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The Transition of Power from Dhaka to Murshidabad: Administrative and Political Dynamics of the Early 18th Century in Bengal

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ABSTRACT :

Murshid Quli Khan, appointed as the Subadar of Bengal, became the supreme ruler of Bengal and Orissa upon his appointment. During his time as Subadar, Bengal was entirely free from the influence of the central government. Murshid Quli Khan's efficient administration kept Bengal's revenue and governance stable despite the Mughal Empire's decline. His leadership in 1717 marked the beginning of Bengal's independent Nawabi era. With the capital's transfer to Murshidabad that same year, Dhaka lost its former prominence and became a Niabat. This study elucidates the political transformation of Dhaka to Murshidabad in the early eighteenth century, focusing on the unrest that led from Murshid Quli Khan's appointment as Subadar in 1717 to the Battle of Plassey. This study also clarifies the administration of Dhaka under the Murshidabad Nawab, alongside the inter-political crisis between Dhaka and Murshidabad. The study utilized both primary and secondary sources of information. Under the Nawabs of Murshidabad, Dhaka's dignity was reduced, and Naib Nazims started to rule Dhaka. The corruption and inefficiency of Naib Nazim diminished the city's former political importance. Although it remained a significant commercial hub, mainly due to the influence of European traders like the East India Company. During this era, Dhaka encountered significant challenges in governance, misrule, bribery, and neglect. Furthermore, ongoing political tensions between Murshidabad and Dhaka contributed to the instability. This resulted in the fall of Dhaka and the rise of Murshidabad, subsequently transforming the administrative landscape of Bengal and ultimately leading to its enactment into a colonial dominion.

Key Words: Murshid Quli Khan, Dhaka, Murshidabad, Administration, Political

1. Introduction

The Mughal Empire expanded to its greatest extent during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, but Emperor Aurangzeb died in 1707. After Aurangzeb's death, when his second son Muhammad Azam ascended the throne, a war of succession began. In the war of succession, the joint forces of Azim-us-Shan and his father, Muazzem Shah, defeated Muhammad Azam. Muazzem Shah assumed the throne of Delhi. With his father's accession to the throne, the influence of Prince Azim-us-Shan (the former Subadar of Bengal) increased. The reason for this is that during the war of succession, Azim-us-Shan helped his father with a large army and money. Muazzem Shah assumed the title of Bahadur Shah while sitting in the Delhi palace, and Azim Us Shan became the independent ruler of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. Under his influence, Murshid Quli Khan was removed from all posts in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa one by one in 1707 and early 1708. However, thinking of the honor and dignity of Murshid Quli Khan, Emperor Bahadur Shah appointed him as the Diwan of the Deccan. He also increased his rank somewhat. After Diwan Murshid Quli Khan was removed from all posts in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, the revenue and political situation of Bengal became very unstable. This is evidenced by the fact that on 20 January 1710, the rebels on the streets of Murshidabad killed Diwan Ziaullah (Sarker, 1948). After Ziaullah's death, the post of Diwan of Bengal became vacant, so after three years on 20 February 1710, Murshid Quli Khan was reappointed as Diwan of Bengal. Along with Murshid Quli Khan's position also increased, and it increased to 3000 castes/2000 riders (Sarker, 1948). But Murshid Quli Khan was still kept away from the post in Bihar and Orissa. Murshid Quli Khan was so qualified as a Diwan that Azim Us Shan appointed Murshid Quli Khan as Diwan despite his reluctance. In 1710, Murshid Quli Khan arrived in Bengal as Diwan of Bengal. Before his arrival, all the disputes between the prince and him were settled. In 1711, Ziauddin Khan's dispute with Murshid Quli Khan began. The reason for the conflict is that as soon as Ziauddin assumed the responsibility of the Faujdar of Hooghly, he began to consider himself independent and free from the authority of Murshid Quli Khan. Murshid Quli Khan appeared before the court of the Emperor with this news and report. On 11 September 1711, the Diwan came to the states council and confirmed the collectorship of customs at the Hooghly port along with the post of Faujdar of Midnapore, from which he had been removed two years earlier (Sarker, 1948). With the death of Emperor Bahadur Shah in 1712, the political situation in Delhi became as critical as before. When the war of succession broke out after Bahadur Shah's death, Diwan Murshid Quli sided with Azim Us Shan in this war and issued sermons and coins in Azim Us Shan's name (Karim, 1989). This political change did not bode well for Murshid Quli Khan, the reason being that Azim Us Shan was defeated in the war. Azim Us Shan died, and Jahandar Shah was crowned as the Emperor of Delhi (Sarker, 1948; Munshi, 1763; Khan, 1780). Murshid Quli Khan was a very clever and resourceful man, so he quickly expressed his loyalty to Jahandar Shah and sent a large amount of tribute to Delhi. At that time, Khan Jahan was in charge of Bengal. While Murshid Quli Khan was busy securing his future, Azim Us Shan's son Farrukhsiyar declared himself the Emperor and started competing with Jahandar Shah (Karim, 1989). Farrukhsiyar needed both money and

manpower to ascend to the throne, so he sought help from his father, Azim Us Shan, and from those who had come to power during Azim Us Shan's reign. But except for the Deputy Subedars of Bihar and Allahabad, everyone showed their support (Karim, 1989). At this time, Farrukhsiyar demanded the revenue of Bengal, and Murshid Quli Khan refused to pay it (it should be noted that Farrukhsiyar had also previously been in charge of the subadar of Bengal). This led to a conflict between Murshid Quli Khan and Farrukhsiyar. The conflict became so pronounced that Farrukhsiyar appointed Rashid Khan instead of Murshid Quli Khan in Bengal. Rashid Khan set out towards Bengal with a large army. Murshid Quli Khan was able to stop him by making preparations. Murshid Quli Khan's policy in this war of succession was that he would remain loyal to whichever prince of the Taimur dynasty was appointed to the throne of Delhi (Karim, 1989). In 1713, Farrukhsiyar won the war against Jahandar Shah and was appointed as the emperor. After the war, Farrukhsiyar appointed his loyalists to various posts. Instead of summoning Murshid Quli Khan to court and threatening him, he conferred on him the title of Nasir Jung in 1714 and retained him in all his previous posts. Farrukhsiyar increased Murshid Quli Khan's mansab to 7000 (Malik, 1967). At this time, Farrukhsiyar appointed his infant son Yar Khundsiyar as the Subadar of Bengal, and his Naib or Deputy Subadar was Mir Jumla II, and Murshid Quli Khan was the Diwan. A few days later, after the death of the son of the Emperor, Mir Jumla II became the Subadar of Bengal. However, he was absent from Bengal most of the time. The Emperor also appointed him as the Subadar of Bihar and sent him to Patna (Karim, 1989). However, Mir Jumla II often came to Delhi secretly (Karim, 1989). Even during this time, he seized the revenue sent from Bengal and paid the salaries of his army. When this news reached, the Emperor became angry and dismissed Mir Jumla II as the Subadar of Bengal and appointed Murshid Quli Khan as the Subadar of Bengal in 1717 (Sarkar, 1948). Before being appointed as the Subadar of Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan was the Deputy Subadar (Naib Nazim) and Diwan of Bengal and simultaneously held the positions of Diwan and Subadar of Orissa. The political changes following Aurangzeb's death reshaped Bengal's administrative landscape. Amidst wars of succession and shifting loyalties, Murshid Quli Khan's resilience and political judgment enabled him to regain authority and ultimately be appointed as the Subadar of Bengal in 1717. His rise marked the beginning of a new administrative era that strengthened Bengal's autonomy and laid the foundation for the Nawabi era. During the Nawabi era, Dhaka became a subunit of the province, and a political crisis and neglect surrounded the city. This unrest, along with the rising influence of the British, culminated in a battle that permanently altered the history and prosperity of Bengal.

2. Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine the political and administrative transformation of Bengal during the early eighteenth century, particularly focusing on the transfer of the provincial capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1717. It seeks to analyze how this shift reflected the decline of Mughal central authority, the rise of autonomous Nawabi rule, and the resulting impact on Dhaka's political, administrative, and socio-economic structures.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the administrative reforms and policies introduced by Murshid Quli Khan that contributed to the establishment of Murshidabad as the new capital.
- To analyze the causes and consequences of the decline of Dhaka's administrative significance and its transformation into a Niabat under the Nawabi regime.
- To evaluate the internal political rivalries between Dhaka and Murshidabad and their larger consequences for Bengal's governance and stability.

4. Necessity of This Study

This study examines the political and administrative shift from Dhaka to Murshidabad in the early eighteenth century, a key period in Bengal's history. It highlights Murshid Quli Khan's reforms and the decline of Dhaka's governance, which led to semi-independent Nawabi rule. The transitional period is arguably, the most critical chapter in Dhaka's history and it addressed in numerous books, articles, and essays. However, these sources are often fragmentary, inconsistent, and inadequate. This is why I feel compelled to undertake this research.

5.1 Murshid Quli Khan as the Subadar of Bengal and Introduction of Nawabi Era

The exact date of Murshid Quli Khan's appointment as the Subadar of Bengal is not available. According to Jadunath Sarkar, it is 1717 (Sarkar, 1948). Nevertheless, many historians doubt this. In the book *Murshid Quli Khan and His Times*, Abdul Karim mentions that according to the British farman, Murshid Quli Khan was the Subadar of Bengal in 1717 (Karim, 1989). However, if, according to Jadunath Sarkar's statement, Murshid Quli Khan was appointed as the Subadar of Bengal in 1717 and if Mir Jumla was dismissed from the post of Subadar of Bengal in 1715-1716, then there is doubt about who was the Subadar of Bengal for one year in between. Abdul Karim, referring to the information from the *Ibartanama* of Mirza Muhammad;

When this matter (Mir Jumla's embezzlement of Bengal revenue) came to the attention of the emperor, he became very angry and Zafar Khan was given the responsibility of the Subadar of Bangladesh entrusted to him (Mir Jumla) as an assistant Subadar. On hearing the news of the troops that Mir Jumla had collected and assembled, relying on the rule of Bangladesh, he dismissed them too (Karim, 1989).

However, there is no doubt that Murshid Quli Khan was appointed as the Subadar of Bengal in 1717. Being appointed as the Subadar of Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan became the supreme ruler of Bengal and Orissa. As soon as Murshid Quli Khan was appointed as the Subadar, he sent a huge amount of gifts and revenue to the court of the Emperor. The Emperor was pleased and gave him the title of Mutamin ul Mulk Ala ud Daulah Zafar Khan Bahadur Nasiri

Nasir Jung (Ali, 2017). On the other hand, due to the change of emperors and the increasing infighting in Delhi, the Mughal Empire fell into extreme distress. The infighting and violence over the throne of Delhi reached such a level that it spread not only to Delhi but also to all the surrounding provinces. Its influence was also present in the Suba of Bengal. At this critical stage of the Mughal Empire, the central government became so weak that the provincial subadars became very powerful, and many subadars became independent. Bengal was no exception. Before 1717, Bengal had become somewhat independent, but with the appointment of Murshid Quli Khan as the Subadar of Bengal, Bengal became completely free from the influence of the central government. Although even then, Murshid Quli Khan respected the central government (the emperor) quite a lot and used to send the revenue to the central government on time. Murshid Quli Khan was always loyal to the emperors of the Taimur dynasty of Delhi, and even after his appointment as the Subadar in 1717, nothing changed for him. Murshid Quli Khan took the entire responsibility of the revenue and administration of the Subadar into his own hands. He did not need the emperor or the central government for this. As a result, the revenue and other administrative systems of Suba Bengal did not collapse even at the threshold of the collapse of the Mughal Empire. This helped Murshid Quli Khan to start a new chapter in Bengal known as the independent Nawabi period. The capital was officially transferred from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1717. Until Murshid Quli Khan was appointed as the Subadar, Dhaka was officially the capital of Bengal. When Murshidabad was made the capital in 1717, Dhaka lost its glory and became a Niabat (Dani, 2005). From 1717 onwards, the Naib Nazim era began in Dhaka (Karim, 1963). From the beginning of the Nawabi period in 1717 until the Battle of Plassey (1757), it is known as the Nawabi era in the history of Bengal (Hoque, 2023). During the Nawabi period, the chief ruler of Bengal was known as the Nawab. At that time, the Nawab was the supreme official of the province (Khan, 2020).

5.2 Administration of Dhaka under the Nawabs of Murshidabad

Dhaka lost its administrative and Diwani power with the transfer of the Diwani from Dhaka to Murshidabad by Murshid Quli Khan in 1702 and the subsequent year 1703 with the departure of the Subadar from Dhaka. Although the Diwani was officially transferred from Dhaka to Murshidabad, Dhaka was still administratively active as the office of the Subadar. In the absence of the Subadar Azim us Shan, the Deputy Subadar Farrukhsiyar took charge of Dhaka. As he was a member of the imperial family, the political power and economic capacity of Dhaka were still strong. Although the powerful Diwan Murshid Quli Khan was still trying to make Murshidabad a political and economic center. Later in 1717, when Murshid Quli Khan assumed power as the Subadar of Bengal, he transferred the capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad, and Dhaka became a sub-province. He built the Murshidabad Palace in Murshidabad, where the previously built Subadar Palace, the Shahi Kella in Dhaka, became the palace of the Deputy Subadar.

Under the Naib Nazims, the administrative system of Dhaka deteriorated. Along with this, there was some deterioration in trade and commerce, which affected the people of the city in the same way. The political position and importance of Dhaka during the Naib Nazims (1717) were so much misplaced that no information has been found about the first Naib Nazim, Khan Muhammad Ali Khan. Muhammad Ali Khan, who was sent to Dhaka by the Murshidabad administrator, is not mentioned in any contemporary book or report; only his name appears in a Farman of Murshid Quli Khan, as recorded in various sources. Similarly, after the death of Itisam Khan, his son came to Dhaka as the Naib Nazim of Dhaka, but his name is not mentioned anywhere, although he held power as the Naib Nazim of Dhaka until the death of Murshid Quli Khan (for a long period of a little over a year). From this information, the administrative status and position of Dhaka can be somewhat estimated. Besides the appointed Naib Nazims, they did not come to Dhaka but instead sent their deputies to govern on their behalf. For example, Sarfaraz Khan sent two of his deputies (Ghalib Ali Khan and Murad Ali Khan) to Dhaka without coming to Dhaka. Basically, as a result of the transfer of the capital to Murshidabad, a settlement was created centered around Murshidabad city, which was always trying to stay in the capital. After the death of Murshid Quli Khan, his son-in-law, Shuja Uddin Khan, became the Nawab. Following his conquest of Tripura, he appointed his son, Sarfaraz Khan, as the Naib Nazim of Dhaka. But Sarfaraz Khan's mother (daughter of Murshid Quli Khan) refused to send her son away. Using her political power, she sent Ghalib Ali and Yashwant Roy to Dhaka as her representatives instead of Sarfaraz Khan. Thus, the administration of Dhaka began to be conducted by the deputy of the Nawab. Later, when Nawab Alivardi Khan also sent his son-in-law, Nawajis Muhammad Khan, to Dhaka, he also sent his representative, Hussain Quli Khan, instead of coming to Dhaka. Later, Hussain Quli Khan also left Dhaka and was replaced by his brother's son, Hussain Uddin Khan. As a result, the administrative burden of Dhaka was entrusted to the deputy of the deputy Subadar (Dani, 2005). Although a large amount of revenue was still sent from Dhaka to the Murshidabad Palace and the Motijheel Palace in Murshidabad. It is noteworthy that mainly the members of the Nawab family refused to stay in Dhaka and appointed their deputies in Dhaka. Bribes were freely given among the administrative officials of Dhaka under the Naib Nazims. According to the Dhaka diary, corruption and free acceptance of bribes by the civil servants in Dhaka during the rule of the Naib Nazims are mentioned (Dhaka Review, 1911). At that time, giving benefits to the company in exchange for money from the civil servants in Dhaka was considered a gift. Ahmed Hasan Dani, in his book *Dhaka: A Record of Its Changing Fortunes*, citing an example:

Syed Raja Khan came here from Maqsdabad last April. The marriage of Sarfaraz Khan's beloved daughter was arranged with him. He was freed from our Nawab Ghalib Ali Khan. Syed Raja Khan had a dispute with him. This man (Syed Raja Khan) worked very arrogantly, not only in his own office but also in matters related to the Nawab's government office. If anyone failed to pay his demands, he would whip them, kill them. He carried on his tyranny without any control. Everyone here thought that Ghalib Ali Khan would be recalled and made Nawab. This man would often call the head of the company to meet him and would ask him to give him the same kind of gifts that were given to the Nawab. If his demands were refused, he would threaten to close our business. Our company head would tactfully evade his demands. He would always reduce his demands and say that he would be happy just to meet him, without giving him respectable clothes; The amount of the speaking fee alone was 2,000 taka. However, our lawyer quoted one of his subordinates as saying that they thought 1,500 taka would be enough. Our company chief expressed his interest in meeting him yesterday and giving him 500 taka. He refused with disgust (Dani, 2005).

From this statement, it is completely conceivable how corrupt the administrative officials of Dhaka under the Naib Nazim became in the absence of the Subadar. This administrative situation of Dhaka during the Nawabi period did not cause much damage to Dhaka politically, economically, or socially. On the contrary, Dhaka's progress as a commercial center of the European Company was commendable (Ahmed, 2005). However, with the abolition of Murshidabad as the capital during the Company's rule, Dhaka's condition became even more fragile, and Dhaka was then governed from the new capital, Kolkata.

5.3 Dhaka-Murshidabad Inter-Politics

In 1717, the first Naib Nazim of Dhaka, Mohammad Ali Khan, obtained the administrative power of Dhaka on behalf of the Nawab of Murshidabad. Since then, between 1717 and 1754, the inter-politics between Murshidabad and Dhaka was a mixture of conflict and compromise. After Murshidabad was established as the capital of Bengal in 1717, the administrative importance of Dhaka began to decline. The emergence of Murshidabad as the political and administrative center of Bengal created a kind of resentment among the local rulers of Dhaka. Although Dhaka was previously the main commercial and administrative center of Bengal, it became quite backward after the transfer of the capital. During the pre-Nawabi period, Dhaka had administrative, economic, military, and cultural importance. However, after the rule of the Murshidabad Nawabs, various types of conflicts and instability arose in Dhaka. These include power struggles, changes in the revenue system, and social and political dissatisfaction. The transfer of the Jagir land from Dhaka to Orissa as a result of the Mal-Jamini settlement by Murshid Quli Khan made the zamindars angry. Various questions were raised in the scholarly circles regarding Murshid Quli Khan's land management and revenue settlement. Firstly, according to some scholars, the new settlement led to the downfall of some old zamindars of Bengal and the emergence of new zamindars in those vacant places (Khan, 2020). Secondly, his land-related efforts created a new land-aristocratic system in Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan thought that he could exert a negative influence on the zamindars in determining the productive power of the land and kept them in check (Karim, 1999). This created a tense situation among the zamindars of the then Dhaka and the entire Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan took effective action against revenue defaulters by making new agreements with the landlords. He imprisoned the landlords, deprived them of their power, took land from the old landlords and created new landlords, and took action to collect revenue (Karim, 1999). As a result, the previous landlords, who indulged in luxury, started paying revenue to the Murshidabad government regularly. This practice affected the income and power of the landlords of Dhaka. The income from the land of many landlords decreased. They started participating in various types of rebellions and protests. In addition, the practice created unrest among the landlord class of Dhaka itself, as it affected their business and land ownership. The landlord class of Dhaka became annoyed because of the change in the revenue collection process and the compulsory participation in the new system. A significant feature of this land reform of Murshid Quli Khan was the exclusive control of the local Hindus during this period. This settlement of Murshid Quli Khan (1722) was slightly modified by Nawab Shuja ud Din Khan in 1728, and it continued until the Revolution of Plassey (Khan, 2020).

After the death of Murshid Quli Khan (1727), Sarfaraz Khan's father (Murshid Quli Khan's son-in-law) Shuja ud Din Muhammad Khan, came to Murshidabad in 1727 and seized power and declared himself as Subadar (Roy, 1902). Sarfaraz Khan was then appointed as Diwan in Bengal. Soon after Shuja ud Din seized power, he appointed his son-in-law Mirza Lutfullah as Naib Nazim of Dhaka. This created an adversarial situation between the Diwan of Bengal and the Naib Nazim in Dhaka. At that time, the Murshidabad Nawab did not consider it safe to appoint anyone outside their relatives to the charge of an important Niabat like Dhaka. The reason is that they considered their relatives the safest and tried to maintain their authority by creating a circle of family lineage. From this time on, the politics of distrust began. The consequences were not blissful for the future politics of Bengal. After Shuja ud Din became Nawab, he tried to firmly consolidate the power of Murshidabad. However, he could not be completely successful in establishing direct control over the Naib Nazim of Dhaka. Shuja ud Din Khan wanted to earn more from the revenue of Dhaka during his rule. Since Dhaka's commercial activities generated a large amount of revenue, Nawab Shuja ud Din Khan wanted to maintain Murshidabad's authority over that revenue. He imposed new restrictions on revenue collection, which irritated Mirza Lutfullah, the Naib Nazim of Dhaka. During that time, the state of Tripura, was conquered, and Tripura was renamed Raushnabad and ruled under the Dhaka Niabat (Ahmed, 2005). As a result, Dhaka's political importance increased significantly (Karim, 1994). While the Naib Nazims wanted to maintain a somewhat independent position, they were forced to follow the rules of Murshidabad, which led to increased administrative conflicts. On the other hand, the zamindars and merchants of Dhaka opposed the additional taxes and duties. Nawab Shuja ud Din Khan, on the eve of his death (1739), appointed his only surviving son and Naib Nazim of Dhaka, Sarfaraz Khan, as the Nawab of Murshidabad. During Sarfaraz Khan's reign (1739-1740), his son-in-law Syed Murad Ali was appointed as the acting Naib Nazim of Dhaka. During Shuja ud Din Khan's reign, Hisab Ghalib Ali Khan was appointed as the Naib Nazim of Dhaka and Jashbant Roy was sent to Dhaka as his assistant. They came to Dhaka and destroyed Mir Habib's monopoly of trade and restored the prosperity of Dhaka. Nevertheless, after the death of Shujaud Din Khan, Sarfaraz Khan, under the influence of a woman named Nafis Begum, withdrew Ghalib Ali Khan from Dhaka (Karim, 1994). Ghalib Ali Khan was replaced by Murad Ali Khan and a man named Rajballab. It is mentioned in various books that both Syed Murad Ali and his subordinate Peshkar Rajballab in Dhaka were extremely greedy for money. Murad Ali and Rajballab came to Dhaka and started atrocities and injustices on the people of Dhaka (Karim, 1994). The people of Dhaka Niabat became fed up with the corruption and oppression of Naib Nazim Syed Murad Ali and his Peshkar Rajballab (Karim, 1994). Syed Murad Ali and his associate, Peshkar Rajballab of Nawara, soon reduced Dhaka from a prosperous state to a relatively poor and miserable state (Taylor, 1840). The peace and prosperity that had returned to Dhaka due to the tireless efforts of Syed Ghalib Ali faded due to the inefficiency and negligence of Murad Ali and Rajballab. Later, the powerless Diwan Jashbant Roy could not prevent this destruction and resigned from his post. As a result, Dhaka fell into the hands of Murad Ali and Rajballab and the people fell into extreme misery. The history of their time was a time of disaster for Dhaka and Bengal.

During the time of Naib Nazim Murad Ali Khan, storms and floods destroyed crops, which resulted in a food famine the following year, disrupting the life of the citizens of Dhaka city. The Naib Nazim of Dhaka did not take any steps to deal with the floods and famine. Nawab Shuja ud Din did not issue any emergency orders either that time. The people of Dhaka were devastated by the famine and the misrule of the Naib Nazim frustrated them against the Murshidabad administration. Shuja ud Din Khan, at the time of his death, ordered Sarfaraz Khan to administer the government with the advice and counsel of his council members Haji Ahmad (Aliverdi Khan's elder brother), Alam Chand (titled Rai Rayan) and Fateh Chand (titled Jagat Sheth) (Salim, 1788 and Roy, 1902). This political shortsightedness of Shuja ud Din Khan created a political instability between Dhaka and Murshidabad. Because in

the analysis of the subsequent activities, it is seen that Haji Ahmad, Alam Chand and Jagat Sheth all these three were politically very crooked and cunning. Among them, Haji Ahmad created a strong political circle centered on Bengal and paved the way for the family to progress. Aliverdi Khan and his elder brother, along with his entire family, were nurtured and established by the grace of Sarfaraz Khan's father Shuja ud Din Khan. It is seen that they took deceit and treachery and killed Sarfaraz Khan (in 1740) and shifted his entire family to Dhaka (Ahmed, 2005). Later, Aliverdi Khan also deposed Shuja ud Din Khan's son-in-law Mirza Lutfullah. Appointed his (Aliverdi) second son-in-law Syed Ahmad Khan as Naib Nazim in his place. During Aliverdi Khan's reign, the faujdars or local rulers of Dhaka enjoyed considerable independence and the Nawab's control over them appears to have been limited. Later, when Aliverdi Khan sought to impose greater control over them, discontent arose among the faujdars of Dhaka. During Aliverdi Khan's time (1740-1756), the office of Naib Nazim of Dhaka in Murshidabad became a victim of palace intrigue and personal enmity (Karim, 1999). The conflict between Aliverdi Khan and Mirza Lutfullah, and later Aliverdi Khan and Baqer Ali, over the rights of the throne of Murshidabad had a profound impact on the politics of Bengal and especially Dhaka. This conflict revealed the internal situation of Dhaka, also the balance of power and the weakness of the administrative structure. The political instability that existed between the zamindars and merchants of Dhaka was further accentuated by the conflict between Aliverdi Khan, Mirza Lutfullah and Baqer Ali. Although Aliverdi Khan was able to re-establish his authority over Dhaka. The result was that Dhaka's political influence and power diminished, and Murshidabad's authority became stronger.

Furthermore, the repeated incursions of Maratha bargis into Bengal worsened the situation and the Dhaka became a fragmented part of Bengali politics. When news of the attacking of Murshidabad by the Marathas reached Dhaka in 1742, there was intense tension in Dhaka even then (Dimock, 1965). In reality, the Marathas occupied only Orissa. However, after hearing the news of the killing and plundering of locals by the Marathas, a large number of people (especially professionals) from West Bengal migrated to East Bengal and Dhaka (Asiatic Society, 2012). Many of them settled permanently in Dhaka. Until 1754, Dhaka was in a state of panic due to the fear of a Maratha attack (Asiatic Society, 2012). However, later, with the help of Aliverdi Khan, Nawazesh Muhammad Khan was able to control it. Although Aliverdi Khan, who had gained the throne by treacherously killing his master, was a skilled administrator. He spent his entire life fighting the Marathas and the Bargis. During Aliverdi Khan's time, the Naib-Nazims of Dhaka used military and commercial power to maintain their independence from the Nawab of Murshidabad. The conflict over this military independence was a significant aspect of Aliverdi Khan's rule. During Aliverdi Khan's rule, the political situation in Dhaka deteriorated under the Naib-Nazims. The result was reflected in the expansion of the city. Due to the decline in the political status and importance of Dhaka during the rule of the Naib-Nazim, the scope of work of the Naib-Nazims also shrank. As a result, the political status of Dhaka gradually weakened, and unrest and dissatisfaction arose among the influential classes of the city. Due to the lack of central intervention in the Naib-Nazim of Dhaka, bribes were freely exchanged among officials. Therefore, it is conceivable that the political situation of Dhaka under the Naib Nazim was very fragile due to the intervention of Murshidabad.

5.4 The Consequence of Murshidabad's internal politics in Dhaka

This political weakness of Dhaka and the establishment of Murshidabad's authority damaged the economic and administrative importance of Dhaka in the long run. The position of the Dhaka elite gradually weakened and Murshidabad was established as the central power of the Bengal. The establishment of Murshidabad as the main administrative center of Bengal changed the economic status and political influence of Dhaka forever. The Nawabi regime turned Dhaka into a peripheral city, which was previously a prosperous commercial and military center. Later, due to various administrative changes, the importance of the office of Naib-Nazim gradually decreased (Ahmed, 2005). In addition, the jurisdiction of the Dhaka also gradually decreased over time, which caused great damage to Dhaka. The fall of Dhaka and the rise of Murshidabad brought about a permanent change in the overall political, economic, and social aspects of Bengal. Although Dhaka's progress as a sub-province was notable under the Murshidabad sub-district, the East India Company gradually grew stronger due to Murshidabad's isolated politics. Although Dhaka became the residence of the Naib Nazim, Dhaka controlled a significant part of the province. During this time, the activities of merchants and traders, especially those of the European company, expanded rapidly, especially the company's exports increased by 3/4 times (Karim, 1999). Taking advantage of the tension between Dhaka and Murshidabad, foreign merchants began to engage in corruption, they began to manipulate the consignment of goods and show low export prices. In addition, they started to run private businesses, evade customs duties, and pass off private goods as company goods (Karim, 1994). The East India Company's tendency to make demands one after another and to threaten them increased. During this political conflict between Dhaka and Murshidabad, the looting and attacks of the Maratha Bargi increased. A large area of the country was captured by the Marathas and was on the verge of destruction. The capital Murshidabad were not free from the looting of the Marathas. The political revolution in Dhaka, one after another-administrative changes, the influence of the officials and employees of the English Company, as well as the looting of the Bargi Marathas, affected the commercial volume and trade of Dhaka. The Nawabs of Murshidabad were ignorant of the world outside Murshidabad, and Bengal later had to pay the price for this. Nawab Aliverdi Khan was engaged in war with the Maratha Bargi for 10 years of his rule, during which he could not do any fruitful work. He fought continuously against the invaders and rebels. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the East India Company was gradually gathering strength and rising headlong, but Aliverdi Khan failed to keep a vigilant eye on it. As a result, the East India Company took over Bengal soon after his death. Thus, the political weakness and resistance of Dhaka during the Nawabi period paved the way for the rise of Murshidabad-centric administration. Which ultimately led to Dhaka's historical and political decline. Unfortunately, the political development of Bengal centered on Murshidabad changed the situation of Murshidabad and caused great damage to the region in general and Dhaka city in particular. Dhaka, lost all care and supervision from its rulers due to all these political instability.

6. Conclusion

The early eighteenth century marked a critical phase in Bengal's political and administrative transformation, defined by the decline of Mughal authority and the emergence of an autonomous Nawabi regime. The transfer of the provincial capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1717 symbolized more than a geographical shift it represented a fundamental change in governance, power distribution, and regional identity. Under Murshid Quli Khan, Bengal experienced relative administrative stability and fiscal reform, reflecting both his efficiency as a ruler and the weakening control of the Mughal Empire. His measures enhanced revenue management and centralized authority but simultaneously marginalized Dhaka, transforming it from a vibrant Mughal

capital into a subordinate Niabat. Murshid Quli Khan's governance laid the foundation for Bengal's semi-independent political identity, yet it also sowed the seeds of internal discontent. The displacement of Dhaka's elite, loss of administrative prominence, and growing distance from central power weakened its political stature. Governed by Naib Nazims who were frequently corrupt and neglected by the Murshidabad court, Dhaka's administration suffered from inefficiency and moral decline. Nevertheless, Dhaka retained significance as a thriving commercial hub, sustained by European traders, especially the East India Company, which took advantage of the administrative disarray for its economic expansion. As Murshidabad became the focal point of Bengal's political life, it also became entangled in factional rivalries and succession struggles that eroded its stability. Nawabs such as Sarfaraz Khan and Aliverdi Khan faced continual challenges from internal corruption to external threats like Maratha incursions weakening the province's unity. These vulnerabilities, coupled with the growing intervention of the East India Company, exposed Bengal to external manipulation and set the stage for colonial domination. The capital's relocation from Dhaka to Murshidabad thus stands as a pivotal episode in Bengal's history, marking the province's shift from Mughal subordination to regional autonomy and eventually to British control after the Battle of Plassey in 1757. The gradual decay of administrative integrity, economic exploitation, and political fragmentation during this period underscores how internal weaknesses hastened Bengal's downfall. Dhaka's decline and Murshidabad's ephemeral rise illustrate the broader trajectory of eighteenth-century Bengal a region transitioning from imperial dignity to colonial suppression. This transformation reflects the consequences of fragmented governance, misplaced priorities, and the failure to sustain an equitable balance between political power and administrative efficiency.

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