

# SIRAJ-UD-DAULAH

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# SIRAJ-UD-DAULAH



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*By*

**KALIKINKAR DATTA, M.A., P.R.S., PH.D., F.A.S.**

*J. S. Sanyal*



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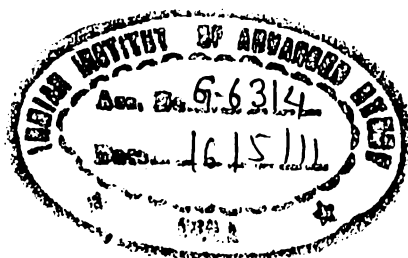
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## PREFACE

In this volume I have tried to present a detailed account of the career of Sirāj-ud-daulah from his birth till he left this world, in the background of contemporary events. The first chapter contains the story of his early career. In the second chapter I have analysed the causes of Sirāj-ud-daulah's conflict with the English East India Company leading to his capture of the English factory at Kāsimbāzār and of the fort of the English in Calcutta. Veracity of Holwell's story of the Black Hole has been examined here. Sirāj-ud-daulah's successful Purnea expedition against Shaukat Jang, who contested his accession to the *masnad* of Bengal, has been narrated in the third chapter. Circumstances under which the English were able to recover Calcutta and to force Sirāj-ud-daulah to conclude the treaty of the 9th of February 1757, the terms of which were favourable to them, have been described in the fourth chapter. Mid-eighteenth century Anglo-French hostilities and their repercussions on contemporary Bengal politics have been studied in the fifth chapter. Pre-Plassey conspiracy against Sirāj-ud-daulah and its consequences have been reviewed in the sixth chapter. In the seventh chapter, I have described the circumstances leading to the battle of Plassey, the causes of Sirāj-ud-daulah's defeat in it and his tragic end. Effects and significance of this decisive battle have also been explained here.

It has been my honest endeavour to scrutinise and assess all materials with due care, and I have tried to draw conclusions as rationally as possible. There might be differences of opinion about certain points. But there is no doubt that the short regime of Sirāj-ud-daulah was a highly critical period in the history of our country, when its political destiny took a new turn and some other forces were generated which vitally affected the

varied conditions of life of her people. Factors responsible for these deserve unbiased study by students of history. The eighteenth century was a dark and dismal period in the history of India. But the darker chapters of human history sometimes supply such precepts and examples as serve to stimulate the imagination, ennoble the thoughts and mould the characters of the succeeding generations. Thus the eighteenth century, marked by internal feuds, conspiracies, horrors, crimes and tragedies, is full of weighty lessons for us today when we are again passing through an epoch of crisis due to the pernicious influence of some demoralising and disintegrating forces.

For deficiencies in this humble work of mine, which I had to prepare in the midst of my other overwhelming engagements, I would crave indulgence of the learned readers and would most humbly solicit their suggestions for its improvement in future.

I am grateful to the Editors of *Bengal: Past and Present* and the *Calcutta Review* for their kindness in permitting me to include in this volume certain portions, which formed part of my articles, published therein. I am thankful to the Director of National Archives, New Delhi, for kindly permitting me to incorporate in this book portions from a few pages which I wrote in the *Introduction to Fort William—India House Correspondence*, Volume I, published by the National Archives.

I must express my gratitude to Shri K. C. Banerjee, M.A., and Dr. P. B. Sinha, M.A., Ph.D., for their kindness in going through the typescripts and the proofs. My thanks are due to Dr. P. B. Sinha and to Shri Tara Saran Sinha, M.A., for preparing the Index, and to Messrs Orient Longman Ltd. for the promptness and care with which they have published this book.

PATNA

The 23rd January 1971

Kalikinkar Datta



# CONTENTS

*Frontispiece*—Photograph of Sirāj-ud-daulah—  
(From Walsh, *History of Murshidabad*)

	Page
Preface	v
CHAPTER I      Early Career	.. 1
CHAPTER II     Sirāj-ud-daulah and the English	.. 9
CHAPTER III    Successful Purnea Expedition	.. 25
CHAPTER IV    Recovery of Calcutta by the English	.. 30
CHAPTER V     Anglo-French Conflicts and their Impact on Bengal	.. 67
CHAPTER VI    The Conspiracy of 1757	.. 84
CHAPTER VII   The Battle of Plassey and End of Sirāj-ud-daulah	.. 94
Bibliography	113
Glossary	121
Index	124



CORRIGENDA

<u>Page</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Read</u>	<u>for</u>
Front			
Blurb	28	Social	Soial
vii	9	Hostilities	Conflicts
vii	16	125	124
12	Folio-heading	SIRAJ-UD-DAULAH	SIRAJ-UD-DULAH
12	24	Cannot	cannot
16	Folio-heading	SIRAJ-UD-DAULAH	SIRAJ-UD-DULAH
17	20	mercantile	merchantile
30	10	accompanied	accompained
33	13	departure	depature
33	29	<i>August</i>	<i>Ausust</i>
33	28 etc.	15 etc.	16 etc.
36	17	tages	ages
38	27	raged	aged
44	5	committed	commited
47	34	conclusively	conslusively
48	12	themselves	themsalves
49	21	Madras	Madrass
65	1	the	thə
72	30	ted	tated
78	8	destroy	destoy
89	28	Killpatrick	Kilpatrick
93	Folio-heading	OF	OE
94	11	Ramzan	Ramazan
99	8	Nawāb	Nāwab
101	Folio-heading	BATTLE OF PLASSEY	BATTLE PLASSEY
101	„	AND END OF	ANYENE
102	10	Cavalry	Cavalary
103	Folio-heading	SIRAJ	SIRAS
105	„	OF	OE
105	„	OF	OE

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## CHAPTER I

### EARLY CAREER

Alivardi had no sons of his own. Of his three daughters, the eldest, Mihir-un-nisā (Ghasitī Begam), and the third, Aminā Begam, were married to his nephews (sons of his elder brother, Ījī Ahmad), Nawāzish Muhammad Shahāmat Jang and Zainuddin Ahmad Haibat Jang, respectively. Some writers<sup>1</sup> mention that his another daughter was married to his nephew, Siyid Ahmad, Governor of Purnea. Mirzā Muhammad Sirāj-ud-daulah was the son of Aminā Begam, who had another son named Mirzā Mahdi. Sirāj-ud-daulah was born a few days before Alivardi's appointment as the Deputy Governor of Bihār in 1733. Birth of Sirāj-ud-daulah being synchronous with Alivardi's elevation to this high post made him an object of special favour and affection of his grand-father, who in fact loved and moved and had his being in him. Ghulām Husain, the author of *Siyār-ul-mutakherin*, notes that Alivardi "had him (Sirāj-ud-daulah) educated in his own house"<sup>2</sup>. Karam Ali, the author of *Muzaffarnāmah*<sup>3</sup>, writes: "As Alivardi had given his heart to Sirāj-ud-daulah from the day of his birth and never kept him apart from himself, but tried to teach him the art of government and administration and all the noble traits that befit a ruler of men, so much so, that every misdeed done by Sirāj was treated by Alivardi as he had not seen it or heard of it. Every thorn that he imagined in the path of Sirāj transfixed his own loving heart, and he considered it his duty to remove it. He could not pass a single moment without thinking of Sirāj". But all this does not seem to have produced a very wholesome effect. Sirāj-ud-daulah's education may have been of the

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<sup>1</sup> *Siyār* ( English translation ), I, p. 126 ;  
Stewart, History of Bengal, p. 508.

<sup>2</sup> *Siyār*, I, p. 283.

<sup>3</sup> F. 43 (b).

usual formal type, marked by rudiments of ordinary knowledge and not well-calculated to foster higher virtues. Due to excessive dotage of the old grand-father the boy naturally developed unruly impulses and obstinacy. There may not have been dearth of sycophants, who, out of their personal interests, flattered him and pandered to his low tastes<sup>4</sup>. He occasionally committed thoughtless acts in his early years. But Alivardi did not mind all these and humoured him in various ways. Thus when he was making some changes in the administration after seizing the *masnad* of Bengal, he nominally bestowed the superintendentship of the State fleet at Dacca on Sirāj-ud-daulah. Sirāj-ud-daulah's brother, who had been adopted by Nawāzish Muhammad as his son and designated Ekrām-ud-daulah, was invested with a similar command over the army at Dacca. Sirāj-ud-daulah was kept in Alivardi's company even during military campaigns. Thus the latter was with his grandfather during his Orissā campaign in 1740-41. In the short respite after repeated campaignings against the Marāthas, Alivardi celebrated Sirāj-ud-daulah's marriage at the commencement of the rainy season in 1746, amidst much pomp and magnificence, with a daughter of Mirzā Irez Khān<sup>5</sup>.

In the year 1748 Alivardi was faced with a critical situation due to the second Afghān insurrection in Bihār in which the Marāthas had joined with the Afghāns and which was a greater calamity for him than the first Afghān insurrection of 1745. The body of Zainuddin, Alivardi's nephew and Deputy Governor of Bihār, was cut into two pieces by Murād Sher, one of the Afghān leaders, with a violent blow of his sword. His limbs were cut into pieces and buried in a plot of land, now known as *Maqbera-i-Haibat Jang* in the Begampur *mahallā* of Patna City. The Afghān insurgents also tortured the Nawāb's brother Hāji Ahmad to death on the 30th of January, 1748. As a matter of

<sup>4</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, F. 41a and F. 42a.

<sup>5</sup> *Siyār*, II, p. 17.

fact, Patna was usurped by the Afghāns for full three months and the local people had to pass their days and nights in extreme agony and fear.

These mishaps at first overwhelmed Alivardi with intense grief and despondency. But he soon screwed up his courage and decided upon taking the bold course of marching to Patna to recover it, to rescue his surviving relatives who were prisoners in the hands of the Afghāns and to avenge the death of his two near relatives. With necessary precautions Alivardi left his camp at Amāniganj, near Murshidābād, for Patna on the 29th February, 1748, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the allied Afghāns and Marāthas on the 16th April at the battle of Rānīsarāi or Rānichock, eight miles west of Barh. Alivardi remained at Patna for six months to arrange for Bihār administration. Probably as a sop to Sirāj-ud-daulah's sentiment the Nawāb appointed him nominal Deputy Governor of Bihār with Rājā Jānkīrām as his Deputy, and leaving Patna on the 6th November returned to Murshidābād on the 30th November, 1748, with Saiyid Ahmad Khān and Sirāj-ud-daulah. In December, 1749, the Nawāb proceeded to Midnāpur and sent a detachment under Sirāj-ud-daulah to Bālāsore to drive out the Marāthas. Unable to bear long separation from his grandson Alivardi went personally to Nārāingarh to see him. Both soon returned to their camp at Midnāpur. Alivardi chased the Marāthas from place to place and wanted to stay at Midnāpur for some time to make proper arrangement for administration of that area.

But an unexpected danger soon compelled the Nawāb to alter his plan. Mahdi Nīsār Khān, a dismissed and discontented General of the Nawāb, instigated Sirāj-ud-daulah to make an attempt to become the independent Governor of Bihār after removing the Nawāb's agent Jānkīrām<sup>6</sup>. To give effect to

<sup>6</sup>*Siyar*, II, pp. 583-88; *Yusuf*, fs. 103-07 ; *Muzaffarnāmah*, fs. 82B-83A.

this design the capricious youth left Midnāpur under the pretext of visiting the palaces at Murshīdābād. He started from the capital city with his Begam Lutfunissā, joined Mahdi Nisār Khān at Jāfar Khān's garden (just east of Patna City) and attacked Patna City. Jānkīrām found himself in a fix. He could not leave the city undefended but at the same time he apprehended that any injury to Sirāj-ud-daulah would deeply wound the feelings of his grandfather. His troops bravely opposed the assailants but were driven back in an encounter with them at the Hājiganj *mahallā* (quarter) of Patna City. The capture of the entire city was, however, prevented by them, and the leaders of the insurrection, named Madhi Nisār Khān, Mirzā Madāri Beg Deccāni, and Amānat Khān, were killed in course of the fighting. This disconcerted the other followers of Sirāj-ud-daulah, who ran out of the city. Sirāj-ud-daulah himself found a safe protection in the house of Mustafā Quli Khān, brother of his father-in-law, Muhammad Irej Khān.

Alivardi had left Midnāpur immediately on hearing of Sirāj-ud-daulah's march from Murshidābād to Patna. He halted at Murshidābād only for one day and marched quickly to Bihār. On arriving at Ghiyāspur near Barh he learnt all that had happened. He hastened to Patna and effected a reconciliation between Jānkīrām and Sirāj-ud-daulah. Jānkīrām governed Bihār efficiently<sup>7</sup> till his death in 1752.

Early in May, 1752, Alivardi declared Sirāj-ud-daulah as his successor on the *masnad* of Bengal. Naturally the European Trading Companies in Bengal thought it advisable to compliment him on an occasion like this. In that year, during Sirāj-ud-daulah's stay at Hugli he "was visited by the French and Dutch Governors with a present equivalent to his dignity". As suggested by the *faujdar* of Hugli and by Khwajah Wājīd, one of the principal merchants of Bengal who resided at Hugli, the Council in Calcutta "judged it highly necessary to pay the

<sup>7</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, f. 80A.



Nabob the compliment required". Accordingly, the President, Roger Drake, accompanied by Cruttenden, Becher and the Commandant, visited Sirāj-ud-daulah at Hugli in the beginning of the third week of September, 1752. They were received there, as the Council in Calcutta expressed, "with the utmost politeness and distinction far superior than was paid the French or the Dutch". Appreciating this cordiality of Sirāj-ud-daulah, the Court of Directors observed in their letter to the Council in Calcutta, dated 23 January, 1754, that they should lose no opportunity of "improving the favourable opinion he seems to entertain of the English nation". In another letter, dated 29 November, 1754, the Court significantly noted that the "Country Government" (Nawāb's government) had "always shown more preferable marks of favour to the English than to the other European nations".

A number of bereavements during the closing years of Alivardi's career caused severe depression in his mind and badly affected his health, which had been very much strained due to his incessant battling against various odds throughout the greater part of his regime. Ekrām-ud-daulah, younger brother of Sirāj-ud-daulah, whom Shahāmat Jang had brought up with care as an adopted son, died of small pox in 1752. Overwhelmed with grief at this Shahāmat Jang also died from an attack of dropsy on the 17th December, 1755. According to his desire, he was buried by the side of Ekrām-ud-daulah in the Motijhil garden, a few miles north of the city of Murshidābād. To add to agonies of Alivardi, Saulat Jang, his another nephew and Governor of Purnea since 1749, also left this world on the 26th February, 1756. His body was buried in the Jāfari Bagh, a pleasant garden in Purnea. All these bereavements told seriously on the health of the old Nawāb and he expired on the 9th or 10th April, 1756, at the age of eighty. His body was buried at the foot of his mother's grave at Khusbāgh on the west bank of the Bhāgīrathī opposite Motijhil. Feeling that his end was

drawing near he had summoned Sirāj-ud-daulah before him on the eve of his death and addressed him thus :

“My darling! strength of youth has given place to weakness of old age and the inevitable death is near. Through the grace of God, I have carved out a very rich dominion for you. Now my last words to you are that you should strive for the suppression of the enemies (of the province) and elevation of the friends, and that you should devote yourself to securing the well-being of your subjects by removing all evils and disorders. Union brings forth prosperity and disunion begets misery; your government will be stable if its foundation is laid on the goodwill of the people. Follow my footsteps so that your enemies may do no harm so long as you live. If you take to ways of malice and hostility, the garden of prosperity will wither away”.

Luke Scrafton, who was associated with Bengal affairs in those days, significantly writes: “I have before mentioned Surajah Dowla (Sirāj-ud-daulah), as given to hard drinking; but Allyvherde (Alivardi) in his last illness, foreseeing the ill consequences of his excesses, obliged him to swear on the Koran, never more to touch any intoxicating liquor which he ever after strictly observed”<sup>8</sup>.

Alivardi was an able ruler and he was particular about maintaining strict control over the European trading companies in Bengal. But he never wanted their complete extermination which he rightly realised would have been prejudicial to the economic interests of the *subah*.

After the death of Alivardi his heir-designate assumed the reins of government on the 15th April. President Drake wrote a “letter of congratulation” to Sirāj-ud-daulah on this occasion, and “desired his favour and protection to the English Company which was received very kindly” and he promised to the Company’s *vakil* that “he would show the English greater marks

<sup>8</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections on the Government of Indostan*, p. 54.

of friendship and esteem than his grandfather had done". But Bengal *masnad* did not prove to be a bed of roses for Sirāj-ud-daulah. His nomination as the successor of Alivardi caused jealousy of his rival kinsmen, who carried on machinations with the help of their shrewd and intriguing partisans, chiefly by Rājā Rājballabh, who was naturally suspected by Sirāj-ud-daulah to be the leader of the party of opposition. In fact, Rājballabh incited Shaukat Jang of Purnea to contest the succession of Sirāj-ud-daulah and he tried to enlist English support for his move. Sirāj-ud-daulah had also to reckon with the hostile attitude of Mir Jāfar Khān, who owed fortune and high position as Commander-in-Chief of the army to Alivardi, but was devoid of any feeling of gratitude. Apprehending serious opposition from Ghasitī Begam (eldest sister of Sirāj-ud-daulah's mother), Sirāj-ud-daulah sought to bring her immediately under control. Ghasitī Begam was then staying at *Motijhil* with her immense wealth and a well equipped army,<sup>10</sup> under Mir Nazar Ali and Bairām Khān, prepared to fight against Sirāj-ud-daulah. But two days after the siege of *Motijhil* by Sirāj-ud-daulah most of them fled away. According to the author of *Muzaffarnāmah* "none remained there except Mir Nazar Ali the *Khānsamah*, Rājballabh the *Dīwān*, Hāji Mahdi the *Arzbeği* and Ali Naqī Khān, son of Akbar Ali Khān"<sup>11</sup>. Sirāj-ud-daulah seized hoarded wealth of the *Motijhil* palace, jewels, four crores of rupees and forty lakhs of *mohars* in cash and vessels of gold and silver worth one crore of rupees belonging to Ghasitī Begam and Nafisā Begam, daughter of Nawāb Shujā-ud-din<sup>12</sup>. All the confiscated wealth of Ghasitī Begam was deposited in the State Treasury. Nafisā Begam was sent to

<sup>9</sup> Evidence of John Cooke quoted in Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, III, p. 290.

<sup>10</sup> 10,000 according to Orme, II, p. 50; 20,000 according to Cooke, Hill, I, p. 249; 7000 or 8000 according to a British Museum Manuscript, Hill, III, p. 217; 5000 to 6000 according to *Muzaffarnāmah*, f. 51a.

<sup>11</sup> F. 51b.

<sup>12</sup> F. 52a.

Dacca along with Sukrullā Khān, alias Agā Bābā, son of Nawāb Sarfarāz. Mir Nazar Ali also soon fled away and was permitted by Sirāj-ud-daulah to proceed towards the river Karmanāsā. Ghasitī Begam was placed in confinement.

Why did the soldiers and followers of Ghasitī Begam run away precipitately without offering any resistance to the army of Sirāj-ud-daulah? Yusuf Ali, a contemporary writer, explains it in the following words: "Since people's feelings had been hurt by her bad behaviour and shameful conduct and they realised that Sirāj-ud-daulah was firmly in control of the government and were won over by inducements and friendly expression used by him, they detached themselves from the party of Ghasitī Begam and joined him"<sup>13</sup>. Ghulām Husain, the author of *Siyār-ul-mutakherin*, comments that this "short-sighted woman" received "just retribution" for "having been guilty of an infinity of infamous actions with which she had dishonoured her character and family"<sup>14</sup>.

Sirāj-ud-daulah soon appointed some officers from among his own partisans. Mir Jāfar, whose loyalty was doubtful, was removed from the post of *Bakshi* (Supreme Commander of the Army) and it was given to the brave and faithful Mir Madan. Mohan Lāl Kāshmirī, another loyal and capable officer, enjoyed his confidence and was made *Peshkār* of his *diwānkhānā* with the title of *Mahārājā*. Mohan Lāl became so influential as to act almost like the Prime Minister with "full power over every branch of administration"<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Yusuf Ali, f. 90a.

<sup>14</sup> *Siyār*, II, p. 186.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 187.

## CHAPTER II.

### SIRAJ-UD-DAULAH AND THE ENGLISH

It has been already noted that the relation between the Europeans in Bengal and its Nawāb was on the whole cordial till 1755. But in the course of the next two years Bengal became the scene of a sanguinary contest between Sirāj-ud-daulah and the English. The year 1756-57 formed, indeed, a critical turning-point in Bengal's history.

Some are of opinion that Sirāj-ud-daulah was guilty of perpetrating acts of violence and cruelty on the English without any cause. He has been accused of unprovoked acts of aggression, committed in compliance with what Holwell describes as the "death-bed instructions" of Alivardi to "destroy the forts and garrisons of the Europeans and to reduce their trade on the footing of the Armenians". But Holwell's testimony is not unimpeachable. Though possessed of ability, Holwell had neither integrity nor veracity. He was accustomed to fabricating facts and inventing stories to vindicate his own point of view. Positive evidence of some English contemporaries of Holwell, all of whom were then in the service of the Company in Bengal (Watts, Chief of the English factory at Kāsimbāzār, Mathew Collet, second of the Council at Kāsimbāzār, and Richard Becher, Chief of the Company's factory at Dacca), proves that his story of the anti-European death-bed speech of Alivardi is a veritable concoction. There are references also in some 18th century Persian works which show that Alivardi had no such evil motive as Holwell imputed to him. Besides questioning the genuineness of Holwell's statement, Richard Becher expresses the view that "the English had given Sur Rajah Doula sufficient provocation to make him their enemy without any need of his grandfather's advice."

In fact, a quarrel between Sirāj-ud-daulah and the English East India Company had become inevitable because of the

conflicting interests of the two. ...During the last days of his grandfather, Sirāj-ud-daulah protested against certain acts of the English in Bengal as likely to prejudice the authority of the Nawāb's government. He justly accused them of conspiring with the rival party which, under the leadership of Shahāmāt Jang's widow, Ghasitī Begam, and her chief *Diwān*, Rājballabh, was opposing his claims to the *subahdārship*. According to M. Jean Law, then Chief of the French Factory at Kāsimbāzār, "during the last illness of Alivardi Khān, there were two considerable parties which pretended to the *subahdāri*, and which, though divided, appeared likely to unite in order to overthrow that of Sirāj-ud-daulah. The one was the party of the widow of Nawajis Muhammad \* \* \* \* \*. The other was that of Saukat Jang \* \* \*"<sup>1</sup>. Jean Law further states: "It was in the effervescence of these troubles that the English gave Sirāj-ud-daulah reason for complaint against them. Always led away by the idea that he would not have sufficient influence to get himself recognised as *subahdār* they carried on correspondence with the Begam whom I have just mentioned \* \* \* \* \*"<sup>2</sup>. They were even suspected of having "an understanding" with Shaukat Jang, Nawāb of Purnea, another rival of Sirāj-ud-daulah. Hoping for the success of Sirāj-ud-daulah's rivals and with a view to securing the favour of Rājballabh, one of their leaders, the Council in Calcutta at the request of Watts, Chief of the English factory at Kāsimbāzār, gave shelter to Rājballabh's son, Krishnadās (Krishnaballabh), who had fled to Calcutta in March, 1756, with his family and wealth on the pretext of a pilgrimage to Jagannāth at Puri.

All this strengthened Sirāj-ud-daulah's suspicions and he reported to Alivardi about a fortnight before his death in the presence of Dr. Forth, surgeon of the Kāsimbāzār factory, who

<sup>1</sup> Hill, III, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* This is confirmed by some other contemporary accounts. Hill, III, p. 219; I, p. 207 & 284.

was attending on the Nawāb, that the English intended to support Ghasitī Begam. Questioned by the Nawāb regarding this charge, Dr. Forth described it as a 'malicious report' on the part of their enemies and disclaimed any intention on the part of the Company to interfere in political matters.

But this did not satisfy Sirāj-ud-daulah. He levelled three definite charges against the English. The first was that they had "built strong fortifications and dug a large ditch in the King's dominions contrary to the established laws of the country". The second was that they had "abused the privilege of their *dustucks* (*dastaks*) by granting them to such as were no ways entitled to them, from which practices, the King has suffered greatly in the revenue of his customs". The third complaint was that they had given "protection to such of the King's subjects as have by their behaviour in the employ they were entrusted with, made themselves liable to be called to an account and instead of giving them up on demand they allow such persons to shelter themselves within their bounds from the hands of justice". He expressed his intention to "pardon their fault and permit their residence here" if they "will promise to remove the foregoing complaints of their conduct and will agree to trade upon the same terms as other merchants did in the times of the Nabob Jaffair Cawn (Murshid Quli Jāfir Khān)".

All this was observed by Sirāj-ud-daulah in his two letters<sup>3</sup> to Khwajah Wājid, a prominent merchant in Bengal, who was engaged in diplomatic negotiations with the English with a view to preventing an open rupture between them and the Nawāb. Khwajah Wājid's mission proved to be of no avail, Drake did not behave properly with him, considered him to be "a secret enemy"<sup>4</sup> and turned him out of Calcutta. In their letter to the Council at Fort St. George, dated the 7th July, 1756, Watts and

<sup>3</sup> *Sirāj-ud-daulah's letters to Khwajah Wājid, 22nd May & 1st June, 1756.* Hill, I, pp. 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> *Drake's Narrative, dated 19th July, 1756.* Hill, I, pp. 139-140.

Collet noted that Khwajah Wājīd “went four times to Calcutta in order to persuade the gentleman to make up matters with the Nabob, but was threatened to be ill used if he came again on the same errand”<sup>5</sup>. They observed in another letter to the Council at Fort St. George, dated the 16th July, 1756: “\* \* \* \* from the above proofs there appears to us the greatest moral certainty that the Nawāb never intended to drive the English out of his province \* \* \*”<sup>6</sup>. John Young, Chief of the Prussian Factory in Bengal, wrote in a letter to Drake, dated the 10th July, 1756: “Fuckeer Toujar (Khwajah Wājīd) went or sent, I cannot say which, nor how many times, to exhort and incline you to pacify measures, which you would neither hear nor accept of; but in lieu thereof, threatened him at last if he dared to return again on that subject”<sup>7</sup>.

A careful scrutiny of the relevant contemporary documents shows that these charges were not baseless. The Council in Calcutta had attempted to improve their fortifications in defiance of the authority of the Nawāb’s government during the fatal illness of Alivardi. Even if it be argued that no new works of fortification had been undertaken at that time, and that Sirāj-ud-daulah had received false or fabricated reports regarding the preparations of the English and the French, there cannot be any doubt as to their efforts to strengthen such construction as had already been completed and to carry out certain repairs. Sirāj-ud-daulah was not content to remain a silent spectator in this matter. Like Murshid Quli Jāfar Khān and Alivardi Khān, he felt that it would not be advisable to allow the Europeans to build strong fortifications within his dominions, as this would adversely affect his own authority. In view of the military and political exploits and successes of the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 62-63; vide also *Holwell’s letter to Court, 30th November, 1756*, Hill, II, p. 22, and *Letter of Richard Becher to the Council in Calcutta, dated 25th January, 1757*, Hill, II, pp. 157-163.



Europeans in southern India and the virtual subordination of the rulers of Hyderabad and Arcot to their control, Sirāj-ud-daulah, like his grandfather, thought it necessary to take adequate precautions for the prevention of European interference in Bengal politics. The Carnatic episodes must have greatly influenced his policy towards the Europeans in Bengal.

It would be incorrect to say that Sirāj-ud-daulah forbade the English to add to their fortifications out of a special bias against them. He wished to enforce the same injunction on the other European nations as well. Even Howell states: "though liberty of trade is granted to the Danes and Prussians, yet they are prohibited fortifications or garrisons". Sirāj-ud-daulah simultaneously ordered the French at Chandernagore and Drake, the English Governor in Calcutta, to desist from building fortifications at their respective settlements. The former were able to satisfy him. But he became "extremely disgusted" at Drake's reply to the effect that the English were not "erecting any new fortifications" but were only repairing the wharf and that the report of their digging a new ditch was a pure concoction by their enemies, there being only the ditch which had been excavated during the period of Marāthā invasions with the consent of Alivardi. Drake further stated that fearing a renewal of hostilities with the French, which was bound to have an echo in India, the English "thought it necessary to be upon our guard and make our place as defensible as we could".

When Drake's reply reached the Nawāb at Rājmahal on his way to Purnea, he is said to have exclaimed: "Who shall dare to think of commencing hostilities in my country, or presume to imagine I have not power to protect them"? Holwell regrets that the answer had not been "debated in Council before it was sent". He also observes: ".....the whole of it had a tendency to confirm the Suba (*Subahdār*) in a belief of those insinuations which had been already conveyed to him, that the war between us and the French would probably be

brought into Bengal besides its carrying a tacit reflection on the Suba's power or will to protect us".

There is plenty of contemporary evidence to justify Sirāj-ud-daulah's complaint regarding the abuse of *dastaks* by the Company's servants to the detriment of the revenues of the government and the interests of the Indian merchants. It had become an old practice by that time in spite of the previous attempts to eradicate it by the Nawābs as well as by the English Company. In 1755 the Court of Directors asked the Council in Calcutta to "be extremely careful to prevent all abuses of the *dusticks*". Referring to the "ill use made of this indulgence" by the servants of the Company, Holwell observed in his letter to the Court of Directors dated 30 November, 1756: "That the abuse of *dusticks* should be one cause of complaint, I am not surprised at". Roger Drake claimed that he "had in a great measure curbed that unlicensed practice", had "refused applications on that head", and "was warm to remedy and put those checks which were resolved on to prevent the abuse of that indulgence". But he could not certainly remove this abuse which grew so much in the post-Plassey period.

So far as the third complaint is concerned, it is not really "difficult to understand" Sirāj-ud-daulah's point of view. There is a clear reference in the account of Dacid Rannic (August, 1756) that the English Company gave protection to the "Nabob's subjects", though they were neither their "servants" nor their "merchants". Further, the affair of Krishnadās (Krishnaballabh) was a sufficiently provocative one. For certain reasons, particularly on account of Rājballabh's leadership of a hostile-party, there was no love lost between him and Sirāj-ud-daulah. Sirāj-ud-daulah demanded from him an account of the administration of the finances of Dacca for several years. Rājballabh, who happened to be then at Murshidābād, was placed in confinement in March, 1756, and some persons were deputed to Dacca to attach his property and arrest his family. There is

no doubt that Rājballabh's family fled to Calcutta, and that the Council in Calcutta continued to shelter the son and the family of an ex-officer of the government, who had incurred the *subahdār's* displeasure, even after he had demanded their dismissal. Richard Becher wrote that to harbour Krishna-ballabh in Calcutta in defiance of the Nawāb's demand was a "wrong step". Some other Englishmen considered it to be a risky course. On the eve of Alivardi's death, Watts himself suggested to the President in Calcutta that it would be "expedient" that "Kissendass and the rest of Ragbullub's family should have no longer protection in Calcutta". Deeming this to be a "salutary advice" and fearing that the continuance of protection to them till the death of Alivardi "might be productive of troublesome consequences", Holwell "pressed more than once for the dismissal of this family". He admitted, however, that it would have been dangerous to dismiss them, "the more especially as for some days advices from all quarters were in favour of the Begum's (Ghasitī Begam's) party".

The treatment meted out to the Nawāb's messenger, Narayan Dās (also referred to as Nārāyan Singh), by Drake and some other members of the Council in Calcutta added fuel to the fire. Nārāyan Dās had come with a letter from the Nawāb which contained a demand for the delivery of Krishnaballabh, his family and treasures. He entered Calcutta on the 14th April in disguise according to some and went to the house of Omichānd, one of the most influential men in Calcutta. In the evening Omichānd took him to Holwell and Pearkes, as Drake, the Governor, was then at Barāsāt. On the Governor's return to Calcutta the next morning, the matter was being discussed by Drake, Holwell and Manningham, when they heard that Omichānd and Nārāyan Dās had reached the factory and were waiting for an interview with them. Omichānd was then in disfavour with Drake, who along with his colleagues, at once suspected this to be a trick on Omichānd's part to take possession of the wealth of Krishna-

ballabh by effecting his transfer to one of his houses. They decided not to receive Nārāyan Dās, or the Nawāb's letter brought by him and under their orders some of their servants turned him out of the settlement "with insolence and derision". Soon realising, however, that this step might produce bitter consequences, they instructed Watts at Kāsimbāzār to take necessary precaution to avert such developments. Watts seems to have managed the situation satisfactorily for some time.

The expulsion of Nārāyan Dās was regarded by the Nawāb as a serious insult to himself. Becher describes it as "an affront that it could not be expected any Prince would put up with from a set of merchants.....". There was absolutely no ground for questioning the authenticity of the document carried by Nārāyan Dās and construing the whole affair as a clever and selfish move on the part of Omichānd. From Holwell's letter it is clear that he believed in the deputation of Nārāyan Dās by Sirāj-ud-daulah. It is strange that in the same paragraph, where Holwell expresses this view, he tries to justify the expulsion of Nārāyan Dās by pleading that the latter "had stolen like a thief and a spy into the Settlement (and not like one in the public character he pretended and as bearing the Suba's orders)". The real motive of Drake, Holwell and Manningham in turning out Nārāyan Dās can be read in the following statement of Holwell himself: "We were all a good deal embarrassed how to act on this occasion, (seeing) that the same reasons that before forbid the family being turned out of the place after the Suba's death still subsisted equally strong against delivering them up, as the contest was yet undecided between Surujud Dowla and the young Begum". Omichānd's statement before Holwell on the 14th April was that "Naran Singh had got, in the disguise of a European dress, into the Settlement". But the *Jamādār* of the *Chauki*, where Nārāyan Dās had landed, reported to Holwell next morning that he "came in the disguise of a common Bengali *pāikār* (broker)". There could be no

similarity between the dress of a European and that of an ordinary Bengali *pāikār*.

Watts and Collet wrote to the Court of Directors from Chandernagore on 16 July, 1756, "that the Nabob never intended to drive the English out of his province but would have been satisfied with a sum of money". They asserted that they had forwarded a letter to this effect to Drake from Hugli through the Dutch Director, but Drake did not agree with them. It may be that the Nawāb's resentment was too intense to be removed in the manner suggested by Watts and Collet. But it can be reasonably said that complete expulsion of the English was not his deliberate and premeditated design. He wrote to Pigot, the Governor of Madras, "It was not my intention to remove the mercantile business of the Company belonging to you out of the *subah* of Bengal, but Roger Drake, your *gomastā*, was a very wicked and unruly man and began to give protection to persons who had accounts with the *Patcha* in his *Koatey* (*Kothi*, factory). Notwithstanding all my admonitions, yet he did not desist from his shameless actions. Why should these people who come to transact the mercantile affairs of the Company be doers of such actions?" Drake and his Council did not make sincere efforts to come to an agreement with the Nawāb. The little they did was half-hearted and belated. A letter was, if the testimony of Khwajah Wājid's Chinsura *diwān* Shri Bābu (Shiva Bābu) is to be credited, sent by Drake to the Nawāb at his persuasion and through him; but it was too late, hostilities having already commenced.

The Nawāb had started from Murshidābād on the 16th May for suppressing Shaukat Jang. On his way to Purnea he heard at Rāj-mahal on the 20th May that Governor Drake had insulted his messengers and immediately decided "to teach the English a lesson".

The Nawāb's troops<sup>8</sup> invested the English factory at Kāsim-

<sup>8</sup> Numbering according to Watts and Collet, who were there, 10,000 cavalry and 20,000 gunmen. Hill, I, p. 46.

bāzār on the 24th May. The Nawāb returned to Murshidābād within a few days and brought the Kāsimbāzār factory fully under his control by the 4th June. Durlabhrām, the Nawāb's *Diwān*, sent a message to Watts, Chief of the English Factory at Kāsimbāzār, asking him to see the Nawāb with assurance of safety. On Watts' arrival before the Nawāb he was forced to sign a capitulation to the following effect:- (1) No protection is to be given in Calcutta to any of the Nawāb's subjects, (2) The draw-bridge at Perrins and the new fortifications are to be demolished and no *dastaks* to be given to any of the black (Indian) merchants"<sup>9</sup>. The Nawāb's army soon occupied the Kāsimbāzār Factory and seized all guns and ammunitions stocked there. The godowns of the Factory were "sealed up with the Nawab's seal and the soldiers remaining in the factory were carried prisoners" to Murshidābād.<sup>10</sup> They were released after some days.

Acting with great promptitude, on the 5th June the Nawāb marched on Calcutta, taking with him Watts and another member of the Kāsimbāzār Factory, Collet, who were, however, delivered to the French Governor at Chandernagore with orders to send them "safe" to Madras<sup>11</sup>. On the 16th June the Nawab's army appeared before Calcutta and attacked Perrin's Redout, which covered the approaches to the Chitpur bridge over the Marātha Ditch but failed to take it. Nevertheless, many of the Nawāb's troops and the looters who were following his army, found their way into Calcutta and the Nawāb himself took up his quarters in Omichānd's garden in the area known as Simlā. Having decided to defend only the European part of Calcutta, that is, the area later known as Dalhousie Square and the region east and south of it, the English set fire to the bamboo and straw huts in the Indian quarter or the "Black Town" during the night of the 16th "in order to drive out the Nawāb's men". Next day

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47.

the English caused all the Indian houses to the east and south to be burnt, and the looters accompanying the Nawāb's army also set fire to the great bazar, that is, the old Bara Bazar situated north of the Fairlie Place, and to "many parts of the Black Town", which burnt till morning. "All the British women were brought into the Fort on the 16th and next day the Portuguese and the Armenian women and children crowded into the Fort (their relatives) the militia declaring that they would not fight unless their families were admitted".<sup>12</sup>

Sirāj-ud-daulah wanted to enlist the support of the French, the Dutch and the Danes in his anti-British enterprises. He drew up *parwānahs* for these three Companies assuring them of his favour. On the 28th May, 1756, he sent copies of the *parwānahs* to Khwajah Wājid for delivering these to them and wrote to him "to endeavour to engage these nations to prevent the English resettling themselves", after they had been driven out<sup>13</sup>. While marching towards Calcutta, Sirāj-ud-daulah wrote to the Dutch, the French and the Danes "to be expeditious in getting their vessels of force in readiness to accompany" his "land army and attack the English by the river" while he besieged them on shore<sup>14</sup>.

The Dutch did not comply with this demand of Sirāj-ud-daulah. Highly infuriated at this the latter wrote the following letter<sup>15</sup> to Adriān Bisdom, the Dutch Director at Hugli, on the 22nd June, 1756: "I have too frequently written to you from Moorshidabad that you were to join your power to the King's army for the destruction of the wicked English by water, though your not doing so is of no account whatever and you were asked only to put you to the test, for by God's blessing and help I am so strongly provided that I find myself able to exterminate ten such nations as these English, and if you wish to ensure the

<sup>12</sup> *History of Bengal, II*, p. 474.

<sup>13</sup> Hill, *I*, p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 26.

continuation of the Company's trade in this country, you will have to act in accordance with what I caused to be made known to you through my friend, Faggeruttojjar Coja (Khwajah) Mahmd Wājid<sup>16</sup>, but in the contrary case, it will be all over with your trade in the *soubaship*, which is a true warning concerning which you must know your own mind". On receipt of this letter the Dutch Director met Khwajah Wājid, who told him that the Nawāb was highly displeased with the Dutch for their refusal to help him and demanded twenty lacs from them<sup>17</sup>. Through the mediation of Khwajah Wājid and Durlabhrām, the Nawāb's demand was reduced to four lacs of rupees, which was paid by the Dutch and the mediators got from them 10,000 rupees as a sort of reward for what they had done to help them in this matter.

The Nawāb's troops attacked the British line of defence on the 18th June. At about 10 A.M. on the 19th Governor Drake, Commandant Minchin, Mackett, Captain Grant, and many other Englishmen abandoned Fort William to its fate. Frankland and Manningham had already deserted it and taken shelter on board the ships in the river. They reached Fultā on the 26th June. Holwell could not escape probably for want of a boat. Those who remained in the Fort were greatly indignant at what has been described as "disgraceful desertion". Though not the seniormost member, Holwell was selected by them to be the Governor and Administrator of the Company's affairs. After a feeble resistance, Fort William surrendered before 6 P.M. on Sunday the 20th June.

We have, as Holwell wrote, many "different narratives and accounts" from his contemporaries of the loss of Calcutta by the English. This to a large extent is due to the attempt of each important officer concerned to justify his own conduct and establish his own innocence. Some said that Watts' surrender was a blunder and resistance on his part for some time at least

<sup>16</sup> *Fakhr-ul-Tijjar*—Chief of Merchants.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, I, pp. 26-29.



could have prevented the Nawāb's prompt attack on Calcutta. Watts pleaded in defence that it would have been "madness" on his part "to resist the Government" when "so great a part" of the Company's "estate amounting to many lacks of Rupees was dispersed over the whole country which would have been immediately seized" to the great loss of the Company. According to Holwell, the immediate causes of this "catastrophe" were weak and defective fortifications, remissness on the part of the garrison and insufficiency of military stores, and certain "capital errors" on the part of the officers. He describes it as a "Tragedy of Errors" of which the fifth act was the desertion of the Fort by Drake and others which was a "breach of trust". The flight of Drake and his companions was not so greatly responsible for the debacle as Holwell tried to show. But there is no doubt, as has been observed by Grey (Junior), a servant of the Company who was present on the scene, that it damaged the morale of those remaining in the Fort and caused a terrible confusion, disorder and tumult which Holwell could not control.

What happened to those in the Fort who surrendered to the victor? "The Armenians and Portuguese were at liberty, and suffered to go to their own houses. Several Europeans just walked out of the Fort, and escaped to Hooghly or the ships at Surman's garden". Holwell had three interviews with Sirāj-ud-daulah, who assured him of safety. The Nawāb's troops "had plundered the Europeans of their valuables, but did not ill-treat them. . . . . Suddenly the scene changed. Some European soldiers had made themselves drunk and assaulted the natives. The latter complained to the Nawāb, who asked where the Europeans were accustomed to confine soldiers who had misbehaved in any way. He was told in the Black Hole, and as some of his officers suggested it would be dangerous to leave so many prisoners at large during the night, ordered that they should all be confined in it"<sup>18</sup>. It was a chamber 18 feet

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<sup>18</sup> Hill, I, XC.

by 14 feet 10 inches with only one window. Some of the prisoners may have died in the hot night of June "due to suffocation or their wounds"<sup>19</sup>. Yusuf Ali, a contemporary writer, observes: "Near about a hundred of the Feringis, who during that day had become captives of the claws of destiny, were all brought together and fastened up in a small room. The duty of management of the factory and sequestration of its contents was entrusted to some of the officers and then Sirāj-ud-daulah left the factory and took up his residence in one of the houses of the Feringis. By chance, in the small room in which they had been kept, all the Feringis got suffocated and turned their faces to the walls of annihilation".

Holwell stated in his letter to the Council at Bombay, dated 17 July 1756: "The Resistance we made and the loss they (the Nawāb's officers) suffered so irritated the Nabob that he ordered myself and all the prisoners promiscuously to the number of about 165 or 170 to be crammed altogether into a small prison in the fort called the Black Hole, from whence only about 16 of us came out alive in the morning the rest being suffocated to death". But pleading that this letter contained some "errors and omissions occasioned by the wretched state" in which he then was, he wrote in his letter to Fort St. George, dated 3rd August, 1756, that he had "over-reckoned the number of prisoners put into the Black Hole and the number of the dead; the former only 146 and the latter 123", and that he had done injustice to the Nawāb by charging him "with designedly having ordered the unheard of piece of cruelty of cramming us all into that small prison", as he had only passed 'general' orders for their imprisonment and his guards perpetrated cruelties on them in a spirit of revenge for the personal losses which they had suffered. Varying statements regarding the number of prisoners and victims are noticed in some other letters also. It is very doubtful if there could have been as many men in the Fort on

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<sup>19</sup> *History of Bengal, II*, p. 476.

the evening of the 20th June as Holwell mentioned, after death, desertion and evacuation had reduced the number. The number was probably about sixty<sup>20</sup> and of them "at the most forty-three lost their lives"<sup>21</sup>.

The veracity of Holwell's story of the Black Hole came to be questioned on strong grounds some years back by two competent and careful writers, J. H. Little and A. K. Maitra. Little describes it as a 'gigantic hoax'. Inconsistencies in a large number of contemporary records which cannot be satisfactorily explained, certain contradictions in Holwell's different accounts, absence of the mention of Holwell's story in some contemporary official despatches and documents and in the important contemporary histories written in Persian<sup>22</sup>, and the physical impossibility of

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 477.

<sup>21</sup> Brijen K. Gupta, *Siraj-ud-daulah and the East India Company*, p. 138.

<sup>22</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin* by Ghulām Husian; *Riyāz-us-salātin* by Ghulām Husain Salim; *Muzaffarnāmah* by Karam Ali. In 1783, a French renegade Hāji Mustafa, translator of the *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, wrote: "This much is certain, that this event\*\*\* is not known in Bengal; and even in Calcutta, it is ignored by every man out of the four hundred thousand that inhabit the city;" at least it is difficult to meet a single native that knows anything of it\*\*\*" In trying to prove that Holwell's Blackhole story was "a solid historical fact", (*Bengal: Past and Present*, 1925, pp. 224-25) Professor Mesrobian. J. Seth cited evidence of two contemporary Armenian merchants, which, however, on careful scrutiny, seems to have been biased against Sirāj-ud-daulah. Referring to the arguments of Little, Henry Dodwell wrote in 1920 that these "cheerfully ignore the first principles of evidence. That Holwell touched up his narrative with an eye to picturesque effect is possible enough; but that a large number of people were suffocated in the Black-Hole is established by the evidence of too many survivors to be shaken. Of Holwell's general veracity the present writer has as poor an opinion as any one; but even at times he approximated to the truth\*\*\*(1). He wrote again after a few years: "Altogether the controversy seems to have arisen from the perplexities of a student unaccustomed to the conflicts of evidence which the historian has perpetually to encounter; and his negative arguments do not seem to me capable of bearing the weight he would lay upon them".(11) To me this judgement on the arguments of Little do not seem to be fair. A modern writer has significantly observed: "too many survivors of the Black-Hole, who have left evidence of the incident, turn out to be two—Holwell and Cooke, and, at the most three, if Captain Mills is also included".(111)

(i) *Dodwell, Duplex and Clive*, p. 122 footnote.

(ii) *Cambridge History of India*, V, p. 156 footnote.

(iii) Brijen K. Gupta, *Sirāj-ud-daulah and the East India Company*, p. 72.

a floor area of 287 square feet containing 146 European adults<sup>23</sup> cannot but lead unbiased students of history to doubt its authenticity.

On the capture of the English factory at Kāṣimbāzār by the Nawāb the Council in Calcutta had sent instructions to the other factories to take necessary precautions for their defence and, if necessary, for the safe withdrawal of officers. Peter Amyatt and Thomas Boddam, Chiefs at Lakshimpur and Bālāsore respectively, managed to escape with much of the cash and property belonging to the Company. They joined Drake's party at Fultā. Richard Becher, Chief at Dacca, was obliged to surrender the factory to the Nawāb's officers and with his subordinates and the English ladies took shelter in the local French factory, whose Chief, Courtin, treated them kindly and lent them a sloop on which they reached Fultā on the 26th August. According to M. Pierre Renault, the Nawāb's people found in the Dacca factory "more than fourteen hundred thousand rupees in merchandise and silver". The only factory that was then retained by the English was that at Balarāmgarhi lying at the mouth of the Bālāsore River.

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<sup>23</sup> This was pointed out by Bholānāth Chunder in the Calcutta University Magazine. It has been quoted by Akshay Kumār Maitra in his book on Sirāj-ud-daulah (in Bengali).

## CHAPTER III

### SUCCESSFUL PURNEA EXPEDITION

After capturing Calcutta in June, 1756, Sirāj-ud-daulah returned to Murshidābād on the 11th July celebrating his victory with great pomp. But he had to meet a new danger due to the design of Shaukat Jang to contest the *masnad* of Bengal with him. Mir Jāfar sent a secret letter to Shaukat Jang exhorting him to march into Bengal to capture its *masnad*, by assuring him of his support and that of some other generals in Murshidābād. Shaukat Jang himself was too ambitious to require any such goading. In fact, he had started conspiring with some members of the Delhi court and managed to obtain from the Wāzir Imād-ul-mulk permission to seize the *masnad* of Bengal by promising him a bribe of crore of rupees. Inordinate ambition had turned his head. Karam Ali, the author of *Muzaffarnāmah*, who was then at Purnea, states that the "character of Shaukat Jang was naturally violent and impulsive, and it now became more rude and vicious". Ghulām Husain, the author of *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*<sup>1</sup>, describes how the stupefying influence of drugs and flattering proposals and false representations of sycophants had made him abnormal and increased his vanity so much that he ignored sincere advice of his well-wishers and dismissed many of the old officers of his army with indignities. When Rāsh Behāri, an officer of Sirāj-ud-daulah, reached Rājmahal and forwarded him a letter of his master for giving peaceful possession of that area, he in his insolence and thoughtlessness sent an offensive reply to the effect that he had received from the Imperial Court "the patent of the three provinces of Bengal, Behar and Orissa" in his own name but that in view of his kinship with Sirāj-ud-daulah he would spare a part of Dacca for him where he should retire forthwith and live as his Deputy.

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<sup>1</sup> He was then in Purnea and was an eye-witness of the battle of Manihārī.

The inevitable contest soon broke out. Sirāj-ud-daulah started with his troops for Purnea, on the 24th September, 1756, to oppose Shaukat Jang. Summoned by Sirāj-ud-daulah to his assistance, Rājā Rāmnārāin, Deputy Governor of Bihār, "set out", writes Ghulām Husain, "with Raja Sunder Singh (of Tikāri), Pahalwān Singh of Bhojpur, and his brother Suther Singh, at the head of a force of Azimābād (Patna), which alone could not be less than the double of the forces of Shaukat Jang, but which at any rate might have been a great deal more than equal."<sup>2</sup> Raja Dhiraj Narāin, brother of Rājā Rāmnārāin, was asked to look after the affairs at Patna during the latter's absence on this expedition. The advanced portion of Sirāj-ud-daulah's army, under the command of Mohan Lāl, had already crossed the Ganges at Rājmahal and by way of Hāyātpur and Basantpur Golā reached Manihārī in south Purnea. The other portion of the Bengal army and the Bihār troops under Rājā Rāmnārāin marched at some distance behind.

Meanwhile Shaukat Jang's army had encamped at Nawābganj, four miles north of Manihārī. Referring to this position, the eye-witness Ghulām Husain writes that it was "surrounded everywhere by lakes and morasses so that there was no approaching it but by a narrow passage, that ended in narrow causeway. The lakes were everywhere two or three *cosse* over and deep, and in some places, where they might be accessible in dry weather the passage had been barred by deep ditch and a rampart; so that the post had become very strong. The post was approved of on all hands; but what is singular, the Commanders of the troops, especially of his cavalry, out of disgust against his indecent way of speaking, were desirous of encamping at a distance from him; and himself, out of mistrust to them, was not pleased with having them for his neighbours. So that whilst

<sup>2</sup> *Siyār (English translation)*, II, p. 206. Thirty thousand cavalry and fifty thousand infantry besides field-pieces according to *Dastur-ul-Imlā*, a contemporary collection of letters. *J.B.R.S.*, 1938, pp. 173-187.

the cavalry was marching to the rendezvous orders were sent to the troops to encamp on the shore of the little river, Sonra, which was about a coss-and-a half, or even more, from his own tents; and these last had been pitched within the entrenched part. In consequence of such a disposition the principal commanders encamped at too great a distance from each other"<sup>3</sup>. In such a situation concerted action was impossible. Shyām Sunder, a Bengali Kāyastha, was commander of Shaukat Jang's field artillery. But coming out of *jhil* he took a position in the plain, "without any natural defence before him, a mile in front of his side on their east"<sup>4</sup>. About four miles west of him, behind the *jhil*, were the regular cavalry and other Purnea troops. Shaukat Jang's tents were pitched in the centre, three miles east of his cavalry and about a mile west of the artillery.

Actual fighting started on the 16th October after one-third of the day had passed. The result was complete rout of the Purnea army. "Many of the Purnea troops were slain and wounded; many who had reached the other bank were captured; the rest broke, recrossed the *jhil* and fled away without having once had the chance of drawing their swords"<sup>5</sup> Shaukat Jang was on his elephant in a state of bewilderment with only fourteen men, when a musket ball thrown on his forehead killed him. His jewelled turban rolled down to the ground<sup>6</sup>. The battle was over by sunset and the survivors in the Purnea army were not chased. They (including the historian Ghulām Husain) ran away to their houses without being molested in any way<sup>7</sup>.

Mohan Lāl was left at Purnea to regulate its affairs and to take possession of the wealth and property of Shaukat Jang. He was to be assisted by Mir Kāzīm Risāldār, Bāl Krishan

<sup>3</sup> *Siyār*, 11, p. 207.

<sup>4</sup> *History of Bengal, Vol. II*, p. 479.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 480.

<sup>6</sup> Karam Ali notes that some people "carried it as a present to Sirāj-ud-daulah".

<sup>7</sup> *Siyār*, II, p. 214, Ghulām Husain came to Patna and, after a short stay there, proceeded to Banaras.

Hāzārī, Kishwār Khān Asis and Mirzā Zain-ul-abdin Baqāwāt. On the attack of a serious illness Mohan Lāl returned to Murshidābād leaving his son to administer Purnea.<sup>8</sup> According to Yusuf Ali and Karam Ali, Rājā Rāmārāin received special favours from Sirāj-ud-daulah for his services. He was secretly ordered to keep under surveillance Oma Khān, Mirzā Ghulām Ali Beg and some others, who were suspected of conspiracy with Mir Jāfar. Mirzā Ghulām Ali Beg, Mirzā Hākim Beg, Ahmad Ali Khān, and Hasan Quli Khān were kept confined in the *Haveli* of Hāji Ahmad (brother of Alivardi) in the centre of Patna City. *Paraganā* Mānpur (Gayā district) and the *mahals* which formed the *Jāgir* of Hākim Beg Khān and his sons were confiscated. Umar Khān with 700 troopers and his two sons, Dabil Khān and Asālat Khan, were imprisoned in the garden of Jāfar Khān (just east of Patna City). All “these prisoners obtained their release after the murder of Sirāj-ud-daulah; only Umar Khān, who had been disgusted with life, died in prison”.

Sirāj-ud-daulah returned to Murshidābād “in gold-decorated boats with every pomp”<sup>9</sup>. He was now at the zenith of his power and prosperity, as the historian Ghulām Husain observes. But his star soon began to pale. Probably in a false sense of security Sirāj-ud-daulah thought that the capture of Calcutta was too strong a blow on the English to enable them to regain it, and so he did not follow up his success in Calcutta by striking against the English at Fulta<sup>10</sup> “It may appear matter of wonder”, observes Scrafton<sup>11</sup>, “why the Soubah (Nawāb) permitted us to continue so quietly at Fulta, till we were become formidable to him, which I can only account for from his mean opinion of us, as he had been frequently heard to

<sup>8</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, fs, 57a-57b. The author of this work was kept among the prisoners at Purnea for 19 days, but was released at the intercession of the Nawāb's mother.

<sup>9</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, f. 57b.

<sup>10</sup> *Orme*, II, pp. 79-80.

<sup>11</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections*, etc., p. 61.



say, he did not imagine there were ten thousand men in all Feringhistan (meaning Europe) and had no idea of our attempting to return by force". M. Jean Law also notes that the Nawāb "was very far from thinking that the English would entertain the idea of re-establishing themselves by force"<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Hill, *III*, p. 176.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOVERY OF CALCUTTA BY THE ENGLISH.

Drake and the English fugitives at Fultā had to spend bitter days due to want of provisions and proper shelter<sup>1</sup>. They tried to secure occasional assistance from some Indian gentlemen of the neighbourhood<sup>2</sup>, including Rājā Navakrishna of Sobbābāzār, and from the French and the Dutch<sup>3</sup> and further tried to “interest” in their favour<sup>4</sup> some influential men in Bengal like Mānikchānd, Khwajah Wājid, Jagat Seth and Durlabhrām. But actual relief came to them from their settlement at Madras. On the 14th of July, 1756, Charles Manningham, accompanied by Lieutenant Lebeaume, sailed<sup>5</sup> for Madras with the following letter from the Council at Fulda to the Council at Fort St. George: “our utmost efforts have been employed to dispatch to you sooner the intelligence of the capture of Calcutta by the Moors acting under the orders of Souragge Dowlat, the New Nawāb, which account we doubt not have reached you before this can possibly arrive by means of *Pattamars* (couriers), from the *Shroffs* or Foreign Nations. A narrative of this unhappy event will be, in our opinion, faithfully related to you by Mr. Charles Manningham, which we have not time to commit at present to writing. The above gentlemen we depute to your Honour, etc., on the United East India Company’s behalf, and require from his representation that you will support us with the whole force, you can obtain on your coast, military and marine together with a sufficient quantity of ammunition, cannon and all other warlike stores Military and Marine, which may enable us to re-establish ourselves in those Provinces, which we esteem of the most essen-

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Drake, Manningham and some others to William Watts and Matthew Collet, dated on Board ship “Doddalecy” off Fulda, the 6th July, 1756.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *I*, p. 171.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25, 37, 306; Scrafton, *Reflections, etc.*, p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> Hill, *I*, p. 57.

<sup>5</sup> Hill, *I*, p. 195.

tial consequence to the East India Company and trade of India in general<sup>6</sup>". Manningham's ship arrived at Vizagapatam on the 12th August and was detained there for about a month owing to a heavy downpour and the consequent difficulty of procuring palanquin-bearers. But he sent the Bengal Council's letter to Madras through M. Lebeaume on the 28th August.<sup>7</sup>

Already in response to the Bengal Council's previous letters regarding the Nawāb's hostile behaviour towards the Company, the Madras authorities had sent on the 20th July a detachment of 230 men, mostly Europeans, under the command of Major Killpatrick. Major Killpatrick arrived at Fultā on the 31st July and found himself placed in a very bad situation "amidst gentlemen, driven out from their habitations, driven out from all they have in the world, and what is worst, having lost all or almost all that had been committed to their charge". So, with insufficient troops and ammunition, and owing to the prevalence of sickness among his soldiers, Major Killpatrick could not undertake any offensive action. He had to wait for further reinforcements from Madras<sup>8</sup>, but before these could reach, he tried to humour the Nawāb through some of his friends. On the 15th August the Major wrote a letter to the Nawāb "complaining a little of the hard usage of the English Honourable Company, assuring him of his good intentions notwithstanding what had happened, and begging in the meantime, till things were cleared up, that he would treat him at least as a friend", and would give orders that his people might be supplied with sufficient provisions<sup>9</sup>. On the 22nd August he himself received a letter from Omichānd "assuring him of his good intentions and of the desire he had to serve him."

In the meantime news of the capture of Calcutta had reached Pigot, President of the Council at Fort St. George, on the 16th

<sup>6</sup> *Bengal and Madras Papers, II.*

<sup>7</sup> Hill, I, p. 242.

<sup>8</sup> Orme, *Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan, II*, pp. 80-94.

<sup>9</sup> *Consultation on Board the Phoenix Schooner, Fultā, 22nd August, 1756.*

August through a letter written to him by Watts and Collet<sup>10</sup> and on the next day he informed his Council about it<sup>11</sup>. In consideration of the "great importance of the Settlement of Calcutta to the Company", the Council agreed that "the utmost efforts should be made to recover it<sup>12</sup>", and thought it desirable to consult Admiral Watson in the matter. On a special request<sup>13</sup> Admiral Watson and Admiral Pocock attended the Council next day, and agreed to use their squadron for the Company's services in Bengal. The Council then resolved to send a small force with the object of recapturing Calcutta only. But Admiral Watson was not disposed to send the expedition before the end of September and wrote the following letter to the Council on the 25th August: "And having further considered this expedition, I am apt to think, if it is delayed, till the last week in next month, there will be a much greater probability of success attending it than if the ships were to proceed immediately, as they will then escape the rainy season which is allowed by everybody to be the most unhealthy part of the year, and in all appearance, if the ships were to go now, one-third of the men would fall sick before there would be an opportunity of doing any service"<sup>14</sup>. After a long debate it was unanimously resolved by the Madras Council on the 25th August that "Admiral Watson be desired to send the Fifty and Twenty Gun ships down to Bengal, with about two hundred and forty military with the intent to re-take Calcutta only without attempting anything more until joined by further succours, and that all necessary preparations be made, as expeditiously as possible, to send all the Forces that can be spared from hence with the remainder of the squadron, if in the interim the expected Advices from Europe (about the outbreak of a war

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<sup>10</sup> Hill, *I*, pp. 45-57.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 195.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 197.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 206.

with the French) should make it necessary to alter these measures". It was also decided to write to the Council at Fulta informing them of that decision and advising them "not to conclude any terms with the Nabob, but if he should be inclined to treat, amuse him" until they received further forces or advice from Madras<sup>16</sup>.

The Madras Council met again on the 29th August when the first point of consideration was whether the survivors of the late Council in Bengal should still retain the same powers and rights as they had before. After a long debate the question was decided in the affirmative<sup>17</sup>. The resolutions of the 26th instant were also altered, and it was resolved that "Admiral Watson be desired to suspend any orders he may have given for the departure of the Fifty and Twenty Gun ships and that the Embarkation of the Men intended to be sent on them be also counter-manded. That in case the expected ships from England should not bring the news of a war with France, Admiral Watson be then desired to proceed down to Bengal with the whole squadron at once. That Colonel Adlcorncorn be desired to proceed on the squadron with his whole regiment and Train of Artillery. And that all preparations of stores and necessaries be made with all possible expedition, in the same manner they would be, were it peremptorily resolved such an expedition should proceed at all events."<sup>18</sup> The Madras authorities were relieved of a great anxiety when the Company's ships Chesterfield and Walpole arrived from England on the 19th September without any news of the actual outbreak of war.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Consultations at Fort St. George, 29th August, 1756, Bengal and Madras Papers, II; Ives' Voyage, p. 94.*

<sup>18</sup> *Consultations at St. George, 29th August, 1756, Bengal and Madras Papers, Vol II.* About the reasons for arriving at this resolution vide *Letter from the Select Committee, Fort Saint George, to the Select Committee, Fort William, dated 21st February, 1757, Hill, II, pp. 232-233.*

<sup>19</sup> *Letter from Fort Saint George to the Court of Directors, dated 13th October, 1756, Bengal and Madras Papers, II.*

But there were also other issues which demanded solution before the expedition to Bengal could be undertaken. There was difference of opinion as to who should command the land force, what should be the extent of his authority in military operations and in negotiations with the Nawab, and what should be done with the captures of the war, etc.<sup>20</sup> A Council of War, held at St. Thomas Mount near Fort St. George, on 20th September, 1756, decided to send the expedition under their own officers and troops at Madras from consideration of material necessity<sup>21</sup>. Six hundred rank and file and one hundred of the trained were ordered for the expedition under the command of Colonel Clive. It was decided that Smith, a member of the Madras Council, and John Walsh, should join Colonel Clive as deputies from the Madras Council and Thomas Maunsell should also accompany him. The Council agreed to give the following powers and instructions to Clive, Smith and Walsh:

“(I) That the Gentlemen at Calcutta be desired by us to form a plan of a Treaty which the Deputy be directed to abide by the tenour of, and make the basis of their correspondence or transactions with the Nabob.

“(II) That Colonel Clive be directed to proceed to all such Hostilities as he thinks will most likely bring the Nabob to those terms until he has had the success to do so, or until he finds utterly impracticable, or he is recalled by us.

“(III) That the Deputies be desired to receive and attend to

<sup>20</sup> Orme, *II*, pp. 37-88.

<sup>21</sup> (a) “.....the steps which in case of the expected success may be thought proper to be taken for the benefit of the Company’s interest will be indisputably placed in the power of their servants, who will be subject to our orders.” (b) “.....in case the Nabob should not by treaty make ample reparation for the immense damage the Company have sustained by his violences, it is the Intention of the Board to reimburse the Company as far as possible by Reprisals. But as the Board are uncertain whether the laws direct distribution of things acquired by arms, the duty they owe to the Company demands that a matter of such Importance be not left in doubt and liable to contest when they may have it in their power to secure the property of such Acquisitions to the Company by employing their own officers and troops.”—*Bengal and Madras Papers, II*.

the Advice of the Gentlemen at Bengal, to weigh the same maturely, and if they think proper to deviate from it in any respect that they have the power to do so, but on assigning reasons to us to be transmitted to the Company.

“(IV) That the Deputies be directed to re-establish the Gentlemen of Bengal in Calcutta as soon as their successes shall render it proper, and that they do when the place is in a sufficient state of security put these Gentlemen in possession of all such part of Company’s Effects as shall remain with them, and be of no further use to them. And that in case the Nabob should agree to a reasonable treaty with the English, that they do put all the possessions acquired by the Treaty under their management.”<sup>22</sup>

It should be noted here that according to the Court of Directors’ letter of the 13th February, 1756, “the management of all affairs of war and diplomacy” had been transferred into the hands of the Select Committees at Madras and Bengal. So, on the 22nd September, the Select Committee at Madras undertook the management of the Bengal Expedition. According to the desire of the Select Committee, the Council, in its sitting of the 28th September, granted a commission appointing Colonel Clive as the Commander-in-Chief of “all the troops sent and to be sent on the Expedition to Bengal” and also empowering Major Killpatrick to succeed him in the command in case of his death and absence. The Council granted 40,00,000 Arcot rupees to the treasury on account of the Bengal expedition, and 40,000 Arcot rupees and 3,250 *pagodas* to John Walsh, Paymaster to the Bengal expedition, for meeting the expenses there<sup>23</sup>

Charles Manningham, who had arrived from Vizagapatam to Fort St. George, on 29th September, objected to the resolutions of the 21st September, which gave the Deputies the powers to deal with the affairs in Bengal and to put the gentleman there

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Consultations at Fort St. George, 28th September, 1756, Bengal and Madras Papers, II.*

in a proper position, after Clive's military success had made their position secure. He argued that the investment of such powers to these Deputies meant that the Council of Bengal had no existence of its own. The question was much debated. Colonel Clive and Robert Orme were in favour of the resolutions of the 21st September but at last they had to submit to the opinion of the majority of the members, who decided, on the 1st of October<sup>24</sup>, that the Deputies would not be sent and the Council of Bengal should be entrusted with these powers. Colonel Clive, who was invested with independent powers to deal with "all military matters and operations", was also furnished with sufficient money and was empowered to draw bills.<sup>25</sup> He was advised to "weigh and consider well the plans he shall receive from the before-mentioned Select Committee of Bengal, and in case he shall judge any part of them not to tend to the most speedy and efficacious method of obtaining the hoped-for advantages to the Company, then to give his best advice on the subject to those gentlemen, and in case their opinions should still differ, then finally to pursue those measures which he shall judge to be most for the Company's benefit", stating clearly to the Madras authorities his reasons for such a proceeding, as these were to be referred to the Court of Directors.<sup>26</sup> The object of the Madras authorities in sending out this expedition, as they pointed out in their letter to the Select Committee in Bengal, dated the 13th October, 1756, was not merely to retake Calcutta or recover their lost settlements and factories, but also to have "all their privileges established in the full extent granted by the Great Mogul (Emperor Farrukhsiyar) and ample reparation

<sup>24</sup> Hill, *I*, pp. 223-227; Orme, *op. cit.*, *II*, p. 88; *Ives' Voyage*, p. 94. Ives notes, on the authority of Admiral Watson's Secretary, that the Admiral was strongly in favour of retaining these powers in the hands of the Council in Bengal. This is also supported by the correspondence between Admiral Watson and the Select Committee at Fort St. George, 30th September, 1756.

<sup>25</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 88.

<sup>26</sup> Hill, *I*, p. 225.



made to them for the loss they have lately sustained.”<sup>27</sup> They were, however, of the opinion that “should the Nabob on the arrival of these forces make offers tending to the acquiring to the Company the before-mentioned advantages” then the “sentiments of revenging injuries, although they were never more just, should give place to the necessity of sparing as far as possible the many bad consequences of war, besides the expense of the Company’s treasuries”; but they mentioned that “the sword should go hand in hand with the pen, and that on the arrival of the present armament, hostilities should immediately commence with the utmost vigour. These hostilities must be of every kind which can either distress his dominions and estate or bring reprisals into our possession.”

“We need not represent to you”, they added, “the great advantage which we think it will be to the military operation, and the influence it will have in the Nabob’s Councils to effect a junction with any Powers in the province of Bengal that may be dissatisfied with the violences of the Nabob’s government, or that may have pretensions to the Nabobship.”

On the 18th of October, 1756, the fleet under the command of Admiral Watson, “being victualled and watered for six weeks”, sailed from Madras.<sup>28</sup> Colonel Clive took with him letters written by Salabat Jung, Nawab of the Deccan, by Muhammad Ali, Nawab of Arcot, and by Pigot “exhorting Surajah Dowlah (Sirāj-ud-daulah) to make immediate reparation for the injuries and calamities which the English had suffered from his unprovoked resentment.”<sup>29</sup>

The whole squadron had to encounter various difficulties and distresses before it reached Fulta, chiefly owing to the heavy rains in Bengal of the months of July, August and September.<sup>30</sup> Admiral Watson tried his best to make way to Balasore Road,

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, I, p. 239.

<sup>28</sup> Hill, III, pp. 30-401; *Ives’ Voyage*, p. 95.

<sup>29</sup> Orme, II, p. 89.

<sup>30</sup> *Ives Voyage*, p. 96; Orme, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 119.

but was obstructed by "trifling winds and strong southernly currents" and found his squadron driving for three weeks to the southward till it got into the Latitude of  $6^{\circ}30'$  N. <sup>31</sup>. On the 10th November "the appearance of a tedious passage obliged the squadron to be put to two-thirds allowance"<sup>32</sup>. On the 15th November the seamen and the military were put to half allowance of provisions, and two-thirds allowance of water, and many of them were attacked with scurvy<sup>33</sup>. Next day the Marlborough, one of the Company's ships, sailing very heavily, was left behind by the rest of the fleet, which reached the ground of Point Palmiras on the 1st December.<sup>34</sup> On the 4th December the squadron came across a pilot sloop and took on board Grant, the pilot. Inconvenience of the military and the seamen for want of water and provisions still continued.<sup>35</sup>

On the 5th December Admiral Watson anchored in Balasore Roads, and was joined on 8th by the *Kent*, *Tyger* and the *Walpole*<sup>36</sup>. On that day the Admiral met Watts and Becher, who had been deputed to him from the Governor and Council at Fulta, to acquaint him with the miserable state of their affairs as well as of the detachment sent under Major Killpatrick, of which only thirty men were then fit for duty.<sup>37</sup> The Admiral then consulted the two British pilots, who had come with Watts and Becher, about carrying the *Kent* and the *Tyger* over the braces. The pilots were of the opinion that it might be done with safety during the spring, and said that if the Admiral permitted them, they would take charge of the ships up the river to Fulta. Encouraged by Captain Speke, who had been before several

<sup>31</sup> *Watson's Letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757.*

<sup>32</sup> *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.; Orme, II, p. 119.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Orme, II, p. 119; Journal of the Expedition, etc.; Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757; Ives' Voyage, p. 97.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Hill, I, XVII*

<sup>37</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757; Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.; Ives' Voyage, p. 97.*

times in the river, the Admiral decided to make an attempt. On the 12th December he reached Injee and on the next day anchored at Culpee, where Drake and Hollwell waited upon the Admiral and Colonel Clive.<sup>38</sup> On the 14th December the Admiral wrote to Bisdom, the Dutch Chief at Chinsura, and to Renault, the French Chief at Chandernagore, warning them against giving any assistance to the Nawab.<sup>39</sup> Bisdom replied to his letter by promising to observe neutrality.

On the 15th December, the Admiral reached Fulta with the *Tyger* and the *Walpole*, and found there the *Delaware*, the *Protector*, and the *Kingfisher*, whom he had sent from Madras, sometime before the squadron sailed, to inform Drake and his followers of the squadron's advance for their assistance<sup>40</sup>. On the same day Colonel Clive opened negotiations with Mānikchānd, the Nawāb's Governor in Calcutta, by writing a letter to him and also sending him draft of a letter for the Nawāb<sup>41</sup>. Mānikchānd replied to his letter on the 23rd December and sent to him his agent Rādhākṛishna Mallik. He pointed out that the letter intended to be sent to the Nawāb had been written in improper terms, and suggested that it might be rewritten in a milder tone<sup>42</sup>. But Colonel Clive replied that he could not accept his suggestion of writing to the Nawāb "a letter couched in such a stile (style) which, however proper it might have been before the taking of Calcutta, would but ill suit with the present time, when we are come to demand satisfaction for the injuries done to us by the Nabob, not to entreat his favour, and with a force which we think sufficient to vindicate our claim."<sup>43</sup> On the 16th December the Company's troops and sepoy on the *Kent*, the *Tyger* and the *Walpole* landed at Fulta and joined

<sup>38</sup> *Journal of the Expedition, etc.*,

<sup>39</sup> *Hill, II, p. 54.*

<sup>40</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757; Journal of the Expedition, etc.; Ives' Voyage, p. 97.*

<sup>41</sup> *Hill, II, p. 56.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid, p. 74; Orme, II, p. 121.*

<sup>43</sup> *Hill, II, p. 76.*

the detachment under Major Killpatrick ; the military encamped in a place to the eastward of the town, and the sepoys were placed on the roads leading to it<sup>44</sup>. On the same day Admiral Watson wrote to the Dutch asking for the help of their pilots but the latter expressed their inability to help him with these.<sup>45</sup>

On hearing of the arrival of the squadron, the Nawāb's officers in Calcutta, "not thinking the forts of Tanna and Busbudgia (Budge Budge) to be a sufficient defence", were raising new works on the banks of the River<sup>46</sup>. They commenced the erection of a fort, "on the bank of the river opposite to Tanna ; but only a part of the rampart commanding the river was finished<sup>47</sup>". On the 17th December both Admiral Watson and Colonel Clive<sup>48</sup> wrote directly to the Nawāb in strong and threatening terms<sup>49</sup>. The Admiral did not receive any reply from the Nawāb. On the 25th the pilots acquainted the Admiral that the time was favourable for advance, and on the 27th he sailed from Fulta with the *Kent*, the *Tyger*, the *Salisbury*, the *Bridgewater* and the *Kingfisher*<sup>50</sup>. The sepoys were ordered to march overland<sup>51</sup> against Colonel Clive's wishes<sup>52</sup>, and Captain Barker followed in boats with 80 of the train and two fieldpieces properly completed<sup>53</sup>. Next day, at about three in the afternoon, the troops and two fieldpieces landed at Māyāpur, where they joined the sepoys. At five in the evening they marched from Māyāpur, under the command of Colonel Clive and conducted by "Indian guides", in order to lay in an ambuscade on the roads leading from the fort of Budge Budge to Calcutta and Alinagar, and by that means to intercept the

<sup>44</sup> *Journal of the Expedition etc.*,

<sup>45</sup> Hill, II, p. 72

<sup>46</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757.*

<sup>47</sup> Orme, II, p. 121.

<sup>48</sup> Hill, II, p. 71.

<sup>49</sup> *Ives' Voyage, p. 98; Hill, II, p. 70.*

<sup>50</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757; Ives' Voyage, p. 99.*

<sup>51</sup> *A Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*

<sup>52</sup> Hill, II, pp. 95-98.

<sup>53</sup> *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*

retreat of the Nawab's people to those places<sup>54</sup>. For this they had to undergo "infinite labour and fatigue by a continued march all night, which was made difficult by the deep creeks and morasses the troops and cannon were obliged to pass<sup>55</sup>". At 8 in the morning they passed through Pāikpārā, and after an hour halted at the place of ambuscade, "having the ships at anchor in view, though not the fort which was obscured by clusters of trees<sup>56</sup>". Kesar Singh, the Commander of the sepoys, with two hundred sepoys, and Captain Pye, at the head of the Grenadier Company and the rest of the sepoys, were ordered to reconnoitre. Captain Caupe with his Company, and the volunteers were posted on the Calcutta Road to inform timely if the Nawāb's troops approached by that way<sup>57</sup>. The rest of the troops, about 260 Europeans, remained with Colonel Clive. The soldiers were so fatigued that they left their arms in order to take some rest ; but they fell suddenly asleep without taking the precaution of stationing sentinels<sup>58</sup>. Clive had no knowledge of the fact<sup>59</sup> that Mānickchānd, the Governor of Calcutta, had arrived the day before at Budge Budge with 1,500 cavalry and 2000 infantry<sup>60</sup>. With this body of troops the latter made a sudden attack on Clive at about 10 O'clock<sup>61</sup>. The surprise attack at first caused panic and confusion in the rank of Clive's troops<sup>62</sup>. But the advance of two platoons soon dislodged them from their position, and Mānickchānd had to retreat to Calcutta on his elephant<sup>63</sup>. The skirmish lasted for half an hour in which the English lost Ensign Kerr with eleven private men and about

<sup>54</sup> Orme, II, p. 122; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *A Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc; Clive's letter to Pigot, dated 8th, January, 1757.*

<sup>57</sup> *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc;*

<sup>58</sup> Orme, II, p. 123.

<sup>59</sup> *Clive's letter to Pigot, dated 8th January, 1757.*

<sup>60</sup> Orme, II, p. 123.

<sup>61</sup> Letter from Clive to Pigot, dated 8th January, 1757.

<sup>62</sup> Orme, II, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid, p. 124.*

twenty were slightly wounded<sup>64</sup>. On the side of Mānickchānd 150 men were killed and wounded with four *Jamādārs* and an elephant. Mānickchānd himself received a shot on his turban<sup>65</sup>.

The fleet arrived before the fort at about 7 A.M. and at half past seven Mānickchānd's people began to fire on the *Tyger* from inside the fort<sup>66</sup>. At noon the cannon of the fort was "silenced by the squadron<sup>67</sup>", but the English forces, who had "marched down to the advanced battery near the river which the enemy had abandoned in the morning," had drawn up "in front of the fort under cover of a high bank<sup>68</sup>" and had an intention to storm the fort before night, fired some guns for most part of the day<sup>69</sup>. At 7 P.M. the Admiral sent Captain King with 100<sup>70</sup> seamen to storm the fort by that evening but it was deferred till the next morning<sup>71</sup> at the suggestion of Colonel Clive, who pointed out that he himself, Major Killpatrick, and other soldiers were extremely fatigued on account of the last night's tedious march<sup>72</sup>. So all of them thought it proper to take rest for that night. But suddenly the Admiral heard that the fort had been taken by storm<sup>73</sup>, due to the exuberance of a drunken sailor, named Straban, belonging to the *Kent*. Thus, as Coote observes in his *Journal*, "the place was taken without the least honour to any one". One Captain Campbell lost his life "as he was posting sentries over a magazine<sup>74</sup>" and four soldiers were wounded<sup>75</sup>. With this loss only, the English captured the fort which was "extremely well-situated for defence and had the advantage of a wet ditch

<sup>64</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757.*

<sup>65</sup> *Clive's letter to Pigot, dated the 8th January, 1757; A Journal of the Expedition, etc.; Ives' Voyage, p. 97.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ives' Voyage, p. 98; Hill, III, p. 3.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ives' Voyage, p. 100.*

<sup>68</sup> *A Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*

<sup>69</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated the 31st January, 1757.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Orme, II, 124.*

<sup>72</sup> *Coote's Journal, Hill, III, pp. 39-41.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ives' Voyage, p. 83; Watson's Letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated the 31st January, 1757.*

round it<sup>76</sup>". Captain Coote remained in charge of the fort for the night<sup>77</sup>. Next day (30th December) the troops re-embarked in the evening after "disabling the guns, carrying off the powder, demolishing the parapets of the fort and batteries and burning the houses<sup>78</sup>". The sepoys marched along the bank of the river and the squadron proceeded up the river on the next day<sup>79</sup>.

At 5 P.M. on the 2nd January, the Company's troops being joined by the sepoys, marched towards Calcutta<sup>80</sup>. Thinking that two ships would enable him to attack Calcutta, Admiral Watson proceeded with the *Tyger* and the *Kent*, leaving *Salisbury* at Tanina "as a guardship to prevent the enemy from regaining it<sup>81</sup>". The *Tyger*, which was the leading ship, was within sight of Calcutta at about 9 A.M. and at forty-five minutes past nine the Nawāb's troops began to fire upon her from their batteries below Calcutta<sup>82</sup> killing and wounding several men<sup>83</sup>. At twenty minutes past ten, "the *Tyger* anchored abreast the line of guns at Calcutta ; at half an hour after the *Kent* anchored<sup>84</sup>". Both the ships then began to fire so warmly that at eleven the Nawāb's troops were compelled to run away from the fort<sup>85</sup>. According to the Admiral's orders Captain King took possession of the fort in the name of His Majesty the King of England and it was garrisoned with a detachment of Aldercron's regiment under the command of Captain Coote, who received the following instruction from the Admiral : "You are hereby required and directed to garrison the fort of Calcutta with His Majesty's troops you have now on shore, and take care to post your sentinels

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*; Coote's Journal.

<sup>77</sup> Coote's Journal.

<sup>78</sup> *A Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*; Ives' Voyage, p. 101.

<sup>80</sup> *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*; Orme, II, p. 125.

<sup>81</sup> Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated the 31st January, 1757; Ives Voyage, p. 101.

<sup>82</sup> Hill, III, pp. 1-3.

<sup>83</sup> Orme, Vol. II, pp. 125-126.

<sup>84</sup> Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated the 31st January, 1757; Ives' Voyage, p. 101.

<sup>85</sup> Orme, II, p. 126.

and guards so as not to be surprised by the enemy. In the evening I shall be on shore, and you are not to quit your post, or deliver up your command till further orders from me. During your continuance on shore you are to take care that no disorders be committed by His Majesty's troops or any other people, but to treat the natives with humanity and take particular care that there is no plundering, as such offenders may depend on the severest punishment<sup>86</sup>.

After some time Colonel Clive arrived at the spot with the Company's troops. The Company's troops were refused admission, but the sentries admitted Colonel Clive, who argued before Captain Coote that Admiral Watson had no authority to appoint Coote, who held a subordinate position, as Governor. With the consent of both, the matter was referred to the Admiral, who sent Captain Speke on shore to know by what authority the Colonel took upon him the command of the fort. The Colonel replied that he did so "by the authority of His Majesty's Commission as lieutenant-colonel and also commander-in-chief of the land forces." Captain Speke carried this reply to the Admiral, who sent him back with the message that if the Colonel "did not abandon the fort, he would fire him out<sup>87</sup>". The Colonel replied that he could not answer for the consequence and refused to give up the command. But after a while Captain Latham, who was a friend of both the Admiral and the Colonel, went to the latter and settled the dispute in such a way that the Colonel agreed to give up the command if the Admiral came himself on shore and took the command<sup>88</sup>. The Admiral agreed to these terms.

Early next morning the Admiral landed ashore, received the keys of the garrison from Colonel Clive, and formally deli-

<sup>86</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 102.

<sup>87</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 103; *Clive's Evidence before the Committee appointed to enquire into the nature, etc., of the East India Company*, 26 May, 1772; *Hill*, III, p. 309; *Watson's letter to Clive*, dated 2nd January, 1757; *Hill*, II, p. 77.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*



vered up the fort to Drake and his Council, who were the Company's representatives in Bengal<sup>89</sup>, "with the guns, military stores, and effects, publick and private, for the benefit and on behalf of the proprietors"<sup>90</sup> Captain Coote then marched out with the King's troops and quartered in the town<sup>91</sup>. The fort contained "many guns of different sizes, round and grape shots, shells, grenadoes, a small quantity of powder (and some military stores) but no small arms ; in the godowns were several bales of the Company's broad-cloth and about 650 bales of goods for the Europe market ; and in the town about 1,400 bales of cotton, a small quantity of tooth-enaguc and some China ware"<sup>92</sup>. For the private property found there a notice was issued, so that the respective owners might take their own effects from the Company's Sub-Accomptant (Accountant) by giving a receipt in return, "to be responsible for the said effects or their amount, in case it should be contested and awarded to another"<sup>93</sup>. The Council in Calcutta then wrote to the neighbouring *Zamindārs* to pay the rents and revenues of their respective districts, "on pain of having their country destroyed in case of refusal". Some of them sent their *vakils* (representatives) and promised to obey the Company's orders. The Council hoped to meet thereby the cost of further operations intended to be carried on against the Nawāb.

On the 4th January the Council in Calcutta decided to attack Hugli and their forces under the command of Major Killpatrick landed below Hugli on the 9th January. "It was resolved", wrote Clive to Khawajah Wājid on the 21st January, 1757, "before we left Chinapatam (Madras) that that city (Hugli) should fall a sacrifice" for "the ruin of Calcutta"<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>89</sup> Hill, *II*, pp. 82-83.

<sup>90</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 92.

<sup>91</sup> *Coote's Journal, etc.*,

<sup>92</sup> *A Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.; Watson's letter to Cleveland, dated 31st January, 1757.*

<sup>93</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 189.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, p. 125.

“The fort was blown up by Major Killpatrick and many granaries, etc. were burnt to ashes<sup>95</sup>”.

The recovery of Calcutta did not bring to an end the antagonism between the English and the Nawāb. It was merely the prelude to the great drama that was soon to be acted on the political stage of Bengal. The English could not rest satisfied till they had provided sufficient guarantees for their future safety, more especially because their actions at Hugli had inflamed the Nawāb’s rage and he had left his capital with a determination to punish them. With a view to preventing the second plunder of Calcutta by the Nawāb, the English adopted various defensive measures. The Select Committee in Calcutta wrote to the Select Committees at Bombay and Madras for further reinforcements and troops in order to complete their “reestablishment and procure reparation” for their “losses, damages and charges<sup>96</sup>”. They made their Fort defensible by “digging a ditch 30 feet wide round the walls, levelling the houses within paces round, and throwing up a glacis with the dirt of the ditch and the rubbish of the houses<sup>97</sup>”.

About a mile to the northward of the town, and half a mile from the bank of the river, the English fortified a camp with several out-posts around it<sup>98</sup>. On the 20th January, 1757, Colonel Clive requested Admiral Watson for landing the King’s forces and ordering the Commander to put himself under his (Clive’s) command, as the troops under him did not exceed 300 Europeans<sup>99</sup>. The Admiral complied with his request next day by issuing orders to the Captains of the several ships “to discharge their troops”. He also directed Captain Weller to join Colonel Clive and to put himself under his command<sup>100</sup>.

<sup>95</sup> *Letter from the Select Committee in Calcutta to the Select Committee in London, dated 26th January, 1757; Hill, II, pp. 166-172.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Orme, II, p. 128.*

<sup>99</sup> *Clive’s Letter to Watson, dated 20th January, 1757, Hill, II, p. 124.*

<sup>100</sup> *Watson’s letter to Clive, dated 21st January, 1757, Hill, II, p. 127.*

About the 16th of January, the Nawāb encamped near Niaserāi. He had with him 15,000 cavalry and 7,000 gunmen, a train of about 50 pieces of cannon, six of which were large and the rest small. There were six wagons of gunpowder and four wagons of shot, where the red flag was hoisted. The Nawāb had also sixty boats with him, by which he intended to cross the river with his army after he had recovered Hugli<sup>101</sup>.

But the renewal of actual fighting between the English and the Nawab was delayed for a few days by negotiations for peace and settlement, carried on through the mediation of the French and the Dutch. Already, when the news of an outbreak of a war between Great Britain and France had reached Bengal, Colonel Clive had written to the Seths at Murshidābād requesting them to act as mediators for peace between the Nawāb and the English<sup>102</sup>. Jagat Seth had replied to Colonel Clive on 14th January, 1757, complaining about the conduct of the English, and informing him that he could not accommodate matters between them and the Nawāb, unless they had stopped all acts of hostility and had stated their intention definitely<sup>103</sup>. But on the 17th January, Khawajah Wājid wrote to Colonel Clive proposing to settle matters between the Nawāb and the English through the mediation of the French<sup>104</sup>. The Dutch offered their mediation for settlement of the disputes between the English and the Nawāb. But Watson was not agreeable to this. Colonel Clive informed Khawajah Wājid and the Seths that he would agree to their intervention, but would not tolerate the mediation of the French<sup>105</sup>. He sent to the former a copy

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<sup>101</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 110.

<sup>102</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 127.

<sup>103</sup> *Letter from Jagat Seth to Colonel Clive, dated 14th January, 1757*, Hill, *II*, p. 104.

<sup>104</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 110.

<sup>105</sup> Letters from Colonel Clive to Khawajah Wājid, dated 21st January, 1757, Hill *II*, pp. 125-126; 'Their behaviour to our Deputies, their written proposals and a thousand other accessories show conclusively that they had no desire to see us take part in this business.' *Memoir of M. Jean Law*, Hill, *III*, p. 181.

of the demands of the English, viz :—“That the Nabob cause satisfaction to be made to the Cōmpany, to the English and all other inhabitants under their protection, for all the losses they have sustained by the captures of Calcutta, Cossimbazar, and all their other settlements ; that he cause restitution to be made of all goods, effects merchandize, etc., seized at the different *aurungs*.

(2) That he put the Company in full possession of all the countries, villages, privileges, etc., granted them by the royal *phirmaund*.

(3) That he suffer the English to secure and fortify themselves in their own possession in such manner as not to be liable to the like misfortunes in future.

(4) That he suffer the Company to erect a mint in Calcutta, endowed with the same privileges with the mint at Muxadavad (Murshidābād) and that if the rupees of Calcutta be of equal weight and fineness with those of Maxadavad they may pass current, without any deduction of *batta*<sup>100</sup>”.

However, two Frenchmen, named Messrs. Laporterie and Sinfray, were deputed by Renault, the French Chief of Chandernagore, to Calcutta<sup>107</sup>. They informed the Council in Calcutta that they were not empowered to propose terms on behalf of the Nawāb but could act as mediators and could forward the proposals of the English to the Nawāb<sup>108</sup>. So the Comncil verbally informed them of the proposals already sent to Khawajah Wājid<sup>109</sup>. After a few days Khawajah Wājid sent a reply through the French deputies, wherein he mentioned that the proposals for peace should be translated into Persian and signed or at least sealed with the Company’s seal, so that the Nawāb might condescend to satisfy the first three demands of the English, but with regard

<sup>100</sup> Hill, II, p. 126.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p. 175.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>109</sup> *Letter from the Select Committee in Bengal to the Secret Committee in London, dated 26th January, 1757, Hill, II, pp. 166-172.*

to the fourth one, he remarked, that as "the English nation has never had this privilege in Bengal, it is not right to demand it, and further the Nawāb is not able to grant a right which depends upon the Mogul (Emperor) and which might damage the currency of that Prince".<sup>110</sup> But the English remained firm and so the French Deputies returned to Chandernagore.<sup>111</sup> The English wanted not only to "compel the Nabab to make restitution and reparation for the private and public losses sustained by the Europeans but likewise exact a more punctual obedience to the tenor of their *phirmaund* and claim such an increase of their revenues and such immunities for their commerce as to render this settlement more beneficial to the Company than it has been since its first establishment".<sup>112</sup> With that object the Select Committee in Bengal wrote<sup>113</sup> to their authorities in London requesting them for permission to erect a strong fortification and for sending an able engineer to plan it. The maintenance of a strong and large force was also regarded necessary and a second request was accordingly made by them to their authorities for sending out to Bengal "by the first opportunity a considerable body of disciplined troops if possible, with positive orders to the Gentlemen at Madrass not to detain them upon that coast on any account whatever."

In the meanwhile, the Admiral received the following letter, dated 23rd January, 1757, in reply to the one which he had written to the Nawāb on his arrival at Fultā—"You write me, that the King your master sent you into India to protect the Company's settlements, trade, rights and privileges ; the instant I received that letter, I sent you an answer, but it appears to me that my reply never reached you, for which reason I write again. I must inform you that Roger Drake, the Company's

<sup>110</sup> Hill, II, p. 127.

<sup>111</sup> *Memoir of M. Jean Law*, Hill, III, p. 181.

<sup>112</sup> *Letter from the Select Committee in Bengal to the Secret Committee in London, dated 26th January, 1757*, Hill, II, pp. 166-172.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

Chief in Bengal, acted contrary to the orders I sent him and encroached upon my authority : he gave protection to the King's subjects, who absented themselves, from the inspection of the *Durbar*, which practice I did forbid, but to no purpose. On this account I was determined to punish him, and accordingly expelled him from my country. But it was my inclination to have given the English Company permission to have carried on their trade as formerly had another Chief been sent here. For the good therefore of these provinces and the inhabitants, I sent you this letter ; and if you are inclined to re-establish the Company, only appoint a Chief, and you may depend upon my giving currency to their commerce, upon the same terms they heretofore enjoyed ; if the English behave themselves like merchants and follow my orders, they may rest assured of my favour, protection and assistance. If you imagine that by carrying on a War against me, you can establish a trade in these dominions, you may do as you think fit."<sup>114</sup> Colonel Clive then thought that the Nawāb was sincere in his desire for peace, as on the 24th January, the Nawāb's 'Private Minister' had sent to him Coja Petrus with a letter asking him therein to send his proposal to the Nawāb through a faithful person.<sup>115</sup> On the 27th January, Admiral Watson sent the following reply to the Nawāb's letter of the 23rd — "Your letter of the 23rd of this month I this day received. It has given me the greatest pleasure, as it informs me you had written to me before ; a circumstance I am glad to be assured of under your hand as the not answering my letter would have been such an affront as I could not have put up with unnoticed without incurring the anger of the King my master. You tell me in your letter that the reason of your expelling the English out of these countries was the bad behaviour of Mr. Drake, the Company's Chief in Bengal. But besides that princes and rulers of States, not seeing with their own eyes,

<sup>114</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 108.

<sup>115</sup> *Clive's Letter to Pigot, dated 25th January, 1757, Hill, II, p. 133.*

nor hearing with their own ears, are often misinformed, and the truth kept from them by the arts of crafty and wicked men ; was it becoming the justice of a prince to punish all for one man's sake ? Or to ruin and destroy so many innocent people, as had no way offended but who relying on the faith of Royal *Phirmaund* expected protection and security both to their property and lives, instead of oppression and murder, which they unhappily found ? Are these actions becoming the justice of a prince ? Nobody will say they are. They can only have been caused by wicked men, who have misrepresented things to you through malice, or for their own private ends ; for great princes delight in acts of justice and in showing mercy. If therefore you are desirous of meriting the fame of a great prince and lover of justice, show your abhorrence of these proceedings, by punishing those evil counsellors who advised them ; cause satisfaction to be made to the Company and to all others who have been deprived of their property ; and by these acts turn off the edge of the sword which is ready to fall on the heads of your subjects. If you have any cause of complaint against Mr. Drake, as it is but just the master alone should have a power over his servant ; send your complaints to the Company, and I will answer for it, they will give you satisfaction. Although I am a soldier as well as you, I had rather receive satisfaction from your own inclination to do justice than be obliged to force it from you by the distress of your innocent subjects.”<sup>116</sup> The Nawāb wrote the following letter to the Admiral—“You have taken and plundered Houghley ; and made war upon my subjects : these are not actions becoming merchants. I have therefore left Muxadavad, and am arrived near Houghley ; I am likewise crossing the river with my army, part of which is advanced towards your camp. Nevertheless, if you have a mind to have the Company's business settled upon its ancient footing, and to give a currency to their trade ; send a person of confidence

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<sup>116</sup>*Ives' Voyage*, p. 109.

to me, who can make your demands, and treat with me upon this affair. I shall not scruple to grant a *Perwannah* for the restitution of all the Company's factories, and permit them to trade in my country upon the same terms as formerly. If the English, who are settled in these provinces, will behave like merchants, obey my orders, and give me no offence, you may depend upon it, I will take their losses into consideration, and adjust matters to their satisfaction. You know how difficult it is to prevent soldiers from plundering in war ; therefore, if you will on your parts relinquish something of the damages you have sustained by being pillaged by my army, I will endeavour to give you satisfaction even in that particular in order to gain your friendship and preserve a good understanding for the future with your nation. You are a Christian, and know how much preferable it is to accommodate a dispute, than to keep it alive, but if you are determined to sacrifice the interest of your Company, and the good of private merchants, to your inclinations of war, it is no fault of mine to prevent the fatal consequences of a ruinous war."<sup>117</sup>

From the tone of the Nawāb's letter it appears that he was desirous of accommodating the disputes with the English, if the latter behaved like peaceful merchants. But he continued his march towards Calcutta with the whole army, and crossed the river ten miles above Hugli on the 30th January, 1757.<sup>118</sup> "He was followed", as Ghulām Husain writes, "by a numerous army, furnished with every necessary for war".<sup>119</sup> Ives mentions that it consisted of 18,000 cavalry and 15,000 infantry, 10,000 pioneers, and about 40,000 coolies, horse-keepers, cooks, bazarmen, etc., 50 elephants, and 40 pieces of cannon,<sup>120</sup> while the English had 711 Europeans in battalion, about 100 artillery, 1,300

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p. 110.

<sup>118</sup> Orme, II, p. 128.

<sup>119</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, II, p. 221.

<sup>120</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 111; Coote in his Journal says that the Nawāb's army consisted of 40,000 cavalry and 60,000 infantry, 50 elephants and 30 pieces of cannon. Hill, III, p. 43.



sepoys, with 14 field pieces, 6-pounders, besides the cannon on their batteries. This prevented the villagers from bringing in provisions either in the town or in the camp of the English. The sick and the women were put on board<sup>121</sup> and many of the natives who had been hired by the English for military service left Calcutta.<sup>122</sup> According to M. Law, they left Calcutta "with the intention of giving confidence to the Nawāb and encouraging him to approach so that they might be more certain of the blows they struck him".<sup>123</sup>

According to the advice of Ranjit Rāy, the agent of the Seths, Colonel Clive wrote a letter to the Nawāb, on the 30th January with proposals for peace.<sup>124</sup> The Nawāb sent the following reply to this letter on the same day. ".....Assure yourself I will make no scruple of complying with the demand. I find it is both our intentions that measures for the Company's losses, the country's good, and the safety of the inhabitants should be pursued. Therefore, send a person of entire trust and confidence with orders and power to treat upon these affairs. You may send such a person without being under any apprehensions of his safety. You may depend upon my giving a currency to the Company's business at all their Factories upon its former footing. I make no doubt things will soon be accommodated upon sending such a person.....If you are willing to make up these troubles and will live in friendship with me, I shall never be wanting on my part to forward Company's business, and show their servants my favour upon all occasions. To render justice and to study the good (of) my country and tenants are what I am desirous of."<sup>125</sup> On the 2nd February the Nawāb sent Coja Petrus to Colonel Clive with a letter, asking the latter

<sup>121</sup> Hill, *III*, pp. 17, 24.

<sup>122</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 128.

<sup>123</sup> *Memoir, Hill, III*, p. 182.

<sup>124</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 129; Hill, *II*, p. 183.

<sup>125</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 184; Orme, *II*, p. 129, Cf. a similar letter written by the Nawāb to Clive on 1st February, 1757. Hill, *II*, p. 208.

to send English envoys for the settlement of the disputes.<sup>126</sup> Clive immediately informed the Select Committee of these negotiations.<sup>127</sup> Accordingly Messrs Amyatt and Hastings were deputed to the Nawāb with instructions to put forward not only the demands already sent to Khawajah Wājid but also the following additional ones—" (1) That the Nawāb should not demand or molest any of the merchants or inhabitants of Calcutta. (2) That the *dastak* of the British should protect all their boats and goods passing through the country. (3) That articles to the above effect should be signed and sealed by the Nawāb and his ministers."<sup>128</sup>

But before Coja Petrus had returned from the English, part of the Nawāb's army appeared along the Dum Dum road and proceeded south-wards towards the camp of the English in Calcutta, and several of his cavalry approached within about 400 yards of the advanced battery of the English.<sup>129</sup> On hearing that small parties of the Nawāb's army had arrived within the outskirts of the town, the English sent Captain De la Beume with 80 Europeans, 150 sepoy, and two pieces of cannon to the redoubt of Bagbazar in order to defend that part of the town. This he effected after having killed a good number of the Nawāb's soldiers and having taken 30 or 40 of them as prisoners. Colonel Clive also sent a part of his battalion and sepoy to harass the Nawāb's troops and to determine the place where they intended to encamp. As they advanced, a sharp but indecisive cannonade ensued. Soon the Nawāb's party drew off their cannons, whereupon the English withdrew to their camp. There was no great loss on any side. The English lost one 'matross'<sup>130</sup> and three sepoy, and Captain Weller and Fraser were slightly wounded.

<sup>126</sup> Orme, II, 129.

<sup>127</sup> Hill, *Introduction*, p. cxliii.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *A Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc., Clive's letter to the Secret Committee, London, dated 22nd February, 1757, Hill, II, pp. 237-241; Orme, II, pp. 129-130.*

<sup>130</sup> An inferior class of soldiers in the Artillery.

On the Nawāb's side six horsemen and a number of ordinary soldiers were killed.<sup>131</sup>

The Nawāb, who was then at Nawābganj, 25 miles from the English camp, sent the following letter to Colonel Clive on the 3rd February—"This place being unfit for encamping my army, for this reason my forces have marched forward and are encamped in Omichānd's garden. Let not this give you any uneasiness. Your business is with me. Rest contented and send me your relation and the other person whom you shall depute to settle affairs with me as soon as possible. I swear by God and His Prophet that no evil shall happen to them. Let them fairly represent your demands to me and I will grant (them). I have given orders to all *jemindars* that they commit no disturbance. Do not be under any apprehensions on this account but send away the deputies to me with safety."<sup>132</sup>

While professing desires for friendship both the Nawāb and the English were taking precautions against renewal of conflict. On the 30th January, 1757, the Nawāb sent a letter to Colonel Clive in terms of cordiality and with proposals for peace ; but on the same date he wrote a letter to M. Renault, the Director of the French Factory at Chandernagore, expressing his determination to punish the English.<sup>133</sup> Here also he wrote to the English for sending envoys, while part of his army was engaged in actual fight with them. Similarly the English were not slow in taking measures of defence, and had not given up their hostile designs, though they were sending and receiving proposals for peace. Ghulām Husain rightly notes that "both war and peace subsisted at one and the same time".<sup>134</sup> In fact, the intentions of both the

<sup>131</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>132</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 209.

<sup>133</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 185: "This is why I notify you, that if you, who are the model of true friends, employ your power to aid me, and if you continue in this intention, you should prepare the ships of war which you have in this country, put one of my people on each, and send them to punish this faithless people (the English) and chase them from this country."

<sup>134</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, *II*, p. 221.

parties were far from what they professed ; both probably wanted time for adequate military preparations.

According to the Nawāb's request in his letter of the 3rd February, 1757, the English sent to him, on the morning of the 4th February, Walsh and Scrafton with the Select Committee's proposals. The Nawāb had by that time left Nawābganj and had fixed his quarters in Omichānd's gardens, situated at a distance of two miles from Calcutta.<sup>135</sup> The English deputies had, therefore, to go from Nawābganj to Omichānd's garden, where they reached in the evening. M. Law writes that in order to "deceive him (Nawāb) more completely and to examine the position of his camp the English sent deputies the day before the attack they meditated".<sup>136</sup> The author of the *Muzaffarnāmah* holds the same opinion,<sup>137</sup> and Ghulām Husain writes that "the English who had their particular views in that doubtful state of things, made it a practice now and then to come into camp, under pretence of an agreement but in fact to examine it, as they intended all this while to surprise the enemy ; and such a manoeuvre required a man that should take a full knowledge of the chart of the country. They took care, therefore, to send with their envoys a man conversant in Geometry, and who to that added an enlarged understanding, a keen memory, and much acuteness of comprehension. This man, in his frequent trips, acquired a comprehensive notion of Sirāj-ud-daulah's camp, as well as of his own private quarters with all the roads that led thither, and every other important matter, that had a relation to his object ; so that after having hoarded

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<sup>135</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 111; *Journal of the Expedition to Bengal, etc.*; Orme, Vol. II, p. 130. The author of the *Muzaffarnāmah* (f. 122 b) says that the Nawāb encamped in Omichānd's garden against the instructions and requests of his officers, who had pointed out to him that the English might attack them in the night.

<sup>136</sup> *Memoir*, Hill, III, p. 182.

<sup>137</sup> F. 122 (b)

up all that knowledge in his memory, he made on his return a very circumstantial report of what he had observed".<sup>138</sup>

The English deputies were introduced by Ranjit Rāy, an agent of the Seths, to Rāi Durlabh, the Nawāb's Minister, who asked them to leave their arms before they entered the *darbār*, but they refused to submit to this and were conducted by Rāi Durlabh to the *darbār* where the Nawāb was sitting "in full state, accompanied by all his principal officers".<sup>139</sup> The deputies complained before the Nawāb that they were "greatly surprised in finding him entered in an hostile manner into their very city, and that unless he would manifest some desire of peace by withdrawing his troops from the neighbourhood of Calcutta, they could not enter upon the business they came about,"<sup>140</sup> and they handed over to him a paper containing the proposals of the Select Committee.<sup>141</sup> After having perused these proposals the Nawāb<sup>142</sup> asked the deputies to confer with his *Diwān* and dissolved his assembly. But the deputies suspected that the Nawāb intended to detain them as prisoners and they ordered their followers to extinguish the lights. Instead of proceeding to the Nawāb's *Diwān*, they quickly returned to their camp.<sup>143</sup>

Immediately after their arrival, Clive decided to make a surprise attack on the Nawāb's army before daybreak. The reasons for this immediate attack were thus stated by him : "I determined to attack him the next morning before daybreak while two-thirds of his army were still encamped without the Moratta Ditch, for when they had once passed and got into the streets of the town, it would be too late to attempt. Another pressing reason for the immediate execution of this enterprise, notwithstanding the smallness of my force, was the sudden distress we found ourselves in upon the approach of the Nabob's

<sup>138</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, Vol. II, pp. 221-222.

<sup>139</sup> Orme, II, p. 130; *Scrafton, Reflections, etc.*, p. 67.

<sup>140</sup> *Clive's letter to the Select Committee, London, dated 22nd February, 1757.*

<sup>141</sup> Orme, Vol. II, p. 131.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>143</sup> *Ibid*; *Ives' Voyage*, p. III.

army by a general desertion of our workmen, *coolies* and servants, the breaking up of our markets and no provisions to be had but what was supplied from the fort by water, in which condition we could not have continued long but must have retreated into the fort with disgrace."<sup>144</sup> He then wrote an express letter to Admiral Watson soliciting his help in the enterprise<sup>145</sup> in response to which the Admiral sent Captain Warwick ashore with 569 men<sup>146</sup> and the latter joined Clive at about 2 A.M. The whole force of the English, which numbered 500 rank and file, 100 artillery men, 800 sepoy, 6 fieldpieces, one howitzer, and 70 of the Train besides the above body of seamen (half of whom were employed in drawing the guns, whilst the other half bore arms)<sup>147</sup> marched against the Nawāb in the following order—"the King's and Company's grenadiers in the front ; the sailors with the train next ; then followed the battalion ; and the sepoy brought up the rear. At 3 the Colonel altered his disposition and placed the battalion before the Train."<sup>148</sup> They were guided in their way by Amyatt, a member of the Council in Calcutta, and also by a native of Calcutta.<sup>149</sup>

About 5 A.M. the English army got over the trenches within the Nawāb's camp and began firing on all sides, receiving at the same time a brisk fire from several quarters.<sup>150</sup> A sharp and bloody engagement followed, descriptions of which have been left by Coote, Warwick, Orme, M. Law and some others. All of these descriptions are almost similar. I quote here the description given by Coote — ".....about daybreak we

<sup>144</sup> *Clive's letter to the Secret Committee, dated 22nd February, 1757, Hill, II, pp. 237-241.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid; Ives' Voyage, p. 111.*

<sup>146</sup> *Captain Warwick's account of the attack on the Nawāb's camp, Hill, II, p. 253; Coote's Journal of the Proceedings of Troops under Clive, etc., Ives' Voyage, pp. 111-112; Orme, II, p. 131.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ives' Voyage, p. 112.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid; Coote's Journal.*

arrived unperceived at an encampment of their horse, but the alarm was soon given, and some popping shots fired at us, upon which our Sepoys in the front began firing but with some confusion. As I had a Company of grenadiers formed out of the King's troops, and my post being broke by them ; I therefore endeavoured to make them advance as fast as I could and sent for a piece of cannon to come in front ; while this was going a shower of arrows came among us with some fire rockets, one of which unfortunately fell on one of the Company's grenadiers (who were in my rear) and blew up almost the whole platoon ; immediately after this a body of their choice horse came riding down upon us sword in hand ; as there was a very great fog we could not perceive them till they were within ten yards of us, upon which our battalion faced to the right and gave them a full fire, which destroyed almost the whole of them ; after this we kept marching through their encampment without any of their horse or elephants coming near us ; their foot kept firing at us from several places, being dispersed up and down behind banks ; about 9 O'clock the fog began to disperse, and we found ourselves nearly opposite the Nawāb's quarters, which was behind an entrenchment made many years ago by the English for the defence of the town against the Morattoes. Here we could perceive their greatest force lay, and they began to cannonade us briskly ; they sent some bodies of horse to surround us, but they never attempted to come near for us to fire our musketry at them ; finding we could not force this part of the entrenchment we marched about a mile further in order to get over at another place ; while we were marching the carriage of one of our cannon in the rear broke and we (were) obliged to leave it behind ; soon after being pressed in the rear, and the people that drew the cannon being very much fatigued, another shared the same fate. Ensign York with a platoon of the King's was ordered from the front to the rear, in order to recover the cannon ; when arrived he found the rear in some

confusion, and another piece of cannon in great danger of being taken, as there was a body of horse and foot pressing upon it ; it being at some distance from the battalion. He then marched beyond the gun and drew up his platoon in rear of it, and by keeping a constant fire secured the gun till it was drawn to the front, in this affair he had one man killed and three wounded ; after we had passed the entrenchment at the place intended, we began to cannonade on both sides very briskly, and continued it for half an hour, after which we marched for Fort William, which was about a mile distant, and arrived there at noon ; about five in the evening marched out of our camp.”<sup>151</sup>

After this surprise attack the Nawāb and his army<sup>152</sup> did not consider it safe to stay any longer near the camp of the English and so they went away to Dum Dum early on the 6th February.<sup>153</sup> On the same day Admiral Watson sent the following letter to the Nawāb—“The letter, which you will receive with this, was written the day before yesterday<sup>154</sup> but before that I could get it translated into the Persian language in order to its being sent to you, I was informed by Colonel Clive, that you had treated his deputies with disrespect, and that you were within the bounds of Calcutta, from which you had refused to retire. Evidences so full and positive, of your bad intentions towards us, that however strong my inclinations might be towards peace, I could no longer entertain any reasonable hopes

<sup>151</sup> *Coote's Journal, etc.*

<sup>152</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin, II, p. 222; Hill, III, p. 157.*

<sup>153</sup> *Clive's letter to the Secret Committee in London, dated 22nd February, 1757, Hill, II, pp. 237-241.*

<sup>154</sup> The contents of the first portion of the enclosed letter were almost the same as that of the 6th February. I quote here the last few lines only: “If you really and sincerely mean to treat of peace, listen to the proposals which will be made by the gentlemen, who are now with you. They ask nothing but justice, nor anything more than the mutual good of both nations. If you refuse it, remember that princes are only placed at the head of mankind to procure their happiness, and that they must one day give a very severe account, if through ambition, revenge or avarice, they fail in their duty. I have done mine in giving you advice. *“Ives' Voyage,* p. 113, footnote.



of seeing it accomplished. I therefore desired Colonel Clive to show you what an army of Englishmen was capable of doing, that before it was too late you might agree to the proposals, which would be made to you. He yielded to my desire, and marched through the whole camp, as if it had not been filled with armed men ; after which he returned to his own, where he will remain yet a little while, in hopes of seeing you accede to the reasonable proposals, which are now offered to you for the last time, from the Secret Committee. If you are wise you will grant them the justice that is their due ; otherwise, the sword is going to be drawn that will never be sheathed again.”<sup>155</sup> Clive also wrote to him in a similar tone and remarked mockingly that he had “cautiously hurt none but those” that had opposed him.<sup>156</sup>

According to M. Law these letters were written to threaten the Nawāb “with a much more serious attack and even to capture him and take him to England”.<sup>157</sup> None of the Nawāb’s party were willing to continue the fight any longer.<sup>158</sup> His father-in-law Mohamed Irez Khān, the principal officers of his court, and the chief commanders of his army, —all asked him to listen to the proposals for peace.<sup>159</sup> Just at that time the victory of Ahmad Shah Abdali over the Mughal forces made the Nawāb apprehensive of his advance towards Bengal. Thus, difficulties within and the fear of a danger from outside the province forced the Nawāb to agree to the proposals for peace. Accordingly Ranjit Rāy sent to Colonel Clive, through the Armenian Coja Petrus,<sup>160</sup> the following letter, dated 6th February, 1757— “.....The Nawāb agrees to give you back Calcutta with all the privileges of your *phirmaund* and whatever goods you lost at Cossimbazar or elsewhere, and will

<sup>155</sup> *Ives’ Voyage*, p. 113; Hill, II, p. 212.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p. 213.

<sup>157</sup> *Memoir*, Hill, Vol. III, p. 183.

<sup>158</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, II, p. 223; *Scrafton’s Reflections*, etc., p. 66.

<sup>159</sup> Hill, II, p. 239. <sup>160</sup>*Ibid*.

grant you permission to coin siccās in your mint at Calcutta or Allenagur, and that you may make what fortifications you please in Calcutta. Your conduct yesterday morning greatly amazed me and put me to shame before the Nawāb. What passed between the Nawāb and myself Coja Petruse will inform you ; what has happened will occasion no difference in this affair. If you want to accommodate matters send a letter to the Nawāb with your proposals, and I will get them signed and send them back to you, with a *sirpah*, elephant and jewels. If you think war necessary acquaint me seriously with your intentions, and I will acquit myself of any further trouble in this affair.”<sup>161</sup> But Admiral Watson regarded this letter as a mere trick of Ranjit Rāy intended to amuse them, as the Nawāb’s army had, just at that time, moved to a place about three miles north-east of the Salt lakes,<sup>162</sup> and he wrote to Colonel Clive to attack the Nawāb’s army and to hold a Council of War for that purpose.<sup>163</sup> Clive, of course, summoned a Council of War,<sup>164</sup> but he was not himself desirous of renewing the war and was supported in his desire by the same Council.

On the 9th February, 1757, Colonel Clive sent the terms of a treaty to Ranjit Rāy and wrote to him that the Nawāb should, without delay, comply with the demands of the English, and should sign ‘agreed’ to each separate article, otherwise “war must take its course.”<sup>165</sup> The Nawāb promised to abide by these articles, and wrote the following letter to Admiral Watson—“The Colonel’s letter I have received, with the Agreement of the Governor and Council signed and sealed. He desires me to get the articles of the treaty now made, ratified by my great men and principal officers. I have complied with his request. It will be proper likewise for you and the Colonel on one part, and myself on the other, to execute an agreement, that hostilities

<sup>161</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 214

<sup>162</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 135.

<sup>163</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 215.

<sup>164</sup> Clive’s letter to Watson, dated 7th February, 1757, Hill, *II*, p. 218.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

between us shall cease ; that the English will always remain my friends and allies ; and that they will assist me against my enemies. For this purpose, I send a person of distinction and confidence who will speak at large the sentiments of my heart, and I hope you will inform him of your disposition towards me. The articles which were sent to me, I have returned, signed by myself, the King's *duan*, my own *duan*, and the *Bukhshi* of my army. I should be glad if you would confirm this treaty by a paper under your hand and seal, as the Colonel has done. I have in the most solemn manner called God and the Prophets to witness that I have made peace with the English. As long as I have life I shall esteem your enemies as enemies to me, and will assist you to the utmost of my power whenever you may require it. Do you likewise, and the Colonel, and the Chiefs of the English Factory swear in the presence of the Almighty God to observe and perform your part of the treaty, and to esteem my enemies as your own, and always be ready to give me your assistance against them ; and though you may not come yourself, I flatter myself you will send the aid I shall at any time ask for. God is the witness between us in this treaty. . . . .”<sup>166</sup>

Thus the treaty was concluded between the Nawāb and the English on the following terms :—

“(I) Whatever rights and privileges the King hath granted to the English Company in the *phirmaunds* and *hushhal-hookums*<sup>167</sup> sent from Delhi shall not be disputed, or taken from them, and the immunities therein mentioned stand good and be acknowledged. Whatever villages are given by the *phirmaunds* to the Company, shall likewise be granted, notwithstanding they have been denied them by former *Soubahdars*, but the *Zemindars* of these villages are not to be hurt or displaced without cause.

I do agree to the terms of the *phirmaund*.

<sup>166</sup> Hill, II, p. 220; Ives' Voyage, p. 114.

<sup>167</sup> “According to command. The initial words and thence the title, of a document issued agreeably to royal authority, by Vezir or other high officer of the Govt.” *Wilson's Glossary*, p. 201.

“(II) All goods passing and repassing through the country by land or water in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa with English *dustucks*, shall be exempted from any tax, fee or imposition from *choquedars*, *Gaulivahs*, *Zemindars*, or any others.

I agree to this.

“(III) All the Company’s Factories seized by the Nabob shall be returned. All the money, goods and effects belonging to the Company, their servants and tenants, and which have been seized and taken by the Nabob shall be restored. What has been plundered and pillaged by his people shall be made good by the payment of such a sum of money as his justice shall think reasonable.

I agree to restore whatever has been seized and taken by my orders, and accounted for in my *Sircary* (Government) books.

(IV) That we have permission to fortify Calcutta in such a manner as we think proper without interruption.

I consent to it.

(V) That we shall have liberty to coin *siccas* both of gold and silver; of equal weight and fineness to those of Muxadavad, which shall pass current in the province, and that there be no demand made for a deduction of *batta*.

I consent to the English Company’s coining their own bullion into *siccas*.

(VI) That the treaty shall be ratified by signing, sealing, and swearing in the presence of God and His Prophets to abide by the articles therein contained not only by the Nabob but by his principal officers and ministers.

I have sealed and signed the articles in the presence of God and His Prophets.

(VII) That Admiral Charles Watson and Colonel Robert Clive, on the part and behalf of the English nation and of the Company, do agree to live in a good understanding with the Nabob to put an end to the troubles, and be in friendship with

him, whilst these articles are observed and performed by the Nabob.

I have signed and sealed the foregoing articles upon these terms that if the Governor and Council will sign and seal them with the Company's seal, and will swear to the performance on their part, I then consent and agree to it."<sup>168</sup>

The English also made the following declaration :—

“We the English East Indian Company, in the presence of His Excellency the Nabob Munser Mulk Serajah Dowlah, Soubadar of the province of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, by the hands and seal of the Council, do agree and promise in the most solemn manner, that the business of the Company's Factories, which are in the jurisdiction of the Nabob, shall be transacted as formerly ; that we will never do violence to any persons without cause ; that we will never offer protection to any person having accounts with the Government, to any of the King's *Talukdārs* or *Zemindārs*, to any murderers or robbers, nor will ever act contrary to the tenor of the articles granted by the Nabob ; we will carry on our trade in the former channel, and never in any respect deviate from this agreement.”<sup>169</sup> The Nawāb then sent the usual presents to Watson, Drake and Clive, giving to each an elephant, a dress or vest and headjewel. Clive and Drake received those presents as representatives of the Company, but Watson, as a representative of the King of England, refused to accept those. The Nawāb then proceeded hastily to Murshidābād.<sup>170</sup>

The terms of the treaty were highly favourable to the English in Bengal and enhanced their influence. Clive himself wrote to the Secret Committee on the 22nd February 1757:—“I have

<sup>168</sup> Hill, II, pp. 215-217; Stewart, *History of Bengal, Appendix XII*; Bolts, *Considerations, Appendix I*; Orme, II, pp. 135-136; Scrafton's *Reflections, etc.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>169</sup> Hill, II, p. 217; *Ives' Voyage*, pp. 116.

<sup>170</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 117.

little to observe on the terms obtained from the Nabob except that they are both honorable and advantageous for the Company. The grants of a Mint and the villages hitherto detained from us are very considerable, and the abolishing the duties lately exacted by the *Chokies*, as well as confirming the free transportation of goods without customs of any kind, and the rest of the privileges of the royal *phirmaund* are no small points gained.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Hill, *II*, p. 239.

## CHAPTER V

### ANGLO-FRENCH HOSTILITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON BENGAL

On the 23rd December 1754, Godehu, who superseded Dupleix, signed a provisional treaty with Saunders, Governor of Fort St. David, the validity of which depended on its final ratification by the home authorities of the English and the French East India Companies. But the interests of the English and the French in different quarters were then too conflicting to admit of a cordial settlement. As a matter of fact, a war between the two was imminent and its formal declaration was only a question of time.

So the Court of Directors communicated due notes of warning and advice in this matter to the Council in Calcutta and asked them to be well on their guard against the risk of the apprehended conflict. Some positive instructions to the following effect were communicated by the Court of Directors to the Council in Calcutta in their letter to the latter, dated the 26th March 1755 : "Great Naval Preparations have been making in France for sometime past, which has given so just an Alarm to our Administration and the Nation in General, That a fleet is fitting out with the great zeal and alacrity, sufficient to protect the Honour of the British Nation, what may be the consequence of these armaments cannot be foreseen but in all Events, it will be absolutely necessary that you stand well upon your Guard, until we can with some certainty give you further information.

"Although we expect that our three Presidencies at all times act in concert and with mutual harmony and give their Aid, assistance and Advice wherever and whenever it may be necessary for the common Interest of the Company, without confining their views to their respective Presidencies only, yet it is at this Critical time more immediately necessary, and

therefore, we most strongly enjoin your observance of it, and that you will give all due attention to the advices you may receive for those purposes from the Governours and Councils of our other Presidencies, or the Governours or any Select Committee constituted by us, or Our Secret Committee.

“His Majesty having out of Tender Regard for the Welfare of the Company in the present Crisis, most graciously assisted us with a Detachment from His Royal Regiment of artillery, of Four Companies, each consisting according to the Establishment of One hundred and Seven Men, Commission and Non-Commission Officers included ; one of the said Company is embarked on the Dodington and other Three on the Bombay ships, the manner those Companies are to be employed and consequently the Destinations of our said ships, fall under the particular directions of Our Secret Committee, who will give the necessary Information wherever they shall think fit.”

Apprehending that after the fall of Emperor Ahmad Shah in June 1754, the French would exploit the confused state of affairs at Delhi to further their own interests at the cost of those of the English, the Court of Directors in England sent the following instruction to the Council in Calcutta in their letter, dated the 16th April 1755—“A ship arrived a few days ago at Port ‘L’ Orient from Pondicherry by which the French are informed that the Mogul Emperor has been dethroned and a Prince of Royal Family placed in his stead, this is an Event, if true, that well deserves your attention and the best use must be made of it in conjunction with our other Presidencies as well to secure our Trade Rights and Privileges as to prevent as much as lies in your power the Artful Designs of the French at Delhi in procuring grants to the prejudice of this Company.”

Additional information and advice regarding Anglo-French hostilities were sent to Bengal by the Court of Directors in their letter, dated the 10th October 1755 : “Our principal view”, they noted therein, “in dispatching the Delawar so early was



to give Information to you as well as to Our other Presidencies, That Hostilities are commenced between the British and French Nations in America, That a great number of French ships have been already and are continued to be taken in Europe by our Men of War, but none of them have been yet condemned nor have Commissions been issued for Privateers or any Letters of Mart granted here, there is no Account that the French have issued Letters of Mart or Reprisals, nor have they taken any British Ships that we know of, except the Blanford Man of War of Twenty Guns, which has been since restored by order of the Court of France, as yet there has been no Declaration of War made by either Nation; as likewise to inform you, that We have heard nothing from the French East Indian Company relative to the Provisional Treaty and Truce made in December last by Mr. Saunders on Our Part and Mr. Godehu on the part of the French for restoring Tranquility on the coast of Chromandel although we delivered the said Treaty, to the French Company's Commission then in England long ago at the beginning of last July upon Mr. Saunders' arrival on the Norfolk. This being the situation of Affairs, it is highly necessary and we accordingly order you to be strongly on your guard, and in constant readiness in every respect to defend our Estates, Rights and Privileges; in all Events, you are to watch all the motions of the French and stand upon defence only, unless they shall commit hostilities against us, in which case you are to Act as shall appear, to be most proper for the Company's Interest."

Events were marching fast to precipitate the crisis. "..... hostilities are carried on", the Court of Directors narrated in their letter, dated the 3rd December 1755, "with vigour, in America, that our Men of War in Europe take all the French ships they meet with, of which great numbers now lay in the several ports of His Majesty's Dominions but none are yet condemned, No Declaration of War is made by either Nation, No Commissions for Privateers or Letters of Marque have been

issued or Granted here, and far from any being issued by the French Court, all British Merchant ships are suffered to go in and out of their ports without Molestation. However, the French continue to exert themselves in increasing, with the utmost diligence, both their Land and Sea armaments, and have drawn down a great number of their Forces to their Coasts, and, it is generally believed are mediating some Grand Effort. On the other hand, the most vigorous measures are taken in England, to be prepared against all attempts, and it is with great pleasure the whole Nation sees the Parliament most heartily concurs therein with his Majesty\*\*\*.”

When war was formally declared the Court of Directors despatched timely information about it to the Bengal and Madras Councils. In their letter to the Bengal Council, dated the 29th December 1756, they wrote : “From the Account we gave you in our Letters last season, of the situation of Public Affairs, an open War between the British and French nations might easily be foreseen, it has proved so in the Event, his Majesty having proclaimed War against France on the 18th May last, which was returned in a very short time after on the part of the French King ; some of His Majesty’s Declarations are now sent for your Information ; not but we have great reason to believe you will know it long before this reaches you by the Dispatches sent immediately overland by His Majesty’s Ministers and Ourselves, or, by the Triton Man of War and Our own ships Prince Henry Packet, the first of which left England on the 17th of July, and the other on the 5th of August, both charged with the news of this important Event.

“We make no doubt you have in consequences of the Information you have most probably received, concerted every necessary measure for the Defence of our Settlements and Property, and Security of Our Commerce ; to the utmost of your power and Circumstances. We shall only add, that We shall greatly depend upon your care and Prudence for the future safety of

Our valuable Settlements in Bengal.” They continued in the same letter : “The French are making great preparations at Port L’Orient for an expedition to the East Indies, according to the best Information, we can at present get, it consists of Six men of War of the Line, two Frigates and Eight Company’s ships fitted in a warlike manner, on which are to embark about Two Thousand and five hundred land Forces ; to what particular part of India this Force is destined We cannot learn, We must therefore recommend it to you in the strongest manner, to be as well on your Guard as the nature and circumstances of your Presidency will permit, to defend our Estate in Bengal against any attempts that may be made upon it by this Force, and in particular, that you will do all in your power to engage the Nabab to give you his protection as the only and most effectual measure for the security of settlement and Property. We have the satisfaction of being further able to inform you that a Squadron of His Majesty’s Ship will be soon Ready to Proceed to the East Indies, to continue there for a time in the room of that under Vice Admiral Watson, and although we are not at present full apprized of its Force we have good reason to believe it will be sufficient to cope with the French Squadron”.

The Select Committee at Fort St. George wrote to the Committee at Fort William on the 14th November 1756 :— “We have desired Mr. Watson, if he thinks it practicable, to dispossess the French of Chandernagore, not doubting but it will be of infinite service to your affairs. Should you be of this opinion we desire you will enforce our recommendation.”<sup>1</sup> The Seven Years’ War presented an opportunity for this.

For some time after the outbreak of this war there were negotiations between the English and the French in Bengal for observing neutrality in this Province. When on the 25th February 1757, three Deputies from Chandernagore, named Fournier, Nicolaas and La Conte, attended a meeting of the

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<sup>1</sup>Hill, *I*, p. 302.

Select Committee in Calcutta, "they were asked whether the Director and Council at Chandernagore have power to conclude a neutrality which shall be binding on all Frenchmen within the prescribed limits, whether they can restrain the ships of the French navy from attacking us, how far they extend the limits of the Ganges, whether the Council will immediately send one of their own body to the *Darbar* to get the *Nabob's* sanction, whether they will, until this is obtained, refrain from fortifying their town\*\*\*."² The draft of the proposed treaty contained the following articles :— (1) Neutrality to be observed throughout Bengal during the present war between England and French, (2) this neutrality to extend to Cape Palmyras, (3) each party to send a copy in Persian to the Nawab, who shall guarantee the Treaty, (4) the French will send a copy to Pondicherry to be ratified by the Commander General of all the French Settlements, (5) the English shall give in exchange a copy signed by Admiral Watson, (6) until these have been exchanged, no act of hostility shall be committed.

The negotiations of the French with the English for neutrality in Bengal finally broke off on the 4th March 1757, when the latter received a large reinforcement of Europeans from Bombay. Conquest of the French possessions in Bengal was undoubtedly the immediate object of the English. The Nawāb at first protested against this on the ground that he would not allow one class of his subjects to be molested by another, and when the English engaged themselves in making preparations to attack Chandernagore he charged them with violation of the terms of the treaty of Ālinagar. A letter said to have been sent by the Nawāb to Admiral Watson on the 10th March 1757,<sup>3</sup> has been interpreted as his consent to the attack of Chandernagore. There

² Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive, I*, pp. 372-393.

³ S. C. Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, pp. 30-31.

"Your agreeable letter, acknowledging the receipt of mine, which you tell me, has dispelled your anxiety, that you had hitherto forbore attack-

are reasons to doubt authenticity of this letter and even if it is regarded as coming from the Nawāb himself "it certainly was never meant", as Scrafton truly writes,<sup>4</sup> to permit the English to march against Chandernagore. As a matter of fact, the Nawāb's embarrassment due to his fear of a north-eastern Afghān push and the insincerity of some of his own men caused a regrettable vacillation in his mind which prevented him from taking prompt and proper steps to help the French. We read in some contemporary English accounts that there was a large force of the Nawāb near Chandernagore under Nand Kumār, *faujdar* of Hugli, which ought to have resisted the English attack of Chandernagore. But a "well applied bribe" to Nand Kumār, writes Scrafton, "removed all obstacles; for it persuaded him to withdraw the troops under his command from Chandernagore."<sup>5</sup>

On the 18th February, Watts wrote to the Calcutta Council : "Omichānd is returned from Hughly and has had a meeting with Nuncomar who is duan (*Dewān*), and in the place of Phousdar (*Faujdar*) of Hughly."<sup>6</sup> Omichānd learnt from Nanda Kumār that messengers had arrived the day before from the Nawāb "with a present of a *lakh* of rupees from the Nabob to the French

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ing the French, out of regard to me; that you had prepared reasonable articles; had sent for them, and told them to sign them; that they gave for answer, if any future commander should disapprove them, they had not power to overrule him; that therefore peace had not taken place, with other disagreeable circumstances; I have received, and I have well considered it. If it be true, that one Frenchman does not approve, and abide by a treaty entered into by another, no confidence is to be placed in them. The reason of my forbidding war in my country is this, I look on the French as my own subjects, because they have, in this affair, implored my protection, for which reason I wrote to you to make peace with them, or else I had neither pleaded for them nor protected them. But you are a generous and wise man, and well know if an enemy comes to you with a clear heart, to implore your mercy, his life should be granted him; that is, if you think him pure of heart; but if you mistrust his sincerity, ACT ACCORDING TO THE TIME AND OCCASION. (Quoted in Scrafton, *Reflections on the Government of Indostan*, pp. 74-75).

<sup>4</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections on the Government of Indostan*, p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive*, I, p. 369.

Company, with orders to Nuncomar to assist the French with all his force, in case the English should attack Chandernagore, or if the French should attack the English, to assist them in the same manner, that there may be no quarrels or disputes in this country".<sup>7</sup> Watts also wrote : "Omichānd upon this advises the attacking of Chandernagore immediately, and not to be apprehensive of the Nabob, and says he is certain that there is not above three hundred matchlockmen in Hughly, that he has concerted measures with Nuncomar, who has engaged to delay matters, so as to prevent any assistance coming to the French from the Nabob for these fourteen days or more, and he says you may depend on it when you are once engaged with the French no one will come to the assistance of either party. Further Omichānd has promised in behalf of the English that if Nuncomar keeps neuter and by his policy prevents any assistance arriving from the Nabob to the French, that we will then make him a present of ten or twelve thousand rupees, and use our interest to continue him in the Government of Hughley. If you approve of giving this present all that you have to say to the bearer of this letter is : "*Gulaub que foul*", or a rose flower ; with which message Nuncomar will be satisfied that you comply with the agreement made by Omichānd, who says that it is not pleasing to him to acquiesce in such demands, but he thinks the necessity of our affairs requires it to prevent our intentions being misrepresented or further jealousies of us instilled into the Nabob, as this is such a venal Government in which nothing is to be effected without money or a very superior force— . . . . . Pray write me by express *coissids* (messengers) and if you agree to the terms proposed above, the Brahmin who brings this, will carry in future the messages, to and fro, between you and Nuncomar."<sup>8</sup> Orme also observes that "Omichānd visited Nuncomar, and by pompous representations of the English force, by assurance

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p. 370.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*.

of their protection and favour, and the promise of 12,000 rupees to be paid as soon as Chandernagore should be taken, won him over to their interests ; a striking instance of the extreme venality which prevails even amongst the highest ranks in Indostan ; for the annual emolument of *the Phouder* amounted to 250,000 rupees.”<sup>9</sup> On the 4th March, Watson threatened the Nawāb : “I will enkindle such a flame in your country as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish.”<sup>10</sup>

The land and sea forces of the English soon reached the vicinity of Chandernagore. Clive fixed his camp two miles from Chandernagore on the 12th March and on the 14th March proceeded to their outposts. On the 16th March he wrote to Nand Kumār : “The many deceitful wicked measures that the French have taken to endeavour to deprive me of the Nawāb’s favour (tho’ I thank God they have proved in vain, since his Excellency’s friendship towards me is daily increasing) has long made me look on them as enemies to the English, but I could no longer stifle my resentment when I found that . . . . . they dared to oppose the freedom of the English trade on the Ganges by seizing a boat with an English *dustuck*, and under English colours that was passing by their town. I am, therefore, come to a resolution to attack them. I am told that some of the Government’s forces have been persuaded under promise of great rewards from the French to join them against us ; I should be sorry, at a time when I am so happy in his Excellency’s favour and friendship, that I should do any injury to his servants : I am, therefore, to desire you will send these forces an order to withdraw, and that no other may come to their assistance.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Orme, *Op. cit.*, II., p. 137. A modern writer (B. K. Roy, *The Career and Achievements of Mahārājā Nanda Kumār*), pp. 18-21, has tried to show that Nanda Kumār did not accept this sum as bribe. But the evidence of three contemporary writers then involved in the affairs of Bengal cannot be ignored.

<sup>10</sup> Hill, II, p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, p. 34.

Highly embarrassed at this critical moment, Sirāj-ud-daulah became more vacillating than before. He passed one order, which he counter-manded soon. M. Jean Law thus describes the pitiable situation :

“.. .. At last on the 14th of March Chandernagore was attacked and I received the news on the 15th. A part of the reinforcements was on the march, the commandant waited only for his (the Nawāb's) final orders. I hastened to the Nawāb to get them given him. He assured me he would give them that very evening ; however, they were put off till the next day upon various pretexts.

“The night of the 15th to 16th at midnight the Nawāb sent me his chief eunuch to give me the happy news that the English had been repulsed with considerable loss, that the commander of their *sepoys* had been killed and several of their European officers. False news, but I did not care to appear to doubt them. When I appeared in the *Durbar* the next morning the Nawāb flattered himself that all was finished. The Commander of the troops was immediately summoned. Orders were given him to be ready to march that very day. At the same time the Nawāb sent messengers to Mr. Bussy, which I did also on my own account.

“I knew several vessels had been sunk in the narrow channel below Chandernagore, so that, supposing it to be completely blocked, I thought there was nothing to be feared from the enemy's ships. On the land side also I thought the Fort was in a condition to defend itself for a long time. Everything appeared to me to be to our advantage, if only the Nawāb's army would act. For this purpose I intended to send with it all the men whom I had at Cossimbazar, reinforced by about 30 soldiers, black and white, whom I expected from Dacca. In the evening I learn in the *Durbār* that every thing is changed. News had arrived that we had withdrawn our outposts, that the town of Chandernagore was in the power of the English, that we had



sent back to Hugli the 2,000 men whom the Nawāb had left with M. Renault on his first request, and that in consequence all was lost. The English had gained over Nand Kumār, *Faujdar* of Hugli, who wrote to the Nawāb any thing they thought proper to dictate to him. The town was really in the power of the enemy, but the Fort might still hold out for a long time.

“The Seths and several of the *diwāns*, who had been consulted on the change, had represented that it would not be proper to send any reinforcements, that the English, who had made themselves masters of the town in so short a time, would be masters of the Fort in less than two days, and would then come and attack the Nawāb in Murshidābād itself, and that it was the part of prudence not to irritate them, on which the order was given to Rāi Durlabhrām not to start. They even brought back all the troops which had marched out as well as the artillery which had already advanced a long distance.

“However, I continue my efforts. Every thing is useless in spite of the good news which I take care to give the Nawāb. I represented to him that it was the best opportunity possible for him to attack his enemies, that he could see clearly that our Fort was in a position to hold out, but that the small number of defenders would at last be wearied out and forced to surrender. Believing the channel completely blocked, I assured him the ships of war could not ascend the river. Colonel Clive was well assured of the contrary. Being quite certain that the Fort could not hold out against the fire of the ships he was in no hurry to sacrifice his men, whom he could not replace and whom he needed for the execution of his projects.

“Meanwhile the Nawāb is informed by his own spies that the English batteries have not damaged the Fort. He recovers courage and gives fresh orders for the departure of the troops, who begin their march, commanded by Rāi Durlabhrām and Mir Madan.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hill, *III*, pp. 196-197.

When the troops under Durlabhrām reached the vicinity of Hugli, Clive wrote two letters on the 22nd March, —one to Durlabhrām and the other to the Nawāb. To Durlabhrām he wrote : “I hear you are within 20 miles of Hughly. Whether you are coming as a friend or an enemy I know not. If as the latter, say so at once, and I will send some people out to fight you immediately. \*\*\*I now declare to you the French are our greatest enemies, and I will destroy them.”<sup>13</sup> To the Nawāb he communicated a note of warning : “\*\*\*If you are determined to march this way, I cannot forbid it, but I should be very sorry to see the troubles renewed. As I persuade myself you will have pleasure in hearing good things from me, I therefore, write this to inform you that hitherto I have only made use of musketry against the French but to-morrow early I shall open my batteries, and the ships will begin their fire, so that by the blessing of God I hope the place will be our own to-morrow.”<sup>14</sup>

M. Renault, Chief of Chandernagore, presented a gallant defence, though his resources were inadequate. His forces were composed of 237 soldiers (of whom 117 were deserters from the British), 120 sailors, 70 half castes and private Europeans, 100 civilians, 167 sepoy and 100 *topasses* or half caste gunners.<sup>15</sup> On the 17th March, M. Renault was betrayed by a sub-lieutenant of the garrison, who was won over by the English to join their side. “He was the only French Artillery Officer, and so his desertion was a serious loss to his countrymen”. Still the Frenchmen within the Fort continued to resist the attacks bravely for a few days. But they were completely overpowered by Colonel Clive and his forces in the afternoon of the 23rd March and surrendered to the English after a gallant defence by entering into a capitulation. “The conduct of the French on this occasion”,

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<sup>13</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 288.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, p. 38.

writes Broome, "was most creditable, and well worthy the acknowledged gallantry of that nation".<sup>16</sup>

The capture of Chandernagore by the English dealt a crushing blow to French power and prestige in Bengal, and it meant a significant gain for the former in that period of grave complications in international and Indian politics. It destroyed the chances of Franco-Muslim alliance in Bengal against the English, and made the English comparatively free to take bolder steps against Sirāj-ud-daulah. It also adversely affected the position of the French in other parts of India by making it impossible for them to utilize Bengal resources any longer in the course of their conflicts with the English. "In short, nothing could have happened more seasonable", wrote Clive in his letter to the Select Committee at Fort St. George, dated 30th March 1757, "for the expeditious re-establishment of Calcutta than the reduction of Chandernagore. It was certainly a large, rich and thriving colony, and the loss of it is an unexpressible blow to the French Company."<sup>17</sup>

Outwardly Sirāj-ud-daulah expressed congratulation on Clive's victory over the French.<sup>18</sup> But he sent a *jamādār* to M. Law "with a hundred musketeers to guard the (French) Factory" at Cossimbazar and one of his flags to put over the gate.<sup>19</sup> He sent word to M. Law "to fear nothing", that "he would support him with all his forces."<sup>20</sup> He is said to have written letters to Bussy to come to the assistance of M. Law. Scrafton has charged him with 'treachery' on this ground, and writes that copies of these letters were placed in the hands of Clive by the Nawāb's Secretary after the English had entered Murshidābād.<sup>21</sup> Authenticity of these letters has been challenged by a

<sup>16</sup> Broome, *History of the Rise and Progress of the British Army*, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 307.

<sup>18</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 294.

<sup>19</sup> Hill, *III*, p. 199.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections, etc.*, p. 97.

modern writer.<sup>22</sup> But it should be noted that M. Law himself refers to some correspondence of the Nawāb and of himself with Bussy.<sup>23</sup>

To make it impossible for the Nawāb to utilise French assistance in their impending conflict with him and for complete elimination of French influence in Bengal, the English demanded of him the expulsion of all Frenchmen from his dominions and the surrender of the French fugitives at Cāsimbāzār. The Nawāb at first refused to comply with it on certain reasonable grounds, which, however, did not satisfy the English. They realised that the stay of the Frenchmen in Bengal, during the period of their bitter conflict with them, as almost certain allies of the Nawāb, would be prejudicial to their interest. So they thought henceforth not only of removal of French influence but also of replacing Sirāj-ud-daulah by a new Subahdār whom they could more easily control. While engaged in a plot to realise their second ambition, they pressed on the Nawāb their demand for expelling the French.<sup>24</sup> Thus intimidated and embarrassed Sirāj-ud-daulah lost firmness of mind and by discarding his earlier resolution to protect the French, he asked M. Law, Chief of the French factory at Cāsimbāzār, and other French fugitives, to leave Bengal. Law and his party left Cāsimbāzār on the 16th April and proceeded towards Bihār.

But even this did not satisfy the English. Watson wrote to Sirāj-ud-daulah on the 19th April 1757 : "I have already told you, and now repeat it again, that while a Frenchman remains in this kingdom, I will never cease pursuing him \* \* \* \*. I desire you will grant a *dustuck* for the passage of two thousand of our soldiers by land to Patna \* \* \* \* the only design of sending them is to seize the French and restore tranquillity and perfect peace in your kingdom which can never be truly

<sup>22</sup> A. K. Moitra, *Sirāj-ud-daulah*, p. 287.

<sup>23</sup> Hill, *III*, p. 196.

<sup>24</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 349.

established in those dominions, while a war continues between us and them (the French).<sup>25</sup>” This demand of Watson and the charge that the Nawāb had not fulfilled the treaty obligations infuriated the Nawāb, who declared : “They are always writing to me to deliver up the French ; I will receive no more of their letters”. As a matter of fact, the Nawāb was wrongly charged with non-fulfilment of the terms of the treaty. Clive had observed on the 29th March 1757 : “He (the Nawāb) had already performed almost every article of the treaty ; paid Mr. Watts the three lacs of rupees ; delivered up Kassimbazar and all other factories, with the money and goods therein taken. The Gentlemen write from thence that little or nothing is wanting.<sup>26</sup>” The Nawāb strongly asserted in his letter to Clive, dated the 26th April 1757, that he had fulfilled all the terms of the treaty and did not think it proper “to send forces against the French”.

The Nawāb had met most of the demands of the English under various considerations. One such consideration was his fear of Ahmad Shah Abdālī’s march into Bengal. The invasion of Nādir Shah in 1738-39 and the repeated inroads of Ahmad Shah Abdālī from 1748 not only affected adversely the political and economic conditions in the areas which were devastated by these but had also some influence on contemporary Bengal politics. In fact, north India being then full of ambitious Afghāns was in constant apprehension of an Afghān bid for supremacy all over India. The Ruhelās under Āli Muhammad Ruhelā openly defied the authority of the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah. The year 1748 which saw Āli Muhammad Ruhelā at the height of his power was the year in which Ahmad Shah Abdālī invaded India for the first time, and when the Afghāns in Bihār rebelled against the Government of Alivardi

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 345.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, p. 303 & p. 308.

and made themselves masters of Patna for three months, 13th January to 16th April 1748. It is also significant that Ahmad Shah Abdāli was joined by the Muslim chiefs of northern India like the oppressed Ruhelās and the Nawāb of Oudh.

In the years 1756-1757 the Company's government in Bengal and its Nawāb Sirāj-ud-daulah were apprehensive of an Abdāli dash upon Oudh and then upon Bengal. The fourth invasion of India by Ahmad Shah Abdāli in November 1756, his march to Delhi and occupation of it in January 1757, followed by slaughter of men and loot of property and the atrocities of his troops in the Jat territory caused an apprehension in the mind of Sirāj-ud-daulah and led him to concede to some demands of the English in February and March 1757. He felt relief when Ahmad Shah Abdāli marched back for returning to his own country towards the end of March 1757. He wrote to Clive on the 26th April 1757 : "By the favour of God peace has been agreed upon betwixt Achmud Shah Abdally and me. By repeated advices I am informed of his returning by continued marches from Delhi to his own country, and that he had got as far as Paniput (Panipat) and Suniput (Sonapat). As I look upon Abdally's returning at this time in the light of a victory, for your pleasure and satisfaction I have acquainted you with it." He again wrote to Clive on the 17th May<sup>27</sup> 1757 : "By the favour and goodness of God, Abdally is returning by continued marches to his own country."<sup>28</sup> He then assured the English : "You may with great confidence continue to carry on your trade ; none will ever make any opposition to it."<sup>29</sup>

Expulsion of the French from Bengal was an injudicious and a suicidal step on the part of Sirāj-ud-daulah. Most probably

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, p. 360.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p. 385.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*.

he thought that after comparative relief from the pressure of adverse circumstances he would recall the Frenchmen and utilize their services if necessary. According to the contemporary Indian historian, Ghulām Husain, the Nawāb at the time of M. Law's departure told him "that at present it was fit that he should depart and that if there should happen any thing new he would send for him again". "Send for me again", replied Law. He added, "Rest assured, My Lord Nawāb, this is the last time we shall see each other. Remember my words. We shall never meet again. It is nearly impossible.<sup>30</sup>" His observation proved to be true. M. Law was driven out of Bihār by Eyre Coote, who seized the French factory at Patna. The French factories in other parts of Bengal soon fell under the control of the English.

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<sup>30</sup> *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, II, p. 227.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONSPIRACY OF 1757

Sirāj-ud-daulah's star was paling fast. A deep and well-laid conspiracy against him had matured by now. He had to face an opposition from the beginning of his rule. The steps taken by him to overpower it must have enhanced the discontent of some whose personal interests were thereby affected. New appointments made by him were not also liked by those who had been thus displaced. His youthful impetuosity may have alienated some. Sraffton suggests that Sirāj-ud-daulah, "by the severity and capriciousness of his temper, had made himself many secret enemies, both in his court and army."<sup>1</sup> But men like Mir Jāfar, Rāi Durlabhram, and the Jagat Seths (Mahātāb and Swarup Chānd) wanted to effect a change in the government to further their own selfish interests, even by enlisting the support of a foreign power, quite regardless of the fate of the country.

According to M. Law, the Seths were "the originators of the revolution ; without them the English would never have carried out what they have \* \* \* \* \*. The cause of the English had become that of the Seths. Their interests were the same. Can anyone be surprised to find them acting in concert ? Further, if we call to mind that it was the same house of *saukars* (bankers) which overthrew Sarfaraz Khan to enthrone Alivardi Khan, and which during the reign of the latter had the management of all important business, one must confess that it ought not to be difficult for persons of so much influence to execute a project in which the English would take a share."<sup>2</sup> Though the Seths had already participated actively in the revolution which helped Alivardi to usurp the *masnad* of Bengal in 1740, yet by an irony of fate the table was turned against his grandson in

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<sup>1</sup> *Reflections, etc.*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, *III*, pp. 185-186.



1757. Mir Jāfar's fidelity to the Nawāb's government was shaky from before. The author of the *Muzaffarnāmah* writes that Mir Jāfar "whose seed planted so many years ago was not sprouting up in the soil of revenge, was always planning with a party whom he thought to be his friends, how to put down Sirāj-ud-daulah". Mirzā Āmir Beg and Khādīm Husain Khān were also in league with the leading conspirators. We read in a contemporary Memoirs that "discord spread itself in the Suba's (*Subāhdār's*) court where the only Oracle that every Man consulted was his own Interest."<sup>3</sup>

A Bengali work, entitled *Mahārājā Krishna Chandra Rāyasya Charitram* by Rājiblochan Mukhopādhyāy (first published in 1805) contains an account of this conspiracy representing Mahārājā Krishna Chandra of Nadiā and Rājā Rājballabh of Dacca as members of it. But it contains several inaccuracies and is not corroborated by any contemporary historical evidence. Dr. R. C. Majumdar has rightly pointed out its incorrectness. "Such is the curious story", writes Dr. Majumdar, "recorded by a Bengali Pandit less than half a century after the battle of Plassey. \* \* About the time when he wrote the English were the rulers of Bengal and naturally there was a wide-spread desire on the part of all leading families to enhance their power and prestige with the English by representing their ancestors as chief actors in the memorable transactions which established the English authorities in the Province."<sup>4</sup> This story narrated in the above-mentioned work was incorporated in a later work, called *Kshitiśabanśābalī Charitram* by Kārtick Chandra Roy (1879), and writers like Nabin Chandra Sen and Akshay Kumār Moitra have also mentioned it in their works without ascertaining its authenticity.

The eighteenth century was a dark and tragic period in the history of our country. Besides lack of political unity, there was

<sup>3</sup> *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal*, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *Mahārājā Rājballabh*, pp. 42-43.

utter degeneration of the nobility; They were very much responsible for the ruinous wars and treacherous conspiracies which sucked the life-blood of the country and left it prostrate, thus creating opportunities for alien domination. Internal exhaustion of a country invariably invites external aggression.

The French adventurer, M. Law, exclaimed in a tone of disappointment before the historian Ghulām Husain in April 1759 : "I have travelled everywhere from Bengal to Delhi but no where have I found anything from any one except oppression of the poor and plundering of way-farers. When I wanted that one of these famous potentates, like Shujā, Imād and their peers, out of a regard for honour and desire for the regulation of the Government, should undertake to put in order the affairs of Bengal and suppress the English not one of them felt any inclination to the task. They did not once weigh in their minds the praiseworthiness or shame of their conduct. \* \* \* \* The Indian nobles are a set of disorderly inconsistent blockheads, who exist solely for ruining a world of people." Shah Alam II observed in 1768 : "Through the perfidiousness of the nobility and vassals of the illustrious Royal House, this anarchy has arisen, and every one proclaims himself a sovereign in his own place ; and they are at variance with one another, the strong prevailing over the weak".

The revolution of 1757 was not the result of popular upsurge. Law's view that "every one longed for a change and many flattered themselves it would take place" is not correct. In fact, it was the work of some court politicians and members of the aristocracy. The general masses did not concern themselves about politics and changes in the court and the government.

Equally incorrect is the view of Hill that among the general causes of the conspiracy was "the discontent of the Hindus towards the Muhammedan Government."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hill, I, Lii.

The reverse is proved by Hill himself, when he writes, "The Nawābs, relying as they did for their supremacy on a foreign soldiery, considered it wise to hold their warlike followers in check by the employment of up-country Hindus in many of the high offices of the State, both civil and military, and in the Government of the subordinate divisions of the kingdom. These Hindus were especially influential in matters of finance, for the commerce of the province was almost entirely in the hands of great merchants, most of whom were up-country Hindus, like Omichānd and the Seths".<sup>6</sup> Further, if the Hindus had a grudge against "the Muhammadan Government", why did they select another Muhammadan, namely Mir Jāfar, to replace Sirāj-ud-daulah? There may have been an undercurrent of discontent among some Hindu aristocrats. But there was nothing like an attempt for general Hindu revival at the cost of the Muslim Government.

To the advantage of the conspirators they had a third party (the English) to support them. Even before Plassey at least one Englishman secretly contemplated a political revolution in Bengal in favour of the English. He was Caroline Frederick Scott, Engineer-General of the English East India Company in the East (1752-54), who also prepared a comprehensive plan for strengthening the fortifications of the English in Calcutta. Mr. Scott tried his best "to procure a perfect knowledge of that Court (Nawāb's Court at Murshidābād), government, country, and people (of Bengal)".<sup>7</sup> He made intimate contact with Omichānd, Rājā Tilakchānd of Burdwān and Khwajah Wājīd, a principal merchant of Bengal, and felt that it would be possible to seize power by effecting a change in the Government of Bengal. In 1756-57 the English regarded Sirāj-ud-daulah's removal necessary for furtherance of their own designs. While considering the ques-

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<sup>6</sup> Hill, *I*, *xxi*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, *III*, *p.* 328.

tion of sending help to Bengal, the Select Committee at Fort Saint George wrote to the Select Committee in Bengal on the 13th October 1756 : "We need not represent to you the great advantage which we think it will be to the military operations, and the influence it will have in the Nabob's Councils to effect a junction with any Powers in the Province of Bengal that may be dissatisfied with the violences of the Nabob's Government, or that may have pretensions to the Nabobship." Clive recommended to Watts, the Chief of the English factory at Cāsimbāzār, "the forming of a party to join" them "in case things should come to extremes, which many circumstances concurred to facilitate". Clive thus advised Watts in his letter to him, dated 30th April 1757 : "The Nabob is a villain, and cannot be trusted ; he must be overset, or we must fall."<sup>8</sup> Scrafton observed in his letter to Walsh from Cāsimbāzār, dated 9th April 1757 : "We ought to be taking measures in case things should take that turn. Give Mr. Watts a hint of this, the least encouragement, and he will set about forming a party in case of the worst. How glorious it would be for the Company to have a Nawāb devoted to them !"<sup>9</sup> In his statement to the House of Commons, Clive observed, "that after Chandernagore was resolved to be attacked, he repeatedly said to the Committee, as well as to others, that they could not stop there, but must go further ; that, having established themselves by force, and not by consent of the Nabob, he would endeavour to drive them out again ; that they had numberless proofs of his intentions, many upon record ; and that he did suggest to Admiral Watson and Sir George Paocke, as well as to the Committee the necessity of a revolution ; that Mr. Watson<sup>10</sup> and the gentlemen of the Committee, agreed

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm, *Memoirs of Lord Clive*, I, p. 289.

<sup>9</sup> Hill, III, p. 343.

<sup>10</sup> Watson wrote to Clive: "I am glad to hear that Meer Jaffier's party increases. I hope every thing will turn out in the expedition to your wishes and that I may soon have to congratulate you on the success of it".

upon the necessity of it ; and that the management of that revolution was with the consent of the Committee, left to Mr. Watts, who was Resident at the Nabob's capital, and himself ; \* \* \* \* ”.

On the 23rd April 1757 Scrafton wrote to Clive that the Seths had made a proposal through Omichānd to install Yār Latif Khān, an officer in Sirāj-ud-daulah's government, as the Nawāb. But early in May 1757, the English abandoned this in favour of another according to which the choice fell on Mir Jāfar, a man of greater influence and Commander-in-Chief of the Nawāb's army. On the 1st May the Select Committee in Calcutta considered that “a revolution will be for the interest of the Company”. Watts carried negotiations with the conspirators, particularly with Mir Jāfar most adroitly and “with utmost secrecy” as Clive said. Clive and some others took due precautions to lull the Nawāb into a sense of security by professing friendship to him till the final blow was struck<sup>11</sup>. Clive wrote to Watts on the 2nd May 1757 : “Tomorrow morning we decamp ; part of our forces go to Calcutta, the other will go into garrison here ; and, to take away all suspicion, I have ordered all the artillery and tumbrils to be embarked in boats and sent to Calcutta. I have written to the Nawāb a soothing letter ; this accompanies another of the same kind, and one to Mohun Lal agreeable to your desire. Enter into business with Meer Jaffar as soon as you please. I am ready, and will engage to be at Nusary (Naiserāi) in twelve hours after I receive your letter, which place is to be the rendezvous of the whole army. The Major, who commands at Calcutta (Major Kilpatrick), has all ready to embark at a minute's warning, and has boats sufficient to carry artillery-men and stores to Nusary. I shall march by land and join him there ; we will then proceed to Moorshe-

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<sup>11</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections, etc.*, p. 81 ; Thornton, *History of the British Empire in India*, I, p. 229.

dabad or the place where we are to be joined at, directly. Tell Meer Jaffier to fear nothing ;—that I will join him with five thousand men who never turned their backs ; and that if he fails seizing him, we shall be strong enough to drive him out of the country. . Assure him I will march day and night to his assistance, and stand by him as long as I have a man left.” In one of his “soothing” letters to the Nawāb, Clive stated : “Yesterday my army broke up their camp ; more than half is gone to Calcutta, the rest remain at Chandernagore. Calcutta is become a place of such misery since your army has almost destroyed it, that there is no room for more soldiers without endangering their lives by sickness. However, further to satisfy you, I shall order down to Calcutta all my field cannon. I expect to hear that your army has retired likewise to Muxadavad, and that you have been as expeditious in performing what you promised as I have.”<sup>12</sup>

Probably the Nawāb was not totally unmindful of the designs of the English. According to some he still tried to enlist support of the French to stand against the English. Clive wrote in his letter to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors, dated 26th July 1757 : “To this end Monsier Bussy was pressingly invited to come into this province, and Monsieur Law of Cossimbazar (who before had been privately entertained in his service) was ordered to return from Patna.”<sup>13</sup> But, as it has been already pointed, the Nawāb did not violate the terms of the Treaty. He also wrote to Clive on the 17th May 1757 :—“I firmly adhere to whatever I have agreed to. Neither have I nor will I ever deviate from it. I consider your enemies as mine, and at any time should you want my assistance, on advising me I will send it to you, and should I ever have occasion for your army I shall demand your assistance.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Malcolm, *Memoirs of Lord Clive*, I, pp. 239-240.

<sup>13</sup> Malcolm, *Memoirs of Lord Clive*, p. 263; Hill, II, pp. 369-370; Forrest, I, p. 416.

<sup>14</sup> Hill, II, p. 385.

The conspirators went ahead. Clive wrote to Watts on the 2nd May : “\* \* \* everything is settled with the Committee,—enclosed are the proposals, and if there be any other articles which you and Omichānd think necessary to be added, you have full liberty to do so, or leave out anything which you think may hurt our cause, or give disgust.”<sup>15</sup> To maintain secrecy Watts went to Mir Jāfar “in a covered Dooley”<sup>15a</sup> and got the secret treaty with him finally signed on the 4th or the 5th June 1757. Mir Jāfar promised to comply with the terms of the treaty which the English had concluded with Sirāj-ud-daulah (9th February, 1757), to treat the enemies of the English (whether Europeans or Indians) as his own enemies, to deliver up to the English all the factories and effects of the French in Bengal, Bihār and Orissā and not to permit the latter to settle any more in these places, to pay the expenses of the English troops if requisitioned by him for his own service and not to erect any new fortifications on the river below Hugli. As restitution for the losses caused by Sirāj-ud-daulah’s capture of Calcutta he agreed to pay 1 crore of rupees to the English Company, 50 lacs to the European inhabitants of Calcutta, 20 lacs to the Hindus, Muslims and other inhabitants of Calcutta and 7 lacs to the Armenians settled there. The Company were to get possession of the land within the Marāthā Ditch and 600 yards all round and they were to receive the *Zamindārī* of all lands to the south of Calcutta between the Hugli river and Salt Lakes as far as Kalpi. We know from a statement of Mr. Richard Becher, then himself a member of the Select Committee, that the members of the Committee received presents on this occasion by private arrangements<sup>16</sup>. According to Becher, the sums received were Rupees 280,000 by Drake, Rupees 280,000 by Clive and Rupees 240,000 each by himself, Watts and Major Killpatrick.

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<sup>15</sup> Malcolm, *Memoirs of Lord Clive*, I, p. 239.

<sup>15a</sup> *Memoirs of the Revolution in Bengal*, p. 99.

<sup>16</sup> Hill, III, pp. 303-306.

Omichānd was paid back in his own coin for his ignoble conduct in the course of the negotiations for the secret treaty. An extremely greedy and ambitious man, he demanded for himself "5 percent on all the Nawāb's treasure, which would amount to two crores of rupees, besides a quarter of all his wealth"<sup>17</sup>, for his participation in the plot against him. When he threatened the English that if his demand was not fulfilled he would disclose the plot to the Nawāb, Clive duped him by the "expedient of a double treaty"<sup>18</sup>. The draft of the real treaty written on a piece of white coloured paper had nothing written on it about the demand of Omichānd, while it was mentioned in the draft of the fictitious treaty on a piece of red coloured paper.

On Watson's refusal to sign the "fictitious treaty", Clive got his signature forged by Lushington<sup>19</sup>. Some say that this was done with Watson's tacit consent. The red paper treaty was shown to Omichānd only to humour him till the negotiations were conducted. After Mir Jāfar was proclaimed as the Nawāb of Bengal, the trick was disclosed to Omichānd, who "died in about a year and a half from the shock of his disappointment"<sup>20</sup>.

Clive later on thus defended this episode before the Parliamentary Select Committee: "That his Lordship never made any secret of it ; he thinks it warrantable in such a case, and would do it again a hundred times."<sup>21</sup> Some modern writers have produced laboured apology in favour of it. But there is no doubt that it was a disgraceful transaction,<sup>22</sup> "a piece of consummate treachery"<sup>23</sup> on the part of Clive, which, as it has been said, has

<sup>17</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 381.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 383.

<sup>19</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 387; *Ibid*, *III*, pp. 317, 318, 320.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p. 325 footnote; Orme, *II*, p. 182.

<sup>21</sup> Hill, *III*, p. 316.

<sup>22</sup> Thornton, *I*, p. 262.

<sup>23</sup> Mill, *III*, p. 192, footnote 2.



done more harm to his reputation than any other charge that has been brought against him.<sup>24</sup> Thornton considers this "transaction not only disgraceful to those immediately engaged in it, but injurious to the honour of the nation which they represented."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Wheeler, *Early Records of British India*, p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> Thornton, *History of the British Empire, in India, I*, p. 262.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BATTLE OF PLASSEY AND END OF SIRAJ

On hearing of the secret plot against him Sirāj-ud-daulah was bewildered. With growing irresoluteness on his part at this critical hour he failed to rise to the occasion. Instead of taking effective steps against the ringleaders of the conspiracy he himself met Mir Jāfar on the 15th June and most pathetically appealed to him for a reconciliation by recollecting the name of Alivardi. Mir Jāfar promised fidelity in words. But he had nothing but treachery in his heart. He wrote to Clive on the 16th June : "I received your obliging letter the 28th of the Moon Ramazan on Thursday in the 4th year in the afternoon, at which I was extremely pleased. I understand that you marched the 25th agreeable to your contract. I broke the claim of service. On the news of your coming the Nabob was much intimidated, and requested at such a juncture I would stand his friend. On my part, agreeable to the circumstances of the times, I thought it advisable to acquiesce with his request, but what we have agreed on must be done. I have fixed the first day of the moon for my march. God willing I shall arrive. I hope till we meet you will write me of your health, and what else occurs, as I will you. You will take care to send trusty people that our secret may not be divulged."<sup>1</sup>

To conciliate Mir Jāfar, Sirāj-ud-daulah restored him to his old position as the commander of his army. It was a great blunder on his part. "If the Soubah erred before", observes Scrafton rightly, "in abandoning the French, he doubly erred now, in admitting a suspicious friend to continue in the charge of a great body of troops, of whom self defence would have taught to make use of for his own preservation."<sup>2</sup> Referring to Sirāj-ud-

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections* p. 89.

daulah's effort to pacify Mir Jāfar, Mir Madan said, "One ought to be very careful about his mortal enemy. At this time we ought not to expect any good service from these *sardārs* (Mir Jāfar and Khādīm Husain Khān). We ought to put them down first, so that the English, on hearing the news, will of themselves take to flight. The presence of these two in our camp will be the cause of distraction and anxiety to us (the loyal generals) ; and they are sure to practise treachery"<sup>3</sup>

But Sirāj-ud-dualah did not pay heed to this with the belief that Mir Jāfar had been won over by him and that he was sincere in his assurances. The Nawāb marched from his capital with his army<sup>4</sup> on the 20th June for the inevitable conflict with the English, in the mango grove of Plassey on the Bhāgīrathī. Forty to fifty Frenchmen were also present in his party. The equipments and preparations of the army were adequate and it occupied a strong position at Plassey. But "what avails pomp and parade", observes Scrafton significantly, "where the heart is not fired by loyalty to their prince, or love to their country"<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, many in the Nawāb's camp and the court were unreliable, and treachery was rampant all round.

The Select Committee in Calcutta saw the secret treaty on the 11th June and Watts hurriedly left Cāsimbāzār on the 11th June or 12th June. Clive marched forward on the 13th June to fight against the Nawāb at the head of an army of 3,000 men of whom 800 were Europeans, the rest being half-caste gunners and sepoys.<sup>6</sup> As an immediate pretext for this Clive

<sup>3</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, fs. 61a-62b.

<sup>4</sup> 50,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry and fifty pieces of heavy cannon according to Scrafton (*Reflections*, p. 90) ; 50,000 infantry, 18,000 cavalry and 50 pieces of cannon according to Orme (*Indostan*, II, p. 173) ; 35,000, infantry, 15,000 cavalry and forty pieces of cannon according to Clive; according to Eyre Coote it consisted of 40,000 infantry and 20,000 cavalry.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, 91.

<sup>6</sup> 650 European infantry, 100 *topasses* (half-caste gunners), 150 artillery men including 50 sailors, and 2100 sepoys, with eight pieces of cannon (6 Poundsers), Hill, I, *cxvii*.

wrote a letter to the Nawāb on the same day wrongly charging him therein with violation of the terms of the treaty between them and still he did not mention to him his intention to fight.<sup>7</sup> He rather wrote to him that he was going to Cāsimbāzār according to the instruction of the Council to "put our disputes to arbitration before Jagget Seat, Rajah Mohan Lal, Meer Jaffer Khan, Rajah Roy Dulab, Meer Murdun and the rest of your great men, and if it shall appear I have deviated from the treaty I bind myself to give up all my demand"<sup>8</sup>. Referring to this duplicity Thornton observes that Clive "violated a great and important principle of morals, by continuing to profess friendly feelings towards the Soubahdar, and to express a desire for the peaceful adjustment of all differences, long after the train was laid for the destruction of that prince, and even upto the very moment when the explosion was about to take place"<sup>9</sup>.

Clive passed beyond Hugli, and his army reached Pāṭlī on the 17th June. He wrote to Mir Jāfar from Pāṭlī on the 18th June : "I have received your letter which has given me the utmost satisfaction after the great pain I have suffered by your silence. I have sent a party to possess themselves of Cutwan (Kāṭwah) fort and town, and shall move with my whole army there to-morrow. I believe I shall march from thence the next day and hope to be at Moncurra (Mankarah) in two days, but my motions will in a great measure depend on the advices I receive from you. Write me what you intend to do and what is proper for me to do. On mutual intelligence depends the success of our affairs, so write me daily and fully. If I meet the Nabob's army, what part will you act, and how am I to act ? This you may be assured of that I will attack the Nabob within 24 hours after I come in sight of his army. Of all things take

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<sup>7</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections*, pp. 87-88.

<sup>8</sup> *Bengal & Madras Papers*, II.

<sup>9</sup> Thornton, I, p. 266.

care of yourself that you be not undone by treachery before my arrival.”<sup>10</sup>

A detachment sent by Clive under Eyre Coote reached Kāṭwah on the 18th June and on the 19th June captured the fort there which commanded the high road to Murshidābād and contained a large quantity of grain. The remaining portion of Clive's army reached Kāṭwah late in the midnight on that day. They all halted at Kāṭwah for two days. On the 20th June, Clive wrote to Rājā Āsad-ur-Zamān of Birbhum, who professed “strong friendship” for the English and was hostile to the Nawāb, to join him. Clive hesitated for some time at Kāṭwah to march forward as he was not still certain about Mir Jāfar's movements. He wrote to Mir Jāfar from Kāṭwah on the 19th June 1757 : “I wrote you yesterday that I should march to Cutwa, and accordingly am now arrived there with my whole force, the fort having been taken by the detachment I sent against it. It gives me great concern that in affair of so much consequence to yourself in particular that you do not exert yourself more. So long as I have been on my march you have not given me the least information what measures it is necessary for me to take, nor do I know what is going forward at Muxadavad. Surely it is in your power to send me news daily ; it must be more difficult for me to procure trusty messengers than you ; however the bearer of this is a sensible intelligent man, and in whom I have great confidence. Let me know your sentiments freely by him. I shall wait here till I have proper encouragement to proceed. I think it absolutely necessary that you should join my army as soon as possible. Consider the Nabob will increase in strength daily. Come over to me at Plassey or any other place you judge proper, with what force you have. Even a 1,000 horse will be sufficient, and I will engage to march immediately with you to Muxadavad. I prefer conquer-

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<sup>10</sup> Hill, II, p. 415.

ing by open force.”<sup>11</sup> Mir Jāfar thus assured Clive in a letter written on the 19th June : “Health, etc., to Sahbut Jung Bhadre, the day of the Eade. Your note from Colsannie is arrived. I have perused the contents. Tomorrow the day of the Eade by the blessing of God I shall march. I shall have my tent fixed to the right or left of the army. I have hitherto been afraid to send you intelligence. After I am arrived in the army mutual intelligence will be easier, but here the Nabob has fixed *choqueys* on all the roads. Your letters come too open to me. I hope that till our affairs are publickly declared you will be very careful.”<sup>12</sup>

Clive had till then “received nothing but bare promises from Mir Jāfar \* \* \* \* and hesitated to risk the fortunes of the Company on the bare word of a man, who, whatever his reasons, was a traitor to his own sovereign.”<sup>13</sup> He called there a Council of War on the 21st June and himself voted with the majority against immediate advance. But Mir Jāfar wrote to Clive again before the 22nd June 1757 : “I have received your answer advising the taking of Cutwa and was highly pleased. Sunday I marched from the city and reached Ammony Gunge (Āmāniganj) and stayed a day there to collect my people. The Nabob marched to-day from Tarrackpore and has pitched his tent at Moncurra (six miles to the north of Cāsimbāzār) near the bridge. By the blessing of God tomorrow I shall march from hence (Tuesday), and shall have my tent pitched to the left at a distance. The Nabob’s intention is to have his entrenchment at Moncurra (Mankarah), therefore the sooner you march to fall on him the better before his design can take place. As yet you are only designing, but it is not now proper to be indolent. When you come near I shall then be able to join you. If you could send 2 or 3,000 good fighting men the upper road towards

<sup>11</sup> Hill, II, p. 417.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Hill, I, CXCVI.

Cossimbazar, the Nabob's army would of themselves retreat. Then the battle will have no difficulty. When I am arrived near the army I will send you privately all the intelligence. Let me have previous notice of the time you intend to fight."<sup>14</sup> On receiving this letter Clive decided to proceed immediately to Plassey and reached there with his army at about midnight on the 22nd June. Thus was played the "nice and important game" with the Nāwab as Clive subsequently said.

The battle began in the morning of the 23rd June. The vanguard of the Nawāb's troops was under the command of his faithful officers, Mir Madan, Chief of Artillery, and Mohan Lāl Kashmiri. But it should be noted that the Nawāb's cause was foredoomed to failure as about 45,000 of the troops were under the command of three traitor confederates, Rāi Durlabhrām on the right, Yār Latif Khān in the centre and Mir Jāfar on the left. At the beginning heavy firing from the Nawāb's side caused some anxiety for the English. After half an hour's fighting, Clive determined to shelter his troops in the groove. At eleven O'clock he, in consultation with his principal officers, decided that the cannonade should be continued during the day and that an attack should be made on the Nawāb's camp at midnight.

But Sirāj-ud-daulah's destiny soon took an adverse turn and blasted whatever hopes he entertained till then. The death of Mir Madan, his last and most faithful general,<sup>15</sup> in the thick of fighting by a chance shot at about 2 P.M. threw him into a veritable crisis. In utter bewilderment he turned to Mir Jāfar again and piteously appealed to him for help at that critical moment in the following words:— "It is for you to defend my

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<sup>14</sup> Hill, II, p. 420.

<sup>15</sup> Bāhādur Āli Khān, Commander of the *bahaliā* musketeers, Nauwa Singh Hāzāri, Captain of the artillery, and some other officers of the Nawāb fell dead on the field at this time.

honour.<sup>16</sup> "One great cause of our success," writes Scrafton, "was, that in the very beginning of the action, we had the good fortune to kill Meer Modun, one of the Soubah's best and most faithful officers, which struck such a terror into him, that he sent for Meer Jaffar, threw his turband at his feet and told him with a most dejected countenance, that it was he that must protect that turband."<sup>17</sup> The perfidious Mir Jāfar professed sincerity by swearing on the Quran to fight the English and gave the following wrong advice to Sirāj-ud-daulah : "Only four *gharis* of the day remain. The English troops are in great power and spirit. Signs of weakness and defeat are visible among our soldiers. On account of their exertions throughout the day, our men are not in such a good condition that in reliance on their support we can put down such powerful enemies as the English. It is advisable and our final safety depends on this that you should now order our guns to be brought back from the field and placed within the entrenchment, so that our men may pass the night at ease. Tomorrow we shall see what can be done."<sup>18</sup> But at the same time Mir Jāfar wrote to Clive : "Your note is arrived. I was in the Nabob's presence on this plain, and observed that everybody was intimidated. He sent for me and flung his turband off before me, and one day he made me write on the side of the Koran so that I cannot come over to you. By the blessing of God you have the better of the day. Meer Murdun was wounded by a ball and is since dead. Buxshee Hazarry is killed, and ten or fifteen horsemen are killed and wounded. Roy Dulub, Luttee Codair Cawn, and myself are moved from the right to the left. Make a great and sudden discharge and they will run away and we shall do our part. The Colonel, Rajah, Cawn, and myself, we four men, must

<sup>16</sup> *Siyār*, II, p. 233.

<sup>17</sup> Scrafton *Reflections*, p. 93; *Tārikh-i-Bāngālā Mohabat Jung*, f. 100 A; *Muzaffarnāmah*, f. 62A.

<sup>18</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, 62A.



absolutely consult together on the proper measures to be taken. We will certainly finish the matter ; the *bildars* and *bildears* (gunmen and pioneers) have acted according to their agreement. I swear by my Prophet that the above is fact, attack him at 3 in the morning, they will all run away, and then will be my opportunity. The forces want to return to the city ; attack him to-night by all means. We three shall be to the left of the Nabob. Coja Haddce will remain firm to the Nabob. If you come you have an opportunity of seizing (him). We three are ready for your service and will see you by and by. The Buckshee is killed, Sangaram is disabled. The commanders of the footmen and the swordmen have left the entrenchments, leaving the guns there. I have mentioned but a small part of the loss that the part of the army commanded by Meer Murdun have sustained. Had you taken that opportunity to advance with your Army there had been nothing more to do. It grieves me that I was then at a distance. Your man was present while the above passed. Coddram Hossein, Meerun, Meer Cassim, Luttee Cawn, and Raja Dulabram all send their *salam* to the Colonel and the rest of the gentlemen.”<sup>19</sup>

Following the treacherous advice of Mir Jāfar the unlucky Subadahr ordered Mohan Lāl to fall back and retreat when “he was closely engaged with the enemy, his cannon was served with effect and his infantry having availed themselves of some covers and other ground were pouring a quantity of bullets in the enemy rank”. Mohan Lāl remonstrated by saying that “this was not the time to retreat, that the action was so far advanced, that whatever might happen, would happen now, and that should he turn his head, to march back to camp, his people would disperse and perhaps abandon themselves to an open flight”. But it did not produce wholesome effect. Utterly bewildered, Sirāj-ud-daulah failed to understand the evil design

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<sup>19</sup> Hill, II, pp. 423-424.

of Mir Jāfar and acted according to it. Under his pressing and repeated orders Mohan Lāl retreated from the position where he had advanced. A party of Frenchmen under Sinfray, who were fighting for Sirāj-ud-daulah, still held out, and some of the Nawāb's soldiers who were not made of the stuff of Mir Jāfar or Durlabhrām, refused "to accept defeat". Broome writes : "Sinfray plied his guns from the redoubt with great spirit, and the enemy's matchlockmen from the entrenchments and the hillock east of the redoubt, maintained an irregular but unintermitting fire. Their Cavalry also made bold attempts to charge, but were as often repulsed by the rapid and deadly fire of the British field-pieces. It was here that the contest was most obstinate, and on this occasion the chief loss of the English was sustained."<sup>20</sup>

But the cavalry under the traitors retreated without firing a gun for the whole day. Clive soon struck a decisive blow and overpowered the Nawāb's army. The Nawāb, almost at his wit's end, now turned to another traitor, Rāi Durlabhrām, who gave him an insidious advice. Betrayed by his own officers and completely unnerved in that menacing hour, the unfortunate young ruler by following Rāi Durlabhrām's treacherous counsel, asked his troops to retire inside the entrenchment and himself left the battle-field in hurry on a swift camel at about 4 P.M., for the city of Murshidābād, where he reached at midnight. Thus, as Mr. Thornton writes, "the work commenced by one of the conspirators (Mir Jāfar) was completed by another (Durlabhrām)."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Broome, *Bengal Army*, p. 148. In the battle of Plassey, the British had, according to Broome (*Bengal Army*, p. 149), a total casualty of seventytwo,—seven Europeans and sixteen sepoy killed, and thirteen Europeans and thirtysix sepoy wounded. Hill (I, ccii) gives a total of seventytwo—Europeans four killed and fifteen wounded; sepoy fifteen killed and thirtyeight wounded. The official return, after the battle prepared by John Fraser, Major of Brigade, mentions seventysix killed and wounded and four missing, thus giving a total of eighty. In the Nawāb's army about five hundred men were killed and about the same numbers were wounded.

<sup>21</sup> Thornton, I, p. 242.

After the Nawāb had suddenly left the battle-field the inevitable followed. It was no longer possible to rally his troops. The English army easily captured the almost deserted camp<sup>22</sup> and pushed on that night to Dāudpur, about six miles from the field. Murshidābād fell into utter confusion. Sirāj-ud-daulah found there none, not even his own kith and kin, willing to stand by him faithfully in that hour of dire calamity. He took at last a desperate step and went out of his capital with one faithful eunuch and his devoted consort, Lutfunnisā Begam<sup>23</sup> in his company. Probably his destination was Bihār where he expected to receive assistance from its loyal Deputy Governor, Rāmnārain, and also from M. Law, who had already received a rather belated correspondence from the Nawāb. But inexorable destiny proved to be unsparing to him even when he was a helpless fugitive. Fatigued and hungry he halted near Rājmahal for a meal and was recognised there on the 30th June by a Muslim faqir, Dānā Shah, who is said to have been previously insulted by him. He was immediately brought to the notice of Mir Dāud, *faujdar* of Rājmahal and brother of Mir Jāfar, and was dragged as a captive to Murshidābād on the 2nd July in the midst of various indignities,<sup>24</sup> and with great secrecy. Here was the climax of his tragedy. “\* \* \* every one of them he entreated”, writes Ghulām Husain, the author of *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, “to obtain a pension for him, and a corner of ground where he might live forgotten, but no one heard him.”<sup>25</sup> Instigated by his enemies, particularly Miran, son of Mir Jāfar, a wretch named Muḥammadi Beg, on whose gratitude he had some claims because of the various favours his father and his grandfather had

<sup>22</sup> Broome, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>23</sup> For her career, vide Article by Brajendra Nath Banerjee, *Bengal : Past and Present*, 1927.

<sup>24</sup> *Muzaffarnāmah*, 64A.

<sup>25</sup> *Siyār*, Vol. II. p. 239.

bestowed upon him, brutally murdered him on the 2nd or 3rd July.<sup>26</sup>

The mangled body of Sirāj-ud-daulah was placed on an elephant and “paraded through the city with ignominy<sup>27</sup>”. When the elephant arrived at the bāzār opposite to Sirāj-ud-daulah’s old residence, his mother “rushed out with bare feet and head and flung herself at the feet of the beast”. But she was forced back to her house by the servants of Khādīm Husain, a General, “who had been cherished in youth by Alivardi” but proved to be traitor.

Sirāj-ud-daulah’s private character was not above reproach. Some of the Englishmen, then in Calcutta, have described him as a cruel tyrant. Ghulām Husain, the author of *Siyār-ut-mutakherin* and the tutor of Sirāj-ud-daulah’s rival, Shaukat Jang, has written in strong terms about the dark aspects of his character,—his cruelty, rapacity and profligacy. Even M. Jean Law, then Chief of the French Factory at, Cāssimbāzār, who was friendly to Sirāj-ud-daulah, writes in his *Memoirs* : “The character of Siraj-ud-daulah was reputed to be one of the worst ever known. In fact he had distinguished himself not only by all sorts of debaucheries but by a revolting cruelty. The Hindu women were accustomed to bathe on the banks of the Ganges. Sirāj-ud-daulah, who was informed by his spies which of them were beautiful, sent his satellites in disguise in little boats to carry them off. He was often seen, in the season when the river overflows, causing the ferry boats to be upset or sunk, in order to have the cruel pleasure of seeing the confusion of a hundred people at a time, men, women and children, of whom many, not being able to swim were sure to perish.<sup>28</sup>” A mid-

<sup>26</sup> Scrafton writes 4th July.

<sup>27</sup> Orme, II, p. 187.

<sup>28</sup> Hill, III, p. 162.

nineteenth century Bengali writer<sup>29</sup> made some such remarks about Sirāj-ud-daulah. Referring to the view of M. J. Law, Dr. Jadunāth Sarkār observes that Sirāj-ud-daulah "was given no education for his future duties ; he never learned to curb his passionate impulses ; none durst correct his views ; and he was kept away from manly and martial exercises as dangerous to such a precious life. Thus the apple of old Alivardī's eye grew up into a most dissolute, haughty, reckless and cowardly youth \* \* \*."<sup>30</sup>

There may have been some change in these traits of Sirāj-ud-daulah's character after his accession to the *masnad*. According to Scrafton, Sirāj-ud-daulah swore before his grand-father when the latter was on his death-bed to give up the use of intoxicating liquor, "which he ever after strictly observed"<sup>31</sup>. But this writer further observes that "the excesses he had already committed, had disordered his faculties to that degree, that he had ever after a disturbed imagination ; sometimes frantic with passion, and cruel to those about him ; then again caressing them on equally frivolous grounds ; and all his words and actions betrayed a violent and uneven temper"<sup>32</sup>.

There is no doubt that Sirāj-ud-daulah had weaknesses and vices in his private life as was the case with many of the rulers or the members of the aristocracy in those days of utter demoralisation. He did not certainly receive a very sound education and his grandfather's excessive dotage naturally produced some adverse effects on his character. But it would not be fair to condemn him outright as a cruel tyrant, a monster of iniquity and a coward. He showed vigour and ability at least for the

<sup>29</sup> Bholanath Chunder, *Travels of a Hindoo* (published in 1869), Vol. I, p. 78. The journeys described in this work were "undertaken at intervals between 1845 and 1866".

<sup>30</sup> *History of Bengal, II*, p. 468.

<sup>31</sup> *Reflections*, p. 54.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

first few months of his rule. Had he been a coward he would not have taken the risk of fighting with the English.

Sirāj-ud-daulah was not a traitor. One has to agree with Malleson that he "was more fortunate, and certainly less to be despised, than was Mir Jāfar. Whatever may have been his faults, Sirāj-ud-daulah had neither betrayed his master nor sold his country. Nay more, no unbiassed Englishman, sitting in judgment over the events that passed in the interval between the 9th February and the 23rd June, can deny that the name of Sirāj-ud-daulah stands higher in the scale of honour than does the name of Clive. He was the only one of the principal actors in that tragic drama who did not attempt to deceive".

Sirāj-ud-daulah may not have been inspired by patriotism in the modern sense of the term. As a matter of fact, foreign rule had not been established here till then. But this much is true that he wanted to assert the authority of his government against those who were definitely hostile to him and also against the growing political and commercial ambition of the English in Bengal. He was conscious that both were prejudicial to the consolidation of his rule and general interests of the Province. The weaknesses in his character should not lead one to ignore the justifiability of this attitude. The short rule of Sirāj-ud-daulah lasting for about one year and three months had a tragic end. Opposition all round and frustration in almost all quarters made him gradually vacillating and indecisive, which also were responsible for his failure. But the cruel behaviour of those who were revengeful even in his last day deserves severe condemnation.

On the 24th June, Clive wrote to Mir Jāfar : "I congratulate you on the victory, which is yours, not mine. I should be glad if you would join me with the utmost expedition. We propose marching to-morrow to complete the conquest that God has blessed us with, and I hope to have the honour of proclaiming you Nabob. Mr. Scrafton will congratulate you on my part ;

from him you will know how much I am yours." The news of the victory of the English at Plassey reached Calcutta in a letter from Clive to Drake on the 25th June. Its immediate reaction among the English there has been thus described by Orme : "The victory was deemed decisive ; and all restraints of secrecy being now removed, the purport of the treaties was immediately revealed by the members of the Council to all whom they met. \* \* \* \* The restitution of public and private property ; the donations to the squadron, the army and individuals ; the grants to the Company ; the privileges to the English commerce ; the comparison of the prosperity of this day with the calamities in which the colony was overwhelmed at this very season in the preceding year ; in a word, this sudden reverse and profusion of good fortune intoxicated the steadiest minds, and hurried everyone into the excesses of intemperate joy ; even envy and hatred forgot their energies, and were reconciled, at least for a while, to familiarity and goodwill ; for everyone saw that his own position of advantages was intimately and inseparately blended with that of every other person in the settlement."<sup>33</sup>

Mir Jāfar entered Murshidābad on the 28th June. Clive reached there on the 29th June with 200 Europeans and 300-sepoys. In the palace of Hirājhil, where Mir Jāfar was staying, Clive led him by the hand to the royal seat (*masnad*), seated him on it, and "saluted him as Nawāb of the three Subahs (Bengal, Bihār and Orissā), upon which his courtiers congratulated him and paid him the usual homage"<sup>34</sup>. The Company obtained *Zāmindārī* of the 24 parganas against the opposition of the tenants and rulers, "who were averse to the introduction of new masters who being merchants might wish to appropriate" to themselves the salt trade of that area.<sup>35</sup> They established a mint at Calcutta,

<sup>33</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 187.

<sup>34</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 437.

<sup>35</sup> Orme, *II*, p. 188.

and rupees were coined there first on the 19th August 1757. As for the compensation money (22,000,000 *sicca* rupees), promised by Mir Jāfar to the English, it was stipulated that (Rs. 11,350,000) of it should be paid by him by the last day of October<sup>36</sup> and the remainder was to be paid within three years at "three yearly and equal instalments"<sup>37</sup>. Orme notes that the English Company received 7,271,666 *Sicca* rupees on the 6th July, 1,655,358 *Sicca* rupees on the 9th August, and cash, gold, jewels worth 15,999,737 *Sicca* rupees on the 30th August. Rupees 584,905 of the stipulated half remained to be paid.<sup>38</sup> The members of the Council in Calcutta were also severally rewarded with pecuniary presents.<sup>39</sup> The English received substantial financial gains from this revolution. Scrafton exultingly observes : "These glorious successes have brought near three millions of money to the nation; for, properly speaking, almost the whole of the immense sums received from the Soubah finally centres in England. So great a proportion of it fell into the Company's hands, either from their own share, or by sums paid into the treasury at Calcutta for bills and receipts, that they have been enabled to carry on the whole trade of India (China excepted) for three years together, without sending out one ounce of bullion. Vast sums have been also remitted through the hands of foreign companies, which weigh in the balance of trade to their amount in our favour with such foreign nations. And to these, let me add the mischief done to our enemies, the French, now totally driven out from those settlements, which were the only support of their India trade."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections*, p. 97.

<sup>37</sup> Hill, *II*, p. 438. Clive writes that this arrangement was effected through the mediation of Jagat Seth.

<sup>38</sup> Orme, *II*, pp. 187-188.

<sup>39</sup> *Third Report*, p. 120.

<sup>40</sup> Scrafton, *Reflections*, p. 101.



Thus ensured a serious economic drain on the resources of Bengal. Growing influence of the English Company and its servants after the battle of Plassey also aggravated the various abuses in the spheres of Bengal's trade and industries. All this subjected the *Subah* to a pathetic economic decline which badly affected the general life of the people.

As regards the French in Bengal, it may be noted that in the course of his departure from Bengal, Sirāj-ud-daulah had written a letter to M. Law to come to his assistance. Probably this letter did not reach M. Law in time due to obstructionist tactics of the *Faujdār* of Rājmahal.<sup>41</sup> In fact, M. Law reached Sakrigalī, near Rājmahal, a few hours before Sirāj-ud-daulah's capture, when it was too late to offer him any effective help.<sup>42</sup> M. Law soon started back for Patna. But he could not stay there for long. The victors of Plassey were determined "to clear Bengal entirely of so restless an enemy to the English",<sup>43</sup> and sent a detachment from Murshidābād on the 6th July under Major Cootc to chase M. Law and his party. Passing through Belgutta (Belāghatī), Suti (9th July), Dogātchy (9th July), Rājmahal, Sakrigalī (14th-16th July), Teliāgarhī, Shāhābād (16th-17th July), Pirpainti, and Colgong, he reached Bhāgalpur on the 18th July. Here he received a letter from Colonel Clive, along with which were enclosed other letters from the Nawāb to the different *Rājās*, *Jamādārs* and *Faujdārs* "ordering them to supply the Major with everything he stood in need of."<sup>44</sup> At mid-night he got a letter, dated the 16th July, from Mr. Pearkes, Chief of the English factory at Patna,<sup>45</sup> informing him that "the French had passed by that city, and were going on to the extreme boundaries of the Province". Their force, he said, "consisted

<sup>41</sup> Hill, *III*, p. 210.

<sup>42</sup> *Siyār*, *II*, p. 236.

<sup>43</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 156.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p. 162.

<sup>45</sup> The old English factory at Patna was re-opened by Pearkes in July 1757.

of about 100 Europeans, 125 Coast and 40 Bengal Sepoys, 8 field-pieces, and 9 patteraroes."<sup>46</sup>

Leaving Bhāgalpur on the 19th July and passing through Monghyr, Hybātganj, Nawābganj and some other places on the way, Major Coote reached Bykuntpur on the 25th July. Here he received information from Rājā Rāmnārāin that the French had already left the Province and that he would consult Major Coote about what should be done on his arrival at Patna. The Chief of the Dutch factory at Patna sent his second "to attend the Major" and conduct him into the city. Pearkes also waited upon him. Major Coote arrived at the English factory at Patna at 10 A.M. on the 26th July. While passing by the Dutch factory he "was saluted with 21 guns" and was visited by Mr. Delatour, Chief of that factory.<sup>47</sup> The same day Major Coote captured the French Factory at Patna, where its Chief, M. Dela Bretesche, was ill. The Military and other servants of the French factory had accompanied M. Law.<sup>48</sup> On hearing of the march of Major Coote, Law had left Patna and was at Dināpur on the 16th July. After halting at Chaprā, M. Law and his party reached Ghāzipur in the territory of Shujā-ud-daulah, the Nawāb-Wazir of Oudh, on the 25th July. Major Coote reached Chaprā on the 2nd August in pursuit of M. Law, but on being informed there of his movements thought that it would not be advisable to proceed further against him. His officials also were of the opinion that they should return to Patna.<sup>49</sup>

As a battle, Plassey is not, writes Malleson justly, "a matter to be very proud of"<sup>50</sup>. It was at any rate not a "fair fight"<sup>51</sup>. Success of the English was not due to any extraordinary general-

<sup>46</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 162.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p. 165.

<sup>48</sup> Hill, *Three Frenchmen in Bengal*, p. 112.

<sup>49</sup> *Ives' Voyage*, p. 169.

<sup>50</sup> Malleson, *The Decisive Battles of India*, p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

ship of Clive, though his single-minded devotion to the cause of his masters and his spirit of enterprise are really praiseworthy. What chiefly helped British victory at Plassey was treachery of the Nawāb's generals and officers.

In estimating the results of the battle of Plassey, Malleon remarks significantly that "Plassey was a very decisive battle. \* \* \* \* \* Whilst the empire founded by the Mughals was rapidly decaying that victory introduced into their richest Province, in a commanding position, another foreign race, active, capable and daring, bringing with them the new ideas, the new blood, the love of justice, of tolerance, of order, the capacity of enforcing those principles which were necessary to infuse a new and better life into the Hindustan of the last century".<sup>52</sup> This is to a large extent true.

The battle of Plassey undoubtedly "decided the fate of India"<sup>53</sup>. It ushered in a new epoch in the history of Bengal by making the English its virtual masters which helped them gradually to establish their supremacy over the whole of India. Plassey certainly did not at once make the British empire of India an accomplished fact ; a good deal was still to be done for it. But there is no doubt that its seeds were well sown as a result of this battle on the fertile soil of Bengal and thus found proper facilities for nourishment to produce a splendid harvest for the English. Plassey gave them plenty of immediate advantages to which we have already referred and enhanced their power and influence. All this, particularly their control over the vast wealth of "three Provinces abounding in the most valuable production of nature and art"<sup>54</sup>, as Clive well realized, immensely contributed to their victories in their wars in the Peninsular India against the French in the course of the next four years and

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67.

<sup>53</sup> Broome, *Bengal Army*, p. 150.

<sup>54</sup> *Clive's letter to Pitt*, dated 7th January 1759.

against their enemies of Mahārāstra and Mysore in the few subsequent decades. Clive exclaimed before a Committee of Parliament in 1772 : "Consider the situation in which the victory at Plassey had placed me. A great prince was dependent on my pleasure ; an opulent city lay at my mercy ; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles ; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone piled on either hand with gold and jewels ! Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation."<sup>55</sup> The victory of the English at Plassey was no doubt a significant step in the history of contemporary British imperialism. Conscious of the various advantages gained by the English Company as a result of Plassey, Clive even suggested to Pitt early in 1759 the advisability of the establishment of direct control of the British Crown over the Company's possessions in Bengal. Pitt felt that the time was not ripe for it. But it came ultimately as a logical sequel to the political developments in India during the century following the battle of Plassey.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive, II*, p. 394.

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(a) *Ahwāl-i-Aliwārdi Khān* (as mentioned in 'Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts', published by A. S. B., Bibliotheca Indica Work No. 248) or *Tārīkh-i-Mahabat Jang* (British Museum Additional MS., No. 27316, Rieu, Vol. I, pp. 311-12). This work gives a very valuable and detailed description of the history of the Bengal Subah during the mid-eighteenth century. The author, an eye-witness of the political events of Bengal since the time of Sarfarāz, mentions many new facts and dates, which are not found in any other contemporary work. I have consulted a copy of it, preserved in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The name of the author has not been disclosed anywhere in the book, but it is clear from his personal references in several places (f. 8 and f. 12 of the copy utilised by me) that he was connected with the political affairs of Bengal since the time of Sarfarāz Khān. He writes in one place (f. 42) that he had to suspend the work of completing (first 4 folios had been apparently written before) this book till 1177 A.H. (1763 A.D.). He accompanied Mīr Qāsīm to Allāhābād where his father died, and he himself fell ill; but

he resumed the work of writing out the remaining portion during the third quarter of the month of Shaban, 1177 A.H., when it was completed. The author is modest enough to crave the indulgence of the readers for inaccuracies or exaggerations. Mr. J. Hindley has ascribed the authorship of the work to Yusuf Ali Khan, son of Ghulām Ali Khān, an intimate friend of Mahabat Jang Alivardi. This opinion is correct. We know from Ghulām Husain, the author of *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin*, that Ghulām Ali was a distinguished noble, who acted for some time as *diwān* of Bihār, whose son Yusuf Ali married a daughter of Sarfarāz Khān, and who helped Alivardi on several occasions. Ghulām Husain also writes that he describes the sufferings of Alivardi's troops, in course of their journey from Burdwān to Kātawah, on the authority of a contemporary memoir writer Yusuf Ali Khān, who was then present in the Nawāb's party. This Yusuf Ali is the author of this manuscript, and we find that Siyār's description of the Nawāb's march from Burdwān to Kātawah is exactly similar to that given in it (fs. 34-35). In fact, this work seems to have been the principal authority of Ghulām Husain for his account of the Marāthā invasions of Bengal and also of the Afghān rebellions. Late Sir H. Elliot, K.C.B., had a copy of *Tarikh-Ali-Wardi-Khan*, i.e. a copy of this manuscript. One copy of it was obtained a few years back for the Patna University Library. Mr. A. Hughes translated portions of this work into English, which were published in *Bengal : Past and Present*, January-June, 1958.

(b) *Siyār-ul-Mutakherin* (completed in 1782 A.D.). A highly important history of India from 1707 to 1780 with a detailed account of the affairs in the Bengal Subah from 1738 to 1780 A.D. The author Ghulām Husain Tabātabāi belonged to a distinguished family ; his grandfather, Sayyid Alimullah, and his father Hedāyat Ali Khān Bāhādur Āsad Jang, held high offices in the Government (Imperial as well as Provincial). He was born at Delhi in 1727-28 and migrated to Murshidābād

in 1732-33. Next he went to Patna in the company of Alivardi in 1734. He stayed here, except for a journey to Delhi from August, 1743 to November, 1744. In 1749, he was employed as tutor to Shaukat Jang and lived at Purnea. But after Shaukat Jang's fall in October, 1756, he went away to Benares. He regained his influence soon, and himself took part in the political affairs and military campaigns of the time, served as a representative of Nawāb Mir Qāsim with the Company in Calcutta and was later on engaged under the Company in various capacities. (Vide *Asiatic Annual Register for 1801*, pp. 26-27). He was well educated and was thoroughly acquainted with the history of his time. An English translation of this work by a French convert to Islam, Hājī Mustafā, was prepared in Calcutta in 1789.

(c) *Muzaffarnāmah*. A detailed history of the Bengal Subah from 1722 to 1772 A.D., when Muhammad Rezā Khān, also known as Muzaffar Jang, was deposed by the English. The author Karam Ali was born at Murshidābād in the mansion of Alivardi Khān on 31st October, 1736. In his fifth year he was granted a monthly subsistence of Rs. 50, which he continued to enjoy till 1772. In 1748 Karam Ali was appointed *faujdar* of Ghorāghāt and held this post till the death of Alivardi in 1756. At the time of Shaukat Jang's fall in October, 1756, he was with that Nawāb, but somehow escaped Sirāj-ud-daulah's wrath. Subsequently he took shelter at Patna. He was employed under Muzaffar Jang, and notes that he wrote the present work in 1186 A.H. = 1772 A.D. in order to remove his grief caused by the dismissal of his patron to whom he dedicated it and after whom it was named. A copy of this manuscript is noticed in *Rieu*, Vol. I, p. 313, one in the India Office Library Catalogue (No. 479), and another in the Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. I have utilised the copy preserved in the Oriental Public Library, Patna (O.P.L. S.M. No. 609). Another copy belonging to Qazi Abdul Wadood, B.A. (Cantab.), Bar-at-Law, Patna, came to our notice some



years back. Important portions of it were translated by Sir Jadunath Sarkar in *Bengal : Past and Present* (1946-47, 1948, 1949).

(d) *Tarikh-i-Bangalah* by Salimullah. This is a history containing many interesting and important details. The author states that he wrote this work by order of Henry Vansittart, Governor of Bengal from 1760-1764. (Vide *Rieu*, Vol. I, p. 312). An incomplete and rather incorrect translation of it was published (1788 A.D.) by Francis Gladwin in Calcutta under the title of *A Narrative of the Transactions in Bengal*. A copy of this manuscript is preserved in the library of the Asiatic Society in Calcutta. One copy of it was obtained a few years back by the K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna, from a gentleman of Patna City.

(e) *Dastur-ul-Inshā*, a collection of letters of historical importance, written by Rājā Rāmnārāin and compiled by Munshi Vijayrām of Lucknow in 1769. This was discovered by us at Patna in 1930. It is a very valuable collection of letters which contain many new and important facts about the history of Bengal and Bihār in the mid-eighteenth century, particularly relating to Rājā Rāmnārāin.

(f) *Dastur-ul-Imlā*, another collection of letters of historical importance. (Vide *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, 1938).

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## GLOSSARY

- Arzbeḡī—An officer who under the Mughal Government was appointed to receive and present petitions.
- Bakshi—Paymaster of the Army.
- Bāttā—“Difference in exchange, discount on coins not current, rate of exchange between rupees of different species”. “Amount added to or deducted from any payment according to the currency in which it is made as compared with a fixed standard coin”. Also an extra allowance paid to “officers, soldiers, or other public officers, when in the field, or on other special grounds. . . .”.
- Bildārs (Beldars)—A digger or delver; one who works with a bel, a pickaxe, or spade; a pioneer, sapper or miner.
- Chaukī (Choquey)—Customs-house; Police station.
- Chaukidār—Watchman, guard.
- Cossids—A courier, a running postman, messenger or postman.
- Coss (Kos)—A measure of distance of generally two miles.
- Darbār (Durbar)—A court, a royal court, an audience, levee.
- Dastaks (Dustucks, Dusticks)—A passport, a permit.
- Diwān (Dewan, Duan)—A minister, a chief of state. Under the Muhammadan Government the title was specially applied to the head official minister, whether of the state or of a province. In the latter case its owner was charged with the collection of the Revenue and the remittance of it to the imperial treasury and was invested with extensive judicial powers in civil and financial cases.
- Dooly—A litter or swing cot.
- Faujdar—An officer of the Mughal government, who was invested with the charge of the police, and jurisdiction in criminal matters. A criminal judge or a Magistrate. The chief of a body of troops.

- Gaulivaḥs—A mistake for Gautwaḥs (*Ghātwaḥs*), a ferry-man or keeper of the passes.
- Ghāt—A landing place; a mountain pass.
- Gomastā (Gumashta)—“An agent, a steward, a confidential factor, a representative, an officer appointed by zamindārs to collect their rents, by bankers to receive money etc., by merchants to carry on their affairs in other places than where they reside and the like”. Also “a clerk for vernacular correspondence”.
- Harkarā—A messenger, a courier, an emissary, a spy.
- Husbal-hookums—“According to command. The initial words and titles of a document issued agreeably to royal authority, by Vezir or other high official of government”.
- Jāgīr—An assignment of the Government share of the produce of a portion of land to an individual generally for military services or “for the support of any public establishment particularly of a military nature”.
- Jamādār—An officer of police, customs or excise.
- Jhil—Marshy land.
- Khānsāmāh—A ‘house-steward’ in Anglo-Indian houses in the Bengal Presidency, ‘the chief table servant or provider’.
- Kothī—Factory.
- Masnad—A cushion-seat, a throne.
- Mohurs—Gold coins.
- Pāikār (Pāiker)—Agent, broker, hawker, pedlar, dealer.
- Parganā—The largest division of land in a zamindāri; a subdivision of a District.
- Parwānāh—Order; written precept or command; letter from a man in power to a dependent, etc.
- Peshkār—Deputy; Manager.
- Pāttāmār—A foot-runner; a courier.
- Phirmaund (Firmān or Farmān)—An order, decree; command or a grant of the (Mughal) Emperor. Also a patent or a passport.

- Sanad—A grant, a charter, a patent, a diploma; a document conveying to an individual emoluments, titles, privileges, offices, or the government rights to revenue from land etc. under the seal of the ruling authority. The Muhammadan government had different forms of *sanads* according to the nature of the grants.
- Sardār—A chief, a headman or a commander.
- Saukārs (Sāhukārs)—Bankers.
- Siccā—“A coining die, a stamp, a mark, a seal, a signet, a royal signet, a stamped coin, especially the designation of the silver currency of the kings of Delhi adopted by the Indian Princes and eventually by the East India Company”.
- Sircārry—Government.
- Sirpālī (Saropā)—A complete dress of honour.
- Subāh—A Province of the Mughal Empire.
- Subāhdār—A Provincial Governor.
- Zamindār—A land-holder paying “revenue to the government direct and not to any intermediate superior”.

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## INDEX

### A

- Adlercorn, Colonel*, 33, 43.  
*Afghāns*, the, 3.  
     in Bihar, 2ff, 81ff.  
     threat of invasion, 73.  
*Ahmad Ali Khān*, 28.  
*Ahmad Shah*, Emperor, 68.  
*Ahmad Shah Abdālī*, 61, 81ff.  
*Akbar Ali Khān*, 7.  
*Āli Muhammad Ruhelā*, 81.  
*Alinagar*, 40, 62, 72.  
*Ali Naqi Khān*, 7.  
*Alivardī Khān*, Nawāb, 1, 7, 11, 15,  
     81, 84, 94, 104ff.  
     and the Afghāns, 2ff.  
     affection for Sirāj, 4.  
     and the English, 9ff.  
     death, 5.  
*Amānat Khān*, 4.  
*Amāniganj*, 3, 98.  
*Americā*, 69.  
*Amina Begam*, 1.  
*Amyatt, Peter*, 24, 54, 58.  
 Anglo-French Hostility, 67 ff.  
 Anglo-French Treaty, 69.  
*Arrot*, 13, 37.  
     rupees, 35.  
 Armenians, the, 9, 19, 21, 61, 91.  
*Asad-u-Zaman*, Raja of Birbhum, 97.  
*Asalat Khān*, 97.  
*Azimābād* (Patna), 26.

### B

- Bāhādur Ali Khān*, 99fn.  
*Bāghbāzār* (Calcutta), 54.  
*Bairām Khan*, 7.  
*Bālāsore*, 3, 24.  
*Bālāsore river*, the, 24.  
*Bālāsore Road*, 37, 38.  
*Balarāngarhi*, 24.  
*Banaras*, 27fn.  
*Barker, Capt.*, 40.  
*Barāsat*, 15.  
*Barh*, 3, 4.

- Basantpur Golā*, 26.  
 Battle of Plassey, 94 ff.  
 (See also Plassey)  
     of Manihārī, 26ff.  
     of Rāniserai,  
     or Rānichock, 3.  
*Becher, Richard*, 5, 9, 15ff, 24, 38, 91.  
 Begampur Mahāllā (Patna City), 2.  
*Belāghati*, 109.  
*Bengal*, 4, 9, 17, 30, 32ff, 37, 49ff, 61,  
     64ff, 72, 79ff, 88, 91, 107, 109, 111.  
     affair of, 86.  
     army, 26.  
     Council, 31, 70.  
     economic drain, 35.  
     Expedition, 35, 37ff.  
     Government, 87.  
     industries, 109.  
     *masnad*, 25, 84.  
     People of, 87.  
     sepoys, 110.  
     trade, 109.  
     Bengali Kayastha, 27.  
     Writer, 105.  
*Bhāgalpur*, 109, 110.  
*Bhāgīrathī*, the, 5, 95.  
*Bhojpur*, 26.  
*Bikār*, 4, 25ff, 64ff, 80ff, 91, 103, 107.  
     Administration, 3.  
     troops, 26.  
*Birbhum*, 97.  
*Bisdam, Admiral*, 19, 39.  
 "Black Hole" tragedy, 21ff.  
 "Black Town", 18ff.  
*Blanford*, the, 69.  
*Boddam, Thomas*, 24.  
*Bombay*, 72  
*Bridgewater*, the, 40.  
 British, the, 19, 54.  
     Commerce, 70.  
     Canons, 102.  
     Crown, 112.  
     deserters, 78.  
     empire, 111.  
     imperialism, 112.  
     Nation, 67, 70.

- Pilots, 38.  
 settlements in Bengal, 71.  
   in India, 70.  
   ships, 69, 70.  
 (See also the English)  
*Broome, A.*, 79.  
*Budge Budge*, 40, 41.  
*Burdwan*, 87.  
*Bussy, Monsieur*, 76, 80, 90.  
*Bykuntpur*, 110.
- C**
- Calcutta*, 4, 11, 13, 15, 18, 25, 28,  
 31ff, 39ff, 48, 52ff, 57, 60, 62, 64, 79,  
 89ff, 95, 104, 107ff.  
 fortification of, 12.  
 mint at, 48, 62, 66, 108.  
 recovery of, 30, 46.  
*Calcutta Road*, 41.  
*Campbell, Capt.*, 42.  
*Cauppe, Capt.*, 51.  
*Chandernagore*, 13, 18, 39, 48ff, 55, 71ff.  
 75ff, 78ff, 88, 90.  
   Capture of, 76ff.  
   Fort at, 77.  
*Chāprā*, 110.  
*Chesterfield, the*, 33.  
*China*, 108.  
*Chinapatam* (Madras), 45.  
*Chinsurā*, 17, 39.  
 China-ware, 45.  
*Chitpur* (Calcutta), 18.  
*Chunder, Bholānāth*, 21fn, 105 fn.  
*Cleveland, A.*, 33, 40fn, 43fn.  
 Conspiracy of 1757, the, 84ff.  
   causes, 86ff.  
   role of the English in, 87ff.  
*Clive, Col. Robert*, 23fn, 35ff, 39ff, 45ff,  
 50, 53ff, 60ff, 77ff, 88ff, 97ff, 107ff,  
 army of, 34, 41, 97.  
   conspired against Siraj, 84, 87ff,  
   92ff.  
   marched against the French, 75.  
   recovered Calcutta, 39ff.  
   rivalry with Admiral Watson, 44.  
   statement before the Commons,  
   88, 112.  
   victory at Plassey, 102ff.  
*Coddram Hossein*, 101.  
*Colgong*, 109.
- Collet, Matthew*, 9, 12, 17, 18, 30fn, 32  
*Colossanic*, 98.  
 Commons, the House of, 38.  
*Cooke, John*, 7fn, 23fn.o  
*Coote, Eyreh*, 42ff, 58, 83, 97, 109, 110.  
 Coromandel Coast, 69.  
 Council at—  
   Calcutta, 4, 12, 15, 19, 24, 45, 48,  
   58, 65, 67, 68, 73, 96, 107, 108.  
   Fort St. George (Madras), 11ff, 30ff,  
   36ff, 70.  
   Fulta, 30, 33, 38.  
 Court of Directors, 5, 14, 33fn, 35ff  
 67ff, 90.  
 Court of France, 69.  
*Courtin, Monsieur*, 24.  
*Cruttenden, Mr.*, 5.  
*Culpee (Kalpi)*, 39, 91.
- D**
- Dabil Khān*, 28.  
*Dacca*, 2, 8, 9, 14, 25, 76, 85.  
 Dalhousie Square, 18.  
 Dances, the, 13, 19.  
*Destaks*, 11, 54, 64, 75, 80 abuse of 13ff.  
*De La Beaune, Capt.*, 54.  
*Dela Bretesche, M.*, 110.  
*Delatour, Mr.*, 110.  
*Dela ware*, the, 39, 68.  
*Deccan*, 37.  
 Dānā Shah (Muslim Faquir), 103.  
*Daudpur*, 103.  
*Delhi*, 25, 68, 82, 86.  
*Dhiraj Nārāin, Rājā*, 26.  
*Dinapore*, 110.  
*Doddaley*, the, 30fn.  
*Dodwell, H. H.*, 23fn.  
*Dogātchy*, 109.  
*Drake, Roger*, 5ff, 11ff, 20ff, 24, 30,  
 39, 45, 49ff, 65, 91.  
*Dum Dum*, 54, 60.  
*Dupleix*, 23fn, 67.  
 Dutch, the 5, 19, 20, 30.  
   chief, 39.  
   Director, 17, 20.  
   factory, 110.  
   Governor, 4.  
   mediation, 47.  
   neutrality, 39.  
   Pilots, 40.

## E

- East India Company, The English, 6, 9, 14, 17, 21, 24, 31ff, 34fn, 35ff, 43, 44fn, 45, 48ff, 51ff, 58ff, 63ff, 68, 82, 87ff, 91, 107, 109, 112. trade rights and privileges, 49, 68.
- East Indies*, the, 71.
- Ekrām-ud-daulch* (Mirzā Mahdi), 1ff, 5.
- England*, 33, 43, 61, 68, 70, 72, 108.
- English, the, 10, 17, 19, 29ff, 46, 49, 52ff, 55ff, 59ff, 68, 71, 74, 87, 91ff, 97, 99, 104, 106, 108, 111. batteries, 77. Colours, 75. conduct of, 47. conspiracy against Siraj, 80, 87ff, 89. deceived *Omichānd*, 92. envoys, 54. factories, 17ff, 24, 63, 109ff. forces, 42, 58, 74, 91, 100, 103. fugitives, 30. interests, 67, 69, 72, 84. relation with the French, 71ff, 76ff, 80, 83. with Mir Jāfar, 95, 107. terms of Alinagar Treaty, 62ff. trade, 75, 107. victory at Plassey, 107, 112.
- Europe, 29, 31ff, 49, 52, 54, 72, 95, 110.
- Europeans the, 9, 12ff.
- European interference in Bengal politics, 9, 13. market, 45. trading companies, 4, 6. troops, 21, 41.
- F**
- Fairlie Place (Calcutta), 19.
- Farrukhsiyār*, Emperor, 36.
- Feringis*, the, 22.
- Foreign Nations, the, 30.
- Fort at Budge Budge, 42.
- Fort St. George, 22, 30ff, 34, 36fn, 67, 71, 79, 88.
- Fort of Tanna, 40.
- Fort William, 19ff, 42, 60, 71.
- Forth, Dr.*, 10ff.
- Fourier, Monsieur, 71.
- France*, 33, 47, 67, 70.
- Franco-Muslim alliance, 79.
- Frankland, Mr.*, 20.
- Fraser, Major John*, 54, 102fn.
- French, the, 5, 13, 19, 30, 48, 68, 70ff, 74ff, 78, 80ff, 91, 94ff, 102, 108ff. adventurer, 86. artillery officer, 78. assistance to Nawāb, 80. Commander-General, 2. Council, 72. Court, 70. Deputies, 48ff, 71. Director, 72.
- East India Company, 67, 69, 73ff, 79. expelled from Bengal, 82. from Bihār, 109f. factory, 55, 83. at Dāccā, 24. at Kāsimbāzār, 79ff, 104. at Patna, 83, 110. fugitives, 80. gallantry, 79. Government of Hugli, 74. Governor, 4, 17, 39. influence, 80. interests, 67. King, 70. mediation, 47. navy, 72. ships, 69, 71. Power and Prestige, 79.
- Fultā*, 20, 24, 28, 31, 33, 37ff, 49.
- G**
- Ganges*, the, 26, 72, 75.
- Cayā district, 28.
- Ghasitī Begam*, 1, 7ff, 10ff, 15.
- Ghāzipur*, 110.
- Ghulam Husain*, 1, 8, 23fn, 25ff, 52, 55ff, 83, 86, 103ff.
- Ghiyāspur*, 4.
- Godchu, Monsieur*, 67, 69.
- Grant* (the pilot), 38.
- Grant, Capt.*, 20.
- Great Britain*, 47.
- Grenadier Company, the, 41.
- Grey* (Junior), Mr., 21.

## H

- Haddee, Goja*, 101.  
*Hāji Ahmad*, 1ff, 28.  
*Hājiganj Mahāllā* (Patna City), 4.  
*Hāji Mahdi*, 7.  
*Hāji Mustafā*, 23fn.  
*Hākīm Beg Khān*, 28.  
*Hastings, Warren*, 54.  
*Hāyātpur*, 26.  
*Hāzārī, Bāl Krishna*, 27.  
*Hāzārī, Nauwa Singh*, 99fn, 100.  
*Hill, Mr.*, 86.  
 Hindus, the, 86ff.  
 Hindus of Calcutta, the, 21.  
*Hindustān*, 75, 111.  
*Hirājhil Palace*, 107.  
*Hughli*, 4, 17, 19, 21, 45, 47, 51ff, 73ff, 77ff, 91, 96.  
 Hughli Fort, 46.  
*Holwell*, 9, 13ff, 20ff, 39.  
*Hybatganj*, 110.  
*Hyderabad*, 13.

## I

- Imād-ul-Mulk, Wāzir*, 25, 86.  
 Imperial Court of Delhi, 25.  
 India, 49, 71, 79, 81, 111, 112.  
 Indian, the, 30.  
   historian, 83.  
   guides, 40.  
   merchants, 14.  
   nobles, 86.  
   politics, 79.  
   trade, 31, 108.  
 Injlce, 39.  
 International politics, 79.  
 Ives, 52.

## J

- Jāfar Khan's garden*, 4, 28.  
*Jāfari Bāgh* (Purnea), 5.  
*Jānkirām, Rājā*, 3ff.  
*Jagat Seths, the*, 30, 47, 53, 57, 77, 84ff, 87, 89, 96, 108fn.  
*Jagat Seth, Mahātāp Chānd*, 84.  
   Swanup Chānd, 84.  
 Jat territory, the, 82.

## K

- Kālpi* (see *Culpee*)  
*Karam Ali*, 1, 23fn, 25, 27fn, 28.  
 Karmanāsā, the river, 8.  
*Kāsimbāzār*, 9ff, 16, 61, 76, 79ff, 88, 90, 95, 96, 98ff, 104.  
*Kātwah*, 96ff.  
 Kent, the, 38ff, 42ff.  
*Kerr, Ensign*, 41.  
*Kesar Singh*, 41.  
*King, Capt.*, 42ff.  
 King's Grenadier, 58.  
 King of England, 43, 49, 65, 68.  
*Kingfisher*, the, 39.  
*Kishwār Khān Asis*, 28.  
*Khādīm Husain Khān*, 85, 104.  
*Khwajah Wājīd* (Fuckear Toujar Coja Mahommad), 4, 11ff, 17, 19ff, 30, 45, 47ff, 54, 87.  
*Killpatrick, Major*, 31, 35, 38, 40, 42, 45ff, 89.  
*Krishnaballabh* (Krishnadās), 10, 14ff.  
*Krishna Chandra, Mahārājā*, 85.

## L

- La Conte, M.*, 71.  
*Lakshmīpur*, 24.  
 L' Orient, 68, 71.  
*Laporterie, M.*, 44.  
*Latham, Capt.*, 44.  
*Latif Qadir Khan*, 100.  
*Law, M. Jean*, 11, 29, 53, 56, 58, 61, 76, 79ff, 83ff, 86, 90, 103ff, 109ff.  
*Lebeaume, Lieut.*, 30ff.  
*Little, J. H.*, 23.  
 London, 49.  
 Lushington, 92.  
*Lutfunissa, Begam*, 4, 103.

## M

- Mackett, Mr.*, 20.  
*Madras*, 18, 30ff, 33, 35ff, 39, 49.  
*Mahdi Nisār Khān*, 3ff.  
*Mahārāshtra*, 112.  
 Mahomedan Government, 87.  
*Majumdār, Dr. R. C.*, 85.  
*Malleson*, 106, 110, 111.  
 Mankarah, 96, 98.

Mānpur Parganā, 28.  
 Mānikchānd, 30, 39, 41ff.  
 Manihāri, 25fn, 26.  
 Manningham, Charles, 15ff, 20, 30, 31.  
 Maqbera-i-Haibatjang, 2.  
 Marāthās, the, 2ff, 59.  
 Marāthā Ditch (Calcutta), 18, 57, 91  
 Maratha invasion, of Bengal, 13.  
 Marlborough, the, 38.  
 Maunsell, Thomas, 34.  
 Māyāpur, 40.  
 Midnāpur, 3, 4.  
 Mihir-un-nisā, See Ghasiti Begam  
 Mills, Capt., 23 fn.  
 Minchin, Mr, 20.  
 Miran (Meerun), 101, 103.  
 Mir Daud, 103.  
 Mir Jāfar Khān, 7, 28, 84, 87, 91, 94ff,  
 99, 102ff, 106ff.  
 Commander-in-chief, 7.  
 dismissed by Sirāj, 8  
 Conspired with *Shaukat Jang*, 25.  
 shaky fidelity to Sirāj, 85.  
 Mir Jāfar's party, 88 fn.  
 the choice of the English, 89.  
 Secret pact with the English, 91.  
 secretly proclaimed Nawab, 92.  
 treachery, 94.  
 reinstated by Sirāj, 94.  
 Secret Communications with Clive,  
 97ff.  
 Plan of treachery, 98ff.  
 treacherous advice to Sirāj, 100.  
 Publicly proclaimed Nawāb, 107.  
 Mir Kāzim Risāldār, 27.  
 Mir Madan, 8, 77, 95ff, 99ff.  
 Mir Nazar Ali, 7ff.  
 Mir Qasim, 101.  
 Mirzā Amir Beg, 85.  
 Mirzā Ghulām Ali Beg, 28.  
 Mirzā Hakīm Beg, 28.  
 Mirzā (Muhammad) Iraz Khān, 2, 4, 61.  
 Mirzā Madari Beg Deccāni, 4.  
 Mirzā Māhdi, See *Ekrām-ud-daulah*  
 Mirzā Zain-ul-Abdīn Baqāwāt, 28.  
 Maitra, A. K., 23, 24fn, 85.  
 Mohān Lāl (Kāshmirī) Maharājā, 8, 26ff,  
 89, 96, 99, 101ff.  
 Monghyr, 110.  
 Moors, the, 30.  
 Motijhil, 5.

garden, 5.  
 palace, 7.  
 Mughals, the, 111.  
 Mughal Emperor, 36, 49, 68.  
 Mughal forces, 61.  
 Muhammad Ali (Nawab of Arcot), 37.  
 Muhammadi Beg, 103.  
 Mukhopādhyāy, Rājiblochan, 85.  
 Murād Sher, 2.  
 Muxadāvād, 90  
 Murshidābād (Muxadāvād), 3ff, 14,  
 17ff, 25, 28, 47ff, 51, 64, 77,  
 79, 87, 89, 97, 102ff, 109.  
 Murshid Quli Jāfar Khān, Nawāb, 11ff.  
 Muslims of Calcutta, 91.  
 Mustufā Quli Khān, 4.  
 Mysore, 112.

## N

Nadā, 85.  
 Nādir Shah, 81.  
 Nafisā Begam, 7ff.  
 Nand Kunār, 73ff, 77.  
 Nārāyan Dās (Nārāyan Singh), 15ff.  
 Narāingarh, 3.  
 Navakrishna, Raja, 30.  
 Nawābganj (Manihāri, Purnea), 26.  
 Nawābganj (Near Calcutta), 55, 56.  
 Nawābganj (near Patna), 110.  
 Nawāb of Bengal (Sirāj-ud-daulah)  
 troops of (army), 43, 54, 57ff, 60ff,  
 89, 99, 102.  
 march against the English (1st), 47.  
 Private Minister of, 50.  
 Minister of, 57.  
 Diwān of, 57.  
 Camp of, 58ff, 95.  
 Secretary of, 79.  
 Court at Murshidābād, 87, 95, 99.  
 Council of, 88.  
 awareness of the English conspiracy,  
 90.  
 sought French support, 90.  
 Nawab-Wāzir, 110.  
 Nawāzish Muhammad Shahāmat Jang,  
 1ff.  
 Nicholas, M., 71.  
 Niaserai (Naisera), 47, 89.  
 Norfolk, the, 69.

## O

- Oma Khān*, 28.  
*Omichānd*, 15ff, 31, 73ff, 87, 89, 91ff.  
 Omichand's garden, 18, 55ff.  
 Orissa, 25, 64ff, 91, 107.  
*Orme, Robert*, 36, 58, 74, 95fn, 107, 108.  
*Oudh*, 82, 110.

## P

- Pakalwan Singh* (of Bhojpur), 26.  
*Pāikpārā* (Calcutta), 41.  
 Palmiras, Point, 38.  
 Palmiras (Palymras), Cape, 72.  
*Paniṣat*, 82.  
*Paraganās* 24, 107.  
 Parliament (the British), 70.  
     Select Committee, of, 92, 112.  
*Pātli*, 96.  
*Pātna*, 3ff, 26, 27fn, 80, 82ff, 90, 109ff  
*Patna city*, 4, 28.  
*Pearkes, Mr*, 15, 109ff.  
 Persian language, the, 60, 72.  
 Perrins, 18.  
 Perrin's Redout, 18.  
 Petrus, Coja, 50, 53ff, 62.  
*Phoenix Schooner*, the, 31 fn.  
*Pigot, Mr*, 17, 31, 37, 41fn.  
 Pirpainti, 109.  
*Pitt (Lord Chatham)*, 112.  
*Plassey*, 87, 95, 97, 109, 112.  
*Plassey*, the Battle of, 94ff, 109.  
     fight starts, 99.  
     casualties, 102fn.  
     effects, 107 ff.  
     causes of English victory 110 ff.  
     estimate of the results, 110ff.  
*Pocock, Admiral Sir George*, 32, 88.  
*Pondichery*, 68, 72.  
*Portuguese*, the, 19, 21.  
 Prophet (the), 101.  
*Protector*, the, 39.  
*Prince Henry*, the, 70.  
 Prussian, the, 12ff.  
*Purnea*, 5, 7, 13, 17, 25ff.  
*Pye, Capt*, 41.

## Q

Quran, the, 100.

## R

- Rai Durlabh* (Durlabhrām), 18, 20, 30,  
 57, 77ff, 84, 95, 99ff.  
*Rājballabh, Rājā*, 7, 10, 14, 85.  
     family of, 15.  
*Rājmahal*, 13, 17, 25ff, 103, 109.  
*Rām Nārāin, Rājā*, 26, 28, 103, 110.  
 Ramzān, 94.  
*Ranjit Rāy*, 53, 57, 61ff.  
*Rannie, D.*, 14.  
*Rāsh Behāri*, 25.  
*Renault, M. Pierre*, 24, 39, 48, 55, 77ff.  
 Reprisals, 69.  
 Revolution of 1757 (in Bengal), 86 ff.  
*Roy, Kārtick Chandra*, 85.  
 Royal Artillery, 68.  
 Ruhclās, the, 81.

## S

- Sahbut Jung Bhadre*, 98.  
 St. Thomas Mount (Madras), 34.  
*Saiyid Ahmad (Khān)*, 1, 3.  
*Sakrigali*, 109.  
*Salabat Jung*, (of Deccan) 37.  
*Salisbury*, the, 40, 43.  
 Salt Lakes (Calcutta), 62, 91.  
 Sangaram, 101.  
*Sarafraz Khān*, 84.  
*Sarakār, Dr. Jadunāth*, 105.  
*Saunders, Mr.*, 67, 69.  
*Scott, Caroline Frederick*, 87.  
*Scrafton, Luke*, 6, 28, 56, 73, 79, 84, 89,  
 94ff, 100, 105ff, 108.  
 Secret Committee in London, 49fn,  
 61, 65, 67, 90.  
 Select Committee-  
     of Bengal (Calcutta), 35ff, 46, 49, 54,  
     56ff, 71ff, 88ff, 91, 95.  
     of Bombay, 46.  
     in London, 48.  
     of Madras, 35, 46, 71, 69, 88.  
*Sen, Navin Chandra*, 85.  
 Seths, the (See Jagat Seths)  
*Seth, Prof. Mesrobb. J.*, 23fn.  
 Seven Years' War, 47, 71.  
*Shah Alam II*, 86.  
*Shāhabād*, 109.  
*Shahāmat Jang* 5.  
*Shaukat Jang*, 5, 7, 10, 17, 25ff, 104.

*Shri Babu (Shiva Babu)*, 17.  
 Shroffs, the, 30.  
*Shujā-ud-daulah*, 86, 110.  
*Shyām Sunder*, 27.  
*Simla* (Calcutta), 18.  
*Sinfray, M.*, 48, 102.  
*Singh, Raja Sundar*, 26.  
*Singh, Suther*, 26.  
*Sirāj-ud-daulah, Mirza Muhammad*,  
 education and early career, 1ff.  
 marriage, 2.  
 nominal Dy. Governor, 3.  
 rebellion of, 3ff  
 declared successor by Alivardi, 4.  
 complimented by the Dutch,  
 the French and the English, 5ff.  
 assumed power, 6, intrigue &  
 jealousy of kinsmen, 7.  
 removed Mir Jafar, 8.  
 made new appointments, 8.  
 caused English antagonism, 9ff.  
 charges against the English, 11.  
 Calcutta Campaign, 18ff.  
 Calcutta Victory, 25.  
 Purnea Expedition, 11, 25ff.  
 negotiations with the English, 47ff.  
 near Hughli, 51.  
 came to terms with the English, 60ff.  
 protested against the English  
 attack on the French, 72 ff.  
 threatened by Watson, 75.  
 sent force to assist the French, 77ff  
 threatened by Clive, 78.  
 position threatened by the English  
 victory over the French, 79.  
 conciliatory attitude to the  
 English, 79.  
 reassurances to the French, 79.  
 threatened again by Watson, 80.  
 fear of Afghan invasion, 81ff.  
 met the English demand, 81ff.  
 expelled the French, 82.  
 failling fortune of, 84.  
 conspiracy against, 84ff.  
 enemies & conspirators against, 85.  
 Hindu discontent against, 87.  
 plan for removal of, 87ff.  
 attempt to pacify Clive, 89ff.  
 promised concession to the English,  
 91ff.  
 learnt of the conspiracy, 94.

attempt to appease the conspira-  
 tors, 94ff.  
 reinstated Mir Jāfar, 94.  
 rejected Mir Madan's advice. 94.  
 marched against the English, 99.  
 faithful commanders killed, 99.  
 begged Mir Jāfar's protection, 100.  
 followed Mir Jafar's treacherous  
 advice, 101.  
 betrayed by Rāi Durlabh, 102.  
 left the Plassey field, 102.  
 fled from Murshidābād, 103.  
 taken prisoner, 103.  
 murdered, 104.  
 character, 84, 104ff.  
 estimate of, 150ff.  
*Sobhābāzār* (Calcutta), 30.  
*Sonepat*, 82.  
*Specke, Capt*, 38, 44.  
 Straban (a sailor). 42.  
*Sukrullā Khān*, (Aga Baba) 8.  
 Surman's Garden, 21.  
 Suti, 109.

## T

Tanna Fort, 40, 43.  
*(Tarrāckpore) Tarākpore*, 98.  
*Teliāgarhi*, 109.  
*Thornton, Edward*, 93, 96, 102.  
*Tikāri*, (Bihār), 26.  
*Tilākhānd, Rājā*, 87.  
 Treaty of Alinagar, 63, 72, 90.  
 criticism of, 65ff.  
*Triton*, the, 70.  
*Tyger*, the, 38ff, 42ff.

## U

*Umar Khān*, 28.

## V

*Vizagapatam*, 31.

## W

*Walpole*, the, 38ff.  
*Walsh, John*, 34ff, 56.  
*Warick, Capt.*, 58.  
*Watson, Admiral*, 32ff, 36fn, 37ff, 42ff.

- Watson, Admiral*, 32ff, 36fn, 37ff, 42ff, 46ff, 49ff, 58, 60, 62, 64ff, 71ff, 75, 80ff, 92.  
*Watts*, 9, 10, 17ff, 20ff, 30fn, 32, 38, 74, 81, 88ff, 91, 95.  
*Weller, Capt*, 46, 54.

## Y

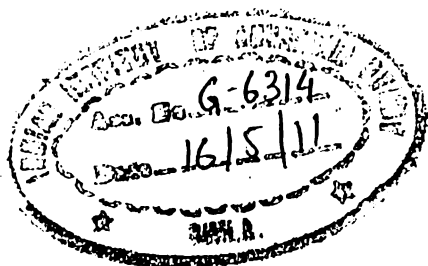
*Yār Latif Khān*, 89, 99.

- York, Ensign*, 59.  
*Young, John*, 12.  
*Yusuf Ali*, 8, 22, 28.

## Z

*Zainuddin Ahmad*  
*Haibat Jung* 1, 2.

THE END





7

8

9

10

11



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