

MORALITY-MINTO REFORMS (1909)

Initiatives of Lord Morley and Lord Minto

Lord Morley, who was the secretary of state for Indian Affairs declared in the British parliament in the year 1906 that his government wished to bring new reforms for India. The reforms would enable the locals to exercise more powers in the legislative affairs. This initiated a series of correspondence between him and Lord Minto, who was the then Governor General of India. A committee was constituted to give suggestion about the scheme of reforms. The committee tabled its report. When the report had been approved by Lord Minto and Lord Morley, the act of 1909 was passed by the British parliament. The Morlay-Minto reforms suggested a separate electorate for Muslims, apart from some other constitutional measures. The government wished to develop a gulf within the Congress on one hand by garnering the support of the moderates, and on the other, to win over the Muslims and put them against the Hindus. The reforms introduced the system of separate electorates under which the Muslims could only vote for Muslim candidates. This was done with an objective of creating a notion that the political, economic and cultural interests of the Hindus and Muslims were different. The Indian political leaders were against these reforms. The following were the main features of the Act of 1909:

1. The number of members of the Legislative Council at the centre was increased from 16 to 60.
2. The number of members of the provincial Legislatures was also increased. It was fixed as 50 in the provinces of Bengal, Chennai and Mumbai, and at 30 for the rest of the provinces.
3. There were four categories of the members of the Legislative councils, both at the centre and in the provinces-ex-officio members (Governor-General and the members of the Executive Councils), nominated non-official members (nominated by the Governor-General but who were not government officials) and elected

members (elected by different categories of Indian people).

4. Right of separate electorates for the Muslims.
5. Official members were to form the majority at the centre, but in the provinces non-official members would be in majority.
6. The members of the Legislative Councils were permitted to discuss the budgets, suggest amendments and even to vote on them except on those items that were included as non-voter items. They were also entitled to ask supplementary questions during the legislative proceedings.
7. The Secretary of State for India was empowered to increase the number of the Executive Councils of Chennai and Mumbai from two to four.
8. Two Indians were nominated to the council of the Secretary of State for Indian Affairs.
9. The Governor-General was accorded the power to nominate one Indian member to his Executive Council.

Indians Councils Act (1909)

The Indian Councils Act introduced the principle of 'elections', which actually meant a minority of indirectly elected members in the Central Legislative Council and a majority of indirectly elected members in the provincial councils. The Councils themselves allowed only some powers of discussion, pulling of questions and sponsoring of resolutions. These Councils had no control over the administration or finance, let alone defence or foreign policy. The reforms were made with the sole intent of isolating the growing nationality movement. Repression had already started with the police's forcible entry into the 1906 Barisal conference of Dulf's Bandhab Samiti, where they beat up a large number of the participants. The Bande Mataram Slogan was banned. Even more systematic repression followed with the agitations in Punjab and the rise of the revolutionary terrorists in Bengal. The major measures included the banning of 'seditious' meetings specific areas (May and November 1907),

Press acts enabling the seizure of press (June 1908, February 1910), the Criminal Law Amendment Act (December 1908), which permitted bans on the principal societies in Bengal and deportations. Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh were deported in May 1907; nine Bengal leaders including Aswini Kumar Dutt were deported in December 1908; Chidambaram Pillai and others from Chennai were arrested; and Tilak was sentenced to 6 years in prison on 22 July 1908.

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