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**Sanjay Kumar**  
Ex. Research Scholar,  
Department of History,  
Jai Prakash University  
Chapra, Bihar, India

## Prince Ali Gauhar invasion and zamindars of Bihar

**Sanjay Kumar**

### Abstract

While the English were busy to consolidate their hold in Bengal, the imperial prince Ali Gauhar, <sup>1</sup> driven by the imperial force from here and there, made fruitless efforts to recover the lost authority of the Mughal empire in the eastern subah. Shuja –ud – daulah of oudh, Imad – ul –Mulk's traditional enemy, Mohammad Quli Khan, Shuja – ud – daulah's first Cousin and the imperial governor of Allahabad assured the prince to help in this regard. Raja Balwant Singh of Banaras and some Bihar Zamindar such as Raja Sundar Singh of Tikari in the Gaya District, Raja Pehalwan Singh, Raja of Nokha and chainpur in the Bhabua Sub- Division Shahabad District and Kamgar Khan of Narhat also encouraged prince. <sup>2</sup> Ali Gouhar Crossed the river- karmanasa, which was the natural boundary line between Bihar and oudh and reached phulwari near patna (seven miles west of Patna) on the 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1759.

**Keywords:** He prevailed upon the weak Alamgir to declare Ali Gauhar as rebel and appoint another prince hadayat baksh

### Introduction

Wazir Imad – ul- Mulk wanted to deprive the princes Ali Gouhar of any legal claim on Bihar. So, he prevailed upon the weak Alamgir to declare Ali Gauhar as rebel and appoint another prince Hadayat Baksh, Subahdar of Bihar on the 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1759. But Ali gauhar's invasion on Bihar was a matter of anxiety for Ram Narayan and the English factory chief, Peter Aryatt, because they did not have any definite information about the arrival of relieving force from Bengal, though it had been requisitioned by Ram Narayan.

The English chief of the factory at Patna left the City and advised Ram Narayan to detain the invader so long as he could or as per the demand of the situation in his interest. So Ram Narayan sought to honour the prince for the time being and after getting assurances of safety, turn up to his camp with some presents. But the prince demanded four crores of rupees and all the artillery in Patna. Ram Narayan returned to the city and the plea of collecting the money, but really he wanted to take steps for the defense of the city. Both Ali Gouhar and Mohammad Quli Khan wasted their time in merry-making and hunting as if they had conquered Bihar. The following course of events soon disillusioned them...

Due to the inefficiency and dissatisfaction of the troops, the Murshidabad government could not manage to appear for Ram Narayan's help. But Clive realized the seriousness of the situation and urgency of checking Ali Gouhar's invasion. Which he termed as "a storm from the north" <sup>[3]</sup>. He decided to march "with the utmost expedition to the relief to Patna, which was in great danger of being lost as well as the whole province of Bihar." <sup>[4]</sup>. Clive moved towards Bihar with Miran as the head of the Nawab's troops. The news of Clive's advance encouraged Ram Narayan and he engaged himself to manage the defence of the city in the best possible manner.

The prince's army made a general and rash attack on the city after being stationed at Zafar Khan's garden on the 21<sup>st</sup> March, but at the end of the day, that resulted in fruitless effort. On thinking on this success, Clive wrote to Ram Narayan "your behavior convinces me not only of your fidelity but at your bravery as a soldier and you may be assured of my maintaining you in your subahship, even at the hazard of to my life" <sup>[5]</sup>. The prince managed to visit M. Jean Low on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April. The next day prince's army made a furious assault" on the Patna city and destroyed the city wall near Mahdiganj. But that, too, resulted in frustration, when Ram Narayan's army presented a powerful restraint, Muhammad Quli Khan was much displeased with the prince on his secretly negotiating with Ram Narayan

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Sanjay Kumar**  
Ex. Research Scholar,  
Department of History,  
Jai Prakash University  
Chapra, Bihar, India

though Yahiya Khan the son of Zakariya Khan of Lahore. The prince pleased him by a personal visit to his tent. The very next day, Ram Narayan got the news of the English army reaching Barh. An advanced detachment of it reached Patna city of the 5<sup>th</sup> April under John Maithew. The prince's army raised the siege of the city and retreated toward south [6].

Clive entered the city on the 8<sup>th</sup> April accompanied by the Nawab's troops under Miran. Ram Narayan expressed his feelings of gratitude towards Clive. But Clive was very much objective and critical and after making necessary steps for the repairing and defence of the city, he marched with his whole force and portion of the Nawab's troops at the bank of the river Karamanasa "to clear that part of the country from detached parties of the enemy, which were still wandering about" [7]. Moreover, he wanted to punish Pehalwan Singh of Bhojpur and other Zamindars, who were still in arms against Bengal and Bihar government. The letter of Clive of dated 27<sup>th</sup> April, which he wrote to Forde from a camp, clearly mentions the successful quelling of the rebellious Zamindars of Bihar and other who had supported the prince Ali Gauhar in his invasion on the city and the country.

But the Shahabad Zamindars were temporarily subdued both by intimidation and negotiation [8]. Pehalwan Singh's son and his followers maintained the stray resistance but were soon defeated by an advance party sent by Clive. Clive then returned to the city by the end of April, but still "apprehended it will be necessary both for the Nawab and himself to leave some forces with Ram Narayan to put the Bhojpur country on a better footing" [9].

In a much deserted condition the prince, Ali Gauhar reached near Mirzapur on the 16<sup>th</sup> May and Clive returned to Calcutta in the end of June leaving a detachment of European battalion under Captain Cochrane. The council in Calcutta wrote to the court of directors on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1759, "we have the pleasure to acquaint you of the safe return of the army from the expedition to the north ward and that by their timely arrival at Patna, the progress of Shahzada was totally stopped and his designs frustrated by which means this province is now in perfect tranquility and the subah more attached to us than ever" [10].

This hope for peace did not last long and Bihar was invaded a second time by the prince by the end of the year, 1759. Through Mirzapur and Sasaram, he reached Ghotauli on the 20<sup>th</sup> December, where he came to know about his father's assassination at Delhi on the 29<sup>th</sup> November. So he proclaimed himself to be the new Mughal Emperor under the title of Shah Alam II and maintained that the year of his reign should be counted from the 21<sup>st</sup> December, the day on which he got the news of his father's murder. This time also, some of his supporters promised to help him out in invading Bihar. Kamgar Khan joined him with five thousand men. Besides, Dilir Khan and Asalat Khan, the sons of Umar Khan a brave Afghan General of Alivardi Khan, who were dissatisfied with Miran's improper conduct, also joined him. Khadar Hussain Khan, who had rebelled against the authority of the Nawab, "threatened to declare" [11]. For Shah Alam II. Probably the latter was trying to seek the support of the Dutch, who were at great loss by the saltpetre monopoly of the English Company, with a view to conquering Bihar.

But Shah Alam II wasted his days in the futile coronation ceremony and rejoining and "lavishly bestowing

hyperbolic titles and in – flated mansabs which had not the remotest chance of being ever translated into reality by the engagement of a corresponding military force or grant of funds capable of maintaining them" [12].

Ram Narayan, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, made a better use of the leisure time to secure the city by seeking the support of local Zamindars and recruiting about 40,000 men with twenty pieces of cannon [13]. On the other hand Clive was prudent enough (before leaving to England) to send (on the 25<sup>th</sup> February, 1760) two complete battalions of Sepoys, 500 European infantry and six field pieces under Major Cailland to oppose Shah Alam's advance. A troop from the Nawabs' end under Miran, consisting of 15,000 Indian infantry and cavalry with twenty five guns joined the English Party [14]. The force of the Nawab left Murshidabad on the 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1760 [15]. and reached the outskirts of Teliagarhi near Sahabganj on the 30<sup>th</sup> January. Here Major, after a futile effort to win over Khadem Hussain Khan of Purnea, moved ahead for Patna on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1760.

Accompanied with seventy two Europeans, two field pieces and a battalion of Sepoys under lieutenant Cochrane, Ram Narayan fought against the Emperor's army at Masampur, four miles east of Patna on the 9<sup>th</sup> February. In this engagement Ram Narayan was defeated, though he "behaved with distinguished gallantry fighting hand with one of the Shahzad's Principal commanders" [16]. and was "wounded at parts of his body" [17]. In this wretched condition, Ram Narayan had to retreat to his three divisional commanders, viz. Raja Pehalwan Singh, Murad Singh, Son of Bahram Khan Belueh and Ahmad Khan Qureshi four English company Sepoys with three working as volunteers on that day, were killed while proceeding to help Ram Narayan, Kamgar Khan's cavalry stormed upon the leaderless Sepoys and butchered them, only one sergeant and twenty five Sepoys could return to the English factory [18].

Shah Alam reached Patna on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, but did not act promptly. Major Cailland, after a quick march defeated the imperial troops at Sherpur, four miles south east of Bakhtiyarpur on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February. Major Cailland had the strategy to press back the imperial army. Which he could not do due to the non-cooperation of the Nawab's "buried himself on his Zenanah" [19]. Thus, the Emperor's troops went unopposed in the night of that date to Barh and reached Bihar city on the 28<sup>th</sup> February. On the advice of Kamagar Khan, the Emperor marched into Bengal making his mind to attack defenseless capital Murshidabad. Rajas of Burdwan and Birbhum joined him and at Vishnupur, in Bankura district. a Marath army under Shree Bhat Sathé joined him. But the Emperor's joint army was defeated at Balkhas on the 7<sup>th</sup> April. The imperial army quickly returned to Patna and attacked the city. Those who were at Patna, presented a thin resistance but the troops of the Emperor ravaged some portion of the city. But very soon, Major Konx, covering 300 miles from Burdwan in 13 days, reinforced the Patna troops and saved the city, reaching Patna on the 28<sup>th</sup> April.

Emperor Shah Alam, retreated to Rani Sarai where M. Law joined him on the 30<sup>th</sup> April. But this did not prove of any help and after two months unnecessary stay in Bihar, he reached the bank of Jamuna in August, 1760. His one of the strong supporters Khadem Hussain Khan was defeated by Major Konx on the 19<sup>th</sup> June and the former fled away to Bettiah on the 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Major Cailland and Miran's troops

reached there “to put the finishing stroke to the affair” [20]. Major Knox’s troops were relived and send back to Patna. The army of Miran and Major cailland had an indecisive fight with Khadem Hussain Khan of Purnea on the 25<sup>th</sup> June. But the Casualty of Miran on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> July by a flash of lightning greatly disconcerted the English troops there. By Preventing confusion among the armies Major cailland marched back to Patna after staying at the Bettiah town for a few day “to oblige the Rajas of that place to pay some arrears of revenue due to the Nawab” [21]. On the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1760, major calilland came back to Calcutta. Thus the attempt of the English to establish their authority in Bihar with the help of Mirjafar was resisted by Ram Narayan and some other powerful Zmindras of Bihar including Kamgar Khan of Narhat Samai. The English, however, succeeded in winning over Ram Narayan to their side by giving protection to him against Mirjafar. Ram Narayan after his friendship with the English, remained their ardent supporter till his death. The disaffected Zamindars, how-ever, continued to offer resistance to the English whenever they got an opportunity to do so. They also continued to trouble Ram Narayan and the Nawab of Bangal.

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