

**TRADITION, IDENTITY AND POLITICAL ELITE: SOME  
ASPECTS OF STATE FORMATION IN  
18th CENTURY MAHARASHTRA**

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DECLARATION

Certified that the dissertation entitled "Tradition, Identity and Political Elite : Some aspects of State formation in 18th Century Maharashtra" submitted by Amarjeet Prasad Singh is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of this university. This dissertation has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university and is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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PREFACE

The travel from a mere desire of seeking an M.A. degree to a slightly serious research work entails passage through many stages. The gradual inculcation of ideas and values speak of the tremendous contribution of this campus which nurtures a distinct community identity hardly visible anywhere in India, if not the world. J.N.U.'s unique topography with its rocky terrains and slabs and the resplendent greenery juxtaposed with the academic complex plays a not insignificant role in evolution of identity. Fascinatingly as E.P. Thompson attested Ganga Dhaba; a place where discussions around national and international issues take place, but to me today, it becomes the place to revive ancient pristine romanticization alongwith modern and post-modern romantic interludes, which simultaneously carries conventional conservatism, elite chauvinism and leftist pragmatism.

It is indeed striking that Tiananman Square massacre in China brings down S.F.I. union in J.N.U. and articulates a new political ethos represented by a group of broad minded leftists. But Mandal heaps another blow to this solidarity and S.F.I. seeks the benefit once again. The collapse of communism all around the world eventually breaks the S.F.I.'s hegemony and brings a combined union of various parties where B.J.P. also managed to enter the campus due to the Mandal-Mandir imbroglio. There is no denying the fact that the new dispensation is leading to the gradual devaluation of relationships possibly due to the relentless drive towards market economy. The repercussion seems unfolding itself through the withering of colloquial colour of relationship as it hardly evokes emotional attachment to one another. Socialism does not merely entail an equality in the productive sphere, but Marx's broad presupposition of strong humanist ethic as he himself was thoroughly exposed to the snoring and whistling of modern machines and thus to the machination of human life. But today we ourselves are so badly exposed in our own relationship that the zeal to perceive and study popular culture infact becomes the part of an elite culture. The relationship is getting greatly monetized around some personal and material aggrandizement. Compounding such a scenario is the introduction of star T.V; what ethos it holds for India and J.N.U. for future in the light of its heavy impact on American society, is anybody's guess. What with today's role models being Monica, Sophiya and Madonna. Thus to me capitalism can not transcend some of its vicious elements. Conversely, it should not mean that Marxism can be the only ladder to reach-up to Socialism.

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Such voluminous characteristics speak of the student's desire to delve into the expanse of freedom. Construction of individual's identity and the articulation of an intellectual's aura which however is not absolutely devoid of the rich repertoire of verbal virtuosity. In the midst of all these, I was also nurturing my own identity from the Dhaba gossip to the seminarian discussion. The politico academic discourse so greatly impinged on me that a strong longing for relationship also started construing along the lexicon of academic discipline, despite the strong grip of certain vicious rituals of tradition beneath one's desire of becoming progressive, radicals etc. It surfaced much to my expectation when I was slighted by someone's giggles and when my niceties were dumped into ditches. Possibly then I realised the instrumentalities of relationship in the form of rugged individualism and crash conservatism. It indeed rendered me speechless as well as helpless for sometime but it culminated into a quick decision to bid farewell to my bygone days. Instead of reeking in melancholic outburst I let myself drift, but equally conscious of the fact that the historian's craft does not demand a juvenile romantic.

To relieve myself off I set out for a field trip to Pune, a beautiful city surrounded by Deccan plateaus, enjoys living with the past and frequently utters the great historical figure of the land with a strong sense of pride. They love to keep alive the memory of past through their literary skills and through their zeal of erecting monuments of the past figures around the central market and busy suburbs. This equally shows how tradition carries its strong meaning and is greatly embedded in the present set-up despite of having sweeping influence of cosmopolitan and modern culture. An evening in a sheer boredom takes me to a movie, 'Home Alone'. where a family flies off for a holidaying trip from Chicago to Paris. Kevin the kid is home alone and Alice the mother gets paranoid with the feeling that Kevin is home alone. While Kevin plunges himself into all kinds of childish pranks with a tinge of matured mainly gestures to bypass those sheer moments of loneliness which if thought seriously can torment the gentle kids heart while Alice desperation to meet Kevin shows strong motherly love as she tries out all the possible ways to reach up to Kevin. When they met together then the expression of longing for each other manifest in spontaneous, passionate kissing of Alice and the tender and reckless hugging of Kevin. This further reiterated my conception of tradition, as love between mother and son can never be submerged in however a totally transformed social and cultural ethos. Thus the dissertation tries to locate some of the historical processes beneath the changing and reinterpreting meaning of tradition and looks at the enduring character of tradition.

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Before following the conventional sequence of acknowledgement. I would like to express my deep admiration for Prof. Madhavan K. Palat, who despite being outside of Indian History has strongly influenced me since my M.A. days. Apart from benefiting from his incredible academic insight, I had the privilege of knowing his gentle side as well. His patience to discuss my subject for hours and hours resolved many of my problems, without ever making me feel unwanted. Truly I feel devoid of proper words to express my inner gratitude to this young gentleman.

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To Prof Harbans Mukhia, Prof Muzaffar Alam and Prof Majid Siddiqui, I owe a lot. Particularly the first two discussed with me many of their suggestions, comments and criticisms. I am particularly thankful to Prof Mukhia for being receptive to my empirical narrative through his intelligent suggestions on my rough draft. It is only after my M. Phil synopsis presentation that I had a long discussion with Prof Siddiqui whose caution, comments and suggestion helped me a lot in resolving certain important questions.

Among those who helped gratefully while on my field trip to Pune is Dr A. M. Deshpande (Director, CES), C.R. Das, S.J. Verma, Miss Kulkarni and Mr Gaikward (All of them lecturers in Pune University) and Prabhu Desai, house manager, Faculty Guest House. I owe a lot to them for their sincere and kind attitude towards me. Among the friends who always discussed with me and made some comments and suggestions after having a look at my first draft is Natrajan, (Nice to know a man like Nats who embodies an ethic of honest and sincere research), Jayant Kumar, Sanjay Gautam, Rakesh Choubey, Rahul Ghai (Rahul has got a matured historical brain and truly a terrific guy). I express my sincerest and heartfelt gratitude to all these people.

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him). I also express my sincerest gratitude to Nivedita for helping me in various ways apart from making my undecipherable handwriting, a decipherable one. I also thank Prabhu Mahapatra and Bharat Sekhar in rendering me their help.


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I also thank Dinesh and Sunil (Arpan Photostat) for bearing with my reckless attitude and finally handing me over my dissertation.

For financial support I am greatly indebted to my parents and a fellowship provided by I.C.H.R.

At last, I feel expressing myself to a deadly elegant girl as the first time I found in me an unbridled enthusiasm to appreciate some one's striking elegance which simultaneously invoked a feeling in me to get out of a sense of structured relationship.

  
Anantjeet

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BISMQ	Bharat Itihas Samsodhak Mandal
IESHR	The Indian Economic and Social History Review
IHRC	Indian Historical Records Commission
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.
PRC	Poona Residency Correspondence
SKPSS	Sambhaji Kalin Patrasar Samagrah
SPD	Selections from the Peshwa Daftar
SSRPD	Selections from the Satara Raja and the Peshwas Diaries
TKKP	Tarabaikalin Kagadpatre
PIHC	Proceedings of Indian History Congress
M.A.S.	Modern Asian Studies
N.H.M.	New History of Marathas - G.S.Sardesai(Bombay 1971)
R.M.P.	Rise of Maratha Power - M .G. Ranade (Bombay 1900)
ASM	Administrative System of Marathas - S. N. Sen (Calcutta 1976)
JAOS	Journal of American Oriental Society

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## INTRODUCTION

"Power is like the wind, we cannot see it, but we feel its force.

Ceremonial is like the snow : an insubstantial Pageant, soon melted into thin air".

David Cannadine

This expression of David Cannadine on 'power and ceremonial' aptly applies to the dispersed polity of 18th century India. The striking aspect of this fluid and dispersed pattern of political power in 18th century India, especially in the case of the Maratha Hindu Kingdom, seems to have closely resembled the constituent elements which make up 'politics' in the Indian classical texts like Dharmasastra and Arthasastra. The sovereign, endeavored to legitimise his political power by invoking the conjoint authority of the king and the brahmin. The legitimation of the king by the brahmin's transcendent authority points to the fact that the universal basis of Dharma was deep into contradiction as the Brahmin's involvement with the king jeopardized the worldly status of Brahmins.<sup>1</sup> However, this very contradictory relationship of these two became the intrinsic part of the component of sovereignty in 18th century Maratha Hindu kingdom. This relation of politics and power further acquired its legitimacy by seeking its

association with religious establishments, performing worship etc. The king started bestowing the emblems and privileges in a cultural context permeated by the language and attitude of worship. The king and Brahmins were indeed privileged but by different forms of divinity in a world in which all beings were however distantly generated from the same ontological source. The power thus whether defined as a constellation of cultural conceits or as an analytical concern, was not simply restricted to any single domain of Indian social life.

In the context of the Marathas, the fundamental structure of social and political relation was greatly geared to perpetuate the hegemony of the dominant classes but this very attempt of the elite lineage was constantly hammered at and their hegemonic influence was considerably bracketed. Beneath the emerging and ongoing political processes was the notion of honour, rituals, symbols, order, royalty etc, which were put into operation with great force, and which simultaneously produced and reproduced the hierarchy within the social and political setup. The use and the representation of such cultural constructs as historical processes derived its strength from the established structure of power, as well as from the hegemonic nature of cultural construction of power. So whether it is 18th century Marathas or India, both can be seen as linked to certain processes by which authority was constituted at each level of representation. The Maratha kingship similar to Dirks Puddu-

kotai,"remains inflicted, at its core by politics, and politics thus becomes the curious paradox of a king".<sup>2</sup> Yet the king is unable to transcend the constituent relations of the community. Power and authority seems diffused throughout the community. Thus the authority in Heesterman's word is enclosed in the network of personal relations and its exercise is bound up with corresponding shift in the actual distribution of power.<sup>3</sup> The varied and dispersed character of 18th century power however coheres the numerous scattered units which eventually culminate into a notion of identity ; whether represented by the Marathas, Jats or Sikhs.

This dissertation is mainly concerned with certain broader question of state and state-formation in pre-colonial Maharashtra. Underlying this broader issue are certain processes which went in the formation of state. The issues discussed in this dissertation are the construction of identity, the use and the representation of tradition in the construction of identity, the rationality or the internal logic of Brahmical institution, the notion of 'Classical Brahmic Kingdom, the role played by the rituals and ceremonies in the construction of power and authority, the enduring character of tradition and thus the significance of traditional polity viz-i-viz the pre-modern polity. It is within these proposed themes that a brief look at the historiography on Maratha history will help us to place these issues in the proper perspective.

It is now well understood that the plethora of recent literature on South Asia has provided a healthy corrective against the conventional construction of pre-colonial India. Rather than falling in ruins, the Mughal empire might now be seen as having been superseded from below by regional states more modern in many of their functions. And rather than representing a set of governing principles imported from a foreign or 'more advanced' culture, the early East India company might be seen as a logical extension of processes with distinctively 'indigenous origin'. The interregnum between pax Mughalica and pax Britanica has been characterized by a processes of the 'the commercialisation' and 'scribalization' of royal power.<sup>4</sup> The metaphor of the body (state or state-formation) has been generally seen as universally applicable symbolic representation of the wholeness, enclosure, order and a singular claim of polity in political ideologies.<sup>5</sup> But the state and state-formation apart from having kings and the governments and their particular conceptualization of order also incorporated social and political development, which could run counter to the rhetoric, concerns and the interests of king and the nobilities. Such a conception for Frank Perlin is generated through the counter ideologies and has to be seen in the societal depth as the various activities of the peoples of different sections constitute inherit and generate a highly flexible and varied library of methods, terms, categories and techniques which mediate relationship amongst the population and provide the continuity through time and space.<sup>6</sup>

Such a framework needs to embrace much broader and longer scale than the space and time occupied by merely one regime or body politic, be it Mughal or Maratha.

Before discussing the major works on Maratha history, and placing the proposed issues of dissertation within the space left in these works, it would be better to see the treatment of culture and ideology in the important Medieval Indian history writing as the delineation of discussed issues necessitates such a discussion.

It remains a fact that culture and ideology have been greatly marginalized in the Medieval Indian history writing particularly so in the dominant school of history writing represented by the Aligarh School. The whole oeuvre of this school remains confined to explain the Mughal State merely in the realm of agrarian economy and hence to look at the class struggle in Indian history. Such an exercise comes through strongly in Prof. Irfan Habib's treatment of 'Monothestic movement in Medieval India'.<sup>7</sup> To him this movement remains merely as an outlet of the development of 'ties of castes' and 'religious communities'. It opened new avenues for social mobility of the lower classes represented by people like Kabir, Nanak, Dadu etc.<sup>8</sup> What is important to note in his argument is the emphasis in the stratification of these people's caste and he once again seems pre-occupied with projecting the class character of the movement. Ha-

bib's one way approach submerged the socio-religion and the political content of the Bhakti movement. He greatly marginalized the teachings of Bhaktas and the broader objectives of this movement. However, to me, this movement also results in nurturing a sense of community identity and provides a structure of relationship which invokes faith, and religion time and again to legitimize and stabilize the position of a sovereign.

After Aligarh school, the vociferous champions of the new historical trend are historians like C.A. Bayly, D. Washbrook, F.Perlin, Andre Wink and Muzaffar Alam.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Prof. Alam tried to look at the stereotypes of Hindu-Muslim conflict in a slightly different way. To him, the earlier construction of such conflict seems hard to eradicate as the initial process of Islamacization certainly encountered failure in India.<sup>10</sup> However significant such an attempt is not adequate enough to explain the larger issues involved. It is in fact Chris Bayly who touches upon such themes but still the issues of culture and ideology have not found substantial theorization. Chris Bayly, working within the Cambridge tradition of Indian history writing maintains that even in matters of authority and the administrative culture, there was much continuity between the high point of Mughal hegemony and the 18th century.<sup>11</sup> So, for Bayly the 18th century becomes the creative period in Indian religious and cultural life.<sup>12</sup> Rich in narrative with new insights, Bayly certainly provides a healthy cor-

rective to the pre-colonial order. But to me Bayly's description of Medieval Indian culture looks still embedded in certain problems. He looks at the period as a complex one with buoyant economy and variegated social and religious systems but yet Bayly presumes that it was not the decaying political system rather the complexity of the old regime which facilitated the arrival of colonial power in India. Is it not that the colonial power for Bayly as well dawns with the instrument of rationality to the Indian sub-continent? Why is it that despite of having a rich narrative of old regime, an issue expressed countless times in Bayly's own writing; it remains unable to convince him that the dichotomy existing between 'tradition' and 'modernity' has to be investigated and tested seriously, instead of seeing these concepts as polar opposites. The significance of such a criticism would be evident particularly when the issues of 'tradition' and 'modernity' would be discussed later.

As far as the work on Maratha history is concerned, it is Stewart Gordon, who, way back in seventies initiated the importance of looking at 18th century in its own terms. Gordon first deconstructs the notion of Marathas as a marauding and plundering hordes and then further moves on to see Malwa's integration into the Maratha empire through a 'slow conquest.'<sup>13</sup> He talked about the interface between the indigenous and conquered population.<sup>14</sup> But still the interface remains for Gordon in the realm of agrarian econo-

my, resulting in the marginalization of other issues which have equal importance in establishing such relationship. After Gordon, it was Frank Perlin who through his skillful but heavy style of writing, brought in the notion of counter ideologies, discussed above and in the third chapter. Frank Perlin indeed unfolds some issues to be looked at with more empirical works but still Perlin's understanding of ideologies, providing a base to state and state-formation remained in relation to fraternal brotherhood generated through the attachment of people to the Watan.<sup>15</sup> This in itself does not seem plausible to me which can explain the complexities of Maratha state, particularly evolved under few important families of Central and Western India. However, Perlin admits that the central processes of these old regimes were based on the complex interaction between two kinds of forces, centralised state building and local powerful families. Perlin discovers the 'infrastructural underbelly of State' in the administrative forms employed by the 'great households' of 17th century Maharashtra, which constituted 'library' of categories and techniques'.<sup>16</sup>

Infact, after Bayly's rich empirical study of North India, it is Andre Wink who densely delved into Maharashtra and talked about whether the imperial unification of Indian subcontinent prefigured modern territorial sovereignty or whether the emergence of Maratha Swarajya was a realization of 'universal dominion' in accordance with Dharma.<sup>17</sup> Wink rightly argues that the 'Maratha Swarajya' was almost always



interpreted without contesting Mughal overlordship.<sup>18</sup> He to substantiate his point goes on to build a theory of 'fitna', a concept used by Ibn Khaldun for the Magherab region. Unlike the general meaning attached to this term such as sedition, disruption and mischief, Wink gives a new meaning to the terms by talking how fitna also incorporated reconciliation, forging of alliances etc which to him became 'the normal mechanism of state-formation' in India.<sup>19</sup> In doing so, Wink attributed central importance to this term and the entire history of Maratha and the Indian subcontinent starts revolving for Wink around 'fitna'. His notion of 'fitna' has been brought into severe criticism by Prof. Irfan Habib and Prof. Muzaffar Alam. Both of them have accused Wink of interpreting 'fitna' in a wrong sense. For Alam, fitna in Islamic literature has been used in a sense of disruption only and therefore often interchangeably with its Arabic and Persian synonymns like 'fasad', 'baghya', 'hangama' etc.<sup>20</sup> It is this concept, pointed out by Alam which led Wink to interpret the rise of Marathas as a consumation of Muslim empire than a mere revolt against it.

It seems that Prof. Alam's opposition of 'fitna' and 'asabhiya' (Clan Collision) is a bit misplaced one because, if we stretch Wink's own line of argument then it is precisely their capacity for fitna - an illegitimate force, always transcended in Muslim and Hindu religious theories, needs the support of 'asabhiya' which once done, becomes a

legitimate force. The way to 'asabhiya' goes via 'fitna'. There is no shortcut whereby it can bypass 'fitna'. It is also well a futile exercise to go into the meaning of a particular term as to me the derived meaning of a particular term by an author conforms to his conception of history and as long as an author is capable to show a structure of relationship; until then the dispute remains irrelevant. However there is no denying the fact that Wink gives unnecessary importance to this term.

The above discussion provides some space to place my issues to see their significance in relation to state and the process of state-formation. The issues which open up with such a discussion are the use of Bhakti traditions, enduring character of tradition, interface in the realm of social and cultural relationship, the emergence of Scindia and Holkar as another point in the construction of counter ideologies.

Another important theme running in this dissertation is the relationship between power, ritual and ceremonial. How ritual and ceremonial becomes the integral part of the process of political setup is an important issue of the discussion. In the case of South India, it is Burton Stein and Nicholas Dirks who have shown the significance of rituals and ceremonials. Burton Stein developed his concept of the 'segmentary state' for the Cola-period (1000 - 1200 A.D.), and extends this concept till the period of Vijayna-

gar (16th century). Stein argues that the state had a 'segmentary' character, with a tiny core area centrally administered, and the rest of the area owing no more than a ritual allegiance to central authority. In this way he brings in the separation between ritual sovereignty and political sovereignty.<sup>21</sup> In talking about ritual, Stein in fact played-down politics within the ritual. For Stien this ritual allegiance did not carry the essence of politics. But the importance of ritual comes through more clearly in the work of Nicholas Dirks. Dirks reconstruction of the pre-colonial 'old regime' of Pudukottai makes explicit that the territorial segmented system of authority and social organization of the Kallars was constituted as a unity by the royal enactment of gifting and privileging. Lesser Kallar Lords were linked to their King by ties of service and kingship while Brahmans and other non-kallars were bound by gift.<sup>22</sup> Dirks insists that kingship and Brahmans both constituted a strong hierarchical force within the Kallar society but where the relationship remained interdependent rather than encompassed within religious domain. The Crown for Dirks, was never hollow until the arrival of British but it got divested of its meaning with the arrival of the colonial state.<sup>23</sup> However, Dirks is logically inconsistent in terms of resolving the problem of colonialism and modernization. Dirks at one time gives lot of importance to the British rule as he argues that the tentacles of British rule are powerful and far reaching

however at an other place he talks about the vibrancy of the old regime even during the colonial period.<sup>24</sup>

It is in the background of above discussion that this dissertation propose an argument on 'tradition' and 'modernity'. An attempt has been made to see the traditional polity which has been characterized in the recent literature as pre-modern polity. The term traditional polity is generally understood in terms of its pejorative connotations but the dissertation tries to show the meaning and forms of tradition which had its own rationality. The historical significance should not be attributed to 'tradition' only when seen in the light of 'modernity'. The very notion of 'modernization of tradition', argued by Rudolph might seem significant in explaining the 19th century but the use of such a notion for 18th century does not seem appropriate.

The battle between 'tradition and modernity' still goes on. But instead of going into this battle, the paper seeks to argue the vibrancy of tradition. 'Tradition' here defies any watertight definition unlike modernity. 'Modernity' is defined, is the result of Renaissance and Reformation and characterized as a new era of history associated with increasing secularization and innovation, which contrasted the modern time against the traditional and static past.<sup>26</sup> But 'modernity' according to Heesterman, if it is dissociated from the realities of modern West, than with relative ease it can be defined as a Weberian ideal type, as for instance

rationality.<sup>27</sup> However, to dissociate tradition from its context is very difficult. 'Tradition' in this sense to me carries its own meaning and keeps interpreting itself to adjust and incorporate newly emerging elements. Heesterman rightly argues that the very essence of tradition is its contradictory co-existence in social reality.<sup>28</sup> 'Tradition', if it provides a critique of Brahmnical institution through the Bhakti movement, it also adopts and adjusts itself with the innovative potentialities of the Brahmnical institution and the castes.<sup>29</sup> Thus polar concepts like 'tradition' and 'modernity' do capture the essential paradox of symbolic life, but only statically. Infact, they are dialectical moments in the ongoing developmental logic of tradition.<sup>30</sup> Jayant Lele argues that by locating the making of tradition in history, we can render it dynamic.<sup>31</sup> 'Tradition' hence ceases to be a dead weight against 'modernity' is called upon to wage its battle seeking a collective annihilation of tradition.

It is in this very wide meaning of the term tradition, the dissertation tries to show that tradition in regulating the power and authority also invents some of its forms to give a new shape to its temporal milieu. Hobsbawm points out that the contrast between constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure, at least some parts of its life as unchanging and invariant, makes the 'invention of tradition' interesting. A striking

example is the deliberate choice of Gothic style for the 19th century rebuilding of the British Parliament.<sup>32</sup> Infact the invention of tradition is the response to novel situations, which takes the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi obligatory repetition.

To me also tradition keeps inventing or using old forms to give substance to the new forms. These developments are not the sterile elaboration of tradition incapable of creativity rather the expression of the rich reinterpreting context of tradition. The striking resemblance of the component of sovereignty with Indian classical texts is a testimony to this fact. The rise of the Marathas and the king's attempt to seek religious legitimation within the ambit of mughal universal dominion is an example of widening fold of 'tradition' where it coexists with the Muslim forms and practices of government. The appreciation of Brahmins and Brahmanical tradition by the saints and poets is its contradictory coexistence where it also carries negative, amorphous processes within itself. Apart from all these, rituals, symbols and titles also become intrinsic to tradition and royalty is expressed in relation to rituals which David Cannadine puts as 'rituals of royalty'.<sup>33</sup>

The dissertation is divided into three chapters which discuss the above mentioned issues at length and tries to see the significance of such issues in the context of 18th

century Maratha politics seen strictly in its own terms. The sources used to construct such a history are varied. The authenticity of hagiography still remains doubtful but in this dissertation it is argued that there hardly exists a strong conceptual gap between the hagiography and the historical records. Infact a type of structure or a structure of relationship particularly in the realm of religious forms, faiths etc. exists in both the sources. There also does exist some form of rituals and political authority in the biography of saints and poets. So to discount and side track hagiography as a source would not be appropriate.

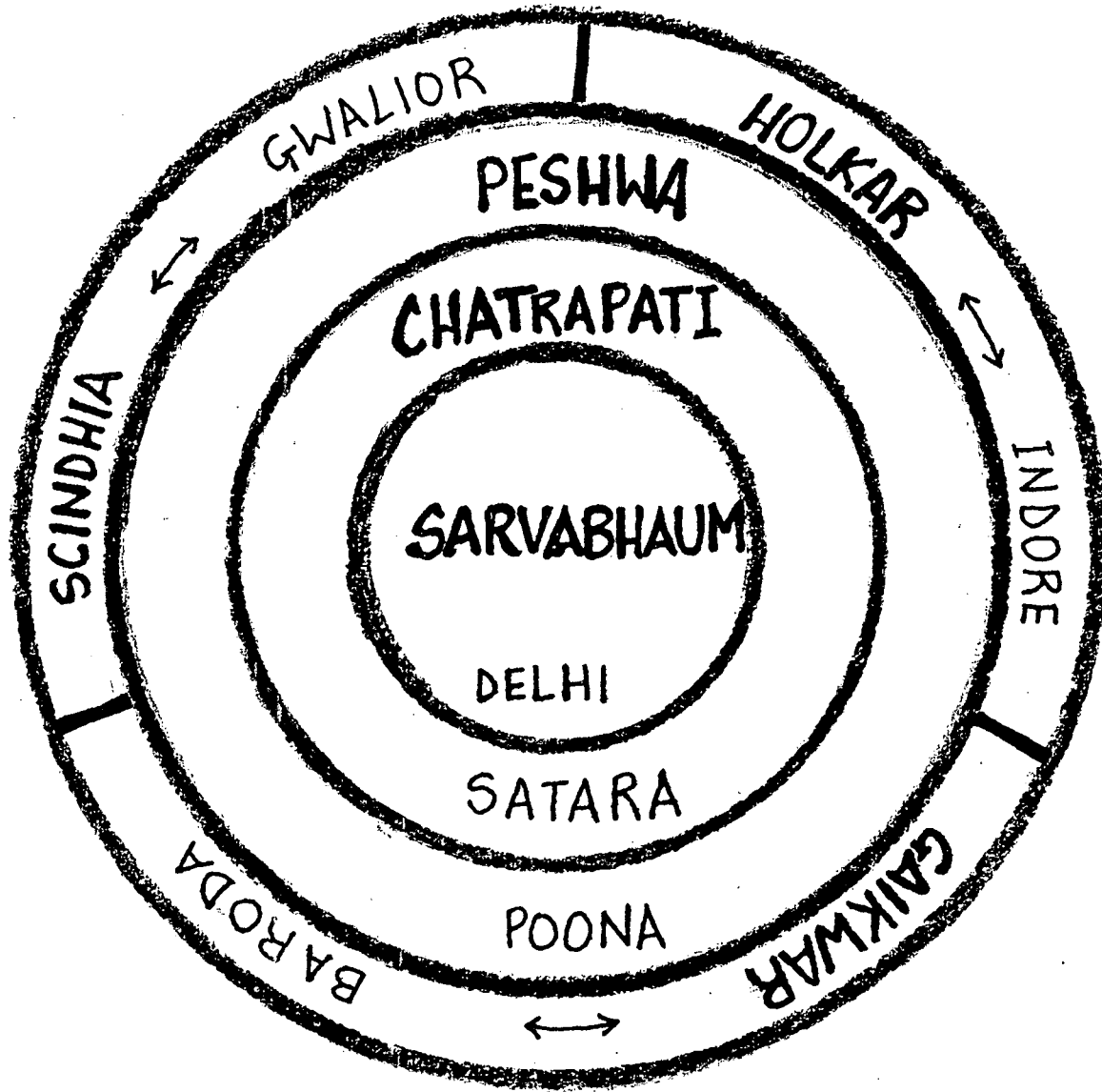
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FLOW OF LEGITIMACY FROM SARVABHUM ONWARDS

## CHAPTER ONE

### CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND REINTERPRETING TRADITION

Section I : 'Maharashtra ' and 'Maratha': The Prelude.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND REINTERPRETING TRADITION

The onset of 18th century witnessed the emergence and growth of various regional identities, dynasties along different faiths, customs and traditions, and created a political system which however remained within the ambit of Mughal universal dominion. The striking aspect of the emergence and growth of Vijay Nagar and Maratha Hindu Kingdom is the overall continuity of their component of sovereignty with the classical Indian texts of Dharmshastra and Arthshasthra, wherein the legitimate sovereignty resulted from the conjoint authority of king and Brahmin. Hence the transcendent or universal basis of sovereignty which was postulated in the religious theory and was later acquired by the brahmanical consecrations of kingship allowed to adjust itself to every conceivable situational compromise.

It is within this context that the sense of having a community identity, fostered through Marathi language and Hindu devotional religion and the picture of the 18th century Maratha Brahmin having a classic 'Brahmanic' kingdom construed around the protection of brahmins, holy cattle and holy places. This presents to us an instance of how tradition is being used and reinterpreted in the construction of Maratha identity. So, the present chapter seeks to

explore certain questions which operate in the setting of an identity whether along regional, linguistic, cultural, religious and political lines. Since Hindu Dharma at a point of time was also given a regional connotation, so is it that the notion of sovereignty was greatly implicated in the regional setting or did it remain firmly embedded in the traditional setting ?.

### 'Maharashtra' and 'Maratha': The Prelude

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Maharashtra, prior to the arrival of Shivaji was marked by dispersed and varied authorities represented by various families namely Moryas, Shrikes, Yadavas, Nimbalkar etc., who were subservient to the Deccani Muslim kingdoms. But yet their did exist a term called 'Maharashtra' in the cultural or more pointedly in the linguistic sense from the 13th century A.D.<sup>1</sup> But yet there does not seem to have been any one Maratha identity till the arrival of Shivaji. The category 'Maratha' was indeed very complex and underwent through various changes and compromise which would be explained in this chapter. In the century preceeding the arrival of Shivaji, the fate of Maharashtra remained in the hands of the Muslim ruler. The opposition to Islamic power from within the land of Marathi speaking people was almost insignificant despite various ups and downs, twists and turns marked by Muslim conquests, rules etc. Yet, a cultural model called Maharashtra survived amidst all the adversities.



The Marathas, like all the Hindus in other parts of the country, were divided into hundreds of castes and sub-castes. 'Maratha' however also happens to be the name of a particular caste. In Maharashtra when the word is used alone, it refers to the Maratha Kshatriyas of the 96 families.<sup>2</sup> According to Rajwade, "those born in Maharashtra are called Marashtra corrupted into Marathas."<sup>3</sup> These Maharashtraikas in ancient times, "were probably known as Rattas, some of whom then came to be styled as Maharashtratras or the great Rathas."<sup>4</sup> In this sense the term Maratha then refers to any inhabitant of Maharashtra, but is then usually used in conjunction with some other word. Thus, a Maratha Brahmin means a Brahmin of Maharashtra, as distinguished from Brahmin of Gujurat or Telangana.

The Marathas inhabit the triangular province of India known as Maharashtra, the base of the triangle lying upon the sea coast from Daman to Karwar and the apex running inland to Nagpur. This territory is divided into north and south by a range of mountains, the Western Ghats. To the west of these mountains, the country is low lying, fertile and damp; to the east it is dry and largely barren, pockets of earth alternating with out crops of bare rock. Maharashtra, has three distinct divisions, of these the sea board below the Shyadri mountain is known as the Konkan; the tract occupied by the Shyadri is known as Maval; while the white rolling planes to the east are known as Desh.<sup>5</sup> Thus this area between Naramada and upper Krishna constituted the main

Maharashtra country," in which the prakrit Maharastri and its later derivative Marathi was spoken forming linguistically and geographically one solid homogeneous block."<sup>6</sup>

The people, mostly of maval areas who built the Maratha power, were sturdy and strong. They are the people who provided the social base for Shivaji to launch a political movement thereby giving a political identity to Maharashtra. In the century preceeding the building of Maratha power, Maharashtra was devoid of strong cohesion and was greatly dispersed and disjointed which had made it almost difficult to nurture a sense of community identity. But the continuous Muslim raids into Deccan from the period of Allaudin Khalji made the princes and families of the Maratha territories much more provincial. These Muslim raids wielded people together as they gradually got attracted around the cult of local saints, followers of Krishna and teachers of salvation through discipline and sacrifice<sup>7</sup>. The strengthening of the incipient monotheistic tendencies in Hinduism, with the emergence and widespread influence of Bhakti in the case of Maharashtra contributed to the growth of Marathi literature through the works of various saints of the Warkari Sampradaya. Thus though Marathas reacting to the dominance of Mongol, Arab and Turk emerged as a military people, they drew their strength from the continuity of deep founded tradition and from a certain solidity of character which might be due to their geographical background.



The above discussion tries to argue how the Maratha identity was already in its formative stage and was being shaped gradually and steadily, through various twists and turns. But the main question arises as to why is it that it is only in the 17th century that the notion of Maratha and Maharashtra in the political and cultural sense of the term assumed significance. What were the elements and objectives around which the notion of Maratha identity in its broader sense started crystallizing, within which the glimmer of the concept of sovereignty also could be discerned. All these questions certainly involve a consideration of the Bhakti movement, a popular and important ingredient of Hinduism. But the objective of this chapter is not to delve into the Bhakti movement in particular and the question of Hinduism in general. Rather it tries to locate certain historical developments which connect such seemingly separate issues by looking at the internal dynamism of Brahminical tradition at a time when it asserted and greatly influenced the social and political milieu, while at the same time merged with various counter reformations whether represented by Buddhism, Jainism and Bhakti movement. It provided legitimacy to the king or the sovereign through its much sought-out strength derived from the Vedas, which simultaneously enhanced and gave legitimacy to the king's image and authority among the people at large. How all this had a strong role to play in the construction of Maratha identity and the constitution of sovereignty will be discussed below.

## Rise of Brahmanic Institutions and the Warkari Movement

A brief discussion of the conditions of Brahmins and Brahmanical institutions might provide some clues to understand its relationship with the emerging Bhakti movement of the time, which was the most potent source of critique of Brahmanism. The medieval transformation of Brahmanism with its contemporary features, which now incorporated a range of Vedic as well as popular terms and beliefs combined with a more sophisticated religious theory did produce a much higher degree of acceptability for itself. The Varna theory, with its crucial claim of Brahmanic superiority gained ascendance through the demand for fabricated genealogies by the aspiring chieftains and the priestly Brahmins. Brahmanism thrived in Maharashtra because it provided legitimation to the elites. In its initial transformation when Brahmanism became a Pan-Indian doctrine, it gave the principle of Bhakti a central place. In spite of that bhakti continued to hold its appeal to the subaltern classes as it encapsulated the dreams and aspirations of the people in the concept of Bhagwan and the practice of intense personal devotion. The believers in the principle of bhakti accepted the Brahmanic appropriation of its message as a promise of its fulfillments in a distant heaven, unattainable in one's life time, only so long as the social practice did not exceed the communally established limits of exploitation. The village chief, later called Patil, came from the superior house

hold, the regional chieftain came to be called Deshmukh. The Brahmin officials associated with them as accountants, bankers or tax collectors came to be known as Kulkarnis and Despandes.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the life of the village people came into closer contact with Brahmanism through these brahmin officials. As watch dogs of revenue collection and accountants and keepers of land records, they controlled what can be described as secular knowledge. These brahmins were in control of the somewhat indistinguishable sacred-secular knowledge of seasons and weather conditions through their mastery of the calendar. Their knowledge of history and genealogies of elite households was also politically crucial. They also had the task of explaining and justifying the mysteries of natural and social disasters, the miseries and injustices. They were thus in control of the outer parameters of the shared world-view through their knowledge of texts, interpretation and rituals of Varnashram Dharma and could offer explanations and solace under conditions of sickness and death as well as determine the meaning of liberation and joy.

Thus the associated behaviour or practices of brahminism began to deepen in various ways. The first and perhaps the most common one was a return to the older, more familiar folk remedies, prayers, rituals, deities and beliefs, which enhanced the income of the priestly brahmins. The second path was that of looking for an alternate life style which in fact meant a partial or total renunciation of

socially productive life. Brahmanism responded to such things through the unification of rituals within the vedic-puranic system for those who were still willing to believe in their healing powers. Wherever possible, it ignored the counter cultural alternatives and allowed them to enjoy only a quarantined legitimacy. Where such movements seemed to acquire a threatening level of popularity, it bore the strong arm of the state and ritual power to force them into secrecy and an underground existence.

To counter the growing menace associated with Brahmanism as an institution, Maharashtra like other parts of India was greatly swept through the influence of bhakti movement, known here as Warkari movement. Its first exponent were, "those who rebuilt the cause of some stains in their inherited purity".<sup>9</sup> They were joined by a spectacular array of rebellious ideas from a number of dependent castes. The challenges to brahminic interpretation of the relation between man and God were headed by large segments of the dependent castes. Had this challenge matured into its fullest implication, it might have engulfed the false patri-monialism of the Maratha elites along with its brahminic legitimacy. Instead what proved was more significant was that the movement apart from its attack on Brahmanism also contributed in the growth of Marathi literature against brahmanic sanskrit literature thus bringing about a certain flexibility into 'Maratha' as a category.

The Warkari movement had its centre at Pandharpur (in Solapur district) a town on the lower reaches of Bhima river. The sect is called Warkari because of its annual pilgrimage by (Waris) which meant wanderers. They went to the cult of Vitthal and Vithoba. The origin of cult of Vithoba is shrouded in controversy.<sup>10</sup> The image of vitthal is rudely fashioned and has no grace of form. The worship is similar to the commonly performed practice in any Hindu temple. What gives it its distinctive character is the special song services, the kirtans and bhajans that are conducted for hours at Pandharpur and other centers of the cult (e.g. Nandi, the Samadhi of Jnandeva and Dehu, the birth place of Tukaram, both a few Km off Pune).<sup>11</sup> The worship involves listening to and singing of the exertions of some famous preachers or Haridasa, which are based on the verses from such great saint poets as Janeshwar, Namdev, Eknath and Tukaram.<sup>12</sup> These kirtans had a profound emotional impact on the multitudes gathered in eager expectation at the holy places. This movement having its origin in 13th century has an unbroken tradition and produced a number of scholarly saints and poets. In the Maharastrian tradition, the 'Sants' and 'bhaktas' are also called as Vaishnavas. The sants are the members of the Vithal Sampradaya and the followers of this sampradayas are devotees par excellence. As Hindus and even more as Muslims, the sants appear more or less hetrodox. In so far as orthodoxy in a Hindu context may be defined in terms of an acceptance of

the authority of Vedas and the brahmanical tradition as a whole, the sants appear as some kind of heretics. The Maharashtra sants however remained rooted within the Hindu folk, as though they adhered to vedantic tradition or the authority of vedas, they only occasionally paid lip service to it. But, the attack on Brahmanism being the main element then becomes somewhat paradox. The first saint poet of this tradition Jnaneshwar (an outcast Brahmin) writes a commentary on Bhagvat Gita in 1290. Since the Bhagvat Gita upholds the four fold division of society, so, the opponents of Jnaneshwar claim that his choice of that text meant the adherence of orthodoxy. But Lele rightly points out that Jnaneshwar's attempt is "an attempt of a critical reappropriation of tradition that is encompassed synthetically in Gita."<sup>13</sup>

The movement as it started earlier had tremendous contribution in the growth of Marathi literature. The earliest Marathi work is Viveka-Sindhu, written by Mukunda Raj, who preceeded Jananeshwar. But it is Jananeshwar's Bhavarttha-Dipika, which is supposed to have laid the foundation of the growth of Marathi literature. The main feature of this work is the use of Prakrit and Marathi. Jananeshwar was followed by a host of other saints and poets namely, Namdev, Chokhamela, Bhanudas, Namdev, Tukaram and Ramdas (not of Warkari Sampradaya). Few of them like Eknath wrote Chauhsloki Bhagwata, Rukmini Swayamvara, Bharata Ramayana. Eknath also wrote a great deal of what might be described as folk

literature. Their teachings were later enclosed in the abhangas in large number. Abhangas composed by Tukaram had a tremendous popularity. But a kind of break seems visible with the arrival of Ramdas. Ramdas did not belong to this tradition but evolved his own sect known as Samartha Sampradaya. Ramdas alongside the Dasa Bodha, has written a lot of miscellaneous episodes, abhangas, aratees, slokas and ashtakas. Of all his writings, the Dasa Bodha is the most important which also has been called as an encyclopaedia. Its forms and styles of dealing with the topic is not very systematic. All sundry topics right from how to improve one's handwriting to, how to achieve absolution through being with the almighty are treated in it.

However, with the arrival of Shivaji and particularly of the Peshwas, Sanskrit again started coming into vogue as is clear from the sanskrit seal of the state of Shivaji, the sanskrit Rajya-vyavahar-kosha, he compiled during his time. There is no denying the fact that the bulk and variety of Marathi literature greatly increased during the Swarajya period but at the same time it inclined more and more towards sanskrit. The Marathi of this time lacks the colloquial forcefulness of Tukaram and Ramdas and the linguistic identity of Jananeshwar and Eknath<sup>14</sup>. Thus Marathi as a language started taking shape from about 10th century A.D. but it had to travel through various phases to give proper forms and structures, which later seems to be taking a different form. The growth of Marathi literature was con-

siderably boosted by Mahanubhava sampradaya as well, a contemporary of Warkari movement. B.G. Gokhle also points to the fact that the saints poets of the Bhakti cult enriched Marathi literature, "by transcreating the ancient vedantic tradition in its multifaceted manifestations and articulating devotional ardour for a loving God, transcending the limitation of caste and breathing an egalitarian spirit into the tired hearts".<sup>15</sup>

The Warkari movement recruited both its followers and leaders from an unusually wide range of castes, although Brahmanism seems to have predominated among its leaders and middle to low castes among the followers. The Warkaris of this tradition were persons who were alienated from the rigid four fold varna system, which had scriptural sanction, but was impervious to any change whatsoever, thus fostering discrimination and inequality in the society. So in these destitute classes, the Warkari movement found its roots. Some Warkari leaders like Danyandev and his brothers were brahmin outcastes, humiliated by the orthodox Brahmans. Some other like Eknath and Bahinabai were liberal Brahmans persecuted for being so. Namdev, the first known leader of the movement, had to apologise to the arrogant brahmans for preaching his new ideas. Tukaram was persecuted and tried because though a Shudra he assumed the religious leadership of his time.



Warkari practices to great extent exposed the falsehood of the brahmanic purity. They did not renounce daily social life, instead the rules and rituals of their spiritual activity were tailored to facilitate full and active participation in whatever productive activity they are engaged in. By requiring its followers to remain fully involved in social life, the movement also subverted a significant hegemonic strategy of Brahminis. Thus, Warkari attack on external authority, magic and miracles, its severe criticism of mindless rituals, and esoteric practices indeed brought about a significant change in the crisis-ridden society. They carried a strong element of protest, but despite all these, they seem to be greatly embedded in the same social structure of their time as they could hardly do away with the vices of Brahmanism.

This movement with its stress on the pilgrimage to Pandharpur twice in a year, brought about homogeneity amidst a heterogeneous population. The yearly pilgrimage to Vitthal on foot created a strong sense of identity among the Maharashtrians irrespective of castes, sects and religion as well as among the non-adherents of this sampradaya. This thus proved to be a binding force as it integrated various diverse faiths and beliefs into one.

A brief discussion on the Warkari movement was intended to show how within this movement Marathi as a language was taking shape within the writings of saints and poets. The another significant element of this movement was that it

stood against the Brahmanic superiority, yet few of the saints and poets in their writing and devotional practice preserve and glorify Brahmanism. The third element which is much more significant is the flexibility which it introduced within the category 'Maratha.'

### Shivaji And Poets Of His Time.

Since this chapter apart from tracing various elements in the construction of identity, is mainly concerned about the establishment of Shivaji's 'Swarajya', so, a brief examination of certain elements in the writings and preaching of Shivaji's contemporary poets and poetess, namely Tukaram, Bahinabai and Ramdas, can tell us something about their relation with Shivaji in terms of his political movements:

Tukaram born in 1608, one of the very prominent saints of the Warkari tradition and a contemporary of young Shivaji was a petty grocer in a village called Dehu (near about Pune). He was a very kind hearted man, who helped the sick, carried the burdens of weary, gave water to thirsty and food to the hungry. Mahipatis biography of Tukaram clearly speaks that he totally failed in his home business and was carried away by his grand obsession with Krishna and took to spiritual life of a mystic. Although presumably unlettered, he was so full of love for God in a variety of ways that he occasionally used to burst into unexpected

inspired poetry called abhangas. Tukaram was overt in attacking Brahmins, as is evident in his statement, when he says that, "brahmins engaged themselves in many trades and indulged in robbing others, they have discarded their white garments, and adopted blue ones, meaning thereby that they had given up all pure duties of their caste and indulged in all baser activities".<sup>16</sup> Yet in Tukaram's poetry, one also comes across stanzas which tell of his submission to the indignation of brahmins. Tuka's movement was certainly to uplift the lower orders. One particular incident associated with Tuka's life is a testimony to this fact which Mahipati, the biographer has dealt in detail. He recounts how once a Brahmin called Rameshwar bhat ordered Tuka to throw all his manuscripts into the Indryani river as he was getting jealous and angry at Tuka's rising fame. Tuka instead of resisting, obeyed the order and sat on an indefinite fast at the back<sup>n</sup> of the river unless God restored his manuscripts to him.<sup>17</sup> This incident is indicative of two things one is that brahmins were indeed strong enough to perpetuate what they wanted and a man like Tukaram remains submerged within that their hegemonic influence. It also points to the fact that to take recourse through God could be an extreme form of protest where God himself appears to save Tukaram.

That the brahmins had a hegemonic influence to which Tukaram even as a saint-poet of the Warkari tradition had to respond also perhaps comes out in Tuka's humble admissions to them, "Tuka says, you brahmins are worthy of reverence. I

come from a low and reviled caste. <sup>18</sup> He further says, "the brahmin may stay from his duty and yet in all the three worlds he is still great indeed."<sup>19</sup>

The glorification of the Brahmins and Brahmanism becomes much more intense in the writing of a poetess called Bahinabai, a contemporary of Tukaram. She glorifies Brahmins in such a fashion as 'among all the castes the Brahman is indeed the highest, so said the great ones in the past. Therefore Brahman should be worshipped with reverence. They are the door to final deliverance for all mankind. He who succeeds in acquiring the water in which a Brahman's feet are washed, he acquires the opportunity of visiting the sacred bathing place at the earth'.<sup>20</sup> Bahina further says that, "the command of a Brahman, God honours with bowed head, for salvation is an obedient slave at his home. Among all the four castes the Brahman stands superior".<sup>21</sup> Bahinbai certainly was not a prominent poetess of her time but yet being the member of the Warkari sampradaya, her description of Brahmins and Brahmanism further tells us of the way Warkari tradition responding to the hegemonic influence of brahmins.

A shift from Warkari tradition seems visible with the arrival of Ramdas. Ramdas, unlike the other saints poets of warkari tradition established his own Samartha Sampradaya and founded many mathas and temples to propagate his faith within and outside of Maharashtra. He set up eleven temples

of Hanuman to begin with, and several temples of Lord Rama, visited Pandharpur too, and spend all the remaining years of his life in personally propagating the philosophy of his sect. He, unlike warkaris believed in action. While the warkari practice of worshipping lord Vitthal at Pandharpur did not evoke much appreciation from him as to submerge one self in front of a statue confined in four walls did not make any sense to him. He possessed practical wisdom and was endowed with an intellectual pragmatism which he brought to bear upon his spiritual life. He endeavored to provide a sound organizational foundation for the religious life of the people.

Ramdas is supposed to have composed his famous work Dashbodha around 1665. In it there is a clear instruction of Ramdas to have great respect for Brahmins. It seems that he wanted to revive the orthodox vedic tradition through Maharashtra Dharma. He was hellbent on glorifying Brahmins as he states in one place in the Dasbodha that, "the vedic tradition is guarded when Brahminhood is preserved. The whole structure of Varnashram is based on it."<sup>22</sup> Instead of talking along the line of Bhagwat Dharma in terms of equality in the sphere of religion, he reiterated the superiority of the Brahmins. He insisted that, "the Brahmin was everybody's preceptor, and even if he neglected the <sup>u</sup>dirty, he had to be revered without any reservations. It is the vedic command that the brahmin should be respected."<sup>23</sup> Ramdas believed that, "since Brahmins were the preceptors of the

whole of society, it was wrong to bestow upon even the most studious of untouchables, honour and respect that was due to the Brahmin.<sup>24</sup> Ramdas unlike the warkaris clearly asserts that the Guru should belong to one's own caste as to accept a preceptor from a lower caste, one had to revere him which implies a certain denigration of Brahmins. Mahipati later in his biography of Ramdas too shows that, "Brahman for Ramdas is the ultimate reality and that they are formless."<sup>25</sup> In the last samsa of the Dashbodha there is an excellent description of Brahmins by Ramdas, "If we try to catch hold of Brahmin we cannot catch it. If we wish to throw it away we cannot throw it away. Brahman is anywhere and everywhere. The Brahman is always before all beings. In all heavens, in the celestial worlds, from Kasi to Rameswara it fills every nook and cranny."<sup>26</sup> So we can see how Ramdas strongly preserves and advocates to preserve Brahmins as they are to him the harbingers of a progressive society. This assertion of Brahmin dominance has great implications in the evolution of the Maratha Kingdom.

The hagiographies of the saints and poets cry out to save Hindu Dharma from Muslim onslaught. This is more explicitly stated in Ramdas's own writing. As G.B. Sardar points out that, "his (Ramdas) literature reflects the standpoint of those upper classes who had risen to overthrow the yoke of Muslim rule."<sup>27</sup> It is also clearly stated in Dashbodha that Ramdas encouraged, "the ruling class to break the power of the Melechas."<sup>28</sup> All this seems to have greatly

impelled Ramdas to propagate militant Hinduism. But such a picturisation of attitude towards Muslims in the hagiographies is not at all in conformity with the other sources available. It cannot be sustained as various old families such as Shrikes, the Moryas, the Nimbalkars, the Ghatges, the Ghorpads etc. were subservient to the Deecani Muslim kingdom. Even Shahaji rose to prominence on account of the favour of the Ahmadnagar chief Malik Ambar. The Maratha rulers had employed a number of Muslim persons in their states services.<sup>29</sup> Shivaji himself employed Muslim men such as Siddi Hillal, Ibrahim Khan, Madari Mehtar and a large number of phatans.<sup>30</sup> Shivaji also visited the Muslim saint Baba Yakuti of Kailashito whom he had made the grant to the tombs of Muslim saints.<sup>31</sup> Shivaji also continued the inam lands to the Muslim pirs of Sayeed hazarat and Qazi Qasim Pirzada in Pune pargana.<sup>32</sup> We have a large evidence of the cordial relations existing between Hindu and Muslims even for the later period as well. So the writings of saints and poets exaggerate the Hindu-Muslim conflict to save Hindu Dharma. This is not to deny the fact that there did exist Hindu-Muslim conflict, but as Gokhle has clearly shown that this relationship underwent through various phases namely reconcialation, avoidance, cordiality, conflict etc.<sup>33</sup> Kulkarni also has shown that prior to the period of Shivaji and during his period also, the Muslims generally adopted a policy of tolerance, which was the political necessity of the time. He clearly shows that Adilshah was referred to as Jagatguru. Hindus enjoyed learning Persian and the impact of

Persian on Marathi was tremendous.<sup>34</sup> This discussion was intended to show how tradition is caught up in the contradictory social practices, where cordiality, and reconciliation on the one hand and tension and conflict on the other become part of tradition. Identity in this way then not merely gets constructed in relation to only positive developments but also involves various ambiguous, amorphous and negative processes which unfold itself in creating a complex social and political relation.

The meeting of Shivaji's with Tukaram and Ramdas is no less important in this regard. This issue has generated a lot of debate among Maharashtrian scholars and others. It remains a point of strong contention that whether Shivaji met Ramdas before the establishment of his kingdom, in the Singhanvadi garden in 1649 or did he meet him after the establishment of his swarajya in 1672 A.D.<sup>35</sup> But I would refrain from going into this dispute as to me it is slightly irrelevant as the paper seeks to explore certain other questions. An understanding of the role of the prominent saints of the time namely Tukaram and Ramdas would involve a consideration of the hagiographies then seen in a certain relation with the rulers policies, titles, administrative structure etc. to see to what extent all these manifest in the very attempt of Shivaji to build a political movement. A clue to some of these elements can also be gleaned through contemporary chronicles. There can be no denying the fact



that Shivaji had the influence of Warkari movement possibly through Tukaram. He had certainly visualised his government as a benevolent monarchy responsible for the welfare of the people.<sup>36</sup> The success of the Pandharpur saints from Janeshwar down till Tukaram in overcoming the prejudices of caste might be practical and temporary, but they played a far more important role in Shivaji's rise to power. With Prabhus acting as his civil and military official, with Marathas and Bhandaris forming the bulk of his land and naval forces with Kois and Ramoshis acting as his comrades in hazardous enterprise and with Mahars and Mangs holding his hillforts; the general mass of the people certainly obtained "a common ground of common identity".<sup>37</sup>

It is generally understood that Tukaram composed a lot of Abhangas, but Tukaram did not have a single complete manuscript of his own writings. The various available versions are transcriptions made from the oral tradition of Warkaris.<sup>38</sup> R.D. Ranade points out that there are certain abhangas, which are supposed to have been composed by Tukaram for Shivaji. Tukaram performed his Kirtans at Dehu as well as at Lohagaon. Since Poona is situated between these two places, so, Tukaram's increasing popularity must have brought Shivaji to Tukaram. Unable to induce Ramdas permanently to live with him, he looked towards Tuka and even expressed his desire to be initiated by him. Shiva even invited Tukaram but the saint declined the invitation in a metrical letter.<sup>39</sup> Having seen the great spiritual impact

upon his son by his mother Jijabai, she burst out crying before everyone that "Tuka has now destroyed our kingdom", and this is not a good news."<sup>40</sup> She quickly went over to Tuka's place and expressed her apprehension about Shivaji. Tukaram, realising the gravity of the situation expiated upon the theme of heroism. Tukaram in one of his kirtans tells that, "a hero is a hero both in worldly as well as in spiritual matters, "Without heroism, misery cannot disappear a soldiers must become reckless in ~~of~~ their lives and then God takes up their burden. He who bravely faces volleys of arrows and shots and defends his master, can alone reap external happiness. The true soldier alone stands the test of critical occasions."<sup>41</sup> It seems that Tuka's meeting with Shivaji is not unhistorical, as he sent a verst to Shivaji, in which, it is stated that the ants and the kings were to him alike. Tuka says, "My delusion and desires are at an end. They are the very bait which death sets for us. God and clay are to me of equal consequence. The whole heavens has descended into my house"<sup>42</sup>. Tukaram with foresight probably sent Shivaji to Ramdas, telling him. "Fix your thought on the good teacher, Ramdas; he truly is an ornament of the world; do not swerve from him."<sup>43</sup> Thus, Tuka's meeting indeed shows a desire in Shivaji to make somebody a spiritual Guru. However Tuka's meeting with Shivaji remains more in the realm of spiritual force than political force and the root of Shivaji's paradoxical attempt lies to a great extent in these two saints poets of his time.

The very shift from prostrating before Vithoba at Pandharpur to idealise Ram with the arrival of Ramdas represents a significant departure from three century long tradition represented by Warkari movement. Now in this new tradition which was called Ramdasi tradition God, no more remains standing before his disciples, rather, "is represented in the most active form - the form in which God is supposed to be encouraging, good and righteous living in the society and destroying evil and sin".<sup>44</sup> Ramdas's bewailed of the bad condition of Maharashtra due to Muslim oppressions, onslaughts etc. and falling character of Brahmins from the high pedestal of spiritual teachership. Some were following the Mohammedan deities, while others voluntarily embraced Mohammedanism. All this led Ramdas to propogate militant Hinduism and Dharma which seemed to him to might be submerged in the growing influence of Mohammedanism. Thus he speaks "a king should be a follower of Dharma; Ksatriya his own and Brahmin his own. Ram the king never ignores the limits imposed upon him and worships cause and Brahmins also".<sup>45</sup> He further says, "if a king fails to behave according to the dictates of Dharma he is also liable to be punished by God".<sup>46</sup> To spread the cause of God, to protect the Brahmins, to help one's subjects, all of them are the gifts of God. Those, in fact, "who reestablish the kingdom of God are all the incarnation of God".<sup>47</sup>

## Maharashtra Dharma and Swarajya :

The description of role, duties and the expectation from a king above in Ramdas looks hardly different from the traditional concept of kingship, as postulated in classical Indian texts. Apart from adhering to the classical Indian texts in terms of preserving the Dharma, the holy places, the fixed set of expectations, the looseness of rules of succession and the milieu of social mobility as argued by Stewart Gordon, is laid down in the 18th century Maratha political treatise Ajnapatra, is strikingly reminiscent of Arthasastra and suggests a dynamic approach to legitimacy and loyalty<sup>48</sup>.

Ramdas, twice used the term Maharashtra Dharma, first in a complementary letter to Shivaji and then in an advisory letter to Sambhaji. In his letter to Shivaji, Ramdas complements him for having defended the Maharashtra Dharma. He says "God become enshrined in your heart, inspiring you to protect the temples, of Dharma, of the cows. It is only because of you that Maharashtra Dharma has been saved"<sup>49</sup>. But all these attributes nowhere make Maharashtra Dharma as distinct from Hindu Dharma. However in the letter written to Sambhaji the concept of Maharashtra Dharma takes a political connotation and thus differs from the traditional Hindu Dharma. He asks Sambhaji to unite all the Marathas together for spreading Maharashtra Dharma and for enlarging the Maratha state. Shambhaji is exhorted to give up the vices,

to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious father. In fact, the term Maharashtra Dharma first occurs in a 15th Century Marathi work, the Guru Charitra, where the author tries to establish the universalistic ideas of Sanskritic Hinduism, the acceptance of Vedas, the varnashram scheme and so on rather than asserting a conscious national or proto-national, self-awareness as has been argued by some Maharashtra scholars. It certainly underwent slight change after Sambhaji, The term Maharashtra Dharma in this sense is used twice; one in a warning letter to Sawant of Phond by Shahu in 1735, where he says that "it is not in the spirit of Maharashtra Dharma to keep in confinement the wife of a Brahmin"<sup>50</sup>. Another reference to it comes in a letter written by the residents of Bassien to Bajirao in 1740, stating, "that the Portugese destroyed their temples, the holy places and also the Maharashtra Dharma."<sup>51</sup>. From the time of Shivaji, the very notion of Maharashtra Dharma started acquiring a political undertone where the exertion of Dharma generally meant to support, and preserve the sanctity of the state. It was an activist and aggressive Hinduism which emphasised the importance of worldly activities and the indispensability of work and action for achieving ones individual goals as well as the larger social and political goals. Moreover, the ideology of Maharashtra Dharma was directed outward against the Muslim rulers and in that respect it provided a basis on which all Maharastrians could be united.<sup>52</sup> Wink also says that Maha-

rashtra Dharma never became anything else than a 'parochial blend of elements of Hindu Dharma that prevailed everywhere in India'. 53.

The influence of Ramdas can also be gleaned from the fact that apart from Shivaji's grants, his son Sambhaji issued an order to his Desadhikari of Prant Malkapur asking him to continue the inam lands, which were given by Shivaji for the worship of lord Hanuman at Chapthal to saint Ramdas. 54. Similarly, Sambhaji ordered the Deshadhikari of prant satara to give 11 Bighas of fertile land in each of the eleven villages granted as inam to Raghunath Dev Swami, who was in charge of the establishment of saint Ramdas at Chapthal. 55. Sambhaji's minister Ramchandra pant also constructed a shrine at the place where Ramdas was cremated. However, Sambhaji asked to construct a bigger shrine in place of the earlier one. 56

The use of the concept of swarajya which has been generally identified with Shivaji is doubtful as the contemporary chronicler Sabhasad makes an analogous distinction between the Maratha homeland and the foreign land. 57. The very term swarajya implies 'self rule' and 'old dominion'. Swarajya is a term applied to those territories of central Maharashtra which originally formed an independent kingdom of Shivaji out of the possessions of the Adilsahab of Bijapur and the Mughal Empire of Delhi. It extended from the river Tapti in the north to the Krishna in the south with a few glaring exceptions around Aurangabad and

Burhanpur. On the west Shivaji's swarajya was bounded by the Sea and on the east its boundary was not quite definite, as it often shifted according to circumstances. Shivaji's kingdom though small it may be, was symbolic of self rule and was called Swarajya, which simultaneously meant the land of Marathas reigned by one of the Marathas.<sup>58</sup> This concept also distinguished Shivaji's kingdom from the Mughal or provinces under other rulers<sup>59</sup>. However, it underwent a tremendous change in 18th century and swarajya denoted Maratha sovereignty anywhere in India. Now it no more remained a term associated only with the Maratha homeland, rather referred to Maratha claims both in political and physical aspect. However, a territorial reference to a Maratha homeland is present in the form of Maharashtra Rajya but there also it is secondary. Govindrao Chitnis in 1765 made a query about its meaning, "the swarajya is the country west of Bhima and all else which you call swarajya, beyond that is Zabardasti<sup>60</sup>. There was always a territorial link with the Maharastrian homeland but it remained as an emotional bond of union which become weaker with the further extension of Marathas".<sup>61</sup>

Thus the term till the period of Shivaji might have been identified with the Maratha homeland but later it cannot be defined as an abstract territorially circumscribed dominion complete in itself. Shivaji certainly used the term Hinduvi Swarajya in one of his letters to (Dadaji Naras Prabhu in 1654). Hence, instead of striving for Maratha

swarajya, Shivaji was striving for Hinduvi swarajya and for the Hindu religious autonomy of the whole country.<sup>62</sup> A letter by Savanoor people to Shivaji, states that the people of Savanoor are groaning under tyrannical sway of the aliens and our Dharma trampled under foot. Come!O, champion of Hindu Dharma and save us from the Mohammedan general Yusuf.<sup>63</sup> This further confirms how Shivaji was being viewed by people at large. Thus it seems very difficult to link swarajya just with Maharashtra Dharma and the circumscribed territory as it had a much more wider appeal and meaning.

The relationship between these two concepts is further substantiated in the writings of two minor poets of Shivaji's time. The poet Bhusan, in his work Shiva Bhusan gives the description of the terrible state of Hindus and to him it was only Shivaji who could withstand such vicissitudes. He presents Shivaji in the tradition of Rama and Krishna where he says that Shivaji gave protection to Vedas and the Koran alike; and worshipped both God and brahmins.<sup>64</sup> Bhusan at one point also says that "if there is any enemy of the Yamanas I shall stay with him"<sup>65</sup> Another poet Lalkavi wrote that Shivaji assumed the title of Go Brahman Pratipalak, as the protection of the cow and the priestly class was considered the paramount duty of the Hindus. When Chattrasal, the Bundela chief waited on Shivaji, the Maratha king urged him, in an inspiring speech, to return to his own principality and fight the Mughals there. Lal Kavi who seems to have heard an account of this meeting from Chattrasal himself,



says that Shivaji addressed the Bundela prince thus - 'does not the Chatri faith consist in protecting the cow and the Brahmins, in guarding the Veda in showing skill and valor in the battle.<sup>66</sup> Thus, one can argue that these duties which frequently surfaced in these writing are strongly embodied not merely in classical Indian texts but also in the attitudes of the peoples and their perception of the image of sovereign.

How strongly the notion of kingship is permeated within the religious consciousness in terms of protecting Dharma and adhering to the dictates and rules of Dharma is not merely reflected in saints-poets teaching and their glorification of certain traditional institutions, but also in the political chronicles of the period. They tell us how such duties were performed and how far the king himself was concerned about the duties, which could appease people at large and how the king equally was permeated with strong religious consciousness similar to the general mass.

#### Sovereign's Image And The Political Chronicles :

When Afzal Khan (Bijapuri noble) was killed by Shivaji then sabhasad goes on to say that Shivaji was an incarnation of Mahadeva. "this deed was not of a human being but an incarnation of Mahadeva".<sup>67</sup> After this incident, Sri Bhawani of Tulzapur, a family-goddesses of Shivaji came to the Raja in a dream and said, "I have got Afzal killed with thy

hands, and those who came afterwards I caused to be defeated, in future too are great deeds to be performed, I shall live in thy kingdom, "establish me and maintained my worship."<sup>68</sup> Sabhasad further says that the king quickly obeyed the order. He loaded a cart with money, sent it to the Gandaki, brought a stone of that river, made an image of Sri Bhawani with it and established the goddesses at Pratapgad. Many deeds of charity were performed, jeweled ornaments of many different styles were made for the goddesses. <sup>0</sup>Maksa villages were granted and separate officials were appointed for goddess's property and a great festivity was inaugurated.<sup>69</sup>

This particular detail in the chronicle shows how some time king's action was also guided through the 'divine miracles', thus further giving legitimacy to the king in the eyes of people.

Despite the fact that Shivaji's political movement was built through the support of lower social groups like Kolis, Kundis, Rasomis, the attitude of the state towards brahmins and upper classes remained that of a conciliation and one of appeasement. This once again is clearly evident in Sabhasad's description of the religious policy of the state - 'brahmins reciting vedas should be placed in comfortable maintenance and learned Brahmins, vedic scholars, astrologers, ritualist, ascetics and pious men should be selected from every village, and a grant of money and grains

should be assigned to each in his own village in the Mahal, according to the size of their (respective) families, and the expense of feeding and clothing them; and it should be arranged that the Karkuns should convey their allowance to them every year'.<sup>70</sup> Ramchandra Pant Amatya, the writer of Ajnapatra states that, "the king should do religious works, he should protect brahmins and sacred places, performe various yajnas which would regulate the Varnashrama Dharma."<sup>71</sup> The same chronicle further says that to make a grant of land for the purpose of Dharma is an act of eternal merit. Among the functions of the king what counts is 'the inquiry into the prevalence of Dharama and Adharma, timely grants (dan) the gaining of the favour of gods and good brahmins devoted to gods and the destruction of irreligious tendencies, the propgation of the duties of religion, become the main merits for the eternal world.'<sup>72</sup> Thus, these two important chronicles of the period not merely echo the prevalent ancient notion of kingship but make the 'ruler a symbol of power and Dharma' Another chronicle of this period by Malhar Rao Chitnis, mentions that it was the duty of Pundit Rao to honour all scholars and learned brahmins; and he should get all religious ceremonies, sacrifices etc. performed in due time. He should put his sign of consent on all papers concerning religious penalties and penances.<sup>73</sup> The Pandit Rao was interested in the task of reviving the lost vedic studies by rewarding the brahmins for the attainments.<sup>74</sup> The Ajnapatra allegorically asserts that the minister (pradhan or purohit) is like the God of an ele-

phant.<sup>75</sup> Vasistha says that 'a realm where brahman ministries appointed purohita flourishes. This purohita or brahman was the real brain of the king'. In theory thus, the functions of king and councillor were strictly juxtaposed and the king retained the plenitude of power. In practice, the brahman purohita or pradhan like his Muslim counterpart the Vazir, had to share in the king's power to be effective. Tripathi clearly says that, "there is a recurrent pattern in Indian history of an intelligent and politically adroit brahman minister or a Vazir replacing the king all but nominally."<sup>76</sup> This also happened with the Maratha king of Satara when Brahmans replaced the centre of power from Satara to ~~pa~~Poona in 18th Century. Thus the religious grants particularly to Brahmins were supportive of the sovereign power. The internal dynamics of brahminical institutions was further enhanced through such acts.

### **The Coronation Ceremony And Its After Effects :**

The coronation ceremony of Shivaji is another event which further highlights how strongly the sovereign had to adhere to the attributes of kingship as embodied in the traditional setting of the classical Indian texts, like the Arthashastra and the Dharmasashtra. The various rituals, symbols and titles associated with the coronation ceremony tells us the role played by tradition in regulating power and authority. The borrowed, rituals, symbols and moral

exhortions from the old tradition were in this case grafted on to what emerged as the new tradition, leading to the very changes coming in the concept of sovereignty. Such use of ancient materials according to Hobsbawm lead to the construction of invented traditions where rituals become intrinsic to the set of practices outlined for 'invented traditions'.<sup>77</sup>

That Shivaji himself at first did not have any Kshatriya pretensions is clear from the fact that in 1657 he married three women of three different Maratha families.<sup>78</sup> Shivadigvijaya explains that Shivaji was unwilling to share the leadership of the Marathas with other and although he had formerly been on one level with many other Maratha Sardars as servant of Bijapur, but he could justify his new claims to predominance amongst them by pointing out that this dependence, through his own efforts, no longer existed.<sup>79</sup> Shivadigvijaya further tells us that the coronation was necessiated by the attitude of some old Maratha Sardars like Shrikes, Mohits and Mahadiks who refused to sit below Shivaji even in his Kacheri, claiming an equality in rank and family honour desired from old customs.<sup>80</sup> Shivaji's endeavor to consolidate Hinduvi swarajya was further compounded with the problem of administration and punishment due to the monopolistic tendencies fostered in Varnashram Dharma. Shivaji then, by tradition was certainly an accepted king, but in the changed circumstances Shivaji continued to hesitate using his traditional power as he

felt that he was not legally vested with the Hindu Shastras. He refrained from punishing a Brahmin even though the Brahmin was treacherously involved in an attack on him by Afjal Khan and on the death of his brother.<sup>81</sup> This state of chaos and confusion made it necessary for Shivaji to coronate himself to deal with the rival powers and bigger families on the basis of equality. It was Balaji Auji who had advised him for the ceremonial coronation. The ceremonial coronation further necessitated a man of high repute who could dispel the confusion of the people. So, the prominent Brahman of the time Gaga Bhatt of Banaras who was also supposed to be the personification of Vedas and sacred scriptures, was invited by Shivaji through Ramchandra Baba.<sup>82</sup> After a long and proper deliberation and deep persuasion the Brahmin agreed to perform the coronation ceremony. Gagga Bhatt believed that Shivaji's family belonged to the ancient Rajput lineage of the Sisodia Vamsha and so had the tradition of Samskaras of a ruling Kshatriya family. He was also convinced at the time of his last visit to the Rajpur Konkan prant that Shivaji was actually ruling his kingdom as a Raja or King. But he however, found that the tradition then current about his powers was not in accordance with Hindu Shastras and hence, a consecration strictly adhering to the old Shastric tenets has to be gone through to dispel the illusions.<sup>83</sup> The problems such as that the Kshatriya can be only crowned meant that a thread ceremony was needed before the coronation could be

performed. This meant Gaga Bhatt's acceptance of Shivaji's unbroken ksatriya pedigree from the Sisodia Rajput of Udaipur. A Dutch account of his coronation mentions that he shrewdly abandoned his present caste of Bhonsle to take the caste of Ketry (Ksatriyas)<sup>84</sup>

The coronation meant the performance of all the prescribed ceremonies of twice born (Dwijja) which in the case of Shivaji had been neglected and which required grand preparations. Water was brought in sacred jars from holy rivers, horse and elephants of healthy auspicious signs, skins of deer and tigers etc.<sup>85</sup> After the completion of preliminary rituals and various practices, the ceremony was held at Raygarh on 5th or 6th June, 1674 and Shivaji ascended the throne with the royal umbrella held over his head. He was weighed against gold and other precious articles later given away in charity. The ceremony was attended by 50,000 brahmins, holy men of different categories and others who received gifts, food and attention in various forms.<sup>86</sup> After accepting the gift from the representative of East India Company, Henry Oxindon, he gave an interview to him. Shivaji, later left on an elephant procession to the temple at Jagdishpur and offered his prayers to the deity. After completing all these rituals, Shivaji held his first darbar and gave his first appearance as Shiva Chatrapati by ascending the throne once again. But Shvaji simhasanarohana ceremony was objected to and was told to be incomplete by Nischalpur, a brahman tantrik theorist who was opposed to Gaga

Bhats method of coronation. In order to pacify the feelings created by this section of brahmins, Nischalपुरी was allowed to perform a second simhasan-arohana vidhi. However this ceremony did not carry any religious or political importance.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless it is indicative of the fact that tradition was having a great weight where Shivaji's whole effort was geared to appease brahmins in one or the other way. Speaking about the significance of Shivaji's coronation, Sabhasad writes "in this age of Mleccha Badshah ruler all over the world, only this Maratha Badshah became Chatrapati"<sup>88</sup> According to the same chronicle "the total amount is spent on the coronation was one crore and 42 lakhs of hons."<sup>89</sup>

The performance of coronation ceremony was significant in various other ways apart from its ritualistic tinge. It was only now that the Astha-pradhan council (council of 8 ministers) got a Shastric and as well as final shape. As a Hindu Monarch, he became the judicial head of the Maratha state, both for temporal and ecclesiastical matters. To perform these duties, he included in his council two special ministers, the Nayayadish or Chief Justice and the panditras or minister for religion. Shivaji strongly abided by Hindu tradition and customs, as he continued the local systems of trial by Majlis and often referred to the Gotas, the suits brought to him. He used to decide important suits with the help of Dharmasabha, which was an evolved form of the Majlis of a pargana, a Hindu proto-type as described in



Hindu law books<sup>90</sup>. This, apart from reviving the older institution reminiscent of the ancient model, also carried with it the preexisting Muslim tradition. The ministers after the coronation stood on each side of the king and Chitnis, a contemporary chronicler informs us that it was then that the council came into being. However, all these offices had existed long before the coronation.<sup>91</sup> S.N. Sen<sup>92</sup> says that what Shivaji did was to retain the old post with new sanskrit designation and thus it was converted into a regular rajmandal or Astha-pradhan council of eight ministers, modelled upon the ancient example. The Pradhans were non-hereditary, salaried royal delegates - six of them belonged to brahmin class. The Peshwa was an originally Persian denomination and became Mukhia pradhan followed by other officials namely Majumdar, Surnis, Waqianavis, Sarnabut, Dabir and Nyadhish. The office of pandit Rao whose function was that of Dandhyaksa 'superintendent of religious gifts', can be compared with that of the sadar in Moghul empire. The difference being however, that the latter was at times authorised to make a small grants as Madad-i-mash (Vazifa) independently of the emperor, while the former were advisory.<sup>93</sup> The concept of the rajmandal seems to have been born of Rakhtakhana of the pre-Shivaji period. He took it from Bijapur and after the coronation, with slight modification he seems to have copied it with such alterations as suited his policy of establishing an independent Maratha Raj. He raised his comrades who previously sat with him in the Rakhtakhana to the ministership and membership of Raj-

mandal<sup>94</sup> Hence, Shivaji tried to organise his administrative and judicial machinery on the lines of Hindu law and polity. Apart from carrying along the ancient tradition in the regulation of administrative structure, it also incorporated, the existing Muslim administrative practices. The judicial institutions of Marathas were evolved from the prototypes, under the sultans of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur kingdom. The coronation also necessitated Shivaji to assume formal titles like Ksatriya Kulavatansa, head of ksatriya race, Sinhasanadhihvara, lord of throne; Maharaja Chatrapati; Go Brahman pratipalak (protector of cows and brahmins). The title Chatrapati was borrowed from the sanskrit phraseology, and was highly symbolic. The word means 'Lord of the Umbrella'. Hence, it became symbolic of the 'protective' umbrella of Shivaji's rule.<sup>95</sup> However, titles like Maharaja and Chatrapati had already been used by Shivaji from 1647 onwards.<sup>96</sup> But Shivaji thought of himself as a king 'by virtue of his power to protect the Dharma and his subjects' On the day of his coronation, he initiated an era called Rajyabhiseka Shaka, and therefore he came to be called Shakakarta (maker of an era).<sup>97</sup> Satara, now becomes the seat of sovereignty of the Chatrapati, who now could now deal in terms of equality with the Deccani Muslim sovereigns and other big families.<sup>98</sup>

Shivaji now became the legitimate master of his dominion and his territorial expansion. Instead of being purely imperialistic, he also carried an ethical and idealistic

tinge. The essence of his swarajya was toleration, religious liberality and freedom. Even Khafi Khan also admitted that, "Sivaji did protect women, the Mosque and the holy Quran."<sup>99</sup> He introduced Marathi as the official language. Shivaji, also employed learned pundits to coin an official vocabulary by "translating technical terms from the Persian into Sanskrit and prepared what is called Rajya-Vyavahar-Kosh i.e., a dictionary of technical names for the use of the court."<sup>100</sup>

#### 'Maratha' As A Category :

The change and flexibility in the very category 'Maratha' is tied to the very rise of Shivaji to political power, as the Maratha-Kunbi caste cluster started crystallizing from early 17th Century onwards. In the simplest sense, the term has been taken to denote all Marathi speakers by the European observers. To them, the term was not in any sense caste specific. This usage points perhaps unconsciously, to the association of the term with rulership, with mastery over the land and, most of all, with military prowess and heroism. But this assumption ignored the caste-specificity of the term. Grant Duff says that though the term Maratha was extended to the Koonbis or cultivators, but in strictness, it was confined to the military families of the country, many of whom claimed a doubtful but not improbable descent from the Rajputs.<sup>101</sup> They also claimed that the

varna status of Ksatriya was appropriated to a ruler or a king, whereas the ordinary Kunbi families accepted the Varna status of Shudra. However, the word Koonbi, like Rajput, denotes a status not a caste, and may be compared in this respect with the later term which has no <sup>ne</sup> <sup>a</sup> accessory ethnic significance. Thus the fact that the Maratha Kunbis are to a great extent a homogeneous group is primarily due to their being Marathas and not their being Kunbis. So, we have two types of people who were considered as Marathas. The one is the small circle of elite families and the other is the larger mass of Kunbi cultivators. However, there were quite distinct differences between some of the ritual and social practices of two groups. The first represented the Maratha aspirations to a Ksatriya status. The second was the amalgamation of some Islamic domestic practices like seclusion of women. These changes were due to their close historical association to the Muslim courts. And these were integrated into the broader collections of beliefs, aspirations and social practices that were associated with Maratha Ksatriya.<sup>102</sup> The developments associated with Shivaji's rise to power invested the term 'Maratha' with some of its significance for popular culture and great military prowess. At the same time Sivaji's own quest for a recognition of Rajput descent and Ksatriya varna points to the association of Maratha identity with Ksatriya status. However, it is not clear whether a Marathas status already existed as an object of social aspiration, or was it created during the expansion of the Maratha power under Shivaji. The emergence

of powerful families such as Holkars of Indore and Scindias of Gwalior suggests further complexities in the term. The exploits of these families certainly contributed to the association of Maratha identity with military heroism. On the other hand, none of these families tried or asserted Ksatriya status or a genealogical link with the Rajput lineages. It seems clear however, that the category 'Maratha' underwent various problems but there remained a clear association of the term with the skills of the soldier and in this sense it seems to have been applied with no particular regard for the caste. Prof. Satish Chandra<sup>103</sup> rightly points out that Bhakti movement was unable to make a dent in the caste system. But it provided a justification for social mobility in the varna scale by individuals and groups. Thus, the movement of Sivaji certainly wielded Marathas and the Kunbis together.

## CONCLUSION

The above discussion tries to argue that Maratha identity was well under construction since very long, but it went through various phases to give it finally the shape of a political and cultural identity. The construction of identity consistently invoked and used tradition, where Bhakti movement reminded Brahmins ~~from~~<sup>of</sup> deviating from the high pedestals of spiritual teachership, simultaneously countering the growing vices of Brahman<sup>ic</sup> institutions. The saints-poets echoed Dharma, enshrined in sacred scriptures and provided various attributes of kingship, reminiscent of ancient classical texts. Much before the arrival of peshwas, the Maratha kingdom became known as 'the rajya which is beneficent to God and Brahmins.' The revulsion expressed through the Bhakti movement according to Karve, was not 'translated into action' but remained 'as a mere platitude in the verses of the saints.'<sup>104</sup>

Thus, what becomes striking is the very internal logic of the operation of the Brahmanical institution, which despite encountering a strong protest, instead of getting submerged within such movements, bounces back into importance thereby constantly reminding the emerging political force and sovereign to adhere to the rituals and the tradition, without which the sovereign would lose his sanctity and the legitimacy of his authority. It is here that—once again we see how tradition is cut up in contradictory proc-

esses, where Brahmins invoke tradition to perpetuate their hegemony in the society. The conjoint authority thus becomes the norm and attribute of Hindu Kingship where Brahmins become the intrinsic part of the process of construction of kingship. The glorification of Brahmins by few saints and poetess might not seem to be a new thing but its imprint became so strong that a king despite his strong secular attitude, felt greatly restrained to transcend the existing customs and practices. The very necessity of the coronation and its after effects illustrate how badly Sivaji needed to immerse his sovereign attributes into the traditional setting to acquire the legitimacy and sanctity of a king. Thus, the tradition is equally and strongly sought for the construction of kingship, which gave Maharashtra a political identity as well. That the tradition simultaneously kept reinterpreting itself is exemplified through the very flexibility which comes in the category called 'Maratha' which incorporated the existing Muslim administrative terminologies and various other practices. This shows that tradition itself becomes flexible to incorporate such developments thus providing legitimation to an emerging new social and political order. So the development of a region as a distinct entity not merely requires a distinct geographical formation but also a clear political shape and set of aspirations through a strong political authority represented by a ruling group which expresses its ambition in terms of unifying the region through various social and cultural

artifacts, these despite being greatly implicated in traditional setting, still nurture a community identity strongly imbued with the consciousness of having a distinct identity.



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CHATRAPATI : SATARA

YEAR (in A.D)  
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SHIVAJI	1674
SAMBHAJI	1680
RAJARAM	1689
TARABAI	1700
SHAHU	1708
RAMRAJA	1749
SHAHU II	1777
PRATAP SINGH	1810

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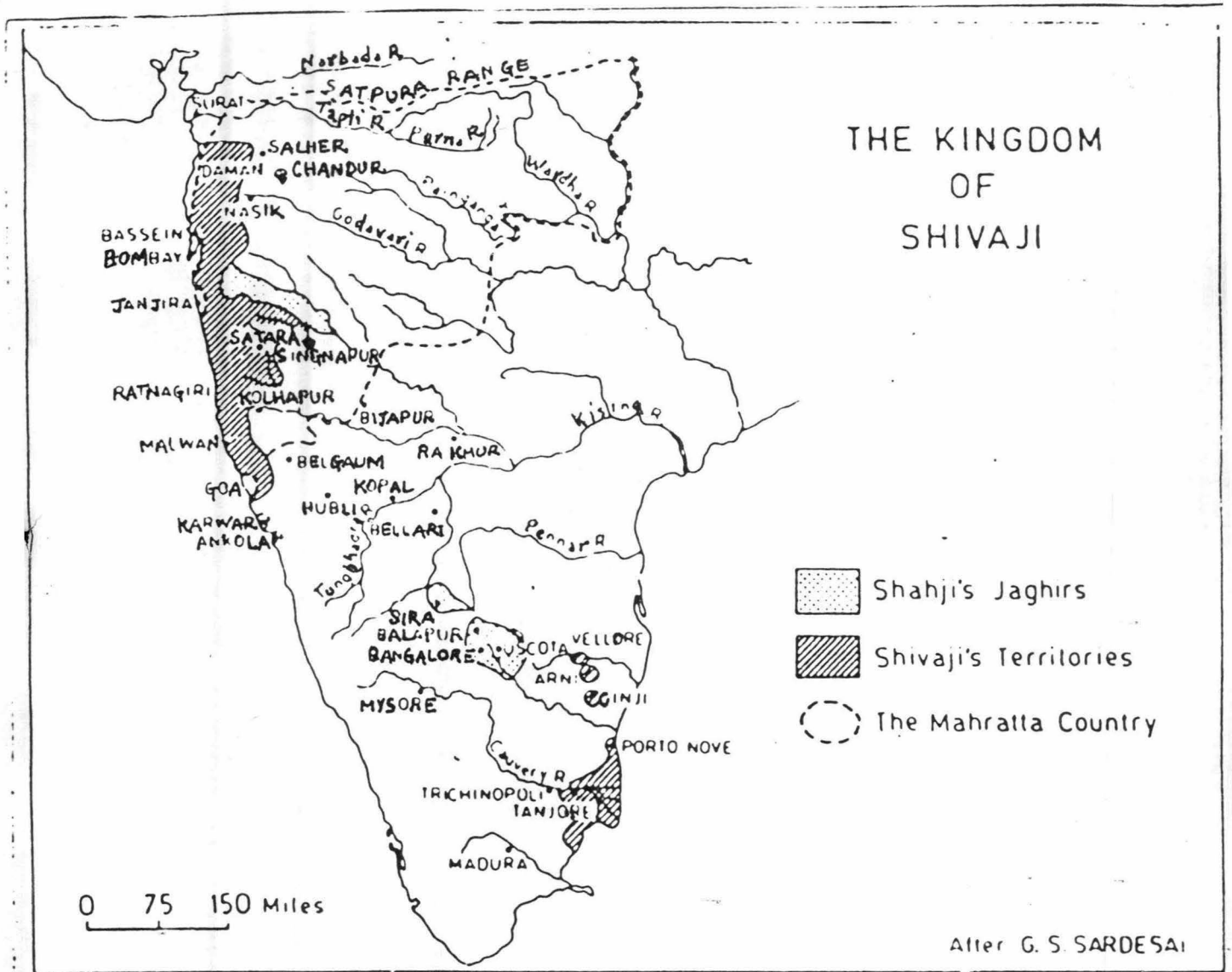
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# MAP OF SHIVAJI'S DOMINION



Source :- K.P. Dikshit - MAHARASHTRA IN MAPS  
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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CHITPAVAN HEGEMONY AND THE EVOLUTION OF BEURAUOCRACY**

- Section I : Rise of Chitpavans as Peshwas.
- Section II : Satara and Poona or Chatrapati and Peshwa.
- Section III : Scholars, Poets, Sahirs: Literature Of The  
Peshwa Times.
- Section IV : Religiosity, Legitimacy and Political  
Authority.
- Section V : The Bureaucratic Structure of the Peshwa  
Government.
- Conclusion.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHITPAVAN HEGEMONY AND THE EVOLUTION OF BEURAUCRACY

The shift in the centres of power, remains an important element, and a recurring feature of Maratha history. The 18th century similarly witnessed a shift from the politically reigning Satara to the politically emerging Poona, as well as the creation of a new sovereign centre-Kolhapur. The shift simultaneously paved the way for Satara becoming another moral center, closely resembling the role of Delhi. Hence the Maratha hegemony now sought to establish itself in a way closely similar to what was the case with Mughal hegemony. This shift resulted in the initiation of a new dispensation, which overtime became typically brahmanized. Closely tied with this new dispensation was an overt manifestation of brahmanical forms of rituals, and practices resulting to a great extent in the Hindu resurgence represented by Marathas, who are described by Barnett as the 'fiercest Hindus'.<sup>1</sup> Here the articulation of a new political and cultural ethos was far stronger than in the earlier period and provided in this sense a durable political and cultural identity to the Marathas. The construction of identity in this phase became much more flexible and complex and the representation of tradition much more wide. The components of the concept of sovereignty underwent some change and modifications. Apart from invoking classical Indian texts, the building blocks of sovereignty also now

started revolving around elements such as reconciliation, conflict, alliance, gift-giving process and the conscious ritualisation of royal power. all of which became an expression of the legitimate rule of the time.

The new dispensation was dominated by the Peshwas, mostly of the Chitpavan subcaste. The creation of a kingly state not only requires a range of new scribal talents, but in the case of Hindu kingship also needs its own ritual specialists to represent a claim to independent sovereignty and to incorporate lesser lineages into the framework of its own rule. As Bayly has also argued that, it was very often this new demand for their scribal and ritual skills which propelled brahmans historically into a closer association with the secular ruling dynasties. This fact helped them to endow their own views and in the construction of a Hindu social organisation with the kind of unique and pan-Indian religious authority.<sup>2</sup> Thus far from remaining purely spiritual and otherworldly, the key groups of Chitpavan brahmans by 18th century emerged as the all powerful Peshwa ministers of purely nominal Maratha kings as they employed new scribal techniques in the creation of an increasingly fiscal and centralised state.<sup>3</sup> But this new ruling class headed by the Peshwas was remarkably eclectic in its social policy and allowed to deepen the emerging synthesis of elite and popular traditions. This was achieved by securing the religious domain by linking themselves to the centres of religious establishments on the one hand and by seeking for new

vocations far removed from their traditional callings as prescribed by the sacred texts and popular traditions, on the other.

The caste and clan networks thus have been identified by people like Burton Stein, Ron Inden and Nicholas Dirks as the basic building blocks of the proto-south-Indian state<sup>4</sup>. Similar to their emphasis, this chapter seeks to explore the acquisition of political power by a particularly dominant caste (Chitpavan) and how that affected their standing within the caste hierarchy. This way the chapter would try to look into the rationality of the internal logic of brahmanical institutions in the new dispensation of the 'classic brahmanic Kingdom' which comes into being only in the 18th century Maharashtra. A closer look into the practices which give a shape to this new dispensation would involve an understanding of the realm of ritual practices and how that related to or responded to the exercise of power and legitimisation of authority. This 'realm of ritual practice' in its brahmanical manifestation was constituted by the performance of ritual, ceremonies of honouring and gift-giving and other practices which defined the relations between the Peshwas and the Chatrapati in a specific way. The constituting elements of this realm and the way they were played out in his new dispensation present to us an instance of the process of 'invention of tradition'.<sup>5</sup> It can be argued that the brahminical institutions used certain older traditions and practices for responding to a new situation. The new

situation was the legitimisation of the authority of the Chitpavan ascent in the realm of politics.

While explaining the legitimacy acquired by the Chitpavan brahmins, this discussion would try to show the complex interplay of politics as it became enmeshed within the ritual which becomes clear in the way the symbolic relationship develops between Satara and Poona. Burton Stein in his argument on the dualism of ritual and politics seems to bypass this issue by arguing that the relationship between the king and his subordinates was only that of ritual and therefore not political in character<sup>6</sup>. In fact, Nicholas Dirks has shown in his discussion on the relationship between Tondaiman Rajas of Puddukotai and the Vijayanagar ruler, how the various insignia, emblems and ritual legitimated the authority of the lineage chiefs.<sup>7</sup>

#### Rise of Chitpavans as Peshwas :

The emergence of brahmins as a powerful force in the Maharashtrian society dates back to the 16th century as is clear from the fact that a considerable number of brahmins were serving in the higher administrative posts in the Deccani Muslim Kingdoms.<sup>8</sup> Under Shivaji's reign, the Konkanasth or Chitpavan brahmins as well as the members of other two subcastes, Saraswats and Desasthas occupied six of the eight posts in the Astha pradhan council. They were generally employed as provincial administrators, while

prabhus often served as karkuns.<sup>9</sup> Brahmins of all these subcastes also figure prominently in the early period of expansion during Shahu's reign.

Among all these caste clusters, it was the Desasthas who enjoyed pre-eminence till the period of Shivaji but it was Balaji Vishwanath, a Konkanasth brahman who displaced them gradually. In Shahu's time thus with their growing influence, the Mughal emperor also has to acknowledge them as Prime Minister or Peshwa and Sardeshpande or the District accountant of the Deccan.<sup>10</sup> But it was only in the 18th century, by 1730s that some of the Chitpavan families which emerged as Peshwas became all powerful throughout the western Deccan. The legends and popular traditions which the Chitpavan believed, contest, "that "Chitpavan" is synonymous with "Chitpohle", which literally means "scanning of the heart", and so they spoke of themselves as "heart-seared" or "heart-stricker", because the god Parashuram (India) did not grant all their prayers.<sup>11</sup> Crawford records that the Chitpavans not thinking it to be a respectable title, "changed it to "Chitpavan" or "pure hearted" or "sinners pardoned".<sup>12</sup> These Chitpavans were the followers of the Rigveda and Krishna (Black) yajurveda<sup>13</sup>. Their original habitat lay on the western coast of Rajapur and Kolaba, and their myths trace their ancestral origins back to the exploits of Parashurama. The Parashurama Carita, a historical biography of the Peshwas describes the brahmin as the divine incarnation of Parshuram<sup>14</sup>. The Bakhar further says that, "Parshuram

being the cultural hero of Maharashtra, also became the Patron deity of the Peshwas".<sup>15</sup> The rationale of the author of the biography, according to Wagle is to play down the role of ksatriyas in founding the Maratha empire. Brahmin Peshwas here are endowed with divine attributes, leaving them with no need to invent any fictitious genealogies unlike the Ksatriyas. Thus the Carita for Wagle becomes a 'brahmin epic'<sup>16</sup>. The Carita narrates at one place how in the process of establishing their authority the Peshwas had to contain ksatriya Maratha rivals such as Dabhade, the Angres, the Bhonsales, the Gaikwads and most importantly check effectively the activities of Tarabai and the descendants of the house of Shivaji, on whose behalf the brahman Peshwas were acting in the first place.<sup>17</sup>

In fact, Chitpavans within the Brahman hierarchy occupied a low position as many legends regarding their origin tell us. The names Chitpavan, Chitpol, and Chipuln appear to come from the town of Chiplum in Ratnagiri, their original and chief settlement, the old name of which is said to have been Chitpolan. They began to call themselves Konkasths after 1715 A.D. when Peshwa Balaji Vishwanth rose to importance in the Maratha Kingdom. Enthoven mentions that, "according to the Sahyadri Khand, Parshuram was so defiled by the slaughter of the Kshatriyas that Brahamans refused to perform any ceremonies for him. At that time, the bodies of 14 shipwrecked foreigners happened to be cast ashore by the sea which then washed the foot of the Sahyadri hills.



These corpses Parshuram purified by burning them on a funeral pyre or chita, restored them to life, taught them brahmin rights and made them perform ceremonies to free him from blood guiltness. Parshuram wishes to reward his new priests and as the Deccan had already been given to the brahmins, he prayed the sea to spare him some of its domain. The sea agreed to retire as far west as Parshuram could shoot an arrow from the crest of the Sahyadri. The arrow was shot and reclaimed a belt of land about 30 miles broad. The banks of the Vashisthi, about 40 miles of North of Ratnagiri, were set apart from the new brahmins, and in memory of the process by which they had been purified, they were called Chitpavans and their settlement Chitpolan." This story was systematically suppressed by the Peshwas who now enjoyed a sense of caste superiority due to their political preminence in the Maratha country.<sup>18</sup>

Before the emergence of Chitpavans as a strong political force, their chief source of livelihood was agriculture and the performance of various religious rituals. But in the early 18th century there took place a change in their occupation and some of them started migrating from Ratnagiri to Desh, Poona and other political and administrative centres. The brahmins of several other kulas also gained social and economic prominence as a result of the military or political talents demonstrated by them during the Peshwa age<sup>19</sup>. However, the Konkanastha brahmins had the monopoly of all the secretarist and Daftar offices and, "they re-

ceived respectable salaries as well as the privileges of having their goods exempted from custom duties and ferry charges."<sup>20</sup>

Although brahmins in general have been brought into severe attack by British administrators, generals and residents but they also at many points could not, conceal their appreciation for them as for instance Mounstuart, Elphinstone's remarks that, "the brahmans are mild, patient, intelligent on many subjects even liberal and enlightened."<sup>21</sup> Crawford also observes that, "the Chitpavans are probably the fairest race in Hindoostan often with blue or grey-green eyes; small delicately formed hands and feet; well-cut, intellectual features; and generally a look of breeding that distinguishes them in any company. They have always been notable for their intelligence and administrative ability" <sup>22</sup>, Chitpavans claimed "...a superiority over other brahmins in descent as in physique and intellect".<sup>23</sup>

As compared to the other sub-castes, the rise of Chitpavan to dominance thus was the result of an extremely circumspect and methodical mode of conduct and was achieved through great industry, assiduousness and a perfection of strategic generalship.<sup>24</sup>

It is also believed that Desasthas looked down upon Chitpavans.<sup>25</sup> But it is the Devs of Cincvad, an important lineage of Maharashtra, who were responsible for raising the

politically powerful Chitpavan brahmins to a status of ritual equality with Desasthas. In 1736, the Dev was entertained in Pune on the occasion of the thread ceremony of, Sadashivrao (Bahusahev), nephew of the Peshwa,<sup>26</sup> The Dev's found it advantageous to attend the ceremony of Konkanasth brahmins, their ritual inferior. The Devs sought strong connection with Morgav; (a pilgrimage centre) which established their sanction in religious terms. So any link of Peshwas with Devs was perceived by people as enhancing the legitimacy of Peshwas among them. This relationship however remains at the religious plane but it is often through the invocation of such religious and spiritual acts that a caste or class derives its political legitimacy from the people at large. The act can further be seen in a very stylized meeting which takes place just outside Pune between the Dev and the Peshwa. The meeting has been graphically narrated in an eyewitness account by captain Moor who observes the details of this journey, 'the details of which seldom vary materially', and which tell to Moor the high degree of estimation the hereditary deity is held. Moor writes, " Gabajee Deo goes at least thrice a year, on fixed days to Mooriwsher, a respectival town of a few miles beyond Jejooree.... One of the days is the 2nd of Maug, commesuring this year to the 31st of January. He leaves Chinchoor prety early; and the Peshwas and the court apprised of his approach, go forth to meet him, generally about half way between a hill called Gunnijkuda, two miles off the city.

The Deo rides in his palkee, attended ( I speak now of the present Deo ), by a suwaree elephant, given him by the late Peshwas, Madhoo Rao, a few ( perhaps dozen ) of his own domestic horsemen and about a hundred servants on foot : as he approaches the Peshwa , his palkee is put down, and he seats himself on a carpet with a secret stone, which he never quits, in a box beside him. The Peshwa alights from his palkee or elephant, advances towards the Deo with folded hands, the posture of a suppliant, prostrates himself and kisses his feet. The Deo neither rises, nor makes a salaam, but with his hands raised a little, with the palm downward, makes a benedictory gesticulation, accompanied by a motion, signifying his desire that the visitor may be seated. The Peshwa and a few distinguished persons, such as IMRIT RAO, CHIMNA APPA, & c. sit, but at some distance, on the carpet. Two or three questions and answers of supplication and blessing are exchanged ; and the Deo bestows on the Peshwa, and others, a quantity of rice and dal, perhaps a cocount, or such trifle. The Peshwas receives them, makes a humble obeisance and takes leave. The Deo enters his palkee, and proceeds, followed the Peshwa & c. by the wooden bridge to the city. The Peshwa quits him near the palace, which the Deo never enters, nor the house of any mortal, but always finds his tents pitched at fixed station".<sup>27</sup>

This description shows that how the Peshwas acknowledged the superiority of Devs. Such a devotion, according

to Enthoven was because of, " the Dev's favour in raising the Peshwas to a position of social equality among the Deccan Brahmins".<sup>28</sup> The Peshwas gave gifts to Devs,(varsasnas) which overtime became a necessary part of the ritual exchange between the supplicant and the superior. Thus, Peshwas made greetings, paid homage and gave gifts - all in a ritually prescribed and closely regulated manner. In this manner each of them reaffirmed each other's domain of precedence in the realm of temporal as well as spiritual powers.

#### Satara and Poona or Chatrapati and Peshwa :

The receding of Satara's significance as a main political centre can only be understood in the background of the relationship which developed between the Chatrapati's and the Peshwas. The office of the Peshwa was first created by Shivaji and its seventh occupant was Balaji Vishwanath. The Peshwas office had been held by four different families before it became hereditary in Balaji Vishwanath's time after nearly hundred years from its creation.<sup>29</sup>

It is in this context that the rise of Balaji Vishwanath during the period of Shahu becomes significant. The period after Shivaji's death till Shahu's proclamation as Chhatrapati was in a state of flux. Shahu after the release from the imprisonment of Aurangzeb was faced with the problems posed by Tarabai, the wife of Rajaram and the

regent of her son, Shivaji II. She flatly refused the claim of Shahu as a king. There was also a rumour floating around that Shahu is an imposter and not the real son of Sambhaji. But Shahu's relation with a powerful Maratha Chief Parsoji Bhonsle, expelled such confusion as Parsoji claimed the same descent as the illustrious Shivaji. He ate publicly in the same plate with Shahu. <sup>30</sup> Tarabai in spite that, unequivocally rejected the claims of Shahu on the pretext that Sambhoji has lost the kingdom and it was Rajaram who recovered it from the Mughals and moreover Shivaji on his death-bed had nominated Rajaram and not Sambhoji to succeed him. Therefore Rajaram's son Shivaji II becomes the legitimate heir of the throne. However, the very claim of Tarabai and her opposition to the elder branch of the bhonsale family was a spurious one; as Rajaram had personally declared that he assumed kingship on behalf of Shahu. <sup>31</sup> Shahu in this ongoing tussle with Tarabai was greatly helped by the konkanastha brahman. Balaji by winning over Angria and others deprived Tarabai of her main support. Still, the Kolhapur state remained formally independent and it retained the Asthpradhan council similar to the one which was first introduced by the Chhatrapati of the Satara but with hereditary posts remunerated with hereditary jagirs. <sup>32</sup> However, the endeavor of the Peshwas to reintegration <sup>of</sup> the two sovereignties into one never materialized. <sup>33</sup> In such a tumultuous scene, Balaji Viswanath's unflinching loyalty to Shahu won him the post of mutaliq on the occasion of Shahu's coronation. He also received the title of Senakarte, or

organiser of armies in 1708 and in the same year, he was assigned by Shahu half of the Moksha realised by khanderao Dhabade.<sup>34</sup> Shahu invested Balaji with the robes of office on Nov. 16, 1713 at a place called manjir.<sup>35</sup> The author of Caritabakhar puts the Peshwas usurpation of real power in Balaji Vishwanath's own words "The amsadhari of Bhrug known as Balaji at that instance became perplexed. This earth in the past was given away as a gift to the brahmans by me in a platter. How can i enjoy on my own? That which is given of ones own accord can't be taken back. I shall consider using another person for my aim I shall myself do the entire work; the appropriation of Raja will remain with other man".<sup>36</sup>

The Chitpavans gradually worked their way up from an ordinary position to the headship of state and eventually emerged as the defacto rulers. Earlier in the official hierarchy, they occupied a rank second to the pratinidhis. For this reason, in the attainment of supremacy they had first to eclipse the pratinidhi, other powerful groups and finally the Satara King. S.N. Sen points out that this transfer of authority from the master to the servant was accomplished so gradually and silently; "that the succession steps important as they were in relation to the whole move escaped all contemporary notice".<sup>37</sup>

A British envoy to the Satara Court reported in 1739, that Bajirao is so powerful that he takes small account of

the Raja. As his power is uncontrolled by whomsoever, the Raja is compelled to an exercise of an outward civility to him. The sentiments of most are that Bajirao has in view to throw off his allegiance to the Raja and "although the civil correspondence with the Raja may not be amiss, care must be taken that he is not solicited with what interferes with Bajirao whose authority in the court is even such, that in the absence of the Raja, and contrary to the advice of the seven councillors, he can enforce a complete obedience to his sole mandates.<sup>38</sup> But it seems that the Peshwas did not derive their authority only due to their being brahmans, rather they exercised their authority as the authorized deputy of the Chhatrapati.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, within the territories under their direct rule, the Peshwas were like the Chhatrapati," the sole depository of the sovereign authority of the state".<sup>40</sup>

The Peshwas in due course became so powerful that Lord Wellesly addresses the Peshwas as a 'Sovereign' and speaks of a 'Maratha Empire'<sup>41</sup>. This observation by Wellesly points to the fact that perhaps Lord Wellesly is not aware of the role of the Raja of Satara. But then Wellesly is speaking of the period of Nana phadnavis," when the relations even in its ceremonial aspect had become one of equality between Chhatrapati and the king".<sup>42</sup>

The gifts, rituals and symbols became the main elements through which the Peshwas maintained their relationship with



Chhatrapatis and sought their legitimacy by seeking the robe of honour as was the case even between the Mughal emperor and Satara kings. The form of the appointment of Peshwas started by investing them with the robe of honour, by granting clothes, from the period of Shivaji onwards and continued till the extinction of the Maratha empire. Even Bajirao II could not do away with this formal ceremony and Chhatrapati Maharaj had no trouble in granting him sanction to the authority already seized, even if the grantees were usurpers. The Peshwa Madhavrao I wrote to Achutrao Ganesh that, "five 66th pratinidhi as before has been granted to Shrinivas Pandity", requesting him to send the Pandit to the Raja to receive clothes of Honour.<sup>43</sup> In 1792-93 Peshwa Madhavrao II ordered Rs. 1000/- to be spent for celebrating the birth of a son to Anandibai, wife of the reigning king, in 1792-93. Similarly the Peshwa granted Rs. 25000/- for the funerary ceremony of Raja Shahu. In the same year more than Rs. 8000/- were spent at the time of new king's coronation.<sup>44</sup> The pulls and pressures were so strongly maintained by the Chhatrapati of Satara that the Peshwa Bajirao II once observed, "the same forms of external respect towards the Raja have to be maintained similar to the days when Satara had efficient Sovereign state, and the Peshwa only his minister".<sup>45</sup> Russell also observed that, "The change that has taken place in the relative power and consequence of the Raja and the Peshwas, have made no difference in their personal behaviour towards each other. The Raja maintained in the ceremonial of his court all the state of a real

sovereign; and the Peshwa approaches and treats him with the same mark of respect that are paid by the most dutiful subject to the person of the most despotic prince".<sup>46</sup>

Hence, it would not be correct to speak on our part that the Raja of Satara was completely relegated to a mere symbolic background. In fact, the pulls and pressures of the Satara Kings were always present and it was difficult for the Peshwas to become the sole sovereign without seeking sanctity from the king.

The meeting which takes place between the Peshwas and the Chattrapatis in 1797 is further indicative of the fact that despite the diminishing importance of Satara's political role, the sanctity of sovereignty of the Peshwas was strongly rooted in Satara only. This meeting has been graphically narrated by H. Russell in a letter to the Governor-general. He observes "when the Peshwa approaches Satara, the Raja sends some person to the distance of two or three miles to meet him. This person conducts him to the Raja's palace in the town. Upon his arrival at the gate of the palace, he is met by some of the Raja's Huzrats (personal troops) who go through the form of tying his hands tightly together with a handkerchief in the posture of respect and introduces him in that way to the Raja's presence... The Raja in addressing the Peshwa calls him mostly by his name Bajirao or frequently with greater kindness and familiarity simply 'Bajiba'. In public the Peshwa never sits in

the Raja's presence; and even in, private he sits only when the Raja desires him to do so. If the Peshwa is accompanied to Satara by the Raja of Berar or any of the other Maratha chieftains, who nominally hold directly of the Raja of Satara, they are received with him into the Raja's presence, with forms generally resembling those observed by the Peshwa, but varying in some degree according to their different gradations of rank. If the Peshwa is accompanied by Holkar or Scindhia (Maratha sardars) or any of the chieftains who hold of the Peshwa and not of the Raja, they are none of them are entitled to the honour of being admitted to the Raja's presence. The Mankaris (who are the ancient military tenants of the Mughal empire) are upon all occasions entitled to be received into the Raja's presence, and although the Peshwa himself does not sit before the Raja in public, the Mankaris do. In all external forms and ceremonies of respect the Mankaris still preserve a superiority above the Peshwas. Whenever a Mankari meets the Peshwa, the Peshwa makes the first Salam (greetings); and if any personal intercourse takes place between them upon the arrival of a Mankari at Poona, the Peshwa must pay the first visit".<sup>47</sup>

Thus the above description of the ceremony brings out quite clearly the Peshwa's subordination to the Chatrapati. It tells us about the importance of Satara as the Peshwa even if he was now becoming politically significant had to go to Satara to seek sanction from the Chatrapati. But that this sanction was more in the realm of ritual doesn't mean

that it was a mere show. In fact the spectacle was politically important becomes clear in another observation of Russell, who says, "all the treaties with the British were concluded by the Peshwas alone".<sup>48</sup> Even in a situation when the politics was being controlled by the Peshwas at Poona it was Satara and the ceremony which invested the Peshwas with the sanction to exercise royal power.

### Scholars, Poets, Sahirs: Literature Of The Peshwa Times :

The newly created dispensation of brahman Peshwas were further derived its legitimacy through their patronage to a large number of scholar poets and Sahirs. The very supremacy assumed by Chitpavan brahmins in terms of political influence could have been strongly contested by the other brahmin sub-caste namely Desastha and Saraswat. To perpetuate their (i.e. Chitpavan's) hegemony which could still have been contested they started patronising scholars and poets, indicative of the fact that there was the strong undercurrent of religiosity, brahmins similar to the period of Shivaji but becoming more overt in the new dispensation carried strong religious tinge associated with the practice of Brahmanism. But despite all these, the Peshwa's relation not merely remained in relation to ritual authority rather religion and ritual was sought time and again to consolidate and acquire more and more political power and social status. In fact, Chris Bayly rightly argues that everywhere the state builders in 18th century sought the support of holy

men. These successor states allowed to deepen the existing synthesis between the high religion of brahmans and Particular forms of worship which simultaneously led to the creation of a strong religious identities.<sup>49</sup>

The role of Sage, Swami, Scholars, poets and shahirs have generally been perceived as a missing link with the earlier Bhakti traditions.<sup>50</sup> But it is my contention that a century long tradition which had such a strong impact earlier cannot absolutely die down. Even if the new tradition shows the absence of the influence of religiosity as was visible earlier, still it can be discerned in the new traditions, however in a slightly changed form. The Peshwas had a strong support in the form of a revived Saint Brahmendra Swami, who wielded great influence by reason of his being the guru to Shahu and to several members of his court.<sup>51</sup> Balaji Vishwanath was struck by the Saint's miraculous power and became devoted to him.<sup>52</sup> Balaji Vishwanath also had the prophecy of the Swami that he would rise to the highest position in the state.<sup>53</sup> Balaji paid his gratitude by granting the village of Pipri on him and by further inducing the king Shahu to grant him the village Dhavadshi near Satara.<sup>54</sup> when Swami's Parshuram temple was attacked by the Siddis of Janjira and the idol was desecrated and plundered. The Swami was so much enraged and fired that he appealed to Shahu and others to wage war against the Siddi. It was Chimaji Appa who avenged this attack of Siddis.<sup>55</sup> Swami and Shahu greatly appreciated this

heroic deeds of Chimmaji Appa. Shahu even showered upon him honour, swords costly ornaments and dresses. Another sage named Maryam Dixit often corresponded and advised Bajirao and Chimaji Appa during the regency.<sup>56</sup>

The Pandit Poets of the Peshwa Period were mostly brahmins and these were steeped to a greater and lesser degree in brahmanical scholarship. They unlike the saints-poets of preceding centuries were patronised by the ruling class and their affiliates, educated enough to appreciate what these poets were trying to convey. Instead of following ascetic and renunciatory life, they believed in living the worldly life and considerably reflected the ethos of their age. However, it was the saints-poets of earlier age who provided the ground for the scholar-poets in their use of episodes from the scriptures and puranas to transmit their message to the masses. What occurred now was a shift from unalloyed Bhakti to the Bhakti garbed in sentiments of sensuous pleasures (Shringara), boisterous bravery (vira) and unabashed joy to be sought in here and now (Pravriti). Their significant contribution was to humanise devotion by investing bhakti with overtones sensuous. Thus the new focus of religiosity was combined with the synthesis of metaphysical mysticism and music which was far off from the orthodox religious practices.<sup>57</sup>

The scholar poets of this generation also claimed to be the upholder of Dharma and they strongly professed that it

is their duty to bring the people on the path of truth and dharma. The patronage ~~to keep by~~ ~~to~~ the Peshwas begin since 1731. However, these poets were engrossed in glorifying the exploits, heroic deeds etc. of the Peshwas. The author of Kampu Kaviya, Jagannath Pandit was formerly under the patronage of the Tanjore Dynasty of the princes but his work seems to have been composed by the order of Nanasaheb Peshwa.<sup>58</sup> The work Alamkaramanjusa deals with poetic figures alone and illustrative versus sing the glory of Peshwa Madhavrao I and his uncle Ragunathrao. The work shows that some intimate contact of the poet with the Peshwa Darbar must have preceeded, followed presumably by the gift of Dakshina. The author of this work Derashankar, glorifies the exploits of the Peshwa Vishwasrao.<sup>59</sup> Poets like Madhav Muni were granted land by Bajirao and Nanasaheb, Poet Niranjan lived with Bajirao himself.<sup>60</sup> Poet Amritrai became famous during Nanasaheb's time. He broke the tradition of writing about ancient heroes such as Bhim and Arjuna rather he started writing about the heroic deeds of the Peshwa themselves. In his composition 'Pant-Pradhan', he has described all Peshwas from Vishwanath to Vishmasrao. Even Mahipati who is famous for his work Bhaktivijaya and Santvijaya Served in the Peshwas court. Bajirao I recognising the talent of this man gifted Mahipati with land<sup>61</sup>. The government document of the Peshwas have scattered reference to their patronage to Haridasas and the performances of Kirtans on various occasions. In 1767, Rs. 2682 were spent on such performances during the Ganesh festival. Madhavrao II spent

hours listening to kirtans on the advice of his elders. The poet Niranjan Madhav (1703-90) was sent on diplomatic assignment to Karnatic and Tamilnadu by Bajirao and Balaji Bajirao.

The Peshwa glory was further enhanced through a tradition known as Sahirs. The word Shahir though derived from the Persian Shayar (Poet) may be rendered as a bard, ministers, balladers, etc. These Shahirs were the most heterogeneous groups, belonging to varied occupations and castes from the brahmans to muslims.<sup>62</sup> They were totally immersed in the pursuit of the vira rasa (heroism) and Shringara. They however were patronised by the big and high families, but they remained the real folk poets and artists who saw life as it was lived. This tradition was further boosted when the Maratha expansion broke out of its confines and got victories, the Shahir became the bards of the new empire. The murder of Narayanrao, the peace and prosperity under Madhavrao II, the decline and humiliation wrought by Bajirao II and his overthrowal by the English in 1818 all became subjects of ballads, forming a rich repertoire of history as has been and felt by the Sahirs poetical perception.<sup>63</sup>

Out of 125 Sahirs, six stand out as pre-eminent and all of them lived and worked in the second half of the 18th century, of them Parshuram was the oldest. He describes the career of Rangunathrao, Shamsar Bahadur and Bajirao II with



great feeling Sanghan Bhare (1778-1840) was of Sikalgar (makers of weapons) muslims castes from Jejuri. He refers to Ragunathrao and Bajirao II. Though a Muslim he shows great familiarity with the Hindu religious traditions of bhakti and its varied literature.

Since Maratha identity also involved the development of literature apart from various other elements, so to see its development in the new dispensation in relation to the very broadening of identity becomes very important. The literature of the Peshwa period had close relationship with the institutions like Purana, keertana etc. The puranas and the keertanas were the most important medium of cultural instructions, of these two age and institutions, the keertana, with its vocal and instrumental music, dancing etc proved more popular. In the later Peshwa rule in particular, the manysidednes of the institutions of keertans found greater scope. The Pada composer, the Sahir and the Scholar orator singer, who delivered keertans, each had his own technique of expression but these were complementary to one another. These permitted a blending of exhibitionist tendencies, peculiar to professional artists. The Pada composers, Madhav Muneeshwar Amrit Raya were the popular keertankars of these times. It was the institutions of keertana that made the poem of Vaman Pandit and Moropant popular.<sup>64</sup> The medium of expression was oral, affording the authors and poets a direct public contact. This resulted in the appearance of factors like actuality, conversation, oratory and a profes-

sion of details. For the sake of the sound effects or for familiarity an easy memorability the poet resorted to rhythmic verse and its jingling effects. Alliterations, fanciful presentations of stories and descriptive devices which went to make the narrations, prelections and descriptions sweet to the ear and mind were as praiseworthy. A part of this literature found a part of the system of education also.

The two forms of literature that particularly prospered and written from the professional point of view, were the saheeriyah poetry, and the prose bakhars, some hold that both were borrowed from the Muslims. The Povada and the Lavanees formed the saheeriyah literature. In general the povada has some gallant exploits of a hero from its theme and it also comes before an audience. Nearly half of the povada belonged to the Peshwa period which also kept company with the rulers and their urban pleasure seekers. The lavanees flourished and boomed forth during the latter part of the Peshwa Period in particular under the reign of Bajirao II. This is ascribed to the supreme fondness of the rulers of those times for sensual pleasures. 65

However, the literature of the Peshwa Period no more evoked the colloquial forcefulness of earlier period and it has been criticized as hedonistic, presumptuous in its scholarly display, replete with rhetorical feats and strained in its tones and nuances. Its writers have been called pedants rather than poets. They addressed themselves

to a new kind of audience, thriving on territorial annexation and material, acquisition, hungry for status<sup>66</sup> Thus the identity in relation to the development of literature seems to have been widening and trying to adjust itself with a new trend that is more amorphous, ambiguous etc. So, the very meaning of identity has to be seen in the changing social and cultural milieus, when tradition itself is widening to incorporate the development at different levels, however strongly carrying its inner essence.

#### Religiosity, Legitimacy and Political Authority :

The spirit of religiosity in the new dispensation became much more overt. The performance of prescribed brahmanical rituals and worship was a hallmark of conformity and loyalty to orthodoxy for the brahmans and the practices were officially encouraged and patronized by the ruling family. The Peshwas performed all the 8 major sacraments (samskaras) which contributed in the building up of the strong social relationship and had deep political connotations. These sacraments involved the participation and visit of important and powerful families apart from the necessity of brahman's presence. All these in the 18th century culminated into the notion of 'classic Brahmanic Kingdom'.

The 8 major sacraments were the birth sacrament (jat karma) naming, first outing of the baby (Nishkeramana), first occasion of eating of solid food (annaprashna), first

haircut (cheedakaruja) investing with Sacred thread (upana-yana), marriage (vivaah), funeral ceremonies (anteyasthe). The first five came during infancy. The sacred thread ceremony was obligatory for all brahmans, and this came at the age of 8 and signified formal admission into the brahman order and the right to learn the vedic lore. This bestowed on them the right to call themselves 'the twice born' (dvija) distinguishing them from the shudras. The implication in terms of political connotation in performing these sacraments can be seen in one of the orders which was issued in 1780 by Peshwas to Sadashiv Nagnath, asking him to resolve the first marriage of his daughter as it was not performed according to the strict religious injunctions and to celebrate again the marriage of his daughter with a fresh bridegroom of his choice.<sup>67</sup> This order apart from preserving the religious heritage, simultaneously shows the authority being wielded in political terms.

The preservation of holy cattle, holy places and brahmans were the most important elements for the ruling class as it could derive its legitimacy from the people only by adhering to such principles which preserve the religious heritage of the land. In fact, the Peshwa rule witnessed an attempt to conquer all the holy places. It was during Bajirao II that a massive campaign was launched and finally Benaras, Brindavan, Prayag etc. was conquered. The Peshwas' interest to conquer Benaras began with the expedition of Bajirao I in the north. In 1735, repairs of the ghats on the Ganga in

Benaras was undertaken. In the same year Radhabai, the mother of Bajirao I went on a pilgrimage to Benaras. There were complaints that the discriminations in terms of Dakshina, as Chitpavans were given more than the others.<sup>68</sup> Benaras as a sacred place invoked lot of interest in Peshwas as well as the people. Sadashivnaik on behalf of the Peshwa was superintending the building of ghats, temples and Dharmashal as at Banaras he gives an account of the progress of the work at Banaras in 1735.<sup>69</sup>

Accompanied with the importance of holy places is holy cattle and the brahmans. There are various references in the Peshwa Daftar which show that there were various orders issued by the Peshwas to send cows. In one of such orders, Harigopal is asked to send some 400 to 500 cows.<sup>70</sup> The distribution of Dakshina, grant was one of the main duty of political powers, particularly in the month of shravan large amount of money was spent. Janardan Appaji informs the Peshwa that Rs. 61,108 were distributed among 28, 981 brahmans on account of the Dakshina of the month of Shravan. In 1767 the peshwas spent Rs. 131,500 in Dakshina distribution to brahmans of Benaras. The lavish expenditure on various religious and social functions was closely linked with the legitimacy of the sovereign power. On almost all the great occasions, the Peshwas and the members of the elite groups spent considerable amount of money. These occasions were the investiture with the sacred thread, weddings, funeral ceremonies and the annual oblations to the spirit of depart-

ed ones. There were also other occasions of charity as in 1764, when Rs. 50,000 were distributed to needy brahman families. In 1767, the preachers (Haridasas) were paid Rs. 2682. In the same year Rs. 2602 were spent on hailing learned brahmans and some Rs. 7000 to feed brahmans at Poona. In 1804, the Peshwa gave a donation of Rs. 10001 to the Vishnu temple at Saswad. They also spent money on places like Nasik, Theur, Cincvad etc.<sup>71</sup>

In 1738, when Chimaji Appa (the brother of Bajirao I) was unwell, Rs. 30 were spent in commissioning brahmans to offer 120,000, ritual chants to the constellation Mars.<sup>72</sup> In 1753, another such ceremony was performed because the rains were delayed.<sup>73</sup> Apart from these expenses, a considerable amount of money was also spent on weddings as is indicated in some of the expenses accounts of Bajirao II. In 1806 his fourth marriage involved an expense of Rs. 16,415 for dinners. Rs. 41800 for gifts of clothes, Rs. 600 as fees to the priest and Rs. 25,744 distributed as gifts (Dakshina at Parvati hills). The death anniversary of Balaji Bajirao cost Rs. 6,318 in 1772.<sup>74</sup> There is no dearth of information in Peshwa Daftar and Poona Residencies correspondence of the money spent on various occasions by the ruling class. Hence the king's role as the chief gift giver and receiver as well as the amount of royal expenditure in course of time became the expression of legitimate rule, which simultaneously invoked the eminent status of the king.

Thus, the state under the new dispensation led by Peshwa, became overtly 'Brahman Partipalak' the protector of brahmins. However the brahmanic ideal of a free gift was meant to serve the Dharma and denied any reciprocity between the donor and the donee. Ideally the brahmins were supposed to be aloof from society and royal power in order to preserve the Hindu dharma. But as can be argued on the basis of our previous discussion that the condominium of king and brahman from which the legitimate Sovereignty in India derived its strength was deep into contradiction between universality and political sovereignty. Hence the kings association with brahmins proved to be a sound policy on the part of the state to sustain sovereignties in India.<sup>75</sup>

The Peshwas being the brahmins were strongly guided by the beliefs and precepts of their caste and religion. It is in this context that their expenditure and various religious establishments, performance of various rituals and sacrifices became very significant. The family deity of the Peshwa was Ganesh.<sup>76</sup> Everyday the Peshwa performed the ritual worship of their family deities. The records of the day to day residence and camps of the Peshwas allow a unique opportunity to measure to what degree the individual Peshwa supported Ganesh as their personal deity.<sup>77</sup> The Ganesh Mahal, where the image of Ganesh was ritually worshiped was located in the palace of the Peshwa at Poona. The Ganesh Mahal has been beautifully narrated in Captain Moors words but to us it is not necessary to mention it here. Large sum

of money was spent on the celebration of Ganesh festival at Poona. Ganesh being the family deity, "the Peshwas glorified his cult, built his temples, lavished gifts and almost transformed into a national cult".<sup>78</sup>

The Peshwas apart from having a deep devotion to their personal deity, also visited the temples of Parvati Hills. In fact, Parvati temple became a vivid symbol of the religious devotion of the Peshwas.<sup>79</sup> The distribution of Dakshina was the most important occasion at the Parvati temple. This custom was started by the Dabhades (an important, powerful family) but was carried to an unprecedented height under the Peshwas. Such a tradition of royal charity and patronage to learning in fact could be traced to the vedic times as the term Dakshina itself suggests. The Peshwas being both brahman and rulers, not only followed this long tradition but also gave it a particular brahmanic orientation. Thus the brahman 'bhojan, giving a feast to brahmins was one of the most popular religious practices undertaken to earn merit as in 1760, Rs. 50,000/- were distributed to needy brahmans. In 1767, Rs. 2602 were spent to ailing learned brahmans and some 7000 brahmans were fed at Poona. The Peshwas also spent money on sacred places like Nasik, Theur, cinvad etc.<sup>80</sup> The performance of these various rituals, ceremonies became the intrinsic part of the legitimacy derived by the brahman Peshwas, in cultural as well as political terms.



The notion of the Marathas, representing the fiercest Hindu power possibly made it necessary on the part of the brahman Peshwa to protect the religious heritage of the Deccan. They frequently gave grants of lands to various religious establishments made by the Peshwas. The Peshwas also made grants of Inam lands to Devs of Cincvad.<sup>81</sup> Apart from this, the Maratha state granted varasanas, an annual cash allowances, to its subjects. The state through this grant favored priests, astrologers, magicians and scholars. Hence the varsanas was largely though not completely a brahman allowance. It sustained the high culture of the country and the incomes were often a sort of social welfare. But the recipients of allowances also rendered a valuable service to the state. Preston argues that by "accepting an allowance they acknowledged the legitimacy of the Peshwa govt".<sup>82</sup> The significance of religious grants can also be gleaned through Ajnapatra's remarks, "after the grant is made, there should not be any desire to retake whatever may be the times of difficulty and even in cases of danger to life; on the contrary after remembering the worldly happiness is momentary and considering the fear of the other world, even a spilful of water from what is given should not be coveted even as a joke."<sup>83</sup>

How strongly had religiosity had gone not only into the ruling class but the common mass as well, is evident in the replacement of the Peshwa govt by British. A visitor to the Deccan reports that, "the religious and learned brahmins

complain that, in the territories subject to, or connected with the English, the general reverence is daily declining for a religion, no longer countenanced by the Powerful. No new foundations or endowments are to be expected under the English Government. and the begging brahmins even complain of a sensible decay of liberality in our dominions.<sup>84</sup> Even the Britishers thought it better to preserve the ancient rights and institutions existing in this country which also shows the greatness of British rule.<sup>85</sup> It is further evident in Elphinstone's statement that the preservation of religious establishments is always necessary in a conquered country," but more particularly so in the one where the brahmans have so long possessed the temporal power.<sup>86</sup> Thus under the British, it was decided that all kinds of inams were allowed to continue. Inams were classed under six heads :

(1) Hindu inams, (2) Husalnian inams. (3) Devasthan - a grant of land for the maintenance of temple (4) Dharmadya - Charitable grants (6) Dhengi donations.<sup>87</sup>

The political legitimation sought by the Peshwas were construing along at various different planes, the significance of which has to be closely observed. Uthoff reports that "Bajirao paid a private visit after his religious incursions to Nanaphadnavis contrary to the customary practice of previous intimation".<sup>88</sup> Shahu sends Sankranti greetings to Peshwa Bajirao Ballal.<sup>89</sup> Similarly Shahu also sends

his greetings on the occasion of the thread ceremony of Chimaji's son Sadashivrao.<sup>90</sup> These two letters clearly indicate that the Chattrapati's invitation to Peshwas was a mark of great honour. Such acts where Peshwas received the respect brought peoples legitimation as well. Similar to such act was an attempt on the part of the Peshwa to please the Chattrapati. When Satara king was on the way to a sacred place called Jejuri, Nanasaheb informs Bajirao that he has left Poona and gone to Khed to meet the king and Virubai on their way to Jejuri, Nanasaheb further sends orders to the officials of Jejuri to make proper arrangements for the king's visit to the temple.<sup>91</sup>

The continuous exchanges, acceptance of gifts, invitation for attending marriage and various other ceremonies between the Peshwas and the powerful families were different threads of the same objective. In a letter Udaji Pawar most humbly acknowledges the invitation from the Peshwa to attend the thread ceremony of Vishwasrao. He, however received it after the date of celebration.<sup>92</sup> Manoji Angria sends dress of honour to Vishwasrao on the occasion of the thread ceremony of Madhavrao.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Malharrao Govind in a letter dated 1750 to Nanasaheb acknowledges the receipt of an invitation for the marriage of Vishwasrao.<sup>94</sup> Tarabai sends a present to the Peshwas three hundred mangoes of excellent variety and two kinds of Inam especially prepared for him.<sup>95</sup> This last letter clearly shows an attempt on the part of Tarabai to build up strong relationship with the

Peshwas. This was done so that the legitimacy of Kolhapur as a new sovereign centre against Shahu's Satara can be established. But Kolhapur despite having its independent existence, could not become as important as Satara and Poona.

### The Bureaucratic Structure of the Peshwa Government :

The Maratha state of the 18th century, wielded enormous amount of power and authority. Closely linked with the legitimation of sovereign power by Peshwas, is the notion of bureaucracy which has been posited for early modern Europe. The emergence of Chitpavans as a strong political force in the form of Peshwas certainly led to the separation of their functions from the purely ritual activity to the worldly and business domain. Such a separation of power has been viewed by Susan Bayly<sup>96</sup> as quite striking because it not merely remained a feature of Maharashtra but also that of places like Madras and Konkan. The Lokika brahmin of Madras and the Navayat lineages of Deccan emerged as a 'tightly knit administrative body'. But she further argues that the rights, shares and honours with distinctly religious connotation became bound up with the general growth of accountability and exchange. This for Bayly did not lead to a creation of a secular domain and bureaucracy in the Weberian sense of rational administration.<sup>97</sup> Such a characterization to me seems to presuppose a complex displacement of religion in

the creation of bureaucracy and secular domain. It simultaneously calls upon modernity to give meaning to the term tradition, thus submerging the significance of tradition beneath the impact of modernity associated with civil society, nation-state etc.

In its modern connotation, the concept of bureaucracy is certainly associated with impersonal and formalised delineation of official jurisdictional areas, hierarchies, Channels of appeal, legalistic method of conflict resolution and private domain.<sup>98</sup> However the ideology of universal dominion associated with Indian Kingship in both its Hindu and Muslim variants employed an artificial categorical grid which approximated to the form of bureaucratic dominion imposed by the modern state. In the Indian context the universalist dharma might have ruled out the political reciprocity but at the practical political plane and particularly in the 18th century its forms and implication is evident in the manner of wielding the power and authority. The political reciprocity becomes one of the important ingredient of Indian political sovereignty, which can be seen in the background of the above discussion and the power wielded in the realm of social and religious matters.

The pattern of authority and government evolved by the Peshwas, comes through in a interesting manner in the observation and statement made by the Britishers. Despite having British legacy and the European superiority, they could not conceal their appreciation towards a totally

different form of administration then at work in Maharashtra. But it is not to say that such observation correspond to the notion of bureaucracy rather it indeed shows the futility of positing the notion of bureaucracy in the context of early modern Europe. William H. Tone , a European observer, while surveying the administration of the Maratha countryside, speaks that, "how everything respecting this extraordinary people becomes an object of curiosity in particular their principles of govt. excite our attention, as they discover a mode of thinking and actions totally different from the European policy. The very local arrangement of the empire are peculiar, the territory of the different chiefs being blended and interspersed with each other".<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Alexander Dow, writing from experience says that " the nation of Marathas, though chiefly composed of Rajputs, or that tribe of Indians whose chief business is war, retain the mildness of their countrymen in their domestic government. The Marathas represented as barbarians, are great and rising people, subject to a regular government, the principle of which are founded on virtue".<sup>100</sup> These two observations clearly point to the fact that the very attempt to look at the pattern of political development in relation to the European kind of development greatly reduces the significance of such a notion such as bureaucracy, secular domain etc. Thus the 18th century Maratha kingdom has to be strictly seen in its own terms as the importance of the various concepts and categories are

rooted in overlapping tendency. Since the notion of bureaucracy and secular domain etc are modern phenomena. So the understanding of it has to be seen in its temporal milieu.

It is generally believed that the creation of Maratha administrative institutions owed a lot to the ancient Hindu kings in the Deccan<sup>101</sup>. It is possibly due to this that the Maratha kings being Hindu rulers were both temporal and spiritual heads of the state.<sup>102</sup> The administrative structure created by the peshwas was similar to the "Shivaji model with a few modifications in the territorial division and the titles of officials. They continued the old system and tried offenses against caste and religion with the help of Brahma sabha and Jatisabha.<sup>103</sup> The chief justice derived his social and religious jurisdiction from the Peshwas and punished social and religions wrongs by administering penance with the help of Brahmasabha.<sup>104</sup> It was the customary right of the brahmins of the holy places to administer penances to those who submitted to them.

In cases of offenses which were directly punished by the state, the government at the completion of the punishment, IN addition to that it dispensed penances to the offenders concerned through the agency of the brahmasabha and thus helped them to restore their own castes. Naturally in such cases government levied both the Raj-danda and Brahma-danda, according to the capacity of the culprit but

the latter was spent for his purification and handed over to the brahmins, by the local public officers.<sup>105</sup> In other cases, involving social and religious offenses, the persons expelled were expected to visit the brahmins of the holy places for purification.

The judiciary depended upon the old sanskrit treatise on law like Mitaksara and Manu's code. Apart from these, they also depended upon old customs. And as those old customs prescribed, among other forms, trial by ordeal, the maratha judges allowed ordeal of fire and water as well as appeal to divine intervention in the form of an oath taken in a sacred temple.<sup>106</sup> The trial by ordeal was an important feature of this period. In the absence of documentary evidence and witnesses, the device of getting divine proof was resorted through ordeal. If the majlis of the place of origination though it necessary to try the suit by means of divine proof, the litigants were sent to the public officer of the place and to the local govts. after its performance a 'Thalpana' was given in favour of the party, which was absolutely necessary in the case of trial by an ordeal. These were various forms of ordeal but the most common ordeal was a piece of metal out of a pot full of boiling oil. This had to be performed in a temple of special sanctity and at an auspicious moment previously fixed by the Government. The ordeal had to be witnessed by the villagers of the party as well as by a government officer deputed for that purpose.<sup>107</sup> Ordeals with boiling water and burning



lamps are also mentioned. In the latter case truth was supposed to be indicated by the period of burning.

It appears that the Sultans of the Deccan didn't interfere with the social and religious traditions of Hindus. Whenever a matter involving religious or social cases of the Hindus were brought to the public officer, they either referred it to local brahmasabha or jatisabha or settled it with the help of Majlis (assembly) of the Diwan (local govt. officers) and the gopa and the caste people.<sup>108</sup> Maratha state had no original jurisdiction over social and religious offences. Such causes if referred to government, were tried with the help of Brahmasabha or the Jatisabha. The Peshwas continued the same system.<sup>109</sup>

The Brahmasabha was headed by a dharmadhikari. It was composed of the learned brahmins, such as Mimansaka, mahabhasya pandit, Puranile and the like. The jatisabha was constituted by the members of the caste and who were collectively called as 'Daiva' or fate. They had jurisdiction over all sorts of offenses that led to the degeneration of the caste and their right to expel such offenders, was sanctioned by customs.<sup>110</sup>

It has been pointed out earlier also that the Chatrapatis and Peshwas were not only the secular but also the ecclesiastical head of the state. Such combination of secular and the religious authority necessitated the Peshwas to regulate social affairs as well. There are various

instances where the Peshwa though was the fountain of all justice, while giving decision to the people, he followed the rules laid down in Hindu sacred books.<sup>111</sup> The cases were referred to brahmans, well versed in vedas and Sastras. A brahmin woman Savitri's case was referred to the Dharmadhikari and other brahmans well-versed in vedas and Shastras of kasaba karad<sup>112</sup>. Peshwas were also supposed to decide about the religious rights and customs of their non-hindu subjects. The dispute about the priesthood of the parties was decided by an officer of the Peshwas.<sup>113</sup>

The state wielded considerable amount of power in various social activities as well. A learned Swami of Kolhapur received letters of introduction from the Deshmukhas and Deshpandes who were instructed to help the Swami to collect charities.<sup>114</sup> In another letter, the Peshwa ordered Rs. 25 to be given to meet the expenses of Sati ceremony. The state would help in the reconstruction of a broken temple.<sup>115</sup>

One of the important part played by the Peshwa government was the regulation of the caste matters. The government in this regard wielded enormous authority and power. This further points to the fact that the whole notion of bureaucracy and the creation of secular domain posited for Western Europe has to be considered seriously. The use of the concepts and categories like secularism, communalism etc is a modern category and if used in the medieval context

reduces, the very logic of the operation of government. So, to understand secular institutions in terms of the displacement of religious beliefs and rituals would tantamount to denigrating the secular credentials of earlier states, despite its legitimacy derived through religious beliefs and rituals. R.N. Bellah, in fact rightly argues that secular ideologies have taken on moral authority in many civilisations around the globe, somewhat in the manner of world religions, despite their rootedness in European culture.<sup>116</sup>

H. Fukazawa argues that the Maratha state played a vital role in regulating the caste matters; from the forfeiture and restoration of caste-status of individuals to the division of castes; the formulation of caste codes and the stabilisation of caste distinctions. The system itself was an order of society protected, controlled and stabilised by the government.<sup>117</sup> The rulers, being brahmins and upholders of the brahmanic civilisation, attempted traditions and regulations governing the system. The regulation of caste system by the State shows that how a ruler is bound to protect and maintain status order of society within the traditional Hindu concept, such an exercise further evokes the rules and procedures laid down in the Dharamashastras. Within this hierarchy of castes, brahmins still enjoyed the highest social status and on many occasions the Peshwas summoned the representative brahmin priests from various holy places and made a decision based on their expert opinions.<sup>118</sup> But unlike the earlier period, the brahman

supremacy and their high status in the society was questioned at many levels and it is possibly in this context that the rise of various families in central and western India from their obscure origin testifies the waning orthodox value of brahmainic traditional institutions.

The 18th century Maratha State also derived its legitimacy through a subservient relationship to the Mughal Emperor. The Ajnapatra speaks of the Emperor of Delhi as 'the lord of the Universe'.<sup>119</sup> It was strongly objected by Shahu when Peshwas were building the Delhi Gate in Poona, which was facing the north, implied an open defiance of the badshah.<sup>120</sup> The Mughal Emperor was often referred to as Sarvabhaume, 'the lord of the land' or 'Universal Emperor'. Similarly Balaji Janardhan or Nana Fadanvis referred to the Emperor as Prithvipati, master of the world.<sup>121</sup> Peshwa Bajirao I also called the Emperor Prithvipati in a letter of 1736 to his mother in which he informs her of his probable success in a campaign against him.<sup>122</sup> However, after 1761, we find such explicit avowals of subservience only in official treaties or agreements, but still then the Rajas of Satara and the Peshwas acknowledged the universal authority of the Emperors of Delhi by addressing them in the form of petition or arji's and by coining their money in the Mughal impression.<sup>123</sup>

However, this new brahmanic dispensation evolved by the Peshwas didn't go unchallenged. The chitpavan power reached

its summit under Nanaphadnavi's and he remained very powerful from 1775 to 1795. But later he lived under the constant fear of being overthrown by the Maratha community rallying around the Chattrapati.<sup>124</sup> As a measure to conciliate the Marathas, there was much talk about taking the Raja out - a project strongly supported by the British, but this plan was dropped when in 1773 <sup>M</sup>Madhavrao <sup>N</sup>Narayan was born and made Peshwa.<sup>125</sup> The challenge to Chitpavan hegemony didn't come from Kolhapur despite its strong rivalry with the brahman govt, rather it came from their own sardars first from Scindias and later from Holkar which would be discussed in the next chapter. These sardars although subject to periodic checks and audit by the Central Government were themselves formally equipped with the sovereign power. The sovereign attribute of the granting of land was shared, in effect with a number of individuals who hold the Sikkekatyar or mutaliq seal and here the importance of families like Scindia, Gaikwad, Holkar becomes important. Thus there was continuous delegation of authority started from Mughal authority, when Satara asserted as a strong power and later by Peshwa who derived their legitimacy through the emblem and seal from the Raja of Satara. When the Peshwa delegated the insignia, than Holkar, Scindia and Shahu, sought to secure the goodwill of the local muslim govt officials by deferring to them claims of overlordship. He visited the dead emperors i.e. Aurangajeb's tomb at Khaludabad, walking there on foot, rendered pious obsiance

to his memory and exhibited in an unequivocal manner his deep gratitude and devotion to the royal house of Delhi.<sup>126</sup>

### Conclusion

Thus, in this chapter one has tried to argue that maratha identity in the new brahmanic dispensation had its foundation in the period of Shivaji where the relationship between the king and brahman was gradually getting entrenched and to a great extent the legitimation of kingship transcended or tried to bypass the existing social milieu by strongly invoking Indian classical texts, which in fact filtered through and in many ways became fictitious overtime. But unlike this king-brahman relationship, the new dispensation dawned with the era of brahmanic hegemonisation, which also in many ways could not overcome the problem of being absolutely independent as it sought its legitimacy from the two established centres of power that of Delhi and Satara. In fact, Poona's relationship with Satara in one or the other way, brought people's legitimation to the Peshwas as a sovereign political power. The very understanding of Satara receding into the symbolic background in the general historical writing questions Poona's sudden emergence as a political centre in the 18th century as the very internal logic of the building of the empire in every part of the globe takes time to stabilise before bumping into a force to be reckoned with. The emergence of Chitpavan as a tightly knit administrative body in the 18th century is inextricably

linked into a relationship with the Chattrapati's of Satara since the time of Shivaji. It is here in this context that the very internal logic of the operation of brahmanic institution becomes clearly evident. As it is in the 18th century, that the brahmanic institutions is exposed to the vagaries of change at every front, where its own attempt to mobilise various resources in strengthening its political hegemony, had to compromise and reconcile with recessive themes which went against their dominant motifs, simultaneously bringing in stresses and strain in the dominant brahmanic ideology while incorporating a synthesis between brahmanic high religion and popular beliefs. It has also been made clear that the very component of political sovereignty in its formative phase can go against the concerns, rhetorics of courts and nobilities which in turn widens the very notion of tradition in regulating the power and authority. Tradition now assimilates new elements and makes its boundary flexible in terms of its representation in the construction of identity. It simultaneously questions the notion, concept and category such as bureaucracy, secular domain identified as an intrinsic part of modernity and civil society. Tradition itself shows that the rationality of such categories in its temporal milieu can co-exist with its representation of extreme conventional form as well as changing and reinterpreting conventional constructions.

PESHWAS AT POONA	Year (in A.D.)
Balaji Vishwanath	1714
Baji Rao I	1720
Balaji Bajirao	1740
Madhav Rao I	1761
Narayan Rao I	1772
Raghunath Rao	1773
Madhav Rao Narayan	1774
Baji Rao II	1796 - 1818



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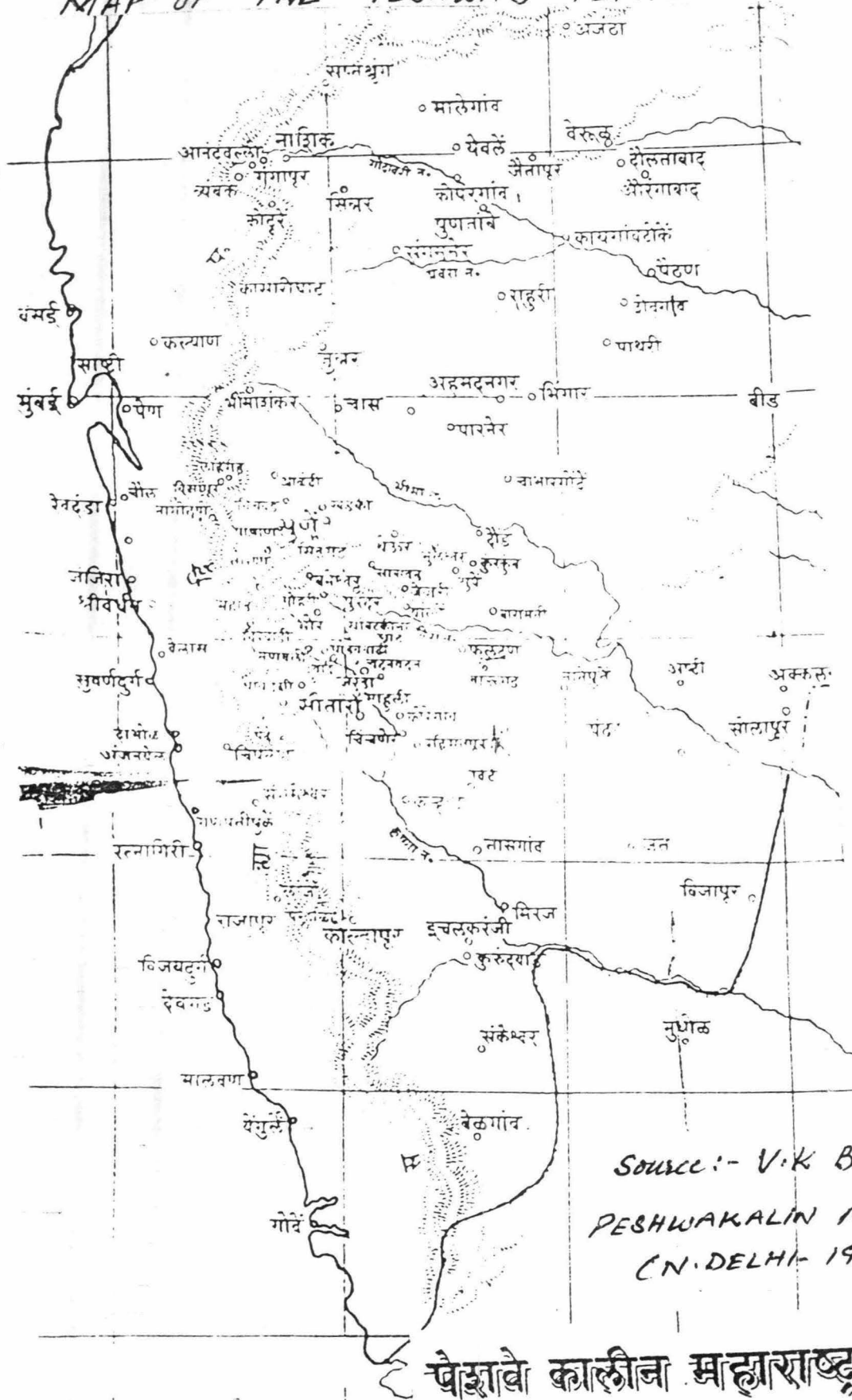
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# MAP OF THE PESHWA'S TERRITORY



Source:- V.K BHAVE  
 PESHWAKALIN MAHARASHTRA  
 (N. DELHI- 1976)

पैशावे कालीन महाराष्ट्राचा

नकाशा.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **POLITICAL ELITE AND THE INTERFACE WITH OUTER FRONTIERS**

Section I : Rise of Scindias and Holkars.

Section II : Religiosity, Interface with the Political Powers.

Conclusion

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**POLITICAL ELITE AND THE INTERFACE**  
**WITH OUTER FRONTIERS**

Until now, the delineation of the construction of Maratha identity has been seen in the background of Shivaji's Swarajya and the Peshwas brahmanic dispensation. But the construction of identity in this brahmanic dispensation witnessed the use and representation of the tradition in a much more wider form, where 'swarajya' no more remained a beating drum rather the logic of an imperial ambition made the Marathas to look for 'samrajya'. This objective was already into practice since the time of Shivaji but in the 18th century the territorial ambition became an expression of authority and royal behaviour. In the case of Marathas, the emergence of few important families in central and western India provided an impetus to such ambition. So the emergence of the house of Holkar and Scindia, apart from others made possible this imperial objective of the Peshwas. To a great extent these sardars turned the 'swarjya' into 'samrajya'. The relentless march of the sardars into the southward and the northward territories were not merely the manifestation of a marauding and plundering acts of hoards rather a rational explanation of the 18th century pattern of authority. This territorial expansion was accompanied with a vigorous assertion for autonomy and independence. the assertion of a sovereign right in their respective domain further complicated the pattern of authority as it no more

remained a scheme of 'administration' and government. But they did not lag behind in exhibiting their regard and submission to the politically reigning Poona. The growing power of these families with relatively low origin further compounded the problem as it brought them into an acute political and ritual conflict with the established Chitpavan's political ascent. Thus the rise of these families considerably questioned the pre-conceived ideology of brahmanic institution. Now the brahmanic institution had to be flexible in adjusting itself to the changing social and political milieu. The interface also with the outer frontiers or the conquered territories was no more sought in the realm of agrarian surplus but in the deep social and cultural patterns of the indigenous people.

This chapter seeks to explain the power construction in the background of the Peshwas and some families and then attempts to place these two particular families namely Scindia and Holkar in the ongoing temporal milieu. The discussion once again remains precise and touches upon certain elements which connect it to the broader argument running into this dissertation. The interface has also been seen in relation to few territories, particularly Malwa and Rajasthan. The discussion of all these further provides a clue to the cultural and ideological base of the formation of a state.

Similar to other parts of India, the 18th century Peshwa regime also witnessed the 'parcellization of sovereignty'. The notion of the now obsolete but at one time extremely influential theory of absolute sovereignty, overarching authority and monolithic state put forward by medieval historiography is now questioned.<sup>1</sup> The recent spate of research has strongly questioned and contested the notion of a state helplessly enfeebled. It is in this context that Burton Stein developed the concept of the segmentary state, which however was compounded with many problems, particularly when faced with Tipu's bureaucratized state.<sup>2</sup> But the characterisation of 18th century as potentially vibrant and dynamic is derived from the thesis of Barni Cohen and J.C. Heesterman<sup>3</sup> and later represented through a rich empirical work by Chris Bayly. Bayly strongly went against the construction of 18th century as 'the black legend'; an issue expressed countless times in the British imperialist ideology to counter Indian nationalism.<sup>4</sup> He in fact demonstrated that in 18th century authority was greatly dispersed, varied and parcellized.<sup>5</sup> Bayly's thesis was later followed by host of historians working in India and outside, which demonstrated a close link of early colonial rule with prior indigenous regimes. Thus, the pre-conceived notion of Marathas as a marauding, rapacious and licentious hordes in certain historical writings is untenable. Stewart Gordon in fact has shown that even the areas subject to Maratha rapine and pillage could recover in a short time. It seems

ironic that "these supposedly archtypical marauders, the marathas, of all the successor states should have left the most complete administrative record".<sup>6</sup>

The sustenance of empire is inextricably linked to the expansion of political power. In the case of Marathas the notion of an empire dates back to the time of Shivaji, but it was not before the arrival of the Peshwas that a massive campaign was launched to integrate various new territories into the Maratha state. Compounded with the need of expansion were measures and policies to be pursued in conciliating the conflicting forces represented by the various sardars. These were the people who were instrumental in expanding the Peshwa's domain. The Peshwas in such a situation had fallen into the hands of two distinctly rival groups of sardars; the first represented by the Bhonsles of Nagpur, the Dabhades and the pratinidhis, all these were closely related with the Raja of Satara and thus were opposed to the growing political power of the Peshwas. The second group of sardars were Scindia, Holkar, Gaikward, Rastia etc. who owed the rise under the Peshwa's rule. But they became so powerful over time that the Peshwas anticipated a great threat to their existing political status. In this sense the second group of sardars emerged beneath the hegemony of the politically reigning Poona.

## Rise of Scindias and Holkars

The expansion until late in the Peshwa's regime needed sanction from the Raja of Satara.<sup>7</sup> The Peshwa could not embark on a campaign until he took leave of the Raja. But the expansion of the empire was the sole pre-occupation of the Peshwas and their sardars only. This preoccupation was later contested by the Bhonsles of Nagpur in the eastern region, Dabhades in Gujarat, the Powars in Malwa.<sup>8</sup> The south however remained a bone of contention between the old sardars. These multiple claims and the varieagated authority proved to be a stumbling block for Balaji Bajirao. But these in themselves were not strong enough to outbalance the increasing power, derived from the Balaji Bajirao's new conquests of north. Balaji got the farman of his claim on Malwa through the imperial order issued by the Deputy governor of the province. The gradual success led Marathas to move into the northern territories.<sup>9</sup> In the same year they reached beyond Delhi into the Punjab as far as Attock and to the east into the Doab, Avadh, Allahabad, Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. The campaign towards north was launched after the death of Sahu. These innumerable conquests posed lots of problems for the Peshwas.

The Peshwas had to undergo various difficult phases and pursued a policy of appeasement, reconciliation along with the building and breaking up of the alliances. These elements became the important constituent of the ongoing polit-

ical relationship. The continuous and constant delegation of authority became a common feature from the emperor of Delhi down till these numerous chiefs. The legitimacy was sought through a humble and subservient relationship with the established centres of power.

Much before the rise of Scindia and Holkar, it was the Bhonsles of Nagpur who enjoyed a considerable amount of power. The Bhonsles collected their dues under the title of a Fauj-Saranjam or military assignment delegated sovereign powers of Sikkekyar from the Raja of Satara.<sup>10</sup> The Bhonsles in due course emerged as a crucial supporter of the Peshwas. The very lure of the wealth shown by Tarabai to the Peshwas did not impress the Bhonsles. In fact Raghuji even went on to acknowledge the Peshwa as 'equal in authority to Sahu'.<sup>12</sup>

However, the rise of Scindia and Holkar points to a complexity of the new power pattern despite of having a subservient nature of relationship towards the Peshwas. The most important of these new groups of sardars who owed their rise in the Peshwas was the house of Scindia. The unprecedented amount of power and the growing prominence of this family made the political status of the Peshwas uncomfortable. Scindia's power reached to such a high degree that they also took Delhi in their own possession for sometime. Scindia also went on to reinstate Shah Alam on the throne of Delhi, when the emperor was deposed by the Rohilla Chief Gulam Qadir.<sup>13</sup> The power of this family in the late 18th



century was gravitating more and more towards Hindustan, the area according to a Marathi document lies between Sutlej and Narmada.<sup>14</sup> Scindia, in fact became more prominent in the Malwa region than Hindustan.

The rise of these two families Scindia and Holkar from the relatively low origin is further a testimony to the fact that despite the receding impact of the Warkari movement in the 18th century, the objective of the movement can once again be seen in the rise of these two families apart from the upward social mobility which earlier crystallized around the Maratha Kunbi caste cluster.

The emergence of these families questioned the brahmanic hegemony as they hardly asserted any Kashtriya status. However, they greatly emulated the life style of ancient kashtriya dynasty of Rajasthan. But this status as Hindu kings brought them into a strained relationship with the ruling Brahmin regimes. The latter argued increasingly that these elite lineage families had after all no proper claim to differentiate themselves from the poor and lower status peasants of Western India in general.<sup>15</sup>

The family of Scindia was shudras of the tribe of Koonbee or cultivator.<sup>16</sup> The first appearance of this family in central India was early in the 18th Century in the person of Ranoji Scindia. However, there is a dispute regarding the origin of this family. They are supposed to have a link with the Kashtriya family of Rajasthan which the

original name was sendrak, who were a prominent family of ancient India.<sup>17</sup> The attempt of people like John Malcolm who attributes Scindia's pedigree to a Shudra caste<sup>18</sup> have been questioned by Maharashtra historians. V.L. Srivastava has pointed out that Scindia had a kashtriya origin.<sup>19</sup> In fact Grant Duff also describes that Scindia's were "a distinguished silledar (Cavaliers) since the time of Bahmanic dynasty."<sup>20</sup> Duff clearly speaks much against Malcolm that "it is difficult to see why Ranoji Scindia, who was a relation to Raja Sahu, should prefer a menial job as against the military profession, which at that time promised to every youthful and aspiring spirit a rich harvest of wealth and glory".<sup>21</sup> But it is futile to go into the debate of Scindia's origin as they themselves never asserted any Kashtriya status.

The Scindia became hereditary head man or Patil of Kumarkheda, about 12 miles from north of Poona and from now onwards the rise of Scindia was spectacular.<sup>22</sup> After the death of Balaji Vishwanath, Ranoji continued in his position. The employment of Ranoji was to carry the Peshwa's slippers, which also gave respect to Scindia's for their being close to the Peshwas.<sup>23</sup> Ranoji Scindia fixed his headquarter at Ujjain, which rose as a first capital of Scindia's dominion. He died in 1750 and was left behind with a large family.<sup>24</sup> After Ranoji, it was Mahadji Scindia who became very powerful overtime. But before discussing the 18th century Maratha context and their relation with

Peshwas and others, it would be better to discuss the background of Holkars. The emergence of this family is also closely related to one of the broader arguments running in this dissertation.

Similar to the rise of Scindia the family of Holkar also proved to be a strong political force in the 18th century Maharashtra. Malhar Rao Holkar had a low origin. Their ancestors were Dhangars or herdsmen by caste of the village Houl. Malhar Rao Holkar's father was : "Chaugala" or deputy Patel. From the village Houl in the Deccan, the descendants of this family picked their name as 'Holkar'.<sup>25</sup> One particular incident in which Malhar Rao Holkar slew a leader of Nizamul Mulk, brought him great fame and it also led Bajio Rao to take him into his own service. Later he was raised to the command of 500 horses. Malhar Rao Holkar was also entrusted with the management of Maratha interests in Malwa in around 1728.<sup>28</sup> But his field of activity and his major military achievement remained in Hindustan after formal cessation of Malwa to the Marathas by the Mughal emperor. The Holkar estate of Indore later crystallized into a political entity.<sup>27</sup>

Thus it is the rise of these two important families in Central India which to a considerable extent undermined the influence of Brahmanic regime at Poona. The appointment of Scindia as a hereditary deputy of the Delhi emperor further aggravated the situation, as the entire administration went

into the hands of Scindia.<sup>28</sup> This gradual prominence of Scindias even led a man like G. Duff to think that now the Scindias are aiming to replace the Brahmin court and attempting to set up their own authority at Poona.<sup>29</sup> But despite their continuous growing power they remained submissive to the Peshwa government. The Peshwa government was accredited with the sovereign right over all their conquests and thus this family acquired it merely as an assignment to their name. All the acquisition of Scindias were made in the name of the Peshwas. Both these families were assigned with countless assignments in Malwa, Hindustan as well as Deccan.

In the initial phase, Scindia similar to Holkar received saranjam in Malwa around 1729 and the Peshwa's seal. He equally shared with Holkars the collection of the revenue of this province.<sup>30</sup> Scindia was also made hereditary saranjamdar like Holkar which was held directly from the Peshwa government but the later development and particularly Scindias' rising fame brought them into an acute political conflict with Nana Phadnis, regent of the Peshwa Madha Rao.<sup>31</sup>

The similarity of the power pattern in the ruling centres is evident in the adoption of various acts and etiquettes of a king by the Scindia and also the manner in which the authority was wielded. Scindia gave considerable attention in giving a permanent shape to his government. Malcolm points out that the countries under Mahadji's observation were well managed, as were those where the

inhabitants were peaceable and obedient'.<sup>32</sup> The manner in which Scindia himself presents and represents his power and the way in which he treats the British resident is further testimony to the fact that in the 18th century power has to be understood in its own terms. The discussion of the British resident's visit to the Scindia camp is described by Broughton. Broughton speaks that " Scindia met us just beyond his own tents. He was attended by all the sardars of the army and followed by the cavalry now in camp; but which I am convinced did not amount to more than three thousand men. They drew up in the form of a crescent, in the centre of which the Maharaja quitted his palnkeen at the moment when the resident did the same, this part of the ceremonial being regulated by the puncitilio. Scindia was superbly dressed in rich brocade, with a profession of pearls and emeralds about his neck and arms. After the usual ceremony had taken place, he proceeded to his tents and are followed at a little distance ... taking leave Pan and Uttar, were as usual distributed and the customary khiluts were presented ... when the Maharaja pays a visit to any person of rank, he sends his own masnad, or throne, on which he sits at the upper end of the tent, and every thing conducted precisely as at his usual Khilut, a superb birch drawn by four beautiful Arabian horses, was presented to the Maharaja on the part of the Governor General. Scindia was pleased with this elegant present".<sup>33</sup> A close look at this meeting between Scindia and the British resident shows that

the same form and the manner was regulated similar to the kingly etiquettes seen in the meeting between the Peshwas and the Chhatrapati. Scindia's adherence to such forms assert his newly acquired political status. Even the British later or particularly with the treaty of Salbai, acknowledged Mahadji Scindia as an independent prince.<sup>34</sup> But it hardly mattered to Scindia in terms of his shift of loyalty to the Peshwas. They remained consistent and firm in their attitude and relationship with the British. Hence the rituals, ceremonials adhered to or practiced might seem complete in their meaning and function but they represent the reinforcement of official hierarchy, a legitimation of parvenu dynasty combined with the parallels of celestial and earthly hierarchies which is aptly put in a phrase coined by David Cannadine 'rituals of royalty'.<sup>35</sup> To understand the significance of power and ceremonial where the rituals of royalty to him seem to be most enduring. The pomp and pageantry, spectacle and splendour are treated as an integral part of the political processes and the structure of power.<sup>36</sup> The context of rituals in the case of Maratha state not merely remains a charade rather expressed the royalty of power, the inherent tensions with in the rituals and ceremony expressed one by the established power and others by the emerging power. Thus politics and ritual are not the separate elements, where one is conceived as serious and the other as superficial. Ritual is not the mask of force but, is itself a type of power which will be further evident in the subsequent discussion.

The complexities of the emerging pattern of the authority, the significance of the title and symbols, the rituals and ceremonials, the pomp and pageantry is manifested in one important incident involving all the three great powers of the time such as the emperor of Delhi, the Peshwas and the Scindias. This incident particularly hinges around the Scindias when the emperor Shah Alam was deposed by the Rohilla Chief Gulam Qadir in 1788. As he wanted the emperor to accord him the title of Amir-al-Umara and Mir Bakshi. But the refusal of emperor to accord him with such titles resulted in his being deposed by this chief. It was Mahadji Scindia, who at the crucial juncture helps Shah Alam and reinstated him on the throne of Delhi in 1788.<sup>36</sup> Shah Alam pleased with Scindia's action, renewed the title of Vakil-I-Mutalaq of the empire.<sup>37</sup> However, much before this incident, the post of Amir-ul-Umarah was offered to Scindia in 1784. Scindia at that time refused to accept this office due to a strong loyalty shown towards the Peshwas. It was not in consonance with the obedience owed to the Peshwas.<sup>38</sup> In the same year, Mahadji in a letter to the Peshwas informed that he obtained for Nana and the Peshwa, the Baksgiri and the post of Naib-I-Mansab while the post of Vakil-I-Mutalq was given to Mahadjee despite his request to the emperor that the post be bestowed on to the Peshwas.<sup>39</sup> This incident led to a strong conflict between the ruling regime and the Scindia. The Poona court flatly refused Scindia's explanation and accused him for having

secured this title for himself.<sup>40</sup> Scindia continued his urge that the post by itself does not mean the defiance of the Pesh-wa's authority and they are still the servants of Peshwas. But the court of Poona remained firm in its attitude towards Scindia. Eventually the Peshwas vehement protest was heeded by the emperor of Delhi. Now the Peshwas were invested with the title of Vakil-I-Mutlaq which became hereditary as well as the Scindia was appointed as the hereditary deputy. These titles were later confirmed by the Raja of Satara.<sup>41</sup> The ceremony and rituals performed on this occasion, the pomp and grandeur displayed according to Duff was beyond anything the inhabitants of Poona had ever seen.<sup>42</sup> Crawford describes the ceremony in detail, "splendid 'Shamianas' or Durbar tents were pitched, at the end of which was a throne on which lay the Imperial 'Furman' or patent, the dresses of honor and the decorations. Advancing up the Durbar, the Peshwas thrice saluting the throne, deposited on it his 'Nuzur' of 101 gold mohurs, and seated himself at the left of the Imperial pheromones were then read, including one which forbade the slaughter of bullocks and cows. The Peshwa then received the 'Khillut' or presents, and retiring into a small tent, arrayed himself in the dresses of hours, returned and reseated himself, whereupon Scindia, Nana Furnavees and other subordinate officers presented their 'nuzure' to him in congratulations.



The Peshwa, then rose, seated himself in the state "palnkeen" or sedan chair just received, and was carried in great pomp to the city of Poona, followed and fanned by Scindia. Arrived at the Peshwa's palace, the ceremony of investigating Scindia with the Deputyship was duly performed".<sup>43</sup> But on this occasion, as on many others, Scindia over did his humility, when he begged to be regard only as a hereditary servant of the Peshwas 'entitled only to carry his slippers' and to be addressed merely as "Patel' Scindia adopted a new Persian seal with the name of Peshwa minister appearing on it as that of his master.<sup>44</sup>

This incident is beset with tensions and jealousy around the significance of titles and symbols. This points to the form in which tradition is being represented in its temporal milieu while regulating the power and authority. These conflicts and the performance of rituals are not only specific to the marathas as it had its genesis in early period and in the various parts of the 18th century India. But what is significant is the way in which the tradition is being represented and the royalty is expressed through the rituals. Crawford's narrative further establishes that the performance of such rituals reinforced the hierchization of officials as well as was an attempt on the part of newly emerging political powers to seek legitimacy to their rule by invoking such traditions, which to some extent is common in terms of getting invested with robes of honour.

As it has been pointed out earlier that with the treaty of Salbai, the Britishers recognized Scindia as an independent sovereign. But still their submission to the Peshwa government remained unflinching. Malcolm clearly says "Mahadji Scindia originally transacted all the affairs in the name of Peshwa, and not only his ministers, but all his public servants, even to his Chobdars or mace bearers, were called by the Peshwas but during the minority of SavaiMadhav Rao, when Nana Farnvis was dewan, all the possessions of the Scindias, south of the Chumbulo were made over to his direct authority. In the conquest made north of the Chumbil, the Peshwa's name was used and two principle officers from Poona attended Mahadji to guard the interests of the Chief of the empire. On first entering Hindustan, some grants were made in the Peshwa's name. These were recalled and regular Sundaes given in the name of the emperor with the seal of the Peshwa as minister and of Mahadji as his deputy".<sup>45</sup> This account of Malcolm indicates the importance of the already established power where the defiance of Poona's authority was tantamount to denigrating the political status-acquired by Scindia. The seal bearing the mark of three different powers shows the complex nature of the levels of power which were inextricably linked to each one's legitimation.

The growing power of Scindia can further be gauged through the fact that when the Peshwas were being given the post of Vakil-I-Mutalaq, Nana Farnvis, the regent strongly

resented the Peshwas desire of being conferred with this title. Nana apprehended that it might bring Peshwas close to Scindia. Nana was greatly angered and jealous of Mahadji continuous prominence and the appointment of a British resident at Scindia's court.<sup>46</sup> Despite all this, it was Scindia who always backed up Peshwas interest against the British and others. IN 1784, Mahadji had warned Nana Farnvis about the nature of British diplomacy in Indian courts, "My attempt in organising the emperor's power and resources and my elevation to the highest post in his government, have given extreme offence to the British. Brown at Delhi is freely bribing the imperial granteers to remove me from the situations. You must remember how treacherous these British are."<sup>47</sup> Despite this warning, Nana consented with the British Government to have a separate resident at Poona for direct dealing. This results in the appointment of Charles Malet as the first British resident Ambassador at Ponna. However, the growing differences between Scindia and Nana was reconciled by the Peshwa Madhavrao II. Madhavrao puts it in unequivocal terms that both of you are my two hands. Thus, it demanded from them to support the Peshwa's government. Scindia's authority was confirmed in Hindustan, dispute with Tukoji Holkar was settled. All these engagements in order to render them sacred and inviolable were sworn in a temple and under the most solemn form of their religion.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike Mahadji Scindia Dowlat Rao to a great extent put some restraint on the Peshwas hegemony wielded by them over the various families. He evaded the payment of the large demands made upon him by Nana Faranvis, for the Peshwas share of revenues of Malwa and Hindustan.<sup>49</sup> Dowlat Rao Scindia according to Malcolm 'considered himself, more the principal sovereign of India; than a member of Maratha confederacy.' He in combination with Raghoji Bhonsle and Jaswant Rao Holkar attempted to arrest the British progress which however resulted in failure.

The rise and prominence of the family of Holkar is no less significant as it was Malhar Rao who designed to the power of his nation over Hindustan. He endeavored to effect his object by operations which extended from the province of Oudh to the Indus and from the hills to Rajputana to the mountains of Kumaon.<sup>50</sup> Despite a standing offer for his help rendered to the Vajir Safdarjung in saving Oudh from the Rohillas. Malhar Rao instead wished to be an officer of the Peshwas and desired to have no country independent of him; but that nomination to the office of Deshmukh.<sup>51</sup> Malhar Rao had in his possession a large part of the Deccan, and considerable part of the province of Khandesh. However the relationship between these two ruling powers became conflicting as both of them came into conflict in their campaign to Malwa and Rajasthan. The attempt of the Peshwas to curb the power and authority of the Scindia's and to check the growing influence of the Holkars. The Peshwas played out

Holkar against Scindia to preserve their own political status.

### Religiosity. Interface with the Political Powers :

Despite their humble origin, the Brahmin's still acquired the same privileges and the rights. Their administrative set up had also strong religious tinge evident in Scindia's attempt to fill up all his key administrative posts with Gaud Saraswats and Shenvi Brahmins, who were opposed to the Chitpavans. <sup>52</sup> Another ruler the Holkar house particularly Ahilya Bai Holkar used to say, that she deemed herself answerable to god for every exercise of power. <sup>53</sup> Her worldly duty was influenced with deep sense of religiosity as she heard sacred volumes of her faith distributed alms, and gave food, in person, to a number of Brahmins. <sup>54</sup> She spent considerable amount of money in the construction of temples, dharam shaalas, and wells, throughout the Holkar possession in Malwa. Even she built holy edific, maintained establishments and sent annual sums to be distributed in charity, outside of her possession in Malwa. Ahylabai in her principal structures at Gaya is shown to have adoring the image of Mahadeva, which is preserved in one of her temples. She is sainted among her own tribe of having placed near the statues of god Ramachandra and his wife Sita. She through the constant supply of the Ganges water to southern region became much more famous. —Her

religiosity was so deep that the Nizam of the Deccan and Tipu Sultan granted her the same respect as that of the Peshwa, Muhammadans also joined with the Hindus in prayers for her long life and prosperity.

In the course of the rise of these houses, they started emulating the life style of the kingly Kashatriya princes, particularly the ancient dynasties of Rajasthan. These Rajput princes used to come to Banaras and Gaya for performing oblations to the shades of their ancestors in the ritual called shraddha. Growing number of genealogist Brahmins attended to their spiritual requirements, Bayly argues that the marathas' claim to the Rajput dynasties encouraged them to seek merit by associating with holy places.<sup>56</sup> After 1680, the Marathas appear to have replaced Rajputs as major donors at Banares, Allahabad, Gaya etc. By the mid 18th century a tradition was developed by the Scindia and Holker in which the majority of temples at Banares were founded by the natives of Deccan.<sup>57</sup> Both these houses built huge stone bathing wharves (ghats) in Benaras and established 'colleges' of dependent brahmins there. The Maratha emigrants in Benaras accounted for not less than thirty thousand people by the end of the century.

Nothing seems more striking and spectacular than the Scindia's deep reverence for a Muhemmedan Faqir Bala Kadir. This particular act further shows how tradition was deep into the contradictory elements. This Faqir was the chief favorite and the companion of Mahadji Scindia. His predic-

tion of great future for Mahadji brought him tremendous respect not only from Scindia but also from others.<sup>58</sup> He became an acknowledged peer of Mahadji and he was always treated by him with utmost respect. Scindia prostrated himself at his feet every morning before he performed the ablutions prescribed by his own religion. He in the midst of his hectic activities also finds out opportunities to supply the money for the use of pious favorite. He has settled on Bala Kadir a considerable jagir and presented him with twenty thousand rupees to defray his expenses on a journey which he is about to make.<sup>59</sup>

At the death of this faqir, all the leading peoples and sardars made considerable presents.<sup>60</sup> Apart from this Faqir Scindia at his court received and protected all Muhommadan Faqirs. One of them in fact is just retained for the sole purpose of proclaiming a march throughout the camp. Charles Malet, the first British resident at Poona puts this act of Scindia in his own words, 'temporarily he is the wakeel-i-Mutaluck an exalted son of Shah Allum, spiritually the devoted disciple of the holy saints Shah Habbeb and Shah Mansoor.'<sup>61</sup>

Thus once again the religiosity and the association with sacred places and the pilgrimage centres had strong linkages with the patterns of royal behavior emerging out in the 18th century India. The expenditure, lavishness, extravaganza associated with such acts, etiquettes, behaviors

were becoming the legitimate expression of the royal power and the newly created pattern of authority.

It would be in this background that a brief study of two regions conquered by the Marathas would provide a clue to the nature of relationship developed by the indigenous population with the conquered territories population. It has already been pointed out that the interface between conquered and the indigenous people not merely remained in the realm of appropriating agrarian surplus, revenues, ceases etc. The act of plundering and marauding can have its own logic and rationality to rule over an alien people for some time, but in the long run it becomes almost difficult to carry the burden of an alien empire without its root having much more beyond the economic interests and the imperial ambition. Since both these families came into prominence in the region of Malwa. So a brief look of Malwa and the Marathas would perhaps be the ideal point to start with. But before going into Malwa a cursory look of the interface would provide a background to study of this relationship.

In the south of the Maratha court of Tanjore presided over a performance of poetry, religion and dance in the first half of the 18th century which resulted in the fusion of ancient vaisnarism of the south with the saivism and the north Indian influence of the new rulers.<sup>62</sup> In the north the Marathas supported the important shrine of Sheikh Muinuddin Chisti of Ajmer, already a shrine of popular veneration or the Hindus of Rajasthan. A late 18th century visi-



tor to a Maratha revenue court in Gujarat noted how the court of justice presided over by the Chitpavan brahmins had become a quasi-temple where villagers did puja as well as registering rites.<sup>63</sup> This in fact points out that, religiosity was deep having an interface and was interrelated in relation to wielding power and in attempting to set up an administrative structure with the new territories. Now in this regard Malwa becomes crucial to explore the ways in which relationship was established as the Marathas had a strong stake in the region.

Malwa for the Maratha had remained an active field and a bone of contention since 17th century. Its strategic importance was due to the political and commercial nexus which it established with Hindustan and the Deccan. Stewart Gordon identifies Malawa as a 'March area', the one main route from the north to the south.<sup>64</sup> The area is inhabited by the Jats, Ahirs, Rajputs, tribals etc. But the region did not have any strong regional and religious identity.

Before the Maratha invasion, it was the Rajputs as officials of the Mughal empire who were powerful in this region. The Mughal patronage and the Rajput settlement, continued throughout the 17th century. But the process of using Rajputs as a collaborating elite started since the time of Aurangzeb.<sup>65</sup> However, the Rajput did not establish any relationship with the indigenous population in matrimonial terms. But they indeed proved to be a lynch-pin of the Mughal administration and provided stability to the empire.

The exact year of the Maratha incursions into this region is still vague. It is generally supposed that the penetration did not begin until 1720. This gradual incursion into the Maratha region has been beautifully summed up in Stewart Gordons phrase called 'slow conquest'; the raid in fact began on the movable wealth of village and then proceeded from countryside to city and eventually with the force of ten thousand troops.<sup>66</sup> Thus the Marathas as Malcolm describes continued their incursion into this region for seven years only abandoned their annual attack of the province with the advancement of Sawai Jai Singh, a Rajput prince.<sup>67</sup> But the authority of Marathas was not established until the regime of Muhammad Shah. The field remained an acute point of contest between Scindia, Holkar and the Pawar, who were left by the Peshwas to levy Chauth and Sardeshmukhi. The sharing of revenue and the rising prominence of Scindias disturbed the oldest maratha family pawar in this region. All of them got embroiled into a conflict and factional dispute.

These gradual but continuous incursion of the Marathas brought them closer to the indigenous people of the area. Initially the Marathas were content to divide the government and the revenues with the Hindu chiefs of military class. Similarly, they started assuming and adopting all those manners, etiquettes and behaviors suited to win the Hindu population out there. The Rajputs and other powerful force were appeased and conciliated by every concession to their

pride, as well as to those forms of dignity which they had learned from their association with the Mughal government.<sup>68</sup> While the lower level of the population particularly the landlords and the cultivators, saw in the Marathas "beings of their own order, who though they had risen to power and dominion," continued to preserve the strongest attachment to the manners and the usages of those village communities in which they were born".<sup>69</sup> Another interesting part of the Maratha movement in various parts of India was their attempt to keep up an intimate tie with their families and kindred tribe in their native districts; and the original links by which they were bound to the community. These were constantly revived and strengthened by ties which operate with great force upon Hindus.<sup>70</sup> The Marathas simultaneously kept a sense of scrupulous inferiority in their intercourse and correspondence with the emperors as well as the Rajput princes.

The Marathas in the course of their stay in the Malwa region further strengthened their ties with the indigenous population by building temples, bathing ghats, tanks and rivers. Ahalyabai Holkar's religiosity and her generosity has already been discussed. She built numerous temples in Malwa and other parts of India. The temples built by the Marathas also served the purpose of a school where vedas and Shastras were taught.<sup>71</sup> The construction of numerous temples by these two families speak of the desire on their part to revive Hindu tradition. The Holkars particularly spent

large amount of money on this project and continued religious grants meant for repairs and maintenance of the temple. The Holkar's Devasthanana classification mentions some sixty-five temples built by Ahalyabai at different places throughout India. Similar to Holkars, Scindia also constructed various temples around Ujjain and Gwalior as Mahadji Scindia even went to build temples at the places like Mathura, Brindaban, Benaras etc. The style of Scindia's temple closely resembled the style adopted by the Rajputs.<sup>73</sup>

The Mughal administration now started receding with the gradual stabilisation of Maratha settlements in the Malwa region. The effect is further evident in the change of the dresses of the men folk. They infused religious spirit into the brahmins of Malwa. Even in conventional matters religious colorings and effects were made. Many of the Maratha customs such as the worship of Ganesh, the distribution of Til and sweets on the Makar sankranti were adopted by the Rajputs here.<sup>74</sup> Even the dialect of the region was influenced with the Marathi language.<sup>75</sup> The Marathas also had been able to regulate their relationship through the various administrative transactions. The faujdars and Kotwals produced cases concerning every aspects of life. Every caste and clan of society came under their administrative decision.<sup>76</sup>

The description of an interface of the Marathas with the Malwa people further established this point that a mere

desire of plunder and loot can never sustain a solidly based relationship despite the unprecedented amount of power being enforced upon the new people. It certainly needed other facets and avenues where the basic constituents of relationship of the ruler and the ruled have to have its internal logic in legitimizing each one's action. The deep imprint of the social and the cultural pattern of the Maratha made their gradual incursions more hospitable unlike the Mughals.

In a very much similar fashion the Marathas also influenced other parts of this imperial project. The Rajput-Maratha relationship is another point which contribute in the understanding of two different levels of power. However they had close parallels in transacting various administrative activities as well as some similarities in the ways the authority was wielded by these two different powers. The fraternal relationship in Rajasthan between the clan members were complemented by eating metaphors and the food was used to express the bonds between the persons (brothers) in their individual capacity.<sup>77</sup> Similar to this bond or the symbol of unity, the Marathas were also knitted into a category through their close attachment to the watan. This very bond among the Marathas created through watan has been conceived by Frank Perlin as 'Counter Ideology',<sup>78</sup> which can go against the concerns and rhetorics of the established centres of power. Thus in many ways the interrelationship established by Rajputs and Marathas becomes significant in understanding the emerging power pattern.

It has been already discussed in the second as well as in this chapter that the Marathas greatly desired to conquer all the holy places and they felt deep pleasure while seeking some kind of association with sacred places by granting land, donating large sums of money etc. The Rajput Maratha relationship in the initial phase was not very smooth as the internal dispute within Rajputana involved the Rajput princess into a conflict with each other. But this very conflict and dispute seem to have facilitated the Maratha penetration. In contrast to Malwa and Gujarat, the Marathas did not establish any regular direct administration in Rajasthan<sup>79</sup> It was Scindia who were able to acquire superiority over the Rajputs and Scindia managed to derive stable income from this region. Again here Scindia maintains his strict formal relationship with the ruling dynasty at Pune. The tribute which he obtained from the Rajput chiefs, he made it on the name of emperor as well as in the name of the Peshwa's.<sup>80</sup>

The pilgrimage of Radhabai, the mother of Baji Rao I and Chimaji Appa, was applauded by all the Rajput princes. Large number of invitations poured in from Rajput princes as well as from the Mughal officials. All these people desired to receive the revered lady in their states.<sup>81</sup> On the special request of Jai Singh the Rajput prince, she stayed and halted for three months at Jaipur.<sup>82</sup> The lady later was accompanied by a special deputatant to Raja Jai Singh throughout her journey. The relationship is also seen

in a letter addressed by Baji Rao to Swai Jai Singh. The friendly relations in this letter is expressed by Baji Rao to Jai Singh through the term 'Kaka'.<sup>83</sup> In 1743 Jai Singh celebrated the performance of Vajipeya Yajna at Jaipur in which the considerable number of Maratha Brahims were invited.<sup>84</sup> The relationship also manifested in the ways they adopted and amalgamated styles, habits and etiquettes of the north Indian people. In one of the letter written by Nana Saheb from Bundelkhand in 1752, he says, "Life here is rich and full, one finds here larger gardens, growing varieties of flower and lotuses. The people here are rich and fare in complexion."<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

Two points emerge out of this above discussion, the first points to the way the brahmnical<sup>n</sup> institution evolved itself to adjust to the growing claims of these families and started co-sharing sovereignty in satisfying the imperial ambition. Accompanied with the imperial ambition is the meaning of identity which broadened as identity now no more expressed itself in relations to specificity in geographical boundary, regional culture etc but the gradual shaping-up of the interface inculcated and amalgamated cultures and rituals of two different traditions. The representation of tradition gets widened in constructing the Maratha identity as also seen in the way the brahmnical tradition was hammered at with the rise of these relatively low origin houses. These houses or families maintained a subservient relationship with the ruling brahmins regime as established centres of power. They sought legitimacy to their own rule by establishing such submissive relations but refrained from bowing to Brahmnaical institutions and their preconceived superiority as well as their own made dominant ideology by carving out their own independent authority.

The second point which is evident through the above discussion is the importance of the titles, symbols and rituals acquired in creating a political process. The combination of celestial and earthly activities also sometimes manifested in the performance of rituals and ceremonies.



als which speak the way the 18th century Maratha power evolved itself, a feature of various other parts of India as well. The pomp and pageantry expressed through the rituals apart from reinforcing the official hierarchy, show each up in striving to legitimize itself is also simultaneously looking for an opportune moment to conquer the last vestiges of power and thus they indulge themselves into rituals and ceremonies which in David Cannadine's words is aptly put as 'Rituals of Royalty'.

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SCINDIA AT GWALIOR      Year (in A.D.)  
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Jayappa	1745
Jankoji	1755
Mahadji	1761
DaulatRao	1794
JankojiRao	1827

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HOLKARS AT INDORE      Year (in A.D.)  
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MalharRao	1728
Ahylyabai	1765
Tukoji	1795
YashwantRao	1798
MalharRaoII	1811

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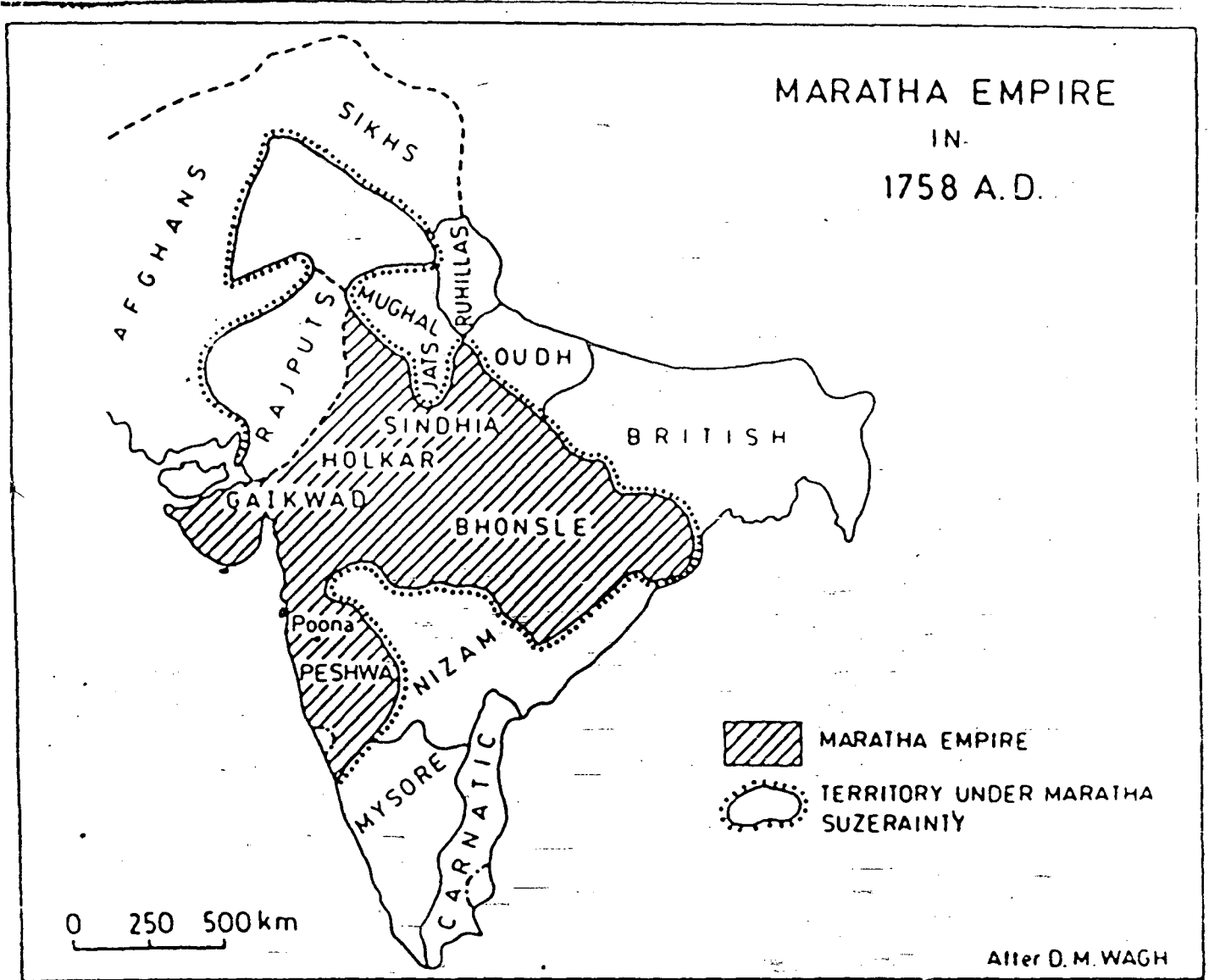
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# MAP OF SCINDIA AND HOLKAR'S DOMINION



Source:- K.P. Dikshit - Maharashtra in Maps  
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## CONCLUSION

The preceding exercise unfolds some important issues to be debated and to be taken up at a much more rigorous theoretical and empirical level. The most pertinent point which emerges out of this discussion is - 'Tradition's' recreation of its own fabric or its essence as considerably applicable and contextual even in 18th century context. But the most enduring thing of tradition was its adaptability with the new elements even if its essence had a presence of the old. 'Tradition' was used to give shape to cultural and political identity of the Marathas where religion, faith etc. to a considerable extent dominated in bridging the gulf between upper and lower sections of society, rather than widening the gulf between Decean Brahmins, Maratha Ksatriyas and the Kunbis. This use of tradition in the form of Bhakti movement was accompanied with the development of a rich repertoire of the Maratha literature which equally contributed to the growth of consciousness and brought about a contradictory social reality in which despite engendering a notion of 'classic brahmanic' kingdom with an overt manifestation of mindless ritualism, the brahmanical tradition entered and initiated itself into a compromise with the rising new groups, leading to the counter balancing of the emerging social contradiction.

Linked to the representation of forms of 'tradition' was the notion of Hinduism, Hindu Kingdom or Hindu State.

The striking feature of this issue is how Hinduism preserves and incorporates its essence and elements within the broad umbrella of Perso-Islamic culture where an emerging political identity floated around various cultural artifacts which were let loose, eventually culminating into a historical process whereby seeking justification of the concealed culture against the dominant culture. The growth and domestication of one's faith into another shows the high point of maturity in which the notion and perception of the 'fiercest Hindus' coexisted with the Perso-Islamic culture. The universal culture seems as giving legitimacy to the emerging culture to keep intact its received status of universalism inspite of the weakening of its forms in relation to social, economic and political organs. But the growth of such a faith strongly nurtures its identity to save itself from becoming the absolute miniature of the universal culture, however interacting at many planes as well as intruding upon it. But in all this the richness and the enduring character of tradition was preserved. So is it possible to conceive 'fiercest Hindus' within the Muslim culture spread out by the Mughal empire. It needs to be debated and requires more work to be done in this regard.

No less significant in the vibrancy of tradition is the forms used in creating the power pattern which apart from construing along the Classical texts, also interacted with elements of conflict and shifting allegiance. Religiosity still permeated this new component of political power yet

retaining the secular essence of administration and government. There was an attempt to invent the tradition through recreating the forms of Judicial institution which existed in ancient times to whip-up once again its faith and custom however making it considerably flexible to dispense with the newly cropped-up issues. Power in this sense was linked to a network of personal relations always situated at the cross-roads in which the receding political power becomes the expression of the balance of various conflicting forces and their opposing pulls and pressures.

The use of rituals, symbols and titles are inextricably linked to create either a centralised political authority or a dispersed one. The invocation of rituals is linked to the invention of tradition and the creation of different rituals expresses the widening of tradition. The ensemble of rituals, symbols and the conflict around titles in fact produced and reproduced hierarchy which constantly conflicted with each other in either preserving its political status or looking to grab more and more political power.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acharya	Head of religious order or sect
Agnihotri	The priest who maintains sacrificial fire
Atma	The human soul, the ego of an individual in contrast to the soul of the universe spoken of as Parama (Supreme) atma
Avatara	Incarnation of divine beings in animate forms, as for example Vishnu in the form of Krishna, or Rama to combat evil conditions in this world
Bakhar	Narrative of events in the life of King, a minister, an army general, etc, or an important episode like a battle, (since the beginning of Seventeen Century)
Balutedar	Village artisan, collectively called Bara-baluta which included twelve categories
Bhakta	Follower of a divine deity and hence devoted to the religious life, like Rama Bhakta, shiva bhakta
Brahma	The one Substance of which all existing things consist of
Brahmachari	A Brahman who observes the strictest chastity for a time or for life for a religious motive
Charitra	One's actions, deeds i.e. behaviour good or bad
Chauth	One fourth, of total produce, payable to the ruler as land revenue
Citnis	An auditing clerk

Dakshina	Money or presents given to Brahmans and Others on special occasions
Dasara	A festival commemorating the period of the year when the Maratha Kings started out on their campaigns
Dayada	Co-sharer
Desai	District level revenue collection and general administration incharge, head of all patels in the district
Deshkulkarni	Hereditary district level accountant, head of all Kulkarnis of the district
Deshmukh	Same as desai
Deshpandey	Same as Deshkulkarni
Dnyanamarga	The way of knowledge; holds the highest place in the minds of philosophers in context of deliverance of man from all worldly affairs
Dadnis	Secretary
Fitna	Drawing away from allegiance; rebellion; Sedition
Gayatri	A sacred verse from the Veda, repeated by Brahmans at their morning and evening devotions
Ghata	A mountainous range dividing countries
Guru	A religious teacher; one who instructs in the Shastras
Haridasa	Servants of Hari (Vishnu). Worshippers of hari. Wandering singers who praise the deeds of Hari

Karma	An act of deed : as all actions through the laws of cause and effect determine the actions in the next life. Also religious action, sacrifice, ablution, etc.
Katha	A story, fable, exploits of gods or heroes related fwith music and singing
Kritana	Reciting the names of the deity and celebrating the praises of a god with music and singing
Kulkarni	Village accountant, incharge of revenue collection
Kunbi	Name of a caste, who were peasant cultivators
Mamlatdar	Revenue collector (A post created in the Peshwa period)
Maya	Literally "Illusion". More or less ignorance about some hidden reality whose cause, is by a sort of personification, which is maya
Mirasdar	Hereditary cultivator, having proprietary right in land.
Mokasa	A village or land assigned to an individual either rent-free or at low quit-rent, on condition of service
Moksha	Deliverance of the soul from the body and its absorption of the soul from the body and its absorption into the divine essence
Naib	Deputy
Nazar	Honorary present
Nivriddhi	Cessation from worldly concerns and engagements; also absorption into Brahma



Pad	A variety of metrical compositions, used in hymns or anthems. Many of the poet-saints have written in this metre
Patil	Hereditary village headman, head of all village level functionaries i.e. Kulkarni, chaugala
Peshwa	Prime Minister in the court of the Maratha rulers later became defacto ruler
Pradhan	Minister
Prakrita	In the usage of the Maratha poet - saints the Prakrita language means the Marathi language. Distint from Sanskrit, it seems to be the common vernacular of the people
Pujari	Temple officiant
Punya	Goodness or holiness in the abstract sense, or a good or holy deed as contrasted to 'Pap', which means sin or an evil deed
Rajbhag	The king's share
Rajyabhiseka	Royal consecration
Rayat	Cultivator, peasant
Sahukar	Banker, merchant
Samsara	The affairs of life in the mundane world, wordly business, the vocations and engagements, the cares and troubles of secularity
Samsthanik	Tributary chieftain
Sanad	Official Document or decree

Saranjam	Assignment of land for collecting land revenue
Sardar	Captain, commander, high official
Sardeshmukh	Head deshmukh or emolument of 10-12%
Sarsubhedar	Govt. official
Sarvabhaum	Lord of all land
Sharia	Islamic law
Shloka	A verse, a stanza in the Sanskrit text
Sikkekatyar	Seal and dagger, emblem of delegated sovereignty
OSiledar	Armed horseman
Subhedar	Provincial Governor
Svarajya	Self rule
Taluka	Territorial division
Tilaka	The spot or line made with coloured earths upon the forehead.
Tirtha	A holy or sacred place, any place of pilgrimage
Ulama	Muslim jurist or theologian
Upanishad	The oldest philosophical literature
Vakil	Ambassador

Watan Hereditary estate, office, rights, a dignity,  
any hereditary right whether in land or in  
office .

Zabardasti Illegitimate force

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