

## *Land of Bangla: Arrivals of Nawabs and Britishers*

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The present Bangladesh is comparatively a new state of ancient land. However, it is the split portion of Bengal as other Bengali-speaking region, the West Bengal, is now the very much part of India. This is the division was created in 1947 after splitting the greater India into two parts on the basis of Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Two-nation theory. Bangladesh's age is only fifty years now. In 1971 we (Bangladesh) earned our complete independence after went for a straight fighting for nine months against the occupying and repressive Pakistani forces. Why it is said that Bangladesh a new state of an ancient land? Is it the land that existing for many many years? If so, then why is Bangladesh considered comparatively a new state? Why its age is only fifty years?

From anthropological and sociological point of view, the existence of this land named like *Bangla*, *Bongala*, *Banga*, etc. are found in the records for more than one thousand years back. Why then Bangla is a new state? From the records of the history we have come to know that Bangla in most of the time with a few exceptions was remained under control of the foreign or neighboring rulers or invaders. For more than one thousand years, the Greater India, Bengal was the part of it, had faced several cruel and devastating invasion from the foreign invaders. This is the land where originally the Dravidian people lived. They were mostly the worshippers of nature and fire. Dravidians are credited to be the pioneers of developing the Indus (Harappa) Civilization which appeared to be about 2500-1700 BCE. Hindu race of India is reportedly to have evolved through the Indus Valley. At anytime of that civilization, the Aryan Hindus were reported to have come here from the Persian regions. Later on with the arrivals of one Iranian (or Saudi?) general as well as a spice trader Muhammad bin Quashim in 712, and later on Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, Afghanistan the penetrations of Muslim foreigners had started. Sultan Mahmud came in India and invaded 17 times in the Somenath temple of Gujrat and looted a huge amount of valuable ornaments from there. With those resources, grabbed from the other country, he modernized the some parts of his own country - Iran. This is the same way many

years after the Pakistanis had extracted the resources and foreign currency from Bangladesh in between 1947 to 1971 to develop their new capital at Islamabad and the country as a whole. The first invader, who came and ultimately settled in India, was Muhammad Ghori of Slave dynasty. He was also from Afghanistan. So in the process the other foreign invaders came in India. Some of them went back. Some of them came here only for looting, and some of them started to settle here and created their own empires, some of them had started to destroy the local language and culture; some of them tried to build up a rapport with the local people and created a mixed culture. And some of them started to impose their own culture and language, and in the process they not only to grab our lands, rather they started to kill our ethnicity. So Sultans, Emperors, Nawabs, Raja-Maharaja, Badshah, Kings, etc. one after another occupied the land of greater India and the land of Bengal as well and some of them even extended their annexation up to the reach of Bengal. As whenever they started to rule over majority local people, then we had to lose our independence time to time. Therefore, through the long history of struggle we had to earn our complete freedom only in 1971. In the process of occupation made by the foreigners especially from Central Asia, Middle East and European regions, the British people had landed in greater India at the beginning of 17<sup>th</sup> century during the time of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, and succeeded to earn a permission of making business in India. Therefore they created a few *Banijya Kuthi* (Trading house) in different parts of India like in Mumbai, Chennai, Odisha, etc. Later they under the name of British East India Company had come to an agreement (DASTAK) with Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in 1690 to make business confined only in import and export in exchange of paying taxes of 3000 rupees annually. During this period they bought three zamindaries (Rather villages) namely Govindapur, Sutanuti and Kolikata under initiative of Job Charnock at the regions which is presently Kolkata. They later bought another 38 villages, and in the way they established this city later. The British people then created a fort namely Fort William at the heart of Kolkata and deposited huge arms and ammunition inside of that fort as if no outsider would create any harm to them. They also created few trading centers at Kolkata especially at Hugli and Qushimbazar. After the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, the Mughal started to collapse and in 1717 whenever one weak emperor of Mughals Farrukh Shiear was in Delhi, then British people had pressurized the emperor of earning a deal for not paying any taxes annually. Moreover they started to penetrating in the Bengals local business and

bypassing the orders of the then Nawabs they stopped of paying taxes from their profit in the local business. The local business people had to pay taxes and facing stiff challenges of surviving. And it has created a conflict between the local business community and the British people. Naturally the local Nawabs also had annoyed with the Britishers.

On the other end, we know the last Nawab of greater Bengal Nawab Sirajuddowlah was defeated in 1757 in the hands of British and subsequently killed by the people loyal to next future Nawab Mir Jafar Ali khan. We generally know that Nawab Sirajuddowlah was the last Nawab of popularly called 'independent' Bengal, but practically we were not independent as the Nawabs were not from this land and they were not at all any Bengali by origin. We usually are very sympathetic towards Sirajuddowlah as he was a Muslim, and very much emotionally attached with him due to his struggle against the British and about his sad fate. But what kind of cruel actions had been applied to him or his family, the same kind of cruelty he and his father Jainuddin and his maternal grandfather Nawab Alivardi Khan also committed to his predecessors and challengers. Incidentally mostly of them were Muslims. Killing former Nawab Sarfaraz Khan and Mostafa Khan, a Pathan Commander of his army and Maratha Bargi leader Bhaskar Pandit were the few clear manifestations of it. It was then very usual political rituals that when one rising to powers after defeating others, then obviously then victorious would kill the losers. It was also a practice for them that they could have been killed even their own parents, siblings or relatives if it was necessary to keep his throne free of risk.

Factually Nawab Sirajuddowlah was not a Bengali, and not even accustomed to speak in Bengali. Although he was born in Bengal (Murshidabad) but he was Turkish by origin. His maternal forefathers came to India, and started to settle here during the Mughals. Accordingly, Alivardi Khan was born in Deccan (south India). He worked under Emperor Aurangzeb, and showed his some courage and qualities before him. But after the death of Aurangzeb, he almost lost everything, and for changing his fate and fortune he proceeded towards Bengal. However the then Nawab Murshid Quli Khan did not allow him. Murshid Quli Khan was virtually the first Nawab of Bengal, and he was basically from India. Murshid Quli Khan was born to a Hindu Brahmin family in south India as Surya Narayan Mishra. In his early childhood his parents were killed in a communal riot during the time of Mughals, then an Iranian Sufi

clergyman, Haji Shafi, who worked in the court of Aurangzeb, bought/adopted him and few years later he had taken that child away to Iran. The child was circumcised there and converted to Islam, and given a new name Muhammad Hadi. After the death of Haji Shafi, his sons reportedly freed Murshid Quli Khan from slavery and he came back to India and worked in the regime of Aurangzeb. He showed his some good qualities especially in revenue collection and smooth administration. Aurangzeb was pleased with him for that and given him the new name of Murshid Quli Khan. He was later appointed as like of Governor in Subah Bangla, and subsequently he was awarded the Nawabship of greater Bengal. While he worked for few years at Dhaka, then one of his enemies had attempted to take his life. After surviving he shifted the capital of Bengal from Dhaka to Murshidabad. He had chosen Murshidabad as his capital as it was located in the central part of undivided Bengal. Besides, Murshidabad was surrounded by a lot of rivers through which the movement of people and business activities were run. Murshidabad was then identified as Moksudabad, but few years later it was renamed as Murshidabad after his name.

Murshid Quli Khan was comparatively a good administrator, and unlikely of other Nawabs he married only once. He had two daughters and a son, and after his death his one son-in-law Shujauddin Ahmed was made the next Nawab. He maintained the regime more or less peacefully, but after his death his son Sarfaraz Khan was made the next Nawab. Sarfaraz Khan was not quite competent ruler, and some kind of chaos had erupted around the region. Capitalizing this opportunity, clever Alivardi Khan ultimately entered into Bengal, and defeated Sarfaraz Khan in a war and killed him. In the process in 1740, Alivardi Khan declared himself as the new Nawab of greater Bengal including western and eastern parts of Bengal, Behar and Assam. He later defeated the king of Odisha and annexed it with the Bengal. Despite his elderly age he was very competent but ruthless. He killed prominent Pathan commanders of his army and Maratha Bargi leader Bhaskar Pandit after alluring him to use his intelligence in his administration.

Nawab Alivardi Khan had three daughters and had no son. His elder daughter was Ghaseti Begum, and the second and youngest daughters were Maimuna Begum and Amina Begum. Maimuna had one son namely Shawkat Jung and he was the ruler of Purnia (Behar) during Alivardi as well as Sirajuddowlah's regime. Amina had more than one child and Sirajuddowlah was one of them. Sirajuddowlah's father was the

son of Alivardi's elder brother. Alivardi Khan had huge affection towards his grandson Siraj than the others, and that irked other members of his family especially Ghaseti Begum, who had influence on his father as well as in the court of Nawab. After the rule of almost 16 years when Nawab Alivardi Khan was forcefully got bedridden due to an acute disease, he almost settled his grandson Siraj as his successor. Siraj then was only about 23 years of age and very immature man in terms of handling the critical issues of politics and administration. Besides he was very arrogant, stubborn and not quite respectful to a disciplined life. On the other hand the chief commander of the army and the Chief Bakshi of the regime Mir Jafar Ali Khan had the dream to be the next Nawab. He was also the brother-in-law of Nawab Alivardi Khan. Nawab Alivardi Khan was reportedly assured to make him next Nawab. This dilemma ultimately had history changing impact in Bengal as well as in whole India. Ghaseti Begum had the intention to make Shawkat Jung as the next Nawab, and alternatively she was ready to see Mir Jafar Ali Khan as the next Nawab. Both of them had some communication between them for a long in this respect. After the death of Nawab Alivardi Khan, when Sirajuddowla was found as new Nawab in the month of April, 1756, it was a very shock to some people especially in the royal court as well as in the royal family.

After ascending to the throne, Nawab Sirajuddowla had to face two-pronged challenges. He had the problems in the family as well as in his court as a lot of family members and the courtiers was not happy to see Siraj at the throne and had some planning to forcefully shut him down from the reign. In this click there were a lot of people were involved like Mir Jafar Ali Khan, Ghaseti Begum, Rajballav, Jagat Seths, Umichad, Yar Latif Khan, Raidurlav, etc. On the other hand he had to face stiff challenges from the people of British East India Company. At the very beginning his cousin and the ruler of Purnia Shawkat Jung did not agree to show his loyalty to new Nawab. Therefore, Nawab advanced towards Bihar and defeated Shawkat Jung and killed him. He also sacked Mir Jafar Ali Khan from the post of Chief Bakshi. He also showed his behaviour indifferently towards his some courtiers also. On the other hand he also advanced his army to crush the British people at Kolkata. Extreme approaches had cost him dearly. Instead of not going far, in some stages he could have been taken some compromising initiatives to settle everything peacefully.

After doing this Nawab was happy that his throne had come to a safe position, but practically it was not. Going through an eventful one year he had faced almost a full scale war against the British people on June 23, 1757, but he had to embrace a painful exit from the throne and subsequently killed on July 2, 1757 due to conspiracies cooked by his own people in the court as well as in the family. The people then were mostly detached from the Nawabs and the people of the administration, and they did not have any idea or attention or not even aware who the man coming or going to or from the power.

Like the most other foreigners the British people also came here first as for making business, but after conquering Bengal they thought of settling here and to rule for a long. Therefore they used Bengal as Springboard; from here they started to steadily annexing the all parts of greater India. As they decided to settle here, for that they needed to bring some changes in India as if they can smoothly collect the revenues and to run the administration smoothly. For that they brought a lot of changes in Indian ruling and administrative policy. Some of the changes they brought were extremely bad like of introducing Divide and rule policy, Indigo planting, Trespassing of wealth and raw materials of Bengal to England for use in industries of England at the advent of Industrial revolution in Europe, etc. On the other hand some of the changes they brought were equally good like of introducing Institutional modern Educational system, Modern Administrative system (Bureaucracy), Intellectual movements, A Representative system instead of long standing Feudal structure, etc. As they needed to rule the country in a bureaucratic structure, for that they needed a lot of trained people. But it was not possible for them to bring hundreds of thousands people from England. So they needed to train up the local people to fit them in the modern administrative system including the courts. So they started of creating modern primary schools first, then colleges and other vocational institutes as if the people could learn a certain level of knowledge in Language both English and Bengali, Mathematics, Sciences, Modern Literature, etc. What the schools and colleges they started to introduce either directly by them, or later by the mostly Hindu elite and educated people, we the people of different generations since then are the great beneficiary of that system. If it was not, then we had to stay at a very traditional medieval age and to lagging behind from the other upgraded developing countries.

