Chapter 4

CRISIS IN BENGAL
NAZIMATE:
CHARACTERISING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CRISIS
I. Crisis in Bengal Nazimate

The previous chapter has explained the emergence of Bengal as an independent state. She was a successor state of the Mughal Empire as she was founded by the erstwhile Mughal officials and inherited by and large the same administrative structure. However, there were minor differences from other provinces, because in Bengal land was controlled by the zamindars at local level.¹ These zamindars were

entrusted the job of maintenance of law and order as well as collection of revenue. There happened to several layers of intermediaries in between peasants and zamindars. This arrangement had gone through fundamental changes during the time of Murshid Quli Khan. Jadunath Sarkar, blamed these transformation to be responsible for the crisis in the Bengal zamindari system.² The system that was introduced by Murshid Quli Khan in Bengal was known as malzaaminee system where mal denoting revenue amount and zaaminee meaning security, the word therefore, invented a guaranteed collection of revenue. The concept would be more clear, if we go into details of the system. On assumption of power, Murshid Quli Khan convinced that the Bengal zamindars were a lazy and inactive lot who could not be relied upon for the smooth and complete collection of revenue. Since the expanding crisis ridden Mughal State required to increase its earning there was need for increased revenue collection.³

To achieve the objective, the policy of the dependence of State on zamindar, for maximisation of revenue collection, abandoned and in their place a new category of officials called amils were installed. Amils entered into an agreement with the state and provided pre-

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guarantee for collection of maximum amount of revenue. In other words, these amils acted as the zamin or security towards the collection of the revenue and in return, the State authorised the amils not only to collect the revenue but also overall supervision of the zamindars. This meant that the state had expressed non-confidence over the zamindars. As against this the amils were kind of contractors between the State and zamindars who could be compared with Farmier Generals of the 18th century France. Within the century these non-resident amils became the zamindars in Bengal, when Lord Cornowallis introduced the permanent settlement.

According to Jadunath Sarkar these reforms introduced by Murshid Quli Khan was responsible for the emerging crisis in Bengal zamindari system. However, historians like N K Sinha, Abdul Karim and Tapan Raychaudhuri feel that Murshid Quli's reforms did not result in any fundamental change in the zamindari system. By 18th century due to increasing fragmentation of land, the Bengal zamindaris had multiplied into innumerable small zamindaris which meant that the collection of revenue from these zamindari involved a massive

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3 Ibid.  
4 Ibid.  
expenditure on the part of the state. Even the collected revenue also
did not reach in full because the small zamindars misappropriated the
collection and kept a portion for themselves. To neutralise this
possibility Murshid Quli Khan wanted to create big zamindaris as unit
of revenue collection. Thus, a number of small zamindaris were
merged to create few big zamindaris.6

The crisis in the zamindari system emerged from the
introduction of this category of revenue contractor called amils. The
traditional zamindars were native of the area and these territorial
aristocracy were one of the integral part of the three tier Mughal
revenue system which was not only a revenue collecting system but
had also linked the natives of Bengal to the Mughal State. These
zamindars were hereditary, therefore, the succession did not make any
change in the nativity and change in the attitude. Because of their
indigenous links these zamindars were involved in the welfare activity
of rural Bengal and were not over exploitative.

They were not only representative of Mughal State to peasant
but also added benevolent element by providing taqavi loan, built
embankments during floods and during calamities (drought and

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floods) the land revenue was often pardoned, besides these zamindars established schools and madrassas, charitable dispensaries and so on. When these indigenous zamindars were replaced by the amils the later refused to carry out the traditional welfare measures and resorted to maximisation of revenue. This led to the break down of the traditional three their system, i.e., state-zamindar and peasant, evolved by the Mughal State, marking the crisis.

What is also important is that these did not really lead to an increase in revenue collection. A careful look at the collection of revenue for Bengal during 1701 to 1721 shows that during the first few years, there was an increase in collection which dwindled subsequently. In fact, due to the expansionist wars fought by Aurangzeb in the Deccan there was demand for increased revenue collection, owing to which Murshid Quli Khan was sent from Deccan to Bengal to supply the increased demand. In 1658 during the prince Suja’s time there was an overall reform of Bengal revenue system by introducing Todarmal’s settlement. After 84 years, the system was changed again. These repeated reforms created a pressure on the system. One of the reasons for the reform of zamindari system in Bengal was also the removal of middle level zamindars. Mainly, after

7 Ibid.
the revolts of zamindar Shobha Singh of Burdwan,\textsuperscript{8} Sitaram Rai of Jessore and Udainarayan of Rajshahi, it became essential for Murshid Quli Khan to curb the growing power and rebellions of zamindars. In doing so, he had adopted a very strict policy of oppression of zamindars. It has been reported that on non-fulfilment of revenue demands, he indulged in physical torture of zamindars. Other instrument of state income was \textit{alwabs} and \textit{nazrana} which were extracted from the zamindars even forcefully. As a result in Bengal there were two similar institutions developing side by side on one hand it was traditional zamindars and on the other new category of zamindar. The peasantry and agrarian structure of Bengal could not bear the burden of two oppressive institutions of revenue collectors. His reforms led to the creation of big zamindars, which not only changed power structure but also collected revenue ruthlessly, which further enhanced the importance of the money lenders and banking class.

Similarly, the mansabdars too adapted to changed circumstances.\textsuperscript{9} But it is not correct to see this structure as monolith entity. The new ruling group had its lineage with the Mughal administration. It was a group of different individuals who were

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Ibid.}, see also Anirudha Ray, ‘Revolt of Sobha Singh, A Case Study’, in \textit{Bengal Past and Present}, Calcutta, 1969.

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Risala}, \textit{ibid.}
more interested to enhance their own personal interest and they seemed to had been afflicted with the similar maladies like bribery etc.. The nobles expected presents against any job, even for the implementation of imperial orders. Manucci informs that the governors and faujdars did not allow people to get possession of property granted by imperial farmans unless they paid the officials presents.10 Similarly William Norris, of English East India Company had to pay Rs. 2 lakh to Emperor and Rs. 1 lakh to the officials before obtaining the pursuit of operation.11

According to Athar Ali

Bribery was thus, for all practical purpose, the chief method by which a subject could secure the aid and assistance of the administration either his own protection or for the destruction of others, both in accordance with and in direct opposition to all the regulations of the state and imperial orders.12

Thus, in the later period the nobility become blind for immediate personal gains and thus civil administration suffered most due to the attitude. The Bengal nawabs also failed to check the growing corruption and it had afflicted even their judicial officials like qazis and muftis. They also neglected the army. Murshid Quli

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11 Ibid., pp. 300-01.
12 The Mughal Nobility, Ibid., p. 152.
Khan maintained cavalry of 2000 and infantry of 4000. And due to lack of large army Alivardi Khan was so troubled by the Marathas that he had to cede large part of Orissa to them. These events had exposed the weakness of the state and its army – a clear invitation to the British ambition. On the other hand the nazims resorted to collection of abwabs (imposts) over and above the land revenue demand. In fact, the standard land revenue demand (1728) remained same, but the collection of abwabs increased from Rs. 19.14 lakhs in Shujauddin’s period to Rs. 22.25 lakhs in Alivardi Khan’s period and such an enormous imposition was burdensome. The abwabs were levied in general on the zamindars in proportion to the assessment of each of them, but they were authorised to collect it from the ryots.\footnote{13 Sushil Chaudhury, From Prosperity to Decline, Eighteenth Century Bengal, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 20-22.} Besides these impost, the State bureaucracy, too, indulged in the realisation of illegal imposts.

The bureaucracy was ridden by factionalism which indulged in vanity which was much on exhibition during the time of Sirajuddaulah, when he faced competition from his cousin Shaukat Jang and Ghasiti Begum. Sirajuddaulah, because of his alleged cruel, debauch and pleasure loving nature which produced hatred in nobles and subjects, was generally held responsible for the crisis in Bengal.
and subsequent British conquest. Besides, the nazim was mainly held responsible for the conflict with the English East India company, and Mir Jafer's treachery and division of society vertically along the communal lines were generally believed to be the main factors led to the crisis.

The characterisation of Sirajuddaullah as cruel, ruthless and being pleasure loving and his responsibility for the crisis appears\textsuperscript{14} to be in same vain as that of later Mughals who were blamed to be influenced from harem and as if the previous ruling class was not indulging in the similar vanity. Though these traits were discernible in the character of Sirajuddaullah, before his becoming nazim. He seemed to change later on and his changed nature after becoming nazim had been testified by Monsieur Law – the Chief of French Factory.\textsuperscript{15} Similarly he had shown remarkable maturity while dealing with Ghasiti Begum and Shaukat Jung. Yusuf Ali Khan – a contemporary informs us about his shrewd diplomacy, that the people supporting the Begum started joining Sirajuddaullah due to his persuasive and conciliatory policy\textsuperscript{16} and his use of force to


\textsuperscript{15} Sushil Chaudhury, ‘Sirajuddaullah, the English Company and the Plassey Conspiracy – A Reappraisal’ in \textit{Indian Historical Review}, vol. XIII, nos 1-2, Delhi, 1986-87, p. 112.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 113.
suppress the dangerous challenge from Shaukat Jung. The English Chief at Kasimbazar William Watts had also testified that he had shown little sign of immaturity, insanity or cruelty during his period of 15 months of his rule and treated the English generously and humanely after the fall of Kasimbazar. The nazim seemed to be well disposed towards the English East India Company and he received the English factors in 1752 when he was prince, 'with the utmost politeness and distinction far superior than was paid to the Dutch or French'. But subsequently, he doubted the English designs against his succession and their support to his rivals. Indeed the English were siding with his rival as it was reported by Monsieur Law that the English were not expecting Sirajuddaullah would become nazim and had never met him for their business. They had avoided all communication with him. Law writes,

It was in the effervescence of these troubles that the English gave Sirajuddaullah reason for complaint against them. Always led away by the idea that he could not have sufficient influence to get himself recognised as subahdar (nazim) they carried on a correspondence with the Begum .... It is even said they had an understanding with the nawab of Purneah (Shaukat Jung).

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17 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
Holwell, the official reported to the court of Directors that Afzal-ud-Daulah’s faction had good possibility of success and Ghulam Hussain Khan testifies that Shaukat Jang was confident of receiving assistance from the English.\(^\text{21}\) Despite these provocation the nazim did not proceed against the English after his succession, instead he sent letters demanding extradition of Krishna Das, who had taken shelter with Rs. 5.3 million taken from his father Raj Ballav, who was suspected of embezzlement, and asking the company to desist from creating any fortifications, without getting any response from the English\(^\text{22}\) the Nazim consulted his nobles before undertaking firm policy towards them. Similarly the accusation that he forced the company to pay presents but similar gifts were exacted by Alivardi Khan and Murshid Quli Khan also.

The facts indicate that the grievances of Sirajuddaullah were genuine which necessitated action. He was explicit in his letter to Khwaja Wazid – his emissary for negotiation with the English. He wrote,

\[\text{I have three substantial motives for extirpating the English out of my country: one that they have built strong fortifications and dug a large ditch in the king’s dominions contrary to the established laws of the country, the second is that they have abused the privileges of their dastak by granting}\]


them to such as were in no ways entitled to them, from which practice the king has suffered greatly in the revenue of his customs; the third motive is that they give protection to such of the king's subjects as have by their behaviour in the employs they were entrusted with made themselves liable to be called to an account.23

Evidences suggests that the English had built strong fortification by ignoring the authority of the nazims.24 Similarly the privileges in forms of dastaks were abused by the English officials not only for their own private trade but also for covering the trades of the Asian merchants, thus, caused the treasury a great loss. As per an estimate the English had defrauded the state about Rs. 1½ crore since Farukh Siyar's firman25. Thus, the abuse of dastak was truly a real cause for the exaction by the nizim.

On the other side, the governor of Fort William Drake adopted posture diametrically opposite to the interests of the nizim and did pay any attention to nizim's embassies but also did not heed the advice of his officials. He continued to provide shelter to Krishna Das - the confident of Ghasiti Begum, despite advice of his officials Watt,

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23 Siraj to Khwaja Wazid, 1 June, 1756, cited in 'Sirajuddaullah, English Company, op. cit., p. 117.
Holwell and Mamingham because they feared entanglement in problems with the new nazim. Despite provocation the nazim tried for peaceful settlement through various emissaries viz., Narain Singh and Khwaja Wazid, and he promised to pardon if his complaints were removed. The conciliation moved failed due to the attitude of Drake and in spite of advises Drake’s rigidity and intransigence precipitated the ‘crisis’.

The failure of Begnal nazimate symptomatic of disease which afflicted the Mughal Empire. The regressive taxation, where the peasantry was left with bare minimum as it is indicative by the increased collection of land revenue through revenue farming and legal and illegal cesses. Though the Bengal nazims were able to subdue numerous zamidnars and created big zamindars (in the form of amils) but peasantry was subjected to acute oppression. The state could not initiate policies for agricultural development except allowing loans like taqavi. The money lenders class gained much importance during the period creating another source of exploitation. Several peasants uprisings in Burdwan, Koch-Behar, Rajshahi and others were also indicative of crisis.

The nobility shows signs of inertia. The lack of scientific and technological progress, i.e., the cultural stagnation or failure

26 ‘Sirajuddaullah, English Company’, ibid., p. 120.
weakened the state so much it could not face the crisis when it finally arrived.

The failure and subsequent conquest of British at Plassey inaugurated a new phase in Indian history. We shall see in next section how for the new regime represented old or new elements and whether it constituted ‘break’ or ‘disjunction’ in Indian history or not.

II. Characterising the 18th Century Crisis

The Eighteenth Century is viewed in two contrasting part by the scholars and 1757 the battle of Plassey which was the beginning of the colonial conquest is regarded as the event which divides (break) the century. The two events, the third battle of Panipat (1761) where the defeat of Maratha ended the aspiration of Marathas to step into the shoe of the Mughal forever and Nadir Shah’s invasion of Delhi in 1739 which had thoroughly exposed the might of the Empire and Maratha and it had made the Mughal Empire insignificant in reality and sealed the fate of Marathas as well. The decline of the Mughal Empire in the 1st half other 18th century was setback to the Indian political and socio-economic structure.

The early nationalist historians, notably Jadunath Sarkar regarded the colonial conquest of state and economy in 18th century as fundamental ‘break’, where each half of the century represented a
radical contrast. He as well as some of the imperialist historians like V A Smith characterised the period prior to colonial conquest as 'dark age' and chaotic, which awaited the order and modernisation by the British rule.

Jadunath Sarkar says that,

On 23rd June, 1757, the middle ages of India ended and her modern age began. When Clive struck at the nawab, Mughal civilisation had become a spent bullet. Its potency for good, its very life was gone. The country's administration had become hopelessly dishonest and inefficient and the mass of the people had been reduced to the deepest poverty, ignorance and moral degradation by a small, selfish, proud and unworthy, ruling class. Imbecile lechers filled the throne ...the purity of domestic life was threatened by the debauchery....on such a hopelessly decadent society, the rational progressive spirit of Europe struck with resistless force...in the twenty years from Plassey,...the land began to recover from the blight of man's handiwork and political life, all felt the revivifying touch of the new impetus from the West.27

He further characterised it as 'Renaissance' and more revolutionary in nature after the fall of Constantinople.

Jadunath Sarkar's hyperbole did not stand before the evidences marshalled out by later nationalist historians. Who also though regarded colonial conquest as similarly 'disjunctive' because it halted the growth of order and development and reduced India to an

impoverish adjunct, source of raw materials, soldiers and wealth which sustained Britain's massive industrial strength. Thus, the colonial rule represents a radically different state formation in second half of the 18th century than the previous Mughal as well as Bengal states. The economic process by which the decline of empire kicked off disintegration of state power, which also made it possible for the British colonialism to disrupt Indian cultural and economic structure.\(^{28}\) The scholars have paid scant attention to north-eastern and deep southern region while formulating the opinion and the present study in a modest attempt to see similar consequential events in the eastern frontier (NE) region.

As discussed above that in contrast to Europe, the Indian population growth was dismal and similarly the European cities become if not bigger than the Indian cities but were certainly equally large and this resulted in diversion of Indian luxury and artisanal goods to Europe to great extent instead of its diffusion in home market. Though the demands led to the expansion of production to some extent but cost and prices also had gone up which had enhanced exploitation leading to agrarian crisis and rural insurgency.\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\) 'Passing of the Empire', Ibid.
parasitical nature of Indian urban centre and lack of capacity to adopt scientific and technological development failed to arrest the agrarian crisis which paved way for colonial conquest.

The second half of the 18th century witnessed the changing pattern of trade where British were involved in transfer of goods and services to western Europe, which disrupted social production first in Bengal and then in Madras and that started to distort the economies of hinterland and in fact nothing was resurrected to replace the old empires.30 Like Spaniards who not only captured Incas but also used their highly centralised structure to quickly establish and extend the rule, and the Inca empire had hardly survived in any form through the Spanish colonisation. The British rule also used superstructure of the Mughal State to quickly expand their rule.31 The British claim to land revenue was basically derived from the Mughal precedence and practice and even the permanent settlement was also seems to had rooted in the practice of the Mughal rule in Bengal during the 17th century.32 Similarly Munro’s Ryotwari system was even more clearly

30 Barun De, ‘Problems of the Study of Indian History with Particular Reference to Interpretations of the 18th Century’, General President’s Address, Proceedings Indian History Congress, Dharwad Session, 1988, Delhi, 1989, pp. 1-53.
31 ‘Passing of Empire’, op. cit.
a development of the Mughal system of zabt assessment. M Athar Ali rightly commented that the conception of the revenues of the country, as gross profits of the English East India company, was the basic principle on which English dominion was founded; and the drain of wealth to England – the ultimate object was realised and thus, the survivals of the Mughal Empire were subverted to a new use and did not tried to resurrect anything resembling the old empire. That empire, despite its inequities was of a different form and content altogether. From the middle of the 18th century the India was subjected to an inexorable process of subjugation and annexation by the English East India Company and thus representing 'break' in India history.

The English East India Company, which was controlled by the merchant capitalists of London, obtained power after Plassey. So far the company’s trade with India was mainly financed by exporting treasure (bullion). The company had exported treasure worth £482,219 in 1700 which constituted 83.3 percent of its total exports and it exported treasure worth £1,101,921 constituting 78.4 percent in

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34 Ibid.
Now the company found in their conquest the ultimate bliss that every merchant dreams that to be able to buy without having to pay, and yet be able to sell at the full price and this was achieved by treating entire revenue as gross profit. After deducting the cost of administration, they yielded the net profit which was invested for the purchase of Indian commodities which was termed as ‘investments’ and moreover, the purchase of these commodities were made where buyer enjoyed monopoly and after selling in European markets they further enlarged the profit – before it was finally received in England as tribute. The revenues from the conquest dwarfed the amount of bullion that had once financed English trade and accordingly the exports of Indian commodities had seen enormous increase. British imports from east India increased from £1.5 million in 1750-51 to £5.8 million in 1797-98 and increase from 12% of total British imports to 24 percent and correspondingly British export increased from 6.4 percent to 9 percent only. In fact these pre-industrial conquerors were more concerned to hunt colonial commodities, which had the whole world as their market. Thus, since the profit was based on land revenue

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38 Irfan Habib, ‘Colonisation of Indian Economy’, Ibid.
instead of commerce, the British rulers resorted to maximisation of land revenue by any means – putting enormous pressure upon the zamindars even resorting to auctioning temporary revenue farms to the highest bidders which put the new rulers in complete contrast to the previous regime.  

The land revenue collection increased from Rs. 64.3 lakh in 1762-63 under the last years of nizamat to Rs. 147 lakh in 1765-66 the first year of company's Diwani.  

But according to R C Dutt, the revenues of Bengal increased from Rs. 2.26 crore in 1765-66 to Rs. 3.7 crore in 1778-79 and it was so unrelenting that it was not lessened even during the period of great famine of 1769-70. Correspondingly the company's export of treasure fell from £797,167 in 1757 to £143,400 in 1760 and its treasure exports to India at Rs. 3.1 million in 1757-58 ceased thereafter. According to Irfan Habib, 

There began (after 1757) that constant feature of India's foreign trade, viz., huge annual surplus exports without ever attaining a favourable balance of payments, down to World War I. An official estimate of India's average annual trade

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39 Ibid.
41 R C Dutt, Economic History of India Under Early British Rule, Delhi, 1901, pp. 46-69, cf. 'Colonisation of Indian Economy' op. cit., pp. 300-301.
with Europe, including the trade carried on by the non-English companies, clandestine trade, licensed private trade, the company’s trade and privilege goods shipped on its ships, for the years 1780-90 presents this picture:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports into India</th>
<th>Export from India</th>
<th>Export surplus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£2,393,610</td>
<td>£7,33,569</td>
<td>£4,937,959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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James Grant estimated total drain of wealth from Bengal and Bihar about £737,651 in 1779. Holden Furber estimated on the basis of prime cost, the total drain including private remittances by English officials at £1.78 million per annum from 1783-84 to 1792-93 which was a conservative estimate. As per the British custom house records, the total drain was about 3.59 million per annum during the years 1795-99 and £1800-04 and in all possibility the annual Indian tribute to England was about £4 million in 1780s and 1790s.

The extraction of the tribute had its effects – it had created large scale unemployment of artisanal class and the revenue maximisation put extreme pressure on the peasants. If one considers Furber’s estimate of drain, it constitute 9 per cent of Indian

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GNP, which was certainly crippling for any economy.\textsuperscript{49} Similarly the diversion of Bengal’s exports in silk and textile entirely to Europe, virtually finished the inland trade with Gujarat whose manufacturing centre were dependent on the Bengal silk.\textsuperscript{50}

The argument above makes it obvious that the colonial power, though used the superstructure of previous regimes but was certainly different from them as it was not only involved in tribute realisation but its one way transfer to England, which had crippled the Indian economy. Thus, the eighteenth century can hardly show any substantive economic continuity similarly there was no basis of ‘indigenous origin of the colonial economy’ certainly there could not be any indigenous urge to transfer wealth to Britain.

Eric Stokes’ argument that the colonial rulers did not transform or revolutionise the inherited system, rather represented a continuity of the system with slight modification.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, he implied a continuity of state forms across the ‘divide’.

\textsuperscript{49} Irfan Habib, ‘Colonisation of Indian Economy’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 304, The GNP of the British possessions in India which directly contributed the tribute, according to Shore’s more reasonable estimate for the total agricultural produce of Bengal was about Rs. 15 crore and if added 5 crores for non-agricultural produce, the GNP come around to Rs. 20 crores.


\textsuperscript{51} Eric Stokes, \textit{The English Utilitarian and India}, Delhi, 1982, p. 81.
The concept of 'break' has recently been challenged by C A Bayly who argues that the Mughal Empire by its fall rendered a service by letting a large number of indigenous groups develop and so enabled a number of networks - established by local castes and communities and immigrant groups, together with merchants and money lenders to flourish. Thus, in the beginning the British expansion might have hurt some of these groups but finally represented a compromise with many of them. Thus, 1757 (Plassey) or 1764 (Buxer) did not constitute a 'break' rather a 'continuity' could be seen.\textsuperscript{52} He recognised that the Mughal Empire was more than a mere umbrella raised over virtually autonomous groups and pointed out that,

\begin{quote}
It was more like a grid of imperial towns, roads and markets, which pressed heavily on society and modified it, though only at certain points. The system depended on the ability of the Mughal state to appropriate in cash as much as 40 per cent of the value of the total agricultural product. A sophisticated money and produce market must have existed to make this possible, and men who recognised the supremacy of the Emperor must have led influence in small towns and \textit{bazaars}.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{52} C A Bayly, \textit{Rulers, Townsmen and Bazars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870}, New Delhi, 1992, attention drawn to Introduction part 1-35.

He further discussed the emergence of the bhumihar zamindars in Banaras, the Rohilas, Jats and Sikhs in terms of Hindu and Muslim, i.e., 'indigenous' and 'external' and suggested how these zamindars carved out local pockets of sovereignty. In fact, Muzaffar Alam has discussed series of zamindar uprisings in Awadh and Punjab in the first half of the 18th century and S P Gupta has shown how the Amber rulers strengthened his position in the first half of the 18th century by taking revenue - farms in contiguous territories in eastern Rajasthan and converted a zamindari into local sovereignty. Thus, the reassertion of the zamindars power over a large part of the country could led to the restoration of condition prevailing before the Mughal Empire. The case of the Rohilas as zamindars and the zamindar origins of the Maratha rulers have seen studied. According to Harbans Mukhia,

It is thus that even when the Mughal Empire was collapsing, one gets the impression that the class of zamindars at various levels was turning out to be the main beneficiary. It was, in other words, an older form of property that was re-emerging in strength.

54 Bayly, Ibid., p. 10.
57 Iqbal Hussain, The Ruhela : Chieftaincies, the Rise and Fall of Ruhela Power in the Eighteenth Century, Delhi, 1994, see also Satish Chandra, Medieval India : Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village, Delhi, 1982, pp. 130-38.
Other scholars like Muzaffar Alam\textsuperscript{59} Frank Perlin\textsuperscript{60} and Andre Wink\textsuperscript{61} have also challenged the theories of 18\textsuperscript{th} century. Muzaffar Alam dealt with the first half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and is concerned to Awadh and Punjab. He asserts that the Empire in its hey-day had contributed to the prosperity, and its autonomous segments continued to do so in the eighteenth century. He says that,

Both the Punjab and Awadh registered unmistakable economic growth in the seventeenth century. In the early eighteenth century in both provinces, politics and administration appears to have moved along similar lines.\textsuperscript{62}

He concludes that

The growing tendency among the nobles and officials to hold jagirs on a permanent and quasi permanent basis, the struggle to convert madad-i-maash holding into milkiyat the emergence of the ta'alluqa, ta'ahud and ijara contracts as the most acceptable forms of government, and the consensus among the regional powers to maintain the Mughal imperial symbols to obtain legitimacy and thus, stability and security of their spoils – all indicated the eighteenth century endeavour to make use of the possibilities for growth within existing social structure.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} Muzaffar Alam, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{61} Andre Wink, 'Land and Sovereignty in India – Agrarian Society and Politics Under the Eighteenth Century Maratha Soorajya', Cambridge, 1986.
\textsuperscript{62} Muzaffar Alam, op. cit., p. 318.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
Thus, he found continuity as the elements of growth continue under British rule were discernible.

Frank Perlin disregarded the centralising capacity of the Mughal State and criticised the Mughal and Maratha centric study of the economic history. He asserts that it is necessary to describe those other aspects of society and state formation which lie beyond and incorporate such system making and which arguably contradict the later, lead to their constant mutation and compose a space of events, acts and even structured relationship and consequences which transcends the frontiers within which contemporary attempts at systematisation occurred.64

Thus, the decline of Mughals or Maratha did not affected the stubborn intermediaries who were forming grass root structure of political, legal, social institution and right and therefore, the decline did not brought any disaster to the Indian economy. Thus, he asserts 'continuity' in the 18th century.

Bayly's assertion of the extraction of rent, grid of imperial towns and a sophisticated money and produce market were important elements in an economy. If the magnitude of commerce and the size of the urban sectors were important factors for economic development, then certainly the decline of the empire on which these elements depend would also represent economic decline. Ashin Das

64 Frank Perlin, op. cit., p. 429.
Gutpa’s study show contraction of hinterland of Surat in the first half of the 18th century without its displacement by any other port.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, Bayly accepts that the commerce and market must have development under the Empire to certain degree but he did not draw his conclusion from the facts that such development could be seriously affected by the decline of the Empire\textsuperscript{66} whereas he asserts that the decline had released forces as if they were suppressed under the Empire and these intermediary class later on struck comprise as if the decline had not affected them at all.

Similarly, the emergence of zamindars’ authority on the decaying Mughal Empire was implicit in Irfan Habib’s analysis of the agrarian crisis in the Empire.\textsuperscript{67} But it is difficult to accept the arguments that a reassertion of zamindar’s power as pointed out above, could have lead to the restoration of condition prevailing either in the Mughal Empire or Delhi Sultanate, because no zamindar would like to surrender their right to collect the bulk of revenue, which could have happened with the restoration and they could have

\textsuperscript{66} M Athar Ali, ‘Recent Theories of the Eighteenth Century India’, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 105.
got merely a percentage. Therefore, there was no attempt from the zamindars to restore old system.\textsuperscript{68}

Further, the conflicting several small units in 18\textsuperscript{th} century India could not be so strong to superimpose itself on the Empire and perhaps fragmentation has fastened the colonisation of India particularly in comparison of China.\textsuperscript{69}

Thus, the view that there was an internal momentum towards progress or growth in the first half of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century can not be accepted justified in the light of evidence, in fact there was all pervasive decline in the society.\textsuperscript{70}

Similarly the suggestion that the English power was dependent on compromise and collaboration with certain indigenous groups and classes is difficult to accept as there could only be two kinds of collaboration firstly, two powers meet on equal plane and secondly where one power is dominant and the others collaborates for survival\textsuperscript{71} and obviously the second type of collaboration is visible which was secured by the English from Amir Chand and Nand Kumar. Certainly it is hard to describe India's conquest as joint

\textsuperscript{68} M Athar Ali, \textit{ibid.}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{69} Irfan Habib, 'Eighteenth Century in Indian Economic History' \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{70} M Athar Ali, 'Recent Theories of the Eighteenth Century India', \textit{op. cit.}, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 109.
Anglo-Indian enterprise.\textsuperscript{72} Andre Wink’s suggestion points out the contradiction in Bayly’s argument, that the Maratha documentation shows that

\begin{quote}
It was not the rapacity of revenue farmers but rather the impact of the colonial government which interfered with circulation and diffusion of money credit and resources.\textsuperscript{73}
\end{quote}

Similarly, Muzaffar Alam’s hypothesis suffered as his evidences, of economic growth to depends on his comparison of \textit{jamadari} (estimate revenue) figures of \textit{Ain-i-Akbari} with the revenue rolls of 18\textsuperscript{th} century, which apparently doubled over the period, but he has not calibrated this growth with price rise, thus, it is difficult to accept his hypothesis of growth and on the other hand the scramble for conversion of various land grants into \textit{milkiyat} did not signify any indication of growth.

On the analysis of the arguments it appears plausibly correct that the Mughal Empire had gone through a period of crisis, leading to its decline and eventual colonisation. The nature of new regime was, different from the previous states and thus, the 1757 represent a ‘disjunction’ in the Indian History.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73} Andre Wink, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 4.
The effect of process of crisis on the eastern frontier states has been analysed below and an attempt has been made to understand the nature of crisis in the light of above analysis.