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## Mir Kasim and the landlords of Bihar

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### Abstract

Mirzafar was made the Nawab of Bengal, after, the battle of Plessey. But he proved to be a very weak ruler and his weakness added momentum to the prevailing political degeneration of the country. The example, which he set against Siraj-ud-daulah has bound to be repeated again. He had a more personal relationship with colonel Clive, who had left for England, so, he was dethroned peacefully and his son in law, Mir Kasim, ascended the masnad of Bengal on the 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1760. After Plessey, it was the second bloodless revolution which carried the events in Bengal one step ahead regarding the British supremacy in the country. Almost all the official and influential dignitaries of the subah were present on the occasion and offered presents and good wishes to the new Nawab. Even Vansittart came to offer congratulation on behalf of the company <sup>[1]</sup>.

**Keywords:** Mir kasim turned his attention to the bhojpur area

### Introduction

Mir Kasim was an efficient administrator. After the departure of Shahzadah Shah Alam II from Patna in 1761, Mir Kasim turned his attention to the Bhojpur area. The border barons of Bhojpur had been a source of perpetual anxiety to the Nawab. These barons had also helped the Shahzadah in his invasions of Bihar. These "Bhojpurah" Zamindars had become serious political menace, which no government could have tolerated. Pehalwan Singh had been very active in his support of the Shahzadah <sup>[2]</sup> and Clive had to march in person against Pehalwan Singh. Pehalwan Singh was defeated by Clive. But these chiefs were not completely subdued by 1760. These Zamindars committed depredations in the neighboring country.

Mir Kasim was convinced that these "Bhojpuriah" barons must be suppressed at all costs. He made sufficient preparation for this expedition. The Governor, Mr Vansittart approved the policy of the Nawab in this respect. The Nawab started against these Bhojpur Zamindars with a huge army.

The Bhojpur expedition of the Nawab is an important event in his administration. He left Patna in November 1761. He dispatched Mr. Raushan Ali Khan accompanied by some troops in advance. Pehalwan Singh and others were terrified at this huge force and they did not consider it proper to fight against the Nawab. All these Zamindars left their homes and fled away to Oudh. The Nawab's force began to occupy the strong hold of these Zamindars. By December, 1761, the Nawab captured the fort of Judgepur. The Nawab occupied all the forts of the Bhojpuriah barons by the beginning of January, 1762. The properties of these Zamindars were confiscated.

The Nawab then, sent a force against the Zamindars of Bettiah. The motive behind this expedition was to capture its strong fortress. He also wanted to establish peace throughout the frontier districts of Bihar. A large force under Bahadur Ali Khan was sent to Bettiah <sup>[3]</sup> and the whole area was captured by March, 1762.

While Mir Kasim was trying to strengthen the government, some circumstances drove him into opposition to the East India Company. He possessed an independent mind and assertive personality. The Calcutta Council had made the change of ruler ship to enhance the quantum of gains both for the company as well as its servants. In the eyes of the Calcutta Council, the office of the Nawab was viewed as an instrument for profit only and if not further change in the Nawabship might be made without any hesitation <sup>[4]</sup>.

Mir Kasim, however, belied English hopes and soon emerged as a threat to their position. He tried to prevent public disorder, to increase his income by removing corruption from revenue

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administration and to raise a modern and disciplined army along European lines. All this was not to the liking of the English.

The battle was about to begin again. The truth of the matter was that there could not exist two masters in an independent ruler, the English demanded that he should act as a mere tool in their hands, for had they not put him in power?

Mir Quasim was defeated in a series of battles in 1763 and fled to Awadh where he formed an alliance with Shuja-ud-Daulah, the Nawab of Awadh, and Shah Alam II, the fugitive Mughal Emperor. The three allies clashed with the company's army at Buxar on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1764 and were thoroughly defeated. This was one of the most decisive battles of Indian history for it demonstrated the superiority of English arms over the combined army of two of the major Indian powers. It firmly established the British as masters of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and placed Awadh at their mercy.

The English declared Mir Kasim to be an outlaw after his escape from the battlefield. He was chased and that drove him out from every refuge. They declared an award of one lakh rupees for Mir Kasim's head. On receipt of the news of such a bit over his head, Mir Kasim moved towards Rohilkhand to evade arrest and gain support. The Rohillas declined to help him against the English, some petty chiefs like the Rana of Gondia offered their help. Mir Kasim also tried to unite the Maratha Chiefs to expel the English from Bengal, but all efforts proved to be futile. His pathetic appeal to Nizam of Hyderabad and Ahmad Shah Abdali failed to get any response from them<sup>[5]</sup>. Lastly Mir Kasim tried to meet the Mughal Emperor at Delhi but latter's Deputy-Wazir, who had friendly relations with the English, foiled his scheme and did not allow him to meet the Emperor. In such a hopeless condition Mir Kasim died on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1777<sup>[6]</sup>, and the dim light of resistance against the English in Bengal and Bihar was over.

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