CONCLUSION

Bihar in the eighteenth century was a repository of change and continuity in various aspects of its polity and economy. Different forces, political as well as commercial, brought about a transition in the sphere of commerce, polity and in life of the people of Patna. The issue of change and continuity along with 'political rupture' was perfectly reflected in eighteenth-century Bihar. The race for larger gain brought about many changes in the structure and function of the East India Company. The East India Company was the forerunner in bringing change. Its right to trade in the province was, however, disrupted due to its defiance to the Nawab's authority. Commercial conflicts between the East India Company and the Nawab over the right conduct of trade resulted in the battles of Plassey and Buxar. The outcome was, however, in favour of the Company and grant of the *Diwani* was an added advantage to it. Earlier, it had monopoly only on saltpetre but after gaining political control opium was also brought under monopolistic control. Unlike saltpetre, monopoly over opium was not new as earlier, native merchants of Patna had enjoyed that privilege. Further, new systems like contract or agency were new to Indian commerce. They proved to be very powerful in consolidating the control of the Company over primary producers. Through these it succeeded in overcoming previous limitations and brought about better management to consolidate its rule. In the name of efficiency and regulations it successfully brought every sphere of commerce under control. The added political power at its disposal further advanced its aggression and consolidated its position. It succeeded in eliminating other European companies and subsumed indigenous players. The main features of commercial transition were direct participation of the state and its transformation into a principal trader. This characteristic was further effective in controlling markets and regulating money supply. Though the markets
were a substantial source of revenue they were under control of the zamindars. These changes, however, left the older system of commodity transaction unchanged and there was substantial continuity in the function of the markets. Next, it was in the sphere of money where it was urgently required to bring about reforms. The existing multiple currency system was not liked by the Company and the monopoly of shroffs remained a serious concern. Various attempts to bring uniformity in the currency met with failures. Finally, fixation of the rate of batta was thought to be the important method to check the shroffs' monopoly on exchange.

Hence, the transition was basically an interplay of politics and commerce. Political conflicts occurred out of commercial considerations and consolidation of the colonial polity was also aimed at imparting commercial uniformity. Various laws and regulations introduced by the Company were basically to fulfill the colonial need for high profits. Manifestation of this design reflected perfectly in its revenue administration. The main focus was on the maximisation of collection and proper implementation of regular methods and measures to bring every existing patch of land under its control. It was more about control and augmentation of revenue. Initially, due to its ignorance it relied on the natives but all throughout it remained apprehensive about the honesty of the native officers and zamindars. This suspicion led it to question the traditional institution of zamindars as the people with proprietary rights over land and land revenue. The Company, however, chose to deal with it differently by bringing zamindars into fixed contract. They always considered the entire system fraudulent and so, even though a change was necessary they could not entirely alter the existing machinery or basic nature of pre-colonial revenue institutions. They, however, tried to reconfigure it through direct participation in it. The fixing of contracts of periods for three, five or ten years was certainly a new
Conclusion

concept. The difference of *Juma* and *haasil* always mounted and the Company struggled to bridge that gap. The fixation of revenue for a longer period was the ultimate solution they could bring out with the hope of imparting permanence in the system. The hope, however, proved to be remote. In all this the commercial character of the city of Patna continued to be the main source of its stability. Against various odds it successfully maintained its growth. Being one of the important trading centres of the century it catered to the needs of merchants as well as rulers. The East India Company never tried to shift its base from Patna to anyplace else, unlike Bengal where the city of Calcutta took over the centrality of Murshidabad. Thus, as the eighteenth-century transition happened gradually from one stage to another, the Company while bringing about the changes, transformed itself—a process which helped in consolidating its position for the next one and a half centuries.