



SALTORA NETAJI CENTENARY COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

SEMESTER –IV

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COURSE TITLE: HISTORY OF INDIA (1757-1885)

TOPIC: GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1919

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## Introduction

The growing discontent of the people brought home to the British Government the necessity of making some concessions to their roused political consciousness. This was all the more necessary in view of the great services rendered by the Indians to the cause of the Allied Powers in the Great War. Moreover the Government wanted to rally the moderate opinion as the recent repressive measure had driven many moderates to the extremist camps. All these causes combined led E. S. Montague, the Secretary of State, to make a momentous declaration of British policy with regard to India on August 20, 1917



## Montague Chelmsford Report

Montague enunciated two main principles, viz., “the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and secondly, the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British empire. Montague visited India and in consultation with Lord Chelmsford published a report known as the Montague Chelmsford Report.

## Basic Principles of the Act of 1919

Its main recommendations were as follows:

1. A beginning for responsible government should be made in the Provinces. The Provincial Legislative Councils should be enlarged and they should have the largest independence from outside control.
2. The Central Government should remain for the present responsible to the Secretary of State and Parliament. The Legislative Council at the centre should be enlarged and made more representative and should have greater opportunities for influencing the Government.
3. The devolution of powers from the centre should be extended and legalised.



## Central and Provincial subjects

The substance of these recommendations was embodied in the Government of India Act, 1919. The Act divided the functions of Government into Central subjects and Provincial subjects and thereby took a significant step in decentralising the authority of the Government. The Central subjects were political and external affairs, income tax, public debt and all India services. The important Provincial subjects were-Local Self Government, education, sanitation and public health, public works and irrigation, famine relief, agriculture, maintenance of law and order and administration of justice.



## Central Legislature and Bicameral legislature

The Central legislative Assembly was replaced by a bicameral system consisting of a Council of State and Legislative Assembly. The former constituted the Upper Chamber consisting of not more than 60 members of whom 34 were to be elected. The Legislative Assembly formed the Lower Chamber and was to consist of 145 members of whom 105 were to be elected. The powers of the two chambers were co-ordinate but money bills and grants were to be submitted to the lower house. The budget was made votable by the Central Legislature with certain specific exceptions.

## Diarchy in Provincial Governmnet

The Provincial Government was thoroughly remodelled. The Executive was divided into two halves: the Reserved Department and the Transferred Department. The Reserved subjects were to be administered by the Governor with his Executive Council with no responsibility to the Legislature, the Governor being responsible only to the Central Government and Parliament. The Transferred subjects were placed in charge of Governor acting with the Ministers selected by him from amongst the elected members of the Provincial Legislature. Thus while the members of the Executive Council, who managed the Reserved Subject were not responsible to the legislature, the Ministers in the Provinces were made responsible to it. This dual government in the Provincial Executive is known as Dyarchy.

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