



PERIOD OF MODERATES – (1980-1905) POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The early period of the Indian National Congress was the period of moderates. The credits for organizing the first meeting of the Indian National Congress goes to A.O. Hume. He was a retired government officers who had chosen to stay back in India after retirement. According to him, the middle class educated people should come forward to guide the nation. The speeches of A.O. Hume which were addressed to the graduates of the university inspired the educated Indians to form the Indian National Union in 1884. In his speech, he urging the scholars to form an association for the mental, moral, social and political regeneration of the people of India.

KEYWORDS: Indian National Congress , period of moderates , educated Indians.

INTRODUCTION

Under the protection of Lord Dufferin, he organized the congress with two main purposes and those were to provide a safety-valve' to discontentment of the Indian intelligentsia and to form a quasi-constitutional party similar to her majesty's opposition to England. He believed that the National Congress would provide a peaceful and constitutional outlet to the discontentment among the educated Indians and thus help to avoid the outbreak of a popular revolt. The safety valve theory is a small part of the truth. The National Congress represented the urge of the politically conscious Indian to set up a national organization to work for their political and economic advancement.

FIRST CONGRESS SESSION AND ITS OBJECTS:

After the formation of the association, delegates from various parts of India assembled in Bombay in the Hall of Gokuldas Tejapal Sanskrit college under the presidentship of W.C. Banerjee in 1885. On the advice of Dadabhai Nauroji, the name 'Indian National Congress' was given to the Indian National Union. A.O. Hume and K.T. Telang were elected as secretaries. The first meeting of the congress was attended by 72 representatives from all parts of India. The most important among them were Dadabhai Nauroji, Justice Ranade, Pherozeshah Mehta, Dinshaw Wancha, P.Anandacharlu, Subrahmanya Aiyar, Kesava Pillai, P.R. Naidu etc.

OBJECTS:

The objects of first congress session were following.

- 1) To promote the personal and close relationship among the active members for the national good.
- 2) To eradicate all prejudices relating to race, creed or provinces.
- 3) To increase the feelings of national unity.

- 4) Try to remove the socio-political problems.
- 5) To decide on the policy for national uplift.

RESOLUTIONS:

After discussion on National issue, congress passed following resolutions.

- 1) Abolition of Indian Council.
- 2) To create royal commission to enquire into the working of Indian administration.
- 3) Holding simultaneous exam for the ICS at London and Calcutta and the raising of the age of candidates.
- 4) Admission of elected members to existing legislative councils and creation of the councils in the North-West Frontier Province, Audh and Panjab.

Thus, an all India platform was formed to air the grievances of the people. The leaders of the congress were moderates and constitutionalists. They suggest administrative reforms.

The attitude of the British towards congress was friendly in the beginning but gradually the British turned hostile as the congress started an agitations against the government. The British followed the policy of 'divide and Rule' they tried to divide the Hindus and Muslim.

SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS OF CONGRESS:

The second session of the congress was held at Calcutta and Dadabhai Nauroji was elected as a president near about 434 delegates attended the session. Dadabhai praised the blessings of the British Rule in India.

The third session was held in Madras in 1887 with 607 delegates, Justice Badruddin Tayyabji was elected as a president. The more session were held in 1888 with 1200 delegates and in 1889 with 2000 delegates at Calcutta and Bombay. Dadabhai Nauroji was the president of the Lahore session of the congress in 1893. Alfred webb was elected as a president of the congress session in 1894 which was held in Madras. Surendranath Banerjee was president of the Poona session of the congress in 1895. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was president of the Banaras session in 1905.

The moderates and their demands:

The moderate leaders of the congress belonged to middle class family which was Indian and color but British in tastes, in opinion, in morals and in intellect. They were supports of British government. They believed that Indian will progress under the British rule. According to them if Indian kept their demands properly in front of them. They would definitely oblige they think that India's connection with the west through England was considered to be a boon not a curse. Hence Indian National Congress passed several resolutions. Their important demands were.

- 1) To increase the number of Indians in legislative councils the half of the members of these councils should be elected and the principles of indirect election should be accepted.
- 2) To increase the age for competitive exams, simultaneously ICS exam should be conducted at London and Calcutta.
- 3) To cut military expenses by reducing the military budget.
- 4) The burden of foreign wars should not be imposed on the Indians.
- 5) Indians should get high posts in the military services. They pleaded to establish military training schools in India.
- 6) To separate the judiciary from the executive.
- 7) British government should give loans to peasants at lower interest rates. To protect peasants from the exploitation of zamindars.
- 8) They demanded the progress in trade and commerce and industry. They demanded opening up of new industries and technical schools in India.

The moderates frequently kept their demands in front of British government but government did not pay much attention to most of the demands.

METHODS OR POLICIES OF THE MODERATES:

The moderates fully believed in the peaceful and constitutional methods. They express their views through newspaper. They delivered public lectures. They assembled yearly in congress sessions and passed resolutions. They presented their demands to the government. They would give application and complaints to the government. They adopted a policy of pray, petition and protest.

In 1889, the British committee of the Indian National Congress was founded in England to inform the Indian affairs to the British nation and parliament. It started a journal called India.

ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT:

Lord Dufferin looked upon the foundation of the congress with suspicion in 1887. He attacked the congress and called it 'Microscopic minority of people'. Hemilton, Secretary of state for India accused the congress leaders of possessing seditious and double sided character. The British officers publically criticized and condemned the Indian National Congress and leaders. They were branded as disloyal Babus 'seditious Brahmins' and violent villains'. The congress was described as a factory of sedition and congress means discontented lawyers.

Lord Carzon declared in 1900, 'the congress is tottering to its fall and one of my great ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise'. He described the congress as an unclean thing. To weaken the nationalists

Movement the British officials used the policy of 'Divide and Rule'. They encouraged Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Raja Shiv Prasad to start an anti-congress movement.

The programme of the moderates:

The moderate leader believed that if they put their demands in front of British Government in proper way, then it will definitely fulfill by the government. They put following reforms in front of British Government.

Constitutional Reforms:

The moderates had full faith in the sense of justice of British officers and British parliament they wanted a large share in the government of their country. They demanded reforms regarding legislative councils. They demanded membership of the council for educated people and increase the power of the councils.

Economic Reforms:

The moderates put the blame for India's growing poverty and economic backwardness on the policies of British rulers. Dadabhai Nauroji declared that economic policies of British government destroyed the Indian industries and exploiting artisans, workers and peasants. They destroyed India's indigenous industries. To save India's economy, the moderates started the policies of swadeshi, burnt of foreign goods, demanded reduction in Land revenue and improvement of the condition of plantation labourers. They complained that India's wealth was being drained to England and demanded that the drain be stopped. They condemned high military expenditure of the government of India and demanded reduction.

Administrative Reforms:

They demanded the Indianization of the higher grades of the administrative service, and agitated against the oppressive and tyrannical behavior of the police, criticized the delays of the law and high cost of judicial process and demanded the separation of judiciary from the executive. They opposed the official policy of disarming the people. They urged the government to develop welfare activities of the people. They emphasized on the spread of primary education among the masses. They demanded improvement of police system and to provide medical and health facilities.

Reforms regarding civil Rights:

The moderates fully recognized the value of the freedom of speech and press. They opposed the vernacular press Act of 1878. They condemned the arrest of Lokmanya Tilak and other leaders as well as editors.

Achievement of the moderates:

If we critically evaluate the work of the moderates/ it appears that they did not achieve much success but we could not ignore their achievement their achievements were as follows.

- 1) To satisfy the demands of the Indians, the Indian councils Act 1892 was enacted by increasing the number of Indian members in Government Generals Council and in the Governor's Council's in the province and introduced the indirect election and enlarged the right of the members to discuss the budget and ask questions.
- 2) They molded public opinion and brought many Indians within the fold of congress.
- 3) They provided the Indians with political education and brought in national awakening.
- 4) They worked for self rule, equality, democracy and liberty amongst the Indians.

Evaluation of work:

Indian National Congress was not a party, it was a movement. Its door was always opened for all classes and communities. It was a national body in true sense. Their programme was broad enough to accommodate all interests. They popularized the idea of democracy and nationalism. Although they get stories instead of bread, they laid down a strong foundation for the building up and growth of such national movement which could ultimately achieved freedom for the people.

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