The tradition of liberalism in Indian politics is much older than the emergence of the Liberals as a separate parliamentary party in the public life of India. This Liberal trend in Indian Politics can be traced back to the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885.

The fundamental article of that Liberal tradition was loyalty to the British Raj. The Liberals never underrated the enormous benefits of British rule in India - the inestimable benefit of peace and security, law and order, English education and works of public utility. Summing up the achievements of the British in a speech in London in 1805 Gokhale said: "I am aware that much good has been done by England in India in certain directions. The western type of administrative machinery has been substituted in place of what we once had. The country enjoys now uninterrupted peace and order. Justice though costly, is fairly dispensed, as between Indian and Indian ... Then you have introduced western education, with freedom of speech and freedom of writing. These are all things that stand to your credit". The whole political literature of the period bore testimony to this profound sense of gratitude for the innumerable blessings of the British Raj. 'Would there

have been an India but for the almost providential intervention of the British'? They were effusive in their expression of loyalty to the Throne. Surendranath Banerjea said at Poona in 1895: "To England we look for inspiration and guidance. To England we look for sympathy in the struggle. From England must come the crowning mandate which will enfranchise our people. England is our political guide and moral perceptor in the exalted sphere of political duty. English history has taught us those principles of freedom which we cherish with our life blood. We have been fed upon the strong food of English constitutional freedom".

The Liberals were thus full of gratitude for all the good that the British did in India consciously or unconsciously. In fact, 'the ideal of the Liberal party in India was ... to unite highest patriotic devotion to the country with an equally enthusiastic attachment to the Crown.'

Complete independence, that implied the severance of British connection, was not their creed. They took pride in calling themselves British subjects of the Empire and claimed self-government, autonomy in internal affairs as well as in economic policy and equality of treatment for Indians throughout the Empire on the basis of their common allegiance to the

Crown. Gokhale reiterated this goal as President of the Benares session of the Congress in 1906: "For better or for worse," said he, "our destinies are now linked with those of England, and the Congress fully recognises that whatever advance we seek must be within the Empire itself. That advance, moreover, can only be gradual, as at each stage of the progress, it may be necessary for us to pass through a brief course of apprenticeship before we are enabled to go to the next one; for it is a reasonable proposition that the state of responsibilities required for the proper exercise of the political institutions of the West can be acquired by an Eastern people through practical training and experiment only ..." Dadabhai Naoroji set the seal upon it at Calcutta in 1906. He declared bluntly that Swaraj or self-Government within the Empire was the goal of India's political striving.

But how was this goal to be achieved? By training and temperament the Liberals were opposed to any radical political and social changes. Among them Sir Ferozeshah Mehta was an eminent Barrister-at-Law. So were A.M. Basu and Tyabji. Both Dadabhai Naoroji and Gokhale started as Professors of eminence in their respective Provinces. Dadabhai later went to England where his chief function became to educate English public as to their responsibility as rulers of India. Gokhale chose the

legislative forum for serving the country. Bengal had her glory in Surendranath who had begun as a dismissed civil servant and since then continued to champion the cause of his country in various capacities - as a renowned teacher and administrator of Ripon College, as a member of the Provincial and Imperial Legislatures, as a member of the Calcutta Corporation and as the successful editor of the famous Bengalee. Among the later Liberals Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru earned a princely income at the Allahabad Bar. Sir Sivaswami Aiyar, another Liberal from Madras, was appointed the advocate general of that Province in Succession to Sir C. Sankaran Nair in 1907. While Sir C.H. Setalvad was the advocate general of Bombay, C.Y. Chintamani was the renowned editor of the Leader of Allahabad for a long time. Thus the Liberals generally belonged to prosperous and well-to-do classes and represented the upper income segments of the society. They were busy and elderly men - mostly eminent lawyers, landholders, professors and journalists. Besides a particular kind of western education, their very social status and official or professional position, great wealth and natural conservatism made them to view with alarm any but a gradual change. They believed that the highest form of political development attainable by a country was the English parliamentary system and though they saw no royal road to the attainment of that political goal, they never doubted that 'the goal being what it was, their reliance must be on what was called constitutional agitation'. "Constitutional agitation", said Gokhale, "was agitation by method which they
were entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constitutional authorities; Gokhale also pointed out clearly that changes desired must be obtained only through the action of the authorities by bringing to bear on them the pressure of public opinion. The Liberals believed that constitutional agitation would succeed for a number of reasons. First, they were convinced of the inherent righteousness of their cause and the operation of a sympathetic providence. In a speech delivered in England in 1909 Surendranath Banerjea said: "The journey may seem to be long and wearisome, the promised land may appear to be distant, but uplifted by hope and by faith in the high destinies of the country let us fight the good fight, and I am confident that the God of all nations will vouchsafe us the victory ... which awaits those who inspired by a sublime confidence in His dispensation and in the paramountcy of moral laws seek to work out the regeneration of their country in a spirit of peace, of righteousness and absolute consecration". Secondly, the Liberals also believed that there were an honest purpose, a deep sympathy and an anxious desire in the British ruler to mould the Indian nation according to his own country's proved and admired principles. The Liberals tried to co-operate with the Government

8. Ibid., pp. 1105-06.
in this task. Moreover, some of them were very conscious about the shortcomings of Indians and recognized that, considered as a whole, the British rule was a favourable circumstance in the present evolution of India and any precipitate withdrawal of it would be disastrous. Hence co-operation with the Government was, to them, the only way to Swaraj open to a people 'hagridden by poverty unarmed and virtuous'. They realised that rash method and undue haste would spoil their case and therefore carefully refrained themselves from using flamboyant languages and giving ultimatums.

The Moderates cherished freedom no less than order. They never allowed their passion for liberty to bedim their love of order or their passion for order their love of liberty. The way to the attainment of political salvation lay not in 'aspiring after the impossible or after too remote an ideal but in striving each day to take the next step in order of natural growth in a spirit of compromise and fairness'. The goal would thus be reached only by slow and steady movement. The Liberals of those days understood too well that Rome was not built in a day and they never despaired. "Let us not forget", said Gokhale in 1909 at Allahabad with Pandit Motilal Nehru in the Chair, "that we are at a stage of the country's progress when our achievements are bound to be small and our disappoint-

ments frequent and trying. That is the place which it has pleased providence to assign to us in this struggle, and our responsibility is ended when we have done the work which belongs to that place. It will, no doubt, be given to our country men of future generations to serve India by their success; we, of the present generation, must be content to serve her mainly by our failures. For hard though it be, out of these failures, the strength will come which in the end will accomplish great tasks".

The Decline of Their Position in the Congress -

The Liberals in India were a 'homogeneous and united party' until the early years of the 20th century and the Indian National Congress served throughout this early period as the chief forum of their activity. At the Benaras Congress in 1906, the clash between the old Liberal leadership and the left wingers became pronounced. On the question of according a welcome to the Prince of Wales (later King George V) the Extremists under the leadership of Tilak decided to oppose the Subjects Committee's welcome resolution in the open Congress, and the situation was only averted by Gokhale's personal appeal to Lajpat Rai who prevailed upon Tilak to desist from such open defiance of the 'old guard'. Between 1905-1907 this gulf widened still further. In 1906 the partition of Bengal came. The Moderates in Bengal led by Surendranath could not prevent

it nor check the bureaucratic highhandedness which tried to crash the anti-partition agitation.

The fact demonstrated to the Extremists that even in terms of its limited objective the Moderate agitation was ineffective. The partition thus emphasised the cleavage between the two groups. The next Congress was to be held at Calcutta. To forestall the situation the Liberals invited the Grand Old Man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji to become the president of the coming session in the hope that the Extremists would not oppose the candidature of 'such an apostle of Indian Nationalism'. But the Calcutta session of the Congress nevertheless proved to be a stormy one. The main controversy centred round the boycott resolution. The Moderates did not favour boycott except in Bengal. They thought that 'infinite prolongation and extra-provincial extension of the measure was fraught with genuine difficulty'. Gokhale explained the Liberal view in his speech on 'Swadeshi'. A strict boycott of foreign goods according to him was not at all practicable in the then Indian conditions. "For when you boycott the foreign goods", he said, "you must not touch even a particle of imported article; and we only make ourselves ridiculous by talking of a resolution which we cannot enforce". To avoid an open rupture the resolution moved by A.C. Mazumdar and seconded by B.C. Pal that 'the boycott movement inaugurated in Bengal by way of protest

against the partition was and is legitimate' was passed. Both the Extremists and the Moderates interpreted the resolution in their own way. So it was a mere compromise to keep the dignity of the chair. But the proceedings of the Subjects Committee were nevertheless, marked by much commotion and disorder.

The patched up truce of Calcutta could not endure. Soon the Presidency of the next session of the Congress proved to be the bone of contention. And at Surat in 1907 the two wings of the Nationalist party - the Moderates and the Extremists parted company and the two were not reunited until 1916. The Surat Congress proved to be a fiasco. For about nine years after Surat the Moderates continued to dominate the Congress. But on 19 February 1915 Gokhale died and Mehta followed him in November of the same year. With the passing away of these two stalwarts, one phase of Moderate dominated Indian politics came to an end. Only Banerjee and Wecha remained to be the last survivors of the old generation, though there were also others who now inherited their tradition and outlook. Since 1916, when Tilak had returned to the Congress fold a year after Gokhale's death, they were steadily losing their influence both within the Congress and with the people and the balance was not restored even by Montagu's notable declaration in August 1917.
which officially committed the British Government to the development of Indian self-Government along parliamentary lines and made no distinction between that goal and Dominion Status. While the Moderates saw in the announcement the promise of a better day and the fulfilment of their life-long mission the Extremists regarded it as 'vague and indefinite' both as regards its phraseology and its substance, and held that if the Indian bureaucracy were to be the judges of the time when the Indian would be deemed fit to be entrusted with responsible Government, that time would never arrive.

In August of the same year the Congressmen of Bengal fell out amongst themselves over the election of the President of the session which was to be held at Calcutta. The agitation over the interment of Mrs. Besant, who had by this time assumed the lead of the Madras Nationalists, rose so high that her election was almost imperative. She was unanimously elected by all other Provincial Congress Committees. But in Bengal, with Surendranath's backing, P.C. Mitter, a Moderate landholder, proposed the name of an Oudh Talukdar, the Raja of Mahumubad, and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee at their meeting, held on 29 August 1917, returned the Raja Saheb as the President of the Congress in opposition to Mrs. Besant, whose name was proposed and seconded by Messrs C.R. Des and

21. Leader, 23 August 1917.
23. Ibid., 30 August 1917.
Byomkesh Chakravarty. 'Bengal would be outcasted and held in contempt by the whole of India,' said Sir Gaganendra Nath Tagore, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Reception Committee of the Congress. That was the uppermost consideration in the minds of hundreds of men who became members of the Reception Committee to set aside the decision of the Congress Committee and to vindicate the honour of Bengal. Popular feeling rose to its highest pitch when Surendranath refused to recognize scores of gentlemen as members of the Reception Committee. It was however, apparent to Surendranath that his group was hopelessly outnumbered. As a last resort he proposed through Dr. P.N. Banerjee, one of his Chief Lieutenants and one of the secretaries of the B.P.C.C., that if the resolution accepting Mrs. Besant's nomination was placed before the meeting with a rider to the effect that in view of the differences of the opinion on the subject, the final decision should be left to the All India Congress Committee, he would accept it. But it was the last straw on the camel's back and Babu Motilal Ghosh, a prominent Congressman and the editor of the Amrita Bazar Patrika, promptly refused to accede to this demand. In the end Mrs. Besant was elected the President.

25. Ibid. Also Bengalee, 30 August 1917, Amrita Bazar Patrika, 30 August 1917.
26. Ibid., 31 August 1917. Also P. Dutta, op. cit., p. 262.
27. Ibid., 1 September 1917.
and Surendranath and his followers left the meeting with shouts of 'get out' ringing in their ears. All sorts of disreputable motives were attributed to Surendranath in opposing the election of Mrs. Besant. "He (Surendranath) has got the Imperial Council vacancy just now in his brain", wrote the Amrita Bazar Patrika, "and has therefore to sedulously cultivate the susceptibilities of the existing honourables upon whose vote depended his chance of once more making his oratory felt in high quarters". This brief Liberal-Nationalist rift in Bengal was only the prelude to a greater contest for control of the Congress. Two months later a compromise was patched up through outside intervention, but that was more superficial than real and the position of the Liberals was finally shattered at the annual session of the Congress at Calcutta. The proceedings began, indeed, with the usual expression of loyalty to the Throne. But Tilak, who was the dominant figure in the Calcutta Congress, succeeded in inserting a time limit in the resolution on self-Government for which he had tried in vain at the Lucknow Congress in the previous year.

The Liberals were disturbed at "the sharp edge politics were developing" but they would not allow their 'better judgement' to be overborne under pressure of any circumstances.

30. Ibid., 1 September 1917.
31. Ibid.
33. Ibid., pp. 90-126. Also Bengal, 30 December 1917.
Disgruntled and disgusted by the manner in which the Extremists had treated them, some of them began to think in terms of an organisation of their own. For example, on 10 November 1917 Prithwis Chandra Roy, a prominent stalwart of the Moderate Party, had written a letter to all Moderate Congressmen throughout India. 'In co-operation with some very influential friends', he wrote, 'I am making a serious effort to find out, if there is, in any quarter, any particular desire to establish a Moderate organisation, and if so, on what lines it should be founded. It is proposed to hold an informal Conference of the leading Moderate politicians of All India stature some time during the next Christmas holiday to discuss the advisability of such an organisation and to take such steps as may be necessary in consequence of its decision'. He had emphasised that the Congress had no separate existence and only flourished as an appendage of the Home Rule League and that the time had come for establishing an organisation in view of the fact that the Moderate Party had been 'swept off the field of politics by a new broom', and that 'the Congress and all its machineries had practically been captured by the Extremist Party ...' The Extremists poured scorn on the new development.

33a. N.M. Samarth to Sastri, 20 September 1918, V.S. Srinivasa Sastri Papers, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi. Also B.N. Basu to Sastri, 1 August 1918, ibid.


35. Ibid. Also Bengalee, 11 November 1917.

36. Ibid.
Montagu's Mission in India and the Moderate Response To It -

Edwin Samuel Montagu who had been Under Secretary of State during Morley's regime, had already revealed his interest in Indian affairs by his speeches and utterances. He became the Secretary of State in July 1917, made his famous announcement on Indian policy in the following August and landed at Bombay early in November to have a look at Indian affairs himself. It seems that one of the first objects of his Indian visit was 'to work with the Moderates' and form a Moderate Party 'Indian, Courageous and Strong'.

Montagu was really in a very difficult position. "You have got a democracy at Home", he wrote to Chelmsford, "ignorant of Indian conditions, Central Government in India naturally jealous of the efficiency of the government of which it is the custodian, local governments growing in importance with the civilisation of countries over which they preside and an Indian opinion produced by a long series of statesmen from Macaulay to Morley which it is now absolutely impossible to ignore. How can we reconcile all these things at a time when no complete solution is possible and every thing must be another step upon the slope which we started on a hundred years ago"?

Secondly, he had made an announcement but it


had committed none in the Government. The speeches in the House of Lords were very hostile and "were directed in my opinion", Montagu wrote, "either against the announcement of 20 August or to defending an attitude which says it accepts the announcement but will do nothing to carry it out". For instance, Marquess of Lansdowne regarded the announcement which carried the intimation that the goal was the earliest possible realisation of full responsible Government, to be full of danger, and he further said that the Secretary of State was trying to bring 'revolutionary changes' in India and that he was attempting to do what both Crew and Morley had said was an impossibility'. In short the Lords were willing to confine their recommendations on responsible Government only to a 'reiteration of Lord Ripon's policy thirty years out of date'. They were saying that even if he succeeded in producing a scheme, that would not be worked by any section in India. To this difficult situation at Home was added the attitude of the Extremist Party in India. Montagu was conscious of the fact that his scheme would fall 'far short of the circumstances of the country' that it would

40. Same to same, 22 October 1918, ibid., vol. 4, p. 159. Also S.D. Waley, op. cit., p. 177.
42. Ibid., pp. 784-86. Also Montagu to Chelmsford, 1 January 1918, Chelmsford Papers, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 1.
43. Same to same, 22 October 1918, ibid., vol. 4, p. 159.
stand 'no chance of public acceptance' and would be 'none
too popular with the Extremists.' He was therefore, convinced
that it was essential to get 'a nucleus of a people' who would
support the scheme against the Extremists and he would thus be
able to assure the cabinet that his scheme would be supported
by a section of Indians. In his scheme of 12 December 1917
he included the following as a separate item: "A new organi-
sation of Indians to be collected and assisted in every possi-
ble way by the Government for propaganda on behalf of the pro-
posals and to send a delegation to England to assist us."
This did not prove to be very difficult. For the Moderates
were already anxious to come out of the Congress fold where
they were gradually finding themselves in an increasingly dif-
ficult and embarrassing position.

Some of them like S.P. Sinha, B.N. Basu and Sir C.
Sankaran Nair were already in the inner council of the Govern-
ment. Lord Satyendra Prosanna Sinha who had presided over the
session of the Indian National Congress in 1915 was a leading
 Moderate and a member of the Council of the Governor of Bengal.
 Bhupendra Nath Basu, a member of the Council of the Secretary
of State, accompanied Montagu in his Indian tour. Sir C.
Sankaran Nair, a former Advocate General of Madras, was a

47. Ibid., p. 55.
48. Ibid., p. 134.
49. Ibid., p. 104.
member of the Executive Council of the Viceroy at the time. He consulted other like V.S. Srinivasa Sastri, Gokhale's old colleague and successor to the Servants of India Society, Surendranath Banerjee, Sapru, and Chintamani. They were all impressed by the extremely sympathetic attitude of the Secretary of State who was trying to do his very best for India. They also realised the obstacles lying on his way - a coalition Government in England, the opposition in different quarters both in England and India to any sweeping reforms and the known antipathy of the Government of India to any relaxation of control over the Central Government. The Moderates were, in effect, 'told to be realistic and not to look at the shortcomings of the first instalment' but to ask 'whether it led assuredly to self-Government'. The Moderates in their turn determined 'not to let the Secretary of State down' and therefore though they were evidently not satisfied with the scheme, for they felt that it did not go far enough, decided to make the most of whatever was attainable under the circums-

50. Ibid., pp. 123-23, 124, 326.
51. Ibid., pp. 56-57, 272-74, 275.
52. Ibid., p. 62.
53. Ibid., pp. 51-52, 279, 312, 322.
54. Before his departure for India Montagu was informed that an association was likely to be formed in England to oppose any policy of concession in regard to policy of Home Rule in India. Viceroy to Secretary of State, 24 September 1917, G of I, Home Pol., Deposit, no.26, 1917, (National Archives of India, New Delhi).
56. E.S. Montagu, op. cit., p. 119.
Montagu started with B.N. Basu and S.P. Sinha. "We talked about the formation of a Moderate Party," he wrote, "they were very enthusiastic and talked about editing newspapers and so forth. I think they mean business." He came to an understanding with some of the Bengal leaders in this connection and, shortly before the publication of the report, Prithwis Chandra Roy founded the National Liberal League in Calcutta with Surendranath Banerjea as its president. On 26 June 1918 Babu Satyananda Bose, a Moderate and a member of the Provincial Congress Committee and a leading political light of the newly established League, issued a letter which was widely circulated all over Bengal and in which he said:

"Having regard to the present state of our progress in public spirit, administrative experience and capacity for organisation it will not be prudent for us to insist on a full measure of provincial autonomy all at once. It is not possible, I admit, for one to learn to swim except in water but one should not go into deep water lest he should sink in the attempt".

Thus before Montagu left India he had already assured himself of the support of the Moderates. He knew well that the Moderates would secede from the Congress and form a party of

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58. E.S. Montagu, op. cit., p. 217.


60. Amrita Bazar Patrika, 26 June 1918.
their own. "When I came out", he wrote, "Moderates were rushing to join the Home Rule League; on leaving the secession of Moderates from the Home Rule League is making marked headway".

In February 1918 Sastri's weekly paper Servant of India made its first appearance. It wrote: "Mr. Montagu had taken an uncommon interest in the question of Indian reform and must be enabled by our sympathetic and reasonable attitude to complete the stupendous task that he had begun ..."

On 8 July 1918 the Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms was published. The report introduced a system of Dyarchy to tide over the transitional period. Dyarchy was an experimental method of dual Government intended to train Indians as administrators by making them responsible at the outset for certain local subjects in their own Provinces. No important change was proposed for the Central Executive but legislation was entrusted to the new Assembly and the Council of State each of which had elected majorities though each contained an official block. The Viceroy was left with the power of certifying any legislation which he might feel necessary and which the Legislature did not pass. The Provinces also had their Legislative Councils elected on a wider franchise.

61. E.S. Montagu, op. cit., p. 263.
64. Ibid., pp. 220-27.
66. Ibid., pp. 183-85.
The scheme fell far short of the proposal either in the Memorandum of the 19 non-official members of the Legislative Council, to which among others Wacha, Sapru and Sastri were signatories, or in the Congress League scheme which the Congress had put forth as the irreducible minimum in their demand.

The prominent leaders of the Moderate Party issued a Manifesto restating their position. It was signed among others by Surendranath Banerjea, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Srinivasa Sastri and C.Y. Chintamani, Nilratan Sircar and Krishna Kumar Mitter. "We are persuaded", it said, "that it is the part of wise patriotism at present to accept the scheme to prevent its being narrowed or curtailed in its scope and to seek for its improvements that can be effected without its framework being destroyed". Two days after the publication of the report, Surendranath Banerjea convened a meeting of the Indian Association, Calcutta to express approval of the Mont-Ford proposals. The National Liberal League organised the first conference of the Bengal Moderates under the Presidency of the conservative Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee who not only gave his whole hearted support to the scheme but also dwelt upon the difficulty of introducing responsible Government in India.

The conference passed a resolution expressing grateful thanks to Mr. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford recognising that the proposals constituted a substantial step towards the progressive

67. Bengalee. 27 June 1918.

68. Report of Progs. of the meeting of the Indian Association on 10 July 1918, Bengalee, 13 July 1918.
realisation of responsible Government and welcoming the scheme in general principles and outlines, subject to modifications in the light of such suggestions and criticism as would be received from public bodies.

The proposals on the other hand proved unattractive to the Indian politicians of advanced views. They criticised many of its important provisions, especially the continuance of the legislative irresponsibility of the Central Government, and were loud in proclaiming the inadequacy of the measure of responsible Government in the Provinces. A special session of the Congress was summoned to consider the report. The Moderates felt that extreme views would dominate the Conference where their voice would be a minority of little or no account, and as they could not be party to a resolution designed to destroy the scheme, they decided to abstain from attending the special session of the Congress.

The Moderates now gathered together in what they called the First All India Conference of the Moderates in Bombay in

71. Surendranath Banerjea, op. cit., p. 283; Sapru also emphasised the impossibility of the Moderate Party getting a fair hearing at the approaching meeting of Indian National Congress. He said that his decision to abstain had been taken in consultation with Banerjea and D.E. Wacha. They had together very carefully weighed the pros and cons, Chelmsford to Montagu, 31 August 1918, excl. Confidential interview between T.B. Sapru and Rushbrook Williams, Montagu Papers, MSS Eur D 523, (National Archives of India, New Delhi), vol. 7, pp. 375-76.
November 1918 with Surendranath Banerjea as its first President. This proved to be the nucleus of the National Liberal Federation of India. Surendranath as its President defined the Moderate creed as 'cooperate when we can; criticise when we must'.

He spoke of the profound change in the spirit and policy of the Government. While he appealed to the people to rally to the support of the scheme, he warned the authorities of the grave consequences of any undue delay in the enactment of the Reforms or any attempt to whittle them down.

The year 1918 thus 'marked the first formal and organisational division of the Congress.' This division, however, related for the most part more to differences in methods between the two wings of the nationalist party than to any divergencies of aim. The goal for both of them was self-Government. The Moderates accepted the scheme but wanted certain modifications. The Extremists did not accept the scheme and demanded certain modifications before they could accept it. But very often in their concrete proposals for modifications there was a great deal common between the two groups. Both wanted the

72. Presidential Address of Sir Surendranath Banerjea, All India Moderate Conference, Bombay, 1 November 1918, p.3.
73. Ibid., p. 4.
74. Ibid., pp. 36-37.
introduction of an element of responsibility in the Central Government. Both were anxious to enlarge the sphere of responsible Government in the Provinces. Both asked for the abolition of the India Council and the relaxation of control over the Governments in India.

Such differences have on occasions appeared within the ranks of the Congress in the course of its evolution and they are perhaps quite natural and inevitable in the history of any political party. But a separate organisation becomes necessary when such differences continue for a long time. The differences had been brewing for long. The Moderates, who had been dominating the Congress since its inception, were people who knew the essentials of compromise. They readmitted the Extremists to the Congress in 1916. But though the separating elements thus managed to come together, it was purely temporary. The drift continued as it received impetus from the forces active in the country.

The years immediately preceding 1918 were hardly conducive to the growth of moderation in India. The Liberals stood for balance sense and ordered progress but it was difficult for such men to thrive under the changed and complex circumstances in the country created by the outbreak of the great War. The War intensified the impatience of the Indian Nationalists to see their country enjoying the right of self-determination on an equal footing with other countries, and in India, as elsewhere, it created a sense of weariness and disillusionment.

The prices were high and there was considerable distress among
the fixed income groups and among urban and factory workers, wages not having kept pace with the prices. This dislocation of Indian economy with resultant hardship spread a feeling of discontent among a large section of the population. The disturbing influences of War thus left no phase of life untouched and no class of population unaffected, while War loans and recruitment propaganda carried into villages some conception of the magnitude of the struggle. Financial stringency continued to hold in abeyance all but the most urgent projects of the Government. The flow of labour was disturbed and the transport facilities were curtailed. The great mass of cultivators and labourers, incapable of visualising the War, save as the work of malefic stars, found themselves harassed by inconvenience the causes of which they only imperfectly understood. This discontent of the agricultural and the lower middle classes affected the political situation and aggravated the rising nationalist surge.

Thus the colour of Indian politics had changed beyond recognition by this time. The name Moderate and the temper it described no longer brought any appeal to the young and the ardent. The whole situation was such that 'the extremer the gospeller', as Chintamani put it, 'the more did he command the

ear of the multitude.' In fact, 'the nature of Moderate interest, objective and point of view was such as to separate them from the bulk of the Indian society at this time.' They were too parliamentary in their approach and by 1918 had become too few in number to excite the public or to move the Government. In 1917 an agitation for Home Rule had started and the idea spread like wild fire.

To this changed atmosphere was added the attitude of the Extremists. The Liberals were reviled and ridiculed by the Extremists. Their policies were denounced as craven and even corrupt. Yet the fact is that for many of them it was a most painful wrench to separate themselves from the Congress which the older among them had founded and reared up, and the younger ones entered as a natural home. To them patriotism and Congress were synonymous terms. In fact, the schism did not take place without strenuous attempts on their part to arrive at a compromise. Fully three weeks before the meeting of the Congress, Surendranath had wired to Joint Secretary and to Mrs. Besant asking them to postpone the special session of the Congress for a short time for an exchange of views which might

80. Surendranath Banerjea, op. cit., p. 284. See also Moderate Manifesto in Amrita Bazar Patrika, 17 August 1918.
help to bring about an understanding. That request was not com-
plied with and, at the last moment, just twenty four hours
before the sitting of the Congress, a final effort was made,
though in vain. The Congress had become more extreme than
ever and the counsel of moderation had become a cry in the
wilderness. Thus the Liberals were forced to think in terms
of a separate organisation by the fact that the Congress was
'shunted off its marked track' by the policy and programme of
the Extremists. The reaction against them, which had started
earlier, now proceeded with a sudden rush until they were swept
out of the organisation they once had dominated. Even before
the publication of the report, the Extremists leaders had
started their campaign of vilification through violent articles
in the press all over the country. Their organisation had
assumed a hostile, even bellicose, attitude. On 2 June 1918,
fully five weeks before the publication of the report, the
Bengal Provincial Congress Committee sounded the tocsin of
alarm as if a great danger was impending and preparations had
to be made to meet it. On 6 June 1918, a letter was circulated
by the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee
which said "... you will keep yourself ready to hold public
meetings, to attend the Congress wherever held and the con-
ference in very large number and to fearlessly criticise the
proposals, if they fall short of our ideals ..." On 8 July,

82. C.Y. Chintamanl, op. cit., p. 94.
83. *Bengalee*. 6 June 1918.
the very day of the publication of the report, Mrs. Besant wrote in her own organ New India: "The scheme is unworthy to be offered by England or to be accepted by India. It is petty where it should have been large, banal where it should have been striking. There is about it no farsighted statesmanship, no constructive genius, no vision for India of even future evolution into freedom".

This writing set the key to the kind of reception of the report by the special session of the Congress. Surendranath Banerjea was already conspicuous by his absence in the special session of the Provincial Congress held on 14 July 1918. From the utterances of Extremists they knew that they would have no hearing at all and tactics, similar to those at Surat, would be repeated. They were right in their anticipations. When Mr. J. Choudhuri, a renowned lawyer and a legal journalist rose to speak opposing Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal's resolution which proposed the rejection of the reforms in toto, he was hissed and hooted and the cries of 'order' made his speech inaudible. The rowdiness was about to culminate in a free for all which was, however, averted by the intervention of friends. The proceedings of the Provincial Congress was a sufficient lesson to them.

84. New India, 8 July 1918.
86. Ibid.
There was another consideration. They thought that if they continued within the Congress fold and swelled the rank of the Extremists in denouncing the Reforms, the British democracy, in view of the practically unanimous opposition to the scheme, would have dropped it altogether and the prospects of self-Government would have been indefinitely deferred. For attempts were actually being made to sabotage the scheme by reactionaries in England led by men of the type of Lord Sydenham, an ex-Governor of Bombay, with his Indo-British Association to help him in that work and with allies in his side in Parliament like Marquess of Lansdowne and Lord Curzon. Of these Lord Curzon was in the coalition Government of Lloyd George. He had already expressed his opinion that British Government was not committed to the Montagu scheme. Lord Sydenham and his Indo-British Association were an interested and factious opposition engineered in England and in India to induce the British Government to whittle down, if not to destroy, the scheme. Lord Sydenham quoted Mr. Tilak in support of his condemnation of the scheme. The Reforms thus had to

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88. Ibid.


90. Ibid., p. 610.

91. Ibid., pp. 548-71.

92. Ibid., p. 559.
run the gauntlet of a double opposition. On the one side from the Extremists of the all or nothing type who attacked the reforms for not going far enough and on the other, from a section of stern and unbending Conservatives at home who attacked the scheme for going too far. In the midst of these accumulating difficulties the Moderates were afraid that if they did not strengthen the hands of Montagu with their support, the reactionary and extremist forces would prove too strong for him.

In this way, while forces in the country were driving the Moderates and the Extremists in the opposite directions and in that process helping the Extremists to outnumber the Moderates, Montagu's visit proved to be decisive. They were so much impressed by the personal honesty and sincerity of purpose of the Secretary of State that they were now ready 'to take their political future in their hand'. It was for this reason that some of them had agreed to form a Moderate Party at his instance.

Thus, while the forces in the country were largely responsible for reducing the Moderates in the position of a hopeless minority in the organisation which they once had dominated and making them to seek refuge in a separate organisation, the emergence of the Liberals as a separate parliamentary party in 1918 was also partly a response to the fascination which Montagu exercised over them. The old spell of Morley over Gokhale

seemed to be working again.

The Liberals came in for a good deal of criticism for what was called an 'act of desertion'. But they were convinced of the justness and sincerity of their own position. As Chintamani wrote in defence of Liberal Party's secession:

"They (Liberals) asserted that they represented the spirit of the old Congress whose name had been usurped by others and they believed that their secession was not an inconsistent, still less a reactionary one. They knew full well what they were letting themselves in for, and with a full consciousness of the unpopularity which would be their portion, they yet acted as their judgment and consciousness bade them do in the interests of the country as they understood them."

94. C.Y. Chintamani, op. cit., p. 95.