for later nationalists.

Model Answer

Introduction

The Moderates dominated the Indian National Congress during its early years after 1885. Leaders such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjea laid important intellectual and organisational foundations for the freedom struggle.

Contribution of the Moderates

- **Political consciousness:** The Congress brought politically active Indians from different regions together and developed a common national platform.
- **Economic critique:** Dadabhai Naoroji's Drain Theory exposed the transfer of Indian wealth to Britain. R. C. Dutt criticised colonial land revenue and economic policies.
- **Constitutional methods:** Petitions, resolutions, public meetings and legislative demands popularised organised political activity.
- **Administrative reforms:** Moderates demanded Indianisation of civil services, greater legislative representation and accountability in governance.

- **National unity:** Their activities helped develop a shared political identity beyond regional grievances.
- **Foundation for future movements:** Their critique of colonialism influenced assertive nationalists and later mass leaders, including Gandhi.

Limitations

Their faith in British liberalism and reliance on petitions limited immediate achievements. Their social base remained relatively narrow, with limited participation from peasants, workers and other marginalised groups. They initially sought reforms rather than complete independence.

Conclusion

Although the Moderates did not achieve self-government, they established the ideological, economic and organisational foundations upon which later nationalists built a broader mass movement.

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