

OCCASIONAL PAPER NO.116

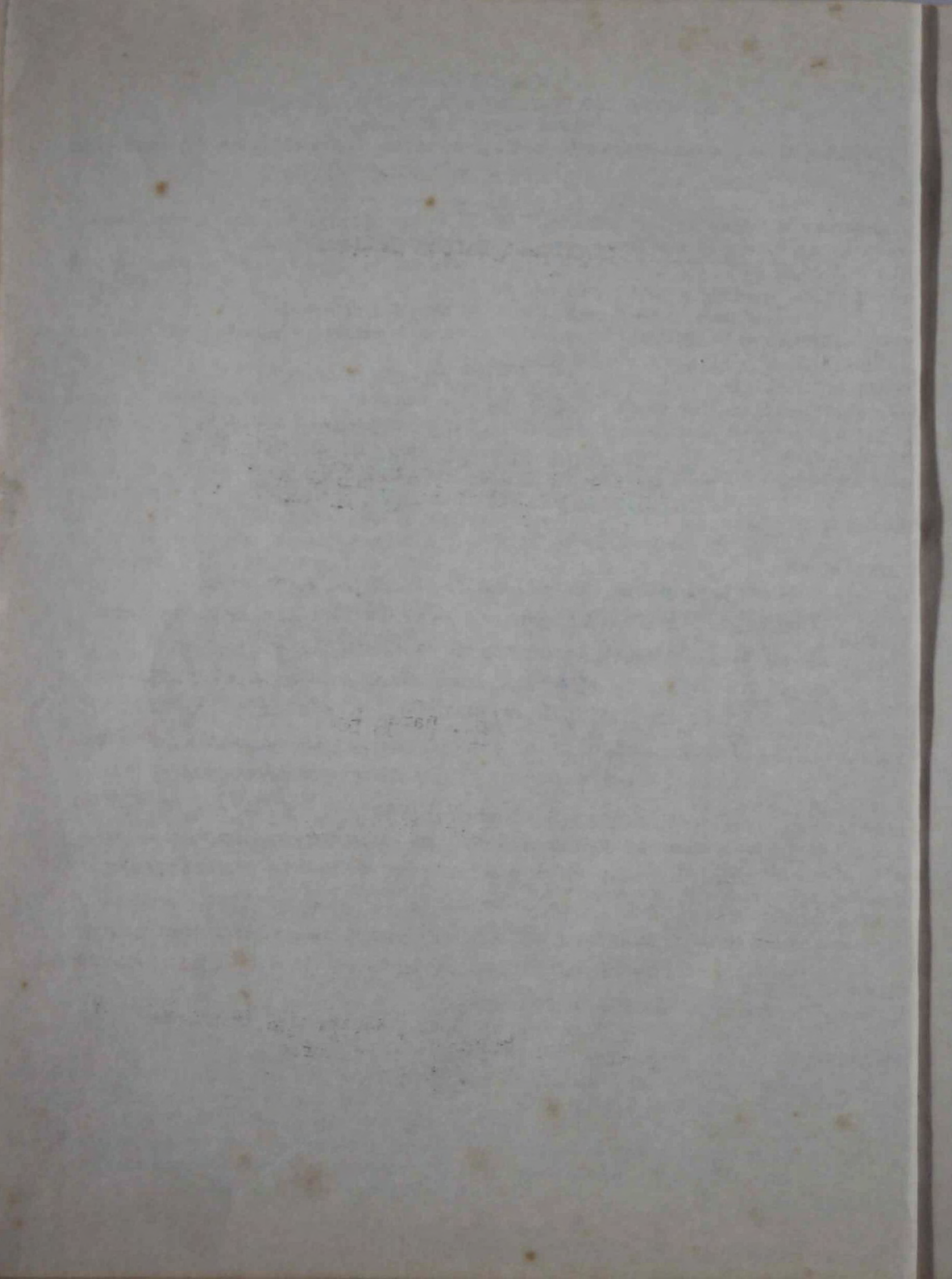
PROBLEMS OF THE STUDY OF INDIAN HISTORY :  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO  
INTERPRETATIONS OF THE 18TH CENTURY.



Dr. Barun De

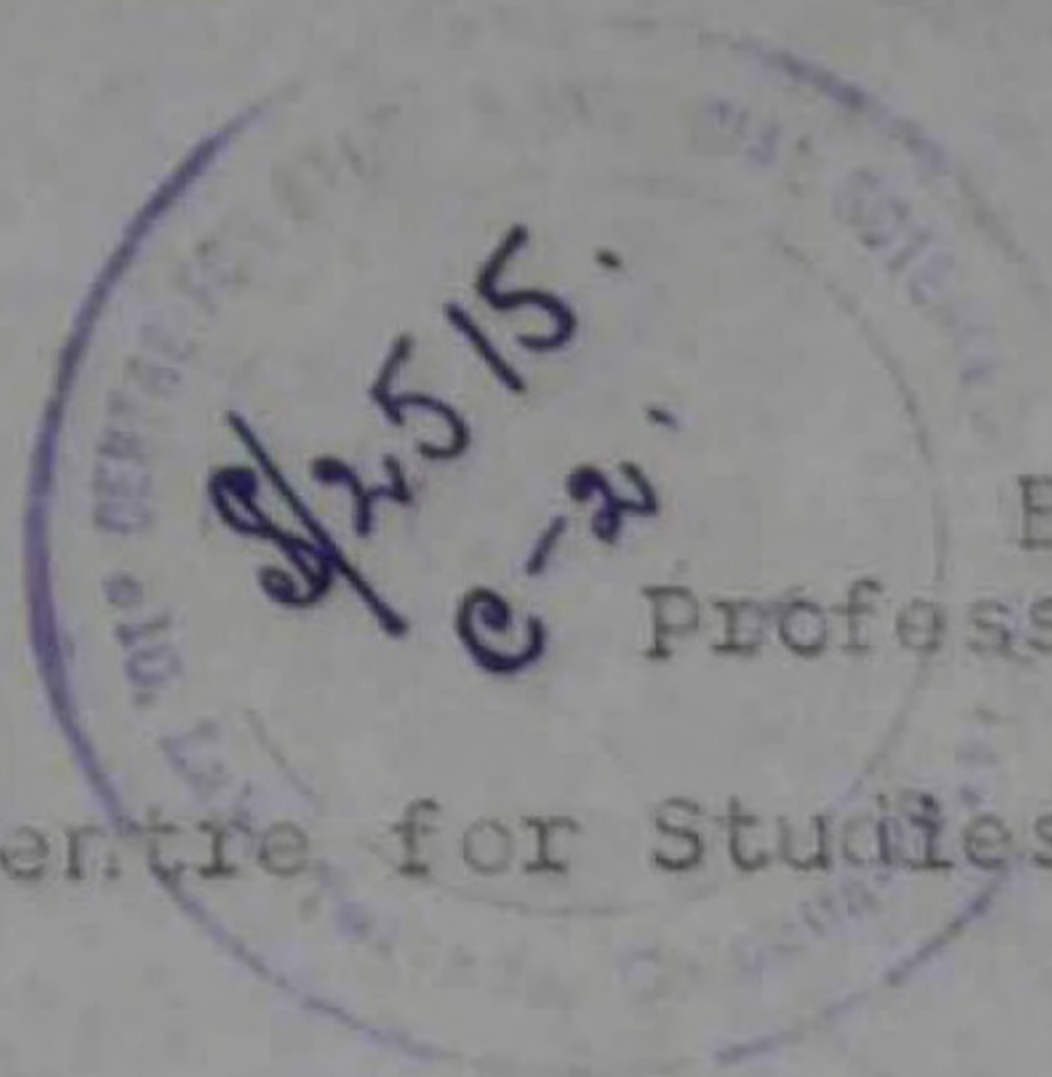
September, 1989

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta  
10, Lake Terrace  
Calcutta-700029.



PROBLEMS OF THE STUDY OF INDIAN HISTORY :  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO INTERPRETA  
TIONS OF THE 18TH CENTURY

---



Barun De  
Professor of History

Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta

Invocation<sup>1</sup>

Members will join me in thanking Karnataka University, its Department of History and Archaeology, and the citizens of Dharwad for their hospitality in this Session. Karnataka has its own place in the continuities and changes in Indian civilization. Its sacral, civil, and military edifices and hero-stones, its peasants, workers and thinkers, its insurgents (not only against sub-continental, local and alien oppression, but also, as far as one can gather from Kannada films documenting social injustice) against obscurantist survivals in contemporary life, are close to the heartbeats of decentralised social vitality and creative autonomy. These represent the core of what has been known from the origins of the Indian national movement as Swadeshi and Swaraj.

I. Indian History Today

(a) The Status of History in Contemporary Social Studies.

As part of the finale to the Indian History Congress Golden Jubilee celebrations, time should also be found to hear the views of those who have to cope with historical interpretation, at those points, where most students are expected to learn it. It has always been understood that history should be compulsory in schools. One has recently heard with dismay of proposals in the South to make the subject optional, or part of general civics in Colleges. Arts subjects have been losing anyway to Science, Engineering, Medicine, or Commerce. Among Arts subjects, History vies with Political Science and the local regional language as worst options for those who fail to gain high marks in College entrance tests for Economics, or for English Literature, either because they could not cope with Mathematics, or, at the Higher Secondary level, missed getting high enough marks, or even a first division grade. Historical knowledge loses out to sociological generalization in the present milieu of westernized technoelitism, when intelligent adolescents are considered by their peers (and even by some headmistresses) to be touched in the head, if they aim to specialise in the subject, giving up the chance to mug up something more streamlined for cushy jobs, nowadays reserved for Management Studies or apprenticeship, or the next best nowadays, for places in Banks.

Part of the praise, bestowed by a Delhi-forthrightly's correspondent (advertising from Bombay) Shyam Benegal's forthcoming 52-week Doordarshan serial on Jawaharlal Nehru's Discovery of India, reads thus :

"Whether this grand yatra through India's past and present reaches its destination without off-loading most passengers is impossible to say : it could easily end eruditely boring .. What Benegal has indisputably come back with is a series of enacted history lessons. These will prove to be a godsend for parents struggling with boring history textbooks which are chasing children away from history as if it were castor oil."<sup>2</sup>

The screen version of the past indeed seems to bring history alive, be it in Shri Benegal's interpretation of the 1857 Uprising in a region contiguous to Rohilkhand in "Junoon", or in his capacity to mingle present and future in Goa before its 1962 liberation, in "Trikaal", or in M.S. Sathyu's earlier "Garm Hawa". Films are surely important for enacting the heritage of the past within private homes, or in the community centres of working people. The History Congress may want to recall its views expressed at Goa last year about the indispensable nature of secular and objective values even if the national epics are to be enacted on television. But one has cause for concern with the subtext of the gloss quoted above, of the double use of "boring" - once for historical erudition and then again for children's history textbooks. We do not hear this in India today about Economics, once called a dismal science, or Behavioural Science that euphemism for sociological and psychological mishmash - nor about Physics or Life Science. Why is history considered particularly boring, we may admit, by common consent ?

The boredom of history was earlier supposed to lie in dates, organized in dynastic or succession lists, of monarchs, princes, or viceregal and gubernational rulers. Some additional notes were appended on the ruling class activity of each of these figures - as far as they could be reconstructed from fading inscriptions, brittle old manuscripts, coins of varying clarity, pictures painted many centuries before now gathering a patina of dust and mildew, ruined buildings, and disintegrating archives recording the interests of governance, commerce or the financial control of industrial capital. No wonder vulgar literary metaphors for the historian's craft, "Metier d'Historien" as Marc Bloch termed it,<sup>3</sup> are archaeology, palaeography, or the antiquarian burrowings of a mole. Michel Foucault has recently termed a tract on the historical approach to methodology, The Archaeology of Knowledge<sup>4</sup>. By its very nature, the old history was supposed to have something about it that only antiquarians could sniff - a mustiness as dry as dust.

(b) Social and Analytical Milieu and Dichotomies in Indian Historiography Today

Recent historians, however, see history as conglomerates of trends without precisely finite terminal points. They describe a multiplicity of causes and consequences. The enumeration of these is supposed to be followed by discriminating judgements about weights and priorities, which are attached to salient parts of the sum total of the conglomerate. Nowadays historical judgement rests less on arbitrary chronological listing, more on inferential consistency, and appropriate choice of explanation from wide perception and generation of a variety of plausible

alternatives. Facts do not necessarily matter less. What matters more is their construction in sensible, logical order. The judgment on sense depends on corroborative evidence which can demonstrate that the ordering of the relevant facts represent the **closest** fits, or the successive approximations to realities in one or other of historical stages in the past.

One of our doyens of ancient history and social science, Prof. R.S. Sharma has summed this new approach up, in his Introduction to a recently published ICSSR Survey of Research on Economic and Social History of India (New Delhi, 1986)

"The construction of all history depends on the theories, methods and social milieu of the scholars and last but not least on the nature of the sources to be used by them. Naturally our understanding of history goes on altering ... certain theories such as historical materialism broadened by the lines of historical investigation undertaken by the Annales School have given much better meaning to historical events but evidence is much more important than sheer logic, theory or polemics. If the causes and sequences have to be manufactured, they must be based on adequate raw material in the form of evidence" (p.xvii)

Historians have two aspects - they have to cut their coats, according to the cloth, or, like cobblers stick to their lasts: but they also work as social beings. Apart from being dependent on appropriately tested data, history is determined by the social milieu of its historiography.

The current fashion of talking about "boring" history cannot stem from a just evaluation of the substantial research on the socio-economic content of political authority in its different ages, which has recently been produced in universities such as Aligarh, Allahabad, Bombay, Burdwan, Calcutta, Calicut, Delhi, Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar, Jawaharlal Nehru University at New Delhi, Patiala, Patna, or Pune, and also one or two in Bangladesh, and a few in the North Atlantic World and Australasia. Some of this work is very clear and lucid. This has led examiners in our better academic systems to set questions requiring interest in broad, secular trends in Indian History and also European and Far Eastern history, quite like the sophisticated work in Western Europe or in Japan. But is this new material synthesised in formats which appeal to different classes of students? Here lies the rub.

For instance, most of the books from specific Universities mentioned above (knowledge about which is required in questions of the type just noted) are not of much use for students appearing for Honours examinations in Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Nepali, Punjabi or other major languages. This separates the English - language educated elite from the broader masses of the student intelligentsia by making available to only the all-India elite the most modern views about our past leaving the rest to read less informed books in the vernaculars. An **International Relations** Professor who teaches Indian foreign policy to a History Post-Graduate Class in my alma mater, the oldest Indian University, found it necessary to give two sets of lectures each week to the same class, dividing it into two groups; one in English to the more



affluent metropolitan students, who, practically all Bengalis, are presumably not accustomed to learning in their mother tongue : the other in Bengali to the residue from colleges in North Calcutta and the countryside, whom he finds more at ease than the former, asking questions and clearing up confusions in the common mother tongue.

I am not making a plea for turning Indian higher education or research into a Tower of Babel. But should it not be bilingual, as Soviet, British, and increasingly European continental scholarship is becoming, treating English or French as a contact language with the wider world, but not with children or students with whom communication is in the mother tongue. Unless we do so, we will go on infecting our posterity with the fruits of Macaulay's poison tree.

The work of writing original or synthetic texts or collections of readings for the general reader at the High School and Honours - as well as primary school - levels needs to be taken up in earnest by all teachers, as well as specialists in text book writing or historians of eminence. We can draw lessons from the way in which eminent Delhi historians organised, in the 1960s and early 1970s, not without political struggle, the preparation of the National Council of Education and Training School textbooks which are early models of their kind. Lessons can also be drawn from the communalist opposition to, and even attempts in 1977-78, to ban, them, and the reasons for their limited circulation in translation. A fresh initiative is necessary at the level of State Book Boards to combat the prohibitive prices marked up for specialist library purchase, by private

publishers' market overkilling practices, in most non-socialist countries. Such pricing of books, which surely has no relationship to their potential demand as well as lamentable lack of production subsidies for books, is another basic reason for pushing students from books towards cheap canned information of the entertainment industry on video cassettes.

All this relates to English-reading elites who are to be found mainly only in the large towns, bunched among aspirant Yuppies, born to relative affluence in the more salubrious, southern residential, quarters, housing estates and colonies of the Indian metropolis. Even when English was the medium of education, imposed by colonial liberal absolutism, it could not, in a century and a half reach more than an insignificant portion of subcontinental population of South Asia. At present about 36.17% of the total Indian population (excluding Assam and Jammu and Kashmir for which figures were not available in the 1981 Census) are literate. The number of students whom English can now reach or favourably influence can be inferred.

Fewer women and even less men nowadays come into higher education in the humanities (in which students place History) with the sort of interest in serious English books, which could lead an average Calcutta, Patna or Bombay student to carefully read through for interest (and not just examination preparation) books like Muhammad Habib and K.A. Nizami's volume on the Delhi Sultanate in the Comprehension History of India or Irfan Habib's Agrarian System of Mughal India or Sir Jadunath Sarkar's older Fall of the Mughal Empire. In West Bengal more have read Habib films in Bengali translation (not just because the book has long been out of

English print, but because mufassil colleges can afford to library purchase the Bengali translation, which is relatively cheap by present standards). And yet we have at the other end of the pole, the bright young Delhi School of Economics or Himachal Pradesh or Calcutta University Post-Graduate Special Paper teachers trained in the latest jargon from Cambridge, Leiden, or even Canberra, out for the kill on what they believe to be orthodox Communist etatisme. Such a split in historical consciousness between post-graduate and undergraduate studies leads not only to boredom at an under-nourished base, but also to frustration and alienation at the top from the new nationalism of the 1980s.

(c) Chauvinism and Indian Historiography

The latter in India was most blatant in the Centenary and Anniversary observances - of the Indian National Congress, or of the 40th Anniversary of Indian Freedom, or of Jawaharlal Nehru's birth, which coincided - as it turned out, not too happily - with that of Maulana Azad. These observances appeared to be meant to identify the present ruling Party at the Parliamentary level with the entire Indian state and nation and to associate visual images of all this with more and more centralism. The broad masses are given pop mythology, appearing as historical narrative. "Mahabharata" rather than the contemporaneity of "Tamas" is today's media-pap. One of the reactions to the new nationalism in India is a rejection, sometimes angry, sometimes contemptuous and "bored", by the younger generation, of even the increasingly diluted, secular historical message of the 1950s and 1960s, which used in those days, to be considered to be the base of Indian socialist thinking. The rejectors of a rather obsolete secular idealism

tend to sway towards fundamentalist religious thought, or towards chauvinist ideologies appropriating Hindu or Muslim imperial elements from our subcontinental past. A Harvard sociologist, originally Srilankan in his roots, Prof. Stanley Tambiah, writing a liberal critique of religious stereotypes, which motivated the political behaviour of dominant Buddhists and defiant Hindu migrants in his ethnic-strife-torn home island, has demonstrated that the strife is the product of the lumpenisation of political management and of clique manipulation of ideologies generated in counterdependent ethnic confrontation. Such tendencies of constructing neo-historicist as well as politically regionalist ideologies, with a motivated historical content, have also been at work in our country, much before the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> Their careful and critical study is a historiographical desideratum : i.e. the study of the abuse of history is a necessity for historians.

(d) Vernacular Translation Programmes

A better use of history lies in organising the publication of more sound history, professionally evaluated by academic historians in as many regional languages as possible within the bounds of Indian nationality. A good beginning was made in 1972 when the Indian Council of Historical Research, newly set up, transformed an older Ministry of Education and Social Welfare project of translating only the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan set of volumes on Indian history in 19 Indian languages, into a broadbased programme to translate in four to six languages more than a hundred selected Indian monographs. That ICHR programme was the one with most democratic potential. Its management was initially decentralised to selected academic institutions in

the linguistic states concerned. Of course those initiatives stultified in the mid-1970s, the years that the locusts ate, due to politicking, at various central levels of Government and Opposition. Yet the programme did arouse, among many enterprising publishers during the early 1980s in different states such as West Bengal, Kerala, Andhra, or Uttar Pradesh the awareness that larger markets existed than merely English language textbook production could permeate. Some state book boards have also shown initiative in the public sector by lowering monograph book prices.

Excessive reliance on merely mass translation **enterprise**, organised from the capital, is clearly not enough: the ICHR Translation Project seems to be at present shoaled in very shallow waters. On the other hand, friends in Kumaon have been carrying on their serious and objective research on popular history in Hindi for a decade now. It is for us to emulate them. A new wave is pouring from rural areas into the city colleges and post-graduate classes. This youth will not be satisfied with merely classroom lectures: they are genuinely interested in reading texts in their mother tongue. Let us recall times about 30 years ago, or more, when senior teachers and colleagues, eminent historians and anthropologists like Surendranath Sen and Susobhan Chandra Sarkar of Calcutta, or Iravati Karve of Pune used to publish the fruits of their research in Bengali, or in Marathi, as well as in English. That project of linguistic creativity is well worth repeating again.

We hear nowadays of small, publication projects in Punjabi or in Malayali, organised by secularist groups, for bringing out their basic historical interpretations. Their aspirations and priorities are well summed up by the Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad's proceedings volume (in Bengali), Itihas Anusandhan, which illustrates how the drive, for at least elementary research publication has once again been evoked among college teachers today, many in country colleagues. Its Secretary, just two months ago in its 1988 Annual Conference, expressed his views about organisational work in the mother tongue :

"First, adequate measures to bring back the popularity of history among students in schools as well as colleges will have to be taken. Second better contact of students with the fruits of knowledge will be necessary".<sup>6</sup>

Those measures lie in the realm of relating history to quotidian social events, something which in India seems to be missing, since the national movement was supposed to have been politically completed in 1947.

(c) The Common Sense of History

What is really necessary for history to appear interesting is to relate it to the events, lives, or thought of actual people. For instance, Eileen Power, the economic historian of mediaeval England brought the socio-economic milieu of the century of the Wars of the Roses alive in her old Penguin, Mediaeval People, when she focused on mainly ordinary individuals, sometimes below the ranks of the social elite of the times. Pieter Geyl similarly exemplified the average figures of the historiography of the Napoleonic phenomenon in his Dutch classic, Napoleon, For and Agist.<sup>7</sup>

historical explanation overgeneralises, overtheorises, becomes too involved in explicating neologisms like "subalternity" in political culture, or is merely obsolete in the writing of history by remaining locked up in the old format of date charts or ruling class leaders, if it cannot explain the social existence forms of labour, management or regulation and their co-ordination or dysfunctioning by means of family, group, classes, or state power, then history will finally lose the status of the popular, academic discipline among social scientists that it could become, during the two decades after the end of the Second World War and the beginnings of the political independence of littoral Asia. History will have to come down systematically to the material culture of common life - of food habits, of sports, of sexual mores, as much as of the more portentous happenings in revenue administration, that infinitely boring archival standby of those interested in the recording of public exploitation. In this connexion, let me recall periods when history did appear relevant, and not boring, to certain generations in our own lifetime.

Those who are older than myself, those who actually consciously lived through the 1920s, or the 1930s, will be able to go back to their memories of why history seemed relevant to them at that time. The tautness of public struggle to create a sense of nationality - according to whatever formations of political integration in which they believed or participated, of national movement, or liberation struggle, or incipient socialism - sharpened the historical consciousness of many of those who lived through the era. It would be worth preparing, even an ex post facto,

history, of what they themselves feel about it today. When, for instance, my generation Matriculated to College in the last years of the first half of the twentieth century, we could surely sense that the entire social milieu was one of "history in the making". These were the days of the tensions of the repressed insurgencies all over South and Southeast Asia, of political measures against agrarian uprisings by bourgeois nationalist parties to whom the British had transferred power in India, Pakistan and Burma - in Telengana, at Kakdwip in the 24 Parganas District, in the Irrawaddy Basin in Burma. Their historical comprehension will serve as reminders that the tasks of economic alleviation of mass misery and of freedom from indigenous oppression are still unfulfilled. The Chinese example was then globally inspiring the last great wave of communism of the 20th century.

In those days, young people were keen to know the causes and to envisage the future of the awakening of the East which had become so apparent in the course of the Asian/Pacific War. Why did the propensity for progress in Indian society seem retarded as compared to Western Europe? What were the global variations in the dynamics of transition from feudalism to capitalism and in the paths to socialism? Were they the hindrances of semi-feudalism, absolutism, bureaucratic socialism and Bonapartism? What degree of responsibility was due to British colonialism for the socio-economic stultification of India? To what extent on the other hand, were its causes, so obviously crippling to South Asian national progress and co-operation, endogenous and therefore persistent and recursive? What was the degree and variety of class content in the freedom struggle? What was the Congress' class character as a broad front leader and



the platform of the national movement ? What was its international character vis-a-vis similar nationalist groupings in Burma, or Pakistan, or Ceylon, or vis-a-vis the freedom struggle in South Africa, Nepal, or Sikkim ? What had been the role and significance of non-Congress elements, or forces peripheral to the Congress - such as the Congress Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc, the Communist Party of India, or the Revolutionary Socialist Party ? And what had been the role of communal or ethnicist parties of the pre-1947 period - such as the Hindu Mahasabha, the Dravida Kazhagam, the Akali Dal, and a class apart, the Muslim League whose leaders had wangled the Partition of India in 1947 ? Or for that matter, what had been the role of the Indian Princes after 1939 ? Their failure to federate between 1935 and 1939 had weakened Indian political integrity during the Transfer of Power negotiations in the Viceroyalties of Linlithgow and Wavell and had led to Mountbatten's decisive dealings of arbitration between only the Congress and the Muslim League. **Indeed**, what had been the role of individual Princely States, such as Patiala, where State Army troops were reported (according to contemporary rumours) to have massacred refugees; or Kashmir, whose Dogra Raja, Hari Singh fled himself with his entourage and officials, from Srinagar to his oldest ancestral domain of Jammu, as tribal levies from Pakhli and Hazara, north of Rawalpindi, advanced past Domel to Baramulla? The Kashmir ruler left them to be fought by the indigenous peasant and artisan masses led by the Muslim National Conference of Sheikh Abdullah, with massive help of men and materiel from Indian state power. These questions were in the forefront of the early 1950s, when we were students and were live ones about national and regional development, and about the nature of leadership to be

accepted, so that clear stands could be envisaged on the class character of plan priorities, scientific, economic, and all-round progress.

Previous decades had relegated matters of development to the domain of chemists and physicists like Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray and Dr. Meghnad Saha, to hydraulic engineers like Sir M. Visweswarayya, or to statisticians like Prof. Prasanta Chandra Mahalanabis. By the 1960s, not only the newly hegemonic economists, but also geographers, economists and political scientists, as well as students of literature, language and social philosophy (still insulated from concern with problems of development which came to them after the student revolts of 1965-68) began to find it necessary to fall back on the historical method to cope with either such questions, or with more detailed problems in the realm of culture and behaviour. It began to be claimed by the 1940s that history was the fount of social science and its interdisciplinary study. This was certainly the reason why many of us joined the historians' craft, and strove for excellence in an age when history was still supposed to be of national use.

A friend and student, now a teacher of history in the Calcutta University Post-Graduate Classes has pointed out to me that such intellectual ferments moved his younger generation twice. First in the late 1960s and early 1970s after the student revolt, when there was murtibhangar rajniti the symbolic smashing of the busts/reputations of Renaissance worthies of the 19th and early 20th centuries; then in 1977-78 when there was talk within the Janata Central Government of banning certain history textbooks, which Government agencies had brought out before the 1975 Emergency was

promulgated, on the specious ground that critics of these books thought that they were pro-Muslim or pro-Communist. On occasions of public controversy, such as this, historical writing might come alive, if its students and practitioners decide to participate together in facing questions whether history is relevant, or what if at all, should be criticised or scrapped.

Yet, it frightens one when such a feeling of cultural crisis is sought to be resurrected without any emotional content or is media-manipulated for lasting indefinitely. This seemed to be the policy, beginning from the Congress Centenary observance of 1985, in the decision-making of Doordarshan to saturate its prime time with serials and audio-visual patriotic displays for a minute or two of flagworship. Part of the logic of Fascism in the 1930s (particularly in Nazi Germany manipulated by Dr. Goebbels's propaganda) came from canning the message of national chauvinism, which had been generated in the Nazi-created cultural crisis in Mitteleuropa and its satellite areas in the 1930s and early 1940s. One should eschew at all costs, the mere replication of history. This may be tragedy the first time, but will end as farce the second time - in late 20th century India as much as mid-nineteenth century France, the land of what Sir Lewis Namier reviewing a biography of Napoleon III, called "the first mountebank dictator".<sup>8</sup>

What we need is more democratic dissemination of history; more serious attempts to bring history to the people, instead of merely writing in sophisticated English for a Commonwealth elite about the failure of plebeian aspirations. The rift grows daily between the sophisticated radicalisante

younger elite, moving easily from one country to another across what they call "international systems" or "dynamic boundaries" and a student mass increasingly contemptuous of the indigenous production in the historical discipline beyond a few centres, or purely mimetic about the most trivial standards within it, for the purpose of getting annually increasingly devalued First Classes or Ph.D.S. Speaking purely as a parent of two history students, rather than from the happenstance of being a history teacher, I would like to suggest some alternatives for getting students involved at all levels from high school to University.

Average and good students alike would appreciate scope for project work leading to B.A. term papers and finally to M.A. dissertations (neither of which are very common in all but a few good Indian Universities, mostly in the North). Without such autonomy of studies, guided by sympathetic supervision, facility can never come in the independent exercise of imagination, judgment and practical procedure. Such matters should not be left to the post-M.A., i.e. M. Phil stage students well into their twenties, who have not had the stamina to strike out for a Ph.D. candidacy on their own, become either blase, or stereotyped or mimetic. But to create scope for such a syllabus change, it will be necessary to create -

- more classroom interaction :

- and to plan and budget for more multiple copies of reference works available in college reserve stocks as well as for improvement of not only collegiate, but also civic library services :

- more emphasis on the study of art, music and architecture, and on a greater variety of archives, (private, to be searched for by students from among traditional citizen families, as well as public):

- more training in what D.D. Kosambi called "the combined method,"<sup>9</sup> broadened to analyse the past of present social practices, say of religious ritual, political hierarchy, or caste-invariant, occupational structure, by looking at their manifestations in a cultural anthropological way, and by melding the methods of various disciplines, such as mathematics and statistics, geography, numismatics or linguistics, depending on the nature of the sources to infer back (where necessary) from the present to the past :

- and more simulation play, such as setting assignments to write the history of one's home streets, village settlements, or Municipalities and Corporations, as they change over time, by setting them to use locally available varieties of sources, such as tauzi records in District Collectorate Record Rooms (in Bengal), or Municipal and District Board minute-books.

One would also suggest that to counter over-regionalism in Indian historical studies, M.A. students should be encouraged - as indeed they are being in some northern Indian Universities - to specialise in one Indian language, more than their own, not just the classical Sanskrit or Persian, but also Marathi, or Tamil, or Bengali, or Assamese, in which mediaeval and modern source materials exist. This would encourage scholars, not only in research, but also for the more ubiquitous central service examinations, to shift away from narrow, regional language concerns and sources to a broader pan-Indian perspective that is necessary for diversity in unity. All this can help in involvement and rivetting to historical studies, of the minds of youth, which normally strays from monotonous lectures, or the dictation of "notes", synopses and reading lists.

The school has to be treated as the seedplot within which historical interest can be nursed by regular and co-ordinated transplanatation towards different themes and problems of higher education. To give an example of the methods of nursing. One of the surest ways of killing interest of students in subjects like the span of the Indus Valley or Harappan civilizations, or the political economy of the Mughal Empire, or the diversities of the Indian freedom struggle is to teach them without reference to maps. Another one is to go on repeating the same data with just the addition of more complex interpretations of varying levels of sophisticated analysis at the B.A., the M.A., and the M. Phil. levels - without varying the substantive information and narrative by making original or historiographical information progressively available at each higher level. It is a pity that historical cartography for

the school and collegiate levels - once developed by foreign scholars of Indology like my Oxford teacher, Dr. C.C. Davies and by the Jesuit, Rev. Fr. Joppen - is now so little used in actual classroom work despite the availability of the Atlases of Irfan Habib, or the Schwartzberg team. The ICHE could profitably sponsor and subsidise innovatively drawn thematic maps - even in thick black and white lines if cheapness is necessary for household and not just library use - based on these data base texts.<sup>10</sup> As regards, visual aid documents for the study of the freedom struggle, these can be derived from the admittedly prohibitively costly and unwieldy NCERT, Government of India chart collection/volume produced for library and demonstration work; or from the remarkably cheaply available volumes (in English and Bengali) of photographs of a wide variety of freedom fighters collected by the devoted efforts of the late Shri Chinmohan Sehanavis of Calcutta, and published by the Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal for commemorating the various militant as well as non-violent, non-Congress, as well as Congress, strands in the broad front of the subcontinental freedom struggle.<sup>11</sup> Such volumes need wider and more purposive use by school, college and university teachers all over India.

Above all, what our profession needs, as the Indian History Congress moves forward from its first half century, is a composite perspective of how history can be presented in various age cohorts from the child to the adult lay reader, from High School to M. Phil., and through discussion on how the perspective can leave room for alternative interpretations, without any attempt to improve on "natural truth". Can we look forward to the UGC expert

committee on history, to the relevant NCERT Committees, to representatives of State Book Boards, and of course to the ICER as a mediatory body on our behalf, to co-ordinate such a perspective, by the time of our 50th Session next year ?

## II. Vicissitudes in the Historical Interpretation of the Eighteenth Century.

It may now be of interest to scholars to also take up debate on a concrete theme. New questions can lead to the revision of standard interpretations and to the development of fresh perspectives of history to characterise actual epochs. The collegiate literature is continually being outpaced by new interpretations on these matters. The theme I shall initiate also raises the broadest possible questions of periodisation of Indian history about an epoch of transition from what we commonly call the mediaeval to the modern ages of Indian history.

Till the days of Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar's later classics of historical narrative, the Dacca University History of Bengal, Volume II, and the Fall of the Mughal Empire, Volume IV,<sup>12</sup> the eighteenth century in India used to be divided "into the pre-British first half and the latter British half".<sup>13</sup> Contemporary historiography, Indian as well as British links up the entire century with "the causality and process of the decline of the Mughal empire".<sup>14</sup> This has pulled the study of indigenous state decline further towards the end of the century and marks a movement away from emphasis of the radical coupure of the mid-century British conquest of Bengal.



Several Western, as well as Delhi historians nowadays reemphasise that the dominant trend in the eighteenth century was the growth of successor states between 1707 and the final hegemony by Wellesley as British Governor-General over subordinate, though still subsidiary autonomous, domains of the rulers of Delhi, Awadh, Hyderabad, Mysore, the chieftains further south, and over the broken-down Maratha Confederacy, where even the Peshwas had recently lost all but titular semblance of political overrule. They study the entire century as a period of transitional political forms before "the peculiarities of British" form of early capitalism accreted itself on the Mughal imperial, bureaucratic feudal heritage.

Was the eighteenth century merely one of devolution of hegemony from Mughal imperialism to British colonialism - whether in 1757-64, or in 1803 ? Or do other political circumstances and socio-economic trends, not necessarily explained only by Mughal decline and fall in parts of the subcontinent,<sup>15</sup> play their part in it, such as the rise of new classes to median power in different regions in different political formations; the emergence and disruption of a variety of intermediate chieftaincies and principalities, not just the regionally super-ordinate "successor-states, which as zamindaries, "estates", and principalities were all turned by British political heuristics into a semi-feudal core of Princely India, or the continuities and changes within certain traditions of previous centuries which the new colonialist overrulers saw no reason to interfere with ? Before these questions can be taken up, the premises of imperialist destabilization may be considered.<sup>16</sup>

(1) Imperialist Interests and 18th Century Historiography

A young historian has recently lamented that "the eighteenth century in Indian history was unfortunate in that it was sandwiched between the political glory of the Great Mughals and the humiliations of colonial rule".<sup>17</sup> This is an example of expostfacto categorisation, of a clear use of hindsight. The first modern writers of Indian history, the early British, had their own interests in projecting as black and anarchic the role of their immediate predecessors, the regional rulers whether it was Alamgir II or his son Shah Alam in the Delhi territory, or those whom they called the Nawabs in the regional principalities, or the Maratha Peshwa and his sardars. Early 20th century writings on the eighteenth century uncritically accepted this projection.

It is of course true that contemporary Persian chronicles also projected the period as one of chaos and decline "As proteges of the nobles, the premier beneficiaries of the Mughal imperial system ... The decline of their fortunes has been portrayed .. as the decline and decay of the entire society."<sup>18</sup> This was blown up as the crumbling of subcontinental order. This did indeed add weight to early colonialist interests. But this is not necessarily what happened.

The important writers on history may have been petty officials or prebendaries in a period of Mughal decline. But people like Ghulam Husain Tabatabai in Bengal, author of the Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhirin, or Shah Nawaz Khan in Haidarabad, author of the Maasir-ul-Umara, or Ghulam Husain Salim of Bengal in Maldah, author of the Riyaz-us-Salatin

also wrote for British official edification; under their aegis, if not always patronage. They did have an interest in depicting the tribulations of traditional honour and prestige. Their aim was also to edify colonial knowledge, as much as Sanskrit pandits like Jagannath Tarkapanchana did, writing for Sir William Jones. The knowledge which they purveyed was directly linked with early colonial power. Secondly, "the picture of the ruin and devastation of Delhi and Agra based largely on the Shahr Ashobs of the contemporary poets, Mir and Sanda need to be treated with a good deal of caution".<sup>19</sup> For instance, it is written in the Maasir-ul-Umara :

"That Nadir Shah's invasion resulted in a setback to the prosperity of Delhi, but in a short while it returned to normal and in fact in everything it is now better and shows progress ... its industries and manufactures are flourishing".<sup>20</sup>

The Shahr Ashobs were stylised Urdu elegies about changing social manners. "They dwelt on the times - of the rise of inexperienced, incompetent people to power, decline of values, etc."<sup>21</sup> from the days of the 17th century fall of the lavish culture of Abul Hasan Tana Shah of Golconda to the austere and prayerful Aurangzeb. It is not necessarily correct to find one-to-one correlations between the gloomy flourish of Urdu sardonic wit of this archetype and actual social conditions. For instance, Jafar Zatali "who wrote before and after Aurangzeb's death" perorates in his Ashob-i-Zamana, in apparently general terms :

"qayā ikhtas ālam se, aḡab yeh daur āyā hai,  
daur sab khalq zalim se, aḡab yeh daur aya hai,  
nah yāron mein rahi yāri, nah bhaiyon mein wafādāri  
muhabbat uth gai sāri, aḡab yeh daur āyā hai,  
hunar-mandon-i-harjāi, phiren dar bar sadāi,  
rāzal gaumon ki bān āi, aḡab yeh daur aya hai."<sup>22</sup>

This is not the description of the decline of a particular urban environment or even of economic collapse, but rather of the expression of change in what nowadays is historically called, mentalite, "the end of a way of life, of the decline of a whole class of people, the umara and the shurfa". In place of hunar-mandon, skilled artists (among whom the poets classed themselves) who lived under the patronage of that class, "low castes (rāzal)gaumon) had flooded (ki bān āi)" social control. "These were indeed strange times" was the refrain of the verses. Prof. Satish Chandra points out that such a flooding by the low castes - "butchers, vegetable-sellers, weavers etc." was "something which could hardly have been possible if the population of the city (of Delhi) had declined .. drastically or the industries totally ruined". While personal interests and class positions should be borne in mind when studying historical texts - something we have already noted - literary style and political-economic events are not to be necessarily correlated. And yet the Shahr-Ashobs tell us much about the general mentalite of the entire period of transition : a task first essayed by Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam in their social analysis of three later Mughal period poets who left Delhi to eke their subsistence by edifying the denizens of the more rustic east after the Durrani sacks in 1757-61.<sup>23</sup>

What is more specific for the present purpose of historiographical deconstruction is to look at the preconceptions of the British historians of the late eighteenth century. Their biases were different from the nineteenth century outlook about their century of either Indian elite nationalism or British officials who ascribed herrenvolk status to themselves. More than a quarter century ago, Prof. J.S. Grewal showed in his London School of Oriental and African Studies thesis that soldier historian-cum-political thinkers of the early colonial era like Colonel A. Dow or Col. Kirkpatrick, working in Lucknow or Hyderabad had not yet developed the mid-19th century British suspicion or aggressive contempt for Muslims, which becomes so glaringly evident in British officials of the mid-19th century.<sup>24</sup> The brief intellectual ancestry of the idea of Mughal misrule in comparison to British government is clear if we look at the provenance of Sir Henry Miers Elliott's preface in his Bibliographical Index to the Historians of Mohammedan India, which was approvingly quoted by the ex-Indian service officer, later explorer of the Red-Sea-Nilotic region, and finally translator of the Thousand and One Nights' Tales, Sir Richard Burton in a footnote in his journal of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah (1855), which he made, disguised as an Arab rather than an Indian Muslim. The Elliott-Burton distaste for the patriotism of "bombastic Baboos and other political ranters"<sup>25</sup> was not an invariable concomitant of British imperialism, it marks a later historiographical phase of the high noon of empire stretching till the age of the historians who edited the Cambridge History of India, such as Sir Wolseley Haig, and their Indian epigoni like Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar.

In the History of Hindustan during the earliest period of the Company's influence in Bengal and the middle Ganges basin Dow condemned mercantile misrule and called for a return to Mughal principles, this did reflect contradictions in early colonial rule. But it also started a tendency of fostering that sense of ultimate successorship to Mughal imperialism, which hoisted Lord Wellesley and Lord Hastings' later aspirations for British proconsulate, on a subcontinental scale, Dow's praise of Akbar had led Warren Hastings earlier to commission Francis Gladwin's first English translation of the Ayeeen Akbari or the Institutes of Akbar. This directed British interest in Indian government beyond their proximate past to the more arcane past of the Mughal, Sultanate and Mauryan imperialism in an attempt to legitimise their government by affinity with "Indian tradition". Kirkpatrick's belief that Mughal arbitrariness was always limited by written, Islamic law, and immemorial usage, no different from the then current British respect for "the ancient constitution", tallied with Cornwallis, actual respect for the laws (whether British or Indian). Francklin's History of the Reign of Shah Anlum may have fostered, as much as it reflected, the respect for the blind Mughal, which the British, no less than Mahadaji Sindhia in 1786, showed following lake's conquest of Delhi from the Marathas after Laswarce in 1803. From such raw material, quite different from its abuse in very different conditions the late in nineteenth century, "was constructed after 1857, the later myth of the manly Muslim with whom politically speaking, the British could play cricket, while Baboo cads and bounders were defacing the pavilion with graffiti".<sup>26</sup>

The later Mughals of the eighteenth and even more, of the nineteenth, centuries were unable to maintain the subcontinental solidarity of Aurangzeb and his forefathers till Akbar. As the British built up their new version from the Indian Ocean to the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush, they looked for exemplars. That was specifically a nineteenth century exercise in constructing history-based political roots. At the end of the eighteenth century, Vijayanagar was still a forgotten empire and indeed undiscovered empire, the Asokan Edicts had not deciphered in English or the vernaculars. So "The Great Mughals" were the most proximate legitimate ancestor available - other indigenous imperialist ancestry would later be added to British colonial heritage as they came to mind.<sup>27</sup>

Through a concatenation of such assumptions, based on imperialist, as well as literary-mechanistic, logic the eighteenth century came briefly in the early twentieth century, to be dismissed as one of anarchy, rapine and plunder. For convenience sake, the black sheep of empire like the East India Company's servants, Robert Clive and the Johnstones in Bengal, General Richard Smith in Awadh or Thomas Rumbold in Madras, who looted entire districts or subahdari revenues to build private fortunes to enjoy the Lucullan pleasures of 'Nabobs' in Britain, were brushed under the same carpet as the greatest plunderer of 18th century India, the Persian Nadir Shah, the Afghans and the Rohillas, Ahmad Shah Durrani, Najibuddaulah and his unworthy lineage Zalita Khan and Gulam Qadir Ruhela, as well as those scourges of Britain in the Carnatic, Haidar Ali Khan and Tipu Sahib : all of whom were made components of an Indian 18th century Dark Age myth. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar went

furthest in perpetuating a dark age theory of the entire eighteenth century, which has been repudiated recently - at least for the major part of it till the 1770s and 1780 by scholars like Prof. Athar Ali, Prof. Satish Chandra and Dr. Muzaffar Alam on the ground that that theory was based on explanations positing "a personal deterioration in the quality of the kings and their nobles" of "the harem influence" and of "unproven increase of luxury in 18th century courts".<sup>28</sup> The dark age theory about the eighteenth century also grew out of loyalism to the abstract idea of imperial stability and regional anarchy, one which passed as the 20th century ideology of subcontinental governance. British administrators as well as more centralist nationalists such as Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>29</sup> Indeed in ages when British colonial, semi-capitalist semi-feudal hegemony was established over India and the littoral of the Ocean named after it, no need was felt to analyse the socio-economic potential of a period stereotyped as politically unstable. The record of history was seen as being gloomily dismal. Sarkar's volumes though regularly published through the first fifty years and slightly more, of the twentieth century, tell out a dirge on Mughals and Marathas alike, from Aurangzeb and Shivaji to Shah Alam and Baji Rao II Peshwar. In this context the last chapter of his Fall of the Mughal Empire (Ch.51 in Volume IV) reads like his version of Eroica on the nineteenth century "renaissance".<sup>30</sup>

This premise of decline has been somewhat qualified in the decade of the 1970s. Prof. Athar Ali in the original Modern Asian Studies version of his 18th century article broadened the concept of decline from the ambit of the scions of the Mughal dynasty to that of the imperial structure itself. He contrasted imperial decline in India with the



socio-economic and political vitality of eighteenth century Northwestern Europe and saw the problem as one of comparative cultural stagnation. Prof. Satish Chandra on the other hand, has recently in his Deuskar Lectures doubted whether economic decline took place in what he calls the riyasats or successor - state forms of the once Mughal domains, in which pragmatic political alignments continued till their subsumption under colonialism which took place only at the end of the century. Skirting the question of cultural stagnation, he appears to deny any deterioration of political culture. Dr. Muzaffar Alam's thesis on Awadh and the Punjab argues that in the first half of the eighteenth century, the Indo-Gangetic subahs of the North, from Allahabad to Lahore and Multan to be precise, experienced multivariate manifestations of crisis, rather than a positive linearity of decline. He sees Awadh as being the scene of innovative developments with potential for creation of a regional political culture; but in the Punjab subahs he finds less evidence of such innovative adjustments, and more of economic stultification.<sup>31</sup>

The qualifications of decline fall into two parts. Prof. Athar Ali stands by the old theses of cultural decline and ultimately of socio-economic creativity from the beginning, and indeed earlier than the eighteenth century, and dates the decisive growth of the dominance of British colonialism from the middle of the eighteenth century itself : thus he repeats the J.N. Sarkar periodisation, distinguishing between Mughal and British rule though from utterly different arguments, dates and perspective. Prof. Satish Chandra nowadays sees the eighteenth century as a concrete chronological entity in which dominant trends weakened only in the latter decades : Dr. Alam goes along

with the first half of that proposition, but does not deal with the second half. The questions then are; when did the forces to be dominant in the future become explicitly so - in the middle of the eighteenth century, or at its end? And why did the transition take place - for exogenous or for endogenous reasons?

Newadays, most of the historians mentioned above use the terminology "transition". Prof. Athar Ali identifies "transition" with "the collapse of the Mughal empire, and then, with an apparent chronological gap in which transitional regimes intervened, (with) the rise of British power". It is generally now admitted that the middle period is "in need of study on its own basis"<sup>32</sup> and not as posterior or prior adjuncts. While Prof. Athar Ali would place that middle period in the middle of the eighteenth century, in Prof. Satish Chandra's view, the entire century becomes a middle term of a trichotomy, a sort of antithesis within the dialectics of indigenous and exogenous imperialism. All the actual regimes of the time are subordinated by the first and third terms - i.e. Mughal genesis and its subsumption or sublation in defeat by British colonialism as, if the question of continuity and/or change within imperialism in India thus becomes all that matters. This is a historiographical position which deserves critical analysis that leads up back to the intellectual roots of these positions.

(b) Was the Eighteenth Century a "Dead End"?

The postulation of the eighteenth century as a blind alley of endogenous development did not end with Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar. From a very different and more secularly

materialist angle of vision, it continued through Dr. Satish Chandra's early book (1959) and Dr. Irfan Habib's Oxford doctoral thesis, both published from Aligarh, (the latter in 1963) and in Prof. Athar Ali's articles (cf. 1975 and 1980). In that form it may be called the Aligarh point of view. What were the differences between the Aligarh view and Sarkar's older position ?

Some of Sarkar's hyperbole in the Dacca University History second volume is striking, though inaccurate, exaggerated and to be read in the context of only the Bengal courts :

"On 23rd June, 1757, the middle ages of India ended and her modern age began.

When Clive struck at the Nawab, Mughal civilization had become a spent bullet. Its potency for good, its very life was gone. The country's administration had become hopelessly dishonest and inefficient, and the mass of the people had been reduced to the deepest poverty, ignorance and moral degradation by a small, selfish, proud and unworthy, ruling class. Imbecile lechers filled the throne .... the army was rotten and honeycombed with treason. The purity of domestic life was threatened by the debauchery fashionable in the Court and the aristocracy and the sexual literature that grew up under such patrons. Religion had become the handmaid of vice and folly.

On such a hopelessly decadent society, the rational progressive spirit of Europe struck with resistless force. First of all, an honest and efficient administration had to be imposed on the country and directed by the English if only for the sake of the internal peace on which their trade depended and the revenue by which the necessary defence force could be maintained.. In the space of less than one generation, in the twenty years from plassey to Warren Hastings (1757-1776)

the land began to recover from the blight of man's handiwork and political life, all felt the revivifying touch of the new impetus from the west. The dry bones of a stationary oriental society began to stir, at first faintly, under the wand of a heavensent magician".

He goes on to call this "a Renaissance, wider, deeper, and more revolutionary than that of Europe after the fall of Constantinople" providentially destined for Bengal, from which "originated every good and great thing of the modern world that passed on to the other provinces of India" and "helped to modernise Bihar and Orissa, Hindustan and Deccan" indeed "passed like ripples from a central eddy, across provincial barriers to the furthest corners of India".<sup>33</sup> This may perhaps be read as an elegy for Bengal, partitioned, as this book was published, in 1947.

Sarkar's hyperbole is less exaggerated and somewhat more precise in a later closing statement, made when just three years later when New India was heralded by the passage of the Constitution in 1950.

"The Mughal Empire and with it the Maratha overlordship of Hindustan, fell because of the rottenness at the core of Indian society. This rottenness showed itself in the form of military and political helplessness. The country could not defend itself; royalty was hopelessly depraved or imbecile; the nobles were selfish and shortsighted; corruption, inefficiency and treachery disgraced all branches of the public service. In the midst of this decay and confusion, our literature, art and even true religion had perished.

By this time India had ceased to produce leaders, with the solitary exception of Mahadaji Sindhia .. our Rajas (gave) .. command of their armies to French and Portuguese mastizoes, Eurasian lads run away from school, without a tincture of English education, illiterate European sailors, who used to dictate letters to their Indian clerks in Urdu for Persian and even pure Indian black Christians of Goa. .... Persia had ceased to be the school of the East and the spring-head of Islamic culture, with the degeneracy of her Safavikings at the end of the 17th century. ... Nor did Islam in India produce a new generation of scholars. Ever since the middle of the 17th century there had been close commercial exchange between India and England but our royalty and ruling classes imported only European articles of luxury; none cared for European knowledge; no printing press, not even the cheapest and smallest lithographic stone was installed by the Mughal Emperors or the Peshwas. With the disappearance of true education, the literature now produced ceased to promote higher thinking, it merely pandered to rich men's pride and vice. This sad fall from the age of Akbar and Tulsidas is noticeable alike in the Persian compositions of Ja'far Zatali, the Urdu literature of the Court of Oudh, the Bengali works of Bharat Chandra Ray, and much of the later Vaishnav poetry of Bengal .. The Indo-Persian civilisation which had grown up under the shelter of the Delhi Padishahi and the new Hindu culture which had sprouted up under the Peshwas, were both dead by the end of the 18th century. Their power for good was gone and their lifeless corpses lingered in the country only to spread rottenness all around.

But with the death of the Mughal Empire, the middle ages in India ended and the modern age began. Happily for India, the death of her old order was immediately followed by the birth on her soil of modern civilization and thought. It was as if the seedlings of the Renaissance and the Reformation had been planted in the city of Rome in 476 as soon as the last Emperor Augustulus had extinguished himself after the victory of Odoacer. But not immediately after. The beneficent action of this change in India's destiny was at first delayed by 20 years. England was engaged in a death-grapple with Napoleon from 1803 to 1815 and thereafter followed years of unrest and people's suffering at home before Britain's life could return to normal. In India, too, Marquess Wellesley's lighting successes at the end of 1803 were followed by a very great setback and a temporary reversal of his policy. It was only after the Marquis of Hastings had completed Wellesley's unfinished task in 1818 that British imperialism found its feet".<sup>34</sup>

Sarkar then goes into what he, like loyalists of his time believed 'providential'; the modernisation of India, by foundation of Hindoo College on 20 January, 1817, the institution of the Calcutta Society for preparing, printing and distributing English and Bengali textbooks on 4 July, 1817 and the starting of the first Bengali newspaper, the Samachar Darpan, on 23rd May, 1818.

Sir Jadu Nath recognised two ages of modernity in India, each an improvement on the previous one - the early modern, beginning in 1757 in Bengal with Plassey, the fully modern, beginning in 1818 with Lord Hastings' defeat of the Marathas, which completed Lake's conquest of Delhi in 1803. A half century of preparation follows the death or

putrefaction - as he visualises it - of Mughal and Maratha ruling class civilization. To him, that rottenness had spread since a half-century before i.e. by Jafar Zatelli's late 17th century coarse **vulgate** which he mentioned. The eighteenth century thus turns, even to Sarkar into a twilight age, or "the moment of transition" in which the old order changeth, yielding place to the new, as Tennyson's Locksley Hall would have rung in Sarkar's favourite nineteenth century rhetorical tropes, in which "immediately" could be stretched into half-centuries.<sup>35</sup> To him, the "moment" was one from which India was "stirred by the wand of the heaven-sent magician - "British overrule.

The Aligarh school of secular, objective historiography during the 1950s and early 1960s began from totally different, even opposite emphases. Dr. Satish Chandra's 1959 magnum opus, published one year after Sarkar's death, Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1739 deals thematically with the subject and period of the title, i.e. the age of Sir Jadu Nath's edition of Irvine's Later Mughals. But his Introduction summed up his own view of the problematics of the entire later mediaeval period, with one cryptic reference to the question of transition. This is his obiter dictum about the end of Aurangzeb's reign at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Crisis in the Mughal imperial system according to him presaged a complete socio-political breakdown. At the root were

"social problems which no mere devices for expanding cultivation could solve ... What was really required was the rapid expansion of industry and trade, based on the introduction of new technology and the removal of old barriers, hindering that expansion ... the existing social order encompassed trade and industry in too narrow a sphere. Hence a basic improvement in the situation was beyond the competence of any one king".<sup>36</sup>

In his various articles in the next two decades, Prof. Chandra emphasised that this fundamental failure was the failure of the ruling class to work out new possibilities within a "tripolar relationship between the central government, the zamindars, and the cultivators (in which the khudkasht predominated)".<sup>37</sup> This matrix of power correlates was cracking up by the end of the seventeenth century. The forces on top of the political system were expected by him to be flexible in transforming their class character to cope with political instability.<sup>38</sup> This reads like the criticism by Smt. Gandhi's leftist advisers of the Garibi Hatao and early "internal Emergency" phase from 1972 to 1975, of old Congress economic policies in the post-Nehru era, that what they call "the right wing" failed to manipulate the masses towards agrarian reform and industrial productivity. A statist longue duree in which the relations of ruling classes with masses was in recursive disequilibrium, is implicit in this position.

In the 1980s, since the publication of his collected essays, he has perceptibly changed his earlier view about the first half of the eighteenth century making a dead end, in the 1982 Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, Deuskar Lectures on Indian History, he comes close to the view now fashionable among western



sociological Indologists, that "the eighteenth century was pregnant with possibilities ... The old mould was cracking and there was a possibility of growth in various areas. Everywhere capable, ambitious people were pushing forward. What was lacking was direction."<sup>39</sup> This view will be analysed later. At present it may be noted as a logical though ultrapositivist step from the manipulative political dream implicit in his earlier critique of the Mughal, or for that matter of any other ruling class, as if they could have given shape to the masses, if only .....

On the other hand, another magnum opus prepared in the same Aligarh series of monographs four years later, Irfan Habib's Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707, was consciously anti-statist. In radical and somewhat romantic prose (reminiscent of the poetic ending of Karl Marx's early articles on India is 1853 written for the New York Daily Tribune). Dr. Habib brought his book to a close by spelling out the inner contradictions of the Mughal Empire and those who replaced its authority. Maratha military operations, he says, did not offer any relief to the cultivating peasantry, who suffered grievously from the ravages. As the range of operations of the "Robber State" (a term that Habib borrowed in a curious historiographical inversion, among all historians, from Vincent Smith, the most imperialist of 20th century Indologists) increased, so did its victims' number. "But this seems only to have created a still larger number of naked, starving wretches" as European travellers described them, "who themselves plundered, had no alternative but to join the plunderers in order to survive, and so the unending circle went on", a point for whose testimony Irfan Habib

traced back to Aurangzeb in his last despairing letters where he wrote, at the beginning of the 18th century :

" 'there is no province or district where the infidels have not raised a tumult and since they are not chastised they have established themselves everywhere. Most of the country has been rendered desolate and if any place is inhabited, the peasants have probably come to terms with the 'robbers' (ashqiya, official Mughal name for the Marathas'.

Thus (continues Habib) was the Mughal Empire destroyed .. No new order was or could be created by the forces ranged against it. The period which follows does not offer an edifying spectacle. ... The gates were opened to reckless rapine, anarchy and foreign conquest. But the Mughal Empire had been its own gravedigger and what Sadi said of another great empire, might well serve as its epitaph :

"The Emperors of Persia  
Who oppressed the lower classes,  
Gone is their glory and empire,  
Gone their tyranny over the peasant".<sup>40</sup>

A refrain of a musical old hit of the 1960s tinkles in one's mind :

"Nothing comes from nothing, nothing every could"

The Mughal Empire "had" by 1707 "been its own gravedigger". It had been unable to cure its recursive endogenous generation of agrarian crisis, which began the cycle of peasant revolts from time to time,<sup>41</sup> and which led to breakdown of imperial authority. The state forms generated in the succeeding period were all forces of "reckless rapine, anarchy and foreign conquest" to which "the gates

were opened" during the eighteenth century. The eighteenth century becomes part of a historical model of recursive agrarian crisis to be read off from the account of the exploitative agrarian system, of which the Ain-i-Akbari and the Persian texts, which followed it were the basic scripts. There was nothing new in it. It continued in the throes of the agrarian crisis of the earlier centuries of exploitation and super-exploitation or subordinate exploitation.

Prof. Habib later elaborated his views about the impossibility of positive potential in the part of the Indian economy controlled by the Mughals. He saw no endogenous potential for breaking out of the trap of recursive agrarian crisis in some development of capitalist forces. Taking issue with A.I. Chicherov's views about accumulation through trade and handicrafts activity which Chicherov felt were stultified, by renewed pressure from "feudal" i.e. landed gentry and chieftain elements allying themselves with foreign capitalism in the eighteenth century,<sup>42</sup> Habib saw no scope for capitalist accumulation per se within the economy of the Great Mughals.<sup>43</sup> Denying that the Marathas had any creative or national alternative to offer to the subcontinent in the period of their ascendancy<sup>44</sup> he criticised colonialist stultification of the Indian economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>45</sup> Thus we can infer Irfan Habib's view about the eighteenth century and for that matter, about any imperial state power. Agrarian crisis was implicit in the Mughal imperial system and continued to intensify after the death of Aurangzeb. The morcellement of the Mughal imperial system was due to the periodic increase of shares demanded from a relatively inelastic surplus, by more and newer exploiters,

with the help of hegemonized peasants, some of them serving in the armies or bureaucracy of the exploiters, as, what V.I. Lenin with whose theory about capitalist imperialism Habib's views have striking resemblance, would have called, "palace slaves". Presumably only basic social and economic transformation linked with patriotic nationalism and a revolutionary liberation struggle could break the cycles of inelasticity of supply with regard to the state's exploitation of the surplus. In this theory, like that of Satish Chandra, inelasticity of resource mobilisation in face of increasing sharers of the social surplus, i.e. a growing demand for luxury at the expense of immiserising the primary producer is the cause of agrarian disequilibrium from time to time.

Since Satish Chandra in his 1959 Aligarh version and Irfan Habib agreed on this point, that the Mughal power elite had a narrow class character, it may be worth attempting to categorise the state form that they envisaged for it. Stretching European terminology a bit, mediaeval imperialism of this type, of the Ottomans in West Asia, of the Safavids in Iran, of the Mughals in South Asia or of the Manchu in China might have been called by them, though they themselves do not do so "Asian absolutism", instead of the loaded pejoratives of "Asiatic despotism", a term Habib rejected in a well-known article. It was absolutist with regard to the power of the ruling class, and racially hierarchical, no more and no less than the "Norman Yoke" or the "Carolingian feudalism" of England and France in the eighteenth century, whose authoritarian repression of primary producers' protest movements is chronicled by historians like Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, Roland Mousnier or E.P. Thompson. It was more sterile, like the despotism of the Bourbons and Romanovs, but

unlike the change-oriented attitude of the Tudors, Hanoverians or Hohenzollerns who allied themselves over long periods of time, with segments of the capitalist classes, or estate-farming gentry and nobility.

The lack of potential for social and economic transformation in such sterile state domination made the eighteenth century successors of South Asian absolutism, (overextended the structurally weak by the seventeenth century) ultimately prone to colonial stranglehold over trade outlets to the Indian Ocean seas and bays on either side of the peninsula. They were finally replaced by an equally authoritarian and absolutist colonial imperialism. The repressive practices of that colonialism dialectically ignited the struggle for freedom among a middle class, newly emergent, and among subject peasantry; and it also sparked the renaissance of values among the urban modernizing forces of the middle class, trying to overcome their cultural crouch. This turns the eighteenth century, in a sort of reified way into an epoch of transition preceding modernity. By a process of literary elision, it then is placed as a forerunner, and then becomes part of the modern period, which is thus made to begin at 1707, the death of the last Great Mughal. This is a process of heroic approximation in the construction of periodisation, a process of literary elision which defies reason.

A recent interpretation of the eighteenth century which follows from Irfan Habib's logic of agrarian crisis leading to a dead end for endogeneity is that of the most eminent administrative historian of the Great Mughals, Prof. M. Athar Ali. We have already noted how "the eighteenth

century" and "the passing of empire : the Mughal case" are identified in his second article on the latter subject.<sup>46</sup> He is convincing in bringing together Aligarh thinking on the economic process by which Mughal decline triggered off disintegration of its state power, and made it possible for European, particularly British colonialism to disrupt Indian cultural and economic structure. But, like all previous writers about the Indian subcontinent in overall perspective, in his emphasis on the Mughal case, he ignores very sizeable peripheral parts of the subcontinent at this time, such as Kerala, Dakshina Kanara, the Madura Nayakdom (including the territories of the Great and Little Maravars of Pudukkottai and Ramnaad) in Southern Tamil Nadu, and all of North-East and Eastern Himalayan India, north of Jalpaiguri and Kuch Bihar, and east of Guwahati and Chittagong. Thus Prof. Athar Ali's propositional structure is representative of the entire trend of Indian history, which looks that eighteenth century India only in terms of imperial morcellement and colonial reintegration. North-eastern and deep southern India did not participate in imperial traditions of the Asokan or Great Mughal variety (beyond only three plundering attacks by Samudragupta, Alauddin Khalji and Aurangzeb's generals). They came under pan-Indian territorial integration only under colonialism. Without taking note of this an all-India historical model of imperialism based on only dominant case material can hardly be constructed.

Stressing the global context of economic interaction between Europe and Asia prior to 1700 as a force for relative growth and decline of weights between both in a balance of historical importance, Prof. Athar Ali also takes note of the almost simultaneous decay, disintegration

or decline of the Islamic empires of Western and Central Asia,<sup>47</sup> "each with only a short interval" preceding the armed attack of the western colonial powers, notably Britain and Russia. It is this perspective which leads to the following valuable propositions, which all students of the eighteenth century in India would do well to reflect on :

- The small volume of goods "that entered international or long distance trade" towards Asia before the eighteenth century should not be dismissed as peddling, since their value is what matters.
- European gross population c.1700 - despite continental wars and Iberian demographic decline in the previous century - is estimated to have leapt by about 140% in the previous 250 years - an index of dynamism towards growth ; from c.1700 to 1861, years of Indian backwardness, Indian population increased by only 60%.
- Apart from the effect of bullion exports, Indian luxury and high grade artisanal production was diverted towards Europe instead of being diffused in a still non-existent integrated home market. Indigo, pepper, chintz, silk, porcelain from Iran and China as well as India were siphoned from Asian circuits, design copied, and then outpriced in their indigenous market networks. "If .. production did expand to some extent costs and prices must have gone up, relatively to the general price level". This led to counter-productive agrarian exploitation, crisis, and rural insurgency.
- Before 1700, Indian cities like Agra and Lahore had dwarfed European urban population. Now the latter were larger, city by city, than many Indian towns, leading to greater bourgeois demand and control of labour. In

46  
New York City by city,  
than many Indian towns leading to greater  
In . . .

contrast to Western European growth,  
Indian innovation's "pace was slow  
and the scope severely limited".  
Since "Indian urban population was  
parasitical, based on expropriating  
the rural surplus .. if (its)  
expropriation was affected, the scope  
of urban employment also declined ..  
there was no possibility of agrarian  
upheaval", though many-headed rural  
revolts could not be effectively  
crushed by the Mughal armies all of  
which led merely to general disruption.

- Technology and science grew in the  
increasingly bourgeois west, but in  
India there was no attempt to diversify  
from or to innovate antiquated ideas  
(a point which, as we have noted, had  
been made in 1959 by Dr. Satish Chandra).

From the second half of the eighteenth  
century, priorities began to be given  
for transfer of goods and services to  
Western Europe, which, disrupting social  
production in Bengal and then in Madras,  
also began to skew the economies of their  
hinterlands. It may have even distorted  
the Afthan Kingdom after the end of the  
eighteenth century, as British economic  
influence spread from Rohilkhand into the  
Punjab which was the Durrani outlet for  
distributing the profits of the long-  
range routes south and east. The Silk  
Road through Central Asia had already  
crumbled and Persia was in shambled. Now  
the Afghans began to turn, according to  
observers like Elphinstone, from trade  
to pastoralism and thus to poverty.

- The new British rulers, like the Spaniards  
in Peru, two centuries before, sought  
initially to harmonize with the Mughal and  
Maratha ruling class mores, while  
economically distorting the material  
culture. But the survivals underwent a sea  
change. Nothing was resurrected to replace  
the old empires.



- The "de-industrialization" of colonialized India was still to take off seriously, even in 1800 (outside Bengal and coastal Madras). But the drain of wealth from these rich areas, by trade and services, let alone colonial plunder in the mid-century, lost for India, the employment that such capital could have created.
  
- The integrative effect of Indo-Persian culture from the North to Karnataka (ruled till 1799 by the Mysore Sultan) was disrupted and subordinated. But "Western culture, the crucial element in any regeneration that might be ascribed to British rule" did not begin to have a significant impact till Wellesley's last years in the first dawn of the nineteenth Century. "The practical limitations of (the) appeal of the work of Raja Rammohun Roy (in the next generation) were alike the index and the consequence of the opportunity that had been denied to India".<sup>48</sup>

This is a consistent summation of the overall process of change towards greater immiserisation and stultification as the expense for the second half of the 18th century colonialisation of India. It clarified Irfan Habib's interpretation after that stops at 1707. In the economic sector, Western European development, and after the 1760s, dominance in parts of India, are seen as the motors of transition till British political imperialism became fullfledged in the nineteenth century. To this extent, the Aligarh periodisation is not radically different from Sir J.N. Sarkar's view, though of course the tone is rationalist and non-hyperbolic.

But on the plane of interpreting the political changes, Prof. Athar Ali is less patiently persuasive. He cursorily mentions and dismissed two views on early eighteenth century politics - curiously juxtaposing (i) theories about the rise of "nationalities" - Marathas, Sikhs, Afghans "subverting or shattering the unified empire, which were developed by Soviet scholars like Reisnev and maintained by a school of popular Indian Marxist writers" (whom, unluckily, he does not enumerate) and (ii) theories of "American scholars who have found new power groups in the states that arose during the eighteenth century."<sup>49</sup> However, actually he commingles part of both categorizations to construct a loose threefold categorization of sub-imperial state forms in 18th century India : (a) the forms which never gave up de jure Mughal superordination, i.e. "the 'succession states' like Hyderabad, Bengal and Awadh, which were really fragments of the Empire that had to stand on their own feet as the central government decayed and became powerless to assist or assert. They inherited more or less the entire Mughal machinery of administration in a working order" : (b) Others, "the Marathas, confederacy, the Jats, the

Sikhs and the Afghans. Their origins as politics were independent of the Mughal empire, though they might occasionally come to terms with it, or indeed in the case of the first two, even acknowledge the supremacy of the Mughal emperor. They were clearly the products of the crisis" : (c) Yet others, which appears to puzzle him in a lack of fit with this preceding residual classification, i.e. the late South Indian state of Mysore, under Hyder Ali Khan and Tipu Sahib, who only as late as 1787 declared himself Sultan, twelve years before his overthrow by the British, which began their final thrust for hegemonization of India. Prof. Athar Ali refers to it with admiration as "The case" that "remained unique"<sup>50</sup> - presumably because it does not follow his 1975 model of "the passing of empires - the Mughal case." He has very little to say about the inner dynamics of these obviously transitional forms, which he can only see wedged in the interstices of an Indian imperialist longue duree.

Irfan Habib had seen the Mughals as their own gravediggers. Athar Ali carries the necrophilic metaphor further, seeing the freebooter remnants of the Maratha confederacy as "Mughal professional cavalry (which) could indeed survive within the Maratha confederacy but only as Pindaris that is as real historical Draculas, who drank up the blood of their new masters."<sup>51</sup> "Speaking of the forces which were the products of the seventeenth century crisis, i.e. the Jat, Afghan and Sikh as well as Maratha polities, he does distinguish them" from the real "succession states" by the following percipient comment :

"While they might use certain Mughal administrative institutions for their own purposes, their mode of government was by and large antithetical to the Empire and could not be reconciled with it ... (Here follows the quotation just cited - B.D.).. The entire contradiction is summed up in the protest expressed by Azad Bilgrami in 1761 that the Maratha leaders in spite of their conquest were not behaving as rulers but as *Zamindars* (*Khizana-ul-Amira*, Kanpur, 1871, 97).

But he does not go into the moieties and fractionalization of these chieftaincies and their bearing on the breakdown of indigenous sovereignty through the eighteenth century. His explanation for the weakening of the Mughal Empire and the rise and expansion of British rule in India is thus purely economic -- explicating Habib's description of the endogenous Maratha paradigm in Vincent Smith's language of "Robber-State", for the exogenous Afghan Durrani case, "Which during the latter half of the eighteenth century came to include the whole of present Pakistan as well as -- Kashmir" as well as the Marathas themselves.

"Once the limits of plundering activities were reached, either because of geography, or of opponents, the tide was bound to turn, and civil war, that is plunder of the internal parts of these states was therefore bound to break out."<sup>53</sup>

Thus, in the Aligarh generalization the Mughal case becomes the dominant paradigm the history of the eighteenth century a trope, a dark backdrop, curtain to the grandeur and decline of the seventeenth century and curtain-raiser for the renaissance (flawed and limited by elitism such as that was), of the nineteenth century. The Aligarh school -- till the work of Prof. Athar Ali at any rate -- has not any more to say about the regional aspects and intra-regional dynamics of subcontinental

history in the period. This, of course, should not be interpreted as any criticism of the macro-dynamics of the imperial breakdown itself, on which the Irfan Habib - Athar Ali proposition is unexceptionable. But it leaves unresolved the characterization of the variety of regional forms that did develop. Scholars were concerned in the 1960s and 1970s with that question and we can deal with their views in the next sub-section.

(c) Was Eighteenth Century India "an Epoch Pregnant with Possibilities" ?

Increasingly during the present decade, some scholars have emphasised that during the Later Mughal and Nawabi transition before the establishment of colonial rule in different regions of the Mughal imperial periphery, trends were not to be necessarily read off from the description of the agrarian crisis in Aurangzeb's imperial system and that this was succeeded by structural changes. The questions are how fundamental were these changes, and what was their viability?

Clearly shifting from his 1959 determinacy about the dead-end character of endogenous technology or social regulation in the precapitalist period, Prof. Satish Chandra, in his 1983 Calcutta Deuskar Lectures, published in 1986, emphasised certain potential forces for economic development in the entire period even towards the end of the 18th century. He mentioned the resilience of cloth production and of long-range trade, of dadni (or production advance contracts) for cash crops, of insurance and banking, and of other forms of rural finance leading to the rise of the sahukari class to socio-economic power. He noted the

division of the rural society into two broad categories - the riyasati or privileged and the raiyati or the rest - a division made by mediaeval administrators, especially in Rajasthan,"

The riyasati or new elite class, in his opinion, consisted of the upper castes, the traditional holders (Malik) of village lands (the khud-kashta, gavetti or mirasdari) and holders of village offices, who formed the nucleus of the rural gentry from which "Raja Rammohun Roy as also many leaders of the middle class during the 19th century were drawn": the other were, presumably the residual masses (a two-class model, not different from the modern Western sociological-cum-subaltern studies binominal structure of elite/people).<sup>54</sup> Satish Chandra identifies the riyasati class with new state-forms of the eighteenth century and claims that "there were greater possibilities for upward social mobility for the rural privileged sector than in the earlier period but within the broad framework of feudal society," He goes on to a inferential conclusion that :

"the eighteenth century was thus pregnant with possibilities ....the old mould was cracking and there was a possibility of growth in various areas. Everywhere capable, ambitious people were pushing forward. What was lacking was direction".<sup>55</sup>

This disjunction of the eighteenth century as a whole from the antecedent circumstances of crisis, as a historiographical trend may be read back to a seminal article of 1972 in the Journal of the American Oriental Society (No.82, 3, July-September, 1962) by Bernard S. Cohn on "Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India : The Banaras Region", studying the micro-structure of the Varanasi-Jaunpur region during the period, when Mansa Ram and Balwant Singh built up the Banaras

zamindari in practical autonomy from local subahdars till when Chait Singh shifted from Awadh suzerainty to the new control of the British East India Company, which entered the tract after the Battle of Buxar in 1764. A year before Irfan Habib produced his magnum opus, Cohn was disturbed about the premises of mid-20th century texts regarding for instance, contemporary Mysore under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan, the Sikh misldars and early British economic administration in Bengal. He used as an archetype for total repudiation, N.K. Sinha's account of the early Khalsa armies which generalized for eighteenth century India: "anarchy and confusion, selfishness, cowardice and treachery, unpatriotic betrayals and horrible reigns of terror, the tyranny of the strong, the agony of the weak and the futility of isolated attempts",<sup>56</sup> Thus Cohn's data would be quite different from what Habib would posit in the next year.

In an even earlier - 1958, Journal of Social Research (Ranchi) I, pp.1-2 - article published jointly with Makim Marriott on "Networks and Centers in Indian Civilization" which also repays rereading in his recent collected papers, Prof. Cohn had drawn attention to the flexible strength of Hindu nodes and foci of community, social linkages, and traditions, maintained across across space and over time, in matrices, knotted together by urban points of pilgrim ritual, as well as craft and commodity interchange. It was in keeping with that theory of tensile continuities in the flow of Hindu culture, that Cohn challenged the macabre dramatisation, in the version quoted above of

"the decline and final dissolution of the Mughal political system, the attempts by some of the regional powers to expand their power into imperial states, and the success of the British in becoming the heirs of the Mughal Empire".<sup>57</sup>

Cohn challenged neither "the sordid record" nor the generally accepted view of the imperial structure of the subcontinental space - which we have just seen continuing in the Aligarh school's shift of emphasis from dynasty to structure. Cohn's novelty by in seeking "to get behind" this narrative to find continuities in change, what he called "enduring structures of political relationships.. and .. the organization and utilization of power and authority in the society of the time."<sup>58</sup> It was the premise of political anthropology, drawn from the U.S. political scientist David Easton's 1959 "systems approach," that political structures and activities have to be seen not only in "centralised states" with superordinate leadership, but also in "the whole process of formulation of demands, the determination of policy for the community, the carrying out of policies, the controlling of disruptive behaviour, and maintenance - through marshalling, allegiance and support - of the political order and the identity of the political community ... activities and .. associated structures, roles and functions ..(to) .. be found at different levels of a society, ranging from kin-based villages or bands, through associations, territorial organizations, up to readily identifiable states." Cohn saw as the characteristic of 'pre-modern societies' that "power and authority most frequently are distributed among vertically or hierarchically ordered groups. The integrity of the larger group, paradoxically, is usually maintained through internal conflict and competition among the groups in the society. .... Consensus and balance are achieved through conflict and through the awareness that there are always other groups ready to step in. The systems to which (he is) referring seem to be perpetually on the verge of breaking apart... Although these societies are segmentary in their structure, culturally there are often rituals, traditions, myths and histories through which the



political order is legitimated and maintained." Incidentally this is very much a point of view from the establishment angle, and not at all an attempt to shift from such an elite perspective.<sup>59</sup>

Working from such assumptions Cohn derived

"In eighteenth century India, .. four levels of the political system, the imperial, the secondary, the regional and the local."

The Mughals, he believed, had monopolised the symbols of legitimacy at the superordinate level, in northern India merely superseding older Hindu doctrines and theories. At the secondary ordinate level, what logicians (though not English idiom) would call the subaltern set, two structures were discernible. "Successor states such as Oudh or Bengal," emerged "with the dissolution of Mughal power if not authority," "which tried to exercise authority over a major historical cultural or linguistic region". This Cohn arbitrarily calls "The Secondary" level. Rather contradictorily he describes as "The Regional" another level in which "groups of regional systems" had power granted by the superior system to "individuals or families ..either as officials or as rulers ..loosely incorporated through rituals of allegiance and financial obligations to the national power.. in competition with potential regional leaders." At an even lower level of power which Cohn terms "The local" were "lineages, a successful adventurer, a local tax official turned political leader or indigenous chief ... subordinate to the regional leader but .. often (deriving) their position from the secondary authority .. (who) directly controlled the local peasants, merchants and artisans and collected from them cash or a share of the crop, in return for which they offered some protection from outside interference."<sup>60</sup>

He went on to construct a case study - of the Banaras Raja's relations with his secondary superior, the Nawab-Wazir of Awadh and with the local Rajput biradaris at the taluka, on even more basic, tuppa level, as well as with other elements in the town and its neighbourhood. This model has hardly been bettered by his Chicago epigoni such as A.M. Shah working on pattidari lineages and the political system in eighteenth century Gujarat,<sup>61</sup> Philip Calkins on early eighteenth century Bengal Subah,<sup>62</sup> Karen Leonard on the Hyderabad political system and its participants,<sup>63</sup> and Nicholas Dirks who comes closest to Cohn's seminal insight on "The Past of a Palaiyakaran".<sup>64</sup> In abstraction, this quadri-level systemic model applies not only to the Mughal succession from the secondary to the local layers, but also to the Vijayanagar successor systems in the deep south of the peninsula. By the same token, if "regional" is changed - say, to "tertiary" - the framework might fit the devolution of power in a historical cycle for any age or region of South Asia. Cohn's framework of transition from an imperial system to one which seems "to be perpetually on the verge of breaking apart" but which has tensile flexibility not to do so, (surviving under new forms of ordination and superordination) i.e. a "conflict-consensus" historical model, has more persuasive power of political analysis for eighteenth century, than the simple empire-to-empire transition model of older scholarship (evidenced not only by Sir J. Sarkar or N.K. Sinha, but also in Cambridge in the 1960s by Dr. T.G.P. Spear<sup>65</sup>) or the Habib-Athar Ali endogenous dead-end theory of agrarian crisis, positivistically correct in its economics but hardly explaining the politics of transition. However it has led to emphasis on the court duree of transition as a more significant factor of explanation of eighteenth century change and continuity than on the longue duree of subcontinental structure. In contrast with

the older Cohn-Marriott article, on "Networks and Centers" it has had the effect of disjoining the study of Indian political culture from the integrative aspect of Indian culture. To this extent it is a model of fission rather than of fusion for structures which were essentially integrative.

The next article in this sort of court d'ee significance interpretation, which has been second only to Cohn for its vogue in Western Indology as an explanatory model of eighteenth century history, is that of Calkins (also then of Chicago University) published in the Journal of Asian Studies, August, 1970. Philip Calkins harked back to Herman Goetz's brief excursus on "The Crisis of Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries" (Calcutta 1938), a small lecture attempting "to understand the eighteenth century in its own terms and thus to reclaim some element of usefulness and creativity for an age which was traditionally depicted as one of dark depravity," Goetz had argued that it was "in fact, an age of political and moral decay and produced an overripe and 'over refined' esthetic sensitivity which was characteristic of that sort of period the world over and while had its own peculiar but very real value in the development of the cultural civilization of India." Calkins went further than Goetz's view that political and economic changes in this century had only a negative value. This might have been true, he said, of the Late Mughal centre after Aurangzeb, but not of the provinces - especially those which developed into successor states, where "political and economic affairs were conducted vigorously and constructively."<sup>66</sup> While not taking Bengal to be typical he presented it pragmatically as a case

"of a provincial administrative system which appears to have grown stronger, not weaker, after the death of Aurangzeb, and where an elite ruling group which was

representative of the political realities of the day coalesced and maintained rather high standards of administrative efficiency."<sup>67</sup>

He posited a post-Mughal "new balance of power"<sup>68</sup> based on a coalition of previously subordinate interests :

"From a position of strong dominance, the Mughal mansabdars became less powerful within Bengal, as they became entrenched there, since they could no longer depend upon the support of imperial forces from the center. Essentially, the price they paid for their independent actions within Bengal, was that they had to contend with other forces in the province without help from outside, and send revenue regularly to Delhi. At the same time a group of larger and stronger zamindars began to emerge and take over more of the responsibilities of government. Thus a partnership between the Mughals and the more important members of the indigenous landed ruling group developed. But the partnership was not complete until a third group, which represented the larger commercial and financial interests within Bengal, was brought into the ruling councils and began to play an important role in financing the administrative reforms which accompanied the shift in the focus of political power."<sup>69</sup>

This was worked out in a fluid series of ad hoc policy adjustments by two Nazims in proto-dynastic succession, Murshid Quli Khan and Shuja-ud-din Muhammad Khan, which were made with the business "House of Jagat Seth". The latter then helped Shuja-ud-din's principal deputy, Alivardi Khan to come to power by overthrowing the Nazim's son Sarfaraz Khan.

"Alivardi's take over actually was a move towards stability..During Alivardi's reign the source of instability came from outside - from the attacks of the Marathas and although the Marathas were disruptive, it can not be said that even they destroyed stable government."

His general conclusion is that "the decline of imperial power brought changes in the provincial system, but it did not bring chaos, decadence, or even, perhaps, a decline in administrative efficiency."<sup>70</sup>

From Philip Calkins' account of the "readjustment" of combinational forces in the early Late Mughal period, came conclusions, which were new in 1970. The creacking of stability within which the modern, colonial forces wedged themselves in the middle of the eighteenth century were not older than the wars of colonial internecine rivalry, first in the Eastern Carnatic in the 1640s and then against the Bengal Nawab in the late 1750s. Exogenous forces, Maratha, Perso-Afghan, and finally British only weakened but did not actual destroy husk political stability in India, broader than just the territories ruled by Mughal Emperors. The corollary was equally novel then - that economic disruption created by endogenously recursive agrarian crisis had no necessarily dominating effect on political trends.

Prof. Athar Arli has some strictures with only Dr. Calkins as a reference :

"The theory that these politics were reflections of the emergence of 'regional elites' or gave opportunities to certain groups previously enjoying only limited prominence to become co-sharers in power are either statements of the obvious in tautological terms or are based on rather untenable assumptions about the Mughal empire."<sup>71</sup>

His choice of conclusions is mutually exclusive, and not necessarily complementary. Actually, he proceeds to grant that the Mughal imperial ruling class became regionalised and that Bengal was rather "peculiar" (a point Calkins had started

by making) since imperial jagirs were made khalisah by the Nizamat in Bengal, giving its Murshidabad controllers greater centralised control over resources.<sup>72</sup> These are not statements of the obvious nor are they tautological. Dr. Athar Ali found no such emergence of regional-oriented ruling groups

"discernible in Hyderabad or in Awadh, where the jagir continued to be in vogue".

thus making the Bengal Nizamat autonomy, a special case of "the passing of empire" and not a part of the general Mughal case set which he posits of cultural stagnation compared to Europe.<sup>73</sup> His point is not borne out by the testimony of the jagirdari system whether changing or stable in the other successor-principalities of the Nizamat or new subahdari type in Hyderabad, Awadh, or the Punjab.

The next study of regional elite - formation over a large tract, i.e. Mughal Dakhin (or the Deccan) composed, like Bengal of more than one Subah, and indeed ruled by a Viceroy, Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah - a classic case of Bernard Cohn's "secondary level" state-form- was published in the next year's Journal of Asian Studies. Karen Leonard's "The Hyderabad Political System and its Participants" (1971) generally describes, through the 18th and early 19th centuries, one of the earliest Indian Princely states to be founded in the eighteenth century, soon after the Kolhapur-Satara rift in Maharashtra. Using ruling-group family chronicles and initially sampling files and registers of the Daftar-i-Diwani (controlled by the Rae Rayan family) and the Daftar-i-Mal (controlled by the Kayastha family) which recorded Marathwada and Telingana affairs of the Nizams, this article analyses patronage networks, the subordinate nobility of the Deccan (very cosmopolitan in character, Shia

as well as Sunni, Arab princes from Makalla, as well as North Indian Pathans from Jaimganj or Gopamaw, Kayastha and Khattri as well as Chitpavan Brahman and Maratha, all within a power-elite of "top ten" families).

Leonard explicitly mentions changes within the pattern of revenue assignments and revenue contracting, marking a transition from the imperial level to that of the new "secondary" principality (to use Cohn's terminology). She also discusses how the preeminence of Mughal yakils (agents) in the Nizam became less important than that of the Peshwa of Pune, or even of his Maratha subordinates, and even of his originally subordinate regional power, the Subahdar Nawab of Arcot, i.e. of the Eastern Carnatic; and how ultimately the latter sets were replaced by British agents Resident at his darbar headquarters. This put in motion a process of creating new sets of networks of influence, conducive to short term stability. Ultimately, only at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it led to the informal subsumption of the Hyderabad system into the British imperial system. Leonard would have us not ignore the middle period's structural characteristics. Similarly she discusses the growth of hereditary tenurial practices in the administration of the Hyderabad principality after formal Mughal control had lapsed. Whether military, financial or administrative they marked a change from earlier practices. The control of offices by an informal, semi-dynastic succession of archivists with family access to old records in the Daftar-i-Mal and the Daftar-i-Diwani marks this transition. The full administrative control exercised by the Mughal governors over talukdars, deshmukhs and deshpandes decayed, into a loosely federative system under the Nizams in the late eighteenth century and even more so in the nineteenth. Though the mansabdari system was retained for purposes of secular

ritual rank, it lost its essential numerical coefficients and notional military usage. That is, mansabdari by the late eighteenth century related more to zat than to sawar. Arrangements in the latter was made by mercenary contingents of Marathas, Frenchmen, and later Rohilla and other subsidiary levies. The mansabdari system now began to loosely signify any particular, usually hereditary, post, in government service or prebend, which had a fixed salary attached - a case of decayed tradition coming close to the origins of an early modern bureaucracy. Certain powerful noble families, the umara-i-azam, held Asaf Jahi mansabs lower in zat, than did families with less force and influence but higher ceremonial rank. These structures were fluid, changing in authority patterns from time to time.

Karen Leonard's approach to change in an archetypal "successor-state" of the Mughal Empire may be less valid for Hyderabad in the pristine Asaf Jahi Viceroyalty 1700-40 period, studied for Bengal by Calkins. The structure of the first Asaf Jah's viceregal authority has not been analysed in as much detail as his wars with the Delhi nobles and with the Peshwas have been chronicles by the late Prof. Yusuf Husain Khan, or his predecessor Subahdars' administration, analysed in the Golconda core of his authority, by J.F. Richards.<sup>74</sup> But in general terms, in contrast to Calkins' description of an early stage of provincial vitality, disrupted after 1739 by exogenous attacks, a comparison of Cohn and Leonard's data for the mid- and late eighteenth century, in areas as different as Banaras-Jaunpur and the Deccan proper, shows a greater pace of infra-structural change in the autonomous secondary domains, i.e. in the "new subahdari" structure; than was envisaged in the age when Murshid Quli Khan and Nizam-ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I, who had worked with Aurangzeb and his sons and



grandsons, while that archetypal figure of the seventeenth century had been alive. It is this volatile trend in political structure and culture, which we would miss, if we concentrate only on the Aligarh emphasis on the determinance of agrarian crisis.

Even the exogenous rapine and plunder that Prof. Irfan Habib saw as the principal feature of agrarian crisis had its own chronology of internal dynamics towards stabilization. This has been epitomized for the Malwa region, (first harried and then conquered by Maratha overrulers in the middle of the eighteenth century), in a 1977 Modern Asian Studies article by a U.S. research worker Stewart R. Gordon.<sup>75</sup> The case has more depth of focus than a simple "successor-state" proposition. The mountain-ranges and plateaus north of the Deccan through which pass the great trade routes from the Arabian Sea to the Gangetic Plains have always been contested by territorial powers from the north and the west or southwest. The fifteenth-sixteenth century symbiosis of Rajput and Turco-Afghan aggrandisement, at local and regional level, that is epitomised by the Baz Bahadur - Roopmati legend, and the Mandu ruins of a secondary level Sultanate, was replaced by Mughal imperial authority. Gordon analyses how after the latter crumbled, it was replaced by, what he entitles his article as, "The Slow Conquest", at a secondary level, both within the broken-down Mughal administration, and within the system of Maratha confederacy, dominated de jure by the Satara Chatrapati and de facto by the Peshwa of Pune.

He challenges descriptions by early twentieth century writers, such as Edward Thompson and G.T. Garratt in their famous textbook Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India of the Marathas as "Cool and insatiable robbers." Indian

nationalist thought has always been riven on this characterisation. North and East Indian Scholarship (influenced by local legends about barqir depredations on Southwestern Bengal (Rarb) in the 1740s and Rajasthan, Hariana and Punjab as well as Rohilkhand later till the 1780s) have seen the Marathas either as robbers or starving wretches driven by agrarian crisis to the plunder of chauth and sardeshmukhi as double taxation of the countryside. Such a phase held true in Malwa only in the 1730s when they were making their probing raids on forts and supply lines for chauth demands. They soon began to hire themselves out

"to various factions in the internal quarrels of Rajput zamindars in western Malwa such as Amjhera, Jhabua and Sailana"

and after the 1727 death in battle of the Malwa subahdar, Girdhar Bahadur, and even more after the coercion of the Nizam following his defeat in Bhopal in 1738, Baji Rao I first controlled south-west Malwa, and then gained - as reward for sparing the Nizam's army - the naib (deputy) subahdari of the entire province. From the 1730s began the Peshwa's rudimentary civil administration of state plunder.

Studying the Hindustan rumals of the Peshwa Daftar in the Maharashtra State Archives at Pune, Gordon distinguished between two moieties of Malwa, separated for this purpose in 1732 - about half to the Peshwa's armed bands' captains, Sindhia, Holkar, the Puars (later of Dhar and Dewas Senior and Junior) and about another half "east of Sarangpur" directly administered by the Peshwa through Kamavisdars appointed for sets of parganas, 62 for 286 jurisdictional units (whose sanads, letters, receipts, accounts and notations regarding whom in the Peshwa's day book on Malwa he

scrutinised by computer analysis). Sometimes saranjam grants to the captains were resumed into kamavisdari for reallocation at an indefinitely future date. The structure was quite similar to the imperial Mughal extraction of the surplus in the Deccan and elsewhere, by khalisa amils as well as jagirdari, with provision for paipagi reserves, for reallocation according to future decision. Till 1738, this double extraction of the surplus (since the Mughal officials were still trying to collect revenue where and when they could) was - on the Maratha side - camp-based raiding, rakhwala collection or protection levies, and mainly by means of saranjami assignment. After the Bhopal defeat of the Nizam, as naib-subahdar of Malwa, the Peshwa established "stabilized khandani contracts" in which kamavisdars with a small levy, commonly shared by several of them,<sup>76</sup> demanded from signatories of contracts for revenue payment, the stipulated payment for each season. Failure to pay led to removal or fuller control in subjection. If annual (known as ainjama) these contracts lasted for about five to ten years.

After the Peshwas' forces' decimation at the Third Battle of Panipat at the hands of the combined Northern forces of Afghans, Rohillas and the Awadh army, Peshwai direct administration passed more to the local saranjam assignees, who now began to build up what really became only now the Maratha "successor states" at Baroda, Gwalior, Indore, Nagpur. Through the mideighteenth century, Maratha imperialism had inserted itself, for instance into the Malwa polity, as an external but symbiotic ruling group over an existing structure. In this sense, following Athar Ali's metaphor, they were vampires sucking Mughal life blood. But then, so were the Afghans in Punjab from 1750 to 1770, or the British from the grant of Diwani for the subahs

of Bengal and Bihar. In this sense, the British were no less vampirical in their origins than the Marathas. They were more so because the surpluses they drained flowed totally away from the pus of the Indian economy.

Unlike the Mughals whose surplus-extraction practices they emulated, the new confederate Maratha imperialism had no numerical ranking system of mansabdari bureaucracy, no unified "provincial" authority, no regular rotation of officers, no concentration of officers and military power in agglomerations of sarkar towns. For instance, the Peshwas had thirty garrison towns and centres in eastern Malwa for only ten in the new princely areas. The triumph of the looseness and greater flexibility of the Maratha armies, the slowness of the conquest to build hegemony (contrastable to the speed with which Akbar had organised his imperial machine in the late sixteenth century and the absolutism which his son and grandson developed) explains why the Marathas could not effectively cope with the Durranis in the north or the British attacking their homelands from 1775 to 1817. As in Bengal, and Hyderabad, so in Malwa, the first half of the eighteenth century marked secondary regional stability. This cracked much later than 1760 in Malwa as it cracked in the 1750s in the Eastern Carnatic and Bengal - due to exogenous pressure and lack of organic solidarity to meet the challenges. Even so, as Gordon says : "after the Maratha conquest, it was not just the administration that was different, Malwa was different." The properties and rights of the old Rajput zamindaris in Western Malwa had been disrupted, peasant insurgency had increased, revenue receipts had fallen, there had been a shift in urban concentration (from Sarangpur and Ujjain to Bhilsa, Mahidpur and Sironj) and even the trade routes along which Chanderi silk was

transported had changed. After Third Panipat, the changes were further compounded. The point of difference within the eighteenth century trends is well taken. What Gordon misses is that the socio-economic consequences were obviously the same as those described by Irfan Habib and Athar Ali for all the regions together. The end-product at the end of the century was not much changed by the mid-century "stabilized Khandani contracts" of the ainjama system. The stability and integration that Calkins posited for Bengal was a case of earlier and very briefly transitory sub-stage. Gordon describes a later stage when Malwa had begun to experience the effects of decentralisation and shaking up of trade routes, urban nodes and substantial families.

When the imperial tradition began to crumble, it was not succeeded by wholesale anarchy in the politics that emerged. Secondary viceregal, or provincial structures could emerge, which however represented new balances of power. But these types of insertion of new forces, some exogenous like the Marathas, made the new balance distended and rickety without breeding any common culture of regional identity that could have helped these balances to survive over more than a quarter century or so. The earlier regional principalities and Sultanates of India from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries - such as the Pandyan, the Hoysalas, the Yadava, the Chodagangas, the Delhi dynasties, and their successor - Sultanates in Bengal, Gujarat, Malwa, Jaunpur or the Bahmani domains in the Deccan or the Vijayanagar empire and its Nayakkan successors had lasted much longer before they began to fall before centralization. This imbalance in the temporary stabilization of eighteenth century Indian regional politics and the acceleration of its breakdown by external

incursions and attacks can be illustrated by reference to yet another provincial region of eighteenth century India, the Subahdaris of Lahore and Multan as well as its neighbouring hill zamindaris from Jammu to Kangra, which together were integrated briefly in the early nineteenth century Punjab kingdom of Maharaja Ranjig Singh, and about which Indian regional historians themselves, for a change have written.

Taking note in her Presidential Address to the Punjab History Conference, Patiala, in 1976, of the demand for new hypotheses "at the interpretational level" in terms of which "the interest in regional history assumes greater historiographic potential, a potential with which we are perhaps as yet not altogether fully familiar"<sup>77</sup> Prof. Romila Thapar reminded historians that

"One might begin with the historical point at which the awareness of being a region and having a history is first expressed. In the case of the Punjab, it has been suggested as having evolved during the Mughal period.... Whatever the reasons, involving agricultural technology, new commercial possibilities, invasions and migrations, there appears to be in the Mughal period, a change in the relations between the sub-regions of the Punjab. The upper Doabs and the hill states impinge on each other to a greater degree than before. Lahore and Multan appear to be in closer contact although not always well-disposed towards each other. The ambitions of the Governors of Lahore extended in their geographical reach to more distant areas such as Kabul and Kashmir, doubtless motivated by the trading network."<sup>78</sup>

Raising questions about the social basis of popular religion from the post-Buddhist Nathpanthis, Bairagis, Sufis, Jogis, etc. to the time of the Sikhs, and taking account of class differences by which first Khattri, then Jat, and mazhabi

Sikhs developed their scriptural and ritual positions of variegated identity, in which "Guru Gobind Singh's tendency to use Hindu symbols, particularly those relating to the Sakti tradition" was only one of many, Prof. Thapar notes that

"The emergence of the kingdom of the Punjab was not a sudden development of the eighteenth century. It has ... a long gestation period.. incorporat(ing) .. various connections .. changing links between .. sub-regions; the two economic thrusts of agriculture and trade, technology as a factor in these : the emergence of caste relations. The growth of religious sects : and the crystallization of political identities."<sup>79</sup>

She rejected mono-causal comparativism of the sort, once common in the Calcutta University M.A. Special Paper syllabi which ranked Marathas and the Punjab together as religious resurgence against Mughal Islamic imperialism. She also suggests that

"the accepted periodization on the large scale seems to be inapplicable to the Punjab. Mediaevalism, with its attendant social and economic changes, would have to be placed later than is normally done. To date the modern period to the mid-eighteenth century would create its own problems in the history of the Punjab. The assumptions on which this periodization is based would in any case require serious reconsideration."<sup>80</sup>

The same approach and questions about the existing historiography will be found in Prof. S. Nurul Hasan's 1978 Foreword to Miss Indu Banga's Ph.D. thesis entitled The Agrarian System of the Sikhs

"The Sikh movement started with a special appeal to the trading castes. Nevertheless it stuck deep roots in the peasantry, simultaneously developing its own feudal relations. There was no sharp break with the agrarian relations and the mode of agricultural production as it existed in the Mughal period." 81

Prof. Banga too sees specifically Punjab history till the middle of the nineteenth century, i.e. the end of the independence of the kingdom of the Khalsa as part of

"questions raised and answered by the historians of mediaeval India but on a much smaller scale of 'regional studies'." 82

Late mediaeval Punjab history in the 18th century has been studied by Prof. J.S. Grewal, Prof. Indu Banga, and their student, Dr. Veena Sachdev. They have several articles, the book just referred to about systemic elements in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Punjab agrarian history, and two theses on the political system of late eighteenth century Punjab, one in microcosm of a particular misdari lineage, the other of the two subahs in general.<sup>83</sup> They have systematically categorised valuable factual information and have persuasively suggested reconsideration of the obsolete characterization of eighteenth century Punjab history as a Khalsa-Misl period of theocratic, confederate brotherhood of Sikh dominance which had earlier been put forward by scholars like N.K. Sinha (the repudiation of whose generalization about "eighteenth century anarchy" at this phase we have already noted). Some of their conclusions are to be noted.

Prof. Banga is clear about the insurgent content of the Sikh movement in the early eighteenth century by the time Nadir Shah had invaded the Punjab and had his premonitory



discussion with Zakariya Khan the subahdar, who had a few years before, had Bhai Mani Singh executed at the kotwali chabutra of Lahore for contumaciousness about paying pilgrim tax for the great festivals of Baisakhi and Diwali at the Harmandir Saheb in Amritsar.<sup>84</sup> She quotes too an evocative popular saying of the 1750s when Zakariya Khan's successor Muin-ul Mulk was seeking to repress them :

"Mir Mannu asan di datri  
Asan Mir Mannu de soe  
Jiyon Mir Mannu wadhda  
Gharin gharin asin hoe"<sup>85</sup>

(to be freely rendered "Mir Mannu is the sickle and we are as grass to him. The more he mows us down, the more numerous we sprout")

We may recall the first part of this address, to appreciate that such hagiography may be misused in contemporary regionalist tensions in Punjab.

Secondly, throughout the eighteenth century, as well as during the more well known secular polity of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, other Punjabis, plains Muslims and hill Rajput chieftains of tribal and agriculturist communities controlled large territories in the region. Drs. Banga and Sachdeva have showed the scale of vesselage and of revenue-free charity (dharmarth) of the Hindu and Muslim elites and people, in the different periods of Sikh suzerainty, after the withdrawal of Afghan imperialism from the Punjab in the 1770s.

"The Sikh dominions came to be regarded at one time as the land par excellence of muafidars and jagirdars."<sup>86</sup>

Dr. Sachdeva meticulously lists for each Doab and its headwaters, the Muslim and Rajput chieftains who controlled large parts of lands from Kangra and Chamba to Altock and Multan. Both analyse in detail the various interpretations in a century and a half of the community connotations among the Sikh hierarchy based on Amritsar, of gurmata, dal khalsa, rahi and misl. Discussing the views from early nineteenth century writers like Prinsep and Cunningham to N.K. Sinha, which see in these terms theocratic democracy and religious egalitarianism of a Protestant variety, Prof. Banga has cautioned that

"in Sikh literature dealing with government and administration and even visualising an ideal Sikh state, there is no conception of a form other than monarchical ... to invoke democratic diets and republican confederacies, which regrettably vanished because of the autocratic postures of the de facto Sikh sardars is to misconceive their position from the beginning." 87

Dr. Sachdeva looks at the ideology more from the point of view of legitimating sanction. The four terms noted above

"played a vital role in the political history of the Sikhs particularly in the 1750s and 1760s. It is difficult to imagine that ordinary people could have risen into political power without these institutions. But (they had no) significant bearing on the polity of the Sikh chiefs after they acquired territory and started ruling over them. The coins struck (for) invocation of the grace of the Gurus enabled each individual chief to be sovereign in his own place. This was in conformity with the general belief of the Khalsa during the 18th century that Guru Gobind Singh had prophesied kingdom for every horseman". 88

Third, Prof. Grewal and Dr. Sachdeva have construed misl, shorn of any sense of dominant lineage systems hegemonizing the Khalsa from 1750 to 1800. Misl means "equal to" or "similar", in the contemporary literature, Misldars were subordinate to and part of the structure of groups or warbands named after eponymous sardars. This is borne out by analysis of the twelve groups identified by British and earlier Indian historians as the Twelve Misls. The earliest British accounts in the 18th century of Col. Polier, George Forster, Browne, or John Malcolm do not refer to misls. Cunningham at the time of the Sikh Wars of the 1840s, searching for the roots of the disruption of the unruly Khalsa army into councils which treated their leaders as subalterns, refers to the heritage of the twelve misls as a "confederacy of equals". He would have been more precise to refer to the eighteenth century Sikh political oligarchy, ranked and class-divided in its political aspect. However, the Sikh political movement began, its political system as it stabilised in the late eighteenth century was no more different than similar secular political trends in Banaras, Bengal, Hyderabad or the Maratha domains. The sardars' scale of power was the same as that of intermediary zamindars or of southern nayaks and large poligars. The Bhangis, the Ahluwalias or the Ramgarhias were no less powerful than the Powers or Holkars or Gaekwads of Baroda. The Sukarchakias, from whose lineage rose Ranjit Singh, were as powerful in their own context as Tipu Sultan when his father was emerging as Nayak of Mysore. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the sardars with their misldars were indeed making attacks on Mughal towns, which were held briefly in that period by Afghan imperialism - along the trade route from Delhi through Mariana and N.E. Punjab to North of Lahore and Gujarat, as well as into Jammu. But by

the 1780s during the ascendancy of the Phulkians and the Ahluwalias in the east and the Bhangis and Sukarchakias in the north, they combined authority with long-established groups of Khattri merchants, bankers and petty officials, of the sort of "new balance of power" in the Punjab region that Carikins posited for Bengal in the first forty years of the eighteenth century or Gordon for Malwa in the 1750s. The Khattris feared the disruption of the earlier stability of the pax Muchalica (such as its indubitably exploitative character was). But they found it expedient to come to terms with the sardar Jats, when the latter stabilised authority after the Afghan retreat from the 1770s. A graphic description of the switches of Khattri feeling against, and then for the Sikh sardars in the localities of the Upper Doab routes to the North will be found in the Char Bagh-i-Punjab by Ganesh Das Wadhera, a Khattri himself.<sup>89</sup>

All over India, the later half of the eighteenth century saw the spread of new contradictions. Prof. Satish Chandra in his Deuskar Lectures notes the phenomenon earlier touched upon by Marshall Hodgson and Athar Ali - i.e. the interaction of the "outreach" of Europe with local and regional elites in Asia in an age when large territorial empires were crumbling at a time of stabilisation of the Western European nation-states, of the emergence of modern science and technology, and of the first signs of Industrial Revolution. He used this to rationalise the decay of the positive role of the traditional indigenous elites of Asia, including the Indian ones by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>90</sup> He sees this decline taking place only in the late eighteenth century. Summating data and inferences about the economies of Delhi, Bengal and Bihar, the Marathas,

the Jats, the Sikhs, and the Rohilla and the Bangash Pathans (migrant settlers from the North-West Frontier hills to Western and Central U.P. who maintained trade and crafts as well as agriculture. There, he makes the point that outside Bengal and the Company's territorial enclaves around Madras and Bombay, till the end of the eighteenth century, seventeenth century economic trends continued in more or less recursive fashion : e.g.

- (a) there was no long-term disruption or setback to agricultural production
- (b) there was no diminution in land-revenue demand : rather there was increase in expropriation by riyasats like Bengal under Mir Qasim, the Jats under their qutonomous princes or in Awadh
- (c) there was less agricultural distress than later came in subsequent periods of each such area, when the British began to make their initial over assessments from the 1770s to the 1840s, at various rates in different regions
- (d) only at the end of the century, as a result of the collapse of indigenous elites before British conquest, was there major scarcity of purchasing power, leading in some cases to famine, rural depopulation and tenancy disruption as a result of colonial policies
- (e) what did begin, however, in the riyasati polities, were measures to consolidate large holdings of zamindars or taluqdars in many regions and to shift tax burdens on to smaller landholders and

khundkashta peasantry : this broke the older tripolar balance of Mughal stability

- (f) as colonialism advanced into the South Asian hinterlands, it recognised the big landholders' social-economic authority : with the diminution of resident small holders, who may or may not have been the actual tillers, there was an increase in different regions of pahikashti (pycaust, anglice - i.e. of non-resident cultivators, who were often tenants) :
- (g) but such increase in the differentiation and inequality in society - itself pre-colonial but also accentuated by interpenetration and interaction with early colonialism from Bengal, and from the coasts of Coromandel and West India - did not lead to any radical change in the mode of production, not even of the "second feudalism" variety of the precursors of capitalism of the "latecomer" type, in Central and Eastern Europe : the agglomeration of large estates noted above was impermanent due to division of inheritance practised in all principalities, and existing in principle in succession to kingdoms in pre-colonial India, where fragmentation and reorganization of holdings was general, till colonialism brought in primogeniture, and from 1793 formalised the land market: marking the origins of radical change in the nineteenth century :

(h) thus developed a new riyasati (privileged) class of rural gentry, from which "Raja Rammohun Roy, as also many leaders of the middle class during the 19th century were drawn" which (as has been noted in the beginning of this section) was supposed by Prof. Chandra to make "the eighteenth century .. thus pregnant with possibilities": "Everywhere capable, ambitious people were pushing forward. What was lacking was direction": though here he makes a distinction : (i) in the older, riyasati areas; i.e. in what Athar Ali had called the successor - states proper, of the autonomous subahs reformulated by new balances of power, there was more "bureaucratic, feudal nobility" with a greater facility in money economy, while (ii) in the less developed, insurgent areas like Maharashtra, Central India, Jat and Rohilla territories, where "lower elements headed by the feudal landed elements had come to power", a process of refederalization, i.e. ultimately second way capitalism might have been on the cards, that is presuming colonial control could somehow have been feuded off by the end of the century. 91

Such convoluted conjecture takes the whole logic of "a century pregnant with possibilities" to the realm of reductio ad absurdum over which we must always hover, if we go too far away from the Habib/Athar Ali thesis, towards quicksands of ever-changing combinatorial polities of limited stability within the old forms of Mughal authority. The only test of the new regional balances was their capacity to last.

And this they did not. The reasons for their quick failure before external attack and the shift of the merchant-cum-rich peasant class as well as of the defeated warriors and professional intelligentsia to the new conquerors have to be analysed. A corollary would be to see whether this was true of those parts of India which were never moulded in the Mughal crucible. Both questions remain on the agenda for work by Indian historians today : and indeed are more relevant than whether some conjectured "refeudalization" was on the cards. As it was feudalism under Mughal aegis was not significantly defeated by British colonialism. After a struggle & shifted loyalties and entered as subalterns - for which the Indian terms were to be from now on, the British Indian army non-commissioned ranks of subahdar - major, naik, havildar, jemadar, etc. -- Maharajas, Rajas, Nizam, Nawabs, etc. in the colonial ranks.

iv. Some New Lines of Research : particularly on the Second Half of the 18th century :-

We may now pause to take stock of the argument and the lines that it opens up for fresh enquiry.

The eighteenth century has been seen by Indian historians till the 1970s as either an appendix to the Great Mughal epoch of the seventeenth century, or as a prelude to the high noon of empire of British India in the nineteenth century : as a moment of imperial transition, of change, either from degraded values to Westernized enlightenment (in the Jadunath Sarkar version) or from the rule of long established conquerors to that of alien colonialists shifting super profits and locating the really revolutionary ways of capitalist investment in their metropolitan homelands to which they retired (in the



Irfan Habib version). The entire problematic was posed, in both versions, by referring to the eighteenth century as either a prelude or an end, as a period of decline of imperialist creativity, never in terms of the history of social structure or economic change within different regions, social groups or various classes in South Asia, merging till today.

Even the study of the actual political structures at the secondary, regional and local levels, systematically initiated by Bernard S. Cohn by his seminal article on the Banaras region under the Mansa Ram - Balwant Singh lineage does not escape the trap of the imperial paradigm. It only inverts the focus from central to provincial/district levels of succession authority, from the study of superordinate state formation to subaltern (in the English idiomatic, not the neo-Gramscian, O.U.P. - radical Commonwealth History sense of the adjectival noun) state-forms, which it became the fashion in the 1960s to call "successor-states", of an interregnum between two imperialisms; an interregnum neatly wedged across a chasm of time representing the century. This is at best a negative view of a hundred years of Indian History.

For one thing, it leaves large chunks of South Asia, i.e. North-East India and the Indian Peninsula, South of the Deccan, out of historical purview. The revival of the last Ahom dynasty, the Tungkhungias, and their fall, weakened by the neo-Vaishnava Mayamariya insurgency, and then after a brief stabilisation, at the hands of nineteenth century Burmese invaders, spans the period from the failure of Aurangzeb's Bengal subahdars to conquer the Ahoms, to the Anglo-Burma War in the second decade of the nineteenth century. The history of the tribal state forms of hither Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur, Dimapur, Mizoram, Jaintia, the Khasi Hills and in the

Garo Hills, and the character of their distinctions from Ahom ruling-elite history, is as true of the eighteenth century as it was of the nineteenth century. No imperial paradigm can encompass the diverse vitality of this tract.<sup>92</sup>

The same is true for the successor-state-forms of the last Vijayanagar dynasty, the last Chandragiri lineage, after the conquest of upper Karnataka, Rayalaseema, Senji and Thanjavur, by Bijapur generals and mercenary captains like Afzal Khan and Shahji Bhonsle - i.e. for the southern Nayakdom of Madura, and of its Palaiyakarans (Poligars) including the Maravar chieftains of Pudukkottai and Ramnad - or of the nayak and Nair lineages in Kerala (including Malabar) and Dakshin Karnataka, Karwar, Belgaum and Dharwar Districts. Here also a process can be noted of fluxing of political system and resistance to imperial rule. This process in the deep south was never subordinated by the Mughals who stayed bogged in the Bijapur-Golconda domains. The superordination of these tracts was accomplished by the British imperialists for the first time - only in the nineteenth century.<sup>93</sup> No sense can be made of these two historical regions (each composed of many diverse cultures) if we try to subsume their variegated eighteenth century experiences into the Procrustean imperial paradigm.

This paradigm retains its hold even over the successor-state theory of Dr. Muzaffar Alam's regional analysis of "the crisis of empire in Mughal North India" as well as Prof. Satish Chandra's recent emphasis on what he calls "eighteenth century riyasats" in which economic activity till the end of the century are seen as sufficient proof of endogenous economic vitality till then : and as proof of the late significance of British colonialism only after its imperial power

became hegemonically explicit in the last decades of the eighteenth century. This has led to an emphasis on court duree (short term) or at best conjunctural elements in 18th century political structure. Such material, even when systematically organized, tells us next to nothing about the actual working of the long run forces of change in a period of political transition. The Jawaharlal Nehru University version of transition in eighteenth century India, displays a certain nullity of transformation. In this version, Historical change of a significant variety is delayed, till it can take place only under foreign auspices in the next century.

The Aligarh interpretation of the eighteenth century is more consistent. It sees in agrarian crisis the explanation of aggregate economic immiserisation. But agrarian crisis, should not be used as a hold all category, as the representation of a perpetual declining curve of popular prosperity. Later Mughal trends in the decentralized imperial heartlands, the rise of new regional power in the Bay of Bengal littoral during the mid-century Anglo-French conflict for coastal supremacy, and the late century colonial strife with what the British called "the country powers" - the successor-states, Mysore, the Marathas all meant the development of new social forces, such as the merchants who invested in the shipping, internal trade and also war enterprises launched by Mughals, Marathas and the new mercantile imperialist intruders of the seaboard and the coastal hinterlands; the dalal, gomastah, dubash and Parsi seth compradores of the foreign territorial 'factories'; the middle classes who grew along the new trade networks and newer urban centres to which shifted commerce from old imperial headquarters mercantile centres, which were not just the new secondary or regional

headquarters. Agrarian crisis need not have meant the acceleration of economic breakdown in absolute terms or in each region of the subcontinent : but just stagnation and a phase of economic backwardness.

On the other hand, the Chicago model of the "new balances" of power within the breaking up imperial processes, takes more note of the emergence of these forces in the short-run developments, which the Aligarh framework elides in its generalizing version. A reading of the Cohn and post-Cohnian work on eighteenth century political systems in India can lead to construction of a pattern of inner contradictions, non-antagonistic as well as antagonistic, in the period from Aurangzeb's last years till the coming of Wellesley as the next all-India dominator. These would include the early zamindari revolts against the post-Aurangzeb subahdars; <sup>94</sup> the stabilisation of regional law and order by the proto-dynastic subahdars who vested in themselves new powers of nazim, which had not been enjoyed by their seventeenth century predecessors (such as the authority to govern more than one subah or to resume jagirs into khalsa, controlled from the provincial seat - previously a prerogative of the diwani branch of imperial/provincial administration - with provincial diwans relegated to a subordinate position under "new Nizamat": <sup>95</sup> the growth of factional politics in the new principalities which led to the breakdown of the proto-dynastic autonomy and the entry of Afghans, British, and (we have ourselves just noted) even briefly in the earliest years of the nineteenth century, Burmese (in Assam), in the regional polities: and finally (something the Chicago model excludes from its purview) the distortions in the political and socio-economic scene created by the ultimate hegemony of colonialism.

The Aligarh and the Chicago versions are not necessarily contradictory. One would accept the "dead end" aspect of Indian endogenous socio-economic creativity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries premised by Irfan Habib. Neither Calkins nor Leonard nor s Stewart Gordon have established any genuine political creativity in the eighteenth century regional stateforms. Each principality or viceroyalty studied by them broke up soon after, or very soon became "Indian Princes" i.e. quite subordinate to British colonialism. But the Cohn framework does emphasise the non-correspondence of political forms and economic trends. One cannot read off one from the other : not that either Irfan Habib or Athar Ali have done so. A conjoint reading of the August on Chicago versions is possible.

What does emerge is the picture of a sort of median period varying in time, pace of emergence and pattern of decay. It is necessary to develop a common terminology to categorise the political forms of this period : the new Nizamats, the emergent insurgent lower level of landed magnates (as in Maharashtra) or the Jat domains in the Doab area) or smaller peasant insurgent leadership outside the imperial social pale (such as the Maratha sardars conquering Baroda or Malwa, Bundelkhand, or the Nagpur territories, or the Sikh misdars like the Phulkians, the Ahluwalias and later the great Sukarchakia, who made himself Maharaja of the Punjab on the ruins of the misdari system (child of a new order he proved himself to be its destroyer) and finally the older territorial chieftaincies and principalities considered inferior by the Delhi court, ranging all the way from the Ahoms or the Mysore nayaks (Wadeyar and Hindu before and after the Muslims, among whom only Tipu Sahib, the heir of Hyder Naik declared

himself Sultan only in 1786, twelve years before death in battle forced on him by the British)<sup>96</sup> to the petty princes chieftains of the deep southwest coast. The median character of the indigenous element in the eighteenth century was indeed a brief interregnum between imperialisms, each with very different characteristics tempting historians to conceptually jump from one to the other. But the median phases specifics of socio-economic formation and political culture deserve more detailed and systematic analysis about that persist to the present day.

Such analysis, will by virtue of its variegated regional and linguistic diversity, require reference to original sources, not just in Persian, the language of the imperial ruling class (revival of scholarship in which of course is crucially necessary, in University cities like Calcutta, Patna, Hyderabad or Lucknow, where once it was much more alive) but also in the regional vernaculars. Far more publication of calendars and summaries of documents in Bengali, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi, or Tamil is necessary. Meanwhile, note can be taken by those who are versed in the use of those languages but are familiar with what, despite the need for vernacularisation, remains at present the language of higher education - English - of much new material that has been coming into eighteenth century Indian studies since the late 1960s. These monographs add a mass of specific data to our knowledge and add force to the need for systematising the information in terms of the framework of the socio-economic and political structures of century. Apart from published doctoral theses, some have sophisticated frameworks of their own.

For instance, Prof. Ashin Dasgupta has presented information about the maritime trade of Western India - in

particular Malabar and Gujarat. The late Prof. Hiroshi Fukazawa supplied valuable information about secular trends at the local and lowest levels in the Peshwa's dominions, and recently Dr. Andre Wink has presented more information on revenue administration in the svarajya (though in an excessively tendentious theoretical format, juxtaposing Maratha fitna or dissension to Mughal authority as if the Marathas did not represent autonomous authority of their own). Prof. K. Rajayyan, Dr. S. Kadhivel, and Dr. Nicholas Dirks have thrown a flood of new light on Poligar local politics in the Ramnaad, Tirunalveli and Kanyakumari regions, hemmed in, resisting by force as well as non-co-operation, and finally brutally repressed by the East India Company as late as 1801-2. Prof. Sirajul Islam, the late Dr. Ratnalekha Ray, Dr. Ranjan Gupta and Dr. Atis Dasgupta (in a unpublished thesis on Fakir and Sanyasi Uprisings in Bengal) and Dr. Basudeb Chattopadhyaya (in another one on Crime and its Control in Bengal from 1770 to 1870 both submitted to Calcutta University) have depicted local and district conditions in Bengal, rapidly changing and deteriorating under colonialism in the second half of the eighteenth century. Also Dr. Iqbal Husain in a forthcoming book on the Rohilla chieftaincies, and Dr. C.A. Bayly writing about the late eighteenth century origins of petty commodity production in the Upper and Middle Gangetic Plains economy (while he grandiloquently terms North Indian Society) have data on the readjustment of agrarian and urban patterns of enterprise in mid-and late eighteenth century Awadh.<sup>97</sup>

Two aspects stand out which require fresh analysis in the light of these and other new data on transition through the century. One, is to work out the period when radical change took place in the century. The framework of spiralling

rural discontent and inanition of the principalities would lead us to read the end of the century as that conjuncture. But this would mean emphasising only the political superstructure, which generally survives fundamental transformation of the means and relations of production viewed in modular terms. Without going into the exact description of the mode of production in the proximate part of precolonial India,<sup>98</sup> one may consider the catalytic effect on the traditional Indian patterns of consumption, demand, and supply of non-subsistence commodities for the urban, noble, class of the power-elite (dominated as it had been in what may be considered to be a longue duree trend) of the choking, after the British conquest of Bengal of inflow into India of bullion from the West, an inflow which had originated from the days of the Roman Empire, accelerated by Spanish bullion transfers from America, but shrunk by the Company after its Investment Policy changed and it could control Murshidabad. After that, i.e. from 1763, the Company could outbid the French and Dutch in commodity purchases for export to London and re-export to the Western economic market.<sup>99</sup>

The spread of British political and economic influence over Bengal and Bihar (not, it should be marked, over even the Orissa part then not of the Subah, but ruled by Marathas till 1803) did lead to changes in the Company's mercantile perception of its new portfolios of capital stock available from, first the Murshidabad Nizamat, and then, more directly and by Allahabad Treaty of 1765 legitimacy (gained from the fugitive Shah Alam) for its own function of Diwani extraction of revenue. The assumption of Diwani (strengthened in 1772 by the Company's decision 'to stand forth as Diwan' from its new headquarters at Calcutta) reversed not only the trend of



"new Nizamat" in Bengal referred to above. Nor did it merely mark what Burke in a later speech (of 1785 on the Pitt Government's scandalous handling of the settlement of the Nawab of Arcot's Debts to European creditors in the Carnatic) called the drain of wealth from India. It reversed trade balances from Eastern India towards Europe. Britain used its new political power to shift from textile purchases to greater investment in cheaply produced commodities of its own territories (such as saltpetre, indigo, opium) and later as those territories grew in the nineteenth century, tea, jute, raw cotton, manganese ore, etc. Obviously this reversal of trade balances marks the growth of relative growth of immiserisation of India as the result, in the long run, of its being drawn into the modern world marketing network and thus into being a subject e.g. -- or at best flywheel -- of the capitalist imperial political system. But the problem remains - all this was not pre-visualised by the events of 1757, or even of the British defeat of Awadh, and its fugitive allies, Mir Kasim and Shah Alam at Buxar in 1764 ?

The matter should not be studied in isolation from the British drive for economic supremacy in colonial markets, following their defeat in the American War of Independence, i.e. during the Administration from 1784 to 1801 of Pitt and Dundas ? The results of the great famine of 1770-71 and the reorganisation of the shambles in which Warren Hastings found the Bengal revenue system when he took up the Governorship; the problems of coping with war on two fronts in the 1770s - in Madras against Hyder Naik who ravaged the Coromandel Coast, and in Central India and Gujarat against the Maratha confederacy still ably marshalled by Mahadaji Sindhia from Gwalior and Nana Fadnis from Pune - which the British could tide over

only by military skill and naval resources (fighting back to the wall against the French, out for the kill in the British disaster over the American War of Independence which ended in 1782 along with the Mysore War) rather than by public (as distinct from private Nabob) control over economic resources, (which came only after the Permanent Settlement turned zamindars into an efficient collaborating class in the last decade of the century); and the shaking up of the civil service of the East India Company by Parliamentary initiative began by Burke and Dundas from opposite Whig and Tory premises in Britain and completed on a non-partisan imperialist basis by Cornwallis and Wellesley who constructed the superordinate British herrenvolk in Eastern and Southern India; all these were indeterminate till Tipu had died at Seringapatam, the misls had been broken by Ranjit Singh soon to be an autonomous collaborator of the British in the nineteenth century, and the Company had begun to subjugate Indian trade and maritime shipping decisively. None of these could have been predicted as consequences of the shutting off of bullion flows to India : nor indeed were they.

Another point is worth enquiry afresh - the character of change in the nature of resistance movements to state authority in general and imperial authority in particular. It is now about thirtyfive years since those of us who were his students were greatly impressed by the data on zamindari as well as lower peasant, and even some urban, mercantile protest and insurgency, against British imperialism in various "Presidencies" that were culled by the late Prof. Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri in his Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India, (now unfortunately out of print).<sup>100</sup> Since then the material has been used to construct a pattern of early pre- 1857 uprising resistance to colonialism.<sup>101</sup> However, the

question is - do we characterize movements or resistance against superior political authority to tax land revenue, or to regulate the principles of inheritance to chieftaincy and to exercise the rights of investiture of subordinate leadership, or against straight forward oppressive or repressive measures against the people, as agrarian uprisings against Mughals, agrarian uprisings against British colonialism, etc. or do we characterize them as rural revolt against all imperial rule, whether indigenous absolutist or colonial, and then seek for the internal differentia specifica ?

If we look at the data on the social origins of various rural uprisings by zamindars, petty peasantry and others in Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and of course the lands controlled by Marathas and Jats during the later Mughal period, described in much of the literature discussed above, we will find many points of similarity with later uprisings, for instance in old Bengal by tribal peasants from 1757 to 1857 all the way from the Chakmas of Chittagong and the Hajong, and other peasants who joined the Pagalpanthi rebellion of the 1820s in Mymensingh to the Mal Paharias, Bhumij, Kols or Santals in the Rajmahal Hills - Chota Nagpur plateau eastern ramparts. The same would be true of structural similarities between Bhil and Ramoshi insurgency in pre-colonial and colonial Western India. Where the difference appeared was in the methods of repression practised under colonialism. The Mughals had sought to integrate the tribal or ethno-religious leadership into the subaltern ranks of the nobility of the imperial structure and in the last resort to conciliate even the Gonds like Bakht Bulahd of Deogarh in Aurangzeb's time or Padia Naik the Berad of Wegingera fort who was the last zamindar to be conquered before Aurangzeb died.<sup>102</sup> Even the Sikhs before the 1730s - Mata Sundari, Guru Gobind Singh's widow and his most eminent

disciple, Bhai Mani Singh and the followers of the Tat Khalsa, as distinct from the Bandais, were restored to control of the Harmandir at Amritsar after Banda's insurgency execution and, marginalisation of the Bandais seeking to control the Akal Takht.<sup>103</sup>

But colonialism followed the new trend, practised as the eighteenth century continued, of Maratha or Afghan ravaging of the social structure of the communities which they attacked. In the same way as the Maratha bargi hangama of the 1740s left bitter memories in West Bengal folklore, and the Shah, Maratha and Afghan gardis were recalled with horror in the Punjab to be followed by the relative stabilisation of Sikha-Shahi or an idealisation (nor with total correspondence to reality) of "raj karega khalsa, ahi rae na koe", so also British repression of the Chuar rebellions in Medinipur<sup>104</sup> or the Rangpur peasant insurgency of 1783<sup>105</sup> was in the nature of destruction of the social groups who were contumacious, by expropriation and encouragement to other classes (such as migrant cultivators) or communities (such as vagrant Santals) to settle at the expense of the defeated insurgents' rural rights and privileges. Such policies were given up by British colonialism only after the growth of Evangelicalism and liberal Utilitarianism in the nineteenth century, when it began the new policy of segmenting the Mundari or Bhil tribal groups in new enclaved districts such as Singhbhum or the Santal Parganas, for keeping them separate from infecting or being infected by disturbances in Hindu society.<sup>106</sup>

But in the eighteenth century, colonialism struck at the forces of local autonomy and actual swaraj in a way Mughal rule had never been able to do. It will be worth our while

to carry on more intensive research on the character of the early colonial state, on its structure of rural control and the compromises it made with different classes before it could develop hegemonic force in the 19th century and subordinate the peasantry for purposes of procurement by compradores of raw materials, semi-finished commodities and other goods for the new type of metropolitan colonialism that industrial capitalism produced. Here again we see that the late eighteenth century had many elements of continuity, but also it was sprouting the germination of change from the earlier half.

Yet another point of structural continuities as well as of new changes which matured in the eighteenth century is that of the decay and formation of new and old principalities all along the Himalayan-Hindu Kush region. This is a theme on which concrete research is urgently called for based on a clear reading of Tai (old Ahom), Buddhist (Bhutanese, Sikkimese, Tibetan and Ladakhi) and Nepali as well as Sanskrit texts that are known to exist (much of it uncatalogued) in the satras of the Upper Brahmaputra Valley, the gompas of the Himalayan Buddhist territories, and Nepali libraries. The weakening of the peripheral authority of the Mughals from Aurangzeb's time in the late seventeenth century reduced political pressure on the high Himalayan economies for tribute to India. This is bound to have strengthened forces like the new Ahom dynasty of Garhgaon, the Tungkhungias, the Dharma Raja-Deb Raja syndrome of choice of a chieftain of one of the principal fortresses (such as Tongsa or Paro) in Bhutan, of the Namgyal dynasty in Sikkim, at whose expense however, Bhutias conquered Kalimpong in 1708, the later rise of the Gurkha principality of Nepal which extended itself through Limbuan and Ilam into lower Sikkim (later the Nagri-Darjeeling region) and also Garhwal and Kumaon

only in the last years of the 18th century; or forces in the 19th century of the Sikhs and Dogras from Chamba, Jammu and Kashmir, rising at the expense of the Namgyal rulers of Leh in Ladakh (in decay through the eighteenth century) and the rise of the Barakzai Kingdom in Afghanistan at the expense of Durrani collapse in the late eighteenth century. It was in this context of new alignments of forces that change occurs on the Himalayan-Hindu Kush border lands. Whether the change was initiated because, as Prof. Athar Ali surmises, British control over the North Indian Plains trade nodes by the end of the eighteenth century weakened political power in each area, or whether the changes were more fundamentally endogenous in the mountainlands during the seventeenth-eighteenth century is a point that scholars of Himalayan studies would do well to analyse.

## V Epilogue

The themes to which I have been drawing attention with regard to Indian eighteenth century studies may be considered as basics on which research has not yet been done, while Western scholarship, has recently - in the 1980s - begun to make sweeping generalizations about the century without taking note of these lacuna. I myself have not been able to compress my thoughts more elegantly and with more explicit propositions. The data is diffuse, to be gathered from different regions of uneven development, with different languages, creeds and cultures. Each historian constructs his or her own eighteenth century and seeks, with such subjective bias, to prepare objective, positivistic statements such as that so-and-so did happen, or at the very least must have happened - as if their constructions are positive trends in themselves. Unless such

certainty can be affected, texts cannot be completed, or readable monographs prepared and such certainty has yet been denied to me.

These years I have allowed myself to be diverted on another tack. Do the existing texts, of the period of the 1950s to 1970s that I have been instancing have internal consistency or do they fall into various schools of thought. Interesting propositions about historiographical ideology can emerge from such deconstruction. For instance, the construction of periodization. Can we not conclude that the eighteenth century till its end was part of earlier trends, rather than the reading forwards of the trends constructed from hind-sight of the dominance of the culture of the Bay of Bengal coasts of Coromandel and the Gangetic delta, which along with Bombay and Gujarat became really dominant only in the nineteenth century? If indeed it was a part of earlier tendencies, endogenous and traditional being jolted from old moorings by accelerating internal contradictions and external attacks from across the mountains as well as by sea, how much of it was mediaeval and how much modern? Should the mediaeval aspect not be more explicitly emphasised in collegiate and post-graduate curricula? Should the late mediaeval aspect of Mughal absolutism in decay and stagnation not be seen as a major influence and drag on the principalities and successor-state-forms that jostle our imagination in eighteenth century South Asia in general? Should we not then use a more sophisticated and uptodate framework of comparison and contrast with late mediaeval and early modern trends in state structure - and, a theme neglected completely in this paper, in popular culture - in Europe, West, South-East and East Asia, and the Americas, where similar forces of transition

from the mediaeval to the modern periods were at work- not necessarily, of course, at the same pace, but faster in the North Atlantic quadrant of the world, and slower in the other three quadrants.

If teachers of eighteenth century history are at least more aware - even if, like me, they are too old to learn - not only English language sources, but also Persian, Marathi, Malayali, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, and other Indian languages, and do not feel that acquaintance with French, Dutch or Portuguese sources makes them Indian mediaevalists, they have a rich harvest to reap : in finding the many semi-feudal elements embedded and encapsulated in fossil forms, in the modern Indian heritage of rural and factory economy, urban milieu, religion, or even proto-dynastic elements in our state power.<sup>107</sup> This will also help in identifying modern Indian history more rigorously with the social and economic dialectics of colonialism and democratic national movement, more concretely in the context of capitalist and socialist penetration in Indian consciousness. But that is another subject. I thank scholars for the patience with which they have borne my thoughts on themes which I have already raised.



### FOOTNOTE

1. This paper is a reorganised and corrected version of a brochure distributed at the 49th Session of the Indian History Congress, to which it was the General Presidential's Address. That version was gravely flawed by printing errors, due to my own delay in preparing the copy for the press. A chunk on the views of B.S. Cohn and of Philip Calkins was then inadvertently dropped. Originally drafted in September, 1988, the second part did not take note of some writings on the 18th century in journals on series of volumes devoted to Indian history, which have been published in the 1980s : these views will be covered in a subsequent article. I am most grateful to my friends, J.V. Naik of Bombay University, and Iqtidar Alam Khan of Aligarh Muslim University for their help in reworking or rethinking the first draft. This draft, with a beginning page read at the actual 49th session of the IHC is being published in full in the 49th session at Dharwar, Proceedings Volume. I regret that before that was sent to the press, I could not read C.A. Bayly, The New Cambridge Modern History of India II. 1. Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire (Cambridge University Press, 1988, Orient Longman Indian Edn.) which I shall notice in depth in the subsequent article referred to above on "Changing Vogues in the Characterisation of Eighteenth Century India".
2. Madhu Jain "Television : Bharat Ek Khoj : Drama of India Today, Sept. 30, 1988, 133.
3. M. Bloch, Apologie pour l'Histoire : Ou Metier d'Historien (Paris, 1949).
4. Translated from the French by A.M. Sheridan Smith (London, 1972).

5. At an Indian Institute of Advanced Study Workshop in 1970, for planning a Government-sponsored source book of Indian traditions, I presented a caution based on the pessimistic pragmatism that consciousness of historical tradition could be manipulated for use value as much as any other commodity : "any historian is a producer, one who supplies data to the general public for use in thinking about their cultural heritage. . . . The general public may be viewed as the consumer in the marketplace . . . The present is where the historian sells his wares." B. De "Encapsulation as an Alternative to the Difficulties of Periodising Indian History" S.C. Malik (ed.) Indian Civilization : The First Phase ; Problems of a Source book (Transactions of the IAS, Simla, 1971) 83. The Srilankan data is in S.J. Tambiah, Ethnic Genocide and the Rape of Democracy in Sri Lanka (O.U.P. 1986). Selig S. Harrison, India The Most Dangerous Decades (O.U.P. 1959) was an early tabulation for U.S. think tank data basing of their arguments in favour of a great deal of ephemeral subnationalist or ethno-linguistic, chauvinism and regionalist historical identity.
6. Sibaji Kayal, "Secretary's Report" Souvenir of Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad, Fifth Annual Conference, 3-5 September, 1988 in Bengali.
7. Eileen E. Power, Mediaeval People (first edn. 1924, Harmondsworth, 1937) ; Peter Geyl, Napoleon, For and Against (London 1957).
8. Sir Lewis Namier, Vanished Supremacies, Essays on European History, 1812-1912 (London, 1958, New York and Evanston, 1965), Chapter VII.
9. D.D. Kosambi "Combined Methods in Indology" published in Science and Human Progress, Essays in Honour of late Prof. D.D. Kosambi, Scientist, Indologist and Historian (Bombay, 1974) which concentrates on the suggestion "that the linguistic study of problems of ancient Indian culture would be more fruitful if supplemented by intelligent use of archaeology, anthropology, sociology and a suitable historical perspective", p.1.

10. C. Collin Davies, An Historical Atlas of the Indian Peninsula (O.U.P. 2nd Ed. 1973) ; Irfan Habib, An Atlas of the Mughal Empire, Political and Economic Maps with Detailed Notes, Bibliography and Index (O.U.P. 1981) ; Joseph E. Schwartzberg ed. A Historical Atlas of South Asia (University of Chicago Press, 1978).
11. G.L. Achya, Project-in-Charge NCERT, India's Struggle for Independence, Visuals and Documents (New Delhi, 1986) ; India's Struggle for Freedom (Calcutta, 1987).
12. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar (ed.) The History of Bengal 1200-1757 (Dacca 1947) 497-499; Fall of the Mughal Empire : In Four Volumes : IV 1789-1803 (First Edition 1950 Calcutta, 1972) Ch.51. The Old Order and the New.
13. Satish Chandra, The Eighteenth Century in India : Its Economy and the Role of the Marathas, the Jats, the Sikhs and the Afghans (Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar Lectures of the CSSS Calcutta, 1986) 2.
14. "This remains the major question from which we must begin - and from which there is no escape" for M. Athar Ali : "The Eighteenth Century - An Interpretation" Indian Historical Review V, Nos.1-2, 174 (This is an enlarged version of "The Passing of Empire : The Mughal Case" Modern Asian Studies, IX, 3, Cambridge, 1975) To Prof. Athar Ali there is a certain same-substitutability between eighteenth century and Mughal decline.
15. Herman Goetz "The Crisis of Indian Civilization in the Eighteenth Century" (Calcutta University Lecture Series, reprint 1938 to which my attention was drawn in 1961 by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and from which my interest in this problem grew) and Bernard Coh, "Political Systems in Eighteenth Century India : The Banaras Region" Journal of the American Oriental Society, 82 3 July-September, 1962, republished in An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays (of which future reference will be made) are early marks of this trend.
16. Barun De "Bharatiya Itinasher Paryayakram O Ashtadash Satabdir Tatparya" in Itihas Anusandhana, 3 (ed. by Gautam Chattopadhyay, Calcutta 1988, in Bengali) gives in brief the points elaborated below.

17. Muzaffar Alam, The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India : Awadh and the Punjab 1707-1748 (New Delhi, 1986) 9.
18. ibid, 9-10.
19. Satish Chandra, The Eighteenth Century in India, op.cit., 9-10.
20. ibid, 10.
21. ibid, 10-11.
22. ibid.
23. Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, Three Mughal Poets, Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan (Harvard, 1968).
24. J.S. Grewal, Muslim Rule in India : The Assessment of British Historians (Calcutta, O.U.P. 1970).
25. For references see Barun De "A Historiographical Critique of Renaissance Analogues for Nineteenth Century India" in B. De (ed.) Perspectives in the Social Sciences, I Historical Dimensions (Calcutta 1977) 197.
26. Peter Hardy, Foreword to J.S. Grewal, op.cit., xi-xii.
27. A recent example is the thought-provoking but abstract and far fetched structural-functional sociological essay in J.C. Heesterman "Western Expansion, Indian Reaction : Mughal Empire and British Raj" in The Inner Conflict of Tradition, Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship and Society (Chicago and O.U.P. New Delhi, 1985) 158-179. Early 19th century neighbours of the British Indian Empire often perceived the situation in this way. Janet Rizvi in her carefully documented Ladakh, Crossroads of High Asia (O.U.P. Delhi, 1983) 60 notes that "When Kashmir passed under the rule of the Sikhs in 1819, the Ladakhi king, Tshe-pal Namgyal, calculated that his advantage by rather with the more distant British Government ('the legitimate representative of the dynasty of Timur' in Moorcroft's quaint phrase) than with Ranjit Singh's expansionist empire" : but his move for allegiance to British forwarded by Moorcroft to Calcutta was rejected and Ladakh later passed under Dogra rule, and then as part of Jammu and Kashmir, integration with India.

28. Athar Ali "The Eighteenth Century : An Interpretation", IHR, V, 1936.
29. In a review of the first three volumes of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan Series The History and Culture of the Indian People, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and A.D. Pusalkar, with a foreword by K.M. Munshi, published in the Annals of the Ehandarkar Oriental Research Institute, XXV (Poona, 1954-55) D.D. Kosambi wrote "Where Vincent Smith's work, . . . contained glorification of empire of strong central rule, of firmness on the part of the ruler and loyalty on that of the subject, the present tendency is to prove that we Indians are as good as the conquerors, with a part no less glorious than anyone else. . . . The effort to prove equality of the present ruling class (and of the supposed ancestors it has found for itself) with the ruling class in some western countries may help secure foreign intervention in time of need; it will not prevent the internal struggle from maturing all the more rapidly". cf. "What Constitutes Indian History" in D.D. Kosambi on History and Society : Problems of Interpretation, ed. by A.J. Syed (Dept. of History, University of Bombay, 1985), 68, 71.
30. Barun De, "Renaissance Analogues" op.cit. item VII (a) Glorification of Nineteenth Century Movements for Hindu Revival. Item VIII The Corollary of Communalism.
31. Muzaffar Alam, op.cit., passim.
32. Athar Ali, loc. cit.
33. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, History of Bengal, II, 1200-1757, 497-98.
34. Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire, IV, 1789-1803, 343-347, passim.
35. The idea of tropes and rhetoric as applicable to historiographical discourse will be found in Hayden White, Metahistory (Baltimore, 1973) and Tropics of Discourse (Baltimore, 1978).
36. Satish Chandra Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court 1707-1739 (Aligarh Muslim University, 1959) xviii.
37. Satish Chandra, Mediaeval India, Society, the Jagirdari Crisis and the Village (New Delhi, 1982) Ch.VI, 63.

38. *ibid.* 64-5. "The lowering of the effective share of the nobles in the agricultural surplus, reflected in reality a social and economic crisis which the Mughal ruling class tried to resolve by administrative means. Since the land revenue demand had already been placed at the highest rate possible, an augmentation of the resources available to the Mughal ruling class could be obtained only by (a) a further expansion of the empire (b) expansion and improvement of cultivation (c) improvement and expansion of non-agricultural production and trade by application of science and technology (d) efforts to squeeze the share of the various classes to the point of diminishing returns. The Mughal ruling class or sections of it tried, in one way or another all (these) methods ... However, it was .. unable and unwilling to carry out any drastic changes in the existing social set-up, especially the agrarian relations which rested on the tried".
39. Satish Chandra, The Eighteenth Century in India, *op.cit.*, 36.
40. Irfan Habib, The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707 (A.M.U. and Bombay 1964) 350-351.
41. An account of the process in the middle of the seventeenth century is given by his colleague, Shireen Moosvi "scarcities, Prices and Exploitation - the Agrarian Crisis, 1658-70" Studies in History (JNU, New Delhi 1, 1 (new series) 45-55.
42. A.I. Chicherov.
43. Irfan Habib "Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India", *Enquiry*, New Series, III Pt.3 (Winter 1971).
44. Irfan Habib "Emergence of Nationalities" Social Scientist, Vol.4, No.1, August 1975.
45. Irfan Habib "Colonialization of the Indian Economy, 1757-1900, Vol.3, No.8, March 1975 and "Studying a Colonial Economy without Perceiving Colonialism" Modern Asian Studies, 19. 3 (1985).
46. Athar Ali "The Eighteenth Century : An Interpretation" op.cit.

47. ibid, 176 : "The Safavid empire also collapsed, the Uzbek Khanate broke into fragments, and the Ottoman empire began its career of slow and inexorable decline". This may be compared with Richard B. Barnett, North India Between Empires, Awadh, the Mughals and the British, 1720-1801 (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1980) comment, p.4, on the late Marshall G.S. Hodgson's "stress (on the international context : a technicalistic social transformation from 1600 to 1800 in Western Europe, based on the twin concepts of constant innovation aimed at technical efficiency and commercial profit for its own sake" and repetition of Hodgson's argument "that although the eighteenth century was hardly notable for the worldwide impact of Muslim's creative energies, it was certainly no worse than several other periods in the mature phase of Islamic civilisation. Such an era would not have seen the fracturing of four imperial systems - the Ottoman Uzbek, Safavid and Mughal - if Western Europeans had not already undermined the landborne trade of central arid lands, introduced quantities of precious metals from the New World, (and hence inflation) and gained a technicalistic head start which yet appears impossible to overcome". (vide Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, Vol.III The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times, Chicago 1974, repr. 1977, 134-222. Barnett places Athar Ali's Modern Asian Studies 9, 3 (1975) article on which "The Eighteenth Century : An Interpretation" is based chronologically after Hodgson. If this connection is accepted, it would fit Prof. Athar Ali's interpretation in the trend of Islamic studies of the modern variety, now popular in the West; though of course that is explicitly Indological in its secular thrust.
48. ibid, 184-6.
49. ibid, 181.
50. ibid, 183 : also see 181.
51. ibid, 182.
52. ibid.
53. ibid, 181.
54. Such a sociological description of class structure is to be found in Ranajit Guha's first article in Ranajit Guha, ed. Subaltern Studies (O.U.P. 1981).

55. Satish Chandra, The Eighteenth Century in India, 2, 6, 8, 32-33.
56. Bernard Cohn, article republished in An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays (O.U.P. 1987) 483 quoting N.K. Sinha's work on Rise of the Sikh Power (Calcutta 1947) 1.
57. ibid.
58. ibid.
59. ibid., 483-484. These premises which have guided much later research in U.S., Western European, and currently Subaltern Studies Indology have not been analysed or recognised for their specific methodological relevance, in Ranajit Guha's erudite Introduction to Cohn's work, ibid., vii-ixxvi.
60. ibid., 485-486.
61. A.M. Shah "The Political System in Eighteenth Century Gujarat" Enquiry, I (1964) 83-95.
62. Philip Calkins, "The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, 1700-1740" Journal of Asian Studies XXIX, 4 (August 1970).
63. Karen Leonard "The Hyderabad Political System and its Participants" Journal of Asian Studies, XXX, 3 (May 1971).
64. Nicholas B. Dirks "The Parts of a Palaiyakaran : "The Ethno-history of a Little Indian King" Journal of Asian Studies, XLI, 4, August 1982.
65. T.G.P. Spear "The Mughal Mansabdari System" in Edmund Leach and S.N. Mukherjee, Elites in South Asia (Cambridge, 1970) 1-15.
66. Calkins "Formation of a Regionally-Oriented Group in Bengal", 799.
67. ibid.
68. ibid., 806.
69. ibid., 800.



70. ibid, 806.
71. Athar Ali "The Eighteenth Century : An Interpretation"  
Indian Historical Review, V, 181.
72. ibid, 181-2.
73. In a recent gloss on this contestation, Richard B. Barnett, North India Between Empires op.cit. 11 and footnote 18, first pontificates "I agree with Athar Ali that the rise of regional ruling groups is an effect not a cause of decline" (Calkins nowhere says that it was a cause of decline, but rather an effect of change asymptotic with cultural decline) and then proceeds to footnote "In a personal communication, March 1979, Prof. Athar Ali has modified his assertion that no new elites emerged in Awadh because it retained the jagir system". Also, a slip in Prof. Athar Ali's text is to be noted where the latter compares the Jagat Seths with "the nagarseths in the seventeenth century". The Murshidabad bankers secured mal-zamini revenue payments and were quite unlike the Gujarati urban private merchants described by D.R. Gadgil, Ashin Dasgupta and Michael Pearson.
74. Yusuf Husain, The First Nizam : The Life and Times of Nizam u'l Mulk Asaf Jah I (Bombay, 1983, edn.) J.F. Richards, Mughal Administration in Golconda (Delhi 1975).
75. Stewart N. Gordon, "Slow Conquest : Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire, 1723-1760" Modern Asian Studies, 12, 1, 1977, subsequent references are from the corpus of the text.
76. In Bhopal at this time, 9 kanavisdars shared 41 staff (1 majundar, external auditor, 10 cavalrymen, 4 archers, 4 messengers, 15 infantry, 2 standard bearers, 2 light bearers, priest, 1 watchman, 1 potdar (money changer) - a small unit of the apparatus of state plunder.
77. Romila Thapar, Ancient Indian Social History (Hyderabad, 1978) 361-362.
78. ibid, 364-365, 372-373.
79. ibid, 375.

80. ibid, 376.
81. S. Nurul Hasan, Foreword to Indu Banga, The Agrarian System of the Sikhs : Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries (Delhi, 1978).
82. Indu Banga, Agrarian System of the Sikhs, x.
83. More notable references are J.S. Grewal "Eighteenth Century Sikh Polity" and a few other essays in From Guru Nanak to Maharaja Ranjit Singh : Essays in Sikh History (Amritsar 1972) : J.S. Grewal and Indu Banga, translation of Ganesh Das' Char Bagh-i-Punjab in Punjab in the Early Nineteenth Century (Amritsar, 1975) : Banga, Agrarian System, op.cit. and Veena Sachdeva, The Rule of the Bhangis (1765-1810) (unpublished M.Phil dissertation, GNDU, Amritsar, 1981) and Polity and Economy in Late Eighteenth Century Punjab (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Deptt. of History, GNDU, Amritsar, 1987).
84. Banga, Agrarian System, op.cit., 14, quoting Ahmed Shah Batalia, Tarikh-i-Hind, 315's story : "Nadir Shah - Have you got any troublesome characters in this country ? Zakariya Khan - None, except a group of Hindu faqirs who assemble twice to bathe in a tank which they regard as a place of pilgrimage. N.S. - Where do they live ? Z.K. - Their homes are in their saddles. N.S. Take care. The day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of your country.
85. Banga, op.cit., footnote 16.
86. ibid, Chs. III and VII, and 148.
87. ibid, 38.
88. Sachdeva, op.cit., 183-184.
89. Muzaffar Alam, The Crisis of Empire, op.cit., 140-143, 169-175, 203, using Grewal and Banga, op.cit.

90. Even in this revised version, the elitist bias is obvious "With all their faults, these elites had played by no means an insignificant role in holding the empire together, and acted as cement to the framework within which the economic processes could work themselves out. These elites had also provided patronage to the arts and the specialised crafts. Their decay inevitably led to the decline of the traditional values, customs and manners, etc. in these countries" Satish Chandra, The Eighteenth Century in India, op.cit., 2.
91. ibid, 6-8, 32-33, 34, 36.
92. Some details can be found in Surya Kumar Bhuyan, Atan Buragchain and His Times (Gauhati, 1957), idem, Tungkhungia Buranji .. 1681-1826, An Old Assamese Chronicle of the Tungkhungia Dynasty of Ahom Sovereignty (London, 1933); idem Anglo-Assamese Relations, 1771-1826 (Gauhati, 1949) : and in Amalendu Guha "From Neo-Vaishnavism to Insurgency : Peasant Uprisings and the Crisis of Feudalism in Eighteenth Century Assam" in Ashok Mitra, The Truth Unites : Essays in Tribute to Samar Sen (Calcutta, 1985).
93. Details will be found from Ashin Dasgupta, Malabar in Asian Trade, 1740-1800 (Cambridge, 1987); Kunju-krishnan Nadar Rajayyan, South Indian Rebellion : The First War of Independence 1801-2 (Mysore 1971); S. Kadhivel, A History of the Maravas, 1700-1802, (Madurai, 1977); Nicholas Dirks, The Hollow Crown, The Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom (Cambridge, 1988).
94. Aniruddha Ray "The Revolt of Sobha Singh - A Case Study" Bengal Past and Present, July-December 1969, 210-222 and January-June, 1970, 158-73; Richards, Mughal Administration in Golconda, loc.cit.; Hari Ram Gupta, Studies in the Later Mughal History of the Punjab (1707-1793) (Lahore, 1944) ; Muzaffar Alam, "Aspects of Agrarian Uprisings in North India in the Early Eighteenth Century" in Sabyasachi Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar, ed. Situating Indian History For Sarvepalli Gopal (OUP, Delhi, 1986).
95. Barun De, "Some Social and Political Implications of the Dissolution of the Mughal Empire in Northern India from 1707-1761" in O.P. Bhatnagar, ed. Studies in the Social History of India (Modern) (Allahabad, 1964).

96. I am obliged to Prof. S. Nurul Hasan (then Governor of West Bengal, when the first draft of this was being prepared) for pointing out to me that the Khutut-i-Shah Alam (Raza Library, Rampur, copy) refers not only to Hyder Naik (who sent a mission to Delhi in 1772 when the Emperor returned under Sindhia's escort to the capital from Allahabad) requesting from him the subahdari of Carnatic (Bijapuri as well as Hyderabad) - i.e. of old Vijaynagar) but also to Tipu Naik later. The reference was to their inferior status, even in the decrepitude of the Delhi suzerain. Satish Chandra, The Eighteenth Century in India, op.cit. which gives the data about Hyder's embassy notes "it only in March 1788 that Tipu .. proclaimed himself 'sultan' on the ground that Shah Alam was the prisoner or servant of Mahadji Sindhia and that none but an idiot could consider him as a sovereign" ft.nt.7, quoting Mark Wilks, Historical Sketches of the South India (London 1810) 110 and 415.
97. Ashin Dasgupta, Malabar in Asian Trade, 1740-1800 (Cambridge, 1967); idem, Indian Merchants and The Decline of Surat, c.1700-1750 (Wiesbaden, 1979); Hiroshi Fukazawa's articles on the Maratha economy are listed in the excellent bibliography in Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, ed. The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol.I: c.1200-c.1750 (Cambridge 1982) 524; Rajayyan, op.cit. Kadhirvel, op.cit.; Dirks, op.cit.; Sirajul Islam, Bangladesh District Records (Dacca, 1978), idem The Permanent Settlement in Bengal : A Study of its Operation, 1790-1819 (Dacca, 1979); Ratnalekha Ray, Change in Bengal Agrarian Society, 1760-1850 (Delhi, 1979); Atis Kumar Dasgupta, The Fakir and Sannyasi Uprisings (unpublished Calcutta University ph.D. thesis 1987) : Basudeb Chattopadhyay, Crime and Control in Early Colonial Bengal, 1770-1860 (unpublished Calcutta University, Ph.D. thesis, 1988) : Iqbal Husain, Rise of the Rohilla Power in the Eighteenth Century (forthcoming from AMU Centre for Advanced Studies in History; C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazars, North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870 (Cambridge, 1983).
98. The matter remains unresolved despite the Journal of Peasant Studies, 12, 2 and 3 (January/April 1985) special issue on "Feudalism and Non-European Societies", in which I find myself able to understand best (though am not necessarily in complete agreement with) Irfan Habib, "Classifying Pre-Colonial India" 44.53.

99. I am grateful to Dr. Shireen Moosvi, for drawing my attention at Dharwar during the 49th Session of the History Congress to this point.
100. Sashi Bhusan Chaudhuri, Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India, (1765-1857) (Calcutta 1955).
101. Kathleen Gough "Indian Peasant Uprisings" reprinted in A.R. Desai, Peasant Struggles in India (O.U.P. Bombay, 1979) vide p.86-7 and footnote 9.
102. J.F. Richards - "The Mughal Crisis in the Deccan" in Symposium : The Decline of the Mughal Empire in Journal of Asian Studies, XXV, 2, February, 1976.
103. cf. Madanjit Kaur, The Golden Temple, Past and Present (Amritsar, 1983) 33-35.
104. A base level account will be found in Binod Sankar Das, Civil Rebellion in the Frontier Bengal (1760-1805) (Calcutta 1973).
105. Narahari Kaviraj, A Peasant Uprising in Bengal, 1783 etc. (Bombay, 1972).
106. Jagdish Chandra Jha, The Kol Insurrection of Chota Nagpur (Calcutta 1964); idem, The Bhumij Revolt, 1832-1833 (Ganga Narayan's Hangama on Turmoil) (Delhi 1967).
107. For an elaboration of this point about periodisation, see Barun De "Bharatiya Itihashey Paryayakrama O Ashtadash Satabdir Tatparya" in Itihas Anusandhan, 3, loc. cit. (in Bengali).