

GS Foundation 2024: Modern India

Handout 30: Indian Politics during WW1

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Home Rule Movement

'India is like a son who had grown up and attained maturity. It is right now that the trustee or the father should give him what was his due.'

Lokmanya Tilak

"India demands Home Rule for two reasons first, because freedom is the birth-right of every nation, second, because her most important interests are now made subservient to the interest of the British Empire without her consent, and her resources are not actualised for her greatest needs."

Annie Besant

Home rule movement was launched in 1916 by nationalist leaders to intensify anti-colonial struggle and pressurized British to grant self-rule to India. Its name and inspiration came from Irish Home Rule movement, and it was an important landmark in the pre-Gandhian era of our national struggle.

In 1916, two parallel movements of Home Rule were launched.

Beginning	Leaders	HQ	Area of operation
April 1916	Lokmanya Tilak	Pune	Central province and Berar, Maharashtra (except Bombay), North. Karnataka
September 1916	Annie Besant, George Arundale, Ramaswamy Aiyer, BP Wadia	Adyar	Rest of India

Background:

- Reaction to the colonial character of the British rule
- WW1
 - The policy of repression and suppression: Normal law of land was replaced by Defense of India Act (1915). Whatever little liberty was there with people was also taken away. Also, economic hardship due to WW1 when articles of daily use were diverted abroad for war efforts.
 - The War also gave a big fillip to the feeling of nationalism all over the world, including in India. The allied powers claimed they were fighting for high-sounding ideas like liberty, democracy, and the principle of self-determination, which aroused unprecedented hopes in India well.
- It was almost a decade since the launching of a mass movement and a new political activism was necessary to maintain the morale of the people.
- It was an opportune moment to unite Congress and create all India front.

- Tilak came back from Mandalay Jail in 1914 and wanted to secure the entry of the Extremists in the Congress.
- Annie Besant thought that a united Congress would be more effective and also ensure the entry of a younger generation to the national movement. Further, it would have a moderating impact on the Extremists and radicalising influence on the Moderates.
- Moreover, the War had given a real opportunity for a united national movement: the attack on Turkey had alienated the Muslims, who were already full of resentment against the British for the annulment of the Bengal partition in 1911.

Thus, without worrying about prevailing wartime condition, Tilak and Besant launched Home Rule Movement.

Objectives:

- Attainment of self-rule within British Empire.
- Convince British of mutual interest, need and urgency of self-ruled India would be better positioned to help in war efforts.
- Propagate and popularize idea of Home-Rule among the masses to build up mass base for anti-British struggle.

Methods:

- It was a peaceful **constitutional movement**.
 - Emphasis was on **educational** rather than agitational, and **conciliatory** rather than confrontationist methods.
 - Strategy was based on unity and all-inclusiveness rather than on divisiveness, differentiation and sectarianism.
 - Tilak and Besant didn't want to create any difficulty for British war efforts.
- Use of newspapers and journals to spread ideas and mobilise people, especially in vernacular language to get closer to people.
 - Tilak:
 - Maratha and Kesari
 - Printed pamphlets in Marathi, Kannada, Gujarati and English - explaining the need for the Home Rule Movement. The popularity of his literature could be gauged by the fact that 47,000 copies of these pamphlets were sold.
 - Besant: New India and Commonweal.
- Hundreds of Home Rule League branches were opened in India to mobilise the masses for future movement. Tilak and Besant organised discussion groups, reading rooms in cities, sale of pamphlets in large numbers, lecture tours, organised classes for students on politics, organised social work, organized home rule rallies, took part in local government and collected funds.
- The **Lucknow Congress** gave a big boost to the Home Rule Movement.

- Even some of the **Moderate leaders** in UP and Maharashtra joined as volunteers, going on lecture tours and bringing pamphlets in favour of the movement. What was more, even the members of **Gokhale's Servants of India Society** joined the movement.

British Response:

When the Home Rule Movement started gathering momentum, the British were alarmed, though the movement was peaceful and lawful.

- Despite being peaceful, British government used all possible means to suppress the nationalist activity.
- The provisions of Newspaper Act (1908) and Indian press Act (1910) were used to check the nationalist propaganda through newspapers/journals.
- The provisions of Defense of India Act (1915) were used strictly to check the rallies and marches.
- In 1916, the government asked Tilak to furnish a surety of Rs. 60,000 and threatened to bind him for good behaviour for a period of one year.
- In 1917, Annie Besant was put under house arrest to prevent her involvement in nationalist activities.
 - a. This infuriated even those leaders who had earlier kept away from the movement. A nationwide protest movement was launched, in which prominent leaders like Jinnah, Surendranath Banerjea, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, M R Jayakar, Tej Bahadur Sapru, CR Das and others participated to show their solidarity with Annie Besant.
 - b. Tilak advocated passive resistance to get her released. There was almost a national upsurge in her favour.
 - c. Sir S Subramaniam Iyer, Honorary President of All India Home Rule League, renounced his Knighthood.
 - d. All this sent a stern message to the government and Annie Besant was freed in September 1917.
 - e. She gained unprecedented popularity and was elected Congress President in 1917 at the initiative of Tilak.

Impact/Significance:

Despite limitations, the movement certainly took the country further on the road to self-government.

- It infused new energy in anti-British struggle. The atmosphere of political passivism prevailing was transformed into political activism.
- It provided an opportunity for the masses to express discontent.
- It widened the mass base of anti-British struggle because it was organized all over India.
 - Annie Besant's League had 200 branches spread in major parts of the country, with a total membership of 27,000 and Tilak's League had 32,000 members by 1918.


- Home Rule Movement reached out to new areas, new groups, and new generations, which in itself was no mean achievement. Major centres of the movement were located in Maharashtra, Madras, UP, Sindh and Gujarat.
- More than three lakh copies of pamphlets, pleading for home rule, in different languages, were sold.
- Annie Besant was expelled from Central Provinces and Berar during November 1916 and Tilak was expelled from Punjab and Delhi during February 1917. All this speaks volumes for the effectiveness of the movement.
- It allowed the extremists to regain their mass base.
 - This paved the way for the re-entry of extremists in Lucknow Congress (1916).
 - Soon, it eclipsed the moderate leaders completely and allowed the extremists leaders to establish their control over congress.
 - In 1917 Calcutta session, Besant was elected as Congress president. She was the first woman president of the Congress.

1917	Calcutta	Annie Besant
1925	Kanpur	Sarojini Naidu
1933	Calcutta	Nellie Sengupta

- It brought immense pressure on the government and forced the government to modify its policy towards India. On **20 Aug 1917** an announcement by **Lord Montague** (SoS) made announcement declaring that the ultimate object of ongoing reforms in India is to grant dominion status and transplanting British parliamentary institutions. (**August Declaration**)
 - He promised an *"increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the Empire"*
 - As the Government of India's dispatch to the secretary of state in November 1916 argued, this should be offered gradually, in keeping with the **rate of diffusion** of education, resolution of religious differences and acquisition of political experience.
 - Although there was no immediate promise of 'self-government', nor was there any end of British empire, still his declaration was certainly a distinct improvement on the Act of 1909.
 - In this way the British government accepted India will attain Home Rule in future.
 - Also, swaraj was no longer considered a radical/revolutionary demand hereafter.

End of Home Rule Movement:

- Montagu's declaration of August 1917, in a way, dampened the spirit of the Home Rule Movement.
 - **Moderates** went with the government in support of new constitutional reforms and even **Annie Besant** virtually turned into a "loyalist". **Tilak** neither rejected the new proposals nor displayed any extra enthusiasm about them. As such, the Home Rule Movement lost its initial momentum.

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- There was a gradual emergence of Mahatma Gandhi as a mass leader in his own right.
 - New situation with the issue of Khilafat demanded a new approach, a set of new national priorities and programmes, a new leadership. As such, the Home Rule movement was pushed to the background.

Lucknow Pact

"It has been said, gentlemen, by some that we Hindus have yielded too much to our Mohammedan brethren. I am sure I represent the sense of the Hindu community all over India when I say that we could not have yielded too much. I would not care if the rights of self-government are granted to the Mohammedan community only... I would not care if those rights are granted to any section of the Indian community... When we have to fight against a third party — it is a very important thing that we stand on this platform united, united in race, united in religion, united as regards all different shades of political creed."

Lokmanya Tilak

The Congress-League joint scheme, better known as the Lucknow Pact (1916), was one of the major landmarks in the history of the Hindu-Muslim relationship.

Background:

The change in the leadership of both the Congress and Muslim League brought the two Parties closer.

- **Within Congress**

- **Moderates**

- Their hopes were dashed and they were disappointed by the limited reforms under the 1909 Act.
 - Two of its stalwarts, **Gokhale** and **Pherozeshah** Mehta had passed away in 1915 and others had lost their dynamism on account of advancing age.

- **Extremists**

- **Tilak** had re-entered the national politics in 1914 and keen to ensure entry into Congress.

- **Bombay Congress (1915)**, presided over by SP Sinha

- Passed a resolution demanding substantial measures of constitutional reforms, giving the people effective control over their governance.
 - Authorized the All-India Congress Committee to work jointly with the All-India Muslim League to evolve a scheme on constitutional reforms.
 - Partially opened the door for the re-entry of the Extremists in the Congress by making suitable changes in its constitution.

- **Annie Besant** who had joined the Congress in 1914, and waned to re-active almost-defunct Congress. She brought a new dynamism and wanted a reunited national movement to take India on the road of 'Home Rule'.

- **Within Muslim League**

- **Increasing estrangement with British**

- **Annulment of the partition of Bengal** in 1911 had dampened the pro-British enthusiasm.
 - **Government's refusal to set-up a University at Aligarh.**
 - British move against the **Sultan/Caliph of Turkey** further alienated them and created anti-British feelings.

- **Newly emerging leadership** in the Muslim League transcended the sectarian outlook and was inspired by a broader vision of the national movement.
 - It was no longer controlled by the Zamindars but came under the control of 'Young Party' which was both Nationalist and progressive.
 - **Jinnah** was emerging as a leader of the League and was committed to work for self-government for the people of India. On the initiative of Jinnah and others, the **constitution of the Muslim League was amended in 1913**, committing the League to the **goal of achieving self-government** under the aegis of the British crown.
- Repercussion of the **First World War**
 - Widespread appreciation of heroic deeds of Indian soldiers fighting on the European front. In the words of Annie Besant, *India would look for the liberty for her people as a 'matter of right and not as a reward for loyalty'.*

The annual session of the Congress party was held in December 1916 at Lucknow. Muslim League's annual session was also held at the same venue. Separately they passed the same resolution, popularly known as the Lucknow Pact. Its **first part** was related with the political interests of Muslims in India, whereas its **second part** was related with general reforms for India.

Main features of the agreement:

- Congress accepted the provision of Separate Electorate for Muslims, given through Indian Council Act of 1909. This was earlier opposed by the Congress.
- The total strength of the **Imperial Legislative** Council shall be 150, out of which, 120 would be elected members: **30% would be Muslims** – would come from separate electorates.
- Muslims should be represented through **special electorates** in the **Provincial Legislative** Councils in the following proportion of the total number of the elected members:
 - Punjab: 50%
 - United Province: 30%
 - Bengal: 40%
 - Bihar: 25%
 - Central Province: 15%
 - Madras: 15%
 - Bombay: 33%
- In both Imperial or Provincial councils, **no bill or resolution** or any clause thereof, introduced by a non-official member, affecting one or the other community, shall proceed **if opposed by three-fourth of the members of that community.**

The following were other major demands put forward under the Pact:

- A constitutional status for India **like that of 'self-governing colonies.'** (dominion status)
- The council of the **Secretary of State should be abolished.**
- **Democratization** of the central as well as provincial legislative councils: **80% members should be elected** on the basis of as wide a franchise as possible.

- **At least 50%** members of the Central as well as Provincial **Executive Councils to be elected** by their respective Legislative Councils. Thus, **subordination of the executive to the legislature** was to be ensured through the Legislative Councils.
- Except army and External Affairs, the Legislative Council should have control over all departments.
- **Autonomy for the Provincial Government**
- Grant of full measure of **local self-government**

Criticism:

- The Congress conceded the **separate electorate system** for the Muslims.
 - Most of the Congress and League leaders were happy with this Pact except a few. **Madan Mohan Malaviya opposed the Pact** and believed that the Hindus have yielded too much to the Muslims.
 - Long-term pernicious implications for the unity of the country and evolution of nationalism. It encouraged the Muslims to be very conscious of their minority status and in all subsequent constitutional developments, the communal representation remained a constant theme on the part of the Muslims.
- The provision that no bill or resolution would be passed if opposed by three-fourth of the community being affected, virtually gave a **veto-power to the Muslims**.
- The **Congress hope** that the united front created at Lucknow would **force the British Government** to concede self-government to India **proved illusory**. On the contrary, the Government of India took advantage of this agreement and introduced **separate electorates** in more accentuated form in the Act of 1919, under the plea that Lucknow agreement had endorsed it.
- The **Hindu-Muslim bonhomie thus created had no popular basis**, as witnessed in Moplah rebellion during NCM or 1923-24 communal riots across the country.

In the long run the Lucknow Pact adversely impacted the national movement. Besides, it gave a handle to the British to pursue their policy of divide and rule more vigorously.

Montford Reforms, Act of 1909

On August 20, 1917, Montagu, the Secretary of State, declared in House of Commons that British policy in India, would be the gradual development of self-governing institutes with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. It was a clear shift in the British policy. **(August Declaration)**

In 1917 Edwin Montagu came to India and embarked on a fact-finding tour. He was accompanied by the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. The following year, the two issued a report on Indian Constitutional Reforms. This is known as the **Montagu-Chelmsford or Montford Report**. On the basis of this Report the Government of India Act of 1919 was passed.

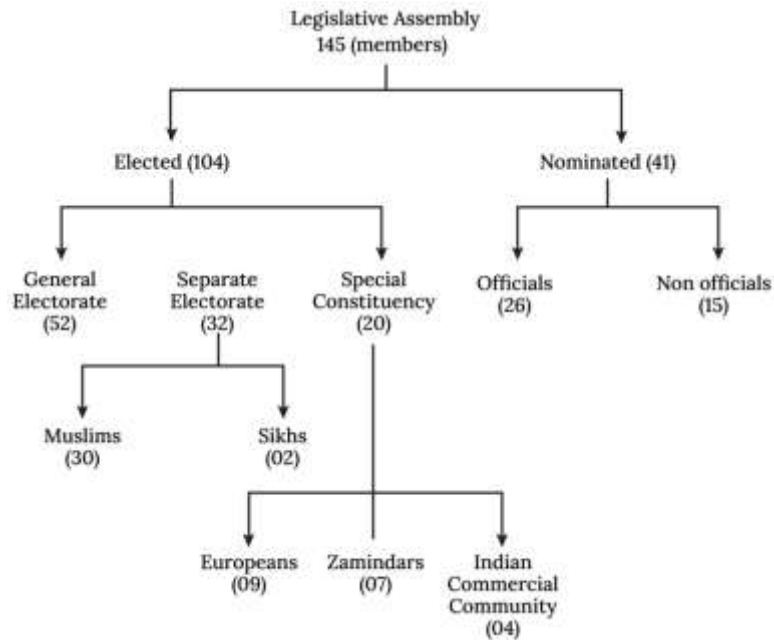
Preamble:

- To create progressively responsible government in India is the objective of British Government.
- India would remain an integral part of the British Empire.
- To develop self-governing institutions, increase the involvement of Indians in the administration.
- The British Parliament would decide the progress and timing of self-government.

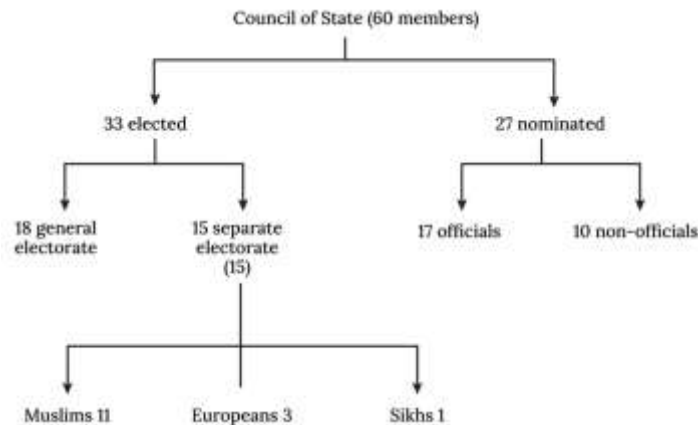
Provisions:

- **Home Government**
 - a. The cost of Indian house (SoS) shall be paid by British government/exchequer.
 - b. **Office of Indian High Commissioner** was created in London to represent Gol.
- **Gol: Central government:**
 - a. Min 3 out of 8 members of **GG executive council** shall be Indian.
 - b. **Central and Provincial Lists**
 - i. Administrative matters were divided between central and provincial government by creating two lists: Centre and Provincial lists.
 - 1. Central List Included subjects that were of national importance or that were related to more than one province, such as foreign affairs, defense, political affairs, Post & Telegraph, public debt, communications, civil and criminal law and procedure, etc.
 - 2. Provincial List Those subjects of local importance such as education, health, local self-government, land revenue administration, water supply, famine relief, law and order, agriculture, etc.
 - ii. But the Central Government had unrestricted control over the provincial governments.
 - iii. The act separated, for the first time, provincial budgets from the Central budget and authorised the provincial legislatures to enact their budgets.
 - c. **Bicameral legislature** was created at center
 - i. **Central legislative assembly:** First Chamber

1. President of the House to be nominated by the Viceroy;



ii. Council of states: The second chamber.



iii. The Council of State had a tenure of 5 years, while the Central Legislative Assembly had a tenure of 3 years.

d. Power of the legislature: **The Act of 1919 introduced responsive if not responsible government at the centre.**

- i. The members were allowed to ask questions of public importance and supplementary areas. They also enjoyed the right and freedom of speech.
- ii. It could legislate for entire British India for both Indian Subjects and Government's employees. It could repeal or amend any law already existing in the country.
- iii. Some items of the Budget were subject to a vote of the Assembly, others were open for discussion, and some could not even be discussed.
- iv. On certain issues like amendment or repeal of a law, foreign relations, relations with the Indian states, defence and religion, previous sanction of the Governor General was required for the introduction of a bill.

- v. The Governor General's assent was essential for the enactment of law passed by the legislature. He could also promulgate Ordinance, which could last for six months.
- vi. The Legislature could not move no-confidence motion against the Executive, still the Executive did respond to the wishes of the Legislature.
- vii. Some of the members of the House were made member of Public Accounts and Finance committee, where they got opportunity to influence the Governmental policy.

- **Provinces:**

- a. Executive
 - i. Governor with the help of his council of ministers.
 - ii. Ministers were to be appointed by the Governor from among the elected members of legislative council.
- b. Provincial Legislative Councils were enlarged, and the majority of their members were to be elected.

Province	Elected Members	Officials	Nominated non-officials	Total
Bengal	114	16	10	140
Madras	98	11	23	132
United Provinces	100	17	6	123
Bombay	86	19	9	114
Bihar and Orissa	76	15	12	103
Punjab	71	15	8	94
Central Provinces	55	10	8	73
Assam	39	7	7	53
North-West Frontier Province	39	7	7	53

- c. The provincial governments were given more powers under the **system of dyarchy**.
 - i. Subjects of provincial administration were divided into Reserved category and Transferred category.

Category	Subjects	Administration
Reserved Subjects	Subjects of greater administrative significance such as justice, police, land revenue, finance and budget, prisons, educations of Anglo-Indians, famine relief, pensions, mines, irrigation and waterways, criminals tribes, factories, gas, electricity, labour, welfare, industrial disputes, minor ports (major ports were with the centre), public services and motor vehicle.	Administered by Governor with the help of his executive councilors appointed by him.
Transferred Subjects	Subjects having comparatively less significance such as education of Indians, public work, public health and sanitation, medical relief, LSG bodies, agriculture, cooperative societies, fisheries, excise, veterinary department, industries, weights	Administered by the Governor with the advice of ministers appointed by him from

	and measures, control of entertainment, museum, libraries, religion and charitable endowment.	the elected members of the Legislature.
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- **Elections and Franchise**

- a. For the first time, **direct elections** were introduced but the franchise was extremely limited. The majority of members of both the Houses were chosen by direct election.
- b. Though women were not granted voting rights, nor the right to stand in elections, the Government of India Act 1919 **allowed Provincial Councils to determine if women could vote**, provided they met stringent property, income, or educational levels.

- **Other Provisions**

- a. Provided establishment of public service commission.
 - i. Hence a **Central Public Service Commission was set up in 1926** for recruiting civil servants.
- b. Provision for Review of 1919 Act after 10 years which led to formation of Simon Commission in 1927.

Assessment:

- The reform was definitely an improvement over the Act of 1909, as its main theme was elected majority in the provinces with executive responsibility. But, like 1909, the reform of 1919 was undertaken with the purpose of perpetuating the British Indian Empire
- It left many important issues for the Nationalists to debate and to launch their attack on the Government. These were:
 - Absence of a responsible Government;
 - Introduction of dyarchy;
 - Expansion and consolidation of separate electorate.

Assessment of Dyarchy:

Merits	Demerits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced parliamentary from the government for the first time in India. • It was a major step in direction of greater association of Indians with the task of governance because matters of immediate local significance were handed over to Indian ministers. • Dyarchy allowed Indians to gain experience about ministerial responsibility. This experience came 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The system of collective responsibility of ministers was absent. Ministers were individually responsible to Governor and LC. • All significant matters were kept in the reserved category. • The division of subjects was irrational and hence unworkable. E.g. irrigation was placed in reserved but agriculture in transferred. In such a situation coordination became difficult.

<p>handy in future when greater powers were devolved to Indians.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the Indian ministers , some of the far reaching measures were taken such as enactment of Madras State Aid to Industries Act, 1923, the Bombay Primary Education act, the Bihar and Orissa village administration Act, the Bombay local boards act, 1923, etc. • Dyarchy paved the way for introduction of provincial autonomy in future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was no proper division of resources. Most income yielding subjects were placed in the reserved category. • The civil servants were kept under the control of the executive council.
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- Other issues:
 - Limited franchise based on property, tax and education.
 - At the Centre, the legislature had no control over the Governor-General and his Executive Council.
- A **special session of the Congress** held in **Bombay in 1918** condemned the scheme as 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing'.
 - The **moderates boycotted** the special Bombay session of the Congress, and soon they found themselves excluded from the body which they had dominated at one time.
- A major theme of Gandhi's non-cooperation programme launched in December 1920 was the boycott of the new councils. Gandhian philosophy was based on a critique of Western civil society; the mass movement he engineered had an altogether different logic, as his mission was to liberate Indian politics from this constricted arena of constitutionalism.