Chapter Three

Business Politics: The English and the ruling groups
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A stable and strong political system promotes commercial development through well defined channels of production, consumption and taxation. This system, though important for wide commercial growth, is somehow considered by various commercial groups as hindrance in their commercial activities. One may argue that this well defined system also has inbuilt mechanism of corruption which in a way inhibits a healthy growth. The political groups that tried to implement the system were looked by the commercial players as a prominent intruder in their activities and the commercial policies as problematic.

The English Company records pertaining to our period are full of minutes detailing ‘problems’ ranging from forceful ejection, monopolization of exportable commodities, use of force and threat of war etc. However, one should note that these problems were faced by all sorts of commercial groups whether Europeans or indigenous. The intensity of the problem differed in different cases. The Europeans gaining more from the commercial system in Bihar had to face intense scrutiny in their activities by the political groups. With the coming of English in Bihar till their conquest of the region we find a chain of events which focuses on the transition of the English East India Company from a pure and humble commercial group to a forceful and strengthened master of the region.

The growth and development of the English Company trade in Patna was a slow, steady, and a gradual process. This development was based on several factors. Thomas Roe in a letter to the English factors at Surat noted that, “The continuation of the trade consists principally on two points- first our good reception and the privileges to be obtained and performed to us here, and second the vent of our own commodity.”

Though this observation of Thomas Roe was for the English trade in the western region, it was equally applicable to the other parts of India as well. The first

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point mentioned by Roe is indicative of the Company’s relations with the indigenous powers, which were manifested, in military and social sectors apart from the most important area that of trade and commerce. As far as the question of the vent of commodities of the English was concerned, Bihar was not the place for the English woollen textile, which was their main import from England. The English therefore visited Bihar and settled a factory there only for Bihar’s goods. The most important product was Saltpeter. It was however not produced in the main city of Patna but in its hinterlands. The Company obtained it by employing indigenous agents. The Council at Bay had observed that, “if the factory be without the city ... the convenience will be very great in increasing the investments.”

Trading grants and concessions

The trading privileges granted to the Company were beneficial both to the Company and the ruling class. The Company got its rights to trade in Bihar while the ruling class got additional income in the form of gifts, presents, taxes etc. Considering the income from commerce conducted by the English Company and other European groups as next only to land revenue, Om Prakash argues that the power elites basically looked upon the Company’s trade as a net addition with the attended benefits. These benefits to the power elites came mostly in the form of gifts, presents, etc., in lieu of the privileges given to the Company.

The local officers of the lower ranks had no such benefits from the English Company. Instead, their additional sources of income were adversely affected by these concessions and privileges granted to the Company by the rulers. These officials not only then managed to ignore the imperial orders but also to make excessive demands from the Company, which was though largely met with. Even the

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2 After officially establishing their factory in 1658 at Patna, the English factors remarked that, ‘the place of honour is naturally accorded to Saltpeter’, E.F.I. 1655-60, 275.
3 Thomas Bowery, A geographical account ..., 224, note 1, The Council at Bay wrote to fort St. George in December 1669.
4 Om Prakash, European Commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India, Cambridge, 1998, 125.
Dutch factors in 1619 noted that, "It was necessary to keep the local officials in good humors. This would be done by presenting gifts to the mutassids, the shahbander and the person in charge of the forts, on the occasion of the arrival of the ships."

Disregarding the imperial orders was in fact a regular phenomenon. The English factors noted that,

"...as regard the farman procured for Bengal the kings' commands are as easily procured as other prince, for if there be no powerful contender, and you have them, they are no more esteemed then being things so easily purchased. Whilst every man honors the king no man obeys him."

In fact, it has been argued that, one of the principle reasons of the conflict in Bihar was due to the exaction by the officials of the Nawab. The English got several trading concessions and privileges from the ruling authorities through gifts and presents which the English records maintained mostly as 'bribes' and referred to these power elites as 'bribing Dogs'. However, they remained unapologetic about the flow of immense profit that accrued to them through these 'bribes'. The other European Companies operating in the region were well aware of it. The English act of gift giving was in fact an important Mughal tradition that was not acknowledged by the English Company. Nazrana and peshkash were the parts of the traditional forms of gifts, which were given to the ruling powers. These presents were then reciprocated by giving more priced gifts to the officers. The English trading concessions were very much like "reversed presents". In fact, the gift exchanged in the hall of public audience was a part of a solemn ritual in which the patron client ties between the

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5 Van Revesteyn's letter dated 14 February 1619 from Surat to the Directors at Amsterdam cited in Om Prakash, ed., Dutch factories in India, 1617-23, A Collection of Dutch East India Company documents pertaining to India, New Delhi, 1984, 84.
6 E.F.I., 1634-36, 204.
8 Though the epithet bribing dogs was used initially for the Turkish authorities, Arab black mailers and so forth, but the English quite often used it for Indian powers. J.Courtenay ed., The First English men in India..., letter dated 14th July 1583; here G.S. character is unknown.
9 The Dutch chief of Chinsura, in a letter to Azimushan, maintained that, "while his nation paid a duty of three and a half percent on all their commerce, the English only paid the petty sum of three thousand per annum...", C. Stewart, History of Bengal, London, 1813, Reprint, 1971, 341.
Emperor and his subjects were renewed. This imperial form of ceremonial gift giving took place even at the provincial levels, where the governors were the patrons.

The constant interaction between the English officials and the ruling elites for securing grants and privileges were not always cordial. Obliged to conform to local customs, the English convoys chafed at the humiliation to which they were often subjected. They were usually subjected to interminable delays and to the necessity of 'bribing' court officials to expedite their business. But as far as the extraction by the officials from men who had to get their business pushed through the public office was concerned, it was universal and a practice that was even acceptable in Tudor and Stuart England. Even the Mughal Emperor did not remain untouched from it. Aurangzeb once asked an aspirant to a title that; “your father gave to Shahjahan one lakh rupees for adding alif to his name and making him Amir Khan. How much will you pay me for the title I am giving you?” Nonetheless, we can say that most of the ravings of the European merchants against the local officials, at least in the first half of the seventeenth century, were exaggerated.

In spite of their complaints the English got accustomed to the practice of securing privileges through gifts. There are various opinions on the matter of privileges and their working. The common view is that the English seldom enjoyed the favor made to them by the ruling elites. W.K. Firminger argued that the English were obsessed by the fallacy that a Jarman from the Emperor would be as binding and efficacious as was his own charter from the English crown. The English failed to understand that the Mughal Empire was something sue-generis, and they emphasized their misunderstanding by expecting from the Delhi Emperors pledged, which under a

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11 Holden Furber, op.cit 314.
12 It was noted in the factory records that 'the rumours of vast spoils taken from the Portuguese had attracted the attention of King James and his favourite Buckingham... the Company had to present 2,000L. to the Duchess of Buckingham..."', E.F.I, 1622-23, XIII; Later on in 1698, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Montague, being hard pressed for money passed an act of the parliament granting a royal charter to the new English Company, which undertook to lend two million to the government, Alfred Lyall, The rise and expansion of British Dominion in India, reprint 1973, 56.
government so loosely held together were impossible. In fact it was known to the English that petty extraction at the hands of the local officials were the inevitable acts of commerce which were subject to ordinary internal duties of the country.

Robert Orme had observed that ‘the advantage intended by the favour depended more on the Nawab (provincial Governors) than on the will of the Emperor, for the English had more than once received such mandates and found them of little use’. This shows that the local officials at the provincial levels were more responsible for the working of any farman, and as these concessions affected their income, they often sought forceful extraction from the merchant groups. In fact the English were slowly coming to realize the futility of having confidence in the papers that guaranteed them the privileges and concessions.

As early as 1616, while reviewing the relation between the English and the Indians from the times of Sir Henry Middleton, the Court of Directors expressed fear that “the new farmans from the prince will only lead to fresh oppression.” Sushil Chaudhuri went on to an extent of arguing that ‘the English claim of duty free trade was only a myth’. The Company had never enjoyed the privileges by virtue of any imperial farmans. He however concedes that the 1717 grant of Farukhsiyar placed the English in a better position.

The above discussion suggests that the English Company did not enjoy their concessions easily. This was further confounded with the problem of spending money on numerous power heads to secure the privileges. The English Company initially obtained trading concessions by presenting a handsome amount to the Mughal Emperor. But when they strived to implement those privileges in the provinces they had to present another spell of gifts and peshkash to the Nawabs apart from what they gave to the lower officials like Shahbandar, Fauzdar etc. This problem is persistently referred to in the Company’s documents of the period of our concern.

15 W.K. Firminger, Affairs of the E.I.C (being the fifth report from the select committee of the House of Commons), Vol., I, New Delhi, 1812, LIII.
17 C. R. Wilson, Old Fort William in Bengal, LX.
18 W. Foster, ed., A Supplementary Calendar of documents in India office relating to India or to the Home affairs of the East India Company, 1600-1640, London 1928, 63.
19 Sushil Chaudhuri, Trade and Commercial..., 28.
If the Company had to face these many hardships then one could ask as to why they insisted on securing trading concessions from the rulers. One factor, according to K.N. Chaudhuri was the way the ‘orient’ was perceived, a belief that all Asian governments as a form of ‘Oriental Despotism’ were intent on extracting the maximum from the merchants. Another reason was the English inability to compete with the Indian traders on equal basis. Satish Chandra has interestingly suggested that the English had the psychological bent towards establishing a special position or monopoly, thus they always sought special concessions.

The most important reason perhaps, was to gain freedom from the delay in their shipping schedule and transportation of goods, which always hampered their trading processes. Streynsham Master noted an example of this in 1675. At that time around ‘thirty-one boats containing 29,890 maunds of saltpeter were in readiness at Patna to be dispatched to Hugli but were held up for want of a dastak. There are various other similar references when loaded ships were detained due to official intervention for want of rawana and other papers. Also it was most unlikely that Mughal officials meant to grant a permanent exemption from the customary payments.

When two factors of the English Company, Robert Hughes and John Parker left Agra on 5th June 1620 for Patna, they were aware of the good treatment by the Patna Nawab, as Patna Darbar was then held by Mukarrab Khan, who had earlier favoured and assisted the English, when he was the governor of Surat. When Hughes reached Patna, there he noted in a letter to the Surat factory that, “I have since my coming visited the governor Mukarrab Khan who seems wondrous pleasant for our arrival here...” Despite their long standing relationship, the English factors still had

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20 K.N. Chaudhuri, Trading World of Asia..., 221.
23 Holden Furber, Rival empires..., 74.
24 ‘Documents relating to first...,' 69; Robert Hughes letter to the Surat factors, dated 12 July 1620, Patna.
to give presents to him for securing his favour. He mentioned that ‘a request for some fine goods and toys was made by Mukarrab Khan’. 25

The honeymoon of the English with the Nawab was soon over in 1621, when Prince Parvez, the second son of Jahangir, replaced Mukarrab Khan. As the Subah was assigned to him as a Jagir, Parvez appointed his Diwan Mukhlas Khan as its governor and Alah Yaar Khan and Sher Khan Afghan as its fauzdar. 26 The English factors noted that, “Sultan Parvej is shortly expected here… it would be furtherance to the rest of our business to make friends whereof, since Mukarrab khan’s departure, we are altogether destitute” 27. But not much time had lapsed after the departure of Mukarrab Khan that, the English thought it difficult to continue the factory at Patna. There were debates in the Surat Council about the situation of Patna factory and the policy to be adopted. Initially, orders were issued for the continuation of the factory but later in a consultation held at Surat on March 1st 1621, it was decided to “dissolve the Patna factory until the Company send sufficient factors to supply that.” 28

The English connection with Patna did not cease completely with the departure of its factors in 1621. Patna goods continued to be purchased at Agra from the Bihar traders, the Mughals and the Purbiya merchants. In the meantime, the English factors of Surat happened to accidentally visit Patna. Peter Mundy in 1632, traveled from Agra to Patna misunderstanding Patna as ‘Samana’. On his arrival to Patna, Mundy noted that, “Here we found not the Saif Khan nor the governor that was in Mr. Hughes and Parker’s time, but Abdullah khan, the most covetous and cruel tyrant that ever came to this place.” 29

This shows his prejudice against Mughal governors. He further noted that, “He (Abdullah Khan) extorted from me the 24th September 1632, 3 ¼ and ½ rupees for

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25 E.F.I., 1618-1621, It was reported that the Nawab was desirous of some cloths and hydes... also tapestry, cloth of tissue, velvets, feathers, or any other rich commodity, 199; ‘Documents relating to first...,’ 70, Robert Hughes letter to Surat factory, dated 12 July 1620, Patna.
26 Ghulam Husain’s Riyas- us –Salatin, 196.
27 ‘Documents relating to first...’, 102; Robert Hughes to Surat factory, Patna, 11th April 1621.
28 E.F.I., 1618-21, 234; Consultation held at Surat by President Kerridge, Thomas Rastell, Giles James and Joseph Hopkinson, March 1st, 1621.
29 Peter Mundy, Travels..., Vol. II, 144.
custom, besides 40 or 50 more in bribes to his officers, thinking he did me a great favor to remit the one half that other men paid and was due.”\textsuperscript{30}

But he failed to note that this small amount of ‘bribe’ empowered the English Company to trade at Patna. He himself explained, “[bribe] as being the custom of the country not to come before them (Nawabs) empty handed especially if we had need of them.”\textsuperscript{31} This shows that what Peter Mundy termed as ‘bribe’ was a necessary customary practice if one wanted to engage in trade at Patna or any other place.

Peter Mundy was of the opinion that it was not to the Company’s advantage to take up residence at Patna. The reasons cited by him\textsuperscript{32} before the Surat Council comprised mainly abuses and accusations against the Nawab of Patna, Abdullah Khan. Also, in order to prove his allegations, Mundy charged that Abdullah Khan humiliated an eminent man of Patna, named Chaudhry Pratap.\textsuperscript{33} This, he did only to prove that, the Nawab was not helpful to the merchant groups, both indigenous and foreign. Lastly, when he was returning on 16\textsuperscript{th} November, 1632 to Agra, he concluded that, “we forsook our house in Patna as willingly as men forsake an infectious place (by reason of the tyranny of the governor Abdullah Khan).”\textsuperscript{34}

One is not sure about the situation, which Peter Mundy faced in Patna in his four months stay, which compelled him to discuss the character of the Nawab and belittle the advantageous position of Patna for trade.\textsuperscript{35} But the English Company’s involvement with Patna ended in uncertainty, though Abdullah Khan continued as the Nawab of Patna till 1643.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 145.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 143.
\textsuperscript{32} The reasons cited by Mundy were :- “1) Ambertees or white cloth which is that we most required from this place is now dear than accustomed by reason this governor is making provision for the king’s Mohall (female apartment) ii) saltpeter, we can have it much better and better cheap else where iii) transport of goods from here is extraordinary far, deer and dangerous and iv) here is a bad governor (Abdullah khan)”, Travels of Peter Mundy, Travels..., vol II, 150-51; out of the four reasons cited by Mundy, two directly refers to the activities of the Nawab. As far as the case of the Ambertees is concerned the scarcity of that was not going to continue after the provisions for the Mahall (palace) was completed and so it was wrong, for Peter Mundy to criticize the Nawab.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 160.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 163.
\textsuperscript{35} The reason cited by Peter Mundy, negate the advantages which at Patna enjoyed, as indicated by his predecessors Robert Hughes and John Parker in 1620 At Patna.
For nearly 18 years after the failure of the Company’s second attempt to establish their factory at Patna in 1632, the Company document does not mention any event of significance either for the commercial transactions of the Company or for their relationship with the Patna elite. The turbulent phase through which, England passed in the reign of Charles I was also not favourable to the Company. However, the Company’s attempts to procure Patna goods, continued indirectly from Orissa or Agra. After establishing themselves at Hariharpur and Balasore, the English issued directions for investments in Saltpeter, silk and sugar. Acknowledging Patna’s superior position in case of Saltpeter, it was directed that, “Patna being on all sides concluded the best place for procuring peter, desire you therefore to make try all you can procure the same from thence.” 36

In fact, the Civil war in England pressed the Company to procure saltpetre from any other place they could. It was ordered to invest at least half of the stock available in Saltpeter. It was also remarked that, ‘in case you run into debt, let it be for this commodity.’ 37 It shows the commercial compulsions of the Company to keep alive their Patna trade. As a result immediately after the Hugli factory was opened, the English factors were sent to Patna in 1651 to re-establish their factory. The English factory at Patna was reopened in 1651 during the governorship of Nawab Jafar Khan. It was nevertheless officially recognized with the appointment of Mr. Richard Chamberlain as the first chief of Patna factory in 1658, Roger Seymour as the second, William Varsell as the third, and Francis Farrer as the fourth. 38

After Jafar Khan, Julfikar Khan Qaramalu (1656-1657), was appointed the governor of Bihar and was followed by Qasim Khan (1657) and Dara Sukoh (1657). In the reign of all these three governors of Bihar nothing substantial, related to their contacts with the English Company happened. After the dethronement of Shah Jahan in 1657 the war of succession started and Dara Sukoh was also involved in it. In fact, all his four sons crowned themselves in their respective Subahships. Saha Suja did the

36 C. R. Wilson, Early Annals..., Vol., I, 25.
38 E.B.Sainsbury, ed., A Calendar of the Court minutes..., 212; However, the list of the factors given in E.F.I., 1655-1660, is rather different. Richard Chamberline as chief, Vassal as second, Samuel Bayly as third and Henry Aldworth as fourth, 189.
same in Bengal and advanced his Army to Patna. However, he was later defeated and murdered by Aurangzeb, who acquired the throne for himself in 1658.

After becoming Emperor, Aurangzeb, dispatched Mir Jumla to Bengal, to campaign against prince Sujha in 1659. But before his march for Bengal had begun, his presence in Bihar had created serious problems for the English factors. Mir Jumla stopped English from procuring Saltpeter at Patna. Confirming to the customs, Richard Chamberlain, the chief of the Patna factory, met Mir Jumla on 21st February 1659, with a present worth rupees 600. However, Mir Jumla refused to accept it, describing the English as 'no better than pirates and robbers.' Mr. Chamberlain tried to persuade Mir Jumla about the good conduct of the English people. He tried to convince that the English factors were private people who had no connection with the Coromandel Coast and that there was no reason why they should suffer for the fault of others. But, Mir Jumla was not convinced by these arguments of Chamberlain. He demanded the return of his Junk, which was agreed to him by the Patna Chief in view of the problems arising in Saltpeter trade. The Madras factors however, rejected Chamberlain’s plea of returning the junk of Mir Jumla, and sent Ion Ken, the chief factor at Kassimbazaar with presents to Mir Jumla, which again was rejected.

In due course the trade of the English at Patna was hampered. Henry Aldworth at Patna wrote to Trevisa at Hugli on 12th July 1660, promising to dispatch about 15,000 mounds of saltpetre to Hugli. In return he asked the agent to send Mir Jumla’s dastak. Ultimately a huge amount was paid to Mir Jumla to restore the trade of Saltpeter at Patna. Thus, it can be said that, the English, in this case were the offenders and provoked Mir Jumla by capturing his junk. He did nothing during his governorship in the Carnatic, as the English commanded superior naval strength there. When he came to Patna, he decided to answer the English offence and then the

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40 *E.F.I.*, 1655-60, 264.
41 Ibid, 280.
42 Ibid, 281.
43 When Mir Jumla was in the Carnatic, his representatives came in conflicts with the English factors of fort St. George. Their suffering led the Agent Green Hill of fort St. George to think of retaliation. In August 1650, the English seized the Red Sea junk of Mir Jumla, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, the *Life of Mir Jumla, the general of Aurangzeb*, New Delhi, 1979, 142. It was this junk that Mir Jumla demanded from the English when he came to Patna.
45 *E. F. I.*, 1655-60, 408.
English had to concede to his demands. This shows that the English Company was not in a position to counter the power elites of Patna on land.

Daud Khan Qureshi was now the new Nawab of Patna. Here, one must note the fact that, as Rajmahal was on the border between Bihar and Bengal, the English Company needed the clearance cheques from the political authorities of both Bihar and Bengal, in order to send their ships loaded with Patna goods down to Hugli. Making use of this compulsion of the Company, the local officials and Nawabs earned profits. The consultation of fort St. George, dated 21st Dec. 1677, noted that, “Saltpeter was all stopped and turned ashore near Kasimbazaar due to the pressure to carry up the Nawab Shaista Khan goods to Patna on the English ships.”

The Company servants knew that, any of the Nawabs (of Bihar or Bengal) if refused to pass on the Company ships, the latter were liable to be withheld with considerable delay in sending Patna goods. For this very reason the English factories tried to procure grants from Nawabs of both the provinces. Richard Chamberline, in a letter dated, 1st Dec. 1569 explained that, “he has no fear of any difficulty being made, seeing that he has the parwana from Mir Jumla, Daud Khan and the Emperor’s diwan.” Here, Mir Jumla was the Nawab of Bengal, while Daud Khan was the governor of Bihar. The perfect enjoyment of the trading privileges by the English was thus subject to the condition that various farmans and grants were well implemented.

When Miran Amin Khan became the governor of Bihar, the English factors complained that in his tenure thirty-one boats loaded with Saltpetere were held up at Patna for want of a dastak. Charnock tried to get them released but his attempts failed, as he was not ready to ‘bribe’ the officials. In July 1675 the Nawab promised a dastak in return for 500 rupees, but he again dubbed. The matter further delayed as a new Diwan came to the office, which, meant all petitions and negotiations, had to be started afresh. The real problem was in the English failure to understand the fact that, all grants and favours were to be legalized with every new person coming to the office. The boats were finally cleared in the last days of Nawab Amir Khan’s office when he was paid rupees 900. The harassment caused by the above incident

46 Records of fort St. George, 128.
47 E.F.I., 1655-1660, 299.
48 Master’s Diary, Vol., I, 114.
impelled Charnock to declare that he was 'weary of the insufferable troubles and
delay affronts that had to contend with in a place where every petty official makes a
prey of the English'.

Shaifullah Barlow became the next governor of Bihar in November 1675 and
continued till 14th April, 1677. John Marshal, who at this time was present at Patna,
complained about the general coercion and ill-treatment the English were meted with.
He also mentions about the destruction of storehouses carried under the order of the
new governor.\(^{49}\) The dispute over the legitimacy of the farman also erupted during his
period. The Bengal Nawab, Shaista Khan tried to sort out the problem by declaring
that the English posses a farman from the Emperor upon which he also had given
them a grant of the said privileges in Bengal and hoped for the same implementation
in Bihar.\(^{50}\) This dispute came to rest during the governorship of prince Azam, as Job
Charnock reported that, "At last the obstinacy of the Diwan (Warris khan) had been
overcome by bribes to him, his peshdast (assistants) and other friends to the amount
of rupees 1,200 and that a compromise had been agreed on for deposit of the custom
at 3\%."\(^{51}\)

After Saifuddin, Aurangzeb appointed Saif khan as the governor of Bihar.
When he came to Patna, Mr. Peacock was the chief of English factory there.\(^{52}\) He
refused to visit the new Nawab with gifts. As a result he was captured in the factory
and dragged barefoot to Hajipura, the temporary residence of the new governor and
was kept in irons until he paid a forced present of 90 Pound, to the Nawab.\(^{53}\) The
Company though complained the Emperor through a Vakil but Mr. Peacock
apparently got no redress.

A year later, when Gangaram, the Zamindar of Bihar and formerly Diwan to
Bahadur khan, whose Jagir then lay about Patna, appeared in arms with about five or

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\(^{49}\) S. A. Khan, John Marshal ..., 55.
\(^{50}\) Master's Diary, Vol., II, 24, Translate of a letter from Shaista khan in an answer to one received
from Warris khan (Diwan of Patna) about the English privileges in those parts of the region.
\(^{51}\) C. Fawcett, ed., The English Factories in India, 1670-84, New Series, (here after E. F. I. New Series
\(^{52}\) Master’s Diary, Vol II, 352; before sending Charnock to Kasimbazar, Master had appointed Mr.
Peacock as the chief of Patna factory, Jeremy Peachy as second and Samuel Meverell as third; letter
from Master and Council to Job Charnock, dated Dec. 13\(^{10}\) 1679.
\(^{53}\) N. N. Raye, op.cit 98.
six thousand horses, and due to that, the English found it difficult to purchase any more Saltpeter. Mr. Peacock was again arrested and thrown into prison only on the pretext that, despite Gangaram’s rebellion, the Company’s factory at Singhiya, was left unmolested, which created suspicion in the mind of the Nawab that, the English also were in league with the rebels. Ultimately it was with much difficulty and through earnest intercession he was rescued.

When prince Azimushan was appointed the governor of Bihar, the English factory was re established in 1703(now it was called as the residency) by the United Council, with the help of substantial parwana obtained by Mr. Red Shaw, the chief of Patna factory, from the Nawab. It was the turn of the officials of the new Company to carry on the trade at Patna as per the rotational governorship rule of the United Company. The old Company therefore did not actively participate in the commercial activities. The consultation noted that,

“The English trade is stopped in Patna owing to the necessity of paying custom dues. The prince still refused free trade unless the Company made him a large present. The old Company did not wish for any such pass now, as they were not responsible for the trade. They therefore sent a letter to the united trade council telling them the result of the negotiation. The united council then agreed to stop the trade at Patna. And the old Company sent to recall all their agents at Patna.”

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54 Records of fort St. George: letters to fort St. George, 1682, vol. II, 47.
55 Hugli Council in a letter to fort St. George mentioned the problem that was going to hit their business at Patna. They noted that, “we know not what influence these troubles may have on our Master’s trade at Patna in getting Peter but for fear the investments will be extremely lessened ...” also they accused Shaista khan, the Nawab of Bengal of “sitting still all the while as unconcerned, though he might from Rajmahal have sent such considerable force as in 5 or 6 day’s might have reached Patna and in all likelihood dispersed Gangaram...”, Records of fort St. George: letters to fort St. George, 1682, vol. II, 47.
56 C.Stewart, op cit., 310-11.
57 The united council was created by the amalgamation of the two English Companies, old and the new. These ensured the rotational government—so called because the president ship of the united Council was held by rotation by the servants of the two Companies. All these arrangements were made without reference to the Mughal government, the rotation government assumed office of 1st Feb. 1704, represented, according to C.R.Wilson, the bastard off springs of an illegitimate union, C. R. Wilson, Early Annals..., vol. I, 151, 169; at the union of the two Company, the English had the following factories in Bengal dependent on the presidency at Fort William viz. Fort William Sutinati, Balasore, Kasimbazar, Dacca, Hugli, Malda, Rajmahal and Patna, W. Milburn, Oriental commerce, London, Vol. II, 103.
However, the United Company made use of its previous agents to set things right at Patna and it was noted that, “we have received advice from Manikchand that the King’s Diwan has ordered his Naib at Patna to permit our business to pass as formerly. Also that he will give his sanad for our free trade upon paying him a peshkash of 3000 rupees.” But illegal extraction from the Company continued in Azimushan’s period. Prince Azimushan himself levied custom duties in the form of tax at the rate of two and a half percent on the goods of Muslims and five percent on the goods of Hindus and Christians. Following this discrimination, the English decided to write a letter to the Diwan desiring him to write to the Emperor, asking him to give favour to the English at Patna and to stop people from interfering in their trade.

Prince Azimushan was the last governor during the reign of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb’s reign provided Patna a recurrent appointment of governors, which did not lead to the significant improvement in the day-to-day administration. There were cases of illegal extortion and forceful exaction and other irregularities, which were not totally overlooked by the Emperor. However the period also registered growth in the volume of trade. The export of Saltpeter in the period from 1665 to 1670 amounted to 1000 tones and their import of bullion in a single year to eastern region amounted to 110000 L.

Sarbuland Khan became the Nabob of Bihar for two years 1716-1718. Mr. Pattie, the chief of Patna residency, informed the Calcutta council that,

“Sarbuland Khan had stopped all the boats at Rajmahal. A present of goods worth rupees 2,000 was given with more fair speeches but nothing happened. Sarbuland Khan refused to make the smallest real concession. He positively demanded 45,000 rupees on the receipt of which he will give us his orders for free trade.”

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59 Consultation, dated 18th July 1706, Ibid., 274,
60 Ghulam Husain’s Riyaq-us-Salatin, 245.
61 Consultation dated 3rd June 1707, C. R. Wilson, Early Annals ..., Vol. I, 282,
62 Safi Khan the governor of Bihar from 1680-82 was dismissed for misappropriating government money.
63 C. Stewart, op.cit 301.
64 C. R. Wilson, Early Annals..., vol. I, 182.
Ultimately the Company provided the Nawab the amount of rupees 45,000. The Nawab was so authoritative that the indigenous Vakils and agents feared to talk to him and even visit to him.\textsuperscript{65} However, through the Surman embassy to the Emperor Farukhsiyar, the Company got the famous farman of 1717 in the governorship of Sarbuland Khan.

When Muhammed Shah ascended the Mughal throne in 1719, he told the English that, Farukhsiyar was a usurper and ordered to strike the name of Farukhsiyar out of the grant seal and to put Jahandar Shah’s name, the father of Mohammed Shah, when the English went for the confirmation of their privileges granted by Farukhsiyar’s farman and Husbool-hukum.\textsuperscript{66} Ultimately it was agreed by the English and the problem was sorted out. Also it was in the last days of Zaman Khan’s governorship that the Fatuha Gomastah of the English Raghu Pandit was seized by the Nawab and a demand was made of rupees 50,000 in lieu of twenty year’s custom, which the said Raghu Pandit had cheated the King’s government of.\textsuperscript{67}

Zaman Khan was succeeded by Nusrat Khan for a year and the later was succeeded by Zafar Khan for four years from 1721 to 1725. Nothing substantial happened in Nusrat Khan’s office days except that, on his arrival Mr. Stephenson, the chief of 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.\textsuperscript{68} In his period due to the problem faced from the local officials, the Company’s indigenous broker, Pran resigned from his service in 1721. It was noted in the consultation dated, 3\textsuperscript{rd} July, 1721, that,

“Pran their (Patna factory’s) broker, being apprehensive of some trouble from the government by means of one Nand gowala, who is always endeavouring to do him what mischief he can by complaining from one Durbar to another…., so that he is afraid of being seized, and dare not stir out

\textsuperscript{65} Consultation dated 1717, October, noted that, “we don’t find anyone inclined to speak to Serbuland khan about the Patna house or factory, Rupchand (Vakil) even fears to go near the durbar”, Ibid, Vol. II, part, II, 235.
\textsuperscript{66} Karim, \textit{Mursid Quli khan}…, 191.
\textsuperscript{67} C. R. Wilson, \textit{Early Annals}…, vol. III, 174.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid, Vol. III, 368.
of the factory: he therefore request, he may leave the place and they (Patna factors) desires that another person may be sent in his stead. 69

The governorship of Zafar Khan was relatively good for the English at Patna. However, in 1732, the Nawab complained to the English that they were including in their Private trade in the name of the Company’s and threatened to stop their trade unless they secured a farman of the then Emperor. The Chief of the Patna factory, Hugh Barker, instructed the Company’s Vakil to report the Nawab that it was not the case of private Trade. 70 In order to maintain good relations with the Nawab, in August 1732, the Company’s authorities decide to buy the whole amount of salt carried by the current fleet, and after retaining the permissible amount for use, to throw the rest into the river Ganga.

After Zafar Khan Hadi (Hazi) Ali Khan was made the governor of Bihar. He was in fact, the last governor of Bihar. However, Prince Mirza Ahmed (Fakhruddaullah) came to Patna as governor in 1733, 71 but in the same year Sujaudaullah was given the charge of both Bihar and Bengal by the Emperor Mohammed Shah. 72

Meanwhile the Company’s business prospered at Patna and a branch factory at Fatuah, Choundee and Begusarai were reopened and five new subordinate factories were started in different parts of the province of Bihar. 73 In 1728, a brick godown was built at Patna to secure Saltpeter against the danger of fire, frequent in those days of thatched sheds and congested bazaars. 74

After getting the governorship of both Bihar and Bengal Shujauddin effectively tried to assert his authority over the European traders. He was succeeded

71 A Sanad found in the Persian papers of the divisional Commission office at Patna, dated 1733, refers to a grant of rent free land to Shah Kalil of Sasaram by Fakhirudaula, who was the last independent governor of Bihar, S. G. Mishra, History of Bihar, 1740-1772, New Delhi, 1970, 10.
72 Mohammed Shah conferred the deputy governorship of Bihar to Samsudaula Amir Ul Umara in place of Fakhirudaula who was dismissed. He was the deputy governor at Patna, of Nawab Shujaudaulla, Abdus Subham trans.&ed. Tarikh-i-Bengal-i-Mahabatjangi of Yusuf Ali khan, Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1982, 7; Nawab Shuja Khan made a petition for the Subahdarship of Azimabad, which was then held by Fakhirudaula. A Parwana arrived from the Emperor, dismissing Fakhirudaullah and a sanad appointing Shuja Khan to the post, J. N. Sarkar, Bengal Nabob, 14.
74 C. R. Wilson, old fort William in Bengal, 124.
by Alam-ud-daula Haider Jang. The next governor Alivardi Khan compared the Europeans to ‘a hive of bees of whose honey you might reap the benefit, but if you disturbed their hives they would sting you to death’. His reign synchronized with the two carnatic wars and he was not slow to recognize their implications from the Indian prince’s point of view. As a precaution against the projection of the Anglo-French struggle into his region, Alivardi opposed the attempts of both the companies to strengthen their fortification at their principle settlements in the province. Alivardi was succeeded by Sirajudaula. The refusal of Roger Drake to congratulate him on his accession with suitable presents and his non-admission to the country house of the English near Kasimbazaar which he wished to visit. Later on the dispute between the Nawab and the English resulted in the battle of Plassey.

**Interpretation of trading grants and concessions**

One of the most important reason of conflict and confrontation between the Mughal official and the English Company was related to the interpretation of various trading grants and concessions received from the Persian speaking Mughal emperor and various Mughal officials. It was not only a case of lack of communication and understanding of each others languages but a tacit act of misinterpretation of the documents by the Company official’s to augment their profits without adhering to local custom dues and taxes. The Company’s usual practice was to procure a grant for custom-free trade from the reigning Subahdars in Bihar on the pretext that Shajahan’s farman- which, as the Company alleged, was lost and could not be produced- enjoined such a concession. However, Shahjahan’s farman, on the basis of which the English contended that they were exempted from paying the custom duties- could never have been intended to give the Company an absolute freedom of trade in Bihar and Bengal. It was specifically clear in its terms, and only exempted the English goods collected in Awadh, Agra etc. from road duties.

Moreover, there was hardly any reason why the English should be exempted from customs duties whiles all the merchants, indigenous or foreigners were bound to pay it in the region for their trading goods.

In fact, the court minutes of the English Company raised doubts about the bonafides of the concessions claimed by the English in the region. In a report by a
committee especially appointed to investigate about the Company's trade in Bihar and Bengal it was mentioned that the privilege procured by Gabrial Boughton, that gave the English "only a liberty to trade, paying custom according to the King's farman was altered and made to pay no custom according to the King's farman." 75

When the English succeeded in obtaining an imperial farman from the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1680, it was interpreted differently by the factors of the Company and the local official. It is significant that the farman was particularly addressed to all present and future governors of Surat. This farman provides us a peculiar example of misinterpretation of the document as evident from the English Company's version of the relevant part of the farman, according to which,

"......it is agreed of the English nation besides their usual custom of two percent for their goods, more one and half per cent jizyah or poll money, shall be taken. Whereof it is commanded that in the said place, from the first day of Shawwal, in the twenty-third if our reign of said people, three and half per cent of all their goods, on account of custom or poll money, be taken for the future. And at all other places, upon this account, let no one molest them for customs, rahdari, peshkash, farmaish and other matters by the emperor's court forbidden, nor make any demand in these particulars." 76

This rendering into English made all the difference in the meaning of the farman. When read as above with a full stop after for the future, it would appear that the farman was intended to exempt all English goods from customs duties at Surat and in all other places. But if the full stop is placed after and at all other places, the meaning is completely reversed. The Company's factors tried to interpret the farman in the former sense as it was to their own advantage, which in the proper context, seems to be wholly incorrect.

In fact J.N. Sarkar observed in his History of Aurangzeb that, 'payment of duty on the goods landed at Surat could by no exercise of ingenuity exempt from duty a different cargo that had come from Home or China not through Surat but directly to Bengal and which thereof could not have paid duty at Surat. The English traders in

75 E. B. Sainsbury, ed., Court Minutes..., 81.
76 Record of Fort St. George, Vol. 30, f. 38 and C.R.Wilson, Early Annals..., Vol., I, 78-79.
Bengal had no reason to claim exemption from a law of the land which the merchants of all other nations had to obey.\textsuperscript{77} Also, some of the English Company’s factors were well aware of the real intention and meaning of the farman and repeatedly argued over the misinterpretation of the content of the farman.

That the farman was never meant to exempt the English in Bengal from customs duties was confirmed by the emperor in 1682. In April that year, the English came to know that Haji Safi Khan, the Diwan had received orders from Aurangzeb requiring the English to pay 3½ per cent customs on all goods exported from or imported to Bengal.\textsuperscript{78} In fact the controversy regarding the proper interpretation of various trading grants and concessions given to the English Company continued throughout the seventeenth century. The local officials were adamant to implement the imperial orders as it was meant to be while the English Company’s factors tried their best to surpass the taxes to be paid by them. This resulted in frequent skirmishes between the Mughal officials and the English Company’s factors in the region. On the whole we can say that the relation between the English Company and the Mughals were not cordial with regards to the Company’s interpolation in the trading grants and privileges given to them in Bihar and Bengal.

**Monopolization and Forceful ejection**

Apart from pure mercantile groups, the nobles and the officials of Bihar like others also engaged in trading activities though indirectly. They therefore tried to gain as much as they could from the ongoing commerce. This resulted in much problem to the merchants both indigenous and the Europeans. One important problem the Company faced was the extractions by the local officials. The monopolizing tendency of the power elites was another significant hindrance. Streynsham Master had noted, “The Nawab’s officials ... monopolized most of the commodities even as low as grass, canes, firewood etc. They went on to oppress people of all sorts who trade, whether native or stranger.”\textsuperscript{79} When Azimushan was the governor of Bengal and Bihar, he declared the entire import trade to be his monopoly, styling this the Sauda-e-Khas-o-Am. Aurangzeb wrote him a stinging reproof that, “What propriety is there

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\textsuperscript{78} Record of Fort St. George, Vol. 30, ff. 38-39
\textsuperscript{79} *Master’s Diary*, Vol II, 80.
in calling public oppression Sauda-e-Khas, and what connection has Sauda-e-Khas with Sauda-e-Am? Those who purchase–sell, we neither purchase nor sell."\(^{80}\) Aurangzeb later reduced Azimushan's rank by 500 sawars.

The provisions of Sauda-e-khas and farmaish were invoked by the officials to procure goods for private trade at price below the market rate. In 1664 Job Charnock, the English chief of Patna factory wrote that,

"The darogas of Shaista Khan has so abused the merchants that they almost ran away. He pretends that all the peter he buys is for the king. It was never known he had occasion for more than 1,000 or 1,500 maunds yearly for all his wars."\(^{81}\)

It might be noted that, at the then prevailing market price, the value of 1,500 maunds of Saltpeter would have been around 2,500 Rupees, whereas the amount actually asked for was worth rupees 20,000.

The trade in Saltpetere was also monopolized by Subhadar of Bihar, Nawab Jafar khan in 1653; by imperial Diwan at Patna in 1660; by provincial diwan at Patna in 1675 etc. The governor of Bihar also monopolized opium trade in 1681. This monopolistic tendency of power elites did not hamper the trade of English alone. It equally affected the local traders and merchant groups. The growing commercial mindedness of the Mughal Nobility, which was the result of the idea of Abul Fazl, to permit a noble to 'indulge in a little commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings,'\(^{82}\) resulted in this problem. This monopolistic control was only to augment their profits but it proved harmful to both the indigenous and European commercial groups. However then, the trade of every commodity was not monopolized. The most lucrative and important ones like salt, opium and Saltpeter were officially monopoly. Saltpeter was used for gunpowder and hence its monopoly was strategic.

During the governorship of Daud Khan, Mirza Luftullah Beg, the Diwan of Patna, attempted to monopolize the sale of Saltpetere by forcing the contractors to sell

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\(^{80}\) Ghulam Husain Salim's *Riyaz-us-Salatin*, 246-7.  
\(^{81}\) *E.F.I.*, 1661-64, 395-96.  
him all their saltpetre which were under the contract with the Dutch.\textsuperscript{83} However, later it was noted in the same letter that, "These procedures were prompted secretly by Chamberline himself, acting through the English broker, Ganga Ram, who had promised that, his employers would take from the Diwan all the Saltpetre thus secured."\textsuperscript{84}

Thus, the claim of the English factors and later by various scholars about the monopolization of saltpetre by Luftullah Beg is negated. Yadgar Beg succeeded Daud Khan, as the governor of Bihar in 1665. He was in that office till 1668 but nothing substantial is mentioned in the records of the Company. After him, Ibrahim Khan (1668-1673) became the Nawab. English documents are very sceptical of his conduct. It was noted in 1671 that, 'the Nawab gave baksheesh for the detention of the English boats to the boatman and thus tried to extort money from the English', but his attempts failed.\textsuperscript{85}

Again in 1672, the English Chief at Patna, Job Charnock, complained about the high handedness of the Nawab Ibrahim Khan who forced the English and other Europeans to purchase decayed saffron in price more than the market value if they wished to have saltpetre from Patna.\textsuperscript{86} Initially, the Company refused to take the delivery of saffron. The Nawab took it as a great affront and ultimately the saffron had to be accepted. The English were so horrified that they reported that without a proper farman,

"We shall have continual trouble and great charges to run through their (Company's) business in those parts in one time or another, if not prevented, a great mischief (will) happen to our master's business and our own persons, the fear of which does often dampens in our business and in all disputes which we have with the governor of this country."\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{83}E.F.I., 1661-64, 69, letter from Hugli to Madras dated 29\textsuperscript{th} Jan. 1661.  
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid, 69.  
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, 354.  
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, 363.
It was proposed by Clavell, the Chief agent of the Company's establishment of Bengal, and his Council, to represent their case to the Emperor's court, against the misdeeds of the Nawab. But the Madras council rejected this proposal. This decision would have been taken to avert the confrontation that has already been faced by the Company at Patna. Despite this, in December 1673, Job Charnock sent a note to Aurangzeb's Diwan at Patna regarding the above incident. Moreover, Patna factors also made repeated requests to the council at Bay for the necessity of a farman from the Emperor entitling them free trade in the region.

Prince Azam, the third son of Aurangzeb, who was made the governor of Bihar for six months (July 1677-Dec.1677), reached Patna on September 1677. He was described by the English factors, as a person of 'bad character'. Job Charnock remarked that,

"His government is hated of all men, he being of himself very careless and altogether swayed by his servants who are beggarly upstarts that they care not which ends goes forward, so they crane their coffers and impoverish the master which makes the whole country at present groase under him." 88

It was true that, in his absences, the local officials became parasitic and made several forceful exactions. The English factors noted that in August 1677, the Diwan at Patna detained the ship carrying the treasure to Patna for investments on the pretext of non-clearance of the custom duties. Job Charnock wrote to Hugli authorities for the payment of receipts, but in the mean time, the Mirbahar had taken half of the treasury in his custody on the pretext of search. He released it only towards the end of November when a deal was struck. 89 Even the fauzdars and darogas adopted illegal means of securing profits.

The confusion and misunderstanding remained conspicuous of the trading relation between the two. In fact later on it was noted that, some Saltpeter men frequently ran away because the princes and darogas 'drubed and imprisoned them.' 90 Similarly, in 1677, three boats loaded with lead from Hugli were stopped at Bhagalpur by the new Amin, who refused to clear them without an order from the

88 Ibid, 442.
89 Ibid, 436.
90 Ibid, 432.
prince’s Diwan. It was also reported that, prince’s officers were obstructing the dispatches of boats laden with Saltpeter in order to extract payments of customs on the goods they contained.\(^{91}\) For these incidents, it can only be said that prince Azam was unable to check his lower officials, as he used to stay in Patna for relatively shorter periods.

Saifuddin succeeded Prince Azam in 1678. So far his relationship with the Company, is concerned, nothing significant is recorded in the documents. However, it was during his tenure that Charnock through his Vakil started negotiations with the Mughal court to secure a farman confirming previous privileges and a guarantee to not interfere in their trade.\(^{92}\) In the mean time he was ordered to leave Patna and join Kasimbazar as the chief of the English factory. His refusal to do so created confusion in the business at Patna. Later, the council at Fort St. George acceded that Charnock must stay at Patna to deliver up the remains of that factory before moving to Kasimbazaar.\(^{93}\)

Even in the early years of the eighteenth century the forceful ejection by the Mughal officials continued. The consultation dated, 30\(^{th}\) December, 1703, noted that,

“The Company’s peter boats arrive at Rajmahal and are there stopped because they had neither the prince’s nor the Diwan’s sanad. They send Mr. Red Shaw 1000 rupees and order him to clear the boats at any prince. Otherwise the peter will not be at fort William in time for shipping.”\(^{94}\)

Again when a new English Company came to Bihar there was wide ranging confusions. It was noted that,

“The English trade at Patna is stopped owing to the necessity of paying customs dues. The Mughal had granted a free trade and sent notice of the same to the prince in Patna under the seal of his grand Wazir, but the prince still refused free trade unless the Company made him a large present. The old Company does not wish for now any such pass now, as they are not

\(^{91}\) Ibid, 423.
\(^{92}\) Master’s Diary, Vol.I, 243, note, 2.
\(^{93}\) E.F.I., New Series, vol. II, 1670-1677, 353; letter from Job Charnock to Streynsham Master, 1679, 14\(^{th}\) December.
\(^{94}\) Consultation dated 30 December 1703, C. R. Wilson, Early Annal…Vol. I, 222.
responsible for the trade. They therefore send a letter to united trade council telling them the result of the negotiation. The united trade council agrees to stop the trade in Patna till they see what the Dutch will do. The old Company therefore sends to recall the agents at Patna. The united Company resolves after all to continue the settlement at Patna."^95

There were incidents of armed clashes between the Company and the Mughal officials. In 1713, it was noted in the consultation that,

"Received a letter from Sarjeet Gammar from Rajmahal, advising his safe arrival there with the Company's peter boats after having been attacked both by land and water at Conna Chowkey, in which his officers, Ensign Beason, was shot dead and a soldier, in the same boat, through the aim. In this dispute according to the best computation they could make they killed between 20-30 of the Chowkey people; and on Friday last received another letter, from the said serjeant wherein he writes he has cleared the boats at Rajmahal, much cheaper than he expected."^96

However, sometimes the Mughal officials needed help of the English Company for purpose other than pure commerce. The Company on its part helped the ruling groups as per their convenience. The consultation noted that,

"Ziyauddin khan, the governor of Hugli having send down acquainting us that his family is coming from Surat on a great moor ship which is unfortunately run upon the long sand where they are in very great danger for want of help desires our assistance by sending down help to them but non of the Company's sloops being up there this is agreed that we send down Mr. Stephenshaw who goes up on his own sloop to their relief."^97

The Company was also required to provide protection from the pirates active in the Arabian Sea scavenging on the Hajj pilgrims.⁹⁸

Thus, the monopolizing tendency of the Mughal officials and forceful extraction of bribes, gifts and presents from the commercial groups including the English Company was an important problem faced by the English Company in its operation in Bihar.

**War of successions, revolts and threat of force**

Any commercial activity is carried out in a peaceful environment. But there were many instances when the political and commercial environment was not peaceful. Though it may not be always violent but was necessarily tensed. The English Company among other commercial groups faced problems due to change in succession. The ascendancy of new Emperor or new appointments of the officials meant annulment of earlier terms and concessions. In such a situation new privileges were to be sought afresh.

In fact one of the main issues in the conflict between the English traders and Mughal officials in the 17th century was the Company’s inability to understand that a *farman* granted by one Emperor was subject to renewal by his successor to acquire the same legal force. When the Company’s Bengal servants began to advocate actively the idea of obtaining *farman* from the new Emperor, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Court of Directors repeated what had been said many times before that, "The Company ought to stand on the validity of its ancient grants which being mutual stipulation between the then prince of the country and us ought to be obligatory on both sides as long as the occasions on which they are granted…continues."⁹⁹

However, the high cost involved in sending embassies to the imperial court and large presents that were lavished on the influential court grandees, explain the Company’s reluctance to secure the renewal of privileges.

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⁹⁸ The council received a letter from Madras, telling them that the king is not willing to grant the Company a farman unless they will undertake to secure their ships from pirates at the ships; Consultation dated 23rd march 1709, Ibid , Vol. I, 313.

The war of succession among the Mughal rulers also affected the trading activities of the far-flung areas. Patna also witnessed the widespread exactions and plundering. In a letter to Hugli authorities, Patna factors wrote that,

"They are in fear of Farukhsiyar, who is an acknowledged king in Patna and will force them to visit him in Patna with a peshkash... they are fearful that when the new king's son with his Omrah and army come against the Patna king that there will be plundering." ¹⁰⁰

However, in this case it can be said that, it was not only the English Company that faced such problem. The indigenous traders and merchant groups were also subjected to forceful exactions. The merchant boats were used for transporting the military across the rivers by the imperial authorities. ¹⁰¹ Therefore it is unjust on the part of the English Company to say that they were the only sufferers of ill treatment and forceful exactions.

When prince Parvej became the governor of Bihar, he became the reason for the closure of the English settlement at Patna. The main reason, for the abandonment of the Patna factory was not the scarcity of personnel, but as noted by Robert Hughes the change in the hands of rule. He noted that,

"The Prince (Parvez) arrival here with so great a retinue has made this place too narrow for his entertainment which has caused the removing diverse, as well merchants as others from their abodes whose houses he has liberally bestowed on his servants, amongst which complement we are displaced and have been those ten days wondering to cover ourselves and goods." ¹⁰²

Though prince Parvez's act were responsible for the closure of the English factory, the former's acts no less injured the indigenous merchants. It is doubtful to claim that the prince nurtured any anti English bias. In fact, this was a recurrent feature whenever a prince or Emperor visited any place. The period1621-1628 was of

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¹⁰¹ When Shahjahan invaded Patna, a detachment of Army under Dariya khan crossed the river Ganga during the day with the boats of the beoparis (traders), *Bahrastan-I Ghayb*, trans, Vol. II, 692.
¹⁰² E.F.I., 1618-21, 256; Robert Hughes letter to the factors at Agra, dated 2nd June, 1621.
utter political disturbance, which included the rebellion of Shahjahan, coup de \'t\'at of Mahabat Khan, death of Jahangir etc. All these events made northern India unfavorable for trade especially of the foreign merchants.

During the skirmish at Hugli, Daud Khan Qureshi, the governor of Bihar sent his soldiers to Patna to seize all the property of the Company there and imprison the servants of the Company.  

When the English were at war with the Mughals in Bengal, Buzurg Omed Khan was the Governor of Bihar (Jan. 1683-Dec. 1692). The troubles in Bengal sent a wave of them into Bihar and the factors there did not thought it safe to reside at Patna, when they heard of Job Charnock leaving Hugli. Patna factory was plundered and Mr. Meverll (second at Patna factory) was put behind bars in 1684, for which Charnock demanded an indemnity of Rupees. 80,000. Also, Charles King (a sergeant at Patna) was imprisoned at Patna, while Braddyll, the chief of Patna factory was lucky enough to slip from Patna to Hugli and later to Dacca. Charles King was later rescued by giving Rupees 800 after the death of Buzurg Omed Khan. Thus the business of the English Company at Patna was once again closed down. This happened without the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's presence in the region because of his indulgence in the Deccan wars and having little time to give attention to a trifling matter in a distant province like Bihar.

After Buzurg Umaid khan, three governors, namely, Qayamuddin Mukhtar (1692-1694), Fidayi Khan (1694-1702) and Ibrahim khan (1702-1703) came to Bihar. The most remarkable events of their period, especially of Nawab Fidayi Khan was the revolt of Shobha Singh Zamindar in 1696, in Bengal and secondly the foundation of a new English east India Company in 1701. Both had relatively contradictory effects on the English Company already operating in Bihar.

When Shobha Singh rebelled, Prince Azimushan was the governor of Bengal. The English chief of Bengal, ordered Mr. Ralph Sheldon, the chief of Patna factory to

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103 C. R. Wilson, Early Annals ..., Vol. I, 98.
104 Hedges Diary, vol. II, CVII.
105 Ibid., CCLVI, Job Charnock letter to Surat, 9th Dec. 1686.
106 Ibid., CVII, CVIII, Charles Eyre letter dated 15th Jan 1695.
visit the prince with a nazar of 15 gold Mohars and 100 rupees. On the way, Ralph Sheldon and Teshmaker (English agent at Rajmahal) were captured and detained by the rebels along with goods worth rupees 20,000. Though the Mughal officials led by Zabardast Khan recovered most of the Company’s goods, but the Company had to bribe to Azimushan by the embassy of Walsh and Stanley to repress them.

However, the revolt of Shobha Singh was also a boon in disguise for the English Company as it provided the pretext for building a fortified settlement in the name of Fort William at Calcutta. Again in 1711, the consultation noted that,

“They hear from Patna factory that a rebel had plundered Chapra. A formidable rebel having plundered Chaprah on which the Nawab sending 2000 men to fight them they fled setting fire to all before then amongst the rest our peter godown by which this is feared we shall lose about 500 mounds.”

On the other hand the coming of new English Company created a competitive atmosphere. Both the Nawabs of Patna and Dacca tried to extract maximum possible gains from the confusion created from the coming of the two companies in the region. Each Company did its utmost to ruin the other; each hoisted the English flag and sent an embassy to contend for the Mughal Emperor’s patronage at his court while the local governors played off against the other, farming each Company alternatively and taking bribes impartially from both.

Between 1698 and 1703 the English passed through an internal convulsion as a result to which their position in relation to the Mughal governors and Subahdars was rendered weak and untenable. One of the policies of the new Company was to attempt to form alliances with important native rulers from whom it desired to procure the protection, permits and privileges so vital to their welfare. It was in this regard, early in the year, a prominent member of the British parliament William Norris, led an

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108 N.N.Raye, op.cit, 46.
110 Alfred Lyall, Rise and expansion of the..., 57.
112 Margverite Eyer Wilbur, The E.I.C. and the British Empire in the far East, O. U. P., California, 1945, 152.
embassy to the court of Aurangzeb and other princes to enlist their support for the new Company. But he failed in his work.

On the abrupt termination the Embassy of Sir William Norris, the Emperor had issued orders to capture and confine every European in his dominion. As a result, in the month of February 1702, the whole English settlement, at Patna and Rajmahal, with all their efforts, was seized by prince Azimushan to make good the damage done by the pirates.113 Among the English Traders, the first victim was the Old Company's servants who lost at Patna and Rajmahal a total of about 18,000 rupees.114 But as the value of the property seized was not sufficient to satisfy the claims of the merchants, the prince extended his operations to all the European factories. The Company servants were confined for 51 days in Jail, but later released on parole. On 30th march the order was extended to all the European factories and the loss of the English Company on this occasion amounted to 62,000 rupees.115 However, Bruce John opined that, on the whole, the prince behaved tactfully and leniently towards the English. The embargo on all European trade in Bihar and Bengal was soon afterwards withdrawn.116

When the Council at Bay heard about the death of Aurangzeb, they apprehended disturbance in the country. They directed their agents in the inland factories to move away to Calcutta.117 The Patna factory was left with a small number of Englishmen. But then also it was resolved to continue the function of the factory through agents, though with small investments.118 It was noted in the consultation that,

"They are much exercised in their mind as to what they shall do about the Patna factory. In the present state of country it is not safe to spend much money in keeping it up, and yet it is not wise to abandon it and make a small investment so as to get all things together to come away the first of the next

113 In 1695, on account of the seizure of two ships of the Mughals going to Jeddah and Mocha with pilgrims, by the pirates, the English factories were all laid under seize and a stop put to their trade, C. Stewart, op cit, 327.
115 Ibid, 357.
117 N.N.Raye, op cit, 120.
118 Consultation dated 19th January, 1708, C. R. Wilson, *Early Annals of ...,* Vol I, 293,
season if the affairs of the government do not appear better than at present." 119

In fact with all the difficulties and drawbacks the English Company looked upon the Patna residency, as valuable an establishment to be abandoned easily. 120 The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 though created confusion in the empire; it paved the way for the extension and firm control of the English Company in Bihar and Bengal. 121

Meanwhile, the war of succession had started. The appearance of Shah Alam at Patna made the countryside hostile for trade. The agents at Patna reported the movement of Prince Azam Shah and of the counter efforts of prince Azimushan to support the cause of his father, Shah Alam. They further reported that, Shah Alam seized the imperial treasury and had threatened to levy a tax on all the merchants. He also demanded a lakh of rupees as a contribution towards raise forces against Azam Shah. 122 The records of the Company mentioned that,

"Bad news was received from Patna on May 12th to the effect that the factory there was wretched. The sultan and his son, the prince had demanded 1 lakh rupees as a contribution towards raising forces. Lloyd and Cowthorp refused the money, so the prince had the English Vakil seized and also the other natives’ servants who belonged to the Company." 123

In December 1708, prince Azimushan who refused to set free his prisoner or to let the Company’s boats pass until he had received a bill of exchange for rupees 14,000 ruthlessly captured Mr. Cawthrope, the English agent at Rajmahal. 124

When the war of succession was over, Hussain Ali came to Patna as the de facto governor (1708-1710) in place of Prince Azimushan. When Emperor Bahadur Shah was at Delhi, a force under his son advanced towards Patna. In October, the pretender straining every nerve to get money to pay his troops extorted a large sum from all the merchants of Patna. It may be noted here that, in case of war of

119 Consultation dated 19th January 1708, Ibid, 293.
120 N.N.Raye, op cit, 123.
122 C. R. Wilson, Early Annals ..., Vol. I, 177-78.
succession there was a great chaos in the region and the local officials on the pretext of supporting the contenders, one or the other, collected large sums of money from all groups engaged in commerce.

In the year 1712, the war of succession again commenced and it was reported that, "During the revolution which took place in Mughal government the English merchants in Patna went in daily fear of being seized and plundered and were in the end glad to escape with the payment of rupees 22,000 to the prince and rupees 6,500 in presents to the Nawab of Patna and his officers."\(^{125}\)

Farukhsiyar was crowned at Patna after the war of succession was over and according to the custom, all the elites and well to do persons were ordered to visit him with some peshkash. The Consultation noted that, 'they are in fear that Farukhsiyar who is acknowledged king at Patna will force them to visit him with a Peshkash and that they are informed that some of his officers have acquainted him that by said pretense he might get 4-5 lakhs out of them (English and the Dutch). Also they are fearful that, when the new king’s son with his army come against the Patna king there will be plundering on both sides so that they must be obliged to leave that place, there being no safety in Patna for them'.

However, again, it was not the English Company only who had to face such ejection. The indigenous commercial groups faced the same set of fear and ejection. After enthroning himself at Patna, Farukhsiyar proceeded to compete for the throne at Delhi and collected a large force. Ahmed Beg, an old companion and favourite of Farukhsiyar collected a considerable force for the prince at Patna and worked for his new Master’s success with devotion and vigour.\(^{126}\) Levying money in the way of taxes from the bankers of Patna, among whom Manickchand was the chief,\(^{127}\) Farukhsiyar reduced the Subah of Bihar to his subjection.\(^{128}\) Due to the chaotic situation Calcutta council ordered the Patna factors to unload whatever goods they had in their hands and sends them to Calcutta and to not procure any other goods then what they were

\(^{125}\) Ibid, Vol. II, part I, LIX.
\(^{127}\) Abdul Karim, Mursid Quli Khan and his times, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1963, 98.
\(^{128}\) Ghulam Husain’s Riyas-us-Salatin, 269.
contracted for already.\textsuperscript{129} In 1712, letters were received from Mr. Hedges which noted that, "Augaruffa (Agha Rafi) the merchant with whom he was to have contracted for the peter was imprisoned by the order of the \textit{Diwan} who pretended that the goods Agha Rafi had brought from Patna belonged to Zoody Khan and Kinker."\textsuperscript{130} These incidents were in fact the prelude to the closing of the English factory at Patna in 1713.

Farukhsiyar was succeeded by Ghairat Khan as the governor of Bihar (1712-1715). It was in his governorship that, the English decided to withdraw their factory once again. Letters were sent to Patna from Calcutta council including orders for withdrawal of Patna factory and a speedy comply of the order.\textsuperscript{131} After the orders for the closure of the factory and winding of the investment procedure, it was decided to reduce the expenses at Patna establishment. The whole charge was reduced to rupees 159 only.\textsuperscript{132} But despite that it was resolved to continue the factory because there was a profit in it.

As the affairs of Patna city and its Hinterland were in a state of utter confusion, it was resolved to send Mir Jumla to look after the government and restore order in the administration of Patna.\textsuperscript{133} He was the governor of Bihar from 1715 to 1716. However, nothing substantial happened in his period and he was replaced by Sarbuland Khan who stayed in the office as \textit{Nawab} of Bihar for two years (1716-1718).

The English Company tried its best not to meddle in the local politics of the region as far as possible for its own benefits. The consultation noted in 1712, that,

"Agreed we write a letter to Patna forbidding them to give a muchalka and to let them know, that we cannot but wonder that they should believes we have been any ways assisting to Murshid Quli Khan since that it is not the business of merchants or adviseable for us to concern for us to concern

\textsuperscript{129} Consultation dated, 23\textsuperscript{rd} June 1712, C. R. Wilson, \textit{Early Annals...}, vol. II, part I, 58.
\textsuperscript{131} Consultation dated, 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1713, Ibid, Vol. II, part I, 132.
\textsuperscript{132} Consultation dated, 24\textsuperscript{th} December, 1713, Ibid, Vol. II, part I, 152.
\textsuperscript{133} Syed Hasan Askari, trans., Shiv Das Lakhani's \textit{Shahnama Munawar Kalam}, Patna, 1980, 7; in fact, considering Mir jumla, their greatest enemy, the Sayyid brothers demanded his removal from the capital and Farukhsiyar was obliged to accept the demand and Mir Jumla was granted the Subahdarship of Bihar and was sent to Patna, Karim, \textit{Mursid Quli khan...}, 53.
ourselves in the government we well knowing it must bring our masters affairs into trouble."134

Then also it never missed an opportunity to secure its position in case any political confusion prevailed in the region.

Though most of the problems mentioned above were faced equally by all sorts of commercial groups operating in Bihar, the English Company was the most vocal of those problems in its records. Also the English were constantly, especially in the eighteenth century looking for an opportune time to establish themselves as a powerful player in the region.

134 Consultation dated 7th July 1712, C. R. Wilson, Early Annal, Vol, II, part I, 64.