

**PATNA ELITES AND THE ENGLISH
EAST INDIA COMPANY
(1620-1733)**

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the Dissertation entitled "**Patna Elites and The English East India Company (1620-1733)**" being submitted by Mr. Satish Kumar is worthy of consideration for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**. The Dissertation has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any other degree or diploma.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

E. F. I.,	English Factories in India.
E. H. R.,	Economic History Review.
I. A.,	Indian Antiquary.
I. H. R.,	Indian Historical Review.
I. E. S. H. R.	Indian Economic and Social History Review.
Isl. C.	Islamic Culture.
J. P. A. S. B.,	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
J. B. R. S.,	Journal of Bihar Research Society
J. B. O. R. S.,	Journal of Bihar and Orissa research society.
M.A. S.,	Modern Asian Studies.
N. A. I.	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
P. I. H. C.	Proceedings of Indian History Congress.

INTRODUCTION

Profit making is an art not every one acquainted with. Yet, it cannot be synonymous with *baniagiri*¹ alone. It cuts across every aspect of life. Caste and gender too, indeed was, cut across. The pre-eminent position allocated to the merchants may be seen to be born out of the traditional view, since it was they, who mostly indulged in profit making through direct investments. But, certainly there were groups who without having any considerable investments tended to earn valuable profits from the ongoing process of business. The provenance of these groups was varied and diverse, ranging from the political to the religious. They often used their power and influence to dictate the terms in order to earn valuable profits, thus combining political or religious activities with mercantile role. Thus we find a trading arena where a range of groups played their roles accordingly and when any foreign commercial group tended to enter, it had to take the consent and aid of these existing groups.

Herodotus, describing his contemporary trading practices, speaks of a 'silent trade',² in which the need of penetrating each other's sphere of influence was not required. But the desire of forming trading settlements wanted the support of groups of the indigenous societies. In fact, C. A. Bayly contends that at this time it almost became a truism that to establish and perpetuate trade in area such as Asia and Africa was impossible without the establishment of trading settlements in these areas. Consequently, the collaboration of the key people in the

¹ Colloquially the term '*Baniagiri*' is used to denote the attitude of a person reflected by his activities just as a Bania caste in India does, in respect to his business and his shrewd behavior in purchase and sell.

² Trade across different societies and cultures have been discussed in several contexts. Herodotus, described it in the form of silent trade where exchanges of commodities took place with no actual

indigenous societies was a *sine quanon*.³ Thence we may safely say that in our period, several groups other than traders came to acquire a stake, and hence one may assume an income too through trade.

It is often not the correctness of the economic policies alone that determines the outcome of the trading groups approaches to the profit accumulation. The political structure, the vested interest and allegiances of the ruling elites, typically determines what strategies are possible and where the roadblocks to the effective economic development and profit making may lie. The constellation of interests and power among different segments of the indigenous population thence, surely affects the policies and programmes of the trading groups. It is in this context that my study of the elites of Patna and the English Company's relation with them is undertaken.

The geographical focus of this study is the eastern Indian Province of Bihar and more specifically its capital city Patna (Azimabad). Though Patna too was a capital city, since its political eminence could hardly rival the other more important capitals in India, its survival and growth may largely be seen to be because of its commerce. Thus it would be perhaps be better to view Patna within the group of a 'commercial city.'⁴ The city of Patna had all the prerequisites for trade. A developed credit and financing system, interregional trade and political stability, all were there at Patna. The contract system of production worked efficiently as merchants could raise short-term loans at a reasonably low rate of interest and could transfer money through bills of exchanges.

intermingling of traders; Philip D. Curtin, *Cross cultural trade in world history*, Cambridge University Press, 1984, 12.

³ C.A.Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaar: North India in the age of British expansion*; Cambridge 1982, 463.

⁴ H.K.Nakvi, *Urban Centers and Industries in upper India, 1556-1803*; Bombay, 1968, 91.

Though a major agricultural region, self-sufficiency in food grains and the availability of raw material in abundance was a crucial factor in the rise and growth of the manufacturing sector, thus attaining a greater degree of commercialisation. Besides, the perennial and seasonal rivers were the mainstay of communication in those pre-steam days, which was well supported by the land routes connecting Patna city in all the four directions since the ancient times.

Despite that, it's an irony that Patna's economy in particular and Bihar's economy in general has though been well studied, has been largely seen as a mere extension of Bengal's economy. This is to an extent because of the political situation of the region. Up till the 17th century it was a part of the Mughal Empire and in 18th century, unlike most Mughal provinces, Bihar did not show any type of political formation that could assert the political autonomy of the province/region, as was emerging in most of the other parts of India. The powerful zamindars of Bihar would have succeeded in projecting Bihar as one of the successor states but thanks to the expansionist policies of Bengal Nawab's and later the English company. In fact, from the beginning of the Muslim period itself, Bihar was a favourable area for the fulfilment of the imperialist designs. Rulers of north India had no other options but to move towards Bihar while the rulers of Bengal could cater to their imperialist designs only in Bihar. It was only in the period between the reigns of Akbar to Aurangzeb, that it could be said that Bihar was given a solid political stability.

The scholars argue that in 18th century the economic decentralisation and the compact and better organised successor regimes proved to be more useful as entry point for European capital seeking, larger consignments and cheaper source of those Asian commodities, that had drawn their interest to these areas in the first

place⁵, if drawn back to the 17th century this can, in a more general way, be applied to Bihar. Since under the Pax-Mughalia, Bihar enjoyed a compact and more efficient regime of Mughal Governors who were mostly blue-blooded and near kinsmen of the powerful Mughal emperors.

Another possible reason for the privileging of Bengal over Bihar may perhaps, lie in the fact that most of historiography has its origins in the early efforts of the English 'writers'⁶ for whom of course Bengal was both politically as well as economically much important than Bihar. The shadow of the company's influence looms so large, that even studies in the pre-colonial economic history of Bihar are seldom devoid of references to the company's activities, further, Patna though economically important, never enjoyed the sort of administrative centrality that cities such as Calcutta had for the English, or Chandranagore for the French or even Chinsura had for the Dutch. However, the English company, as others, never treated Patna establishment as less important to their other factories in Bengal. In fact, according to the Court of Directors, "Patna was the most desirable station, the place where the Calcutta council sent their prime favourites..."⁷

All societies simple and complex, agricultural and industrial need authorities within and spokesman and agents outside, who are also symbols of the common life and embodiments of the values that maintain it. Inequalities in the performance and reward favours this arrangements and the inequality in the distribution of deference acknowledge the difference in authority. These specific

⁵ Kum Kum Chatterjee, *Merchants, Politics and Society in Early Modern India: Bihar, 1733-1820*, Leiden, 1996, 5.

⁶ By the term 'writers', I mean both the writers of professional histories as well as those lowly classical pen-pushers in the employ of the English company who produced most of the 'primary materials' on which these professional histories are based.

⁷ C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals of English in Bengal, vol. II, part I*, London, 1895, Reprint 1983, New Delhi, lviii.

groups are called elites⁸, and for every activity and corresponding sphere of life there is an elite. In fact, the society in medieval period was divided into two class; *Asraf* (elites) and *Radhalah* (the Commoners).⁹

In Patna city too we find a wide range of socially positioned groups influentially operating in our period. Among them we are concerned here with the political and the commercial elites. The former group included the people posted as Governors, *Diwans*, *Faujders* etc. these were the Mughal Mansabdars appointed by the imperial authority. These officials as Percival Spear thinks, constituted a genuine elite but of a secondary type. He argues that they never developed a personality of their own and owed their effectiveness to the control of the emperor¹⁰. However this was not always true as the officials in the far off places from the centre often acted on their own and it was for this reason that special directives were sent to the subahadars and other officials time and again by the emperors¹¹.

The commercial elites included the merchants operating in the region having considerable capital at their command and a whole team of agents. The name of *Fatehchand*, *Pran*, *Raghu Pandit*, *Champa Shah* and others may well be remembered in this regard. Though the merchants were not organised groups, yet

⁸ Suzanne Keller (art.), 'Elites', in International Encyclopedia of Social Science, ed., David L Sills, vol. 5, Macmillan Company and the free press, 1968, U.S.A., 26.

⁹ I. H. Siddiqui, art., 'the process of urbanization and social change in pre-Mughal India.' Isl. Vol. LXXVII, no. 2, April 2003, 49.

¹⁰ Percival Spear (art.), 'The Mughal Mansabdari system', in Edmund Leach and S.N.Mukherjee ed., *Elites in South Asia*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, 14.

¹¹ An ordinance containing seventeen points of admonition was issued to the Subhadars and particularly to Islam Khan Mushedy (governor of Bengal from 1637 to 16390 by Emperor Shahjahan, to be observed without slightest deviation from them. It contain among others- No Subhadar should sit on a place higher than ½ a human height above the ground; they should not hold any imperial review; they must live according to their own status; no men is to be compelled to *Salam* and *Taslim*; the Subhadars must not set up their own standard (Qur); No beating of Kettle-drum at the time of setting out on a Journey etc. this shows that the subhadars, who were also the Mughal Mansabdars tried to set their own standards; M.I.Borah, trns. & ed., *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. 1, Govt. of Assam, Gauhati, 1936, 213.

there are references of cooperation like '*Rewadas and company*', the house of the *Jagat Seth* etc.

The Patna merchants had agents in far off places like Agra, Benaras, and Calcutta, who assisted in developing their master's business on a wider scale. The commercial elites of Patna also include, as in other places, many Mughal Mansabdars who participated in trade, both regional and international and used their official position to augment their trading interest and hence a watertight distinction between the power elites and the commercial elites of Patna is not possible. However, in our case we have made a provisional distinction, on the basis of their greater influence and pre-eminence in the two sectors i.e. the 'political' and the 'economical.'

English East India Company's trade in Bihar was a regional manifestation of a worldwide phenomenon. Organised on a joint stock basis and acting on the theory of mercantilism, it was specialised machinery, especially developed for trading activities in the eastern seas. The company successfully integrated the function of a sovereign power with those of a business partnership. It represented a fusion of public and private interest within a technically superior organisation.

English East India Company with the Dutch V.O.C. presented an innovation in the fact that, these companies were formed for pure economic purposes unlike the Portuguese whose main motive was the facilitation of spice trade and spread of Christianity. Though later, both the companies favoured proselytising activities in their colonies but then too economy were their main concern. The model set up by the Portuguese admirably suited the purposes of the English east India Company as well. The only significant difference being that,

the English Company was determined to be traders first and territorial rulers next.¹² Its overall strategy was premised on the goal of maximization of the commercial profits.

Despite having superior organisational skills and trading policies, the cultural differences, which the English Company confronted, created the need for mediation which at first required a trusted native to act as an agent. Also the company had to adapt its trading methods according to the local institution and customs of the people in commercial sectors. In fact as F. Gaastra observes, 'the Company's adaptation to local circumstances and the use of existing networks were the very basis of its success.'¹³ The English Company choose to rely more heavily upon the indigenous merchants of Patna since merchants of whichever nationality identified more closely with each other than with the political authorities.¹⁴ However, the English contacts with the commercial groups of Patna were greatly limited to the upper crust of the society, and this was true even up to the middle 18th century.

The English interacted with the Patna merchants in a host of situations and on a variety of levels. The English were the proprietors of a world wide mercantile policy while the Patna merchants were the procurer of privileges and concessions, products and the financers of the English trade. The constant dependence of the company's officials on the Patna commercial groups i.e. Brokers, bankers (*sarrafs*) and weavers were also closely paralleled by an equally complex web of relationships in their private capacities. The fact, that the English

¹² K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trading world of Asia and the English East India Company*, Cambridge, 1978, 115.

¹³ F.Gaastra and L.Blusse, 'Companies and Trade: Some Reflection on a Workshop and a Concept', in F. Gasstra and L. Blusse, ed., *Companies and trade: Essays on overseas trading Companies during the Ancien regime*, The Hague, 1981, 12.

prospered almost as much through association with the Patna commercial elites as through their competition against them, has led some scholars to characterise their relationship as 'partnership.'¹⁵

The Company mainly preferred to deal with those merchants who commanded a substantial amount of capital, either of their own or borrowed from others. This was to relieve the company from the cash shortage that it faced through out the period. Even at the close of the 18th century the cash resources of the English trading factory were seldom continuously sufficient to spare its chiefs the necessity of borrowing in his official capacity from the indigenous commercial groups.¹⁶ Also, the company made contacts with those merchants whose dealings were typically on a large scale both in the cash and forward markets and were able to organise their own chain of middlemen to the producers. The English always faced the possibility that, if they pressed the local *sarraf*, merchants etc. they could withdraw their support.

The English Company investigated the background of the indigenous merchants before entrusting them with advance payments. This was done mainly to avert the problem of bad debts, which would hamper their trading capacity. It also employed an agent or a broker after being introduced by a reliable and well-known person, but there were certain cases in which the company freely employed merchants who had not been introduced by others or simply those who were known to be reliable. This policy was adopted to avert and weaken the power

¹⁴ I.B.Watson, *Foundation for an Empire: British Private Traders in Bengal*, New Delhi, 1980, 31-32.

¹⁵ M.N.Pearson, 'introduction', in Blair B.Kling and M.N.Pearson, ed., *The Age of partnership: Europeans in Asia before Domination*, Honolulu, 1979.

¹⁶ Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, Minneapolis, O.U.P., 1976, 316.

wielded by the merchant groups who often formed rings and contracted with the company.

Though these basics were looked upon before contracts, it was the Hindu merchants who were favoured by the Company most for employment. One reason for this may be the financial position and strength of the *Hindu* merchants. However, the identity of interests which a common religion interposed between the *Muslim* merchants and the *Muslim* rulers was treated as a sufficient reason for not trusting the Muslim commercial groups at large.¹⁷

The English coming from a society acutely aware of social distinctions, behaved towards the highest levels of society in India, as he would have done in England. The English use of the term “blacks” for all their indigenous agents by no means implies that they made no distinction between them. It was this sense of superiority that somewhere worked in the relationship between the English and the Patna merchant groups though not in case of their contact with Patna’s political elites. In fact, the nature of the relationship between the English and the Patna commercial groups depended some what on the treatment the later got from the indigenous ruling authorities and hence we find respectable approaches of the English towards merchant magnets like *Manikchand* and *Omichand* while there were cases where the indigenous agents serving the English were subjected to ill treatments. Therefore, the relationship of the English Company and the Patna commercial elites must be seen in both economic as well as social context.

The merchants of Patna however, were certainly not the formulators and enforcers of the laws of the land and abiding by the modes of the region was a must for the English to trade at Patna. In order to create space for themselves, the

¹⁷ K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trading world of Asia...*, 150.

English had to take the consent of the rulers and this very thing provided the first step in the relationship between the Company and the ruling groups of Patna. In our period the English just as other foreign company had to deal with two sets of ruling groups, one at the imperial cities of Delhi or Agra and the other in the provinces.

Though provinces were under the control of the centre, we find a situation where the local governors ignored the Mughal stringency to extort arbitrary profits from the commercial groups. At the same time they adhered to the Mughal centre, which assisted and acted as a responsive centre in case, the situation went beyond the control of the provincial Governors.¹⁸

The use of about sixty percent of the gross agricultural produce by the state aristocracy indicates the high standard of their living and in order to continue and augment that extravagant life style, the Mughal officials favoured the company which provided them with an easy source of income in the form of gifts, peshkash, bribes etc. It is in this context, that arguments are made to prove the amiability in the relation and ultimate success of the English by allying them with the officials.¹⁹

However, in some circumstances, the ruling authorities treated the traders (English and other foreigners) as a pariah caste, to be exploited or robbed at will; whose presence was tolerated only because it was useful in profit making.²⁰ Further, the officials and high nobles participated in the thriving inter and intra oceanic trade. For this, that they tend to monopolise certain profitable commodities. They also used force and their official position to carry on their

¹⁸ W.W.Hunter, *A History of British India*, Vol. II, Indian reprints, Delhi, 1972, 86.

¹⁹ Farhat Hassan, art., 'Indigenous Cooperation and the Birth of a Colonial City: Calcutta', M.A.S., 1992, 26.

²⁰ Philip D. Curtin, op cit., 5.

trade. It is in this context that the relationship between the company and the local political elites is looked upon as being competitive and hence scope for the trial of strength from both sides.

Patna being a land locked city seldom provided the English the opportunity to push forward their military policies, which were based on their naval strength. The English knowing their limitations on the land, tried to avert their thought of armed trading in Patna. Since a naval blockade or the armed capture of indigenous shipping, was bound to have its 'costs' in terms of its trade on land, the English could not afford to avail.

In the first place, there was a distinct possibility that the agents and the servants of the Company's lives might be in danger. At the very least they would have to endure siege conditions with the supplies of food and water cut off. A greater possibility was the interruption in their trade. In fact, as K.N.Chaudhuri points out, it was clearly in the interest of every one concerned that a conflict should be strictly limited.²¹ So, in order to establish them selves, as an autonomous self governing group, often, the English by a self conscious pacifisms and neutrality towards all political struggles, sought to concentrate themselves in their commercial programmes. However, there are certain instances where the English consciously showed off their military strength, which would in future help them to establish their authority more securely. Then also it can be said that the building of the English empire of trade depended to a very large extent, on a bargain struck under condition of mutual respect rather than fear and violence.²²

In social contexts, it can be said that there was mutual exchanges between the ruling elites of Patna and the English East India Company and both

²¹ K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trading world of Asia...*, 126.

benefited from it. The constant demand of the Patna Nawabs for European wines, cloths and other artefacts shows their inclination towards the western culture. On the other hand the adoption of the customs and culture of these elites by the Company's servants (though not in large scale) proves the necessity of the Company to be looked upon as being similar as the indigenous groups, if they wanted to earn larger profits from the existing commercial system. In their negotiations with the local rulers, the English were obliged to conform to the local customs and traditions. In fact, in the pre- colonial period the English lived in far closer contact with the indigenous society than was the case in 19th century. This was true equally in their relationship with both the power elites as well as the commercial groups of the region.

The English at Patna cultivated all their diplomatic and economic relations merely for trading profits and the commodity most important for them from Patna was Saltpeter, apart from the cotton textiles, opium and other sundry items. Patna and its hinterland were the major producers of the best quality Saltpeter, cheapest of all varieties and were known as the 'Patna peter' in the international market. The demand of petre was governed by the political situation of Europe at that time.

In Patna the English Company however had to face the most exasperating situation in the procurement and trading of Saltpeter. Due to the nature of the Saltpeter as a prohibited commodity, official vigilance on it was the greatest. The relationship of the Patna elites and the English company hence will be discussed in greater detail in the context of Saltpeter trade in addition to other trade-worthy commodities of Patna.

²² Holden Furber, op cit., 314.

The birth of this study is in the womb of the neglect of the English factory at Patna in general, and that of the Patna-trade in particular. This study also, grows out of dissatisfaction with the treatment of the political and the commercial realm of trade of the English company at patna- particularly as an instrument to help us understand better the English company's activities in Patna during our period.

First, the question of the political aspects of the company's trading programmes (which by itself has received a fair deal of attention from scholars) cannot increase our understanding much further unless such study is grounded in an analysis of regional levels of political systems. Since the nature of the English connections with the political elites cannot be discussed as a pan- India phenomenon but has regional variations as well.

Further, any generalisation on the nature of the relationship between the company and the political elites is problematic. Pre-eminently since the relation between the English and the indigenous merchants were marked by both elements of competition and collaboration. For after all, quite tautologically, the English were motivated to a larger extent, by the impulse to augment profits, than their political clout, i.e. the political interest of the English merely followed their commercial interests. However, throughout our period of study, it was the indigenous merchants who had the upper hand, though contrapuntally it was the indigenous military prowess in land that undershot their superiority.

Secondly, the nexus between the indigenous merchants and the company has been by and large explored as a matrix of cooperation and collaboration but the articulation of a difference is necessary in our appraisal, of the social position of the Patna merchants dealing with the company in order to understand the relationship. The English Company treated their counterparts in the light of the

treatments, the Patna merchant groups received from the ruling authorities. However, in case of dismissal by the Company, the Patna merchants lost very little as, they themselves were in a commanding position through their independent ventures in the commercial sectors.

There are a host of writings covering this area's social, political and commercial aspects. Earliest among them is authored by N.N.Raye (*The Annals of Early English Settlement in Bihar*; Kamala book Depot. Calcutta, 1927). This is a study encircling almost all aspects of English activities in Bihar covering a period of almost a century and a half. However, the perspectives of the Patna elites were relatively under represented and hence leaving a sizeable gap in terms of its area and scope, for further investigations.

Three years later, a study covering the relationship of the English Company with Patna by Abdul Ali was published (A.F.M. Abdul Ali- *Patna- her relation with the John Company Bahadur*; Indian Historical Records Commission, 13th session; Patna, 1930). Though the title of the book look promising. It fails to line up to our expectations. The narratives merely detail the English presence in Patna without attempting to relate it to the Company's relations with the political groups of Patna. Neither does it deal with the commercial aspects of the Company's presence or with its interactions with other indigenous mercantile groups.

Jagdish Narayan Sarkar's study on Bihar economy (Jagdish Narayan Sarkar- *Glimpses of medieval Bihar economy, 13th to mid 18th century*; Calcutta, 1978) provides a good description of Bihar's economy in the medieval period and also discusses the commercial programmes of various European companies in Bihar. What is indeed lacking is the political and commercial links of the

European in general and the English company in particular with the Patna elites. Again, in this work, the periodisation is too broad to give a microscopic study of the topic.

Sukumar Bhattacharya's work, *the East India Company and the economy of Bengal from 1704 to 1740* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyya, Calcutta, 1969); discusses the nature of political contacts of the English company in Bengal and agrees that political changes, either at the centre or the provinces affected the company. On the economic front, Sukumar Bhattacharya describes the groups, ways and rates by which the company dealt with the merchants. His study though, integrates the economy of Bihar with that of Bengal thus leaving the scope for the study of Patna wide open.

Trade and commercial organisation in Bengal, 1650-1720, (Firma K.L.Mukhopadya; Calcutta, 1975) by Sushil Chaudhry discuss the English company's trade and other related activities in Bengal. Though it describes the early attempts of the company to establish their trade at Patna, but in only stray references. Further, the political and commercial contact of the company with Patna is less discussed.

K.N.Chaudhuri's *Trading world of Asia and the English East India Company, 1660-1760* (S. chand & co.; New Delhi, 1978) is one of the most valuable theoretical works on the English Company which discusses the policies, programs, actions, relations with the natives of Asia and the English Company, etc., but then too there is scope for empirically based regional narratives based empirically.

Kum Kum Chatterjee's work *Merchants, Politics and Society in Early Modern India, Bihar, 1733-1820*, (E.J.Brill, Leiden, 1996) provides an insight into the commercial aspects focussing on the indigenous groups both political and

economic and their nexus is thus exposed, but there is relatively little emphasis on the English Company which had acquired a dominant position in the region in the period she dealt with. Thus there is a fair scope for the study undertaken in respect to the English Company and its relationship with the elites of Patna.

The starting point of this study is 1620, when the English Company first sent two of its factors to attempt settlement, at Patna. Though it did not last for more than two years, yet, it made the English aware of the potentialities, which Patna had in respect to trade. Further, one year later, Bihar was provided with its first Mughal prince as governor or *Subhadar*.

The year 1733 has been chosen as a terminating point, not because it was a significant year in the commercial history of Bihar or Patna, but because it was the year when Bihar was formally made a part of the Mughal kingdom of Bengal by the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah, or to use the words of Muzaffar Alam, “the hijacking of Bihar government”²³ was completed. Ever since the battle of RajMahal in 1576, Bihar was an independent Mughal province till 1733, but in 1703, it was united with Bengal politically when prince Azimushan was appointed the governor of Bihar and Bengal simultaneously. Earlier, too, during 1643 to 1646, for a short while under Mirza Shahpur Atiqad Khan, Bihar had been administratively joined to Bengal.²⁴ However, Bihar was finally added to Bengal with the appointment of Shujauddin Mohammed Khan as the governor of Bengal.

Chapter one sets out the specific details of the place, geography, the political system and the economic environment of Patna that serves as a backdrop for the analysis of the relationship of the English East India Company with the

²³ Muzaffar Alam, art., ‘Eastern India in the Early 18th century Crisis: Some Evidence from Bihar’, I.E.S.H.R., 1991, 43-71.

²⁴ Q.Ahmed and H. Askari ed., *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, vol. II, part II, Patna, 1987.

Patna elites. This chapter also discusses the life of the Englishmen at Patna in our period.

The second chapter discusses the political aspects of the English company's trade *i.e.* the Company's link with the political groups and the interrelationship between them, encircling the political, commercial and social aspects. The third chapter continues the same discussion regarding the mercantile communities of Patna and the English company. The recurrent question of the nature of relationship between the company and the Patna elites is discussed in detail.

The absence of systematic data left by Indian merchants makes the reliance on the European source material unavoidable, which comprised the records of various European groups operating in the region and more specifically of the English East India Company. However, this documentation naturally expresses the preoccupation and priorities of the English Company and do not provide an answer to important questions relevant for the reconstruction of the political and economic world in which the Indian merchants (Patna merchants) lived and operated. These records project only the Eurocentric viewpoint thus leaving a scope for bias. The political system of Bihar as other places is relatively unexplored. Despite these lacunae, there is little option but to use the English records (in the form of various diaries of Englishmen serving the company viz- Streyنشam Master, William Hedges, Thomas Bowery, etc.; English factory records and various company papers; public consultation of Bengal in C.R.Wilson- Annals of English company in Bengal in addition to a large numbers of English and other travellers visiting Bihar viz- Bernier, Tavernier, Pelseart, Thomas roe, Manucci, Manrique etc.) in order to expand the parameter of our knowledge and understanding of the region.

However, in order to look into the experience of the indigenous society, indigenous sources, mostly authored by the court scribes viz- *Ain-i-Akbari*; *Riyas-us-Salatin*; *Shanama Munawar Kallam*; *Baharistan-i-Ghayabi* etc. have also been consulted. But one of the major flaws we have to face in the case of these indigenous sources is that these sources seldom have discussion and details of economic aspects. The great Mughal Empire had customhouses at major routes but unfortunately; their records have not been survived.

The secondary sources include various texts, edited works and articles published in various journals. These sources helped to substantiate the details culled from the primary sources and thus were very useful.

CHAPTER ONE

TRADING GEOGRAPHY AND GEOGRAPHIES OF TRADE

“The city is more beautiful than the face of the beloved;

The inhabitants of the city are more charming than the city...”¹

Folklores attribute the foundation of the city of Pataliputra (ancient Patna) to prince *Putra* and princess *Patali*.² It is this folk memory that is institutionalised in the form of the *Patani Devi* temple. Thenceforth up to the early medieval period, when it lost its political pr-eminence, the city of Patna was the centre of politics as well as commerce. The ancient eminence was restored again when Shershah transferred the capital of Bihar, from Biharsharif to Patna in 1545. This decision of Shershah strengthened the process of urbanisation, which in turn favoured trade and commerce. However it may not be entirely correct to see the transfer of capital as factor for Patna’s eminence, as there are references to merchant colonies at Patna earlier than 1545.³

The Region: - Patna & its Hinter land:

Apart from political reasons, Patna’s geographical location certainly provided the advantage of being a major entre-port. Located at 25° 37' North &

¹ These are the opening lines of the poem composed by Mirja Muhammed Sadiq in the praise of the city of Patna, cited in Q. Ahmed and Hasan Askari ed., *The comprehensive history of Bihar*, Vol. 2, part II, 553.

² There is a story of Putra, the son of Bikusha, who married the princess Patali of Ceylon and then founded the kingdom of Patliputra; in Mira Pakrasi, *Folktales of Bihar ; Origin of Patna*, Sterling Publishers, 1999 112-4.

³ The inscription regarding the founding of the Begu Hajjam mosque (AD 1510-1511) refers to a body of merchants living in an urban environment at least 30 years before Sher Shah’s transfer of his capital to Patna from BiharSharif. F. Lehmann, ‘the 18th century transition in India: response of some Bihar intellectuals’. PhD. Disst; University of Wisconsin, 1967, 22n 44, cited in Kum Kum Chatterjee, *Merchants, politics and society in early modern India, Bihar; 1733-1820*, 14.

85° 12' East, along the west bank of the Ganges⁴, Patna was almost at the heart of the rich alluvial Gangetic plains. Evidently, it was the stability in the course of the river Ganges at this point that enabled the city to endure through the ages.

Patna was the capital city of Mughal *Subah* of Bihar during our period. Bounded by the *Subah* of Awadh and Allahabad in the West, while in north, the boundary of Bihar touched the tarai regions on the foothills of the Himalayas. In the south, it was bounded by hills of considerable elevation⁵ (Chotanagpur Plateau). The eastern boundary of Bihar converged on Sarkar Purnea. In fact, Patna City was in *Sarkar* Bihar, which included the district of Gaya and formed the western half of the plain of Magadh. The central position of Patna, was accentuated by its strategic situation between the eminent cities of the rich *doab* on the west and the bounteous Bengal which apart from other trading advantages possessed a convenient sea outlet. The immediate Hinter land of Patna too greatly supported its trade. Tirhut, Saran, Gaya, Singhiya (on the left bank of Gandak, about 15 miles north of Patna), Bhagalpur, Lakhawar, Dariyapur etc. were among the more important Hinter land of Patna.⁶

Three great rivers, the Ghagra, the Gandak and the Son, joined the Ganges not far from Patna. Further east Punpun at Futwah joins the Ganges from south.⁷ Thus, Patna was a city well guarded by the rivers from three sides.

Climatically Patna lies in a belt of transition between the wetter environs of Bengal in the east, and drier Uttar Pradesh to the west. Climatically

⁴ Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account of the Countries around Bay of Bengal*, ed., R.C. Temple, Munshi Ram Manohar Lal, 1997, First published London, 1905, Hakluyt society, 22.

⁵ H.S. Jarret trans & ed., *Ain-i-Akbari*, connoted and ed., J. N. Sarkar, 1891, Reprint 1989, New Delhi, Vol. II, 162.

⁶ W. Foster ed., *English Factories in India (here after E. F. I.)*, 1618-21, 192; S. A. Khan, ed., *John Marshal in India*, 1668-72, London, 1927,, 77&121.

⁷ *Ain-I-Akbari*, Vol.II, 163-4.

speaking thence, the city has three seasons into which the year is divided. Abul Fazl noted about the climate of Patna that,

“summer months are intensely hot while the winter is temperate. The rains continue during six months and through the year the country is green and fertile. No severe winds blows, no clouds of dust possible.”⁸

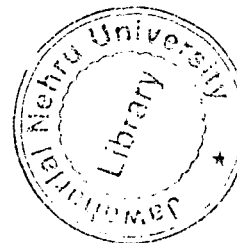
Fazl’s views however, seem a trifle over romanticised in the face of references to both droughts and floods by other commentators. Thomas Bowery for instance, noted that.

“in 1670, there had a great scarcity in so much that many thousands of the natives perished in the streets and open fields for want of food and many had to sell their own children for a handful of rice.”⁹

This is also well corroborated by De Graffie, the Dutch traveller who noted that, “dead bodies were strewn all over the roads, streets, common market places and on the sandy banks of the Ganga.”¹⁰

In summers there were cases of fire in the city, which engulfed several houses and market places. Robert Hughes, writing in the year 1621 at Patna, noted that,

“at west part (sic.) of the suburbs belonging to this city, in the Allamganj, a terrible fire kindled which having consumed all those parts, by the force of a strong *andhi*, break into the city and within the space of two *ghari* came into the very



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⁸ Ibid., 164.

⁹ Thomas Bowrey, *A geographical...*, 226.

¹⁰ Q. Ahmed and H. Askari ed., *The Comprehensive history of Bihar...*, 164-65.

heart thereof, where our abode is; who being environed with neighbouring *chhapar*....”¹¹

In the rainy season, trade and commerce was hampered due to the heavy rains and floods, which were a recurrent annual phenomenon. Robert Martin noted that,

“little or no advantages is taken of the immense torrents to float down any kind of commodity and during rainy seasons all internal commerce is at a complete stand still.”¹²

Thus, in an era when man was still largely a slave to his natural environment, the natural factors had a major role-play in the city’s economic life.

Highways, waterways and the Sarais:-

Convenient land-routes and waterways connected Patna on the north, the west and the east. It was mainly due to these communication routes that commerce from Patna radiated in all directions. Patna was connected to Agra, Allahabad and Benaras on the west by rivers Ganga and Yamuna and by over-land routes as well. Through these routes it was incorporated into the larger matrix of the overland traffic in to Central Asia, West Asia and Africa including Egypt. Thomas Bowery noted that,

“this country is really the great gate that opens into Bengal and Orissa and so consequently into most parts of India viz- from the northern kingdoms (by land) namely Persia, Kirman, Georgia, and Tartaria....”¹³

¹¹ *E. F. I.*, 1618-21, 246-47; Letter from Robert Hughes at Patna to factors at Agra, dated 31st March 1621.

¹² Robert M. Martin, *Historical Documents of Eastern India, Bihar and Patna*, Vol. I, First Published, 1938, Reprint, 1990, Delhi, 385.

¹³ Thomas Bowrey, *A geographical Account...*, 221.

Almost every traveller visiting Patna and its environs has drawn attention to the magnificence and utility of both the land and the water routes. Peter Mundy informs us that, Jahangir, mindful of the comforts of the travellers, had ordered the construction of a road to link Patna to Agra.¹⁴ From Patna to Benares, there were two possible routes. One ran with the Ganges through Danapur, Maner, Arrah, Bhojpur, Buxor, Chausa, Zamania and Mughalsarai. Whilst a second ran through Phulwari, Nawbatpur, Arwal, Daudnagar, and Sasaram to Mughalsarai.¹⁵ On the eastern side, Patna was linked to the Hughli via Monghy- Rajmahal- Kasimbazaar and Balasore.¹⁶ The city of Patna was also connected to Nepal via Hajipur- Mehsi- Motihari- Hitoura, while Nepal was linked through hilly route to Tibet, Bhutan etc.¹⁷

Manrique mentions that, these routes were well equipped with *sarais* built by wealthy men with philanthropic interests.¹⁸ Ever since the days of antiquity the state had been known to have built rest houses for the comfort of travellers and merchants. In the medieval period the state started building *Khanquahs* for the benefit of the travellers, by using the taxes collected on the high ways. However by the time of the Lodhi Sultans, the term *Khanaqah* seems to have been replaced by the term *Sarai*.¹⁹ SherShah also built a number of *Sarais*, totalling nearly 1700, for the benefit of the common people. They were in reality, fortified inns. Sher Shah caused markets to be set up in every *sarai*. Many of the *sarais* became *mandis* i.e. markets, where the peasants came to sell their produce. These in turn

¹⁴ R. C. Temple, ed., Peter Mundy, *Travels in Asia, 1628-34*, Vol. II, 2nd series, Hakluyt Society, London, 1914, 83.

¹⁵ K. M. Karim- *the province of Bihar and Bengal under Shahjahan*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dacca, 1974, 172.

¹⁶ S. A. Khan, *John Marshal...*, 161.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 161,166.

¹⁸ C. E. Lourd, trns. & ed., *Travels of F. Sebastian Manrique*, Vol. II, Hakluyt Society, London, 1927, 146.

became in time, the nuclei around which towns (*qasbas*) grew, where trade and handicrafts developed.

Peter Mundy noted that, “here is also the *fairest* sarias that I have yet seen, or I think is in India...”²⁰ He also says that,

“this place is chiefly for merchants... where the merchants may lodge and keep their goods, the time of their stay here, paying so much by the month. These are usually in great cities but the other sorts of *sarais* are in all places serving for all sorts of travellers that come at night and away in the morning.”²¹

The *sarai* mentioned by Peter Mundy, as a matter of fact, was built by Jafar Khan the Governor of Bihar. In fact as we have seen above, it was the duty of the rulers to make arrangements for the travellers and merchants, and the *sarais* were a part of that arrangement. There is distinct reference to four *sarais* viz- *sarai* at Barh, (John Marshal noticed this *sarai* en-route from RajMahal to Patna, he claimed it had two hundred room),²² Rani *Sarai* 11 ¼ miles of Barh; Asmulika *sarai* and Gusarpur *sarai* 18 ¾ miles west of Barh²³ Apart from these there was the Amwakantha *Sarai*, two days journey short of Benares and Mendroo *Sarai*.²⁴

Further, it was for the convenience of the travellers that bridges were built over the various water bodies on the trade route. John Marshal noticed two such

¹⁹ I. H. Khan art., ‘The process of urbanization and Social change in pre- Mughal India’, *Islamic Culture*, Vol. LXXVII, no. 3, April 2003, 38.

²⁰ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 157.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 159.

²² S. A. Khan, *John Marshal...*, 117.

²³ Jagdish Narayan sarkar, art., ‘Patna and it’s Environs in the seventeenth century- A Study in Economic History’, *J. B. R. S.* 1948, Vol. 34, 131.

²⁴ R.C.Temple, ‘Documents relating to the first English commercial mission to Patna’ 1620-21, *Indian Antiquary*, May 1914, 77, 110.

bridges, one at Kalyanpur (on Patna- RajMahal route) and the other at Garhi Sarai which was under construction.²⁵

However, land routes were not always safer and hence *fauzdars* were instructed to keep a constant vigil on the roads so that the caravans and other travellers might not be attacked by the robbers and thieves. Apart from robbers, Thevenot also talks about '*fakirs*' who molested travellers and caravans and emphasised that, 'they are all over India.'²⁶ Sometimes, even the *banjaras*, moving in groups were so strong in their strength of number and their contempt of the petty officials of the government that they looted the people on the travellers.²⁷ Yet, despite such cases, land routes witnessed large-scale caravan traffic. Tavernier on his way to Patna met 110 wagons carrying the revenue of Bengal, each drawn by oxen.²⁸ Bullock carts and pack oxen were in fact the major means of transport on the over-land route. Despite all these efforts by the governments of the day, transportation during the rainy season, became a veritable impediment. In a letter to the Surat Factory, dated 12 July 1620, from Patna, Robert Hughes noted that,

“the general transport of goods from hence (Patna) to Agra is by carts, but now in the season of the rains the ways are so deep that no carts can

²⁵ S. A. Khan, *John Marshal...*, 120, 123.

²⁶ S.N.Sen ed., *Indian travels of Thevenot and Carrie*, New Delhi, 1949, 94.

²⁷ Jadunath Sarkar art., 'the condition of the people in Aurangzeb's reign', 307, in M. Alam and S. Subramanyam ed., - *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, Delhi, O. U. P., 1998; In one such incident, on the complaint of a *Naik* against some *banjaras* for looting him and wounding and killing his followers, Aurangzeb issued orders to make investigations, Yusuf Hussain Khan, ed., *Selected Documents of Aurangzeb's reign 1659-1706*, Andhra Pradesh Publication, 1958, 19; In eighteenth century when Alivardi Khan was the deputy Governor of Bihar, he sent an expedition against the *banjaras* who according to Ghulam Hussain, were a class of marauders and murders and who in the guise of traders and travelers used to plunder the imperial domain and treasure, Abdus Salam trans. & ed., Ghulam Husain Salim, *Riyas-us-Salatim*, Calcutta, 1903, 296.

²⁸ V.Ball, ed., J.B.Tavernier, *Travels in India, 1640-67*, London, 1889, Vol. 1, 93.

pass, and therefore for necessity whatever goods
hence is laden on oxen.”²⁹

However, the cost of communication on these land routes was much higher than the waterways just as the distance travelled by water was also shorter. English factors noted that, on the route from Patna to Agra goods sent were usually charged a rupee and four *Annas* or a rupee and eight *Annas* per maunds for a journey of 35 days duration.³⁰ Apart from these of course, the English Company also had to pay the agents who accompanied their caravans. Robert Hughes noted in a letter to Agra Factory, dated 6th October, 1620 that

“we have delivered into the hands of our servant Dayala, fifteen rupees to defraye (sic) the charges of the goods on the way... we had sent Abdul Karim with the cartes,... we have paid our servants which went with the goods 4 ¼ per piece for their journey.”³¹

The distance from Agra to Patna was about 300 Jahangiri *Kos*.³² Yet, Manrique, we are told, took only 25 days to reach Agra from Patna.³³ The difference in the time taken was due, I daresay, to the better quality bullocks and carts used by Manrique.

The water ways were far more important for trade, since they were faster and easier to commute on. English factors noted that,

“the current of the Ganges from Patna towards the south east was so strong that it could carry

²⁹ ‘Documents relating to the first English...,’ 70; Robert Hughes letter to surat factors, 12 July 1620, patna

³⁰ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 191.

³¹ ‘Documents relating to the first English...,’ 78.

³² *Ibid.*, 69.

³³ *Travels of F. S. Manrique*, Vol. II, 145.

down freight in five or six days while the
upcoming voyage took thrice the time.”³⁴

Bowery mentions that, “many patella’s came down yearly laden with wheat and grain and go up laden with salt and beeswax on the Ganges.”³⁵ The boats used for conveyance of merchandise were variously called ‘*ulaks*’, ‘*patellas*’ and large ones --- ‘*Huliyas*.’³⁶(see glossary) Here one must note that, the trade east ward from Patna was mostly carried on by means of riverine transport while west ward transportation of goods was largely over land. Owing to the large volume of the riverine trade upon the Patna-Hugli route though, the English were often exasperated by the frequent delays in obtaining clearances from the Mughal officials, despite being in possession of the necessary papers.

The land cum water ways were so important for the patna officials that they used to levy taxes on the entry and the exit points of these routes and for this purpose they had set up customs house called ‘*chaukis*’ or ‘*chabutras*’, where merchants or travellers were checked with their goods for payments of the dues, unless they could show passport in favour of exemption. The out goinh trade of Patna was carried through Sultanganj *Chauki* in eastern part of the city situated on the river Ganga.³⁷ Trade passed through these *Chaukis* and custom dues were collected there. Robert Hughes mentioned one such ‘*chabutras*’, which according to him, ‘was a shed used as a resting place for the travellers or for the transaction of public businesses.’³⁸ Merchants travelling in northern India had to take a passport (*dastak*) from the place of departure and show it at the custom posts in order to be allowed to pass without paying customs. While travelling from Dacca to Patna, Manrique had to wait at every check post because the officers, who he found were very busy owing to the pressure of the work. His boat tried to pass a

³⁴ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 214.

³⁵ Thomas Bowery, *A geographical Account of...*, 225.

³⁶ R.M.Martin, *Historical Documents...*, Vol. I, 385.

³⁷ Ranjan Sinha, art., ‘Patna as a manufacturing and trading centre, 1765-1865’, 182, in Q. Ahmed, ed., *Patna through the ages, Glimpses of History, Society and Economy*, New Delhi, 1988.

³⁸ *E.F.I.*, 1618-1621, 198.

small custom check post situated between Raj Mahal and Munger but could not do so because of the vigilance of the watchmen on the duty. The boat was hauled up and the boats men brought before the kotwal of Raj Mahal. However Manrique was forgiven the ground that, being a foreigner, he was liable to make an error.³⁹ Shiahabuddin Talish has described the collection of customs and transit duties in an interesting way. He says that,

“on the roads and ferries matters came to such a pass that no rider was allowed to go unless he paid a dinar and no pedestrian unless he paid a dirham. On the river highways if the wind brought it to the ears of the toll collectors (rahdars) that the stream was carrying away a broken boat without paying hasil, they would chain the river.”⁴⁰

The transit duties were charged as ways of guarding the roads or renovation of the road patrols. This road tax, rahdari, amounting to about 10% of advalorem of the value of the goods was taken on every highway (guzar) and yielded large revenue.⁴¹

Products: - Agricultural and manufactured

Patna was the producer of wide range of goods, both agricultural and manufactured one and this made the city of Patna a favourite spot for the merchants. Also, as the chief metropolis of the region, it undoubtedly attracted large quantities of goods and commodities from the surrounding areas. In fact, in no civilisation is city life evolved and developed independently of its Hinter land.

³⁹ *Travels of F.S.manrique*, Vol. II, 120-23.

⁴⁰ Jadunath Sarkar, trans. & ed., *Fathyyah-i-ibriyyah* by Shihabuddin Talish, Journal and proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, new series, Vol. II, 1906, Calcutta, it is translated as *Shaista Khan in Bengal*, Vol. II, no. 6, 264.

There is a close interaction of services between cities and surrounding areas. The ruler economy older than the urban economy continued to exist side by side with the later. Self sufficiency in agricultural products was an important factor in its commercial development. Abul Fazl noted that, "agriculture flourish in a high degree, especially the cultivation of rice which for its quality and quantity is rarely to be equalled."⁴² There were many varieties of rice produced at Patna. Again Abul Fazl says that, 'if a single grain of each kind were collected, they would fill a large vase.'⁴³ Thevenote's observations also testify the dominance of rice over other crops.⁴⁴ System of crop rotation was in vogue since earliest times.

Cotton was cultivated all over northern India and was an important crop of Patna.⁴⁵ Peter Mundy noted that, in 1632, he saw cotton fields in the area between Naubatpur and Patna.⁴⁶ Among the several varieties that were cultivated, the most common was the 'Herbaceous' annual variety, used for the manufacture of fabrics. The other Variety inferior in quality was grown on trees called 'sanbal' and was used for stuffing and quilting purposes. Patna also produced sugarcane. Abul Fazl says that, it was quite abundant in Bihar.⁴⁷ Patna's sugar cane was of two varieties. The thinner was used for extraction of sugar while the thicker one was used for chewing. Raw silk was also an important item of Patna. Silk were grown of three varieties- the 'brown', the 'ordinary' and the 'fine' one. Most of the raw silk, however was bought from Bengal. Serbandy (Sirbandi, head winding) silk, the best of Maksudabad and Murshidabad Satgaon silk and

⁴¹ Q.Ahmed and Hasan Askari, *the comprehensive history of Bihar...*, Vol. II 326.

⁴² *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, 164.

⁴³ H.Blochmann, trans. & ed., *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1872, 134.

⁴⁴ *Indian travels of Thevenote and Carrie*, 68.

⁴⁵ F. Bernier, *travels in the Mughal Empire, 1656-58*, trans. A. Constable, 2nd ed., revised by V. A. Smith, London, 1916, (here after Bernier Travels) 402, 439; R. C. Temple, ed., *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, (here after Master's Diary) London, 1911, Vol. II, 81-82; Thomas Bowery, *A geographical Account...*, 132-134.

⁴⁶ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 134.

Saidabad were brought to patna. As these were brought by the indigenous merchants, the company had to take these from them only. They had to pay a brokerage on these purchase. Robert Hughes noted that,

“the brokerage as well on this as on all other sortes (sic) of silk is by the *Nawab's* command, but five *Annas* of a rupee percent. From the buyer and ten *Annas* from the sellers but the brokers do usually take 1 ½ percent from the buyers and one percent from the sellers.”

The demand of raw silk by the European companies fluctuated cocurently with the price in Europe and was attuned to the supplies of other silks received by the European companies for their home market.

Other cash crops of the region were oilseeds, indigo, and tobacco, which were cultivated in substantial quantities.⁴⁸ Peter Mundy talks about the production of indigo at Patna, which was an important commodity used in dyeing.⁴⁹ But other cotemporaries did not mentions such production therefore it can be said that before late 18th century it was not considered as an important item of export by the English Company. Among spices long pepper grew wild in the forest of the Hinter land of Patna. *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions the production of long pepper in sarkar Champaran.⁵⁰ Turmeric greatly produced at Patna, was used by the English company mostly to complete the tonnage of the ships leaving Patna.⁵¹ Saffron was brought to Patna from Nepal and Kashmir.⁵² Patna was also the important producer of various types of drugs and the English authorities enquired that “send us a list and sample of what drugs are procurable at Patna and the adjoining and in

⁴⁷ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, 151.

⁴⁸ *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, 81-82; *Berniers Travels*, 440.

⁴⁹ Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol. II, 156.

⁵⁰ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, 152.

⁵¹ *Master's Diary*, Vol. I, 308; Vol. II, 64.

⁵² S. A. Khan, *John Marshal...*, 413.

what quantities and prices.”⁵³ The important drugs produced at Patna included opium, Tinkal etc.

Opium was highly placed among drugs and we have numerous references of its production and use worldwide. It was manufactured at Patna and Monghyr since the early days of seventeenth century, however the Opium produced at Patna was the cheapest and of better quality among other Indian varieties.⁵⁴ Opium was used by the Mughal Emperors, nobles and the common men alike.⁵⁵ Patna’s opium drew buyers from far and wide and therefore according to traditions, merchants from northern and western India congregated at Patna every year for its purchase. The participation of the European companies in this export trade expanded it considerably. Patna also produced tincall (tinkal, native borax). Streyntsham Master reported that, in the year 1677, 400 maunds of tincall were bought for export from Patna.⁵⁶

Patna and its environs were also rich in forest products of various kinds. Lignumaloe (aguru) was available in large quantities at Patna.⁵⁷ The price of the lightest and commonest kind ranged from 8 *Annas* to 4 or 5 rupees a ser. Gumlac was also an important product. 50 maunds of Gumlac were purchased by the Patna factors (1620-21) for Persia, the Red Sea and England.⁵⁸ Musk from the two foot high Musk deer of the locality was available at Patna and was exported in large quantities by the English and the Dutch Companies and was passed off as China

⁵³ *Master's Diary*, Vol. I, 309-10.

⁵⁴ S. A. Khan, *John Marshal...*, 414.

⁵⁵ Van linschoten mentions an interesting and sensuous use of opium. He says that, “the Indian use it mostly for leisure. For it makes a man to hold his seed long before he sheds it which the Indian women much desires, that they must shed their nature likewise with the men”, J. H. Van Linschoten, *The Voyage of Van Linschoten to the East Indies*, ed., A. C. Burnell, London, 1885, Vol. II, 114.

⁵⁶ *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, 64.

⁵⁷ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 200.

⁵⁸ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 156.

musk by the merchants.⁵⁹ The Court of Directors issued recommendation to the English factors, 'to converse with the Armenian merchants and others that travels into those parts and negotiate in the musk trade and who annually come through Patna.'⁶⁰

Patna was equally fortunate in respect of fruits. *Kathal* (jack fruit) and *Barhal* were produced on abundance.⁶¹ But the most important fruit grown in the region was mango. *Pan* (betel leaf) especially of the *Maghahi* variety, delicate and beautiful in colour, thin in texture, flawless, without cracks (*be-jarm*) fragrant and pleasant to taste was even then grown in Patna. The Europeans used to chew betel leaf imitating the local elites.

The self sufficiency in agricultural products helped Patna to grow into a manufacturing centre of eminence. The artisans and peasants could concentrate more on the production of manufactured goods. Patna was famous for cotton textiles and so great was the demand for it that, it was felt by the English factors that, cotton textiles along with raw silk was sufficient to uphold the English Factory at Patna.⁶² Patna's speciality lay in two varieties of cloth, the '*Ambertees*' and the '*Aljah*'.⁶³ (See glossary) While the Europeans preferred the former, the later was popular with the central Asians. It was reported that, in the early seventeenth century the Mughal and the Armenian merchants invested at least 1,00,000 rupees in the finest and most expansive variety of Calicoes, called '*QaimKhanis*', which they sent to Iran from Patna.⁶⁴ The English factors at Patna noted in 1620 that, "50,000 rupees could easily be sunk in the purchase of

⁵⁹ Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account...*, 229; J.B.Tavernier, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 259.

⁶⁰ *Master's Diary*, Vol. I, 309-310.

⁶¹ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol.II, 164.

⁶² *E.F.I.*, 1618-1621, 213.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 168-1, 192-3.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 195.

'*Amberty*' calicoes.⁶⁵ There are references of three varieties of '*Amberteas*' that were made in Patna and its suburbs. These were- '*Rasseyyes*', a coarse variety, thick woven wrapper about rupees 2 for a piece of 13 yards X 0.75 yards; '*ZafarKhani*', was a fine variety in no way inferior to the '*Baftes*' of Broach and which price ranged between 2 rupees to 6 rupees for a piece of the same length as above, and the third variety was '*Jahangiri*', which was the broadest and the finest cloth made at patna and was also highly priced.⁶⁶ However, low priced varieties of '*Amberteas*' were considered safe from commercial point of view. The Patna factors declared in early seventeenth century that, they could provide 20,000 pieces of '*Amberteas*' annually from patna alone.⁶⁷

The localities around Patna, within a radius of nearly 50 miles, were important centres and markets of cotton products. Manucci observed that, fine white cloth was manufactured at Patna and was very plentiful in the province of Bihar.⁶⁸ The weavers who made cloth, both of cotton and silk at Patna, were confined to three vicinities, Fatuha, Gaya and Nawada. In Patna also, large numbers of weavers were engaged in production. Robert Martin noted that, there were 17,000 families of '*Julaha*' or weavers in Patna in his time.⁶⁹ This shows the popularity of weaving business at Patna. Lackhawar (English factors noted that it was a *Penth*, market town or fayer (sic) for *amberty* Calicoes, 14 course from Patna), produced a great quantity of fine cloth of four, five, six, eight to ten rupees per piece.⁷⁰ By far the greater part of the weavers were employed in making coarse cloths for the country use, but a good many also worked at finer goods for

⁶⁵ Ibid, 198; Robert Hughes letter to the President and Council at Surat, 12 July 1620.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 192-3, 213, 270.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 213.

⁶⁸ William Irvine, trns. & ed., Manucci, *Storio de Monger*, vol. II, 246.

⁶⁹ R.M.Martin- *Historical Documents...*, Vol. I, 115.

exportations. In the nineteenth century, the English Company had three factories depended on Patna and five subordinate to the other three, while the indigenous merchants had established 22 houses for the purchase of cloth.⁷¹

This indicates the volume of production of textiles at Patna and its suburbs. Patna equally produced other varieties of calicoes, such as 'Sahan', 'Hammam', 'Chautaha', 'Ravat', 'Ramsukha', 'Carsa', and 'Dupattas', (See glossary) both fine and coarse.

The bleaching, dying and printing of textiles were done at Patna. The dyers were divided into four kinds- 'Rangrej', 'Nilgur', 'Achfurosh', and 'Galalsaj'.⁷² First of them dyed various colours, the second dyed with indigo alone, the third dyed with the roots of Marinda and the fourth dyed with Lac alone.⁷³ Block printing was also famous and was used widely in printing textiles.

As regard silk textiles, Patna was equally fortunate. Pelseart, the Dutch traveller, mentions the production of a coarse variety of muslin at Patna sold at four or five rupees per piece.⁷⁴ Manucci, while talking about Patna's Muslin simply praised their quality without actually naming the varieties or going in further details.⁷⁵ Baikunthpur, ten miles east of Patna was an important silk manufacturing centre, (See Map) producing quantities of 'Alachaah' (*Ellachas*), 'Layches' and 'Tuckrees' (*tukri*) or 'Becutpoores' (silk for women's petticoats). These were generally purchased for Persia by the Mughal traders,⁷⁶ and were

⁷⁰ 'Documents relating to the first....,' 70, 73; Robert Hughes letter to Surat Factory, Dated 12th July 1620 and 6th August 1620

⁷¹ F.Buchanan and Hamilton, *An Account of the Disst. of Bihar and Patna in 1811-1812*, First ed., 1934, Reprint, 1986, New Delhi, Vol. II, 652; R.M.Martin, *Historical Documents...*, Vol. I, 354.

⁷² F.Buchanan and Hamilton, op cit. Vol. II, 649.

⁷³ Robert M.Martin, *Historical Documents of ...*, Vol. I, 351.

⁷⁴ W.H.Moreland and P.Geyl, ed., F.Pelseart, *Jahangir's India: The Remonstratie of F. Pelseart*, Cambridge, 1925, 8.

⁷⁵ Manucci, *Storio de Mongor...*, Vol. II, 246.

⁷⁶ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 154.

considered by the English factors as likely to command a market in England. Silk products of Bihar were of two kind's viz. - a) those which were imported from outside and b) those produced locally.

Patna and its Hinter land was the major producer of Salt peter. Almost every traveller visiting Patna testifies to the production of Salt peter. Bernier was of the opinion that, a prodigious amount of peter was exported from Patna. Though Patna was not the only place of production of peter in India, yet its Salt peter was of best quality and of cheap rate. Especially at Tirhut, where the soil contained large proportion of saline matter such as nitrate of potash (peter) lime, sulphate and soda, great production was done.⁷⁷ This peter generally called the Patna peter was regarded as of good quality and of low price. According to the English factors, in 1650, Peter at Patna cost one rupee per maund, where as at Hugli it cost 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ rupees per maund and at Balasore it was 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ rupees per maund.⁷⁸ Also it was much easier to shop around for better qualities of peter at Patna, while at the ports the buyers were obliged to buy whatever quality had been brought there.

The European companies generally exported refined Salt peter as other wise it could not be used for making gunpowder. Moreover, the export of raw or crude variety was uneconomic as it increased the fright charges while custom duties remained the same on both refined and crude varieties.⁷⁹ Salt peter was carried down the Ganges with great facility and the English and the Dutch send large cargoes to many parts of the Indies and to Europe.⁸⁰ Peter was usually

⁷⁷ Ibid, 156.

⁷⁸ *E.F.I.*, 1646-50, 337; James Bridgman to the Company abroad *Lioness*, dated, 15th December 1650.

⁷⁹ Sushil Chaudhuri, art., 'Saltpeter trade and industry in Bengal' in Satish Chandra ed., *Essays in medieval Indian Economic History*, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987, 230.

⁸⁰ Bernier, *Travels*..., 440.

carried from Patna down to Hugli in various types of country crafts known as 'Patellas', 'Boras', and 'Palwars.'⁸¹ (See glossary). However, it was also carried by oxen on land.⁸² Thomas Bowery noted that, "the only commodity of this kingdom that is yearly sent for English here is peter of which great quantities are sent to England and Holland."⁸³ This shows the importance of salt peter among the Europeans. It was in fact, only among the Europeans that, Salt peter was a favourite commodity for trade. The chronic warfare in Europe in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century generated a great demand for peter and yet European sources were not enough to meet the demand.⁸⁴

Since Salt peter was an essential commodity in the manufacture of gunpowder, the Mughal State had always maintained an interest in it and frequently granted favoured blue blood persons, its monopoly.⁸⁵ And due to state monopoly on Salt peter, the trade of it was a major cause of struggle between the English factors and the Mughal officials at Patna.

Patna was also the centre of production of bottles and fine earthenware's, including cups of clay finer than glass, lighter than paper and highly scented. Minapure, near Ghajipure was a pottery centre.⁸⁶ Abul Fazl noted that, gilded glass was also manufactured in Patna.⁸⁷ (See map) Such articles were used not only by the nobles but were sent to the courts as a rarity and carried all over

⁸¹ R. Barlow & H. Yule, ed., *The Diaries of William Hedges*, (here after Hedges Diary) London, 1887-1889, Vol. III, 197; *E.F.I.*, 1651-54, 95.

⁸² *E.F.I.* 1655-60, 297-98.

⁸³ Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account...*, 229.

⁸⁴ K.N.Chaudhuri, *Trading world of Asia and the English...*, 336-9; Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *Glimpses of Medieval Bihar Economy*, Ratna Prakashan, Calcutta, 1978, 71.

⁸⁵ Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, art., 'Monopolies and monopolistic control in Mughal India', 177-85, in J.N.Sarkar, *Studies in Economic life of Mughal India*, Oriental Publishers, New Delhi, 1975.

⁸⁶ Manucci, *Storio de Mongor...*, Vol. II, 246.

⁸⁷ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, 164.

world. Peter Mundy also testifies to the production of bows and arrows in the city of Patna.⁸⁸

Commercial System: - Merchants, Markets and Finance

Commercial aspects viz.- finance, weights and measures, coinage, merchant groups, production system etc were well developed at Patna. and these all contributed in making patna a great entre-port city in eastern India. Robert Hughes noted Patna, 'as the cheafest (sic) mart town of all Bengal.'⁸⁹ Peter Mundy mentioned that,

“It is the greatest mart of all this country, from whence they repaire (sic) from Bengala (sic) that way to the Seaside, and from Indostan (sic) and other inland countries round about, plentifull in provisions, abounding with sundrie commodities.”⁹⁰

This observation of Mundy indicates the commercial importance of Patna.

Apart from other factors indicated above, the system of production played a great role in developing Patna as a favourite spot for the merchants. In the main, the artisans still worked on a domestic basis. In general, the artisans owned their own tools of trade. This provided them the basis for producing designs and quality according to their wishes and as the profit arising from that was solely theirs, they preferred this type of manufacturing. But very often, also, big buyers from outside the region made their purchase through advances to the primary producers.⁹¹ Merchants made advances to ensure the requisite supply of goods but they do not

⁸⁸ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 170-2.

⁸⁹ 'Document relating to...', 82; Robert Hughes and John Parker to the Honourable Company, Patna, 30th November, 1620.

⁹⁰ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 157.

⁹¹ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 204.

appear to have used them to control the specific details of production. However, when trade and manufacture grew the merchants gradually extended their control over the professional artisans through the 'dadni' or putting out system. They not only brought the artisans under their control by giving them loans, but providing raw materials and even laying down the size, pattern etc. of the goods.

Initially the English factors bought cotton textiles from the merchants and weavers coming to Patna from the Hinterland. Robert Hughes in a letter dated, 12th July 1620 to the surat Factory noted that, "the usual custom of buying the amberty, calicoes is as follows: they are daily brought in from the neighbouring *Ganj*, a village, by the weavers, from whome (sic) they are bought raw, of length 13 coveds *Jahangiri*, from which the buyer, of an ancient custom, tears of 1 ½ or 2 coveds and so delivers them marked to the whitster, (sic) who detaines (sic) them in whitening and starching about 3 months, the charge whereof is near upon 3 ruppes per score, and the abetements and *dasturi* (commission) in buying them raw from the weavers 4 rupees or 25 percent."⁹² Later on they appointed indigenous agents who bought textiles and other commodities from the producers. As regard the raw silk, however, the English factors already employed workers for winding and reeling them. It was efficient, as labour cost at Patna was cheaper. Robert Hughes noted that, "at present have 30 men at work thereon, purposing to use increase them to a 100, and if you approve thereof and the price (which is 1/3 cheaper then in Agra), I may have 2 or 300 silk winders to work in the house all the year."⁹³ In another letter to the Agra factors he noted that, 'I have increased my *KarKhana*, workshop to almost a hundred workmen...'⁹⁴

⁹² 'Documents relating to the first English...', 70.

⁹³ Ibid, 74; Robert Hughes letter to the Surat Factory, dated 6th August 1620.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 75; Robert Hughes letter to Agra Factory, 3rd September, 1620.

Financial aspect of trade was highly developed and merchants could easily raise considerable investment loans. The instalments for the sum of rupees 29,000 received by the Patna factors during 1620-21, and referred to were all in various forms of bills of exchanges and cheques to be cashed locally.⁹⁵ Robert Hughes had drawn a bill of exchange for rupees 2000 received at Patna in the name of Man Makhan, a *sarruff* at Patna to which Man Makhan earned rupees 8 and a ½ for exchanging the amount and this was at a time when the exchange rate had fallen.⁹⁶ In fact, the exchange rate at Patna was less than other places where the English were settled. Robert Hughes in a letter to the Surat Factory noted that, 'I have also advised for 5 or 6000 rupees more to be forth with remitted hether, (sic) for the exchange here is cheaper by 1 ½ or 2 percent then there....'⁹⁷

The financial institutions at Patna were thus largely favourable for commercial purposes. In fact, bankers were a major part of the society. Tavernier was of the opinion that, 'in India a village must be very small indeed if it has not a money changer called a shroff (cheraf) who acts as banker to make remittance of money and issue a letter of exchanges.'⁹⁸ Those who lend money at Patna were called 'Nukdi -Mahajan' and 'Ugahiya.'⁹⁹ There were 24 proper bankers (*kothiwalas*) who discounted bills payable either at Patna or at Calcutta, Benaras and Mursidabad in early nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ This shows the importance of the business of money transaction at Patna. English factors noted in early seventeenth century that, Champa Shah was the chief banker of the city of Patna whose son

⁹⁵ *E.F.I.* 1618-21, 198, 236.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 236.

⁹⁷ Documents relating to..., 72; letter dated 12th July 1620, Patna.

⁹⁸ J.B. Tavernier, *Travels in India*, Vol. I, 24.

⁹⁹ Robert M. Martin, *Historical Documents* ..., Vol. I, 381.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 380.

was posted at Agra in the same business.¹⁰¹ Other prominent bankers were Bharon Das, Chibilla Shah, Shyam Shah, Prag Das and Chandsahai Shah.¹⁰²

In fact, banking and money lending was a large profession, which owes its vastness also to the revenue policies of the Mughals. This profession was very vast even in all over India as can be witnessed from the account of Sir Richard Temple about the British India that,

“there are no less than 3 ½ million of adult males engaged in commerce in British India out of whom 1,18,000 adult males are banker proper, 1,10,000 are money lenders and 21,000 are money changers- total 2,49,500.”¹⁰³

It is quite clear that, it was largely the money business that mattered. The bankers were specialized not only in issuing ‘*Hundis*’ but also in discounting them as mentioned above. Indeed in 1655, the English factors at Agra reported that, the *sarrafs* were not lending out money at interest for they were finding more profits by exchanges i.e., by using their funds to discount *Hundis*.¹⁰⁴ Whenever the English drew a bill it was usually discounted by a *sarrafa*.

Patna city was also well inhabited by the brokers or middle men who were the usual intermediary between the Europeans and the local producers and manufactures. Manrique noted that, “Patna has as many as 600 wealthy brokers or middle men.”¹⁰⁵ However, the English factors mentioned in 1621, that,

“...they are so poor and beggarly that they cannot furnish us with moneys before hand, which

¹⁰¹ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 198.

¹⁰² ‘Documents relating ...,’ 75.

¹⁰³ R.C.Temple, *Oriental Experience - A Selection of Essays and Addresses delivered on various Occasions*, Delhi, first Reprint India, 1986, Chp. XII, ‘Monetary practice amongst the native of India’, 299.

¹⁰⁴ *E.F.I.*, 1655-60, 18-19.

¹⁰⁵ *Travels of F. Sebastian Manrique*, Vol. II, 140.

course we dare not attempt they not being able to give security for performance....”¹⁰⁶

The observation of F.Buchanan that,

“there are a good many dalals or brokers who have no capital engaged in trade and live by making bargains for others. In Patna they have the shopkeeper under a good deal of subjection, and scarcely any purchase even to the value of one rupee can be made without their interference. In fact, they are a public nuisance...”¹⁰⁷

Though presents a different picture of the brokers of Patna, but then also, it is an established fact that, without the “help” of these brokers the European Companies would have hardly thought of any sort of profitable commerce.

Apart from the city merchants, both Indian and foreign merchants were regular visitors of Patna and had their establishments to carry out their commercial programmes. Robert Hughes noted that,

“the Mogelles (merchants from upper India) and Prachaes (purbiya) are here like bees, whose cheafest (sic) provisions are Mandil (turban cloth), Girdells (*Kamarband*), Layches (*Alacha*, silk cloth), and *Doupattas* of Malda; also a sort of thin cloth called Kaim-Khani of Bihar. These are bought for the transport to Lahore, and thence to Persia...”¹⁰⁸

Peter Mundy also supports the above fact when he observed that, “here is also the place chiefly for merchants of strange countries as Mughals, Persians, and

¹⁰⁶ Documents relating..., 98; Robert Hughes and John Parker’s letter to the Surat Factory, dated 31st January, 1621.

¹⁰⁷ F.Buchanan and Hamilton, op cit., Vol. II, 697.

¹⁰⁸ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 195.

Armenians.”¹⁰⁹ Robert Hughes also met some Portuguese in Patna during his time who usually ‘brought vendable fere (sic) all sortes (sic) of spices and silk stuffs of China, tin, and some jewellers ware; inleu whereof they transport those coarse carpets of Jaunpur, *Ambertees*, *Khassas* and some silk.’¹¹⁰

Various merchants and their families migrated and settled at Patna in the seventeenth century. Most important among them was Hiranand Sahu, the founder of the house of Jagat Seth.¹¹¹ The arrival of Hiranand Sahu at Patna was almost contemporary with the establishment of English Factory there in 1652. Ralph Finch mentioned that, at Patna, ‘the chief merchants are Moors and Gentiles.’¹¹² There were various types of merchants of religion, both Hinduism and Islam. Those were ‘*Goldars*’ (usually merchants dealing in wholesale grain, many of them were of Jain religion); ‘*Aratiyes*’ (merchants who received goods from merchants and dispose of them by commission taking upon themselves the responsibility for the purchase); ‘*sarrafs*’ (they dealt in not only the precious metals and coins but in cotton cloth; European woollens and shawls were dealt in by the highest description of bankers called *Kothiwallas*); ‘*Saudagar*’ (were special merchants who keep the European shops); ‘*Beruni*’ (who came in boats and purchased grains),¹¹³ ‘*Baqqals*’ (Persian term for the traders of low birth).¹¹⁴

It is quite clear that there was no line of distinction between various types of traders and as mentioned above as even the bankers were traders of various commodities. It must be noted here that, while the financial part of trade was

¹⁰⁹ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 159.

¹¹⁰ ‘Documents relating ...,’ 71.

¹¹¹ J.H.Little, *The House of Jagat Seth*, Calcutta, 1967, 3.

¹¹² W.Foster, ed., *Early travels in India, 1583-1619*, First published, 1921, Oriental Book Reprint, New Delhi, 1985, 18.

¹¹³ F.Buchanan and Hamilton, op cit., Vol. II, 692, 655; Robert M. Martin, *Historical Documents* ..., Vol. I, 111.

¹¹⁴ Robert M. Martin, *Historical Documents...*, 111.

dominated by the Hindu and the Jain merchants, the trading (import and export) part was done mainly by the Muslim and the Armenian merchants. But the merchants with whom the English Company dealt with were mostly Hindus.¹¹⁵ The religious sanctions on the Muslim traders hampered the financial aspect of trade done by them. The ban on 'Riba' (usury) in Quran, stifle to the development of banking and credit and hence of commercial enterprise itself, but it was slightly countered through 'Hiyal' (legal devices). Also, by recognising credit as a valid form of commercial investments and by placing a premium on any skill of partners and agents, the *Hanafi* partnership¹¹⁶ served as a means of financing and to some extent ensuing commercial ventures as well as of providing the combination of necessary skills and services for their satisfactory execution. Not only the travelling merchants who accompanied their wares but also the sedentary merchants urban notables and others who preferred stay could put effectively make use of these arrangements and their variations by investing their surplus capital with those who did travel and thereby enjoy the profit of long distance trade while providing the capital necessary to finance it.¹¹⁷ But then also, the Hindu merchants, moneylenders and other non-Muslim groups usually carry on their customary practices unhindered as compared to the Muslim traders.

The merchants of Patna were well acquainted in commercial activities and were viewed as shrewd and intelligent by the Europeans. Pelseart, the Dutch factor observed that, 'these cunning and crafty Hindu merchants realise how we

¹¹⁵ Sukumar Bhattacharya, *The English E.I.C. and the Economy of Bengal, From 1704 to 1740*, Calcutta, 179.

¹¹⁶ Hanafi School of Islamic law divided the institution of partnership into two broad categories. *Sharikat al mailk*- propriety partnership and *Sharikat al aqd*- contractual or commercial partnership; Abraham L. Udovitch, *Partnership and profits in Medieval Islam*, Princeton, 1970, 17.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 261.

stand.¹¹⁸ However, another Dutch factor, Pieter Willemssen was impressed by the position and activities of these merchants and wished in early seventeenth century that, 'when the Portuguese had been driven from Bengal, the *bantias* who are great and powerful merchants would supply goods to them.'¹¹⁹

The Patna merchants were well versed in various mercantile practices. For every transaction they had some simple codes of manual signs known to all Indian brokers and merchants. These signs were simple, distinctive, and mistakes were hardly possible.¹²⁰ The great nineteenth century Historian of commercial law, Levin Goldschmidt epitomized the position of the medieval merchants by saying that, 'the grandeur and significance of these merchants was that he created his own law out of his own needs and his own views.'¹²¹ This was well true for the Patna merchants also.

Though the sources on seventeenth century Patna's commercial world do not emphasize or provide detail references about the activities of the Patna merchants. One of the few direct references to such merchants reports that, they rarely sold any of their goods in Patna, but carried them to Agra and Lahore where presumably greater gains were to be made.¹²² But it can be said that in an entre port city as Patna, there existed a sizable number of wealthy merchants who dealt in local products and did business with the Indian and foreign merchants who visited the city.

¹¹⁸ Pelseart, *The Remonstratie...*, 24.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Brij Narayan, *Indian economic life: past and present*, Delhi, First published, 1929, Reprint 1990, 60.

¹²⁰ D.C.Phillott, art., 'A note on the mercantile sign language of India', J. A.S. B., Vol. II, no. 6, 1906, Calcutta, 333-34.

¹²¹ Quoted in W.Mitchell, *An Essay on the Early History of the law Merchants*, Cambridge, 1904, 10. cited in Abraham L.Udovitch, *partnership and profit in Medieval Islam*, 249.

¹²² *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 204.

The city of Patna had several specialized markets dealing in various provisions. In fact, it was the essential features of the medieval city to have specialised markets in addition to 'Bazaars' and 'Haats'. Edward Terry noted that, every great town and cities of India have markets.¹²³ This observation correctly emphasizes the above argument. However, the successful development of these markets was facilitated by the well knit system of coinage, weights and measurements en vogue. The imperial mint was situated itself at Patna. Officially recognised unit for all cash transaction were *rupiya* (rupee) and *Dam*. In Bihar the standard of money was silver, gold coin was occasionally in circulation. In 1640, the price of a mohar prevailing in Bengal is stated to be about rupees thirteen.¹²⁴ However, currency in the market represented the diversity of units in different parts of the Empire, also the *batta* on the coins led to various differences in its ongoing value. Tavernier observed that, 'the Indians are cunning and exacting in reference to coin and payments, for when money has been coined for 3-4 years it has to lose ½ % and it continues in same proportion according to age not being able as they say to pass through many hands without some diminution.'¹²⁵ This forced the merchants to preferably use the coins minted in the current year itself. Apart from the minted *Siccass*, *Kauris* and *Badam* (Almonds) are also referred to have been used for daily purchase and sell by ordinary people in case of goods for daily use.¹²⁶

Many travellers were of the opinion that, no goods were sold by measure but every thing was weighed by mounds.¹²⁷ But, it was actually not the case.

¹²³ W.Foster, ed., *Early travels in India...*, 313.

¹²⁴ *Travels of F. Sebastian Manrique...*, Vol. II, 129.

¹²⁵ *J.B Tavernier Travels...*, Vol. I, 8.

¹²⁶ *E.F.I.*, 1634-36, 176.

¹²⁷ Pelseart, *The Remonstrance...*, 29; Edward Terry in W. Foster, ed., *Early Travels in India...*, 313.

Patna, as other parts of the Mughal Empire had a well developed weights and measurement system. The main unit of measurement was 'gaj' divided into 24 parts each of which was equal to 8 barley corns placed together breadth away.¹²⁸ The mound bigger or smaller was divided into forty equal parts called *sers*, which were furthered halved and quartered.¹²⁹ However, the leading characteristic of weights, measurements and coinage during our period was their diversity. Although through official rates it was intended that, uniformity would be maintained, nonetheless a non official rates varied from province to province and area to area. Officially the maund weighed 40 *sers* but unofficially it ranged between 40-43 *sers* sometimes. In Bihar and Bengal, the pucca maund was of 75 lb. (within the English Factory) while among the indigenous commercial groups it ranged between 80-84 lb.¹³⁰

Political system:-

The city of Patna was made a favourable trading centre and was provided with a commercial atmosphere by the political system presented by the Mughal. From 1575 (when Bihar was annexed to the Mughal Empire) to 1733 (when it was officially united with Bengal), Bihar was a Mughal *Subha*, with Patna as its capital city having the *Nawab's* residence known popularly as the 'Patna *darbar*.' Earlier it was under the Afghan rule.

F. Bernier named 20 provinces into which the empire of Aurangzeb was divided. It also included 'patna' or 'Beara.'¹³¹ At the time of Akbar, Bihar was divided into seven *Sarkars* namely- Bihar, Monghyr, Champaran, Rohtas,

¹²⁸ M.P.Singh, *Towns, Market, Mint and Ports in Mughal Empire, 1556-1707*, Delhi, 1985, 282.

¹²⁹ Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account of...*, 217.

¹³⁰ M.P.Singh, *op cit.*, 278.

¹³¹ F.Bernier, *Travels...*, 456-58.

Hajipure, Saran and Tirhut,¹³² (See map) but late during the reign of Aurangzeb, Rohtas was divided into two parts- *Sarkar* Rohtas and the new *Sarkar* of Bhojpur Shahabad.¹³³ The city of Patna was in *Sarkar* Bihar. It was named Azimabad by prince Azimushan and though the name Patna never fell into disuse, Azimabad was extensively used over the eighteenth and nineteenth century, particularly by the literati and the ruling class. Prince Azimushan carried out substantial repairs and additions to the interior and exterior of the Patna fort on the model of the Red fort in Shahjahanabad. In fact, its palaces and Mansions and other public buildings were itself based on the Red fort and the city of Shahjahanabad. The famous palace of 40 pillars called '*chihilsatun*' was the residence of the *Nawab*, built in the reign of Shahjahan.¹³⁴

Patna *darbar* was dominated by the *Nawab* or the *Subahdar* called *Sahibi Suba* in royal correspondence and had full control over civil (*mulki*) and financial (*Mali*) affairs. The Governor was known in different titles such as *Sipah salare*, *Nazim* and *Subahdar* and was appointed by the imperial order technically called the *farman-i-sabiti*.¹³⁵ Usually the Governor was the Mansabdar of high rank between 5000 to 7000 horses. The office of Governor was never left vacant and clear rules were laid down regarding the arrangements to be taken during his absence in case of accident or any other reasons. As the Emperor appointed him, his tenure also depended on the good will of the Emperor. He, according to the *Ain*, was the vice-regent of his majesty responsible for increase in agriculture and the flourishing condition of the land.¹³⁶ Next to the *Subhadar* in official rank but

¹³² *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. II, 165.

¹³³ W.K.Firminger, ed., *Affairs of the East India Company (Being The Fifth report from the Select Committee of House of Commons, 28th July, 1812)*, Vol. I, Delhi, 502.

¹³⁴ Kum Kum chatterjee, *Merchants, Politics and Society...*, 22.

¹³⁵ *Ain-i-Akbari*, Vol. I, 194.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. II, 37-39.

not in any way under his control, was the provincial *Diwan* who was in independent charge of the revenue of the province. Below him was the *Fauzdar*, who was appointed by and responsible to the emperor.¹³⁷ In fact, under the Mughals, the administrative machinery in Bihar was a miniature copy of that at the centre. The Governor was the representative of the Emperor and the various departmental heads (the *Diwan*, the *Bakshi*, the *Qaji*, the *Sadr*, and the *Muhtasibs*) were subordinate to their corresponding imperial officers with the emperor as the final arbiter.¹³⁸ Both the *Subhadar* and the *Diwan* were accountable for their working directly to the center; they acted in theory and in practice as checks upon each other in the province. Patna *Nawabs* were mostly men of blue blood and in Jahangir's reign the process of having royal prince as *Subhadars* was initiated by appointing prince Parvej to Bihar *Subah* in 1621.¹³⁹

Thus, the Europeans visited Patna also for political reasons apart from the important commercial one. The English settled in Patna was because it was the residence of the *Nawab* that governs that country.¹⁴⁰ The English were in direct contact with the Mughal Governors and that provided them a link between imperial capital Agra and Hugli and Calcutta.

When the English first visited Patna, Muqqarab Khan was the Governor of Bihar. Robert Hughes, the English factor noted that, Muqqarab Khan 'seems pleasant for our arrival there.'¹⁴¹ Prince Parvej, the first royal prince to be appointed as Governor of Bihar, succeeded him. However the English establishment at Patna was closed down soon after Parvej's arrival at Patna. When

¹³⁷ Ibid, Vol. II, 42.

¹³⁸ R.R.Diwakar, *Bihar through the Ages*, Orient Longman, Calcutta, 1954, 510.

¹³⁹ Q.Ahmed & Hasan Askari, *The Comprehensive History of Bihar*, Vol. II, part II, 303.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account...*, 224, note 1, letter to Fort St. George from Council at Bay, dated 12th December 1669.

¹⁴¹ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 191.

Peter Mundy arrived at Patna in 1632, he found 'not Safi Khan, nor the Governor that was in Mr. Hughes and Parkers time but Abdullah Khan, the most covetous and tyrant....'¹⁴² This observation of Peter Mundy points out the Governorship of Safi Khan (September 12, 1628- May 24, 1632) and Abdullah Khan Bahadur Firuj Jang (24th May 1632- 1639). After Mundy's return, the English establishment was sacked, to be again established in 1652, in the Governorship of Nabob Jafar Khan (February.1651- May 1656). Shaista Khan governed the *Subah* from 1639-1643. The important Governors during Aurangzeb's reign were Daud Khan, Jan Nishar Khan whose Governorship witnessed the European travellers such as Tavernier, Bernier. Ibrahim Khan was the Governor when a devastating famine in Patna occurred. There were several Governors appointed and many of them were from the royal house. Among them were Prince Dara Sukoh (19th December. 1657), prince Azam (July24 1677-December 1677) etc. But important among the royal Governors were prince Azimushan (22nd January 1703- March 1712, in the last years of Aurangzeb's reign, Bihar was given to Azimushan as an appendage to the Governorship of Bengal which he held since 1696) and prince Farukhsiyar. Another important *Subhadar* was Mir Jumla (24th May 1715- January 1716). In 1732-33, Bihar was added to the Bengal subha by the Emperor Muhammad Shah and was placed under *Nawab* Shujauddin.

It is quite clear that almost all types of business at Patna functioned within the frame work of the political system and merchants and manufactures some times felt the weight of the authority wielded by government officials.¹⁴³

As Patna was the centre of polity, political turmoil sometimes also interrupted the commercial activity of Patna and its hinterland. In 1712, when the

¹⁴² Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, 144.

war of succession was going on, the English were in daily fear of being seized and plundered. Mughal rule in Bihar was also characterised by almost chronic turbulence and volatility stemming largely from the efforts of the region's Zamindars to defy the authority of the provincial regime.¹⁴⁴ The increasing weakness of the Mughal Empire in the early eighteenth century doubled the risk and uncertainties of the trading process. The English feared of producing constant alarms from the fighting that went on near their settlement, liability to plunder and incessant exaction and danger of encroachment or attack from European rivals.¹⁴⁵

Apart from political turmoil, sometimes other factors hampered commerce. The taxation system of the Muslim India was one such factor to be noted. Mughal policy of taxation was influenced by the financial doctrine of the Hanafi School of the Muslim Jurist. Various kinds of taxes were prescribed by the Islamic theology. *Zajiyā* was one such which was imposed by Aurangzeb and was taken as 1 % from traders including English Company also. According to the Islamic canon, a ruler was expected to impose these types of taxes and had *carte blanche* in case of other taxes. Though other taxes were considered Un-Islamic but then also arbitrary exactions on special occasions often by the local authorities were imposed. A variety of such exaction was imposed, collectively called as '*Abwabs*'. These included local sales duties (*octori*), license taxes for some traders and special imposts, in land transport duties (*rahdari*) on merchandise could also be included in this category since they were not explicitly sanctioned by Islamic law. For this reason some Rulers committed to the stricter interpretation of the Islamic canon felt constrained to abolish them. Aurangzeb issued edicts on three separate

¹⁴³ Kum Kum Chatterjee, *Merchants, Politics and Society...*, 30.

¹⁴⁴ *E.F.I.*, 1655-60, 51; letter from Edward Pitt, 29th January 1656, referring his experience in Bengal.

occasions in 1665, 1673, and 1682, declaring *Abwab* to be illegal, though in practice such taxes often continued to be levied, especially in the outlying regions far from imperial capital like Bihar and Bengal. It shows that though fanatic attitude was adopted in political and social activities by the Mughals (both the Rulers and the officials) but when it came to economic sector and profits, they evaded or tried to evade stringent religious decrees that came in their way of accumulating profits. These activities in larger case hampered the commercial groups who had to bear these illegal exactions.

In order to present the character of the Mughals in accordance to the above view, Stephen P. Black opined that, “the merchants were not protected by the Mughal government. They were subjected to illegal tolls and taxes, robbers were common and arbiters, payments were often demanded. The Mughal attitude” he continues, “however, was not simply the result of the inefficiency of being unable to insure internal peace. Rather it seems to have been, at least in part an economic decision. To have guaranteed the safety of the merchants on highways, to have abolished the tolls levied by the local chieftains and officials, to have lowered the urban transactions cost- all of this would have been extremely expensive”. He further argues that,

“the Mughal Emperors, like the French and the Spanish rulers of the same period, could see no economic benefits in establishing merchants rights and encouraging market efficiency.”¹⁴⁶

But going through various sources, the opinion of Stephen P. Black seems prejudiced. Both the central as well as the provincial government strives to

¹⁴⁵ Alfred Lyall, *The rise and expansion of British dominion in India*, with a new introduction by B. L. Grover, originally published in London 1891, First Indian edition 1973, 48.

¹⁴⁶ Stephen P. Black, art., ‘The Urban economy in pre-modern India, Shahjanabad, 1639-1739’, *M. A. S.*, 21, 3 (1987), 454.

provide a favourable environment for trade. Various arts and crafts were encouraged and there are numerous references to this, in *parwanas* and *Farmans* issued by the Emperors and the Governors.¹⁴⁷ Taxes on commerce and trade was considered an important source of income and voluminous and emphasis was laid on its proper collection. A part of the *farman* of Akbar issued in 1582-83, that,

“... one of the source of revenue meant for the maintenance of the royal forces ... was the tax on merchandise (*baj-i-ashiya*) brought to the market for sale or purchase...”,¹⁴⁸

Clearly indicates the importance of commercial profits for the government.

Duties were levied on various kinds of merchandise moving on land and water. However, the illegal exaction by the local officials countered to an extent, the developmental measures taken by the government. But, it can be said that the trading environment of Patna was well favoured due to political stability provided by the Mughal authorities.

English at Patna: - Initial visit and establishment of Factory; their life at Patna.

The coming of the English to Patna was a well-defined policy on the part of the Company. At the time of their arrival, the city of Patna was a commercial hub for the merchants and the like minded people. The ‘*bazaar paintings*’¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ In 1724, *parwana* issued under the seal to the *Mutassids*, *Chaudhris* and *Qanungoes* of *pargana* Jais, *Sarkar* Manikpur, *Subha* Allahabad stating that, ‘an area of three *bighas* of land in vicinity of *Qasba* jais has been demarcated by Mir Musharaf of Nekpura so that it may be populated by the Artisans and others. Instruct them not to offer any hindrance or obstruction on account of *bhaint* *beggar* and other forbidden imposts and provide them all possible help’, *Calendar of acquired Documents*, ed., R.K.Perti, N. A. I., New Delhi, Vol. II, 66.

¹⁴⁸ Mansura Haider, *Mukatabat-i-Allami (Insha-i-Abul Fazl Daftar I)*, Akbar’s *farman*, dated 1582-83, Munshiram Manohar lal, 1998, 13.

¹⁴⁹ The *Bazaar* painting by Patna School painters and independent Artists portrayed various *Bazaar* tradesmen and craftsmen and peddlers. These paintings also depicts the town and village sights as well as various means of transport such as Bullock carts, palanquin etc. the portraits by

clearly depict the traditional importance of Patna in case of commerce. This attracted the attention of the English East India Company to settle a 'Factory'¹⁵⁰ at Patna. In accordance to the observation of J.B. Tavernier that,

“should any nation desire to establish a commercial Company in the East Indies, before all things it ought to secure a good station in the country...”,¹⁵¹

The English Company, as the other merchant groups, sought to obtain an establishment at Patna.

However, before establishing any settlement at Patna, it was necessary for the Company to see the position of the settlement in case of the goods procurable and saleable there. Patna, in this case showed a different feature. It neither had the spices for which it was said that, 'the east was still the fountain of all riches.'¹⁵² The excessive spice hunger of those days and the difficulty of obtaining them was a chief factor in the jealous contest for the road to India and were long to remain so, nor was it the fresh market for the English cloth.¹⁵³ Thus all reasons, by which the English opened several factories in various parts of India, were not generally applicable in case of the inland city of Patna. Patna was initially reached for

Bani Lal and Sewak Lal shows a variant economic life of the people at Patna; Mildred Archer, *Patna Paintings*, The Royal India Society, London, 1947.

¹⁵⁰ At this period the term 'Factory' denoted either a group of merchants established at a foreign centre for regular trading or the building in which they dwelt and carried on business. The practice was very ancient and was an inevitable outcome of the trading conditions then prevalent. While in general use throughout Europe (familiar e.g. are the Hanse factories in London and Bergen) in the East the maintenance of such factories was indispensable as a condition of profitable commerce. W. Foster, ed., *England quest for Eastern Trade*, London, 1933, 157-8, foot note I; In the middle eighteenth century, the Council at Dacca wrote that, 'the Factory is little better than a common house, surrounded with a thin brick wall, one half of it not above nine foot high', S. C. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. I, London, 1905, XXXVI.

¹⁵¹ *J.B. Tavernier travels...*, Vol. II, 26.

¹⁵² J. Courtenay, ed., *The first English men in India, letters and narratives of Sundry Elizabethans written by themselves*, First published London, 1930, Indian Reprint, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1994, 4.

¹⁵³ It was argued that, 'her (England's) only industry of commanding magnitude was the cloth trade, her only present means of attaining a more diffused prosperity was by finding fresh market

cotton and silk textiles. In fact, the earlier responses of the English at Patna were that, they could be able to hold the Patna Factory only for the above two commodities.¹⁵⁴

In the year 1620, the first English commercial mission led by Robert Hughes and John Parker commenced from the Agra Factory to Patna to purchase an assortment of *Ambeerty* calicoes, from Bihar traders and at the same time to see whether they could secure Bengal silk on advantageous terms. This was in fact, the first English contact with Patna. Initially the English factors did not have their own built establishment. This is known from the letter of Robert Hughes to the president and council at Surat dated August 6, 1620, that, "I have taken a house in the great *bazaar* near the Cutwalls (*Qotwal's*) choultry (sic)...."¹⁵⁵ In fact, the English were unable to have a well-settled Factory at Patna until 1657.¹⁵⁶

However, the English Factory at Patna was closed in case of political turmoil or any other political reasons. But, every time the English Factory was closed down, the English trade from Patna continued indirectly through the indigenous traders. After the abortive attempts of the English in 1620-1621 for a Factory at Patna, the English were fortunate to have several favourable events, which happened in the third decade of the seventeenth century that pushed on the desire of the English for a permanent establishment at Patna. First among those was the deadly famine that gripped whole of India except the eastern India. The worst affected areas were the western parts of India. The famine known as the '*Satiaskal*' partially depopulated the province of Gujarat and its surroundings

for her cloth and by trade generally: the only ready market to be seen lay in the countries... and especially India', J.Courtenay, ed., *The first Englishmen in India...*, 2.

¹⁵⁴ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 213.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 197-98.

¹⁵⁶ Though Patna Factory was set up in 1651, but officially it was recognized in 1657 and by the Charter of 1658 its Chief and other Factors were appointed.

that affected the textile production.¹⁵⁷ This forced the English to look fresh centres of textile production in unaffected areas like Bihar and Bengal. Second major incident was the arrival of the Peter Mundy in 1632 at Patna. And the last but not the least was the defeat of the Portuguese by the Mughal forces from Bengal in 1633. This last event kept open the rich commercial prospects of Bengal and hence to Bihar, to various trading Companies and the English East India Company was one among them.

However, despite several attempts by the English, it was, as mentioned above, not until 1658, that Patna became an officially recognised establishment of the English under the authorities at Hugli. Richard Chamberline was appointed the chief; Roger Seymour as *Second*; William Varsell as *Third* and Francis Farrer as *Fourth* at Patna.¹⁵⁸ Even after the establishment of Patna as a trading settlement, the English had no house of their own at Patna and the chiefs did not ordinarily live there in early periods. In fact, most of the factors appointed at Patna seldom stayed at Patna in the early days of the Company due to the temporary kinds of settlement and most of the commercial activities were done through indigenous agents. In his account of Patna, John Marshal observed that, "the honourable Company have no Factory here (Patna), a Factory at Singee by reason of its being most Salt peter ground, but is convenient by reason thereof. For peter men live not far from it. Besides the Company have a Factory at Nanagur which lies east of Patna. There remains generally a *baniya* or sometimes only peons to receive the peter from Peterman."¹⁵⁹ It was probably this reason that made Robert Martin observe even in the nineteenth century that,

¹⁵⁷ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, Vol. II, LXIII.

¹⁵⁸ E.B.Sainisbury, ed., *Court minutes of the Company...*, 1655-1659, 212; *E.F.I.*, 1655-60, 189.

¹⁵⁹ *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, 89.

“it did not appear that the villagers at least the women and children had even seen the European and they followed and flocked round my palanquin with great eagerness.”¹⁶⁰

Thus, it can be said that the English staying in the capital city of Patna, in what numbers be they came necessarily in contact with the elites of the city both political and commercial only, for various reasons. From their establishment of Patna Factory, the English were a regular visitor of Patna. Their Factory developed into a full-fledged settlement having administrative and commercial dealings. Now the site of the original English Factory at Patna is marked by the present Government printing press, Gulzarbagh. It was a fortified house with an underground passage leading to the outer waterfront. The Factory was later removed to Bankipur (Bakerganj) and this building was used as the Opium Factory until 1910, when the Government manufacturing of opium was discontinued.¹⁶¹

English life in smaller trading factories like Patna was very much one of a corporate life.¹⁶² The descending hierarchy of the officials at the Patna Factory was- the chief, factors (Second, Third and Fourth) and Scribes apart from the indigenous servants employed by the Company. When the Englishmen came to India in the service of the Company, they were inducted in the Company as apprentices. When these apprentices have served their time they were styled as writers; when the writers have spend their time they were styled as factors; the

¹⁶⁰ Robert M. Martin, *Historical Documents...*, Vol. I, 39.

¹⁶¹ Q. Ahmed, art., 'Patna Azimabad (1540-1705)', 76, in Q. Ahmed ed., *Patna through the Ages...*,

¹⁶² Percival Spear, *The Nabobs- A Study of Social life of the English in eighteenth century India*, Rupa & Co., Calcutta, 1971, 11.

factors having served their time were styled as merchants and the merchants having spend their time were styled as chief or senior merchants.¹⁶³

There was never a large group of English men residing at Patna at any point of time, as mentioned above. These small groups of English men were assisted or served by the indigenous population hired on by these factors. The list of these employees ranged from a washer man, cook and butlers, *mashalchi*, *kahars*, barbers, *khidmatgars*, to flag bearers etc. apart from brokers and agents as follows.¹⁶⁴

Pran, broker-15 Rupees; 14 Peons - 35 Rupees; *Mirda* – 3 Rupees; Roop chand, *Vakil*-50 Rupees; *Kahars* – 12 Rupees; Barber- 2 Rupees; *Chobdar* - 3 Rupees; *Halal Khar*- 2Rupees; *Khidmatgars* – 8 Rupees; Washer men - 2 Rupees; *Gurryally*- 4 Rupees; *Dussandsy*- 8Rupees.

These were used by the factors for there needs and comforts. Various drawings of Englishmen in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century portray the Englishmen with their indigenous servants.¹⁶⁵ These servants were paid in cash that varied according to their works (as shown above). The use of these indigenous peoples reflects the way and the standard of the life of an Englishmen at Patna in our period. Their way of life was in fact a copy of the oriental life style. Oriental civilisation for most of the English at the beginning meant the Muslim Mughals.¹⁶⁶ Their dress, hairstyle, amusements and pleasures were all an imitation of the local elites.

¹⁶³ John Bruce, *Annals of the Honourable East India Company*, London, 1810, Vol. II, 374, 375& 378.

¹⁶⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals of the English...*, Vol. II, Part I, 152.

¹⁶⁵ In the drawings of Charles Doyley, A Gentle man is shown attended by his *Hajjam* or native Barber, another of his drawing shows a Gentle man with his *hookah burdar* or a pipe bearer; Plate V & X, the Europeans in India, F. W. Blagdon, ed., *The Europeans in India/ From a collection of drawings by Charles Doyley*, First Published, London 1813, New Delhi reprint, 1995.

¹⁶⁶ Percival Spear, *The Nabobs- A Study...*, XXI.

The factors life started in the morning with preparation for the office. The hour of work was from 9 or 10 AM till 12 AM in the morning and again in the afternoon till about 4 PM if work persists.¹⁶⁷ At mid-day they all dined together in the common hall, seated strictly in order of seniority. The evening was reserved for pleasure and amusements which included hunting walking in the gardens picnicking in the rivers on boat etc.. The small number of English men lived within the Factory, the gates of which were closed every night. They met for dinner and supper at a common table, which was presided by the Factory chief. Various oriental dishes were served and Persian and European (Arrack punch and Shiraz) wines were drunk.¹⁶⁸ The drinking of tea every day was even then in fashion.¹⁶⁹

The fanciful life of English was cherished and continued upon by the factors at Patna also. Despite economic crunch, the factors lived a life of comfort. Even the scribes, notwithstanding their salary, would imitate the oriental way of life. The company authorities were very weary of the luxurious life of the factors and so time and again regulations were passed to take control of that. In the reports and letters concerning the Company's affairs in Bengal 1661-1685, the authorities provided a list of servants and their settlement charges to the subordinate factories as follows:¹⁷⁰

At the subordinate factories	rupees per mensem
Servants wages for the chiefs-	six
For the second	four
For the third	three
Charges general keeper	two, at Kasimbazaar only

¹⁶⁷ Wilson, *Early annals of the English...*, Vol. I, 63.

¹⁶⁸ Percival Spear, *The Nabobs- A Study*, 12.

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, *Early Annals of English...*, Vol. I, 63.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 389-90.

A palanquin for the chief.

Three horses not to be lent out but by the chief.

Three Gurrials.

One Cooke and a mate.

Two Maschalchi.

For Barber two per month

For washing what it costs for all the factors.

No Dog keepers, nor Dogs at the company's charges.

Also, it was resolved that,

“no candle or bottle to be allowed as has been used under the denomination of settlement charges. Candles are only allowed to the chiefs and to those of the council in the respective Factory's, to the chaplain and to the surgeon. Lamps are allowed to every chamber.”¹⁷¹

The factors were usually addicted to drinking, gambling, quarrelling etc. Shaista Khan, the Governor of Bengal called the English “a Company of base, quarrelling people and foul dealers.”¹⁷² The Company's authorities imposed fines on the erring factors. If one was found absent from the house after nine, he would have to pay 10 rupees. Drunkenness was punished by a fine of five shillings for each offence. One shilling was the fine for neglecting to attend public prayers morning and evening on the Lord's Day.

However, the Patna Factory seems to have been comparatively free from these vices, as there are very stray references to these activities in the records. It has been argued that it was either due to the wise ness of the factors of Patna who

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 390.

¹⁷² Ibid, 66.

if faced with such situation, settled their scores within the Factory itself or because their chiefs were like Job Charnock who though a truculent subordinate was a strong and tactful chief and kept a tight hand upon his assistants so that if the second or the third bore any personnel grudge to his chief, he had to keep his felling to himself till he left Patna.¹⁷³ Also, there was a sense of relative superiority among the Patna chiefs as the Court of Directors noted that, "Patna was the most desirable station in Bengal, the place where the Calcutta Council sent their prime favourites, because there at a safe distance from all observations and control, they could study their own interest and neglect their masters."¹⁷⁴ This shows that Patna chief and factors were in a position to act according to their wishes¹⁷⁵ and thus tried to augment their life style.

As the English men were themselves a small groups, there were a very few English women in our period in all of the English settlement. These handfuls of daring women, who sailed to India every year, had their main or only objective being to hook a wealthy husband.¹⁷⁶ It was this reason that the English factors remained bachelors or took the indigenous women as their wives. The chief of the Patna Factory of the English, in such a case, married an indigenous woman at Patna. Charnock married a Gentoo's (Hindu) wife, 'who ran away from her husband stealing all his money and jewels to a great value.'¹⁷⁷ But this had strong repercussions. It was complained to the *Nawab*, who sent 12 soldiers to seize

¹⁷³ N.N.Raye, *Annals of Early English Settlement in Bihar*, Kamla Book Depot., Calcutta, 1927, 60.

¹⁷⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals of the English...*, Vol. II, part I, LVIII.

¹⁷⁵ The Records of Fort St. George noted that in 1676, an order was made for keeping of Diaries and Consultations and sending them monthly to Hugli. these being distributed to the subordinate factories, the order was observed in all save Patna, where for the year 1677 & 1678 not any was kept and the project was scorned and laughed upon..., Records of Fort St. George, letter to the Fort St. George, 1682, Vol. 2, 45.

¹⁷⁶ R.V.Vernede, ed., *British life in India*, O. U. P., Delhi, 1995, 2.

¹⁷⁷ There is another story related to the marriage. It records that Job Charnock saved the woman from the funeral pyre of her husband and married her, noted by William hedges in His Diary.

Charnock. He was later relieved off by compounding the business for rupees 3000, five pieces of broad cloth and some sword blades.¹⁷⁸ The “evil” consequence of marriage with the indigenous women was commented upon in a Hugli letter dated 16th November 1690, highlighting the case of Job Charnock.¹⁷⁹ However, the policy of preventing the Company factors from marrying indigenous women, led to the rise of infidelity and other acts on the part of the English factors.

The company was anxious for its own sake as well as for its servants, that the factors should lead a moral and goodly life. The Court of Committee in 1667, sent a set of direction to Fort St. George and Hugli having the preface that, “we understanding of the unchristian like and disorderly practices of some of our people and being desirous to reform the same to the glory of god, the credit of our Christian profession, the goods and welfare of our servants as well as our advantages, have therefore agreed upon rules and orders, which we here with send you, which we require to be strictly observed by all persons in our several factories.” These admonitions had however, very little effect. Even Streynsham Master’s attempt to put up in the hall, printed copies of these ten commandments of the Company was not met with much success.¹⁸⁰

Thus, the life of the English men at Patna as in other subordinate factories was that of cool comfort which the English factors strive to, amidst a tiring job in an alien environment at Patna.

¹⁷⁸ *Hedges Diary*, Vol. I, 52.

¹⁷⁹ N.N.Raye, *Annals of Early English Settlement*....., 80.

¹⁸⁰ *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, 9.

CHAPTER TWO

BUSINESS POLITICS: RULING ELITES AND THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY

The growth and development of the English Company trade in Patna was a slow, steady, and a gradual process. This development was based on several factors. Thomas Roe in a letter to the factors at Surat noted that,

“The continuation of the trade consists principally on two points- first our good reception and the privileges to be obtained and performed to us here, and second the vent of our own commodity.”¹

Though this observation of Thomas Roe was for the English trade in the western region, it was equally applicable to the other parts of India as well. The first point mentioned by Roe is indicative of the Company's relations with the native powers, which were manifested, in military and social sectors apart from the most important area that of trade and commerce. As far as the question of the vent of commodities of the English was concerned, Patna was not the place for the English woolen textile, which was their main import from England. The English therefore visited Patna and settled a factory there only for Patna's goods. The most important product was Saltpeter.² It was however not produced in the main city but in hinterlands. The Company obtained it by employing indigenous agents. The Council at Bay had observed that, “if the factory be without the city ... the convenience will be very great in increasing the investments.”³ This shows their reluctance and disinterest in settling at Patna city. But as Patna was also the seat of provincial administration where the *Nawab* resided, it was but imminent to have a factory there.

The presence of *darbar* in the city brought the English Company in direct contact with the *Nawabs* and other political elites, which had both positive and negative aspects. Om Prakash describes the relationship between the ruling authority

¹W. Foster, ed., *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India*, 1615-19, Indian reprint, 1993, 146.

² After officially establishing their factory in 1658 at Patna, the English factors remarked that, ‘the place of honor is naturally accorded to saltpeter’, *E.F.I.* 1655-60, 275.

³ Thomas Bowery, *A geographical account ...*, 224, note I, The Council at Bay wrote to fort St. George in December 1669.

and the Company as one based on perceived mutual advantages.⁴ Considering the income from commerce conducted by the Company and other European groups as next only to land revenue, he argues that the power elites basically looked upon the Company's trade as a net addition with the attended benefits.⁵ These benefits to the power elites came mostly in the form of gifts, presents, etc., in lieu of the privileges given to the Company. The local officers of the lower ranks had no such benefits from the Company. Instead, their additional sources of income were adversely affected by these concessions and privileges granted to the Company by the rulers. These officials not only then managed to ignore the imperial orders but also to make excessive demands from the Company, which was largely met with. Even the Dutch factors in 1619 noted that,

“It was necessary to keep the local officials in good humors. This would be done by presenting gifts to the *mutassids*, the *shahbander* and the person in charge of the forts, on the occasion of the arrival of the ships.”⁶

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

“...as regard the *farman* procured for Bengal the kings' commands are as easily procured as other prince, for if there be no powerful contender, and you have them, they are no more esteemed then being things so easily purchased. Whilst every man honors the king no man obeys him.”⁷

⁴ Om Prakash, *European Commercial enterprise in pre-colonial India*, Cambridge, 1998, 124.

⁵ *Ibid*, 125.

⁶ Van Revesteyn's letter dated 14 February 1619 from Surat to the Directors at Amsterdam cited in Om Prakash, ed., *Dutch factories in India, 1617-23*, A Collection of Dutch East India Company documents pertaining to India, New Delhi, 1984, 84.

⁷ *E.F.I.*, 1634-36, 204.

In fact, it has been argued that, the principle reason of the conflict in Bengal was due to the exaction by the officials of the *Nawab*⁸. The English got several trading concessions and privileges from the ruling authorities through gifts and presents which the English records maintained mostly as 'bribes' and referred to these power elites as 'bribing Dogs'.⁹ However they remained unapologetic about the flow of immense profit that accrued to them through these 'bribes'. The other European Companies operating in the region were well aware of it. The Dutch chief of Chinsura, in a letter to Azimushan, maintained that, "while his nation paid a duty of three and a half percent on all their commerce, the English only paid the petty sum of three thousand per annum..."¹⁰ The English act of gift giving was in fact an important Mughal tradition. *Nazrana* and *peshkash* were the parts of the traditional forms of gifts, which were given to the ruling powers. These presents were then reciprocated by giving more priced gifts to the officers. The English trading concessions were very much like 'reversed presents'. In fact the gift exchanged in the hall of public audience was a part of a solemn ritual in which the patron client ties between the Emperor and his subjects were renewed.¹¹ This imperial form of ceremonial gift giving took place even at the provincial levels, where the governors were the patrons.

The constant interaction between the English officials and the ruling elites for securing grants and privileges were not always cordial. Obligated to conform to local customs, the European convoys chafed at the humiliation to which they were often subjected. They were usually subjected to interminable delays and to the necessity of

⁸ Phanindra Nath Chakraborty, 'Anglo- Mughal commercial relations', P. I. H. C. 1982, 146.

⁹ Though the epithet *bribing dogs* was used for the Turkish authorities, Arab black mailers and so forth, but the English quite often used it for Indian powers. J.Courtenay ed., *The First English men in India...*, letter dated 14th July 1583; here G.S. character is unknown

¹⁰ C. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, Oriental Publishers, Delhi, 1979, 341.

¹¹ Stephen Blake, *The Urban Economy in pre modern Muslim India: Shahjahanabad, 1639-1739*, 453, Modern Asian Studies, 1987.

'bribing' court officials to expedite their business.¹² But as far as the extraction by the officials from men who had to get their business pushed through the public office was concerned, it was universal and a practice that was even acceptable in Tudor and Stuart England.¹³ Even the Emperor did not remain untouched from it. Aurangzeb once asked an aspirant to a title that; "your father gave to Shahjahan one lakh rupees for adding *alif* to his name and making him Amir Khan. How much will you pay me for the title I am giving you?"¹⁴ Nonetheless most of the ravings of the European merchants against the local officials, at least in the first half of the seventeenth century, were exaggerated.¹⁵

In spite of their complaints the English got accustomed to the practice of securing privileges through gifts. There are various opinions on the matter of privileges and their working. The common view is that the English seldom enjoyed the favor made to them by the ruling elites. W.K. Firminger argued that the English were obsessed by the fallacy that a *farman* from the Emperor would be as binding as efficacious as was his own charter from the English crown. The English failed to understand that the Mughal Empire was something *sue-generis*, and they emphasized their misunderstanding by expecting from the Delhi Emperors pledged, which under a government so loosely held together were impossible.¹⁶ In fact it was known to the English that petty extraction at the hands of the local officials were the inevitable acts of commerce which were subject to ordinary internal duties of the country.

¹² Holden Furber, *Rival Empires...*, 314.

¹³ It was noted in the factory records that 'the rumors of vast spoils taken from the Portuguese had attracted the attention of King James and his favorite Buckingham... the Company had to present 2,000L. to the Duchess of Buckingham...' , *E.F.I.*, 1622-23, XIII; Later on in 1698, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Montague, being hard pressed for money passed an act of the parliament granting a royal charter to the new English Company, which undertook to lend two million to the government, Alfred Lyall, *The rise and expansion ...*, 56.

¹⁴ Jadunath Sarkar, trans. & ed., *Massir-i-Alamgiri* of Saqi Mustad Khan as A history of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir, 2nd ed., 1986, 489.

¹⁵ S.C. Mishra, art., 'The Medieval Trader and his Social Order', 42, in D. Tripathi, ed., *Business communities in India: a Historical Perspective*, Manohar, 1984.

¹⁶ W.K. Firminger, *Affairs of the E.I.C...*, LIII.

Robert Orme had observed that ‘the advantage intended by the favour depended more on the *Nawab* than on the will of the Emperor, for the English had more than once received such mandates and found them of little use’.¹⁷ This shows that the local officials at the provincial levels were more responsible for the working of any *farman*, and as these concessions affected their income, they often sought forceful extraction from the merchant groups. In fact the English were slowly coming to realize the futility of having confidence in the papers that guaranteed them the privileges and concessions.¹⁸ As early as 1616, while reviewing the relation between the English and the Indians from the times of Sir Henry Middleton, the Court of Directors expressed fear that “the new *farmans* from the prince will only lead to fresh oppression.”¹⁹ Sushil Chaudhuri went on to an extent of arguing that ‘the English claim of duty free trade was only a myth’.²⁰ The Company had never enjoyed the privileges by virtue of any imperial *farmans*. He however concedes that the 1717 grant of Farukhsiyar placed the English in a better position. The above discussion suggests that the English Company did not enjoy their concessions easily. This was further confounded with the problem of spending money on numerous power heads to secure the privileges. The English Company initially obtained trading concessions by presenting a handsome amount to the Mughal Emperor. But when they strived to implement those privileges in the provinces they had to present another spell of gifts and *peshkash* to the *Nawabs* apart from what they gave to the lower officials like *Shahbandar*, *Fauzdars* etc. This problem is persistently referred to in Company documents of the period of our concern.

¹⁷ Robert Orme, *A History of Military Transaction of the British in Indostan*, vol. II, London, 1778, 15.

¹⁸ C. R. Wilson, *Old Fort William in Bengal*, LX.

¹⁹ W. Foster, ed., *A Supplementary Calendar of documents in India office relating to India or to the Home arrairs of the East India Company, 1600-1640*, London 1928, 63.

²⁰ Sushil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial...*, 28.

If the Company had to face these many hardships then one could ask as to why they insisted on securing trading concessions from the rulers. One factor, according to Chaudhuri was the way the 'orient' was perceived, a belief that all Asian governments as a form of 'Oriental Despotism' were intent on extracting the maximum from the merchants.²¹ Another reason was the English inability to compete with the Indian traders on equal basis. Satish Chandra has interestingly suggested that the English had the psychological bent towards establishing a special position or monopoly, thus they always sought special concessions.²² The most important reason was to gain freedom from the delay in their shipping schedule and transportation of goods, which always hampered their trading processes. Streynsham Master noted an example of this in 1675. At that time around 'thirty-one boats containing 29,890 maunds of saltpeter were in readiness at Patna to be dispatched to Hugli but were held up for want of a *dastak*.²³ There are various other similar references when loaded ships were detained due to official intervention for want of *rawana* and other papers. Also it was most unlikely that Mughal officials meant to grant a permanent exemption from the customary payments.²⁴

The English factors and the indigenous agents were often subjected to ill treatment for failing to comply with the demands made by the Patna elites. But the English only managed to make mild protests. One reason was the geographical location. Being a landlocked city, Patna was not under the threat of strong naval strength of the English. The Mughal central as well as provincial authorities were also strong during the period to counter any threat coming from the English or any other European Company. The English were also suspicious of the Dutch Company

²¹ K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia...*, 221.

²² Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, Part II, Har Anand Publication Private Ltd., 1999, 2nd edition 2000, 416.

²³ *Master's Diary*, Vol. I, 109.

²⁴ Holden Furber, *Rival empires...*, 74.

providing help to the Mughal in case they made any naval advancement against the Mughal.²⁵ An English factor at Surat wrote as early as 1614 that “the people of this country of all sorts pretend to love us, so I am sure they will also fear us concerning their seas, for great and small are merchants”²⁶.

Apart from pure mercantile groups, the nobles and officials of Patna also traded directly. However the political groups traded through various agents. The reason, that they could hold the agents responsible in case of a loss of their goods. The political groups of Patna were also in a position to recover their gains from the English at Patna itself, if they found the Company disturbing their indigenous trade on the high seas. The English on the other hand had also the advantage of compensating their loss at Patna with the trade of some other regions. It was maintained, “if our any people there (Patna) are plundered, we will take satisfactions at Hugli or anywhere we find it convenient to do so.”²⁷ However, most of the times in case of conflicts at Patna and its hinterland, between the Company and the ruling groups, the English Company had to face the problem. The matter sometimes worsened to the effect that the English were forced to close their factory:

One important problem the Company faced was the extractions by the local officials. The monopolizing tendency of the power elites was another significant hindrance. Streynsham Master had noted, “the *Nawab's* officials ... monopolized most of the commodities even as low as grass, canes, firewood etc. They went on to oppress people of all sorts who trade, whether native or stranger.”²⁸ When Azimushan was the governor of Bengal and Bihar, he declared the entire import trade to be his

²⁵In case of 1686, it was calculated by the Company that the Dutch might come to assist the Mughals for want of favors, C R. Wilson, *Old Fort William...*, LX.

²⁶ W. Foster ed., *Letters received by the Company from the Servants in the East*, London, 1897, Vol II, 1613-15, 246; William Edward letter to Sir Thomas Smith.

²⁷ C.R. Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol I, 178.

²⁸ *Master's Diary*, Vol II, 80.

monopoly, styling this the *Sauda-e- Khas-o- Am*. Aurangzeb wrote him a stinging reproof that,

“What propriety is there in calling public oppression *Sauda-e-Khas*, and what connection has *Sauda-e- Khas* with *Sauda-e-Am*? Those who purchase–sell, we neither purchase nor sell.”²⁹

Aurangzeb later reduced Azimushan’s rank by 500 sawars. The provisions of *Sauda-e-khas* and *farmaish* were invoked by the officials to procure goods for private trade at price below the market rate. In 1664 Job Charnock, the English chief of Patna factory wrote that,

“The *darogas* of Shaista Khan has so abused the merchants that they almost ran away. He pretends that all the petre he buys is for the king. It was never known he had occasion for more than 1,000 or 1,500 maunds yearly for all his wars”³⁰.

It might be noted that, at the then prevailing market price, the value of 1,500 maunds of petre would have been around 2,500 Rupees, whereas the amount actually asked for was worth rupees 20,000. The trade in petre was also monopolized by Subhadar of Bihar, Nawab Jafar khan in 1653; by imperial diwan at Patna in 1660; by provincial diwan at Patna in 1675 etc. The governor of Bihar also monopolized opium trade in 1681. This monopolistic tendency of power elites did not hamper the trade of English alone. It equally affected the local traders and merchant groups. The growing commercial mindedness of the Mughal Nobility, which was the result of the idea of Abul Fazl, to permit a noble to ‘indulge in a little commercial speculation and engage in remunerative undertakings.’³¹ This monopolistic control was only to

²⁹ Ghulam Husain Salim’s *Riyaz –us –Salatin*, 246-7.

³⁰ *E.F.I.*, 1661-64, 395-96.

³¹ *Ain - i- Akbari*, Vol II, 57-58.

augment their profits. But then, the trade of every commodity was not monopolized. The most lucrative and important ones like salt, opium and saltpeter were officially monopoly. Saltpeter was used for gunpowder and hence its monopoly was strategic.

The Company also faced problems due to change in succession. The ascendancy of new Emperor or new appointments of the officials meant annulment of earlier terms and concessions. In such a situation new privileges were to be sought afresh. In fact one of the main issues in the conflict between the English traders and Mughal officials in the 17th century was the Company's inability to understand that a *farman* granted by one Emperor was subject to renewal by his successor to acquire the same legal force. When the Company's Bengal servants began to advocate actively the idea of obtaining *farman* from the new Emperor, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Court of Directors repeated what had been said many times before that,

“The Company ought to stand on the validity of its ancient grants which being mutual stipulation between the then prince of the country and us ought to be obligatory on both sides as long as the occasions on which they are granted...continues.”³²

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

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

“They are in fear of Farukhsiyar, who is an acknowledged king in Patna and will force them to visit

³² *Dispatch Book*, Vol. 97, 28th December 1711, 449-50 cited in K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trading World of...*, 124.

him in Patna with a *peshkash*...they are fearful that when the new king's son with his Omrah and army come against the Patna king that there will be plundering."³³

However, in this case it can be said that, it was not only the English Company that faced such problem. The indigenous traders and merchant groups were also subjected to forceful exactions. The merchant boats were used for transporting the military across the rivers by the imperial authorities.³⁴ Therefore it is unjust on the part of the English Company to say that they were the only sufferers of ill treatment and forceful exactions.

We now come to the primary question of the relationship between the Company and the Mughal power elites at Patna. Any generalization of the nature of the contacts could be seriously problematic. There were various contexts, in which the ruling groups and their relations with the Company were defined. The nature of relationship depended on various factors viz., a) character of the *Nawab* and officials; b) responses of the English Company; c) working of the privileges and concessions; d) nature of the commodity procured and traded by the Company; and e) the rank and position of the indigenous agents of the Company. As far as the character of the *Nawab* and the officials were concerned, it is noted from the English documents that the Company praised some of the *Nawabs* while it strongly condemned the others. This was so despite the company fulfilling the demands of the power elites without making any distinctions. The reason being the personal attitude of the Officials vis-à-vis the trading merchants, the nature and quality of the personal care they took in facilitating their trading operations. An individual official might welcome merchants and give

³³ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol.II, Part I, 14.

³⁴ When ShahJahan invaded Patna, a detachment of Army under Dariya khan crossed the river Ganga during the day with the boats of the *beoparis* (traders), *Baharistan-I Ghaybi*, trans., M.I. Borah, Vol. II, 692.

them all facilities for trade, he might refuse to admit their goods at all or he might claim apart from customs, a large share of the profits for himself.³⁵ It has thus been argued that the English entered the region as the humble servants of a trading Company and for freedom and protection in their commercial operation they relied on the 'goodwill of the country powers'.³⁶

The response of the English was another factor in determining the relationship. The hostile attitude of the English Company always instigated the local authorities to take stern action against them. This left the English factors in lurch to devise and follow any definite policy. The lower officials played a vital role in the actual implementation of the grants and concessions. Despite the grant from *Nawabs* and Emperors, the English were subjected to ill treatment, which made the relationship acrimonious.

Nature of Patna commodity, which the Company procured, and traded, also counted much. In case of other commodities like textiles and other goods, the Company had not to face similar situation as in case of saltpeter. In fact most of the cases of extortion and forceful exactions and the delay in shipments happened when the Company exported Patna Peter. The last factor determining the relationship was the social and economical position of the Company's indigenous agents. Only those agents of the Company who were less influential among the socio-political circle of Patna were subjected to ill treatment. Few Company agents like the House of Jagat Seth were very well treated by the *Nawabs* and the Mughal officials. Keeping these factors in view, we will now discuss the nature of relationship between the English Company and the ruling elites of Patna.

³⁵ W. H. Moreland, *India at the death of Akbar*, London, 1923, 44.

³⁶ W. K. Firminger, *Affairs of the E.I.C....*, LIX.

Two factors of the English Company, Robert Hughes and John Parker left Agra on 5th June 1620 for Patna. They were aware of the good treatment by the Patna *Nawab*, as Patna durbar was then held by Mukarrab Khan, who had earlier favored and assisted the English, when he was the governor of Surat. When Hughes reached Patna, there he noted in a letter to the Surat factory that, "I have since my coming visited the governor Mukarrab Khan who seems wondrous pleasant for our arrival here..."³⁷ Despite their long standing relationship, the English factors still had to give presents to him for securing his favor. He mentioned that 'a request for some fine goods and toys was made by Mukarrab Khan'.³⁸ Also, initially the major purchaser of the English goods brought to Patna by the factors, was the *Nawab* himself. Hughes noted, "they have now sold most of their goods to the *Nawab* to good profits in all for 3,400 rupees for which we have got out a berate (barat, an order of payment)."³⁹ In fact the Patna elites, both the ruling groups and the commercial groups were the sole purchasers of the English goods, which the Company imported from England.

The honeymoon of the English with the *Nawab* was soon over in 1621, when Prince Parvez, the second son of Jahangir, replaced Mukarrab Khan. As the *subah* was assigned to him as a Jagir, Parvez appointed his Diwan Mukhlas Khan as its governor and Alah yar Khan and Sher Khan Afghan as its *fauzdar*.⁴⁰ The factors noted that, "Sultan Parvej is shortly expected here... it would be furtherance to the rest of our business to make friends whereof, since Mukarrab khan's departure, we are altogether destitute"⁴¹. But not much time had lapsed after the departure of Mukarrab

³⁷ 'Documents relating...', 69; Robert Hughes letter to the Surat factors, dated 12 July 1620, Patna.

³⁸ *E.F.I.*, 1618-1621, It was reported that the *Nawab* was desirous of some cloths and hydes... also tapestry, cloth of tissue, velvets, feathers, or any other rich commodity, 199; 'Documents relating...', 70, Robert Hughes letter to Surat factory, dated 12 July 1620, Patna.

³⁹ *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 201, Robert Hughes letter to the President and Council at Surat, dated 31st oct. 1620 Patna.

⁴⁰ Ghulam Husain's *Riyas- us -Salatin*, 196.

⁴¹ 'Documents relating...', 102; Robert Hughes to Surat factory, Patna, 11th April 1621.

Khan that, the English thought it difficult to continue the factory at Patna. There were debates in the Surat Council about the situation of Patna factory and the policy to be adopted. Initially, orders were issued for the continuation of the factory but later in a consultation held at Surat on March 1st 1621, it was decided to “dissolve the Patna factory until the Company send sufficient factors to supply that.”⁴²

The main reason, however for the abandonment of the Patna factory was not the scarcity of personnel, but as noted by Robert Hughes the change in the hands of rule. He noted,

“The Prince (Parvez) arrival here with so great a retinue has made this place too narrow for his entertainment which has caused the removing diverse, as well merchants as others from their abodes whose houses he has liberally bestowed on his servants, amongst which complement we are displaced and have been those ten days wondering to cover ourselves and goods.”⁴³

Though prince Parvez’s act were responsible for the closure of the English factory, the former’s acts no less injured the indigenous merchants. It is doubtful to claim that the prince nurtured any anti English bias. In fact, this was a recurrent feature whenever a prince or Emperor visited any place. The Company’s servants were at Patna during the Governorship of both Mukarrab Khan and Prince Parvez, but the English factors were abusive of Prince Parvez and praised Mukarrab Khan. This was only due to the supportive character of Mukarrab Khan. Ultimately the English factors returned to Agra in 1621, thus ending the first phase of their contact with Patna.

⁴² *E.F.I.*, 1618-21, 234; Consultation held at Surat by President Kerridge, Thomas Rastell, Giles James and Joseph Hopkinson, March 1st, 1621.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 256; Robert Hughes letter to the factors at Agra, dated 2nd June, 1621.

The English connection with Patna did not cease completely with the departure of its factors in 1621. Patna goods continued to be purchased at Agra from the Bihar traders, the Mughals and the *Purbiya* merchants. The period between 1621-1628 was of utter political disturbance, which included the rebellion of Shahjahan, *coup de'tat* of Mahabat Khan, death of Jahangir etc. All these events made northern India unfavorable for trade especially of the foreign merchants. In the early years of the third decade of the 17th century, two major events took place that pushed the English towards resettling their trading establishments in Bihar and Bengal. One was the great famine in north and west India, which hampered the trade as both the production and growth, was affected due to the death of several workers and textile manufacturers. It forced the Company to look for other regions of India for textiles and hence they came to Bihar and Bengal. The second important event was the expulsion of the Portuguese by the Mughal forces in 1632. This opened the eastern region to the English and the Dutch Company, which did not loose this opportunity. The Portuguese were also expelled from Patna.

In the meantime, the English factors of Surat happened to accidentally visit Patna. Peter Mundy in 1632, traveled from Agra to Patna misunderstanding 'Samana' as Patna. On his arrival to Patna, Mundy noted,

“Here we found not the Saif Khan nor the governor that was in Mr. Hughes and Parker’s time, but Abdullah khan, the most covetous and cruel tyrant that ever came to this place.”⁴⁴

This shows his prejudice against Mughal governors. He further noted,

“He (Abdullah Khan) Extorted from me the 24th September 1632, 3 ¼ and ½ rupees for custom, besides

⁴⁴ Peter Mundy, *Travels...*, vol. II, 144.

40 or 50 more in bribes to his officers, thinking he did me a great favor to remit the one half that other men paid and was due.”⁴⁵

But he failed to note that this small amount of ‘bribe’ empowered the English Company to trade at Patna. He himself explained, “it (bribe)[as] being the custom of the country not to come before them (*Nawabs*) empty handed especially if we had need of them.”⁴⁶ This shows that what Peter Mundy termed as ‘bribe’ was a necessary customary practice if one wanted to engage in trade at Patna or any other place.

Peter Mundy was of the opinion that it was not to the Company’s advantage to take up residence at Patna. The reasons cited by him⁴⁷ before the Surat Council comprised mainly abuses and accusations against the *Nawab* of Patna, Abdullah Khan. Also, in order to prove his allegations, Mundy charged that Abdullah Khan humiliated an eminent man of Patna, named Chaudhry Pratap.⁴⁸ This, he did only to prove that, the *Nawab* was not helpful to the merchant groups, both indigenous and foreign. Lastly, when he was returning on 16th November 1632 to Agra, he concluded that, “we forsook our house in Patna as willingly as men forsake an infectious place (by reason of the tyranny of the governor Abdullah Khan).”⁴⁹ One is not sure about the situation, which Peter Mundy faced in Patna in his four months stay, which compelled him to discuss the character of the *Nawab* and belittle the advantageous

⁴⁵ Ibid, 145.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 143.

⁴⁷ The reasons cited by Mundy were :- “I) Amberteas or white cloth which is that we most required from this place is now dear than accustomed by reason this governor is making provision for the king’s Mohall (female apartment) ii) saltpeter, we can have it much better and better cheap else where iii) transport oof goods from here is extraordinary far, deer and dangerous and iv) here is a bad governor (Abdullah khan)”, *Travels of Peter Mundy, Travels...*, vol II, 150-51; out of the four reasons cited by Mundy, two directly refers to the activities of the *Nawab*. As far as the case of the *Amberteas* is concerned the scarcity of that was not going to continue after the provisions for the Mohall was completed and so it was wrong, for Peter Mundy to criticize the *Nawab*.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 160.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 163.

position of Patna for trade.⁵⁰ But the English Company's involvement with Patna ended in uncertainty, though Abdullah Khan continued as the *Nawab* of Patna till 1643.

For nearly 18 years after the failure of the Company's second attempt to establish their factory at Patna in 1632, the Company document does not mention any event of significance either for the commercial transactions of the Company or for their relationship with the Patna elite. The turbulent phase through which, England passed in the reign of Charles I was also not favorable to the Company. However, the Company's attempts to procure Patna goods, continued indirectly from Orissa or Agra. After establishing themselves at Hariharpur and Balasore, the English issued directions for investments in saltpeter, silk and sugar. Acknowledging Patna's superior position in case of saltpeter, it was directed that, "Patna being on all sides concluded the best place for procuring peter, desire you therefore to make try all you can procure the same from thence."⁵¹

In fact, the Civil war in England pressed the Company to procure saltpeter from any other place they could. It was ordered to invest at least half of the stock available. It was also remarked that, 'in case you run into debt, let it be for this commodity.'⁵² It shows the commercial compulsions of the Company to keep alive their Patna trade. As a result immediately after the Hugli factory was opened the English were sent to Patna in 1651 to reestablish their factory.

The English factory at Patna was reopened in 1651 during the governorship of *Nawab* Jafar Khan. It was nevertheless officially recognized with the appointment of

⁵⁰ The reason cited by Peter Mundy, negate the advantages which patna enjoyed, as indicated by his predecessors Robert Hughes and John Parker in 1620 At Patna.

⁵¹ Wilson, Early Annals..., vol I, 25.

⁵² Ibid., 26.

Mr. Richard Chamberlain as the first chief of Patna factory in 1658, Roger Seymour as the second, William Varsell as the third, and Francis Farrer as the fourth.⁵³

After Jafar Khan, Julfikar Khan Qaramalu (1656-1657), was appointed the governor of Bihar and was followed by Qasim Khan (1657) and Dara Sukoh (1657). In the reign of all these three governors of Bihar nothing substantial, related to their contacts with the English Company happened. After the dethronement of Shah Jahan in 1657 the war of succession started and Dara Sukoh was also involved in it. In fact, all his four sons crowned themselves in their respective Subahships, Saha Suja did the same in Bengal and advanced his Army to Patna.⁵⁴ However, he was later defeated and murdered by Aurangzeb, who acquired the throne for himself in 1658.

After becoming Emperor, Aurangzeb dispatched Mir Jumla to Bengal, to campaign against prince Sujha in 1659. But before his march for Bengal had begun his presence in Bihar had created serious problems for the English factors. Mir Jumla stopped English from procuring saltpeter at Patna.⁵⁵ Confirming to the customs, Richard Chamberlain, the chief of the Patna factory, met Mir Jumla on 21st February 1659, with a present worth rupees 600.⁵⁶ However, Mir Jumla refused to accept it, describing the English as 'no better than pirates and robbers.'⁵⁷ Mr. Chamberlain tried to persuade Mir Jumla about the good conduct of the English people. He tried to convince that the English factors were private people who had no connection with the Coromandel Coast and that there was no reason why they should suffer for the fault of others. But, Mir Jumla was not convinced by these arguments of Chamberlain. He

⁵³ E.B.Sainsbury, ed., *A Calendar of the Court minutes...*, 212; However, the list of the factors given in *E.F.I.*, 1655-1660, is rather different. Richard Chamberline as chief, Vassal as second, Samuel Bayly as third and Henry Aldworth as fourth, 189.

⁵⁴ Jadunath Sarkar, *Massir-I-Alamgiri*, 1.

⁵⁵ *E.F.I.*, 1655-60, 264.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 280.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 281.

demanded the return of his Junk,⁵⁸ which was agreed to him by the Patna Chief in view of the problems arising in saltpeter trade. The Madras factors rejected Chamberlain's plea of returning the junk of Mir Jumla, and sent Ion Ken, the chief factor at Kasim Bazaar with presents to Mir Jumla, which again was rejected.⁵⁹

In due course the trade of the English at Patna was hampered. Henry Aldworth at Patna wrote to Trevisa at Hoogli on 12th July 1600, promising to dispatch about 15,000 mounds of petre to Hoogli. In return he asked the agent to send Mir Jumla's *dastak*.⁶⁰ Ultimately a huge amount was paid to Mir Jumla to restore the trade of saltpeter at Patna. Thus, it can be said that, the English, in this case were the offenders and provoked Mir Jumla by capturing his junk. He did nothing during the governorship in the Carnatic, as the English commanded superior naval strength there. When he came to Patna, he decided to answer the English offence and then the English had to concede to his demands. This shows that the English Company was not in a position to counter the power elites of Patna on land.

The English were very disturbed due to the stoppage of their trade from Patna by Mir Jumla. Later on it was proposed to purchase saltpeter from the Coromandel Coast in order to consider the maintenance of a factory at Patna.⁶¹ But at the end of the day it was left undecided even though the Saltpeter remained an important trading article for English factors in the Patna region. However, it was left undecided, whether Saltpeter might be brought down without maintaining a factory at Patna. But

⁵⁸ When Mir Jumla was in the Carnatic, his representatives came in conflicts with the English factors of fort St. George. Their suffering led the Agent Green Hill of fort St. George to think of retaliation. In August 1650, the English seized the Red Sea junk of Mir Jumla, Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, the *Life of Mir Jumla, the general of Aurangzeb*, New Delhi, 1979, 142, it was this junk that Mir Jumla demanded from the English when he came to Patna.

⁵⁹ Anjali Chateerji, *Bengal in the reign of Aurangzeb, 1658-1707*, Calcutta, 1967, 113.

⁶⁰ *E. F. I.*, 1655-60, 408.

⁶¹ *E.F.I.*, 1661-64, 62; Company's letter to the factors at Madras, dated 28 Jan. 1661.

again emphasizing the importance of Saltpeter it was remarked that, 'for on that gross commodity depends most of the tonnage of all the shipping.'⁶²

Mir Jumla left Patna for Bengal, where he took charge as the governor of the province. Daud Khan Qureshi was the new *Nawab* of Patna. Here, one must note the fact that, as Raj Mahal was on the border between Bihar and Bengal, the English Company needed the clearance cheques from the political authorities of both Bihar and Bengal, in order to send their ships loaded with Patna goods down to Hugli. Making use of this compulsion of the Company, the local officials and *Nawabs* earned profits. The consultation of fort St. George, dated 21st Dec. 1677, noted,

“Saltpeter was all stopped and turned ashore near Kasimbazar due to the pressure to carry up the *Nawab* Shaista Khan goods to Patna on the English ships.”⁶³

Again, when he was the governor of Bengal during the skirmish at Hugli, he sent to Patna his soldiers to seize all the property of the Company there and imprison the servants of the Company.⁶⁴ Thus the Company servants knew that, any of the *Nawabs* (of Bihar or Bengal) if refused to pass on the Company ships, the latter were liable to be withheld with considerable delay in sending Patna goods. For this very reason the English factories tried to procure grants from *Nawabs* of both the provinces. Richard Chamberline, in a letter dated, 1st Dec. 1569 explained that, “he has no fear of any difficulty being made, seeing that he has the *parwana* from Mir Jumla, Daud Khan and the Emperor’s *diwan*.”⁶⁵ Here, Mir Jumla was the *Nawab* of Bengal, while Daud Khan was the governor of Bihar. The perfect enjoyment of the

⁶² Ibid, 65; letter to the Company dispatched on 15th Jan. 1662, Madras.

⁶³ Records of fort St. George, *Diary and Consultation book, 1672-1678, Madras, 1910, 128.*

⁶⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals ...*, vol. I, 98.

⁶⁵ *E.F.I.*, 1655-1660, 299.

trading privileges by the English were thus subject to the condition that various *farmans* and grants were well implemented.

An interesting incident however unravels the secretive politics of the Company officials. During the governorship of Daud Khan, Mirza Luftullah Beg, the *diwan* of Patna, attempted to monopolize the sale of Saltpeter by forcing the contractors to sell him all their saltpeter which were under the contract with the Dutch.⁶⁶ Later it was noted in the same letter that,

“These procedures were prompted secretly by Chamberline himself, acting through the English broker, Ganga Ram, who had promised that, his employers would take from the *Diwan* all the Saltpeter thus secured.”⁶⁷

Thus, the claim of the English factors and later by various scholars about the monopolization of saltpeter by Luftullah Beg is negated.

Yadgar Beg succeeded Daud Khan, as the governor of Patna in 1665. He was in that office till 1668 but nothing substantial is mentioned in the records of the Company. After him, Ibrahim Khan (1668-1673) became the *Nawab*. English documents are very skeptical of his conduct. It was noted in 1671 that, ‘the *Nawab* gave *baksheesh* for the detention of the English boats to the boatman and thus tried to extort money from the English’, but his attempts failed.⁶⁸

Again in 1672, the English Chief at Patna, Job Charnock, complained about the high handedness of the *Nawab* Ibrahim Khan who forced the English and other Europeans to purchase decayed saffron in price more than the market value if they wished to have saltpeter from Patna.⁶⁹ Initially, the Company refused to take the

⁶⁶ Ibid, 69, letter from Hugli to Madras dated 29th Jan. 1661.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 69.

⁶⁸ *E.F.I.*, New Series, vol. II, 1670-1677, 336.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 354.

delivery of saffron. The *Nawab* took it as a great affront and ultimately the saffron had to be accepted. The English were so horrified that they reported that without a proper *farman*,

“We shall have continual trouble and great charges to run through their (Company’s) business in those parts in one time or another, if not prevented, a great mischief (will) happen to our master’s business and our own persons, the fear of which does often dampens in our business and in all disputes which we have with the governor of this country.”⁷⁰

It was proposed by Clavell, the Chief agent of the Company’s establishment of Bengal, and his Council, to represent their case to the Emperor’s court, against the misdeeds of the *Nawab*. But the Madras council rejected this proposal. This decision would have been taken to avert the confrontation that has already been faced by the company at Patna. Despite this, in December 1673, Job Charnock sent a note to Aurangzeb’s *Diwan* at Patna regarding the above incident. Moreover Patna factors also made repeated requests to the council at Bay for the necessity of a *farman* from the Emperor entitling them free trade in the region.

Nawab Ibrahim khan was replaced by Miran Amir Khan (1673-1675) as the governor of Patna. The factors complained that in his tenure thirty-one boats loaded with saltpeter were held up at Patna for want of a *dastak*. Charnock tried to get them released but his attempts failed, as he was not ready to ‘bribe’ the officials. In July 1675 the *Nawab* promised a *dastak* in return for 500 rupees, but he again dubbed. The matter further delayed as a new *Diwan* came to the office, which, meant all petitions and negotiations, had to be started afresh. The real problem was that the English failed to understand the fact that, all grants and favors were to be legalized with every new

⁷⁰ Ibid, 363.

person coming to the office. The boats were finally cleared in the last days of *Nawab* Amir Khan's office when he was paid rupees 900.⁷¹ The harassment caused by the above incident impelled Charnock to declare that he was 'weary of the insufferable troubles and delay affronts that had to contend with in a place where every petty official makes a prey of the English'. The English authorities, however enjoined that so far their ships passed easily, the illegal demands of the *Nawabs* and officials were not a problem. Streyntsham Master censored Job Charnock for not agreeing to the demands of the *Nawab* remarking that, 'hazarding so great a commerce of the Company for so small a matter as 1,000 or 1,500 rupees was something we not satisfied with'.⁷²

Shaifullah Barlow became the next governor of Bihar in November 1675 and continued till 14th April 1677. John Marshal who at this time was present at Patna, complained about the general coercion and ill-treatment the English were meted with. He also mentions about the destruction of storehouses carried under the order of the new governor.⁷³ The dispute over the legitimacy of the *farman* also erupted during his period. The Bengal *Nawab*, Shaista Khan tried to sort out the problem by declaring that the English possess a *farman* from the Emperor upon which he also had given them a grant of the said privileges in Bengal and hoped for the same implementation in Bihar.⁷⁴ This dispute came to rest during the governorship of prince Azam, as Job Charnock reported that,

"At last the obstinacy of the *Diwan* (Warris khan) had been overcome by bribes to him, his *peshdast* (assistants) and other friends to the amount of rupees

⁷¹ *Master's Diary*, vol I, 114.

⁷² *Ibid*, 109.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 55.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, vol. II, 24, Translate of a letter from Shaista Khan in an answer to one received from Warris Khan (Diwan of Patna) about the English privileges in those parts of the region.

1,200 and that a compromise had been agreed on for deposit of the custom at 3%.”⁷⁵

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

“His government is hated of all men, he being of himself very careless and altogether swayed by his servants who are beggarly upstarts that they care not which ends goes forward, so they crane their coffers and impoverish the master which makes the whole country at present groase under him.”⁷⁶

It was true that, in his absences, the local officials became parasitic and made several forceful exactions. The English factors noted that in August 1677, the *Diwan* at Patna detained the ship carrying the treasure to Patna for investments on the pretext of non-clearance of the custom duties. Job Charnock wrote to Hugli authorities for the payment of receipts, but in the mean time, the *Mirbahar* had taken half of the treasury in his custody on the pretext of search. He released it only towards the end of November when a deal was struck.⁷⁷ Even the *fauzdars* and *darogas* adopted illegal means of securing profits.

The confusion and misunderstanding remained conspicuous of the trading relation between the two. In fact later on it was noted that, some Saltpeter men frequently ran away because the princes and *darogas* ‘drubed and imprisoned them.’⁷⁸ Similarly, in 1677, three boats loaded with lead from Hugli were stopped at

⁷⁵ *E.F.I.*, New Series, vol, II, 1670-77, 431.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 442.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 436.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 432.

Bhagalpur by the new *Amin*, who refused to clear them without an order from the prince's *Diwan*. It was also reported that, prince's officers were obstructing the dispatches of boats laden with saltpeter in order to extract payments of customs on the goods they contained.⁷⁹ For these incidents, it can only be said that prince Azam was unable to check his lower officials, as he used to stay in Patna for relatively shorter periods.

Saifuddin succeeded Prince Azam in 1678. So far his relationship with the Company, is concerned, nothing significant is recorded in the documents. How ever, it was during his tenure that Charnock through his *Vakil* started negotiations with the Mughal court to secure a *farman* confirming previous privileges and a guarantee to not interfere in their trade.⁸⁰ In the mean time he was ordered to leave Patna and join Kasimbazar as the chief of the English factory. His refusal to do so created confusion in the business at Patna. Later, the council at Fort St. George acceded that Charnock must stay at Patna to deliver up the remains of that factory before moving to Kasimbazar.⁸¹

After Saifuddin, Aurangzeb appointed Saif khan as the governor of Bihar. When he came to Patna, Mr. Peacock was the chief of English factory there.⁸² He refused to visit the new *Nawab* with gifts. As a result he was captured in the factory and dragged barefoot to Hajipura, the temporary residence of the new governor and was kept in irons until he paid a forced present of 90 Pound, to the *Nawab*.⁸³ The Company though complained the Emperor through a *Vakil* but Mr. Peacock apparently got no redress. A year later, when Gangaram, the Zamindar of Bihar and

⁷⁹ Ibid, 423.

⁸⁰ *Master's Diary*, vol,I, 243, note, 2.

⁸¹ Ibid, 353; letter from Job Charnock to Strynsham Master, 1679, 14th Dec.

⁸² Ibid, vol,II, 352; before sending Charnock to Kasimbazar, master had appointed Mr. Peacock as the chief of Patna factory, Jeremy Peachy as second and Samuel Meverell as third; letter from Master and Council to Job Charnock, dated Dec. 13th 1679.

⁸³ N.N.Raye, *The Annals of Early...*, 98.

formerly *Diwan* to Bahadur khan, whose *Jagir* then lay about Patna, appeared in arms with about five or six thousand horses,⁸⁴ and due to that, the English found it difficult to purchase any more Saltpeter.⁸⁵ Mr. Peacock was again arrested and thrown into prison only on the pretext that, despite Gangram's rebellion, the Company's factory at Singhiya, was left unmolested, which created suspicion in the mind of the *Nawab* that, the English also were in league with the rebels. Ultimately it was with much difficulty and through earnest intercession he was rescued.⁸⁶

The frequent disturbances and disruptions in the trade led the directors of the company to reassess their relationship with Mughals and the local political elites. The option of direct confrontation as proposed by William Hedges was out rightly rejected. They were well satisfied by the relationship established by John Russel, the chief of Bengal factories, which was one of seer opportunism, which meant that they were least concerned as to who occupied the throne. Regular uninterrupted flow of trade was the only thing they cared for.⁸⁷ However, a few years later the Directors thought of a shift in their policy. Earlier, Sir Edward Winter, the governor at fort St. George, thought it impossible to continue the policy of peace and retrenchment simultaneously. He was of the opinion that, "how could the English provide for the investments if the factories were withdrew and of what avail was it to complain to Indian princes of the arbitrary dues exacted by their tax gatherers?" On his complaint to one of the princes, he was answered back, "when the English horns and teeth are

⁸⁴ *Records of fort St. George*: letters to fort St. George, 1682, vol. II, 47.

⁸⁵ Hugli Council in a letter to fort St. George mentioned the problem that was going to hit their business at Patna. They noted that, "we know not what influence these troubles may have on our Master's trade at Patna in getting Peter but for fear the investments will be extremely lessened ..." also they accused Shaista khan, the *Nawab* of Bengal of "sitting still all the while as unconcerned, though he might from Raj Mahal have sent such considerable force as in 5 or 6 day's might have reached Patna and in all likelihood dispersed Gangaram...", Ibid, 47.

⁸⁶ C.Stewart, *History of Bengal*, 310-11.

⁸⁷ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol, II, part I, XXXI.

grown said the prince then I will free your goods from the duty.”⁸⁸ But finally the Company continued with its policy of maintaining peace with the rulers.

The turn came around 1686 when the Company having obtained permission from James II, ordered the governor of Bombay to withdraw from Surat and the dependent factories and to direct the ships to seize those of the Mughals. This provided the pretext in which the war between the Mughals and the company started.⁸⁹ The court of directors were of the opinion that, “we will undauntedly pursue the war against the Mughals until we have a fortified settlements in Bengal upon as good terms as we hold the fort St. George or Bombay, whatever it cost us.”⁹⁰ In fact, it was this time that there was a steadily growing conviction that the Company’s position as a trading body involved the assertion of its position as a political power⁹¹.

When the English were at war with the Mughals in Bengal, Buzurg Omed Khan was the Governor of Bihar (Jan. 1683-Dec. 1692). The troubles in Bengal sent a wave of them into Bihar and the factors there did not thought it safe to reside at Patna, when they heard of Job Charnock leaving Hugli.⁹² Patna factory was plundered and Mr. Meverll (second at Patna factory) was put behind bars in 1684, for which Charnock demanded an indemnity of Rs. 80,000.⁹³ Also, Charles King (a sergeant at Patna) was imprisoned at Patna, while Braddyll, the chief of Patna factory was lucky enough to slip from Patna to Hugli and later to Dacca. Charles King was later rescued by giving Rupees 800 after the death of Buzurg Omed Khan.⁹⁴ Thus the business of the English Company at Patna was once again closed down.

⁸⁸ Ibid, vol. I, 39.

⁸⁹ Wilson, *Old fort William in Bengal*, LXI.

⁹⁰ *Hedges Diary*, vol. I, LXXIII.

⁹¹ C.J.Hamilton, *Trade relation between England and India*, 36.

⁹² *Hedges Diary*, vol. II, CVII.

⁹³ Ibid, CCLVI, Job Charnock letter to Surat, 9th Dec. 1686.

⁹⁴ Ibid, CVII, CVIII, Charles Eyre letter dated 15th Jan 1695.

The unsuccessful outcome of the war of 1686 demonstrated the strength of the Mughal military and administrative machinery. It also proved that the naval warfare was to be far more useful to the English Company as a deterrent than as a tactical weapon. Josiah Child noted on the failure of the Mughal war in 1686 that, “such has been God’s blessing upon the Company’s Arms, their unavoidable necessity, and their righteous cause that the war, beyond all men’s options, has ended to the eternal Honor of the English nation in those parts of the world....”⁹⁵ During the period of war, the Company’s direct trade with England had virtually come to a standstill. Keeping this in mind in 1687, it was decided to normalize the tense relationship between the English and the power elites. It obliged the Company to sue for peace and pardon from the then Emperor Aurangzeb and for this the Company sent two of its factors from Surat, Mr. George Weldon and Abraham Navaar to Delhi.⁹⁶ Job Charnock noted in a letter that,

“I agent Charnock do make this agreement, whereas for several operations...I designed to withdraw our factories from Patna and Orissa and return to our country; in the interim Abdul Samad coming this way, I made known to him our operations, who gave to us the encouragement for which I make promise to return to our factories and trade as formerly...”⁹⁷

It was also decided that,

“We are not now willing, suddenly after the pacification to enter into any new warfare with the Mughals but hold

⁹⁵ S. A. Khan, *The East India Trade in the seventeenth century in its Political and Economic aspects*, 205.

⁹⁶ William Bolts, *Consideration on Indian affairs particularly representing the present state of Bengal and its dependencies*, 59-60.

⁹⁷ Hedges Diary, LXX, translate of a paper sent over for the right worshipful the agent to signe, indorsed- translate of a paper signed by the right worshipful agent to Abdus Samad at Hijli, dated 9th June, 1687.

all his governors and peoples strictly to the terms he has agreed with us.”⁹⁸

This pacification was confirmed with the grant of a *Farman* from Emperor Aurangzeb in the year 1690, allowing the English to trade free of custom, on condition of paying annually the sum of 3000 rupees. However, this normalcy in the relationship between the English and the Mughals depended, as were in early days ‘more on the behavior of the *Nawabs* than on the will of the Emperor.’⁹⁹ Although admitting the futility of engaging in a war with the Mughals at present, the Court of Committee thought that ‘it was a just war which had prevented the Company’s affairs being totally ruined by the extorting Mughal governors.’¹⁰⁰

After Buzurg Umaid khan, three governors, namely, Qayamuddin Mukhtar (1692-1694), Fidayi Khan (1694-1702) and Ibrahim khan (1702-1703) came to Bihar. The most remarkable events of their period, especially of *Nawab* Fidayi Khan was the revolt of Shobha Singh Zamindar in 1696, in Bengal and secondly the foundation of a new English east India Company in 1701. Both had relatively contradictory effects on the English Company already operating in Bihar. When Shobha Singh rebelled, Prince Azimushan was the governor of Bengal. The English chief of Bengal, ordered Mr. Ralph Sheldon, the chief of Patna factory to visit the prince with a *nazar* of 15 gold Mohars and 100 rupees.¹⁰¹ On the way, Ralph Sheldon and Teshmaker (English agent at Rajmahal) were captured and detained by the rebels along with goods worth rupees 20,000. Though the Mughal officials led by Zabardast Khan recovered most of the Company’s goods, but the Company had to bribe to Azimushan by the embassy of

⁹⁸ Ibid, LXXV, letter from Court to Bengal, 27th August 1688.

⁹⁹ Robert Orme, *Military transaction ...*, vol, II, 15.

¹⁰⁰ Despatch book, 13th may, 1692, vol. 92, para 2, 161, cited in K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trading World of Asia and ...*, 117.

¹⁰¹ Anirudh Roy, *Adventures, Landowners and Rebels in Bengal*, Munshi Ram Manoharlal, 1998, 150-51.

Walsh and Stanley to repress them.¹⁰² But the revolt of Shobha Singh was also a boon in disguise for the English Company as it provided the pretext for building a fortified settlement in the name of Fort William at Calcutta.

On the other hand the coming of new English Company created a competitive atmosphere. Both the *Nawabs* of Patna and Dacca tried to extract maximum possible gains from the confusion created from the coming of the two companies in the region. Each Company did its utmost to ruin the other; each hoisted the English flag and sent an embassy to contend for the Mughal Emperor's patronage at his court while the local governors played off against the other, farming each Company alternatively and taking bribes impartially from both¹⁰³. Between 1698 and 1703 the English passed through an internal convulsion as a result to which their position in relation to the Mughal governors and *Subahdars* was rendered weak and untenable.¹⁰⁴ One of the policies of the new Company was to attempt to form alliances with important native rulers from whom it desired to procure the protection, permits and privileges so vital to their welfare.¹⁰⁵ It was in this regard, early in the year, a prominent member of the parliament William Norris, led an embassy to the court of Aurangzeb and other princes to enlist their support for the new Company. But he failed in his work.

On the abrupt termination the Embassy of Sir William Norris, the Emperor had issued orders to capture and confine every European in his dominion. As a result, in the month of February 1702, the whole English settlement at Patna and Raj Mahal with all their efforts were seized by prince Azimushan to make good the damage done

¹⁰² N.N.Raye, *The Annals of...*, 46.

¹⁰³ Alfred Lyall, *Rise and expansion of the...*, 57.

¹⁰⁴ Q.Ahamed and H.Askari, ed., *The comprehensive history...*, vol. II, part II, 214.

¹⁰⁵ Margverite Eyer Wilbur, *The E.I.C. and the British Empire in the far East*, O. U. P., California, 1945, 152.

by the pirates.¹⁰⁶ Among the English Traders, the first victims were the Old Company's servants who lost at Patna and Raj Mahal a total of about 18000 rupees.¹⁰⁷ But as the value of the property seized was not sufficient to satisfy the claims of the merchants, the prince extended his operations to all the European factories. The Company servants were confined for 51 days in Jail, but later released on parole. On 30th March the order was extended to all the European factories and the loss of the English Company on this occasion amounted to 62,000 rupees.¹⁰⁸ However, Bruce John opined that, on the whole, the prince behaved tactfully and leniently towards the English. The embargo on all European trade in Bihar and Bengal was soon afterwards withdrawn.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, prince Azimushan was also appointed the governor of Bihar. The English factory at Patna was re-established in 1703 (now it was called as the residency) by the United Council,¹¹⁰ with the help of substantial *parwana* obtained by Mr. Red Shaw, the chief of Patna factory, from the *Nawab*. It was the turn of the officials of the new Company to carry on the trade at Patna as per the rotational governorship rule of the United Company. The old Company therefore did not actively participate in the commercial activities. The consultation noted,

“The English trade is stopped in Patna owing to the necessity of paying custom dues. The prince still

¹⁰⁶ In 1695, on account of the seizure of two ships of the Mughals going to Jeddah and Mocha with pilgrims, by the pirates, the English factories were all laid under seizure and a stop put to their trade, C. Stewart, *History of Bengal*, 327.

¹⁰⁷ John Bruce, *Annals of the Honourable...*, Vol. III, 506.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 357.

¹⁰⁹ John Bruce, *Annals of the Honorable East India Company*, London, 1810, vol, III, 506-7.

¹¹⁰ The united council was created by the amalgamation of the two English Companies, old and the new. These ensured the rotational government—so called because the president ship of the united Council was held by rotation by the servants of the two Companies. All these arrangements were made without reference to the Mughal government, the rotation government assumed office of 1st Feb. 1704, represented, according to C.R. Wilson, the bastard off springs of an illegitimate union, Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. I, 151, 169; at the union of the two Company, the English had the following factories in Bengal dependent on the presidency at Fort William viz. Fort William Sutinati, Balasore, Kasimbazar, Dacca, Hugli, Malda, Rajmahal and Patna, W. Milburn, *Oriental commerce*, vol. II, 103.

refused free trade unless the Company made him a large present. The old Company did not wish for any such pass now, as they were not responsible for the trade. They therefore sent a letter to the united trade council telling them the result of the negotiation. The united council then agreed to stop the trade at Patna. And the old Company sent to recall all their agents at Patna.”¹¹¹

However, the United Company made use of its previous agents to set things right at Patna and it was noted that, ‘we have received advice from Manikchand that the King’s *Diwan* has ordered his *Naib* at Patna to permit our business to pass as formerly. Also that he will give his *sanad* for our free trade upon paying him a *peshkash* of 3000 rupees.’¹¹² But illegal extraction from the Company continued in Azimushan’s period. Prince Azimushan himself levied custom duties in the form of tax at the rate of two and a half percent on the goods of Muslims and five percent on the goods of Hindus and Christians.¹¹³ Following this discrimination, the English decided to write a letter to the *Diwan* desiring him to write to the Sultan, asking him to give favour to the English at Patna and to stop people from interfering in their trade.¹¹⁴

Prince Azimushan was the last governor during the reign of Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb’s reign provided Patna a recurrent appointment of governors, which did not lead to the significant improvement in the day-to-day administration. There were cases of illegal extortion and forceful exaction and other irregularities, which were not totally overlooked by the Emperor.¹¹⁵ However the period also registered growth in

¹¹¹ Wilson, *Early Annals* ..., vol. I, 232.

¹¹² Ibid, 274, Consultation, dated 18th July 1706.

¹¹³ Ghulam Husain’s *Riyas-us-Salatin*, 245.

¹¹⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals* ..., vol. I, 282, Consultation dated 3rd June 1707.

¹¹⁵ Safi khan the governor of Bihar from 1680-82 was dismissed for misappropriating government money.

the volume of trade. The export of saltpeter in the period from 1665 to 1670 amounted to 1000 tones and their import of bullion in a single year to eastern region amounted to 110000 L.¹¹⁶

When the Council at Bay heard about the death of Aurangzeb, they apprehended disturbance in the country. They directed their agents in the inland factories to move away to Calcutta.¹¹⁷ The Patna factory was left with a small number of Englishmen. But then also it was resolved to continue the function of the factory through agents, though with small investments.¹¹⁸ In fact with all the difficulties and drawbacks the English Company looked upon the Patna residency, as valuable an establishment to be abandoned easily.¹¹⁹ The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 though created confusion in the empire, it paved the way for the extension and firm control of the English Company in Bihar and Bengal.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, the war of succession had started. The appearance of Shah Alam at Patna made the countryside hostile for trade. The agents at Patna reported the movement of Prince Azam Shah and of the counter efforts of prince Azimushan to support the cause of his father, Shah Alam. They further reported that, Shah Alam seized the imperial treasury and had threatened to levy a tax on all the merchants. He also demanded a lakh of rupees as a contribution towards raise forces against Azam Shah.¹²¹ In December 1708, prince Azimushan who refused to set free his prisoner or to let the Company's boats pass until he had received a bill of exchange for rupees 14,000 ruthlessly captured Mr. Cawthrope, the English agent at Raj Mahal.¹²²

¹¹⁶ C.Stewart, *History of Bengal*, 301.

¹¹⁷ N.N.Raye, *Annals of Early English...*, 120.

¹¹⁸ Wilson, *Early Annals of ...*, vol I, 293, Consultation dated 19th Jan. 1708.

¹¹⁹ N.N.Raye, *Annals of Early...*, 123.

¹²⁰ W. Milburn, *Oriental commerce*, vol. I, 103.

¹²¹ Wilson, *Early Annals of ...*, vol. I, 177-78.

¹²² *Ibid*, 181.

When the war of succession was over, Hussain Ali came to Patna as the *de facto* governor (1708-1710) in place of Prince Azimushan. When Emperor Bahadur Shah was at Delhi, a force under his son advanced towards Patna. In October, the pretender straining every nerve to get money to pay his troops extorted a large sum from all the merchants of Patna. It may be noted here that, in case of war of succession there was a great chaos in the region and the local officials on the pretext of supporting the contenders, one or the other, collected large sums of money from all groups engaged in commerce. The English Company was also among these groups. Also, we find mere instances of direct military participation of the English Company at Patna in support of the power elites as the Company's army was not resourceful and strong and hence the major context in the military relationship between the Company and the Patna elites was provided in the financial sector. Coming to the above sequel, the *de facto* governor, steadily opposed the princes attempts to plunder the town and as the English factors noted, 'exerted himself once again in favour of the English who were allowed to get out with a payment of rupees 22000 only.'¹²³

After Azimushan, prince Farukhsiyar became the governor of Bihar for a year (1712). But in that very single year, the English records notes that, the Mughal officials were very extortionate. In that year again, the war of succession commenced and it was reported that,

“During the revolution which took place in Mughal government the English merchants in Patna went in daily fear of being seized and plundered and were in the end glad to escape with the payment of rupees 22,000 to the prince and rupees 6,500 in presents to the *Nawab* of Patna and his officers.”¹²⁴

¹²³ C.Stewart, *History of Bengal*, 38; Wilson, *Early Annals of ...*, vol. II part I, XXX.

¹²⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals of ...*, vol. II, part I, LIX.

Farukhsiyar was crowned at Patna after the war of succession was over and according to the custom, all the elites and well to do persons were ordered to visit him with some *peshkash*. The Consultation noted that, 'they are in fear that Farukhsiyar who is acknowledged king at Patna will force them to visit him with a *Peshkash* and that they are informed that some of his officers have acquainted him that by said pretense he might get 4 -5 lakhs out of them (English and the Dutch). Also they are fearful that, when the new king's son with his army come against the Patna king there will be plundering on both sides so that they must be obliged to leave that place, there being no safety in Patna for them'. However it was not the English Company only who had to face such ejection. The indigenous commercial groups faced the same set of fear and ejection. After enthroning himself at Patna, Farukhsiyar proceeded to compete for the throne at Delhi and collected a large force. Ahmed Beg, an old companion and favorite of Farukhsiyar himself collected a considerable force for the prince at Patna and worked for his new Master's success with devotion and vigor.¹²⁵ Levying money in the way of taxes from the bankers of Patna, among whom Manickchand was the chief,¹²⁶ Farukhsiyar reduced the *Subah* of Bihar to his subjection.¹²⁷ Due to the chaotic situation Calcutta council ordered the Patna factors to unload whatever goods they had in their hands and sends them to Calcutta and to not procure any other goods then what they were contracted for already.¹²⁸ In 1712, letters were received from Mr. Hedges which noted that, "Augaruffa (Agha Rafi) the merchant with whom he was to have contracted for the peter was imprisoned by the order of the *Diwan* who pretended that the goods Agha Rafi had brought from Patna

¹²⁵ Zahiruddin Malick, *A Mughal statesman of 18th century- Khan-i-Dauran- Mir Bakshi of Mohammed Shah, 1719-1739*, A. M. u., 1973, 32 ,note, 164.

¹²⁶ Abdul Karim, *Mursid Quli Khan and his times*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1963, 98.

¹²⁷ Ghulam Husain's *Riyas-us-Salatin*, 269.

¹²⁸ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. II, part,I, 58, Consultation dated, 23rd June 1712.

belonged to Zoody Khan and Kinker.”¹²⁹ These incidents were in fact the prelude to the closing of the English factory at Patna in 1713.

Farukhsiyar was succeeded by Ghairat Khan as the governor of Bihar (1712-1715). It was in his governorship that, the English decided to withdraw their factory once again. Letters were sent to Patna from Calcutta council including orders for withdrawal of Patna factory and a speedy comply of the order.¹³⁰ After the orders for the closure of the factory and winding of the investment procedure, it was decided to reduce the expenses at Patna establishment. The whole charge was reduced to rupees 159 only¹³¹. But despite that it was resolved to continue the factory because there was a profit in it.

As the affairs of Patna city and its Hinterland were in a state of utter confusion, it was resolved to send Mir Jumla to look after the government and restore order in the administration of Patna¹³². He was the governor of Bihar from 1715 to 1716. However, nothing substantial happened in his period and he was replaced by SarBuland Khan who stayed in the office as *Nawab* of Bihar for two years (1716-1718). In a very short time, Mr. Pattle, the chief of Patna residency, informed the Calcutta council that,

“SarBuland Khan had stopped all the boats at RajMahal. A present of goods worth rupees 2,000 was given with more fair speeches but nothing happened. SarBuland Khan refused to make the smallest real concession. He positively demanded 45,000 rupees on

¹²⁹ Ibid, 51.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 132, consultation dated, 23rd July 1713.

¹³¹ Ibid, 152, Consultation dated, 24th dec. 1713.

¹³² Syed Hasan Askari, trans., Shiv Das Lakhanvi's *Shahnama Munawar Kalam*, Patna, 1980, 7 ; infact, considering Mir jumla, their greatest enemy, the Sayyid brothers demanded his removal from the capital and Farukhsiyar was obliged to accept the demand and Mir Jumla was granted the Subahdarship of Bihar and was sent to Patna, Karim, *Mursid Quli khan...*, 53.

the receipt of which he will give us his orders for free trade.”¹³³

Ultimately the Company provided the *Nawab* the amount of rupees 45,000. The *Nawab* was so authoritative that the indigenous *Vakils* and agents feared to talk to him and even visit to him.¹³⁴ However, through the Surman embassy to the Emperor Farukhsiyar, the Company got the famous *Farman* of 1717 in the governorship of SarBuland Khan.

From 1718 to 1720, Zaman Khan was the governor of Bihar. The success of Surman embassy stimulated the English to attempt to obtain facilities for their trade from Zaman Khan on the Basis of Faruksiyar’s *Farman*. But before resettling their trade again at Patna, the English asked their *Vakil*, Rupchand at Patna to be assured about the working of the *Farman* of 1717. It was advised to the *Vakil* that,

“Meet taking rupees 500 as durbar expenses to Zaman Khan. Whether the unjust *peshkash* laid on the government will not be demanded or the forbidden imposition excused in *Farman* be observed upon such condition we would settle a factory and send an Englishman otherwise not.”¹³⁵

Zaman Khan assured the English and a *parwana* under his seal dated 5th June 1718 was granted to the English, which read as follows:

“It is known unto one that you withdraw your factory from Patna for which this is wrote that you may come hither with satisfaction and resettle your factory according to the former customs, everything to your contentment shall be complied with, I have given a

¹³³ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. I, 182.

¹³⁴ Consultation dated 1717, oct. noted that, “we don’t find anyone inclined to speak to SerBuland Khan about the Patna house or factory, Rupchand (*Vakil*) even fears to go near the *darbar*”, Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. II, part, II, 235.

¹³⁵ Wilson, *Early Annals of ...*, vol. III, 26, letter from Calcutta to Rupchand *Vakil* at Patna, dated April 1st 1718.

dastak for the ways, send your *Gomastah* speedily that they may come and stay here with satisfaction.”¹³⁶

In accordance with the *Nawab's parwana*, the *Diwan* of Bihar Abdul Kadir Khan also issued a *parwana* under his seal dated 14th June 1718.¹³⁷ This shows the supportive character of the *Nawab* and other officials. After getting these privileges, the English Company started considering ways to resettle their factory at Patna in 1718. However, in 1719, it was decided and agreed to send 200 men under the command of Major Hunt to guard the Patna fleet in fear of disruption of trade by the local Officials.¹³⁸

However, it was at this time that Mohammed Shah, who ascended the throne in 1719, told the English that, Farukhsiyar was a usurper and ordered to strike the name of Farukhsiyar out of the grant seal and to put Jahandar Shah's name, the father of Mohammed Shah, when the English went for the confirmation of their privileges granted by Farukhsiyar's *farman* and *Husbool-hukum*.¹³⁹ Ultimately it was agreed by the English and the problem was sorted out. Also it was in the last days of Zaman Khan's governorship that the *Fatuha Gomastah* of the English Raghu Pandit was seized by the *Nawab* and a demand was made of rupees 50,000 in lieu of twenty year's custom, which the said Raghu Pandit had cheated the King's government of.¹⁴⁰

Zaman Khan was succeeded by Nusrat Khan for a year and the later was succeeded by Zafar Khan for four years from 1721 to 1725. Nothing substantial happened in Nusrat Khan's office days except that, on his arrival Mr. Stephenson, the chief of Patna factory, was very much pressed to visit him, which his indisposition has

¹³⁶ Ibid, 47.

¹³⁷ *Parwana* under the seal of Abdul-Qadir Khan, *Diwan* of Bihar dated, 14th June 1718, it read as follows- 'the English Company *Gomastah* are sent for to come and resettle. It's strictly ordered that you do not molest them and hinder boats for *abwabs mamnuan*, that is the custom on boats', Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. III, 47.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 139, Consultation dated 23rd July 1719.

¹³⁹ Karim, *Mursid Quli Khan and...*, 191.

¹⁴⁰ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. III 174.

hitherto prevented, but ultimately he was obliged to do it in ten days.¹⁴¹ In his period due to the problem faced from the local officials, the Company's indigenous broker, Pran resigned from his service in 1721. It was noted in the consultation dated, 3rd July, 1721, that,

“Pran their (Patna factory's) broker, being apprehensive of some trouble from the government by means of one Nand *gowala*, who is always endeavoring to do him what mischief he can by complaining from one Durbar to another..., so that he is afraid of being seized, and dare not stir out of the factory: he therefore request, he may leave the place and they (Patna factors) desires that another person may be sent in his stead.”¹⁴²

The governorship of Zafar Khan was relatively good for the English at Patna. However, in 1732, the *Nawab* complained to the English that they were including in their Private trade in the name of the Company's and threthend to stope their trade unless they secured a *farman* of the then Emperor. The Chif of the patna factory, Hugh Barker, instructed the Company's *Vakil* to report the *Nawab* that it was not the case of private Trade.¹⁴³ In order to maintain good relations with the *Nawab*, in August 1732, the Company's authorities decide to buy the whole amount of salt carried by the current fleet, and after retaining the permissible amount for use, to throw the rest into the river Ganga. After Zafar Khan Hadi Ali khan was made the governor of Bihar. He was in fact, the last governor of Bihar however, Prince Mirza Ahmed (Fakhruddaullah) came to Patna as governor in 1733,¹⁴⁴ but in the same year

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 368.

¹⁴² Ibid, 358.

¹⁴³ J. N. Sarkar, *Glimpses...*, 54.

¹⁴⁴ A Sanad found in the Persian papers of the divisional Commission office at Patna, dated 1733, refers to a grant of rent free land to Shah Kalil of Sasaram by Fakhrudaula, who was the last independent governor of Bihar, S.G.Mishra, *History of Bihar, 1740-1772*, New Delhi, 1970, 10.

Suzauddaullah was given the charge of both Bihar and Bengal by the Emperor Mohammed Shah.¹⁴⁵

Meanwhile the Company's business prospered at Patna and a branch factory at Fatuah, Choundee and Begusarai were reopened and five new subordinate factories were started in different parts of the province of Bihar.¹⁴⁶ In 1728, a brick godown was built at Patna to secure saltpeter against the danger of fire, frequent in those days of thatched sheds and congested bazaars.¹⁴⁷

In the later years of our period we find a policy shift in case of the English Company at Patna. The pattern of contact changed significantly. This was both due to the political and commercial development. The political situation changed rapidly with the progress of the demise of the imperial power. There was a gradual polarization of interest between the court of Delhi and the Mughal provincial governors. The provincial governors acquired a much greater degree of financial and political control over local areas than was possible under Aurangzeb and his predecessors. The attempts of local rulers to surpass the imperial authorities was a dangerous but helpful development which made English Company aware of the fact that now their gifts and bribes would have to be directed in only one way. The general escalation in violence on all sides eventually drew the English Company and this was in fact the starting point of the process that led to the final establishment of English rule. On the economic front, the Company got the most important *Farmans* in the later years of our period. This emboldened them to harden their stand vis-à-vis the

¹⁴⁵ Mohammed Shah conferred the deputy governorship of Bihar to Samsudaula Amir Ul Umara in place of Fakhradaula who was dismissed. He was the deputy governor at Patna, of *Nawab Shujaudaula*, Abdus Subham, trans. & ed. *Tarikh-i-Bengal-i-Mahabatjangi* of Yusuf Ali Khan, Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1982, 7; *Nawab Shuja Khan* made a petition for the Subahdarship of Azimabad, which was then held by Fakhrudaulah. A *Parwana* arrived from the Emperor, dismissing Fakhrudaulah and a *sanad* appointing Shuja Khan to the post, J. N. Sarkar, *Bengal Nabob*, 14.

¹⁴⁶ R. M. Martin, *Historical documents...*, vol.I, 354.

¹⁴⁷ Wilson *old fort William in Bengal*, 124.

political elites. The chronic warfare in the region forced the indigenous mercantile groups to seek protection of the English; hence we find that prominent merchants and bankers of Patna migrated to Calcutta. Thus from a humble servants of a trading roots, the English were moving towards to become the rulers of the country.

Social relation of the English and the Patna political elites:

The English at Patna were a small group in our period. The English lived in far closer contact with the indigenous society around them in 17th century than in the 19th century. The sense of self- respect and superiority forced them to relate themselves with the elites of Patna. The attraction of Indian court life to the British factors was particularly evident during the early years of the residencies. In fact, in those days of greater isolation the tendency to gravitate towards the local ways of living and acting was very strong.¹⁴⁸ This effort to fit into the Indian life emerged in several forms like the adoption of the factors of Indian honor, titles or life styles. Indian rulers on their part, seems to have appreciated the attraction, their world had for the English standards.¹⁴⁹ Thus there was an amicable social relation between both of them.

Patna power elites tended to acquire English goods, from the Company, to enhance their already existing luxurious living. In fact, most of the sundry items brought by the Company from England were purchased by these elites. Captain Nicholas Downton, in a memorandum given to the Company, gave a copy of a note given by Mukkarab Khan of such things, as he desired to be furnished of by the next ships that came out of England. These included a wide range of objects from military equipments to luxury items and various animals and dogs and birds.¹⁵⁰ These were definitely demanded by Mukkarab khan when he was the governor of Surat, but when he came to Patna he also desired the same set of commodities from the factors. In a

¹⁴⁸ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol.I, 65.

¹⁴⁹ Michael H. Fisher, 'The Resident in Court Ritual, 1764-1858', vol. 24, M.A.S. 1990, 432.

¹⁵⁰ W.Foster, ed., *the voyage of Nicholas Downton to the East Indies, 1614-15*, reprint, 1997, 187.

letter to the Surat factory dated 4 September 1620, Patna, Robert Hughes, reminded the officials that, "I pray remember the governor with what fine goods and toys you may spare of what you exports in this fleet. He is very earnest with me to procure him some and I have promised to write you in his behalf."¹⁵¹ Robert Hughes delivered to Mukkarab khan, the *parda* (curtain), looking glass, mohair and 280 pieces of weight amber beads.¹⁵²

The obsession towards western goods prompted the elites to purchase or demands these commodities from the English factors despite the fact that the indigenous goods were themselves more elegant and luxurious. The swords blades, knives and textiles made in India were advanced in their qualities. However, the goods provided by the Company also comprised various toys, pictures in cloths and not in woods and wine and looking glass. These articles were either not made in India or were of low quality. Thus the social relation of the Patna elites with the Company was confined to the modes, which augmented their living standard.

But the English factors were influenced by the local elites in their living style, their dress and manners. Due to the weather at Patna, it was not possible to have an English way of dressing and so the factors imitated the dress of the local peoples. In fact, in time, they came to understand the necessity of adopting dress to the climate and environment. Pomp and display however over rode comforts and economy. The factory records of the Company noted that, it was not unusual for the English merchant, when traveling up country, to adopt Indian dress, as being at once more comfortable and less conspicuous than their ordinary habit.¹⁵³ In 1658, a good cloth coat with large silver lace was all the fashion, and was considered to be the badge of

¹⁵¹ 'Documents relating...', 76, Robert Hughes to the Surat factory, Patna 12th July 1620.

¹⁵² Ibid, . 100, Robert Hughes to Agra factory, Patna 3rd March 1621.

¹⁵³ *E. F. I.*, 1655-60, 278.

an Englishmen. Without something like it, a man got no esteem or regards.¹⁵⁴ Though the English wore wigs as a common fashion in England, but here, those who consulted comfort cut their hairs short and condescend in the Islamic fashion.¹⁵⁵ Job Charnock when proceeding to Patna got his hair cut in local fashion.¹⁵⁶ But then also there were Englishmen like Streynsham Master who still wore wig in the public.

The English chiefs and factors at Patna imitated the oriental grandee in the matter of retinue, palanquins and umbrellas. On high days the governors went to the garden and bazaars in a procession according to the indigenous custom. William Hedges noted that, "first came two men carrying swallow-tailed silk flags displaying the broad red cross of St. George fastened to a silk partisan. Next the musicians sounding their trumpets and the chief's Persian horses of state had before him gallantly equipped in rich trappings. The chief and his wife rode the palanquin borne by four 'ordealies' (servants) and were escorted by the whole body of 'ordealies' in scarlet coats on foot..."¹⁵⁷ Diplomatic ceremonial was more elaborate in Indian court than in England and the English tended to follow these practices and adopted the state elephant, state umbrellas. Though these were granted to special privileged Englishmen, the general Englishmen also used umbrellas in public. The use of umbrellas by the factors became such a positive nuisance that Streynsham master had to rule at Masulipatam an order afterwards enforced in all factories in Bengal that no person to use umbrellas.¹⁵⁸

The amusements and pleasure of the factors though a few were also more or less an imitation of the elites. Picnicking in boats was a favorable pastime of the nobles. Mahalgari, a kind of houseboat was used for family outings. The English

¹⁵⁴ *Hedges Diary*, vol. II, 347.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, vol. III, 194.

¹⁵⁶ *E. F. I.*, 1655-1660, 278.

¹⁵⁷ *Hedges Diary*, vol. II, 237.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, vol. I, 295.

factors adopting this also went in boats in the rivers. Thomas Bowery noted that, “a Budgaroo (Bajra- a kind of large boat, fairly clean, centre of which form a little room) wherein the English and the Dutch chief and council go in state upon the water, in use also by the moors grandees or governors.”¹⁵⁹ The English always spend time in the evening in the gardens and grooves as the elites of Patna did. They had special gardens at Calcutta but at Patna they had to use the imperial gardens and public grooves for pleasure. Hunting also served as a major amusement.¹⁶⁰ The forest around Patna had a large variety of wild beasts that were hunted.

Thus, it can be said that the social relation between the English factors and the Patna elites was one in which both groups imitated each others. The Company did that in order to prove themselves more oriental at the court of the local elites so that they could get more privileges and favors, also it was the climatic factor that worked. The Patna political elites did that to show their eagerness and interest in the western world but more importantly to enhance their life style.

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account of...*, 228.

¹⁶⁰ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. I 64.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPANY AND COMMERCE: THE ROLE OF MERCHANTS NETWORK

Patna's mercantile community had a large network of operations functioning within the overall structure of trade in the region. All the three sectors of trade viz. finance, procurement and distribution was marked by their presence. Though each group worked as a separate entity viz., - as a banker, broker, transporters etc., they often integrated their activities, which was required for a satisfactory and profitable programme. Hence, it was not rare to find a *shroff* (banker) indulging in procurement and / or trade, either by himself or through his trading houses, in addition to his principal function of financing trade. Robert Hughes at Patna in a letter to the factors at Agra, dated 3rd September 1620, noted that, "Champa Shah is the chief banker at patna... next year he will provide brown *Amberteas* as desired."¹ This indicates that the lure of profit transcended all traditional boundaries of occupational set-up i.e., it was not that a *dalal* son was bound to be a *dalal*. This feature became more prominent in our period and was intensified with the coming of the Europeans in the region.

The English Company was provided with several privileges. A wide-ranging freedom of trade and access to various sectors of trade was given. But when it came to the dealings with the merchants of the region, it was just another trading group operating there. This was principally due to the pre-dominantly economic character of the region. The local merchants were indispensable to regional trade owing to their superior knowledge of local conditions. The merchants too, in their turn, were keener on profits rather than the colour of the skins of their interlocutors. In fact, it is argued that the completely market- determined relationship between the European and the

¹ *E. F. I.*, 1618-21, 198.

Indian artisan and intermediary merchant groups, is one of the principal distinguishing characteristics of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century.²

Though there was a sense of superiority among the English over the indigenous merchant groups, as can be seen from the reference to the local *Gomastahs* of the Company as 'black servants'. In many cases the merchants of Patna had an upper hand and even the English Company could not deny as much. The Company records, noted many a times, about the enormous wealth and power that the Patna merchants wielded and the English were well aware of the fact that if they desire a profitable business to continue, they had to come in contact with these merchants. For such merchants, their dealings of the European Companies was only a small fraction of their overall operations, hence they could well resist the domination of the European Companies, leave alone individual European.³ The English had neither the resources nor the infrastructure to be in direct contact with the primary producers or even the lower rungs of the native mercantile community. Neither did the commercial elites of Patna encourage such contacts. Therefore, the English were forced to depend on these very elites to maintain their trade.

As noted earlier, in the first chapter, among the Patna merchants, it were *Hindu* commercial groups that had a commanding position in case of finance and procurement of the exportable commodities. Hence, the company dealt mainly with the *Hindu* merchants. However, among them, the employees of the company or the contractors for the company were not from the *Brahmins* and higher castes, but mostly from the *seths* and *baniyas*, who then, as now, formed the most important mercantile class.⁴ Following list of brokers appointed by the English Company at

² Om Prakash, *European Commercial...*, 343

³ P.J., Marshal, *East India Fortune, the British in Bengal in eighteenth century*, Oxford, 1976, 44.

⁴ Sukumar Bhattacharjee, *E. I. C. and the Economy...*, 179, 202.

Calcutta supports the contention that all the indigenous merchants contracted were *Hindus*.⁵

<i>Dip chand Bella</i>	1704-1706
<i>Janardan Seth</i>	1706-1712
<i>Banarsi Seth</i>	1712-1715
	And again From 1719-1724
<i>Ram Krishna</i>	1715-1716
<i>Harinath</i>	1716-1719
<i>Baishnav Das Seth</i>	1724-1732

The merchants who were contracted by the English Company had different designations viz., bankers (*saraff*), brokers (*dalal*), agents (*Vakil*) etc., though, even in the Company's service sometimes, these indigenous employees of the Company combined the functions of all the elements. The Patna merchants had their own trading profile and so, when hired or contracted by the English, it was an additional source of income for them. Thence, in case the company dismissed them, or if they left their jobs, they did not meet with any substantial profitable loss. In fact, it has been argued that the Patna merchants served the English Company financially, and in the procurement of goods in lieu of a mere marginal profit.⁶

The English Company was not very generous in paying its indigenous employees, the *Vakil* or the broker. In 1713, the annual income of Pran (the broker) was rupees fifteen while that of the *Vakil*, Roopchand was fifty rupees per annum at

⁵ Consultations of the Year 1704, 1706, 1712, 1715, 1716 & 1719, Cited in Karim, Murshid Quli Khan... 235.

⁶ B. K. Mishra, *Trade and Commerce in Patna in Seventeenth Century*, Un-Published M. Phil. Disst., C. H. S., J. N. U., New Delhi, 1983, 75.

Patna.⁷ In the regulation for the Bay of Bengal at a Consultation held at Kasimbazaar, dated 2nd December 1679, regarding the payment of the indigenous agents, it was noted that,

“It is ordered that the *Vakils*, the *mustaddys* or writers, and the *tagadgeers*, *dunneers* or oversears of the weavers and picares (*Pykars*) and *podars* (Bankers) shall from this day forward have no monthly wages paid to them upon the honourable Company’s account but they shall be contend with the *dustoore* (Commission) money of a quarter of an Anna upon a rupee which the merchants and weavers are to allow them, and they shall not allow any thing more upon any pretence whatsoever, and the said *dustoore* money shall be divided every year twice or oftener by the chief and the council of the factory amongst the said writers, *tagadeers*, *podars* and *Vakils*.”⁸

This shows that except the Company’s *Gomastah* (permanent employee of the Company), the indigenous servants were to be paid in this above fashion. We have references in various accounts of the Company about the annual payment to the indigenous agents commissioned by the Company. Though references to monthly payments are conspicuous by their absence.

The Company’s broker or the *dalal* occupied the foremost places among the merchants with whom the Company had dealings. It has been argued, particularly in case of western India, that the growth of the piracy by the English led to the stoppage of the trade of the Indian merchants who therefore sought other source of income. Both the English and the Mughals authorities began engaging them in different types of commercial activities. The English company appointed them as their brokers,

⁷ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, Part I, 152.

financiers, middlemen, and collector of merchandise from the remote places of production.⁹ But Ashin Das Gupta opines that the European companies did not invent the institution of 'broker'. It was a traditional institution in Indian trade.¹⁰ In fact, practically every one who was interested in trade- merchants, companies, the Mughal rulers, princes, *Nawabs* and even the weavers had their own brokers to look after his interest.¹¹ The broker was distinct from a *Gomastah*. *Gomastah* was a part of the factory administration and a regular employee of the Company while the *dalal* was a contact man receiving a commission if his transaction was successful.¹²

The English chaplain Ovington commented that, for the buying and more advantageous disposing the Company's goods these brokers were appointed who were skilled in the rates and values of all the commodities in India.¹³ Though he made this observation in case of western India, it was true for other regions of India as well. In fact, the usual intermediary between the Company and the local producers and consumers was the broker, who was sent out into the districts around the factory to buy on the Company's behalf in the cheapest market and was rewarded by a brokerage of three percent on all transactions.¹⁴ However, as Fryer noted, "beside their usual commission, they secretly squished out the price of the thing bought; which cannot be well understood for want of knowledge of their language."¹⁵ And so the Company encouraged its factors by monetary rewards to learn the language in order to avoid leaning too heavily on the broker. In 1713, the Calcutta Council hired a Persian teacher at rupees five a month and those who could learn to speak and write

⁸ Ibid, Vol. I, 396.

⁹ Om Prakash, ed., *The Emergence of East India Companies*, New Delhi, 2002, 34.

¹⁰ Ashin Das Gupta, 'Indian Merchants in the Age of Partnership, 1500-1800', in D. Tripathi, ed., *Business Communities in India*, Manohar, 1984, 30.

¹¹ *E. F. I.*, 1622-23, 148-53 & 1633-34, 184.

¹² Gautam Bhadra, 'Role of Pykars in Silk Industry of Bengal, (1765-1830)', *Studies in History*, 3, 2 (ns) 1987, 85-86.

¹³ Rawlinson, ed., J. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat*, 233.

¹⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals of...* Vol. I, 63.

that language were offered a gratuity of two hundred rupees with the promise of promotion.¹⁶ Earlier, in 1711, two English factors, Mr. Crisp, and Mr. Pratt were ordered to go up to Patna and also to learn the country language and to qualify for the Company's service.¹⁷ However, the Company never succeeded in averting the use of the local brokers or agents.¹⁸

The indigenous brokers were employed in the Company's service in a traditional way. On appointment to his office, the chief to all merchants who were summoned together in a formal meeting publicly introduced the broker. The chief confirmed the appointment by putting a *seerpaw* (head-dress) on the new broker's head and presenting him with rose water and betels, and other merchants would do the same.¹⁹ In 1622, rupees twenty-three were given to Jadu broker for a *shash* (turban cloth).²⁰ For better regulating the affairs of the Company in Bengal, it was observed by the Company authorities that,

“No native merchant employed by the company was to be suspended without due inquiry in ‘Consultation.’ This rule was extended to the native writers, *baniyas* etc., none of whom were to be dismissed, without due order of the Council, since it was of bad consequence to turn off old servants.”²¹

However, the Company did occasionally dismiss their indigenous servants from the service because they did not need them at large or the situation did not permit to continue them in the service. The Consultation dated 22nd February 1704, noted an order that,

¹⁵ J. Fryer, Vol. I, 211-12.

¹⁶ Wilson, *Early Annals...* Vol. I, Part, I, LXVI.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸ J. Fryer, Vol. I, 217-18.

¹⁹ Sukumar Bhattacharjee, *E. I. C. And The Economy...*, 180-81.

²⁰ *E. F. I.*, 1622-23, 75.

²¹ *Master's Diary*. Vol. I, 117-118.

“All the Blake servants that look after the Company’s factories and dead stock in the country be dismissed and paid off till the first February, and the house etc., be delivered to the Council for the management of the united trade.”²²

This was done when the two English Companies were merged into one and the old indigenous Company servants were dismissed to give way to a new restructuring of Company administration. In 1716, when the Company’s affairs at Patna were not in a good position it was noted that, “we now having no occasion for a *Vakil* at Patna, ordered that Roopchand be discharged from the Company’s service.”²³ This shows that the Company had its own say in dismissing the indigenous employees even if they were working well.

These brokers were instrumental in both procuring the exportable commodities for the Company as well as marketing the Company’s goods in the region. Sometimes some of these brokers became so influential that they even meddled in the administration of the Company factory. In one such incident one of the brokers, Janardan Seth, whom Governor Russell had left in charge of every thing, had manipulated all the trade. He took commission on all that was brought by the city merchants by threat and violence. He prevented any merchant from offering their wares at rates lower than what he had fixed.²⁴ The monopolising tendency of the indigenous merchants was troublesome for the company especially in case of salt Peter and opium. This was acute in the early decades of 18th century, as in the seventeenth century these commodities were monopolised by the state itself. These

²² Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. I, 228.

²³ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, Part I, Consultation Dated 16th April 1716, 242.

²⁴ *Ibid.* LXI.

merchants after monopolising used to dictate price according to them and often the quality provided were poorer than demand by the Company.

Although the Company itself approached the ruling groups directly for trading concessions etc, yet, they appointed *Vakils* too for these purposes. The *vakil* was usually appointed from amongst the socially well-placed people of the region. This *Vakil* was also merely one type of a broker, responsible to the local Mughal authorities for the good behaviour of the Company's factors. He was in fact the link between the Patna *darbar* and the English at Patna. It was noted by the factors that, "Patna being the residence of the Nawab... the chief most sometimes repair thither, had always keep a *Vakil* to solicit the Company's business."²⁵ The role of indigenous merchant as intermediaries between the ruling groups and Europeans began in the time of Akbar when the indigenous merchants helped in sorting out the difference between the Portuguese and the Mughals.²⁶

There are several instances when the Company sought the use of *Vakil*. In 1672, the Nawab of Patna forced the English factors to purchase saffron from him if they wanted to buy Saltpeter. This resulted in a great tension on the English side, then, Job charnock, the English chief, at Patna wrote to the authorities for an able *Vakil* to be send to the Mughal court to represent the case of the English. But at the end of the year Clavell wrote to the Company's factors at Patna that, he had received no advice that whether one had been despatched or not.²⁷ However, in 1673, the increasing difficulties at Patna forced Clavell (chief of the Bengal Agency) and his Council to propose to send a *Vakil* from Patna to the Emperor's court to complain of the

²⁵ *E. F. I.*, 1668-69, 312.

²⁶ P.N. Chakrabarti, *Some Aspects of political participation of Indian merchants in Mughal India*, P.I.H.C, 1982, 297.

²⁷ *E. F. I.*, *New Series*, 1670-77, 354.

misdeeds of his officials there, but they were unable to get any orders from the fort on the proposal.²⁸

Job Charnock, in February 1679, opened negotiation with the court at Patna, through the Company's *Vakil*, to endeavour to procure a *Farman* confirming ancient privileges and securing freedom of trade for the English.²⁹ In 1704, the Company's *Vakil* Rajaram was sent to the *Diwan* at Patna to negotiate for a *sanad*, which was to be in full term as possible and also to clear their business at Patna.³⁰ At the end of April 1708, the English sent an agent to RajMahal (at that time the Mughal prince Azimushan was there) to renew the negotiation for securing free trade to the English in Bengal.³¹ On 6th September 1708, the *Vakil* at RajMahal, Shivcharan, paid the *Diwan* and his official the price 36000 rupees for the *sanad*.³² When Farukhsiyar was crowned at Patna, he demanded a large sum of money from all the merchants operating in the region, whether Indian or foreign. This news was provided to the Company by Raykirpanath (Rai kripanath) who 'sent them word that the king had laid a design of extorting large sum of money from all richness in the city.' This forced the Company to send their *Vakil* on the 20th March to the king Farukhsiyar with an *Eltamous* (*Iltamas*, i.e., request) to the *Nawab* to notify their grievances to him.³³ In September 1712, the Calcutta Council received a letter from their Patna *Vakil* with a copy of a *hasbul-i-hukum* to Shukrulla khan, *Amil* of Hajipur, Saraisa, Bisara etc. *Parganas*. Further, it was also revealed from it, that the *Nawab* assured the Company of its security.³⁴ In spite of all this, the Company yet employed spies to keep itself abreast of the possible reverses. In June 1713, one Dwarka Das in his letter to the

²⁸ Ibid, 363.

²⁹ *Master's Diary*, Vol. II, 243, Note 2.

³⁰ N. N. Raye, *Annals of the Early...*, 117.

³¹ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. I, 180.

³² Ibid, 299.

³³ Ibid, Vol. II, Part I, 52.

Calcutta Council offered his services to assist the Company in procuring a *Farman*. The Council on its part thanking him desired that, 'he will write us the court news and every conveyance during his stay there.'³⁵

When the English embassy (John Surman) was proceeding to the Mughal court, Khwaja Sarhad was hired by the Company to represent its case and assist Mr. John Surman. It was he, who was earlier approached by the Company to visit the camp of the Mughal prince Azimushan, the grandson of Aurangzeb. The Consultation dated 27th January 1714, noted that "Khwaja Sarhad been thus elected second in the negotiation in Surman embassy, it is agreed that if he procures the privileges for our nation to trade custom free which he will attempt, he is to have 50,000 rupees more for that service but if he fails in that he is not to have the reward, he is nevertheless to endeavour to get the costume we pay at that part reduced to 2 ½ %."³⁶

When the Surman embassy was at Patna, one Anoopchund (Anupchand), a merchant of Patna presented himself to serve as *Vakil* and assistant to Khwaja Sarhad Israil in the Surman embassy's negotiation. The Company finding his credentials and "finding him to be a person of some substance, and clear reputation; being particularly commended for his eloquences and leaving sufficient for this undertaking", the Company thought him a proper person.³⁷ However later the Consultation dated, 1st January 1715, noted that,

"The person Anoopchund, continuing still so infirm that an entire reliance cannot be put in him. With this consideration we have looked for another. His name is Mollookchund (Malikchand) by caste a surrock (sic) (Mahajan), by religion a Jain; he has been brought up to

³⁴ Ibid, 80.

³⁵ Ibid, *Consultation Dated 6th June 1713*, 109.

³⁶ Ibid, 158.

³⁷ Ibid, Vol. II, Part II, *Consultation Dated 15th Sep. 1714*, 3.

this business all his life. He was also assisted by another Ram Chandra Pundit, by caste a Brahmin.”³⁸

This shows the Company’s process of selecting indigenous agents for its Services. The Company at one time employed a person not known widely, but having the ability to provide his service to the Company. This was done to reduce the impact and the pressure of the already employed; or the influential indigenous merchants who tried to push forward their own candidates in the Company’s services. However, on the other hand the Company also preferred to appoint those agents who were known to them through the other Company officials or backed by them or the well-known and influential merchants of the city. The above statement also reveals that the indigenous merchants tried to relate themselves to the Company and offered themselves for the Company’s service. This was primarily for two reasons, first, for the prestige attached to the Company’s employees as well as for the obvious lure of profit. For indigenous merchants there was also real advantage in becoming a *baniya*. In so doing, merchants did not necessarily compromise their independence to any significant extent. They might appear to have their master’s servants, merely managing their trade for them; but the reality was often less than of masters and servants than of trading partners.³⁹

In 1714, the Company appointed Roopchand *Vakil* at Patna to go and meet Mir Jumla who was on his way to Bengal and had ordered to ‘play a compliment to him in our names and to be our *Vakil* at his court.’ He was also given a bill of exchange of 800 *sicca* for expenses.⁴⁰ In April 1718, in reply to a letter from the Calcutta Council, Roopchand, *Vakil* of the English at Patna, mentioned that he had written to Zaman Bahadur, and the *Diwan* Abdul Qadir Khan. He had also tried to

³⁸ Ibid, 17.

³⁹ P.J. Marshall, 45.

meet him with 500 rupees as *Durbar* expenses.⁴¹ In their letter (in their reply to the letter sent by the Council at Patna, dated 12th October, 1719), Messer's Stephenson and Falconer, wrote that,

“They have enquired of our *Vakil* (Roopchand) who was employed to adjust the business with the nabob about resettling this factory (the factory at Patna was closed in 1715 due to problems with the local officials, as noted in the second chapter), he says he transcend all that affair by means of one Dil Narayan Shah an eminent *Sarraff* and a great favourite of the *Nawab* who undertook the *Nawab* should comply with his promise....”⁴²

Roopchand was relieved of the Company's service later, as he 'himself requested the Company to entertain Mulickchand, who was one of the *Vakils* at the court with Mr. John Surman', since he was very old.⁴³

Though these *Vakils* were regular employees of the Company, yet sometimes, they were ill- treated by the local officials and some of them even restrained from visiting them. Therefore the English Company had to take the help of other merchants, who were influential but not employed in the Company service. The Consultation dated, 18th July 1706, noted,

“We have received advice from Manickchand that the king's *diwan* has ordered his *naib* at Patna to permit our business to pass as formerly also that he will give his *sanad* for our free trade in Bengal upon paying him a *peshkash* of 3,000 rupees.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, Part I, 214.

⁴¹ Ibid, Vol. III, 26.

⁴² Ibid, Letter Dated 9th Nov. 1719, 177.

⁴³ Ibid, 180.

⁴⁴ Ibid, Vol. I, 274.

Here, it may be noted that Manikchand, though a high profile merchant in Bengal with business interest in Bihar and other parts of India, yet he was not the Company's *Vakil* or agent. In 1732, when the Patna *Nawab* complained that, the English were including in their private trade in the name of the Company and threatened to stop their business unless they secured a *Farman* of the then Emperor, the Patna factory chief Hugh Barker instructed the *vakil* of the English to represent that it was not a private trade.⁴⁵

On the commercial front, the indigenous employees of the English Company made the Company knew the existing networks of trade and helped in the procurement and disposal of goods. As early as 1632, Peter Mundy took the help of Sunder Das for accompanying him to Patna,⁴⁶ and in Patna he "made choice of one *Chaudhri Fakira* (headman of traders) to act as a middleman between him and the traders of Patna."⁴⁷ He also noted that, Ganga Ram was the chief broker in those parts for coarse linen, whom his broker had brought up to him for contract at Patna.⁴⁸

After officially settling their factory at Patna in 1658, the Company started appointing regular agents and commissioning indigenous brokers who contracted the exportable commodities on behalf of the Company. This was due to the growing interest of the Company in Patna's commodities. Money and merchandise were delivered to these middlemen or *dalals* in advance from four or six months before the time when the commodities were to be delivered. These brokers in turn gave advances to the weavers, artisans or the Peter men. Thus a substantial part of the Company's investment was procured through an advanced form of *dadni* system. The practice enabled the English to get the goods cheaper and also in time. Master noted that the

⁴⁵ J.N. Sarkar, *Glimpses...*, 54.

⁴⁶ Peter Mundy, *Travels*, Vol. II, LIV.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

goods become 8-10% cheaper by *dadni* system of procurement.⁴⁹ It also enabled the Company to recover the interest charges they themselves paid on the money borrowed by them.⁵⁰

Another way, to make the procurements, was to invite the merchants living in the town, by the English factory, to send samples and buy through them. But in whatever way the purchases were made, passes were given to the merchants in English Company's name, so that the goods might be freely conveyed to their destination.⁵¹

The most important export commodity of Patna desired by the Company was Saltpeter. It was noted in the factory records that, 'apart from Saltpetre the English trade was small; yet they were maintaining large factories at Patna, Kasimbazaar and Hoogli.⁵² The importance of Saltpetre can be seen from the commodity list of the ship Scipio as follows,⁵³ which was to proceed to Europe in 1704.

COMMODITY	TONS	COMMODITY	TONS
<i>Saltpeter</i>	200	<i>Dimity</i>	1
<i>Baftas</i>	6	<i>Taffetas</i>	2 ½
<i>Lac cowries</i>	10	<i>Alwanis</i>	2
<i>Khasas</i>	5 ½	<i>Patkas</i>	3
<i>Tanjibs</i>	5	<i>Tanjib (flowered)</i>	2
<i>Malmals</i>	6	<i>Raw silk &</i>	
<i>Dariyas</i>	5	<i>Mogta</i>	37 (both)
<i>Susis</i>	2 ½	<i>Ginger</i>	491/2
<i>Neck cloth</i>	3	<i>Cottonyarn</i>	10

⁴⁹ *Master Diary*, Vol. I, 26.

⁵⁰ S. Najaf Hyder, *English Merchants and Credit Market of India in 17th Century*, PIHC, 1987, 295.

⁵¹ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. I, 63.

⁵² *E. F. I.*, 1661-64, 71.

⁵³ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. I, 255.

Up to the fifth decade of the seventeenth century almost half of the trade from Bihar was related to the export of Saltpeter. The English factors in Bengal were that, "all goods must be brought at the cheapest season of the year and for this purpose 4,000 rupees should be sent annually to Patna to purchase peter."⁵⁴ This shows that the Company needed adequate liquid investment amount at the time of the procurement season of a particular commodity. And the absence of adequate money forced the Company factors to look towards the indigenous bankers and brokers. For, the bankers would provide them money on loan and the broker would strike a deal between the Company and the supplier on credit.

Saltpeter was usually procured through 'Assamies' or the Peter men to whom money was advanced in the right season. The *dalals* used by the company to contract the 'Assamies' for crude Peter were called as *Moostajeers*.⁵⁵ But as there was a state monopoly on saltpeter, the indigenous brokers of the Company had to reach the person monopolising the sale of peter. About the middle of 18th century, Khwaja Wajid, the Armenian, held the monopoly of peter in Bihar till 1758. The Khwaja paid annually to the *Navab* 15,000 rupees and supplied him for his own use 20,000 mounds of peter at cost price and to Raja Ramnarayan Rs. 10,000. The English Company used to procure peter with certain rich *Dadni* merchants like Omichand, Ramkishan Seth and Binodram Basu of Hoogli.⁵⁶

Though the purchase of Peter by the Company started after its establishment of the factory at Patna in 1652 but it was Job Charnock who built the first of the Company's Peter warehouses at Patna in 1665 and organised a system of supervising

⁵⁴ *E. F. I.*, 1661-64, 165.

⁵⁵ Shyam Bihari Singh, *Saltpeter Industry of Zillah Tirhut During First Quarter of 19th Century*, J. B. R. S., Sep-Dec 1951, 50.

⁵⁶ J.N. Sarkar, *Glimpses*..., 88.

'Assamies' with the Company's peon.⁵⁷ In a letter from Madras to the Company at Bay, dated 29th January 1662, concerning the affairs of Bengal it was noted that, "the merchants at patna owes for 6,000 maunds which will make 30,000 bags; but how the debts of Peter will be now got in, we cannot at present give you an accompt."⁵⁸

The above statement shows that the Company entrusted the local merchants for the procurement of peter and collected it from them. Further, those merchants who failed to deliver the adequate amount in the concerned year were had to clear their contracted amount in the coming year. In order to prevent the inadequate supply of commodities to be expected from the merchants, the Company found it advantageous to foster the formation of association of the merchants. It was especially thought of, and done in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁵⁹ However, Patna did not see such associations, as these types of joint stock associations were restricted mostly to the supply of textiles of which Patna was a low supplier.

There are fewer references about the names of the merchants with whom the Company contracted for the supply of commodities. Also, the name of the saltpeter merchants contracted by the Company is less mentioned. In May 1683, the company contracted for 4,120 maunds of peter with Bucktmall (Bhaktmal), Muluckchand and Siabray (Siab Rai), who had provided all the Company's peter in the previous year and now gave a good security against the fulfilment of the contract.⁶⁰

Owing to the importance of Salt peter as an exportable commodity from Patna and the competition provided by the Dutch Company, the English Company always tried to continue the purchase of Peter through advances despite the want of proper

⁵⁷ *E. F. I.*, 1665- 67, 134.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 1661- 64, 67.

⁵⁹ S. Arasratnam, *Indian Merchants and Their Trading Methods, circa 1700*, I. E. S. H. R., 1966, 85-86.

⁶⁰ Factory Record, Patna, Vol. I, Part IV, f. 18, Cited in Sushil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial...*, 166.

shipping. And for this, regularly a *bania* or a broker was employed in the Company's service at Patna. In the Consultation dated 23rd April 1716, it was noted that,

“There being a necessity to keep the same servants in pay at those places that the houses may not fall ruin nor our possession be lost of those places and the ground belonging to the Company adjoining them unto, Mr. Frankland having correspondent at Patna, is desirous to continue advancing the monthly.”⁶¹

Further, in 1704, the Hugli merchants refused to deliver peter at Calcutta without an advance. At last the Company agreed to the demand of the peter merchants to give them an Anna or a little more, per maund extra. This was hastily done because of the arrival in Balasore Road of seven Dutch ships and one French ship in search of salt peter.⁶² Apart from peter other Patna goods were also procured by the Company in the same way (i.e. by advancing money to the *Dadni* merchants). Towards the end of 1752, Hazarimal, brother-in-law of Omichand offered to contract Patna goods with the English Company on the basis of the samples of 1733. But the price was very high and the quality inferior, hence the matter was postponed till January 1753.⁶³

In contracting the Patna merchants, the Company faced the problem of bad debts. The *Dalals* usually supplied goods of less value than the amount of payment made in advance to them by the company and for this reason the Company had to take lots of precaution, including a denial of advance payments to the erring brokers. In a letter to Robert Hedges, President of the Bengal Agency, dated 23rd October 1717, Edward Stephenson and John Surman noted that, “It is the custom of these sort of merchants seldom to clear such debts but run on sometimes more sometimes less seeing the buyer is not able to be without them and if the business happens to be

⁶¹ Wilson, *Early Annals...* Vol. II, Part I, 243.

stooped or the factory withdrawn or the king's death, they generally all sink very little being to be recovered afterwards."⁶⁴

The Company, on its part, tried to recover its debts from these erring merchants through force. Earlier the Company charged 10% in 1707, on the merchants who were defaulters. Even a great merchant like Khwaja Serhad was obliged in 1709, to pay interest for the money advanced to him because he failed to provide goods in due time. The Consultation dated, 28th November 1714, noted that, "Edward Pattle seized several off the Company's debtors and it was also agreed that peons be employed to seize them as speedily as possible especially the two debtors, namely Dunnysaw (Dhanishah) and Acrum (Akram)."⁶⁵

There are instances when the Company allowed someone else from the family of the broker who had contracted with the Company in case he suffered from illness or had died, to continue the contract for the Company. This was done to complete the procurement because if the Company did not agree for such arrangements, it would have to face bad debts. When the Company's broker Janardan Seth died, the Calcutta Council noted that, "this year's business being very pretty near a conclusion and all the merchants accounts being in his brother Banarsi Seth hands, agreed that he act in his stead as broker for this season."⁶⁶

The indigenious merchants sometimes sought the help of the local ruling groups, in case, the company threatened to use force against them for the recovery of debts. It was noted,

"Having seized Caurgee (Khanji) and Dunnysaw
(Dhanishah) the Company debtors with Sooty *dalal*

⁶² Ibid, Vol. I, 246.

⁶³ J.N. Sarkar, *Glimpses...*, 92-93.

⁶⁴ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, Part II, 244.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid, Vol. II, part I, Consultation dated 5th February 1712, 39.

(Suti *dalal*) a debtor and used them with some severity... their friends got together and raised all the salt merchants and the Cashmeerys (Kashmiris) to complain to the nabob.”⁶⁷

The indigenous brokers employed by the Company sometimes acted secretly in collaboration with the private traders and factors operating privately. When the Company implored Mathura Das not to deal with the private traders, he shrewdly replied that, ‘being a merchant in the kings country he was free to correspond and deal with anyone he liked.’⁶⁸ The brokers were in communication with the artisans and merchants and also had advance information about the departure of ships and articles of merchandise, which will be saleable in the current or the following year. In 1684, the Patna factors reported that Purusuttom Das and Jadu Das who were formerly Dutch *Gomastahs* and provided the interlopers with salt peter in various years, again procured for the interlopers with great quantity of refined peter which made the coarse variety scarce. But when the interlopers failed to buy, the two merchants, hard pressed for money tried to sell the commodity to the English and the Dutch Companies. However, the English Company, along with the Dutch tried to do away with that and it was agreed by them not to buy an ounce of peter from them so that they might be losers and be made examples to prevent other from following their steps in future.⁶⁹

Apart from the private traders the English factors sometimes did harm to the Company. In 1672 it was noted by the English factors that their Patna factors, “yearly wronged the Company at least 600 maunds of Salt peter which they sold underhand to the Dutch.”⁷⁰ Sometimes the Company, in order to evade such linkages between the

⁶⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁶⁸ Sushil Chaudhuri, *Trade and Commercial...*, 78.

⁶⁹ Sushil Chaudhuri, *Salt Peter Trade and Industry in Bengal Subah, 1650-1720* in Satish chandra ed., *Essays in Medeival Indian Economic History*, 232.

⁷⁰ *E. F. I.*, New Series, 1670-77, 341.

Company brokers and the free traders, dismisses the brokers apart from the ever-going process of curtailing the activities of private traders. But such move by the Company was always not successful.

Whenever the indigenous merchants anticipated that they would lose their money, they tried to recover their debt from the Company by using political links. In 1659, Mr. Black (Robert Black, private trader) had in his hand, bills of debt owing to Shah Suja, amounting to 6,000 rupees, which he sold at his departure to some indigenous merchants. But the merchants did not recover their amount and went to the Prince at Raj Mahal. At Patna (their abode), also, they demanded money of Mr. Chamberline (Chief of the Patna factory at that time) presenting their bills to him. Initially, Chamberline refused to pay the amount alleging Mr. Black as a private man. The merchants complained against him before the nabob of Patna (Daud Khan) after which he (Chamberline) was forced to pay the money to those merchants.⁷¹

The English Company financed its investment at Patna, as in rest part of India, in three distinct ways i.e., by importing European goods, by drawing bills of exchange from London against funds to be delivered in India, and by shipping gold and silver from Europe.⁷² Thomas Bowrey noted that, the capital required for investing in this trade was partly provided by the Europeans from the proceeds of imported foreign goods at Patna, such as broad cloth, vermilion, quicksilver, copper, lead etc. and bullion.⁷³ The Company continued to export a certain amount of its capital in goods, partly for fear of popular criticism and partly because when funds were short in the city, goods could always be bought on credit. In fact, earlier, every opportunity was taken to protect and stimulate the woollen industries and anything, which threatened

⁷¹ *E. F. I.*, 1668-69, 177.

⁷² K. N. Chaudhuri, *Treasure and Trade Balance*, E. H. R., Vol. XXI, 1968, 491.

⁷³ Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account...*, 232.

its prosperity, was treated as a national danger.⁷⁴ But there is little doubt that the high price of European commodities in relation to prices in India remained an efficient discouragement for developing such an export beyond a certain limit in India. Also, the fact is that the people of India in the first half of the seventeenth century at least, obtained a little by international exchanges except precious metals to serve as money, or for use in the arts, together with a few articles of luxury enjoyed by the elites.⁷⁵ In fact, the Company was quite ignorant of the commercial needs of the peoples of Bihar.

The imported cargo of the Company was not much in demand in the region and so the indigenous merchants were much sought after by the Company for their sell. Selling goods in Bihar was a complex process with a high degree of risk. Outside the towns, the goods had to be entrusted to the gomastas who disposed them of slowly in small lots. Returns might not be realised for several months. It seems to have been customary to allow long periods of settlements on large scale of goods.⁷⁶ The Company found difficulty in disposing their woollen goods in 1714. This was mainly due to the fact that the English wanted to sell all their wares to one merchant, so that they could maintain a high rate of profit. Vanarsi Seth, the Company's broker, who had bought the goods last year refused to buy from them, since he claimed that he had been unable to dispose last year's stock. The Company ordered Mr. James Williamson to find a Chapman and to endeavour to sell all, or most of the woollen goods in the warehouse.⁷⁷ The Consultation dated, 23rd October 1721, reported that Bakshichand offered to take of all the lead received by the ship 'Stretham' at the extraordinary rate

⁷⁴ C. J. Hamilton, *The Trade relation between England and India, (1680-1896), Delhi reprint, 1975*, 88.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

⁷⁶ P. J., *Marshal*, 39.

⁷⁷ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, part I, 211.

of rupees seven per mounds.⁷⁸ Once again the Consultation of 1719, noted that, “our broker Vanarsi Seth acquainting us with the fact that, he has an opportunity of disposing off all our ordinary perpetuators in barter for goods.”⁷⁹ In 1679, it was noted that, ‘come at last to the agreement for the remains of the gold with Chitramal Shah at rupees 15 the tola of 12 masha fine to pay ½ money rest at a month.’⁸⁰ Sometimes the Company had to sell their goods at price lower than the market rate. In 1704, January, the Council at Calcutta noted that, ‘being in great need of money they agree to dispose of the company’s copper at the present low rate, namely 100 mounds at 24 rupees per mound.’⁸¹

A greater proportion of the Company’s imports, for investments, comprised largely of bullion. The ratio of species to goods in the year 1664-68 in Coast and Bay was 89:11.⁸² Following table shows the distribution of English exports (merchandise and bullion) in Bengal from 1708-1737.⁸³

YEAR	BULLION IN £	MERCHANDISE IN £	TOTAL IN £
1708-17	772,520	159,619	932,139
1718-27	1331,529	227,163	1,558,692
1728-37	1,063,447	511,347	1,574,794

In Bengal, the merchants were especially induced to accept the European goods. However, in 1680, it was noted by the Directors that, “we have sent you little

⁷⁸ Ibid. Vol. III, 374.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 124.

⁸⁰ *Master Diary*, Vol. II, 305-307.

⁸¹ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. I, 219.

⁸² Balkrishna, *Commercial Relation Between England and India*, 128.

⁸³ Ibid, 317.

stock in goods, but mostly in bullion as you desired ...such goods as we have now sent will no ways clogg your market.”⁸⁴

Patna was a poor market for the European goods as the whole of Bengal and hence the Company was forced to have precious metals and ready money for its investments. The bullion imported by the Company in Bengal comprised principally of gold and silver specie. This silver specie was in the form of the Spanish coins known as ‘rials of eight.’ This Spanish *Piastra fuerte* (i.e, rials of eight) was already familiar with the indigenous merchants due to their interaction with the Portuguese Company in the previous century. The English Company purchased these ‘rials’ from Middleburg and Amsterdam though its ultimate origin was the royal mint at Seville.⁸⁵

However, the bullion shipped by the Company in the region for financing its trade was also not free from problems. The Calcutta Council noted in February 1713 that,

“A chest of silver remaining which we cant sell for more than siccas 193 for 240 sic weight, which we suppose to be much less than the value ordered that it be delivered to Mr. Hedges, that he may send that and the 41 lumps of silver which was plate melted down in the year 1710, as for himself to be coined at Maqsudabad mint for the Company’s account under the colour of a merchants treasure.”⁸⁶

Further, for selling bullion, the permission of the mint superintendent of Patna was necessary. But in 1678, it was noted that, he was ‘so abusive and cross grained that a little will not content him.’ It was at last obtained by the end of January 1678,

⁸⁴ K. N. Chaudhuri, *Treasure and Trade Balance...*, 485-86.

⁸⁵ K. N. Chaudhuri, *The E. I. C. and the Export of Treasure in Early 17th Century*, E. H. R., 1963-64, 30-32.

⁸⁶ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, Part I, 106.

evidently after he had been satisfied.⁸⁷ The coins mostly used for big transaction were the silver ones called *sicca* rupees, but the *sicca* rupees were not the standard or ideal coin of the region. The ideal coin was not a real one, but merely an imaginary one. The current rupee was a mere abstract value, physically manifested in the form of contemporary coins, and operated after adjusting its value for inflation. These coins were adjusted to the current rupee according to a rate of *batta* or discount and thus the real value of the coins was maintained.⁸⁸ In fact the currency system was extremely vexatious. This gave rise to a class of people called *sarrafs*, moneychangers or bankers.⁸⁹

Thus the Company was forced to raise investment loans locally from the bankers of the region. The Company knew the importance of holding ready money while operating in India. It was necessary to supply the factories with adequate funds to make their purchase in the right season and despatch the goods to the port of embarkation on time, before the arrival of the Europe bound shipping. The Company faced the problem of not having ready money with it. The Consultation dated, 18th April 1716, noted.

“The merchants of most note among those we design to contract with for the ensuing investments being arrived and appearing before us objected against contracting with us because we have not money to advance as usual which advances used to be from 70-75 % on the contracts....”⁹⁰

Patna with its creditable money market provided some relief to the Company in financing its trade there. In the Consultation of Fort St. George it was noted in

⁸⁷ *E. F. I, New Series, 1670-77, 436-37.*

⁸⁸ Karim, *Murshid Quli...*, 94.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 96.

⁹⁰ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. II, Part I, 265.

1674-75, that, "...we do allow the chief and factors in the bay to take up money at interest for the carrying of the constant yearly peter business at Patna, necessary occasions in want of bills of exchanges from the Dutch or other supplies."⁹¹ Though the company took bills of exchanges and loans from the Patna bankers but the large amount of investment fund for Patna was send by the company from Hugli, Kasimbazaar or Calcutta, the company it selves taking loan there. It was noted that, "to pay money at kasimbazaar and receive it at puttana (sic), upon bills of exchange a month after date, always yields profits, known to be from 1-6 %."⁹² Balasore was the important centre for the distribution of bullion and merchandise. In 1682, a total stock of £134,050 of which £120,840 was in treasure and £13,210 in European ware was distributed among various factories as follows.⁹³

Factories	Amount in treasures (£)	Amount in goods (£)
Kasimbazaar	73,395	7,964
Patna	7,601	824
Malda	7,863	953
Balasore	16,776	1,820
Dacca	8,652	938
Hugli	6,553	711
Total	120,840	13,210

As early as 1620, the English factor, Robert Hughes at Patna had drawn a bill of exchange upon Agra for 2,000 rupees having received at Patna, of Man Makhan, an

⁹¹ *Records of Fort St. George, Diary and Consultation Book, 1672-78, dated 18th Feb. 1674 -75, 41.*

⁹² Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol., I, 376.

eminent *sarraf*⁹⁴. In a letter to Agra factory, Robert Hughes at Patna noted that, “in your occasion to remitt moneys by exchange, you maye(sic) bee (sic) bould (sic) to deale (sic) with Chamseyes (chanda sahai shaha) sonne(sic), whose father is the currant dealler (sic) (generally accepted agent) of Puttana(sic).”⁹⁵ Hughes was also indebted to one of the bankers at Patna named Guru, to about 300 rupees.⁹⁶ Churmull (Churamal), a *shroff* at Patna was the creditor of Gabriel Boughton to the extent of between 5-6,000 rupees with interest in 1653.⁹⁷ In March 1679, the English factors borrowed 30,000 rupees from Chaturmal Shah for sending to Patna. Earlier in 1704, Mr. Cawthorp at RajMahal had drawn a bill on the Company for 14,000 *sicca* from the indigenous bankers in order to clear the Saltpeter boats.⁹⁸ The Consultation provides the least of banking firms, which loaned the Company trade in Patna in 1705 as shown in the table.⁹⁹

Banking Firms	Agency at patna	Amount (in Rupees)
Futtachund (Fatehchand) and Annuchund (Anandchand)	Mannickchund Ramchund (Manikchand Ramchand)	20,000
Lolgee (Lalajee) and Burgeeboocun (Brijmohan)	Sueernand (Sadanand) and Luljee	20,000
Sewdut (Shivdutt) and Mittersein (Mitsrasen)	Sucdusaw (Sukhdev Saha) and Sewdut	10,000
Himutsing (Himmatsingh) and Lumersing (Laxman singh ?)	Kissoraw (Kisori?) and Munsawnant (Maneshwarnath?)	10,000

⁹³ Factory records, Hugli, vol. III, pt. II, f.87., cited in Sushil Choudhuri, *Trade and Commercial Origination...*, 213.

⁹⁴ *E. F. I.*, 1618-21, 236-37.

⁹⁵ Temple, 'Documents Relating...', 75.

⁹⁶ *E. F. I.*, 1622-23, 75.

⁹⁷ *E. F. I.*, 1651-54, 193.

⁹⁸ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, Vol. I, 307.

⁹⁹ Karim, *Murshid Kuli...*, 234.

In 1712, when there was a great scarcity of money at Patna owing to the forceful ejection of Farukhshiyar and his officials from the local merchants, the Calcutta Council sent Bills of Exchange for large sum to Patna and a letter of credit for Rs. 1,50,000 was obtained on Fatehchand's factory at Patna in order to exempt the English from payment of exchange charges.¹⁰⁰ In 1719, for advancing money to the *Assamies* the Company remitted 60,000 *siccas* rupees which the Company thought, 'sufficient sum to intrust with the *sarraf*s till we hear these bill are complied with ordered that the brokers do immediately sent to Hugli to procure bills of exchanges for the sum ordered for Patna.' However the Company again emphasised that, 'he (broker) be careful that *saraff* are substantial and men of credit.'¹⁰¹ This was done in order to avoid the risk of bad debts. It was noted by the Company in 1721, that due to the increase in the exchange rate at Agra (6 ½ %) the Patna bankers had diverted their money that way and hence there was a shortage of adequate money to be loaned for the Company's investment. However, the Company succeeded in having money at 4% exchange rate itself at Patna from Kurruckseen (Kharag Sen) and Kishnchund (Krishna Chandra).¹⁰²

The local merchants also financed various embassies of the Company to the court of the Mughals. On 23rd September 1713, in order to provide adequate amount of money to the Surman embassy, it was agreed by the Calcutta Council to get bills of exchanges for 100, 00 rupees to be remitted to Patna.¹⁰³ This amount was also to be used for clearing off the Company's debt at Patna. In a letter to Robert Hedges, Governor of Fort William, John Surman at Patna, dated 7th October 1717, noted that,

¹⁰⁰ J.N. Sarkar, *Glimpses...*, 105.

¹⁰¹ Wilson, *Early Annals...* Vol. III, Consultation dated 15th Feb 1719, 98.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Letter from Stephenson from Patna to Calcutta Council, Oct., 1721, 376.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, Part I, 193.

“I draw bills of 5,000 rupees payable to Saw Biparry (Sahu Beopari) on order received from Bal chand and one bill of 5,000 rupees payable to Kissoray Golalchand (Kishori Gulal chand) received from Gowaldass Gossaulry (Gokal Das kushal Rae) to both which we hope your honour and will give due honour.”¹⁰⁴

In defining the relationship between the indigenous merchants and the Company in our period, one should also see the position and situation of both these groups operating in the region. Patna merchants were independent commercial people. The groups indulged in procurement, finance etc were mostly *Hindus* while the trading ports was dominated by the *Muslims* and *Armenian* merchants as mentioned in the first chapter. Moreover the rate of custom imposed on various groups of merchants varied to an extent. Towards the end of Aurangzeb’s reign the custom rate were as follows.¹⁰⁵

Merchant Groups	Custom Rate
Hindu	5% + Transit dues
Muslim	2.5%+ all other imposts
English	Duty from the English was commuted to Rs. 10,00 as yearly and no other imposts.
Dutch, French and Portuguese	2.5% + a Anna
Armenians	3.5% + Transit duties

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, Vol. II, Part II, 236.

¹⁰⁵ Om Prakash ed., *The Emergence of East India Companies...*, 111-112.

This shows that, the *Hindu* merchants who were the major contractors of the Company in the region were have to pay high custom duties hence they were devoid of the same amount of profit, the other groups were making. The English Company on the other hand armed with various types of concessions and privileges were a major trading group. Despite then, the need of the Company to contract with these *Hindu* merchants was a must. These merchants assisted the Company with goods, finance and also helped in obtaining privileges. In return they got firstly- the brokerage on procurement of exportable goods and commission on disposing English imported goods. Secondly, they were provided with free passes on the English Company's name for their private goods. This prevented them to pay custom dues to the local officials. Thirdly, they could use the English ships for the transportation of their own commodities. But, as the indigenous merchants contracted by the Company had less stake in shipping goods or its distribution, so the benefit as mentioned above was less. Though, the freight rates on British ships were higher than those on Asian and other European ships, yet the indigenous merchants used the ships of the English in order to the evade customs dues.¹⁰⁶ Fourthly, the additional income in helping the Company getting imperial passes and concessions for trade. And lastly, the overall prestige and power, which they felt, being attached with the company.

It has been argued that these indigenous merchants exerted their influence to secure commercial privileges not for themselves but for the foreigners, the English. It is surprising to note that all their efforts and initiatives were directed to place the English in an advantageous position perhaps knowing fully well that this would destroy their identity as sea borne traders.¹⁰⁷ However, this was not actually the case. As mentioned above, the indigenous merchants gained a lot from their assistance to

¹⁰⁶ P. J. Marshall, Op.Cit, 59.

the Company. Moreover these merchant groups were capable enough to carry on their individual commercial ventures independent of the Company. Even in the mid 18th century, the famous merchant Omichand could still undertake to procure a third of the English Company's goods costing just around rupees 1,000,000, without needing to receive any payment in advance.¹⁰⁸ In fact, as long as the Mughal custom system remained in force, the exemption under the 1717 *Farman*, which private English men enjoyed as well as the Company, was coveted by the indigenous merchants.¹⁰⁹ When the English Company gained ascendancy in the region, these merchants shifted their base of operation to the English settlements. Again it has been argued that the oppression of the traders and artisans by the *Nawab* and his officials helped the Company extend their control over the commercial situation. Producers and artisans, being oppressed, found in the English their saviour and switched over their allegiance.¹¹⁰ But the fact is that, the oppression of the *Nawab* and his officials were equally for the European Companies as shown in earlier chapters. In case of Patna the Company could practically do nothing to counter the official oppressions. Even in 1763, Mir Qasim, followed Mr. Ellis (then chief of the English factory at Patna) to the English factory at Patna, and made many Englishmen prisoners.¹¹¹ However, it is true that the indigenous merchants sought refuge in the fortified settlement of the English Company at Calcutta, but it was not mainly due to the official oppression but also due to the political turmoil that was a regular feature in the early 18th century.

The Company's relation with the Patna merchants and the other commercial groups was determined to an extent also by the treatment these groups got from the

¹⁰⁷ P. N. Chakravorty, 'Some Aspects of Political...', 302.

¹⁰⁸ P. J. Marshal, *Op. Cit.*, 44.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹¹⁰ Om Prakash, ed., *The Emergence of East India Company...*, 353.

¹¹¹ Edward Thornton, ed., *A Gazetteer of the Territories Under the Government of the E. I. C.*, 1st Publication 1859, reprint 1933, 755.

local ruling groups. However this relationship was not exactly in equal terms. When Raghu pundit, the English *Fatuha Gomastah*, was seized by the *Nawab* and about 50,000 rupees was demanded for his release. When this news reached the Calcutta Council, the Council noted that, "had he (Raghu pundit) been treated ten times worse or even to death, we can see no reason the company have to pay so dear for the clearance of any black fellow in the country."¹¹² Job Charnock forced the indigenous merchants who brought goods for the Company, to pay two percent commission on the goods they sold to him and when any poor ignorant native transgressed his laws, they were sure to undergo a severe whipping for a penalty and the execution was generally done when he was at dinner, so near his dinning room that the groan and cries of the poor man served him as music.¹¹³ These instances show that the Company viewed their indigenous servants as inferior to themselves. The only thing that forced the Company to act in co-ordination with these indigenous merchants was the lure of profit. Thus the nature of relationship integrating both the commercial and social sectors of contact between the commercial groups of Patna and the Company was one surely based on the profit making, in which every act of both these groups was determined by the extent of the profit involved in that.

¹¹² Wilson, *Early Annals...* Vol. III, Copy of letter sent by the Council at Patna, 12th oct. 1719, 176.

¹¹³ N. N. Raye, *Annals of Early English Settlement...*, 82-83.

CONCLUSION

Patna's traditional economy was efficient enough to attract the foreign merchants both Asian and European. Though Patna and its hinterland produced almost every thing considered exportable by the indigenous merchants and European Companies, the difference was in the quantity and not the quality at all. The artisans and peasants with their age-old means of production were perhaps capable of serving the growing population of the region, as well as to some extent that of other parts of India. The regional commercial system within which the merchants of Patna operated in seventeenth and early eighteenth century also witnessed the activities of different kinds of traders. In fact, Patna and its hinterland had enormous commercial potentialities. Almost every traveller visiting the region has discussed its trade and the trading system. The observations of Peter Mundy that, "[Patna] is the greatest mart of all this country, from whence they [merchants] repaire (sic) from Bengal that way to the seaside, and from Indostan (sic) and other inland countries round about, plentiful in provisions, abounding with sundrie (sic) commodities,"¹ clearly proves the commercial importance of Patna.

The major difference in the trading programme of the indigenous merchants and the English Company was that while, the indigenous merchant groups preferred, and often traded in almost all commodities available in the region, the English Company, on the other hand, liked and were fascinated by the trade in only those commodities, whose marginal profit were enormous. This was due to the fact that, the English Company, unlike the Dutch V.O.C., found country trading less profitable, and Patna's products mostly comprised of this type of trading. As for textiles and raw silk, the Company preferred the products of Bengal proper, to those of Patna. Saltpeter and

Opium were, in our period, the major products of Patna and its hinterland that attracted the Company's activities. The observation of Thomas Bowery that, "the only commodity of this Kingdom that is yearly sent for English here is peter of which great quantities are sent to England and Holland,"² testifies the importance of Salt peter for the Company.

It is difficult to arrive at any definite conclusions on the subject that we have chosen for study. The Company's relation with the Patna elites (political and commercial) was shaped by a variety diverse factor for both the groups. The commodity most desired by the Company from Patna (i.e. Salt peter) was also thought to be profitable by the ruling groups of Patna. The ubiquity of official interference, that we have unravelled, merely accentuates imbrication of the Patna trade within a larger context of socio-political relationships. In this regard, Sumit Guha's recent study of identity politics in pre-modern South Asian societies is enlightening. Guha writes that, "taxation and labour-service", the dual motors of trade, "were not extracted from homogenous and isolated individuals by an independent bureaucracy. Instead, these extractions were finely calibrated to the many aspects of status and power, organised through social collectivities and delivered to a range of power-holders at many levels of the social hierarchy."³ Further, the specificities of Patna's political structure introduces novel contours into this broad matrix of trade interactions. Whilst on the one hand, it remained more than merely in the nominal sway of the imperial centre, yet Patna enjoyed a remarkable degree of political autonomy. The amorphous and ambiguous nature of this anxious relationship had its own set of variable that impinged upon the trade and trading relationships of the

¹ Peter Mundy, *Travels in Asia*, vol. II, 157.

² Thomas Bowery, *A Geographical Account*..., 229.

³ Sumit Guha, *The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India c. 1600-1900*, in *Journal for the Comparative Study of Society and History*, 2003.

region. Thus, we find that the imperial strictures regarding the English Company trade were often subverted by the local authorities. Wherein it was held to be quite legal to extract profits and pecuniary benefits from the Company, despite the allowances made by the imperial centre.

Terming the Company's relation with political elites of Patna as co-operation, collaboration or competition cannot do justice to the ostentatious and complex nature of this relationship. Co-operation was albeit there, but it was only a small part of the entire seriality of their interactions. It is in this regard that we need to re-appraise ourselves of the terms under which the Company received support and help for its trading activities from the native politicians. The Company collaborated, to whatever extent, owing to its own fear of the use of force. The *Nawab* and his officials, on their part, gave trading concessions and other privileges, not because they wanted the trade of the Company but either due to the necessity of complying with imperial orders or for pure profit. This is the reason perhaps that we find little words of praise in the Company's accounts for the ruling groups of Patna. Certainly there was not competition between them as one was a trading Company and the other was a ruling group and both had different sets of preferences and activities that seldom came in each other's way.

There were various contexts where the ruling group's relations to the Company's were defined variedly. An important function in the framing of this interaction was the individual proclivities and character of the Governor and different officials. Yet, we must urgently keep in mind that, all instances of non-collaboration with other rival European Companies cannot always be conflated with support for the English. The few instances that we do meet with of the *Nawab* and his officials extending help to the Company, needs to be contextualised. In most cases we find not

any personal munificence at play but much rather a lure of profits and fiscal benefits that drove these moves.

Further, the geographical location of Patna also played a major part in determining their relations. Despite the Naval weakness, the Mughal army was strong enough to counter any move of the Company on land. Therefore, we find that whenever the Company tried to any action, which was averse to the interests of the officialdom, they had to face eviction, seizure of its officials/factors, closure of the Patna factories etc.

In the domain of privileges and concessions the Company's relation were also fashioned by the exigencies of the 'local' and the 'particular'. They fully knew well that their imperial privileges were worth a precious nought unless they remained on cordial terms with the provincial authorities. The English factors noted that, "as regard the *farman* procured for Bengal, the King's commands are as easily procured as other princes... and when you have them, they are no more esteemed then being things so easily purchased."⁴ This statement clearly shows the importance of the local officers in the implementation of trading concessions and privileges of the Company and hence of the fruitful continuation of the Company's trade. Hence the Company faced extortion and many 'illegal' evictions by the local rulers in case they tried to implement their trading privileges, without the consent of the provincial authorities. Yet the income that the political elite of Patna derived from trade was hardly substantial.

The forcible eviction of the Company by the local authorities was not an institutional novelty; after all as we have already seen, even indigenous merchants received similar treatment for similar offences. Albeit the extent to which the local

⁴ *E. F. I.*, 1634-36, 204.

authorities were willing to bend the letter to extract the additional monetary benefits could be seen to have a mutual co-relation with the large profits that the Company themselves reaped. However, this type of forceful interference was not the norm in trade for all commodities at large, but indeed pertained only to the trade in Saltpeter. Due to the official monopoly on it, the Company faced the most exasperating situation in the export of Salt peter from Patna. Almost all the cases registered on the Company's accounts and other papers refers to the tense situation arising out of the official interference in the Company's Salt peter trade at Patna. Lastly, the treatment of the Company's indigenous servants by the local officials also shaped their relation. As the English chief and other factors seldom resided at Patna, whenever there was any political turmoil, it was the Company's indigenous servants who faced the wrath of the ruling groups at Patna. They were seized, imprisoned and fined.

However, in the social sphere, the Company and the ruling groups were close and the relation was to a large extent, cordial. For the Company, it was the ruling groups that represented the oriental world in India. The use of 'black servants' for the Company's local servants indicates the feeling of superiority that pervaded the imaginary of the Company. This in turn led them to socially interact exclusively with the elite of the region. In fact, the Company's factors were fascinated by the lifestyle of the ruling groups and tried to largely emulate them. There was a proper give and take relation in the social sector between them. Here, it can be said that the attraction for the local modes and way of living for the Company, was, at least to some extent profit oriented. They thought that by adopting the oriental ways they would come closer to the elite, which would in turn, foster new modalities of profits. On the contrary, the attachment to the English style by the local elites was only a way of augmenting their already existing luxurious lifestyles. This is clearly brought out by

the larger emphasis placed on articles of luxury (wines, clothes, paintings etc) and military articles. Thus we find that the relation between the Company and political elites of Patna was neither co-operative nor competitive as a whole. The ruling groups were far more powerful than the English, in our period to resist any move by the Company; while the Company did not enjoy a similar privileged position.

The average commercial groups of Patna, which were employed by the Company, were certainly not the merchant magnates like Jagat Seth. These houses were approached only in special cases. Largely the Company contracted those indigenous merchants who while commanding large trading operations but also needed or at least sought to enhance their profits by relating commercially with the Company. However, we are unfortunate in being to get a clearer picture of the merchant groups of Patna dealing with the Company.

The Company procured its exportable commodities mainly through merchant-middlemen, as they could not deal directly with the producers in most cases. In fact, the usual intermediary between the Company and the local producers and consumers was the broker, who was rewarded by a brokerage on all transactions, as noted earlier.⁵ The procurement was through advance payments or the *Dadni* system. Further, it was mostly the merchants with a good economic background who were contracted. This was because the Company tried to prevent the bad debts and also to finance the trade in case of shortage of liquid capital, which they were often subjected to in the region. The Company made use of various type of merchants ranging from full time employees to commission agents. The high volume of the trade of the English was not in conformity with their purchasing power and so they had to use the authorities of the local merchants who by credit, cash loans and other such procedures

⁵ Wilson, *Early Annals...*, vol. I, 63.

helped the English to procure of exportable goods. Moreover, the English often sought the political connections of these merchants, for commercial gains. In fact, the Company in our period never became so strong economically, so as to do away with these local commercial elites.

What emerges then is a complex picture wherein the mutual beneficiality and social bargaining power of the merchants were largely responsible for framing the relationship of the Patna merchants to the Company. The mutuality of the relationship on the part of the merchants lay in the benefits that accrued to the local merchants in escaping custom dues and illegal exaction, which they were liable to be subjected to, by allying with the English Company and using their ships and passes. Even though, as shown earlier, the extent of this gain was relatively speaking, as large as the benefits accruing to the Company. This non-egalitarian relationship is clearly mapped by the pronounced distinction that the Company's officials made between the commercial elite and their own native servants. Thus despite the few instances of ill-treatment of indigenous merchant, by and large, we may conclude that it was profit that bound the two groups in a mutual relationship.

Though the indigenous servants of the Company were not paid liberally by the Company, but the additional profit, as mentioned above, and the prestige of being attached to the Company, attracted these local merchants. The indigenous servants of the Company had to face ill treatment from the local officials as well. The Company though at most times thought it improper to dismiss their indigenous servants, yet this was by no means an unilateral law, and exceptions to this rule are not difficult to come by. The Company's suspicion of these groups also led it to perpetually place an emphasis upon its officials learning the native tongue. By this they hoped to, in the

long run do away with the need for such intermediaries. Yet, as we have seen in Chapter three, despite all their efforts, they failed to evolve a white skinned *gomasta*.

Both the indigenous as well as the English merchants were after all a commercial group and driven more by the lure of pelf than anything else. It is thence that we find the Company, in spite of its sense of superiority, depending and indeed in cases allying with indigenous groups. On the other hand, despite the cases of ill treatment by the English we see the indigenous merchants offering their services to the English. At the last instance we may conclude that it was the market, that determined coloured the shifting terrain of their relationship.

APPENDIX -1

List of Mughal governors of Patna (1620-1733)

Emperor	Governor	Period
Jahangir (1605-1632)	Mukarrab khan	1618- March 1621
	Prince Parvej	16 th March, 1621- 1623
Shahjahan (1632-1658)	Rebellion of Prince Khuramm who appointed Khan-i-Dauran Alis Bariam Beg as governor	1623
	Mahabat Khan (left in Charge by Prince Parvej	October 1624
	Mirza Rustam Safi	1626-27
	Mirza Barkhurdar	1628
	Mirza Safi Khan	12 th September 1628- 24 th may 1632
	Abdullah Khan	24 th may 1632-1639
	Mirza Abu Talib (Shaista Khan)	10 th February 1639-25 th February 1643
	Itiqad Khan	February 1643-4 th September 1646
	Mir Mohammed Baqar	18 th October 1646-1647
	Azam khan	
	Zafar Jung Allah Quli khan	1647-1651
	Jafar khan	February 1651-may 1656
	Zulfiqar khan Qaramalu	26 th may 1656 22 nd April 1657
	Allahwardi Khan	25 th March 1657- 22 nd august 1657
Aurangzeb (1658-1707)	Prince Dara Sukoh	19 th December 1657
	Daud khan Qureshi	15 th January 1659- Februry 1659
	Yadgar Beg	To December 1664 13 th February 1665
	Ibrahim khan	February 1668 5 th March 1668- November 1673
	Miran Amir Khan	1673- November 1675
	Shafiullah Barlos- Tarbiyat khan	18 th November 1675- 14 th April 1677
	Prince Azam	24 th July 1677- December 1677
	Saifuddin Muhammed	May -June 1678-1680
	Safi khan	1680-1682
	Buzurg Umed khan	28th January 1683- 5 th July 1692

	Mir Qayamuddin Mukhtar Khan	1692-1694
	Fidai Khan	12 th December 1694- March 1702
	Ibrahim Shamsar khan Qureshi	10 th March 1702- 22 nd January 1703
	Prince Azimushan	22 nd January 1703- March 1712
Bahadur Shah I (1707-12)	Prince Azimushan (in absentia)	continuing from 1703, but Husain Ali as defacto Governor 1708-1710
Jahandar Shah (1712)	Farukhsiyar	
Farukhsiyar (1713-19)	Ghairat khan	end of 1712- April 1715
	Mir Jumla	24 th may 1715- January 1716
	Sarbuland khan	1716-12 th February 1718
	Zaman khan Bahadur	1718 continuing-
Mohammed shah (1719-48)	Zaman khan Bahadur	till June 1720
	Syed Nasrat Yar khan	1720-1721
	Mir Jafar Aqidat khan	January 1721- 24 th September 1725
	Hadi Ali khan (acting)	1727-1733-34
	Nabob Fakrudaulah	
	Prince Mirza Ahmed (Absentia Governor)	Bihar was added to Bengal by Mohammed shah in 1733

(Source: Hasan Askari & Qeyamuddin Ahmed, ed., the Comprehensive History of Bihar, Vol. II, Part II, Kashi Prasad Jaiswal Reaserch institute, Patna 1987)

APPENDIX - 2

List of the chiefs of the English factory at Patna (1658-1733)

Richard Chamberline (1658- 1670)
Job Charnock (1670-1679)
George Peacock (1679)
Joseph Dods
Roger Bradyll
Ralph Seldon
L. Loyd
Edward Pattle (1710-1715)
Samuel Brown (1715-1719)
Edward Stephenson (1719)
Huge Barker (1732)

(Source:-, Foster, W., ed., The English Factories in India, 1618-1669, 13 vols., Oxford, 1906-1927; Temple, R. C., ed., The Diaries of Streynsham Master 2 vols., London, 1911; Yule, H., ed., The Diary of William Hedges, 3 vols., Hakluyt society, London, 1887-89; Wilson, C. R., Early Annals of the English in Bengal, 3 vols., Calcutta, 1895-1900.)

SELECT GLOSSARY

<i>Ajlaf</i>	People of low origin.
<i>Aljah</i>	Probably fine cotton piece- goods.
<i>Alachaah (Ellachas)</i>	Striped cloth of mixed silk and cotton.
<i>Amberteers</i>	White cotton cloth woven around patna.
<i>Asraf</i>	Gentry.
<i>Bafta</i>	Plain white cotton cloth.
<i>Bania</i>	Merchant, a caste traditionally engaged in commercial activities.
<i>Batta</i>	Discount.
<i>Becutpoores</i>	Silk cloth for women's petticoat.
<i>Boras</i>	A kind of boat.
<i>Calico</i>	Plain white cotton cloth.
<i>Carsa</i>	A type of calico.
<i>Chautaha</i>	A coarse double with cotton cloth of 2 length.
<i>Chauki</i>	Toll or custom house.
<i>Chintz</i>	Painted or printed calico, provided at Patna and its neighbourhood.
<i>Dalal</i>	Broker or middleman.
<i>Darbar</i>	Court or levee.
<i>Dastak</i>	A pass or permit.
<i>Dupattas</i>	Cotton cloth for women.
<i>Farman</i>	Letter issued by the Emperor.
<i>Faujdar</i>	Military officer in charge of a district.
<i>Guzerbaun</i>	An officer who collected custom dues.
<i>Gomastah</i>	An agent, an employee of a merchant or a broker.
<i>Hammam</i>	Cotton towel cloth.
<i>Hasbalhukum</i>	Letter issue by the order of the Emperor and under the seal of <i>Wazier</i> .
<i>Kanqah</i>	A building usually reserved for Muslim mystics.
<i>Kothiwala</i>	Wealthy banker.
<i>Layches</i>	Silk mixed cotton textile.
<i>Mahmoody</i>	A variety of cotton cloth.
<i>Maund</i>	A unit of weight.
<i>Nawab</i>	Governor.
<i>Nishan</i>	Letter issued by the prince.
<i>Nunia</i>	Salt peter manufacturers.
<i>Palwars</i>	A kind of boat.
<i>Parwana</i>	Letters issued by the officers like <i>subahdars</i> or <i>diwan</i> .
<i>Patellas</i>	Flate bottomed boats.
<i>Penth</i>	Market towns.
<i>Poddar</i>	A money changer, or teller, under a <i>shroff</i> .
<i>Pykar</i>	A broker, inferior to those called <i>dalals</i> .
<i>Qaimkhanis</i>	Plain cotton piece-goods woven near

<i>Radhalah</i>	and around patna.
<i>Ramsukha</i>	The commoners.
<i>Ravat</i>	Plain white cotton textiles.
<i>Romalls</i>	Plain cotton textiles.
	Thin silk piece-goods with handkerchief pattern woven in many parts of Bengal.
<i>Sahan</i>	Fine sheet of cotton cloth.
<i>Sanad</i>	Letters issued by the officials.
<i>Sarai</i>	Rest houses.
<i>Sicca</i>	Current money.
<i>Subah</i>	Province.
<i>Shroff</i>	Banker, specially one who is specialized in exchange of various kinds of currency.
	Silk piece-goods.
<i>Tuckeres</i>	An agent, or charge' des affairs.
<i>Vakil</i>	

(Source:- Sushil Chaudhuri, Trade and commercial organisation in Bengal, 1650-1720, Kum Kum Chatterjee, Merchants, Politics and Society)

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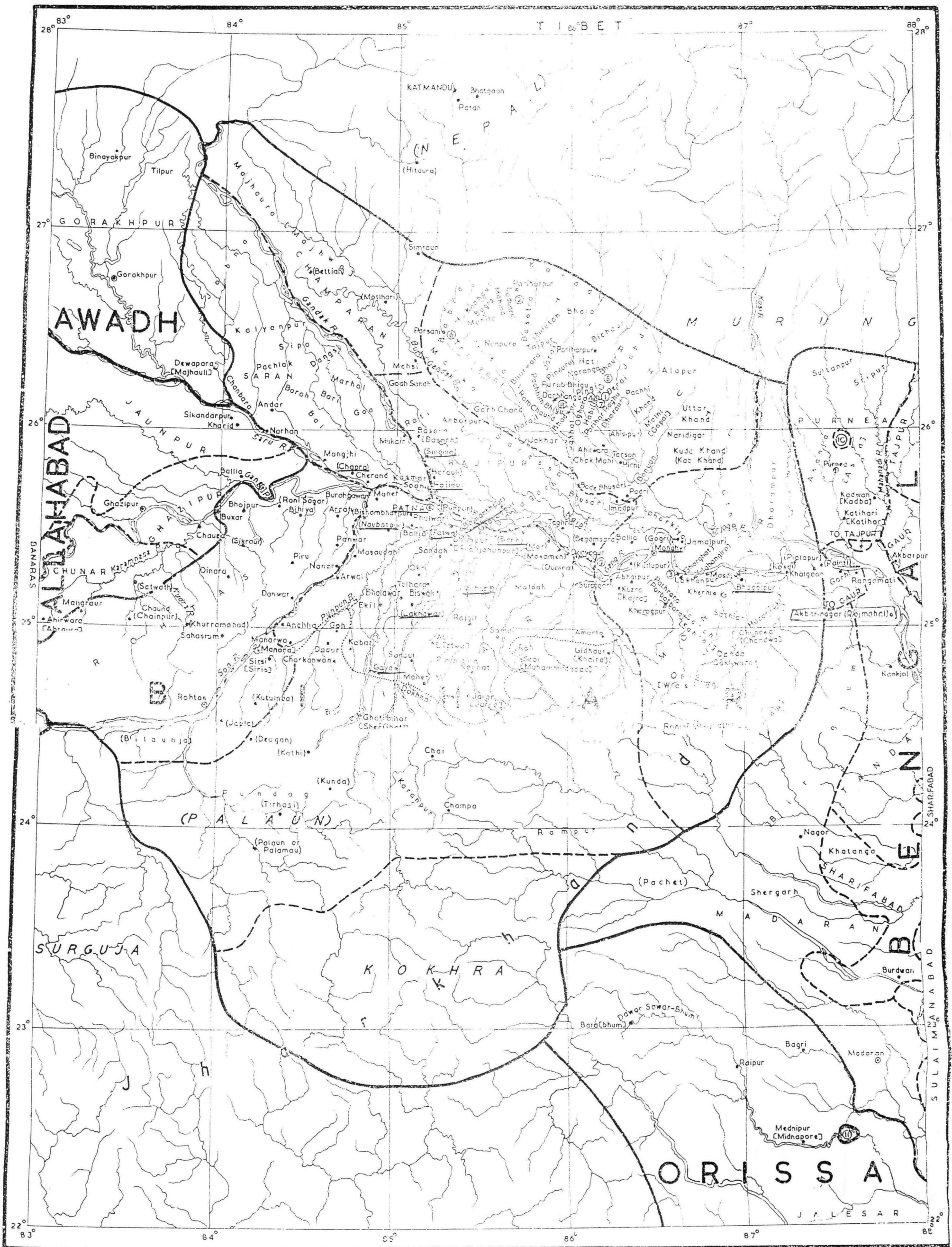
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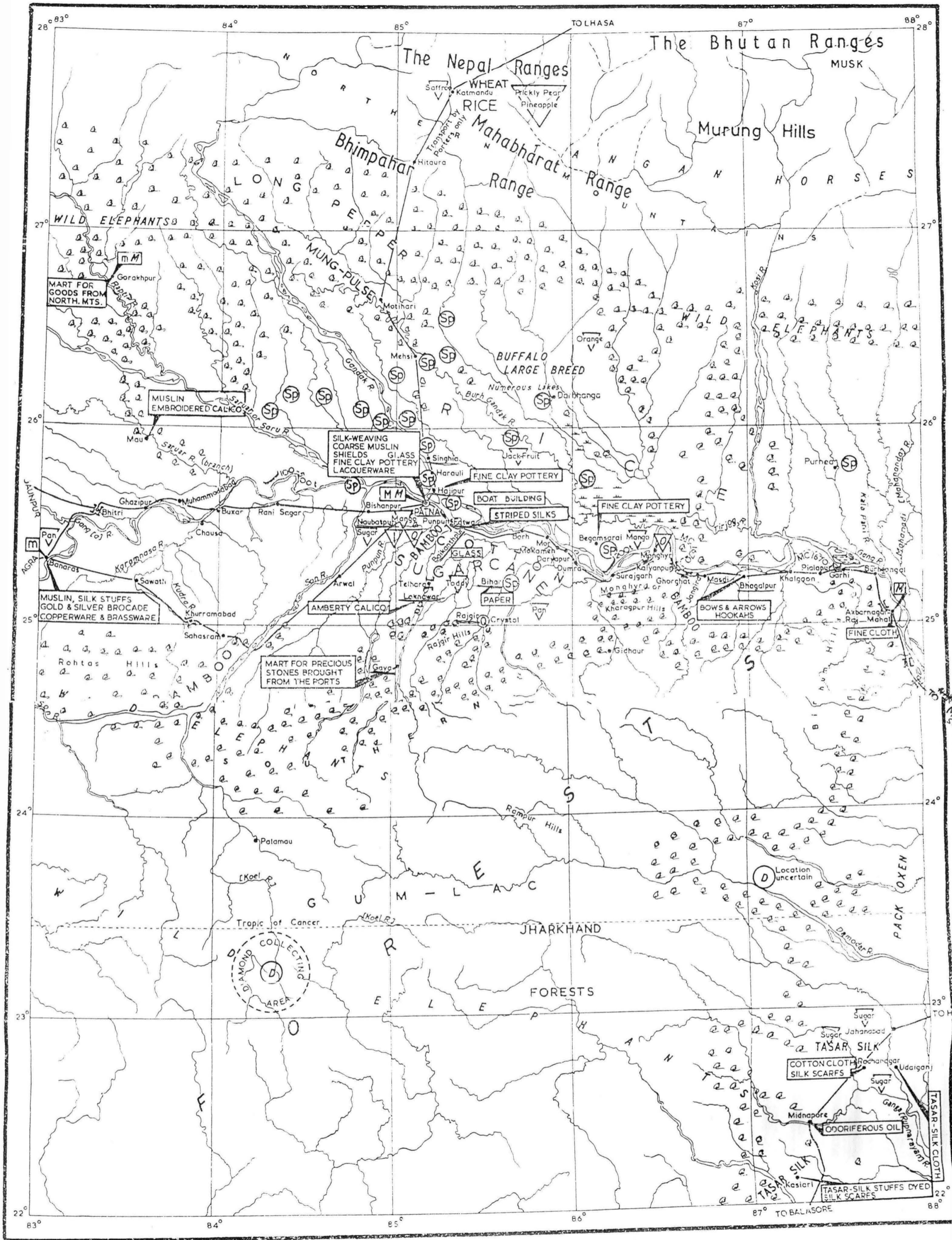
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Map showing political boundary of Bihar and the capital city Patna and its hinterlands

Source :- Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, political and economic maps with detailed notes, O.V.P., Delhi, 1982.



Map showing production centres of Bihar

Source :- Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal empire, political and economic maps with detailed notes, O.V.P., Delhi, 1982.

PATNA - MONGHYR (R. Ganges)

SCALE

