CHAPTER III

THE POLITICS OF TRANSITION

Politically, Bihar in the eighteenth century was a centre of attraction for all the leading actors of eighteenth century India, i.e. imperial court of Delhi, the Nawab of Bengal and the East India Company who had much to share in shaping the political contour of this province. For the imperial administration it was a politically strategic province due to its geographical situation between Bengal and the northern provinces of Allahabad and Awadh. It was a buffer state and having control of this region meant an almost complete command over the eastern limits of the empire. Secondly, for Bengal it was primarily an economic concern, for the revenue administration of Bihar was under its direct management. And, the East India Company’s commercial interest in this province placed it equally on the political as well as economic equations of stakeholders. Hence, since the very beginning of the eighteenth century the relationship of the court of Delhi, the Nawab of Bengal and the East India Company profoundly impacted the political fortunes of Bihar.

The eighteenth century was an era of optimisation in political, economic and social transactions in their respective regions. The core of these developments was basically the autonomy of distinct political and economic formation at the regional level.\(^1\) This feature induced a tangible connection between commerce and conquest in the Indian sub-continent, largely characterised by ‘adaptation and resilience’ against many inroads into its political and economic life.\(^2\) Though, the process of political decline of the Mughal Empire is often mistakenly quoted with the general decline of Indian


polity, it was not the case with the eastern part of the Mughal Empire. The emergence of Bengal under powerful Nawab, Murshid Quli Khan and Aliverdi Khan, and its further consolidation in due course of time certainly proved that political decline in the eastern region had not set in.\(^3\) And, Bihar too reflected the same, being under the rule of the Nawab of Bengal since 1733.

The year 1765, however, was a watershed in the history of India in general and Bengal and Bihar in particular. Grant of the *Divani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765 virtually established the rule of the Company in the eastern part of the Mughal Empire. The ‘political rupture’ in the wake of colonial intervention was equally and simultaneously felt in Bihar along with Bengal. On the pretext of protecting its commercial interest from local rulers and the French, the English East India Company resorted to military action against Siraj-ud-Daula and French East India Company which eventually established its territorial empire in the region.\(^4\)

The historiography on the colonial conquest, its motives and its mode of operation after its consolidation has various interpretations. The foremost among all is the crisis theory which believes that there were political and economic crises prevailing in eighteenth century India which let the inevitable happen. This is, however, proved wrong as eighteenth century Bengal was not in crises.\(^5\) Secondly, it is argued that the colonial conquest of India was basically a part of the larger process of expansion of the British Empire, both in polity and economy. The East India Company lost its thirteen colonies in America which virtually ended its empire in the Atlantic Ocean and made them realise the importance of south Asian trade and commerce. Hence,

\(^1\) Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline Eighteenth Century Bengal*, New Delhi, 1995, p. 2.


\(^5\) Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline Eighteenth Century Bengal*, pp. 2-3.
the political conquest of India was necessary to protect its commercial holdings which were highly vulnerable due to the extension of Anglo-French rivalry from Europe to Asia. The commercial holdings of south Asia were very important to sustain its economy at home and finance wars abroad. Therefore the Company’s conquest was not the simple reaction to the local encroachments to its factory establishments but part of larger process of empire building. The Company consciously drew legitimization from the mother country for its political behaviour in the sub continent. The British found it strange that the people had ‘difference of language and dissimilarity of manners’ so their responses took time to unfold. Initially the structure of Bengal’s complex polity made it impossible for them to establish a single system of authority or to formulate a uniform administration, which brought them many times in conflict with the local ‘political culture’. However, the form of governance which emerged afterwards was characterised by a situation of governing people whom British officials regarded as different and impossible to communicate with. Consequently, along with other parts of the world Bengal too experienced a ‘dramatic rupture in the political culture’ in the eighteenth century since the characteristic feature of this rupture was to ‘abandon local political and juridical traditions, and use the agency of the state to create stable regimes based on new principles of legitimacy’. 

The historiography, however, clarifies that it was not the polity of India but the British Empire which was in crisis. It is important to note that the crisis in Britain’s worldwide empire coincided with the political conquest of Bengal and Bihar. The lost of thirteen colonies in the Atlantic Ocean and vulnerability of commercial holdings in

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the Indian sub-continent created havoc in the mind of legislators at home and of the officials, of the Company, in the field. It was therefore agreed by the legislators to despatch immediately the Royal army to Madras for the assistance of the Company against the French. Deployment of the Royal army in the commercially viable region of south Asia legitimised the English India Company's existence as the representative of the British Empire acting on behalf of the same and responsible as well as accountable to the Crown for their loss and gain.

Keeping all the above views in consideration this chapter proposes to re-examine the determinants of British conquest in the context of Bihar. To elaborate on the political transition it basically seeks to trace how colonial intervention manifested in Bihar? Bihar was not a political concern for the colonial forces but an economic one and in Bihar the colonial forces had to face both the imperial forces as well as the Nawab.

The narrative of events is arranged chronologically under the two broad sections of pre and post Plassey phase since it was the period prior to the battle of Plassey which set in motion the military conquest of the province by the East India Company, and the post Plassey phase which prepared the ground for the final conquest.

PRE-PLASSEY PHASE (1700–1756)

BIHAR: EARLY TRANSITION FROM INDEPENDENCE TO SUBORDINATION

Beginning of the eighteenth century witnessed the last days of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who had been suffering from a depleting treasury and defiant regional states, trying to assert their independence. In this atmosphere of uncertainty in finance and polity he made two important appointments in the eastern region of the Empire. First, he appointed Murshid Quli Khan as the Diwan of Bengal for reorganising Bengal's revenue. Second his grandson, Prince Muhammad Azim, was made the
subadar of Bihar. The revenue remittance under Murshid Quli Khan produced the desired results and he could manage to send about 10 million rupees in the very first year of his appointment to the imperial treasury. Aurangzeb, impressed by the performance of Murshid Quli Khan, gave additional charge of revenue administration of Bihar to him in 1703. But the subadar, Prince Azim-us Shan and the newly appointed Diwan could not tolerate each other and due to regular confrontation of egos between them the Prince was recalled to the court in Delhi. But, in spite of his truncated rule the Prince had introduced many measures in different aspects of social, political and cultural front of the province. He got its capital Patna renamed after him as Azimabad in 1704-5. The Prince wanted to make Azimabad ‘a second Delhi’. He got many public buildings constructed and renovated, established charitable institutions and sarais (Rest house) and encouraged eminent scholars and skilled persons to come and settle in the town. He is said to have made administrative arrangements for division of the town into different wards, named after people of different communities living there, such as Lodikatra, Mughalpura, etc. and on the basis of professions practiced by different people such as Zargartola (embroidery workers) and Mir Shikar Toli (bird-hunters). Subsequently, due to war of succession in the wake of Aurangzeb’s death the Prince could not venture into anything else but got involved in it, scoring against his father’s (Bahadur Shah) enemy. Bahadur Shah emerged victorious and rewarded his son with the charge of Subah of Bihar again. This time Prince opted to stay out of the province and appointed Sayid Husain Ali

9 Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline Eighteenth Century Bengal*, p. 11.
Khan (the younger of the famous Sayid Brothers) in his place as his deputy to the Province.\textsuperscript{12}

With the rule of Husain Ali Khan there started an era of \textit{Naib Nizam} (deputy governorship) in Bihar. Husain Ali Khan administered the province well under the supervision of Farrukhisiyar, who was there at Dacca during that period. But things took a different turn when Bahadur Shah died in 1712. The Sayid brothers had emerged as one of the powerful sections of nobles who virtually played the role of kingmaker. Consequently, Jahandar Shah was enthroned in the court of Delhi in 1712-13 for a brief period before he was finally dethroned by Farrukhisiyar in 1713. In these years Nusrat Husain held the post of \textit{subadar} who was appointed by Jahandar Shah. He tried to reorganise the administration of the province but after the accession of Farrukhisiyar he was removed and Sayid Gairat Khan was appointed the new governor but before he could settle down with the daily responsibilities Mir Jumla took over the reins from him. But by then factions plagued the politics of the court in Delhi as well as in the province. Mir Jumla soon after returned to Delhi making Sarbuland Khan in charge of the governorship of the province. He also initiated few measures to control the administration of the province by himself and through his associates, and took strong steps in reorganising several important local offices including the \textit{Diwani} and \textit{Faujdar}.\textsuperscript{13}

With frequent change of rulers in the court of Delhi, appointments of \textit{subahdars} in the province too kept changing frequently. After Sarbuland Khan, Nusrat Yar Khan was the governor of Bihar but who succeeded him is not stated by the author of \textit{Siyar-ul-Mutakharin} one of the principal political witnesses of the century and one of the main

\textsuperscript{12} Muzaffar Alam, "Eastern India in the Early Eighteenth Century", p. 46.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 48-49.
sources of the time and the region. He declared his ignorance about the successor of Nusrat Yar Khan and recorded that Fakhr-ud-Daulah, brother of Roshan-ud-Daulah, obtained the *subadari* of Bihar in 1727-28 and held it for five years.\(^\text{14}\) Nusrat Khan was succeeded by Aqidat Khan and was replaced by Fakhru-ud-Daula.\(^\text{15}\)

The reign of Fakhr-ud-Daula was the turning point in the history of eighteenth century Bihar. He tried vigorously to control and manage the affairs of the province by campaigning against refractory zamindars. He invaded the area of Ghatwals of Palamau and Chotanagpur in 1730, and also led expeditions against the Ujjainiyas of Jagdispur (in Shahabad) with an army which included the local militia of Horli Singh of Mithila, Pahlwan Singh of Nokha and Tribhuwan Singh of Tikari. He promoted and encouraged new arrangements which had already been initiated earlier, and while doing so he insisted on dealing directly with zamindars or choosing the mediator himself. Fakhr-ud-Daula also tried to reorganise and control the Jagir administration in the province.\(^\text{16}\)

While undertaking administrative reforms Fakhr-ud-Daula came in conflict with many powerful Mughal tax-farmers and intermediaries. One among them was Shaikh Abdullah, a key figure in the administration of *suba* Bihar. He was *naib* of the governor and thus was regularly in touch with zamindar Khawaja Mutasim, brother of Samsam-ud-Daulah, who was the second powerful person in Patna. Fakhr-ud-Daulah imprisoned Khawaja Mutassim on charge of having misappropriated a huge sum of revenue pertaining to the treasury. Shaikh Abdullah fled to Ghazipur and took shelter under the jurisdiction of Burhan-ul-Mulk. In spite of his military successes Fakhr-ud-


\(^{16}\) Ibid., pp. 205-207.
Daula could not manage to hold the faith of his courtiers. There was growing discontent among dispossessed zamindars and their allies in the court who conspired against him and had him removed from the helm on the grounds of mismanagement. The Court in Delhi observing closely the political developments of Bihar realised that it would be better if Bihar was put directly under the government of Bengal, for it was becoming difficult to control these petty conflicts from Delhi. The court in Delhi with a view of better management decided to attach the administration of Bihar with Bengal and thus in 1730 Bihar was made a part of the Bengal Suba.\textsuperscript{17} Although the administrative structure and its political status remained the same but from then onwards it was Bengal which played the role of guardian of the province and unlike before governors were appointed and assigned to the affairs of Bihar from Bengal instead of Delhi.

Nawab Shuja-ud-Din appointed Aliverdi Khan as deputy governor of Bihar in 1733-34. Aliverdi Khan established order in the province, which had been highly disturbed owing to the activities of turbulent zamindars after Fakhr-ud-Daula’s dismissal and transfer of the administration to Bengal. The refractory zamindars were chastised with the help of the Ruhela Afghans under Abdul Karim Khan and in the campaign against them Bhojpuri zamindars of Shahabad, Raja Sunder Singh of Tikari and Kamgar Khan Mayi of Nurhat Samai and the Rajas of Bettiah and Bhanwarah were subdued. The semi independent tribe of the Chakwars of Sambho was suppressed. Aliverdi Khan after becoming the Nawab appointed Haibut Jung, his nephew and son-in-law, as the governor of Bihar. Haibat Jung remained there for eight years (1740-48) and the significant work he could do was the subjugation of Ujjainiya zamindars of

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 207.
Bhojpur, Raja Horli Singh and Babu Udwant Singh and defeated the Raja of Ramgarh.¹⁸

**MARATHA MENACE**

The political scenario of Bihar during the 1740s was plagued with few external political advances made by Maratha leaders. In a bid to oppose the Mughals, the Marathas regularly plundered the province of Bihar, Bengal and Orissa during the 1740s. First, it was Bhaskar Pandit who invaded the province in the 1740s but Haibat Jung and Saif Khan, faujdar of Purnea, managed to avert any serious damage. The second invasion under Raghujji Bhonsle in 1743 was more devastating. Peshwa Balaji chasing Raghuji at the request of the Mughal Emperor entered Bihar from the south and on the way he behaved very rapaciously and caused heavy damage to the province. Ahmad Khan Quraishi, faujdar of the area, tried to defend the fort of Ghauspur in Gaya district to contain the Peshwa but he failed. The fort was besieged and the town was plundered. Finally, Aliverdi Khan had to come to an agreement with the Marathas, and agreed to pay chauth for Bengal and Bihar. The incursions, however, continued and Marathas did not restrain but they received a decisive blow when they made their third attempt in the province in 1744. Bhaskar Pandit one of their front ranking leaders, was killed in that invasion. In 1745, Raghujji Bhonsle, however, came down to Futwah and took a heavy toll on the lives and wealth of Shiekhpura and other villages in the Tikari estate. This time Aliverdi Khan himself marched towards Bihar to check any further advances of Raghujji. They met near Son and fought near Muhib Alipur and at Bhagalpur. It ended with the retreat of the

¹⁸ ibid., pp. 208-9.
aggressor. The troublesome Marathas, however, remained a consistent threat to the tranquility of the region.\textsuperscript{19}

**AFGHAN UPRISING**

Along with Marathas Afghans too posed a serious threat to the political peace of the province. In 1748 Aliverdi Khan's ambitious general Mustafa Khan revolted. He was, in fact, disappointed as he had not got the deputy governorship of Bihar. The rebellion started with the plunder of Patna and capture of the fort of Monghyr. Haibat Jung restrained him with the help of few local nobles, including Raja Kiratchand and Ramnarain and local zamindar Sunder Singh of Tikari, Pahalwan Singh of Sasaram and Chainpur and Bharat Singh of Arwal. Mustafa was driven out of Bihar, but he soon re-entered Shahabad, with the help of few local zamindars, who were hostile to Haibat Jung, especially Udwant Singh Ujjainiya of Jagdishpur. But, he was defeated and killed near Jagdishpur. The Afghans shocked by the blow, treacherously murdered Haibat Jung in the open Durbar held in the famous *Chihil Satun* palace, the official residence of the subadar, followed by widespread plunder and loss of lives in the city of Patna during this period. Aliverdi Khan finally defeated the Afghans and their Maratha allies in the battle of Ranin Sarai and recovered the city, finally getting the situation under control.\textsuperscript{20} Thus, after several threats to its existence Aliverdi Khan succeeded in saving the province from political breakdown. The Maratha problem, however, persisted and finally Aliverdi Khan had to pay them off.

\textsuperscript{19} Ghulam Husain Tabatabai, *Siyar-ul-Muta'akhrin*, pp. 381-2.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, p. 385-89.
THE PLASSEY CONSPIRACY

There were multiple events leading to the conspiracy of Plassey and the period before it had witnessed similar disturbances in the polity of Bihar. Siraj-ud-Daula, before his succession to the seat of Nawab in 1756, had attacked the city of Patna in June 1750. Jankiram, the deputy governor of Bihar had thwarted his attempt. Jankiram held the office of Naib-Nazim till 1752 when he was succeeded by Raja Ramnarain. Raja Ramnarain was one of the most successful governors of the province. He maintained good relations with all the powerful people in the province, most importantly with the Company which later on in the period became his protector. From the very beginning of his rule Siraj-ud-Daula was disliked by many people across the political and commercial arena. The house of Jagat Seth, the most influential banking house and non-political entity of eighteenth century Bengal, was one of them who disliked the Nawab the most. The Nawab was regularly on the hunt for finding fault with anybody who interfered in his decisions and his threatening policies towards merchants and traders kept them in constant fear of losing their wealth to him. On the other hand, the Nawab had further alienated his old courtiers with his new appointments. It caused great disappointment to the ambitious nobles who saw their future being threatened by the Nawab and Mir Jafar was one among them.

The British East India Company was also in the same disgruntled position. Since the Nawab was very much against the malpractices of the Company officials in their private trade, the Company could not bear it anymore because it thought it had the right to do business in that manner as it had been granted this privilege by the imperial centre where the local ruler had no role of interference. He did not approve of the

22 Ibid.
misuse of *dustucks* by the Company’s servants in their private trade. The majority of the members of the Council in Calcutta were not agreeable to the demand of the Nawab to stop that practice. These practices had been damaging the interests of indigenous merchants of the province and of the government exchequer, something that the Nawab was determined in his cause to stop. The English officers, however, argued that they had got permission from the supreme authority above the Nawab i.e. the Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar’s firman of 1716-17, which had granted exemption from payment of duties on exports and imports of the East India Company.  

Rallying around this threat from the Nawab, the Company along with other disgruntled parties hatched a conspiracy to remove him from the office and install somebody more amenable on the *masnad*. The role of the Company certainly added an extra feature to it. In Bihar, the Patna traders Omichand and Khwaja Wazid who had close links with the Company were taken into confidence by the conspirators. But they had differences with the conspirators of Bengal, i.e. Jagat Seths and Mir Jafar. In fact, the Jagat Seths and Mir Jafar had no trust in them because they did not want others to take any advantage but as the English had confidence in them so they conceded but did not divulge much about the plot to them. Eventually, the conspirators succeeded and Siraj-ud-Daulah was defeated and deposed. But the whole political scenario had changed after the battle of Plassey, contrary to the calculation of the conspirators Jagat Seths and Mir Jafar, the East India Company emerged to be the next power determinant in the province and new Nawab Mir Jafar became a puppet in their hands.

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21 Ibid.

POST- PLASSEY PHASE

THE ROAD TO BUXAR

The impact of Plassey on Bihar was, however, negligible. The post Plassey arrangement made the English presence in the province more pronounced and they started penetrating deep into the internal politics of the region after their recent victory and upgraded military strength. The political interference of the Company became more aggressive, under Clive, in the next few years. First, he managed to secure the most coveted privilege of having monopoly over saltpetre trade and larger access to the polity of the region by the newly appointed Nawab Mir Jafar. Second, there was the patronage to the Deputy Governor, Raja Ram Narayan, who was not in the good books of the new Nawab but due to Clive’s ‘assurance of assistance and favour’ he regained his position. On 23rd February 1758 a ‘darbar’ was held at Patna and Mir Jafar formally nominated Miran as Governor of Bihar with Raja Ram Narayan as his deputy.25 It was, however, indicated that the appointment of Miran ‘was merely nominal, not derogating from the authority of Ram Narayan who continued to be responsible to the Nabab [Nawab] alone, but rendering him [Miran] liable to some additional presents’. Clive also announced the raising of a third battalion of sepoys chiefly from Bhojpur area recruiting mainly ‘fine athletic’ men.26

The Prince and the Province of Bihar

After his accession to the masnad Mir Jafar found it difficult to establish a stable administration. The foremost trouble he faced was the attack of Shahzada Ali Gauhar,
who had proclaimed himself Emperor under the title of Shah Alam II in December 1759 and had invaded Bihar not once but thrice consecutively from 1759 to 1761. To add more to the worries of the new Nawab, the Prince was joined by M. Jean Law, French factor, and his men and also by refractory zamindars of the region like Pahalwan Singh and Kamgar Khan.\(^{27}\)

Shah Alam besieged Patna in 1759 and provincial forces were on the verge of collapse, right at that moment the Company forces under Clive stepped in and fought tactfully to oust the imperial forces.\(^{28}\) Again, towards the end of 1759 and the beginning of 1760 the Prince invaded Bihar and proclaimed himself Emperor of India after the death of his father. This time local zamindars, Pahalwan Singh and Kamgar Khan, joined him with 5000 men. Raja Ram Narain, the Naib Nazim, of the suba (1758-61) tried in vain to stop the imperialist forces at Masumpur, the arrival of reinforcements under Captain Caillaud, finally, brought the situation under control. The English with their full fledged participation in local conflicts directly confronted the Mughal Emperor. British troops under Major Knox compelled the Emperor to raise the siege of Patna and later captured him.\(^{29}\)

In addition to the above external military threat there was another set of troubles from within plaguing the court of the Nawab. During 1759-60 the greatest part of the Nawab’s army and the English forces was at Patna to oppose the Prince. The Nawab’s army consisted as usual of a great number of undisciplined soldiers who were never regularly paid. Due to ill-management the financial burden fell on the troops who were for a long time without pay. It was worsened by the inability of the Nawab to do

\(^{28}\) NAI, *HPP, Secret Committee*, 22nd February to 15th March 1758, Letter Patna to Calcutta, 3rd March 1758.  
\(^{29}\) Ibid.
something positive in this regard.Troops became unruly and there was regular plunder and desertion by them out of sheer frustration. The Company in this situation remained watchful to their developments. The English troops, were also running in arrears. The Nawab failed on both counts as he could not pay his own troops and also failed to pay a sum of one lac of rupees stipulated for the maintenance of the English troops. The revenues of most of the provinces were withheld by the zamindars. In Calcutta, poor state of the treasury and continuous drain of money forced the English East India Company to stop further investment. The Company regretted its alliance with the Nawab and accused him for the prevailing crisis in the region.

The situation in Murshidabad became critical when the palace of the Nawab was surrounded by the discontented troops. Their anguish translated into something very tumultuous attacking the Nawab. At this time Mir Qasim, son-in-law of the Nawab, came to his rescue. He made an immediate payment of three lacs rupees to his troops and promised to clear their arrears after getting an assurance of being the successor of the masand of Bengal. The Company stepped into this chaos to score its points. Since the Company was also financially sick and consistent wars took heavy tolls of its strength, it thought it was an opportune time to find a saviour who could not only take the whole responsibility but also bring them relief from the prevailing crisis. Accordingly, the Company proposed Mir Qasim all assistance if he secured to the Company revenue proportional to the increased military expenses brought upon them by their connection with the Nawab. In return they would help to put an end to the war in Bengal either by a decisive action or by entering into an alliance with the

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31 Ibid., pp. 275-77.
32 Ibid., pp. 280-81.
Prince to support his pretentions to the throne of Delhi. Mir Qasim readily agreed and conceded to cede to the Company revenues of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong an yearly amount of fifty lacs rupees provided he would be appointed to the vacant office of the Nawab’s deceased son and recognised as the successor of the Nawab. 33

The Nawab sensing the approaching threat to his life and office reacted strongly and started an assassination campaign against those who supported his opponents’ cause. Since the same time the English as well as Mir Qasim were busy in handling the Shahzada and trying to get Patna secured, it gave enough time to the Nawab to carry out his designs. But he soon discovered he could not continue for long as there was pressure from all sides. Most importantly, the role of the Company was determining the fate of the Nawab and it was known to him that Mir Qasim had all support of the Company in being made the next Nawab. Eventually, there was second siege on the Nawab’s Palace and it was almost a coup against the Nawab who finally agreed to send Mir Qasim the seals and all the royal insignia, provided he would agree to take whole charge of the government upon him and to discharge all the arrears due to the troops and to pay the usual revenues to the King. Subsequently, he was relieved from all the responsibilities and was deported out of Bengal. The government of Bengal at the instigation of Holwell, the acting Governor of the Company in Bengal replaced Mir Jafar. Mir Qasim, was made Nawab of Bengal in October 1760. 34

In his second attack Shah Alam II was captured and taken to Patna. It was there that Mir Qasim got royal confirmation of his Subadari from the captured Emperor with the help of the English East India Company. 35 Thus, the English with their shrewd

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33 Ibid., pp. 283-85.
34 Ibid., pp. 290-94.
35 Ibid.
tactics legitimised their act of replacement of the Nawab as well as their engagement in the local politics. In his letter Col. Carnac while observing the situation remarked that the Prince as well as the Nawab were 'more an object of pity than of fear' and the sovereignty of the king from now on got underestimated. The period between the battle of Plassey and Buxar was very significant in formulating the Company's power vis-à-vis native powers and the Mughal Emperor. The Company informally through its military feats proclaimed itself the guardian of local peace and politics. Technically, its military prowess over the local forces came in handy to assert its position as one of the powerful determinants of politics.

Mir Qasim wanted to be a real ruler, not a mere figurehead with the power of the English supporting his throne. Contrary to the expectations of the Company, Mir Qasim proved to be more ambitious; from the outset he took the onus of reorganising the affairs of the province. He started checking violations of law. He did not allow any body to surpass his authority and brought everybody under strict vigilance. He realised that there should be three-pronged development and up-gradation required to enhance the power of the Nawab. First it was the treasury, second the military and third the aristocracy.

There were no regular payments to the treasury from the refractory zamindars and large arrears were due on them. Mir Qasim forced them to pay off the arrears and also caught hold of corrupt officials who had been mismanaging the finance, foremost among them being Raja Ram Narayan. An Armenian, Gurgin Khan was appointed as the military head to reorganise the military on the model of European armies. A good number of English sepoys were recruited. He promoted the manufacture of flint

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36 NAI, HPP, SC, 15th January to 12th November 1761, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 6th March 1761.
muskets and guns at Monghyr, which was then a very important centre for such work. He strengthened the fortifications of the city of Patna.\textsuperscript{38} Last but not the least the refractory zamindars, particularly those of Bhojpur who had been a serious threat to any ruling powers, proved again the same. Mir Qasim summoned them to attend the court. Buniad Singh and Fateh Singh obeyed and were arrested due to their past defiance. Kamgar Khan escaped with his troops into the hills of Ramghar and Bishun Singh of Siris Kutumba fled to Benaras. To make his operation more forceful Mir Qasim sent special troops under different chiefs against other refractory zamindars. In 1761, he himself marched towards Shahabad with a large force. Pahalwan Singh and some other zamindars of Shahabad fled from their base and took shelter at Ghazipur in the territory of Raja Bulwant Singh, zamindar of Banaras. Mir Qasim brought Shahabad under his direct control and appointed his own officers for its administration. Further advancing his actions towards these disturbing elements he also led an expedition against the Raja of Bettiah who had shown an attitude of arrogance. The Raja was subdued and his fortress was captured in 1762.\textsuperscript{39}

As a result those who had supported Mir Qasim during the coup now turned against him. His move against Raja Ram Narain, a close ally of the Company, proved to be more disastrous in his relation with the Company. He deposed and imprisoned Rama Narain on charges of mismanaging the account balance and was ordered to be drowned in the Ganges at Monghyr in 1763. The Company openly came out in his defence him and helped him to escape.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{38} NAI, \textit{HPP, SC}, 15th January to 12th November 1761, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 2nd October 1761.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Henry Vansittart, \textit{A Narrative of the Transactions}, p. 308.
Mir Qasim’s self rejuvenating policies were finally the last straw for the English East India Company when he questioned their commercial practices. Warren Hastings’ and Vansittart’s efforts to negotiate on that failed drastically and it ended in war. It was instigated by some of the Company officials like Mr. Ellis, Chief of the English factory at Patna. He particularly misbehaved with the Nawab’s authority and made ‘him lose in respect and honour in the eyes of the people’. The differences between the two parties intensified, Vansittart tried to reconcile and met the Nawab at Monghyr on 30th October 1762 but could not succeed in bringing about normalcy.41

There was an agreement on certain conditions of private trade being carried on by the Company’s servants. Those were, however, not accepted by other members of the Council and they continued to demand their privilege on the use of the dustuck and other similar practices. The differences became irreconcilable and clash between the two became inevitable. On 25th May 1763 Mir Qasim captured some boats carrying some implements, and Ellis, Chief of Patna, seized Patna in reaction to this on 25th June.42 The Nawab’s troops besieged the English at Patna but they could not contain them and the English forces succeeded in crossing the river Ganges and retaliated. The Nawab was defeated in three engagements at Suti, Giria and Udhuanala. On the following day Major Adams the victor of Udhuanala, captured Rajmahal and then marched towards Monghyr as it was reported that the English prisoners in Patna were massacred at the behest of the Nawab. Thereafter the English recovered Patna and the aged Mir Jafar was reinstated on the masnad of Murshidabad in July 1763.43

41 Ibid., pp. 308-9.
42 NAI, HPP. Secret Committee, OC, 18th July 1763, No.1 (A).
43 Henry Vansittart, A Narrative of the Transactions, p. 316.
The English forces quashed any further attempts of the deposed Nawab to resort to any offensive and the latter was also deserted by his own contingents. The English emerged victorious at the clash near Udhuanala in 1763 and on hearing this Mir Qasim retreated towards Monghyr via Champanagar near Bhagulpur and from there he left for Patna. The English army under Major Adams, accompanied by Mir Jafar kept on chasing him and before reaching Patna captured the fort of Monghyr in October 1763. The deposed Nawab realising that he could no longer possibly resist the advancing forces of the English and the Nawab left Bihar for Awadh.44 There he formed an alliance with the Nawab of Awadh and Emperor Shah Alam II to make a final assault on the Company. Early in 1764 the allies reached the borders of Bihar. But they suffered a reverse at the hands of joint forces of Nawab Mir Jafar and English commander Carnac, in the battle of Patna. Finally, in Buxar on 23rd October 1764 the allied troops of Mir Qasim, Sujah-ud-Daulah and Emperor Shah Alam II were completely crushed by the English forces under Hector Munro and were chased out of Bihar.

It was a decisive victory for the English. The Treaty of Allahabad in 1765, signed between the Company and Shah Alam-II formally led the foundation of the colonial Empire in the region by granting Diwani rights of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

The Firman reads as:

At this happy time our royal Firmaund, indispensably requiring obedience is issued; that whereas, in consideration of the attachment and services of the high and mighty, the noblest of exalted nobles, the chief of illustrious warriors, our faithful servants and sincere well-wishers, worthy of our royal favors, the

English Company, we have granted them the Dewanny of the Provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, from the beginning of the Fussul Rubby of the Bengal year 1172 as free gift and ultumgau, without the association of any other person, and with an exemption from the payment of the customs of the Dewanny, which used to be paid to the Court. It is requisite that the said Company engage to be security for the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees a year for our royal revenue, which sum has been appointed from the Nabob Nudjum-ul-Dowla Behauder, and regularly remit the same to the royal Circar; and in this case, as the said Company are obliged to keep up a large Army for the protection of the Provinces of Bengal, &c., we have granted to them whatsoever may remain out of the revenues of the Provinces, after remitting the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees to the royal Circar, and providing for the expenses of the Nizamut. It is requisite that our royal descendents, the Viziers, the bestowers of dignity, the Omrahs, high in rank, the great Officers, the Muttaseddeed of the Dewanny, the managers of the business of the Sultanut, the Jaghirdars and Croories, as well the future as the present, using their constant endeavours for the establishments of this our royal command, leave the said office in possession of the said Company, from generation to generation, for ever and ever. Looking upon them to be assured from dismission or removal, they must regard them as excused and exempted from the payment of all the customs of the Dewanny and royal demands. Knowing our orders the subject to be most strict and positive, let them not deviate from.

Further, there were separate articles in the agreements specifying the mechanism for transactions of revenue as follows,

The nobob Nudgum-ul-Dowla agrees to pay His Majesty out of the revenues of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, the sum of twenty-six lakhs of Rupees a year, without any deduction for batta on the bills of exchange, by regular monthly payments amounting to Rupees 2,16,666-10-9 per month; the first payment to commence from the 1st of September of the present year; and the English Company, in consideration of His majesty's having been graciously pleased to grant them the Dewanny of Bengal, &c., do engage themselves to be security for the regular payment of the same. It shall be paid month by month from the factory at Patna to Rajah Shitabroy, or whomsoever His Majesty may think

proper to nominate that it may be forwarded by him to the Court. But in case
the territories of the aforesaid Nobob should be invaded by any foreign enemy,
deduction is then to be made out of the stipulated revenues, proportionable to
the damage that may be sustained.46

The grant of Diwani was a free gift to the Company for the life time; the highlights of
the Firman were exemption from customs; realization of revenue and its security with
proper army in the purpose. It was significant for the Company to maintain the troops
on the pretext of securing revenue. The ruler of Hindustan accepted the Company
which firmly legitimised its position as the authentic political power with vast
territorial possession at its disposal. The Company became the acting Diwan. The East
India Company became the virtual ruler of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Though the
formal administration was left with the native ruler and the Company chose to be a de
facto ruler of the region.

THE NEW REGIME

Under the Mughal administration Bihar was ruled by two authorities, the Nawab or
Nazim and the Diwan. The former exercised executive functions, while the latter was
responsible for fiscal administration and civil justice. This difference, however,
disappeared in Bengal after 1707. Since the grant of Diwani pronounced it clearly that
the Company would be the sole authority in the matter of revenue administration, it
practically ended the previous mechanism. The Company decided that the command
of the army and receipts of the revenues would be under its jurisdiction and the law
and order would be under the Nawab. The Company, however, put revenue collection
under the Nawab’s responsibility. Since the Company was aware of its ignorance
about the system, it kept the native agencies intact in the lower level of revenue

46 Ibid., p. 244.
administration where the collection was done. After acquiring Diwani the Company declared that,

...it was not thought prudent, either by the local government, or the directors, to vest the immediate management of the revenue, or the administration of justice, in the European servants. It may indeed appear doubtful whether the European servants at this time, generally possessed sufficient knowledge of the civil institutions and the interior state of the country, to qualify them for the trust. 47

Shitab Rai was appointed as Naib Diwan to look after the revenue collection. Clive in 1765 pensioned off Kazim Khan and allowed Dhiraj Narain to work with Raja Shitab Rai as Diwan. Early in 1766, a council with three members comprising Middleton, Chief of Factory, Dhiraj Narain and Shitab Rai was appointed to implement and monitor the revenue collection. In the following year Dhiraj Narain was removed and Shitab Rai made the Company’s Naib-Diwan of Bihar. The same year Thomas Rumbold was appointed Chief of Patna factory. Rumbold and Shitab Rai carried out the revenue administration till 1769 when the former left for England. After his departure James Alexander worked with Shitab Rai. 48 The situation, however, deteriorated under the rule of Clive’s two successors as Governors of Bengal, Mr. Verelst and Mr. Cartier. Richard Becher, servant of the Company in Bengal wrote to the Court of Directors that,

It must give pain to an Englishman to have reason to think that since the accession of the Company to the Diwani, the condition of the people of this country has been worse than it was before; and yet I am afraid...this fine country which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government, is verging towards its ruin... 49

47 James Grant, The Fifth Report From the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company, Vol. 1, Madras, 1866, p. 3 (Hereafter Grant, The Fifth Report).
48 NAI, HPP, SC, 31st January to 12th March 1769, Letter from Calcutta to Patna, 23rd February 1769.
49 NAI, HPP, SC, 20th March to 5th June 1769, Letter from Calcutta to Patna, 24th May 1769.
To add more to their worries there was drastic famine during 1769-70 which caused large scale loss of lives and wealth. Thousands of people perished due to starvation and the government virtually remained a silent spectator to the situation. Alexander, the Chief of Patna wrote to Calcutta in January 1770,

To judge from the city of Patna the interior of the country must be in a deplorable condition. From forty to sixty have died every day for these ten days past. the depopulation of the interior part of the country is more rapid than will be imagined by any person who has not been witness to it. By this time the miseries of the poor increased in such a manner that no less than 150 have died in a day at Patna.\(^{50}\)

A letter from Bengal to the Court of Directors, dated 9th May 1770 recorded that,

In the famine which has ensued, the mortality and the beggary exceed all description. About one-third of the inhabitants have perished in the plentiful province of Purnea, and in other parts the misery is equal.\(^{51}\)

Mr. Ducarel, Supervisor of Purnea, reported that,

Purnea, which was once a plentiful country, retains now nothing but the name of its former abundance. The distress of the poor is now beyond description, hardly a day passes over without 30 or 40 people dying. ...The Gunge, called Allumgunge ...has declined greatly by reason of the considerable decrease of inhabitants during the last famine, a great part of the town having become a jungle, and literally a refuge for wild beasts.\(^{52}\)

This appalling situation was aggravated by the mismanagement of administration and selfish behaviour of the English servants of the Company. The Court of Directors remarked that,

\(^{50}\) NAI, HPP. SC, 29th March to 12th June 1770, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 3rd April 1770.

\(^{51}\) NAI, HPP. SC, 20th March to 5th June 1769, Letter from Calcutta to the Court of Directors, 9th May 1769.

\(^{52}\) NAI, HPP. SC, 29th March to 12th June 1770, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 28th April 1770.
...the public distress turned into a source of private profit. As part of the charge
sets forth that the ryots were compelled to sell their rice to these monopolizing
Europeans, we have reason to suspect that they could be no other than persons of
some rank in our services; otherwise, we apprehend that they would not have
presumed of having influence, sufficient to prevent an enquiry into their
proceedings.\footnote{NAI, \textit{HPP. SP}, 29th June to 9th October 1771, Letter from Calcutta to Patna, 22nd August 1771.}

The province of Bihar along with Bengal suffered drastically under the dual
government. The responsibilities at the hands of the Nawab were devoid of any real
power which was paralysed by the Company's presence in every sphere of
governance. The Company also realised that it would ruin itself if things would
remain in the hands of the native. After realising this the Company appointed
European supervisors to look after revenue matters in the lower level. In June 1770
supervisors were appointed for each district of Monghyr, Saran, Champaran,
Shahabad, Tirhut and Rohtas. The district of Patna remained under the immediate
charge of the Chief of Patna. A Comptrolling Council of Revenue was established for
Bihar and Bengal separately and the principal officers were stationed at Patna and
Murshidabad, respectively. The Murshidabad Council, however, had supreme
authority over both Bihar and Bengal. The Council consisted of three members and
their focus was to supervise the office of the Supervisor and implement the policies of
the Company rule.\footnote{NAI, \textit{HPP. SC}, 29th March to 12th June 1770, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 28th April 1770.}

In 1770, appointment of the Comptrolling Committee of Revenue at Patna comprising
James Alexander as President and Robert Palk and George Vansittart as members was
the first step in this regard to check any further deterioration of the situation. The
maximum rent was fixed at 9/16 of the produce due to complaints about heavy
exactions of the rent by collectors. The appointment of Warren Hastings as Governor
of Bengal further brought significant changes in the administration. After an observation period of two years the Company realised that it should take over the complete administration then only the main objective of regularizing revenue administration could be achieved. In 1772 the Court of Directors expressed their intention to 'stand forth as Diwan' and ordered the removal of Shitab Rai. Accordingly in 1772 the services of Muhammad Reza Khan and Shitab Rai were terminated and the Comptrolling Councils of Revenue at Patna and Murshidabad were abolished. Warren Hastings' desire to demolish the influence of Shitab Roy and Muhammad Reza Khan was main reason behind this move. The Khalsa or the chief Revenue office was put under the direct control of the Company. Shitab Rai was suspended on charges of corruption, misappropriation and mismanagement of government money during the famine and was arrested. He was deported to Calcutta but he was not found guilty and was acquitted of the charges of embezzlement. He was reinstated in his office, but soon fell seriously ill and offered his son, Kalyan Singh, as his successor to the Company's service. Warren Hastings appointed Kalyan Singh as Diwan of Bihar in 1773. He was on an annual salary of 50,000 Rupees but was not given the allowance of 300,000 which Shitab Rai was allowed to receive. Kheyali Ram and Sadhu Ram were appointed as Naib Diwans under him.

The Provincial Council of Revenue was formed to look after the revenue matters. George Vansittart and then Thomas Lane remained the President of the Provincial Council of Revenue till 1775. Philip Milner Dacres took over the responsibility of the Patna Council in 1775. Isaac Sage succeeded Dacres at the expiry of the five-year

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55 NAI, HPP. SP, 3rd January to 25th June 1772, Letter from Calcutta to Patna, 7th February 1772.
57 Ibid.
58 NAI, HPP. SP, 12th July to 20th November 1772, Letter from Calcutta to Patna, 19th October 1772.
revenue settlement and he was relieved by Evan Law in 1777 and remained in that post till 1780. In 1781 William Maxwell became the revenue Chief of Patna.

In 1781 the Provincial Council of Revenue was abolished owing to ineffective administration and unsatisfactory results. The whole of Bihar was farmed out to Kalyan Singh, who carried that with the help of his Naib Kheyali Ram. The revenue collections, however, fell short of the stipulated installments and by the end of 1781 Kheyali Ram was thrown into prison for being in arrears. On account of the occasional obstructions of revenue chiefs, Kalyan Singh also could not successfully collect the revenues in the parganas entrusted to him. One estate after another was taken away from him and placed under direct management, until John Shore came to Patna in 1783 and made a new settlement. In 1783 another famine threatened Bihar and as a preventive measure among other things, the Government sanctioned the building of a huge granary at Patna and the Gol Ghar of Patna was built in 1786.

In 1785 the Board of Revenue was constituted to undertake complete management of the revenue. In July 1787 the office of the Chief of Revenue was abolished and Thomas Law was appointed Collector of the district of Bihar with headquarters at Gaya. It was decided that the supervisors would be now designated as Collectors and vested with some executive authority required for dispensing their obligations. The Collectors were made directly responsible to the President and Council who had now become the Board of Revenue. The President and Council were to act as Board of

59 WBSA, GGC, 5th January to 15th February 1782, Letter from Patna to Governor-General in Council, 13th February 1782
60 WBSA, GGC, 25th February to 31st March 1784, Letter from Patna to Governor-General in Council, 22nd March 1784.
62 WBSA, BR, 11th February to 21st May 1787, Letter from Governor-General in Council to Patna, 22nd April 1787.
Revenue when sitting jointly in the revenue department. The President and Council constituted a committee to carry the settlement and the headquarters of each district would be filled with the assistance of the Collector and a native Diwan subordinate to him.\(^63\)

Thus, with these initiatives and establishments of new institutions, foundation of the district administration was laid in India. It was further systematised by appointing a Collector as the head of each district supervising the revenue as well as judicial and executive administration directly accountable to the government at Fort William. The districts of Bhagalpur, Tirhut, Rohtas, Saran and Champaran, Monghyr, Rajmahal and Purnea were constituted into Collectorships.

**District Administration**

Since revenue collection was the primary motive of the Company government, it tried various ways to excel in it. A Committee of Revenue was constituted with four members, David Anderson, John Shore, Charles Croftes and Samuel Charter in 1785-86.\(^64\) The object of this committee was to centralise the administration of revenue and bring collections under immediate control of the government at Calcutta. It was, however, realised by the Committee that this centralisation would not be functional until there was a proper district agency to take responsibility and be accountable to it.

Warren Hastings had tried to form one in 1772 but it was not accepted by the Board of Directors. The main confusion was over the selection of heads in this system. The Committee was not sure about who to give the responsibility to administer the district, the native Indian *naib* or the European Collector. John Shore and other Company

\(^63\) WBSA, *BR*, 15th March to 29th April 1786, Letter from Calcutta to Chief of Patna, 6th April 1786.

\(^64\) WBSA, *BR*, 4th January to 10th January 1786, Letter from Governor-General in Council to Calcutta, 4th January 1786.
officers favoured the latter and in 1786 it was finally decided that a general plan of
district administration would be formed and the European Collector would be its head,
handling all the matters of revenue and judiciary.\textsuperscript{65}

The Collector's office received substantial boost under the regime of Cornwallis. Due
to increase in the affairs of revenue as well as other related matters the Governor-
General was imposed additional responsibilities of civil-judge and the Collector was
ordered to play the magistrate's role.\textsuperscript{66} It was, however, felt that these would mar the
productivity of the Collector so in the 1790s, separate civil courts with separate judges
were appointed to take care of the civil suits emerging from revenue and property
disputes. The Collector was now only responsible for the settlement and collection of
revenue but he was supervised by the judge of the civil court who also combined in his
office of the duties of a magistrate. These reforms in the sphere of revenue
administration were basically aimed at isolating zamindars. It was, however, reversed
when the Permanent Settlement was conducted directly with the zamindars. The
immediate impact of it was exhibited in the restriction over the power of the Collector
who could earlier take action over the oppression carried out by zamindars while
exacting the revenue.

The Company was interested in bringing reforms in the sphere of judicial
administration too. Hence it established two courts: Diwani adalat and Faujdari adalat
in each of the Collectorships. The Collector was made head of the former to supervise
and the latter was put under the native judges. The Collector was the supreme

\textsuperscript{65} WBSA, \textit{BR}, 2nd February to 12th March 1786, Letter from Board of Revenue to Calcutta, 2nd
February 1786.

\textsuperscript{66} WBSA, \textit{GGC}, 21st May to 15th October 1780, Letter from Governor-General to Patna, 9th August
1780.
authority in both the adalats. His objective was to ensure the proper observance of judicial regulations and recording the judicial proceedings.\footnote{NAI, \textit{HPP, SP}, 11th June 3rd September 1772, Letter from Calcutta to Patna, 21st August 1772.}

\textit{The Acts}

In 1773 the Regulating Act was passed to bring new dimensions to the Company governance. Under the Act it was provided that the Governor had to be Governor-General with four members in his Council. It was a kind of centralisation formulated to handle affairs of commerce as well as administration of the acquired territories. The other Presidencies of Madras and Bombay had to be accountable and subordinate to the Presidency of Bengal. The presidency of Bengal had the final decision over all matters of peace and war and the Governor-General enjoyed the right of a decisive vote in the Council. The Act also provided that there would be a Supreme Court at Fort William to look after the jurisdiction over European citizens residing in the Presidency and working in the Company.\footnote{NAI, \textit{HPP, SS}, 12th October to 31st December 1773, Board’s Minute, 30th December 1773.}

The newly conceived set up progressed gradually with another modification with the India Act of 1784 which enhanced the power of the Governor-General and reduced the strength of the Council to three. Further in 1786 he was given the power of veto, though he was not supposed to use it except in the time of emergencies. On the other hand the administration of Provincial Council was made more responsible and given the judicial responsibility to it. In 1780 a separate provincial Diwani adalat was formed to handle the extra burden of the province. A total of eighteen such adalats
were established out of which seven (Patna, Bhagalpur, Darbhanga, Lauriya, Chitra, Raghunathpur, and Tajpur) were located in Bihar.69

The criminal administration of Bihar which had still continued in the hands of the Naib-Nazim of Bengal was taken over by the Company in 1790.70 The first Magistrate of Patna was Charles Francis Grand whose jurisdiction did not extend beyond the city and Bankipore police circle. In 1792 he had to make way for Henry Douglas who remained in the same station for twenty years and subsequently as a judge of the Provincial Court of Appeal at Patna. Owing to the difficulty of the magistrate of Bihar in dealing with the evil of gangs of robbers around Patna from his distant station at Gaya, the jurisdiction of the Magistrate of Patna was extended in 1798 to cover the area of about four hundred square miles from Futwah to Maner in the west and to Naubatpur in the south.71

In 1772 a faujdari adalat was constituted to dispense criminal justice by Warren Hastings. Under this scheme fourteen thanas, each under a Faujdar, were established in Patna, Bhagalpur, Purnea, Rajmahal and Kharagpur. Altogether twenty-three courts of faujdari adalat were established in 1776.72 Daroga was head of these courts and he was assisted by a qazi and mufti. Ironically, the power of the Faujdar was not recognised by many who had superior power or influence. It was reported that,

70 WBSA, BR, 23rd March to 21st October 1790, Letter from Board of Revenue to Patna, 5th October 1790.
71 WBSA, BR, 21st September to 21st October 1798, Letter from Board of Revenue to Patna, 5th October 1798.
...Shakarullah, the Faujdar of Tirhut, and Imam Baksh, the Company's agent for saltpetre had disagreement over collecting wood. The Faujdar had been beaten and treasury in his office was looted by the men of Imam Baksh. 73

The frequent instances of violence and inactivity against it led to the abolition of the office of the Faujdar in 1781. 74

RESISTANCE TO THE COMPANY

These reforms, however, were not welcomed by the zamindars and revenue farmers who considered them to be measures to curb their independence and local influence. 75

There were collective efforts by many to disturb and defy the Company government. The foremost among them were the refractory zamindars. Besides, there were tribes near the Rajmahal Hills and group of wandering ascetics who incessantly troubled the Company government.

The Zamindars

Some of the Bihar zamindars, dissatisfied with the English Company, disrupted everything. These zamindars were further encouraged by the rebellion of Raja Chait Singh of Benaras and accompanied him in his defiance to the Company. On 29 August 1781, the Collector of Saran, Charles Grame, wrote to the Revenue Chief at Patna,

Reza Cooly Cawn, formerly the amil of Sasaram, is at this time with Raja Chayt Singh. Many of the inhabitants of that district, and probably Oojains, a tribe of Rajpoots, are sincerely attached to him. Petambar Singh, of the family of the Ticcai Raja, is most intimately connected with Cheyt Singh, and his

73 WBSA, GGC, 10th July to 31st October 1777, Letter from Patna to Governor-General in Council, 24th August 1777.
75 Ibid.
dependents are remarkably good soldiers. He has also a number of horsemen in his pay.  

He also informed the commanding officer deployed at Mithila region that

...Fateh Shah was giving trouble in Saran at this period, while several zamindars and others in the jurisdiction of the Revenue Chief at Patna armed and clothed their dependents in the military accoutrements of the Company.  

Zamindars of Siris and Kutumba, Narayan Singh, and Raja Akbar Ali of Narhat and Samai were also up against the Company. After few clashes near Sasaram while the former was arrested and was deported to Dacca, the latter could manage to escape.

The Sannyasi

Since resistance to the Company came from different quarters, the ‘Sannyasi raiders’ as described in the Company records also became a serious concern to the Company. These were organised bands of armed monks who regularly took up arms against the Company authority. The Chief of Patna in 1767 reported that,

A body of 5,000 Sinnasees entered the Sirkar Sarouge [Saran]; the Phousdar sent two companies of sepoys after them, under the command of a sergeant who came up with them; the Sinnasees stood their ground and after the sepoys had fired away part of their ammunition fell on them, killed and wounded near eighty and put the rest to flight.

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76 WBSA, GGC, 21st July to 19th November 1781, Letter from Collector of Saran to Chief of Patna, 29th August 1781.
77 WBSA, GGC, 21st July to 19th November 1781, Letter from Collector of Saran to Chief of Patna, 6th October 1781.
78 WBSA, GGC, 15th January to 21st April 1786, Letter from Patna to Governor-General in Council, 5th March 1786. He was allowed to return to his zamindari in 1792 when it was settled on him under the Decennial Settlement Regulations, but his zamindari was sold at the end of the eighteenth century for arrears of revenue, R. R. Diwakar, Bihar Through The Ages, p. 615.
79 NAI, HPP, SC, 31st March to 25 May 1767, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 12th May 1767.
Purnea was badly affected by the incursion of these sanyasies. Since it was on their way from Dinajpur, Rangpur and Maldah, the Supervisor of Purnea tried in vain to check that and had deployed many ‘haracaras [spies] at the Ghats and passages of the Kossy river. It was reported that a group of Sanyasis sneaked into Bengal through Purnea and Captain Brooke in his effort to check them could manage to capture only a few. Their opposition continued, though sporadically, since these Sanyasies were reported to be in Purnea even in the 1790s.

**Resistance from the Hills**

Warren Hastings had made serious efforts to consolidate the Company’s rule in different parts of Bihar and to counter its opposing forces. The area around Rajmahal Hill was where zamindar Jagannath Deo had raised a band of hillmen who had been a consistent threat to the Company. This area was referred to as Jugletterry (Jungle Terai). Captain Browne reported that after the 1769-70 famine the situation became worse. Many zamindaris were destroyed during the famine and the Company forces added to their miseries. Hence they rose against the alien rule.

Warren Hastings appointed Captain Brooke to handle this problem in that area with a special Light Infantry Corps of 800 men. Captain Brooke made several expeditions and subdued the zamindars and hill-chiefs who had challenged the authority of the new administration. He captured Jagannath Deo’s fort at Tiur but the chief escaped into the hills. The Captain helped settling as much as 280 villages extending from

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80 NAI, HPP, SC, 13th January to 22nd February 1770, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 4th February 1770.
81 NAI, HPP, SS, 31st March to 22nd April 1773, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 13th April 1773.
82 WBSA, BR, 13th May to 22nd June 1795, Letter from Patna to Board of Revenue, 9th June 1795.
83 NAI, HPP, SS, 31st March to 22nd April 1773, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, 13th April 1773.
The work begun by Captain Brooke was continued by his successor, Captain James Browne, till 1778 and carried further by Augustus Cleveland who, being previously stationed at Rajamahal as Assistant to the Collector, had been transferred to Bhagulpur in 1776. He succeeded in bringing the Paharias under more control than before by combining firmness with conciliation through various means, including payment of stipends to the Paharia sardars, ryots, and manjhis. To enforce authority he raised a force of hill men called the Bhagulpur Hill Rangers with the concurrence of Sir Eyre Coote, Commander of the British forces in Bengal, who had recently passed through Bhagulpur on his way up country. Hastings reported to the Court of Directors that the troubled area of the 'Jugleterry tract had been reduced to the government.

**Famine and Robbery**

There were several occasions when the Company found itself handicapped to deal with local disturbances. The law and order situation was affected by frequent robberies reported by the local authorities. The Chief after an enquiry reported that after the famine 'many robberies were committed by persons residing in the Low Country for which the hill people bore the blame'. He opined that the famine scarcity forced people to move towards the hills. When the famine was over they wanted to return but there was no scope for them to get work or food. 'This necessity and perhaps some influence from the example of the hill people soon made them Robbers'. Since they were 'well acquainted with the low country, they were more Dangerous than the Hill People by far'.

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
They adopted the dress and arms of the hill people whenever they attacked villages or passengers, and thereby multiplied complaints against the others; for it was impossible for the sufferers to examine further than the general appearance of the persons by whom they were assailed.87

It was obvious from the above description of events that though the Company had acquired Diwani and the right to rule the province politically, it had to face stiff resistance from not only the zamindars who were deprived of their property and privileges but the common populace who suffered at the hands of the oppressive methods of the Company government. Hence, the Company’s rule of the period was not free from vices.

87 WBSA, GGC, 10th March to 9th May 1778, Letter from Patna to Calcutta, Governor-General in Council, 10th March 1778.