

Lecture-43



The Indian Councils Act, 1892

The Indian Councils Act 1892 was an act of the British Parliament that increased the size of the legislative councils in India.

Background

- The Indian National Congress (INC) was formed in 1885. There was a growing feeling of nationalism and this led the INC to put forth some demands to the British authorities.
- One of their demands was the reform of the legislative councils.
- They also wanted the principle of the election instead of nomination.
- The INC also wanted the right to hold discussions on financial matters which was hitherto not allowed.
- The Viceroy at the time Lord Dufferin set up a committee to look into the matter. But the Secretary of State did not agree to the plan of direct elections. He, however, agreed to representation by way of indirect election.

Provisions of the Indian Councils Act 1892

- The act increased the number of additional or non-official members in the legislative councils as follows:
 - Central Legislative Council: 10 – 16 members
 - Bengal: 20 members
 - Madras: 20 members
 - Bombay: 8 members
 - Oudh: 15 members
 - North Western Province: 15

📌 In 1892, out of 24 members, only 5 were Indians.

- The members were given the right to ask questions on the budget (which was barred in the Indian Councils Act 1861) or matters of public interest but had to give notice of 6 days for it.
- They could not ask supplementary questions.
- The principle of representation was initiated through this act. The district boards, universities, municipalities, chambers of commerce and zamindars were authorised to recommend members to the provincial councils.
- The legislative councils were empowered to make new laws and repeal old laws with the permission of the Governor-General.

Assessment of the Indian Councils Act 1892

- It was the first step towards a representative form of government in modern India although there was nothing in it for the common man.
- The number of Indians was increased and this was a positive step.
- However, since the British conceded only a little, this act led indirectly to the rise of many revolutionary movements in India. Many leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak blamed Congress's moderate policy of petitions and persuasions for a lack of positive developments and called for a more aggressive policy against British rule.