Chapter-Five

Collaboration, Conflict and Domination: politics and trade
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The English East India Company was definitely aware of the fact that commerce in Bihar functioned within the framework of the political system and all commercial groups had to abide by the system prevalent in Bihar for their business activities. Moreover, the presence of Durbar in the Patna city brought these groups in direct contact with the ruling elites which had both positive as well as negative aspects as far as commerce was concerned.

The growth and development of the English Company's trade in Bihar was a slow and steady process as the Company had to device various strategies for its trading activities in the system in which all level of players existed and influenced the trading activities. Of greater concern to the Company was the fact that the power of the Nobility was occasionally encountered in the operation of certain lines of business—usually saltpeter.

In fact, the observations of the council at Bay that, 'if the factory be without the city... the convenience will be very great in increasing the investment', indicates the presence of political interface in Bihar's commercial world. It was because of that reason that the English and for that matter other Europeans were careful to locate their factories and godowns outside the city walls and close to the water fronts.

For these wide ranging problems faced by the Company in Bihar, it had to develop strategies peculiar to circumstances in order to continue their trade. One such

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1 Thomas, Bowrey, *A Geographical Account...*, 224, note 1, letter to Fort St. George from Council at Bay, dated, 12th December 1669.
2 The English Company considered Saltpetre as the most important commodity of Bihar, after the official establishment of the Patna factory in 1658, the English factors remarked that, 'the place of honour is naturally accorded to petre', E.F.I., 1655-60, 275.
3 Thomas, Bowrey, *A Geographical Account...*, 224.
was the use of gifts and *peshkash* to lure the indigenous political groups for peaceful continuation of their trade.

**Paying of gifts and peshkash**

The English Company used to pay presents and gifts mostly for three purposes. First was to get any trading concessions and grants from the ruling authorities. Second was to secure the peaceful and uninterrupted passage of its ships from Bihar destined to Europe. Thirdly, the Company used presents to the newly appointed Emperor or officials to keep them in good humour. Apart from these, the Company also had to spend some amount in order to settle some disputes concerning trade especially in saltpetre.

Every time a new official was appointed, the Company visited him with gifts to secure his influence for its benefits\(^5\). Though the Company itself sends English factors in embassies to the Emperor or the officials, it often took the use of influential indigenous peoples for earning concessions.

The house of Jagat Seth was a favorable ally in this regard. This was done in order to put forward their case in a better way to the indigenous political authority. However, the use of indigenous people for getting concession did not exempt the Company from paying gifts and *peshkash*.

In fact, it was the tradition not to visit the Emperor or the governor empty handed as mentioned earlier. The Company also had to abide by the exaction from the officials and it tried to fulfil their demands as far as possible in order to have its ships reach the coast without any hindrance.

The English authorities enjoined that so far their ships passed easily, the illegal demands of the *Nawabs* and officials were not a problem. In fact, Streynsham Master in his diaries had censored Job Charnock for not agreeing to the demands of the *Nawab* remarking that, ‘hazarding so great commerce of the Company for so small a matter as

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\(^5\) When Nusrat khan was the governor of Bihar, Mr. Stephenson, the chief of the Patna factory was very much pressed to visit him, which his indisposition has hitherto prevented, but ultimately he was obliged to do it in ten days, C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals…*, Vol. III, 174.
1,000 or 1,500 rupees was something we not satisfied with. It was true that the 'illegal' demands made by the local officials were very less in comparison to the profit generated in this trade. As this was well known to the Mughal officials, they used to put their demands whenever English ships laden with saltpetre moved towards the seas for Europe.

The English got various trading privileges for their trading activities through several farmans, nishans or letter patents only after paying peshkash to the concerned authorities. The farman from Shahjahan, the farman from Aurangzeb (1680), imperial order of 1691 from Aurangzeb, the farman of Farukhsiyar and other privileges granted to the English Company was never without paying any peshkash.

Sometimes the Company had to accept censors from the ruling authority in addition to the payment of presents. After the Anglo- Mughal wars, the Company humbly submitted to the Emperor and repented for its act. The Emperor accepted the repentance of the English along with a desirable amount of present to grant the Company pardon for its offence.

Most of the cases of demands for presents, gifts, bribes by the local officials were related to the trade of saltpetre. The intense competition and rivalry prevailing in the saltpetre market provided plenty of opportunities for arbitration in business-related disputes by the Patna darbar. On almost all occasions, the nawab's intervention in these issues was accomplished by payments made to the Patna darbar by the English Company.

The English Company at Patna regarded gifting as purely economic transaction that seemed to secure certain immediate and specific objectives for them. Thus, for the Company, the presentations that it made to the Patna darbar were no different from bribes and the Company records reveal the bitterness and unwillingness with which such gifts and payments were often made.

In case of any dispute between the English and the indigenous commercial groups, the Company had to 'purchase' peace through payments. In fact, the Company

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officials at Patna were directed to try to keep on good terms with the Patna darbar by judicious payoffs.

Also, the disputes arising out of the activities of the private British traders, was settled through the payment of various presents and gifts. In 1735, Shujauddin protested against the extension of private trade of the English factors and the abuse of dastaks and ordered that the English saltpetre trade at Patna should be stopped. The matter was solved by the payment of rupees 55,000 to the nawab. In July 1736, parwanas were issued to the effect that the English were permitted to resume their trade again.7

There were other similar instances of the resumption of English trade in Bihar after the payment of peshkash to the rulers. Therefore, it can be said that in routine business matters like granting parwanas for the procurement of saltpetre or granting permission for its sale to the Company, the Patna darbar appeared to be the most vulnerable to payoffs.

Sometimes, the Company provided gifts to the local political groups even if there was no immediate need of any trading concessions. This was done to improve their relation with the ruling class. Captain Nicholas Downtown, in a memorandum given to the Company, gave a copy of a note given by Mukkarab Khan of such things, as he desired to be furnished of by the next ships that came out of England. These included a wide range of objects from military equipments to luxury items and various animals and dogs and birds.8

These were definitely demanded by Mukkarab Khan when he was the governor of Surat, but when he came to Patna he also desired the same set of commodities from the factors. In a letter to the Surat factory dated 4 September 1620, Patna, Robert Hughes, reminded the officials that, “I pray remember the governor with what fine goods and toys you may spare of what you exports in this fleet. He is very earnest with me to procure him some and I have promised to write you in his behalf.”9

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9 ‘Documents relating to first…', 76, Robert Hughes to the Surat factory, Patna 12th July 1620.
Mukkarab Khan, the *parda* (curtain), looking glass, *mohair* and 280 pieces of weight amber beads.\(^{10}\) Thus, the goods provided by the Company comprised various toys, pictures in cloths and not in woods and wine and looking glass. These articles were either not made in India or were of low quality.

There is an interesting incident mentioned in the consultations which refers to the demands of present made by the Mughal governor from the English Company. The consultation dated, 5\(^{th}\) February, 1711, noted that, “Zoody Khan” Ziauddin Khan, having a son lately born and it being the custom to pay a compliment and send a present on such occasion agreed we send a yard of brocade silk and 5 gold *muhars* by the hands of our Vakil.”\(^{11}\) Also, sometimes the Englishmen helped the ruling elites by using their personal expertise in certain field. The story of Gabrial Boughton, a surgeon by profession is well known to be repeated here. This was done to keep the ruling class in friendly terms for either immediate concessions or future benefits.

**Adaptation to local customs and culture**

The English coming from as society so acutely divided tried to align themselves to the local elites. The English imitated the life style of the local elites in order to be close to them. Thus, we find the use of local dress, eating habits, leisure, and way of living adopted by the English in Bihar as in other places.\(^{12}\) This was also to an extent due to the local climatic conditions. Pomp and display however overrode comforts and economy. The factory records of the Company noted that, it was not unusual for the English merchant, when traveling up country, to adopt Indian dress, as being at once more comfortable and less conspicuous than their ordinary habit.\(^{13}\) The visit of the Company factors to the court of the Mughal provided them an opportunity to witness the court culture and to be inspired to follow the same. Diplomatic ceremonial was more elaborate in Indian court than in England and the English tended to follow these practices and

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 100, Robert Hughes to Agra factory, Patna 3rd March 1621.

\(^{11}\) Consultation dated 5\(^{th}\) February 1711, C.R. Wilson *Early Annal*, vol. II, part I, 2


\(^{13}\) *E. F. I.*, 1655-60, 278.
adopted the state elephant, state umbrellas. Though, these were granted to special privileged Englishmen, the general Englishmen also used umbrellas in public.

The constant interaction between the English and the ruling elites in social sector provided a way to come closer to the local political group. The Company did that in order to prove themselves more oriental at the court of the local elites, so that they could get more privileges and favors. The Company also issued orders to its officials to learn the Persian language both for the commercial and political purposes. As Persian was the language of official correspondence, the English found it necessary to learn. Moreover, the persianised court culture was to be clearly understood only after learning the language. However, the Company’s attempt was a failure in this regard during our time.

**Threat and use of force, war**

When these peaceful means did not seemed to work in favor of the Company, the officials of the Company switched to armed trading. Especially in the early 18th century, Saltpetre boats and other English boats were escorted by the Company army from Patna to Calcutta. The English used to threat the local commercial groups of attacking and looting their ships. It was noted in the consultation that,

“They resolve to write to the governor of Hugli and acquaint him that if the boats of goods that are stopped are not cleared; we will not led any of the Moor’s ships pass. They agree that they will send up to 40 soldiers and 30 black gunners to clear the boats that are stopped higher up the country.”

In fact, there were regular skirmishes in the later part of the period concerned with this study between the Company forces escorting the English ships and the local custom officials. It resulted in great causalities on both the sides. The Christian tower (See Photograph) built in the Patna city area of Patna by the English in memory of those died

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14 In 1719, owing to the disturbances in Bihar, it was decided and agreed to send 200 men under the command of Major Hunt to guard the Patna fleet in fear of disruption of trade by local officials, C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals…*, Vol. III, 139; Consultation dated, 23rd July, 1719.

15 Consultation dated 11th December 1709, Ibid., vol, I, 524.
in those conflicts is a standing testimony to that. This Christian tower has the names of various English Company commanders killed during those conflicts in Bihar.

The Company also used threats to continue their trade in Bihar. This threat was based on the naval superiority of the Company. However, in seventeenth century, at least the English only managed to make mild protests. One reason was the geographical location. Being a landlocked city, Bihar was not under the threat of strong naval attack by the English. The Mughal central as well as provincial authorities were also strong during the period to counter any threat coming from the English or any other European Company.

The English were also suspicious of the Dutch Company providing help to the Mughal in case they made any naval advancement against the Mughal. But then the Company still banked upon its naval strength. An English factor at Surat wrote as early as 1614 that "the people of this country of all sorts pretend to love us, so I am sure they will also fear us concerning their seas, for great and small are merchants." The English also had the advantage of compensating their loss at Patna with the trade of some other regions. It was maintained, "if our any people there (Patna) are plundered, we will take satisfactions at Hugli or anywhere we find it convenient to do so."

However, most of the times, in case of conflicts at Patna and its hinterland, between the Company and the ruling groups, the English Company had to suffer setback on its trade front. The matter sometimes worsened to the effect that the English were forced to close their factory.

When Aurangzeb became the emperor, the English began to see the folly of trusting to the promise and good will of a power so arbitrary and variable as the Mughal government. In 1658 the governor of Hugli, considering that the deposition of Shahjahan rendered all imperial grants null and void had insisted on an annual payment of 3000 in

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16 In case of 1686, it was calculated by the Company that the Dutch might come to assist the Mughals for want of favors, C R. Wilson, Old Fort William..., LX.
18 C.R. Wilson, Early Annals..., vol I, 178.
lieu of custom. At Rajmahal, all the English ships from Patna with peter were stopped by Mir Jumla. 19

On every side, the English found themselves oppressed and the trade vexatiously hampered. At last, in 1661, the agent at Hugli lost patience and seized a native vessel as security for the recovery of debt. Mir Jumla was greatly incensed. He demanded immediate reparation of the offence and threatened to destroy the out agencies to seize the factory at Hugli and expel the English from the country. 20

Provoked by the vexatious exaction of the local rulers, the English had to abandon their peaceful attitude and seek to establish their trade by force. The men who in 1661 apologized for seizing a small boat, in 1685 waged open war with the Mughals, capturing his ships and burning his ports. 21

The frequent disturbances and disruptions in the trade led the directors of the Company to reassess their strategy towards the local political groups. The option of direct confrontation as proposed by William Hedges was outrightly rejected. They were well satisfied by the relationship established by John Russel, the chief of Bengal factories, which was one of seer opportunism, which meant that they were least concerned as to who occupied the throne. Regular uninterrupted flow of trade was the only thing they cared for. 22 However, a few years later the Directors thought of a shift in their policy. Earlier, Sir Edward Winter, the governor at fort St. George, thought it impossible to continue the policy of peace and retrenchment simultaneously. He was of the opinion that, “how could the English provide for the investments if the factories were withdrew and of what avail was it to complain to Indian princes of the arbitrary dues exacted by their tax gatherers?” On his complaint to one of the princes, he was answered back that, “when the English horns and teeth are grown said the prince then I will free your goods

19 Ibid., vol. I, 34.
20 Bruce Annals, vol., I, 560-61.
21 C.R. Wilson, Early Annals..., vol. I, 38
22 Ibid., vol. II, part I, XXXI.
from the duty.23 But finally the Company continued with its policy of maintaining peace with the rulers.

The turnaround came in 1686 when the Company having obtained permission from James II, ordered the governor of Bombay to withdraw from Surat and the dependent factories and to direct the ships to seize those of the Mughals. This provided the pretext in which the war between the Mughals and the Company started.24 The court of directors were of the opinion that, "we will undauntedly pursue the war against the Mughals until we have a fortified settlements in Bengal upon as good terms as we hold the fort St. George or Bombay, whatever it cost us."25 In fact, it was around this time, that there was a steadily growing conviction that the Company’s position as a trading body involved the assertion of its position as a political power26.

However, the unsuccessful outcome of the war of 1686 demonstrated the strength of the Mughal military and administrative machinery. It also proved that the naval warfare was to be far more useful to the English Company as a deterrent than as a tactical weapon. Josiah Child noted on the failure of the Mughal war in 1686 that, "such has been God’s blessing upon the Company’s Arms, their unavoidable necessity, and their righteous cause that the war, beyond all men’s options, has ended to the eternal Honor of the English nation in those parts of the world...."27

During the period of war, the Company’s direct trade with England had virtually come to a standstill. Keeping this in mind in 1687, it was decided to normalize the tense relationship between the English and the power elites. It obliged the Company to sue for peace and pardon from the then Emperor Aurangzeb and for this the Company sent two of its factors from Surat, Mr. George Weldon and Abraham Navaar to Delhi.28 Job Charnock noted in a letter that, "I agent Charnock do make this agreement, whereas for several operations...I designed to withdraw our factories from Patna and Orissa and

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24 Wilson, Old fort William in Bengal, LXI.
25 Hedges Diary, vol. I, LXXIII.
26 C.J.Hamilton, op.cit, 36.
27 S. A. Khan, The East India Trade in the seventeenth century in its Political and Economic aspects, 205.
28 William Bolts, Consideration on Indian affairs particularly representing the present state of Bengal and its dependencies, 59-60.
return to our country; in the interim Abdul Samad coming this way, I made known to him our operations, who gave to us the encouragement for which I make promise to return to our factories and trade as formerly..."\(^{29}\)

It was also decided that, "We are not now willing, suddenly after the pacification to enter into any new warfare with the Mughals but hold all his governors and peoples strictly to the terms he has agreed with us."\(^{30}\)

This pacification was confirmed with the grant of a *Farman* from Emperor Aurangzeb in the year 1690, allowing the English to trade, free of custom duty, on condition of paying annually the sum of 3000 rupees. However, this normalcy in the relationship between the English and the Mughals depended, as were in early days, 'more on the behavior of the *Nawabs* than on the will of the Emperor.'\(^{31}\) Although admitting the futility of engaging in a war with the Mughals at present, the Court of Committee thought that 'it was a just war which had prevented the Company’s affairs being totally ruined by the extorting Mughal governors.'\(^{32}\)

Thus the strategy of direct confrontation or the threat of force not always had unfruitful results, especially in 18\(^{th}\) century, the use of force by the Company proved beneficial both commercially and politically.

However, till the first decade of the eighteenth century the tone of the English Company was more humble than aggressive. This can be gauged from the following copy of a letter to the emperor Farukhsiyar, dated 27\(^{th}\) March, 1713 and 12\(^{th}\) of the month Rubbeulouall:

"We have been continually dutifull servants particularly at the reduction of Hugli, and conquest of carnation. We then supplied the imperial troops largely with ammunition and provisions, and by our innocent dependence on your

\(^{29}\) Hedges Diary, LXX, translate of a paper sent over for the right worshipful the agent to signe, indorsed-translate of a paper signed by the right worshipful agent to Abdus Samad at Hijli, dated 9\(^{th}\) June, 1687.
\(^{30}\) Ibid, LXXV, letter from Court to Bengal, 27\(^{th}\) August 1688.
majesty have obtained the favour to be exempted in all places from customs etc. we are in hopes upon sending our present towards court that we should have been exempted from customs, ... we are in hopes on our presents arrival at your imperial majesties tribunal a hoobsullhookum by way favour will be granted directed to the Subhadarship of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, to permit our business to go on as formerly. 33

However, there was a growing conviction among the English to have a fortified settlement in the region in order to keep their trading activities safe and peaceful. This was needed also as a measure of security against any possible political disturbance in the region. The English believed that, “such a show of power was the best way to keep the English in India free from indigenous insults and will most effectively keep off the peshkash, the consequence of most quarrels.” 34

During the reign of Alivardi Khan, there was a standoff between the English Company and the Nawab regarding the issue of fortification of English settlements and the Company’s official were in no mood to relent. It was noted that, “if after all precautions were taken, the Nawab still attempted to attack or disturb the construction then the English would immediately stop all navigation upon the river to the utmost of their power in every branch, suffering no vessel or boat to stir whether laden or empty, except such as belong to European settlements who have a right to give Dusticks or passes for the river.” 35

The English Company, to meet the exigencies of war or other political troubles, not only strengthened their defence but also improved their military establishments in the region and all over India through various ways. The Company of artillery was formed and a military store-keeper was appointed to be in charge of the stores which had been so long looked after by the Gunner. The court of directors advised the respective councils to tap useful sources of recruitment in India. The district of Shahabad in Bihar was one such

34 General letter from the court of directors to Bengal, 4th February, 1709; C.R. Wilson, Old Fort William ..., Vol. I, 76.
important area of recruitment. The Rajputs settled there were recruited for police and military duties both by the Nawab’s government and the English Company. In 1754, Colonel Scott suggested the recruitment of Rajputs of Bihar. This rise in the military strength of the English Company was to have serious repercussions on the political situation of the region in coming years.

**Battle of Plassey and the English domination**

The English Company driven by the idea to secure its position in the region had always looked for an appropriate time to put its claim to the superior position. The time came when the English emerged victorious in the two Carnatic wars against the French and the local rulers of the region. This emboldened the Company to take offensive step in Bihar and Bengal. Again, the ascendance of Sirajudaulah on the throne with many counter claims to it made the English Company to think of supporting the rivals of Sirajudaulah.

Thus, Sirajudaulah’s rupture with the English was not really due to comparatively trivial causes like the refusal of Roger Drake to congratulate him on his accession with substantial presents and his non-admission to the country house of the English near Qasimbazar which he wished to visit. In fact, when Sirajudaullah ascended the throne, the English were prepared to visit him with presents. The council at Calcutta in a letter to the court of directors dated 18th September 1752, noted that,

“Sirajudaullah arrived at Hugly.....we judged it highly necessary to pay the Nawab the compliment required and therefore agreed that the President should prepare himself accompanied by others...and a present should be made the Nawab that might prove satisfactory.”

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36 In a letter from the court of directors to the council in Bengal dated 29th November 1754, it was mentioned that, “Col. Scott has hinted to us that there are a set of men called Rashpoots, (sic) natives on the banks of the Ganges near Patna who are gentoos (hindus) of the fighting caste, and is of the opinion that if they are properly disciplined they will make excellent soldiers....”, K. K. Datta, *Fort William- India House Correspondence*, N. A. I.; Delhi, 1958, 66.

37 Letter to the court of Directors from the council in Bengal dated 18th September 1752, Ibid...., 614.
Roger Drake, the English chief at Patna however, was not interested in visiting the Nawab.

The clue to the crisis lay in the Company’s desire to improve its position and enhance its affairs in Bihar and Bengal. It was for this reason that the open violation of the norms of dastaks was started by the Company. Under the farman of 1717 granted to the Company by Farukhsiyar, it was permissible to issue dastaks for exports and imports only i.e., the immunity from payment of duties was restricted to foreign trade. But in practice, the dastaks were used for inland trade as well i.e., in favour of commodities purchased and sold within the region.

There are, in fact, plenty of contemporary evidences to justify Sirajudaulah’s complaint regarding the abuse of dastaks by the Company’s servants to the detriment of the revenues of the government. In 1755, the court of Directors asked the council in Calcutta that, “you must use all prudent measures... 38, to prevent all abuses of the dusticks that the government has no pretences to interrupt the trade on that account, which we are afraid they have sometimes too much reason for.” It can be said that the English Company was aware of the abuses of the grant of trade by the Mughal Emperor and the complaint of the Nawab was not without reason.

Meanwhile, the Maratha’s attack on Bihar and Bengal led to the disruption of the normal life in the region. Raghu Bhonsle, plundered the neighbouring territories of Azimbad such as Shaikhpura, Tikari etc., after which the people of the area shifted to the other side of the river Son. 39 It resulted in the destruction of crops in the city of Azimabad and their acute scarcity caused by the non-arrival of various kinds of goods from other region into the city.

Even the Nawab’s troops were afraid of the Maratha raid. It was noted that, “on several occasions the Maratha troops plundered the oxen and grains that passed that way owing to the negligence and disregard in guarding the roads by the Nabob’s

38 Letter from the court of Directors to the council in Bengal dated, 31st January 1755; Ibid., 87.
39 Abdus Subhan trns., Tarikh-i- Bengala-i- Mahabatjangi by Yusuf Ali Khan, 58.
40 During the Maratha invasion, the English Company among others, was asked to help the Patna administration with men and ammunition. Alivardi Khan insisted on the demand that the English should help the government with money for the utter financial ruin to which it had been reduced as a result of the raids.

During the Afghan revolt in Patna, the English Company's activities were badly hampered. In a letter to the council, the Patna factors of the Company wrote that, "The Afghan rebel Samsher Khan had demanded a general tax from the three European factories of 40 or 50,000 rupees." And the English were "planning to withdraw the factory when circumstances and time would permit." 41 However, Alivardi Khan killed Samsher Khan in a battle and routed the Afghan insurrection. This insurrection showed the English incapability to wage a full-fledged war in Bihar at that time.

It was at that time the deputy governorship of Bihar was given to Raja Ram Narayan on the death of Raja Janki Ram and Raja Durlabh Ram was appointed as his agent at the Nawab's court for the demand and necessities, affairs and matters of that province. 42 The English Company was favourable to Raja Ram Narayan. The latter part of Ram Narayan's governorship reflects the power that the English had acquired over this office and over the political system in general. The English help enabled the raja to overcome difficulties, but the power of the Niabat was also being undercut by the former.

This is best confirmed by the incident, in which the English forced Ram Narayan to endow certain offices on Shitabh Rai despite the governor's obvious reluctance to do so. The perception that the Niabat of Bihar was largely under the control of the English was becoming quite commonly accepted. 43 Though at Dacca, when Rajballabh seized the political authority for some time, the English were pressed for presents. But, the English Company kept silence on that issue. In the letter dated 1st March, 1755 to the court of Directors, the council noted that Rajballabh demanded presents from the Company...upon hard pressing the council paid three thousand rupees to quiet his

40 Ibid., 69
41 Letter to the court of directors from the council in Bengal dated, 19th November 1748; K. K. Datta, Fort William., 301.
42 Abdus Subhan, op.cit, 113.
43 Kum Kum Chatterjee, op.cit, 108.
demand and prevent the consequence of longer refusal which would have been attended
with a stoppage of their business..."44

The issue of fortification emerged as a major contention between the Nawab and
the English Company. The Nawab sent a parwana to the Calcutta ordering them to desist
from fortifying. On his arrival at Rajmahal, the Nawab ordered a party of horsemen and
gunmen upon the Patna factory. The letters dated 16th July, 1756 to the court of Directors
has several points raised by the council to show that the Nawab, according to the English,
never intended to drive the English out of his province, but would have been satisfied
with a sum of money. The letter noted that, "His treatment of the Dutch and the French
after taking of Calcutta is a corroboratory circumstance, of each of whom he demanded
twenty lacks of rupees."45

The Nawab troops finally captured Calcutta and all the English who were left
there made prisoners, but were later released.46 The capture of Calcutta by Sirajudaulah
was only the spark that ‘provoked’ the English Company for a powerful showdown in the
region. The English were seriously planning for revenge. The Company tried all available
options against the Nawab. In November 1756, the Company provided all possible
facilities to the family of Rajballabh, the Begum’s Diwan. It was noted in the letter dated
30th November 1756 that,

"in compliance with Raagbullob’s intimation and request he wrote and
recommended his family being received.....not only on account of his influence
with the Chuta Begum but as his power at Dacca might be of the utmost
consequence to our Hon’ble Master’s affairs there."47

44 Letter to the court of directors from the council in Bengal dated, 1st march 1755; K. K. Datta, Fort
William., 873 &874.
45 Letter to the court of directors from the council in Bengal dated, 16th July 1756, Ibid., 1012.
46 Letter to the court of directors from the council in Bengal dated, 16th July 1756 noted that, "we were
released by the Nawab at Hugly on his return from the taking of Calcutta and were delivered to the French
government of Chandranagore from whom the Nawab took a receipt for us and ordered him to send us safe
to Madras."; Ibid., 1014.
47 Letter to the court of Directors from the council in Bengal dated, 30th November 1756; Ibid., 1043.
Sirajudaullah, on the other hand, sensing war with the English issued \textit{parwanas} to the Dutch demanding them to join him against the English. The Dutch were however, disinterested in joining the \textit{Nawab}. Moreover with the conspiracy against the \textit{Nawab} ripening, the English were at an advantageous position to that of the \textit{Nawab}.

It ultimately resulted in the defeat of Siraj in the ‘battle of Plassey’. Though, the English Company retained its commercial character after Plassey it was now the king maker in the region and on that account it had the most powerful political authority there. Now that they had placed a \textit{Nawab} who was amenable to their control on the throne, there was little chance that the competitors of the English who had so long exploited their \textit{darbar} connections to win special business privileges, would be able to resort to these methods with any continuing success. The advantage that the English gained in matters of trade and business was rooted in the fact that after 1757 the Company emerged as the real political power in the region.\footnote{Kum Kum Chatterjee, \textit{op.cit}, 107.}

The effort of the indigenous government under Mir Qasim to assert itself and to liberate itself from the domination of the English Company led to an armed confrontation between the two sides. In 1763, Mir Qasim, chased Mr. Ellis (then chief of the English factory at Patna) to the English factory at Patna, and made many Englishmen prisoners.\footnote{Edward Thornton, ed., \textit{A Gazetter of the Territories Under the Government of the E. I. C.}, 1\textsuperscript{st} Publication 1859, reprint 1933, 755.} However, ultimately the English triumphed in their efforts to attain a supreme position in Bihar.

The desire for economic supremacy initially and then an eye over the political authority had been major motives of the English in their initiation of the events of 1757. Also, the leadership and the military preparedness decided the end result. Till the first decade of eighteenth century, the Mughal Emperor was a force to reckon with. In that period, the English Company’s attempts to dictate terms mostly ended in failures as was the case in Anglo-Mughal wars of 1686. In that period, the English adhered mostly to the idea of ‘survival’ through peace and diplomacy. However, after the degeneration of Mughal Empire, the perpetual growth of power of the Company helped the English to
establish themselves as an important commercial and political power, though with active help from the indigenous merchants.