

Q Discuss the Minto-Morley Reforms of 1909.

① Introduction:

The Minto-Morley Reforms, also known as Indian Council Act of 1909, were an effort to put an end to the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905. Viceroy Lord Minto wanted to gain support of the maximum Indians through this effort. Under these reforms, the representation of the Indians was increased in many councils. Also, right of a separate electorate was given to the largest minority — the Muslims.

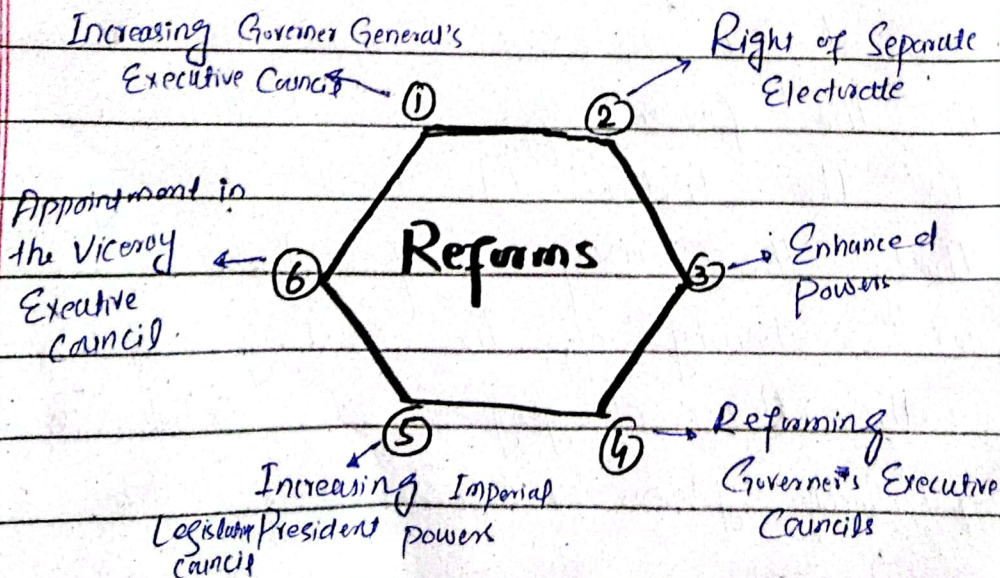
② Mindset of the Lord Minto:

Lord Minto (1905-1910) was not in the favour of the Parliament in the India. He used to say that the welfare of Indians is in the continuity of the existing system rather than changing it to British-like political system. Addressing to the

first session of the Imperial Legislative Council he said, "We have distinctly maintained that the representative government in its western sense is totally inapplicable to the Indian Empire. We have aimed at reform and enlargement of our councils, but not the creation of Parliaments."

In fact, he was intended to establish a constitutional aristocracy by blending the principle of absolutism of the Mughal Emperors with the principle of constitutionalism of the British Government.

③ Minto-Morley Reforms:



3.1 Increasing Governor General's Executive Council:

Under these reforms, the number of additional members in the Governor General's Executive Council was increased to 60. It was a step to ensure greater representation of the Indians in the council.

3.2 Granting Right of Separate Electorate:

These reforms served the long-awaited demand of the All India Muslim League (AIML) by granting Muslims a right of separate electorate. This step was taken to attract Muslim support for the reforms.

3.3 Enhancing Powers of the Imperial Legislative Council:

Through these reforms, the powers of the Imperial Legislative

Council were enhanced. The members of the council were now entitled to discuss budget and move a resolution against tax amendments.

3.4 Increasing Governor's Executive Council Members:

These reforms increased the number of members in the executive councils of Bombay, Madras, and Bengal. The number was increased to 4 aiming at the greater representation of the Indians.

3.5 Powers of the President in the Imperial Legislative Council:

Although the council was allowed to move resolutions on some issues; however, the President was given a veto power. The President of the council was empowered to disallow discussion on any part of the resolution by the members.

3.6 Appointment in the Viceroy's Executive Council:

For this first time, an Indian (S.P. Sinha) was appointed as a member of the Viceroy Executive Council, although it was bitterly criticized in the Britain.

Previously, AIML had demanded to appoint two Indians to the Council - a Muslim and a Hindu. The Muslims reacted on the Sinha's appointment, so they were promised that the next member appointed would be a Muslim. Hence, Syed Iram Ali was appointed as a member after the Sinha resigned.

(4)

→ Reaction of the Moderates

→ Hard-liners Response

Reactions
on the
reforms

→ Bengalee Stance

→ AIML Reaction

4.1 Reaction of the Moderates:

The 'moderates' welcomed the reforms and considered it a significant step towards peace and stability in the country. Famous moderate-minded politician, Gokhale, praised the reforms while addressing in the Imperial Legislative Council.

4.2 Hard-liners Response:

The 'extremist' mindset rejected this effort. Hard-liners were against the reforms mainly because of two reasons. First, the right of separate electorate was undigestible for them. Second, there was ban on the people, who participated in ^{rebellious} activities against the government, to be elected. Hard-liners were of the view that if Michael David and John Bernard, who were ~~accused~~ tried for the seditious activities against the British, could become the members of

the British Parliament and British Cabinet, then why there is ban on the Indian Nationalists.

4.3 Bengalee's Stance:

Bengalee rejected this package. They said that it was not reflecting the political system of the British. How can it be justified here if it is totally unjustified and unacceptable for the British political system.

4.4 AIML Reaction:

All India Muslim League (AIML) welcomed the reforms. It passed a resolution at a session in Delhi declaring full support of this British Scheme. Full cooperation was announced with the government regarding compliance to the reforms.

⑤ Conclusions:

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that Minto-Morley Reforms were aimed at ensuring the greater representation of the Indians in the Councils. However, it should be noted that these reforms merely increased the representation and the British government was still in position to exercise its powers in the same way. According to Professor Coupland,

"Minto-Morley Reforms brought about a representative government rather than a responsible government."

Nonetheless, Minto-Morley Reforms were a significant step to the evolution of the constitution in India.