

## **Lord Lytton**

(1876-1888)

( Important Points)

Lytton took charge from Lord Northbrook at Calcutta in April 1876. He was diplomat by profession and had served the British Foreign office in many capacities. Lord Lytton was appointed by the Conservative Government. His tenure as Governor General has been subjected to fierce criticisms, nevertheless he brought some new conceptions into the field of Indian politics at that time. Some important measures taken by Lytton were.

- Free Trade- Lytton abolished import duties on twenty nine articles, including sugar, some varieties of cloth, drill etc. However in 1879 the duties on the coarser kinds of imported cotton were removed and the Viceroy had to use his constitutional powers to overrule the majority in his council.
- Financial reforms- The policy of financial devolution was continued. The Provincial governments were given the control of the expenditure upon all ordinary provincial services including land revenue, exercise, stamps, law and justice, general administration etc. It was also provided that any surplus above the estimated income was to be shared equally with the Central Government, the latter undertaking to meet half of any deficit.
- The Famine of 1876-78 – A severe famine ravaged India during 1876-78. The areas worst affected were Madras, Bombay, Mysore, Hyderabad and some parts of Central India and the Punjab. The Government famine machinery was inadequate and ineffective. In 1878 a famine commission was appointed under the presidency of Richard Strachey to enquire into the

whole problem of famine as well as the grants to be given for relief. The commission opined for relief for the poor and suitable employment to those who could work. It recommended for the creation of Famine Fund in every provinces. This commission paved the way for subsequent famine policies.

- The Royal Titles Act, 1876.- The British Parliament passed the Royal Titles Act, it honoured Queen Victoria with the title of Kaiser-i-Hind meaning Queen Empress of India. A darbar was held for this honour , ironically at a time when several parts of the country was in the grip of severe famine.
- The Vernacular Press Act, March 1878- Lytton became very unpopular among the Indians, with the enforcement of the Vernacular Press Act. It empowered the magistrate to call upon the printer and publisher of any vernacular newspaper to enter into a bond undertaking not to publish anything likely to aggravate feelings of disaffection against the government or Her Majesty's subjects.
- The Arms Act, 1878- It made it a criminal offence to keep, bear or traffic in arms without licences. The penalties were imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, with or without fine. The worst feature of the Act was the racial discrimination it introduced. Europeans, Anglo-Indians and some categories of government officials were exempted from this Act.
- The Statutory Civil Service- Lytton proposed the Statutory Civil Service in 1878-79. The Secretary of State did not agree to Lytton's proposal, of closing the Covenanted Service to Indians altogether, however steps were taken to discourage the Indians by lowering the age from 21 to 19 years. Since the examination was held only in London, young Indians had to face lot of difficulties.

- The Second Afghan War- Lytton provoked a senseless war with the Afghans with a view to establish supremacy towards the north west. But this adventure proved to be a failure, and it was a great blunder on his part.

Of real achievements, Lytton does not have much to credit for, as far as Indians are concerned. His reactionary policies, however helped in uniting the Indian community. He favoured the idea of forming a separate North West Frontier Province under the direct supervision of the Central Government. It was Curzon who gave a final shape to it. His idea of formation of an Indian Privy Council of Indian Princes was endorsed by Montford Scheme of reforms and the Chamber of Princes came into existence in 1921.