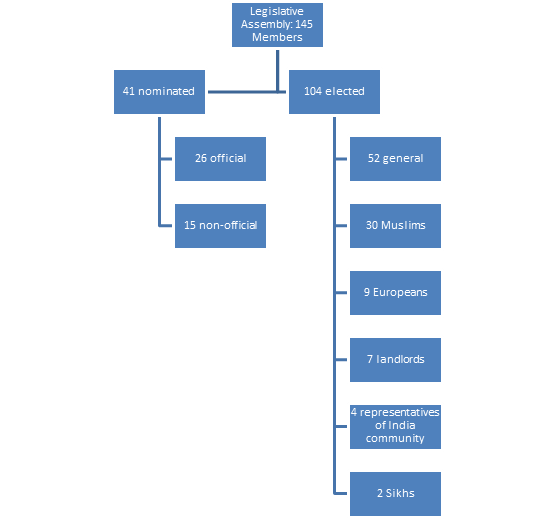
**Government of India Act 1919**

**Background:**

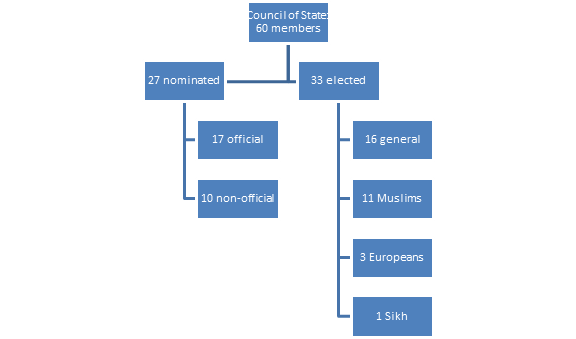
The Government of India Act 1919 was an act of the British Parliament that sought to increase the participation of Indians in the administration of their country. The act was based on the recommendations of a report by Edwin Montagu, the then Secretary of State for India, and Lord Chelmsford, India’s Viceroy between 1916 and 1921. Hence the constitutional reforms set forth by this act are known as Montagu-Chelmsford reforms or Montford reforms.

**The important features of the Act were:**

1. The Council of the Secretary of State was to have eight to twelve members, including three Indians, and at least half of them should have spent a minimum of 10 years in India.
2. The Secretary of State was supposed to follow the advice of his council.
3. A portion of the expenditure of the office of the Secretary of State was to be met by the British Government.
4. The Secretary of State was not allowed to intervene in administrative issues of the provinces in the matters of ‘Transferred Subjects’ and also in the matters on which the Governor-General and his Legislative Council agreed.
5. The Governor-General was empowered to nominate as many members to his Executive Council as he wished.
6. Members appointed to the Executive Council were to have served in India for minimum of 10 years.
7. The Central Legislature was to be composed of two houses – the Council of the State (Upper House) and the Legislative Assembly (Lower House).
8. The Council of the State was to be composed of 60 members, of which 33 would be elected and 27 nominated by the Governor-General.
9. The Legislative Assembly was to be composed of 144 members, of which 103 would be elected and 41 nominated by the Governor-General.
10. There was to restricted franchise.
11. The term of the Upper House was to be 5 years and of the Lower House 3 years.
12. Both the houses enjoyed equal legislative powers. If there was a tie, the Governor-General was supposed to summon a joint meeting to decide the matter by majority vote.
13. The Executive Council was not responsible to the Legislature and the Governor-General could reject its advice.
14. Provincial legislatures were to be unicameral.
15. Seventy per cent members of the Provincial Legislative Councils were to be elected and the remaining 30 per cent were to be nominated.
16. The Governors were to be handed over an ‘Instrument of Instructions’ which was supposed to help them in executing their administrative functions.
17. The system of diarchy was set up in the provinces.
18. Apart from the Muslims, other minorities (Sikhs, Anglo-Indians, Christians and Europeans) were also accorded the right of separate electorates.
19. New reforms were to be introduced after 10 years.
    * **Members of the Legislative Assembly:**



**Council of state**



**Merits of the Government of India Act 1919**

•Dyarchy introduced the concept of responsible government.

•It introduced the concept of federal structure with a unitary bias.

•There was an increased participation of Indians in the administration. They held some portfolios like labor, health, etc.

•For the first time, elections were known to the people and it created political consciousness among the people.

•Some Indian women also had the right to vote for the first time.

**Limitations of the Government of India Act 1919**

•This act extended consolidated and communal representation.

•The franchise was very limited. It did not extend to the common man.

•The governor-general and the governors had a lot of power to undermine the legislatures at the centre and the provinces respectively.

•Allocation of the seats for the central legislature was not based on population but the ‘importance’ of the province in the eyes of the British.

•The Rowlatt Acts were passed in 1919 which severely restricted press and movement. Despite the unanimous opposition of Indian members of the legislative council, those bills were passed. Several Indian members resigned in protest

**Conclusion:**

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms were not accepted by most quarters in India as they fell far short of the Indian expectations. It introduced the principle of a dual made of administration, or diarchy, in which both the elected Indian legislators and the appointed British officials shared power. Dyarchy set in motion certain real changes of the provincial level; a number of non-controversial or ‘transferred’ portfolios, such as agriculture, local government, health, education and public works, were handed over to the Indians, while more sensitive matters such as finance, taxation and maintaining law and order, were retained by the provincial British administrators.