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Propositions

1. The Ganga River as a geographical entity helps to explain economic and political processes in the region of the Ganga plain.
2. The Ganga divides and connects two historically related but ecologically distinct sub-zones: the semi-arid areas on its western and southern banks and the humid area on its northern and eastern banks.
3. The Ganga stands at the beginning *and* end of empire.
4. The Ganga facilitated Bihar's commercial integration into the maritime global economy.
5. Bihar's commercial integration into the maritime global economy (proposition 4) was the result of the growing agency of regional zamindars, merchants, bankers, and officials, following their increasing collaboration with the European Companies on the coast.
6. The process of regional centralization initiated by the zamindars was carried forward by the English East India Company after it assumed the *diwani* (Mughal taxation rights) over the Bengal province in 1765.
7. The traditional tripartite geographical division of the Ganga plain does not help to explain historical processes. Instead a division based on rainfall is far more useful in explaining the dynamics of polity and economy (contra O. H. K. Spate, *India and Pakistan: A general and regional geography*).
8. In early modern South Asian historiography, the historical-geographic perspective remains to be marginal in informing our understanding of political and economic changes (contra Irfan Habib, *The agrarian system of Mughal India*).
9. Thus far, no work on early modern Indian history has tried to synthesise a regional, political study with a maritime-oriented, economic history (contra

Kukum Chatterjee, *Merchants, politics and society in early modern India* and Om Prakash, *The Dutch East India Company*).

10. Nationalist, Marxist and revisionist scholars continue to disagree significantly on the issue of Mughal decline as well as about the nature of the eighteenth-century Indian economy and polity. A global perspective that focusses on long-term geohistorical processes will yield more tangible results on these historical problems (contra Irfan Habib, “Potentialities of capitalistic development”; Muzaffar Alam, *The crisis of empire in Mughal north India*; Karen Leonard, “The ‘great firm’ theory”).
11. To be a witness to the largely equitable distribution of resources, access to opportunities and the general social security enjoyed by Dutch citizens was a truly remarkable experience. If made applicable at a wider, even global scale such political and social arrangements would help achieve the goals aspired to by the radical theories of social change still debated in India and elsewhere.
12. Pursuit of historical inquiry and the generation of knowledge should be premised on compassion for our fellow humans and could help create a mutually dependent global order.